The Complete Poems of Anne Bannerman

Matthew Heilman

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THE COMPLETE POEMS OF ANNE BANNERMANY

A Dissertation
Submitted to the McAnulty College and Graduate School of Liberal Arts

Duquesne University

In partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

By
Matthew J. Heilman

December 2017
THE COMPLETE POEMS OF ANNE BANNERMAN

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ABSTRACT

THE COMPLETE POEMS OF ANNE BANNERMAN

By

Matthew J. Heilman

December 2017

Dissertation supervised by Susan K. Howard

Anne Bannerman (c.1780-1829) spent most of her life in Edinburgh, Scotland and published three volumes of poetry in the early nineteenth century. For my dissertation, I have prepared the first fully-annotated critical edition of Bannerman’s complete works, including Poems (1800), Tales of Superstition and Chivalry (1802), and Poems, A New Edition (1807). A comprehensive introduction provides information on Bannerman’s life and background, and examines her work in the context of British Romanticism, the Gothic, Scottish nationalism, and the ballad tradition. Close-readings of the poems examine the ways in which Bannerman’s female narrators challenge early nineteenth-century conceptualizations of gender, particularly in regard to her depictions of vengeful femme fatale figures. Poems such as “The Spirit of the Air,” “The Mermaid,” “The Dark Ladie,” and “The Penitent’s Confession” feature female characters invested with supernatural powers, which enable them to harness occult forces, manipulate the natural
elements, or return from the grave to punish those responsible for their deaths. Other poems such as “The Nun,” “The Murcian Cavalier,” and Bannerman’s melancholy sonnets highlight the limited choices afforded to women throughout history and include sharp critiques of the Catholic Church, the chivalric code, and the institution of marriage. A handful of political poems condemn Great Britain’s involvement in the Napoleonic Wars and highlight the effects of war upon the lives of widows, mothers, and veterans. In addition to her own poems, Bannerman was also an accomplished translator of French and Italian, and her translations of Francesco Petrarch, Antonio Allamanni, Jean-Baptiste Rousseau, and others are examined alongside a sonnet-cycle inspired by Johann Wolfgang von Goethe’s novel The Sorrows of Young Werther. Finally, the edition features an appendix comprised of critical reviews, letters, and selections of poetry and prose from William Collins, Charlotte Smith, Joanna Baillie, Samuel Taylor Coleridge, Matthew Lewis, Sir Walter Scott, and others. The edition also includes a list of textual variants for the material collected in Poems, A New Edition, an index of first lines, a bibliography, and four illustrations from the original edition of Tales of Superstition and Chivalry.
DEDICATION

To the memory and accomplishments of Anne Bannerman.

Your seraph-strains, unpitying, destroy...
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**Introduction**

In 1830, Sir Walter Scott made the following observation in his “Essays on Imitations of the Ancient Ballads,” which appeared in the fourth edition of his influential ballad collection *Minstrelsy of the Scottish Border*:

Miss Anne Bannerman likewise should 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. (559)

Despite Scott’s endorsement of her work, Anne Bannerman was not remembered by the general public, nor did she make a lasting impression on enthusiasts of Romantic poetry or Gothic literature. After publishing two volumes of original poetry – *Poems* (1800) and *Tales of Superstition and Chivalry* (1802) – Bannerman’s work fell into obscurity. In what appears to have been an eleventh-hour attempt to secure herself a career as a professional writer, Bannerman issued *Poems, A New Edition* by subscription in 1807. This volume included most of the material from her first two publications as well as a handful of new or previously uncollected poems. Unfortunately, *Poems, A New Edition* was not a success, forcing the already impoverished poet to seek a more practical means of earning a living as a governess. Scott’s survey of Scottish balladeers that have “honored their country” may have ranked Bannerman alongside Robert Burns, John Leyden, and James Hogg, but she has been mostly forgotten by her native country and is now barely a footnote in the history of Scotland’s rich literary tradition (559).
Yet Anne Bannerman was indeed a “gifted” poet. Her poetry engages with the same philosophical questions posed by her more well-known Romantic contemporaries, and the visionary scope of her poetry is as sublime as it is subversive. Her work complicates longstanding critical tendencies to associate literary Gothicism exclusively with fiction, and to treat it as a genre that evolved alongside but remained distinct from Romantic poetry. Furthermore, Bannerman’s appropriation of Gothic motifs serves a specific and radical purpose. Her impassioned narratives emphasize female empowerment through acts of vengeance, amounting to a bold – even quasi-Satanic – deconstruction of culturally inscribed gender roles. The ill-fated and victimized heroines in Bannerman’s poetry rarely turn the other cheek; instead of forgiving their enemies, they endeavor to find ways to punish them.

Bannerman’s poetry is consistently thrilling, entertaining, atmospheric, and enjoyable. All three of her volumes deserve further investigation from literary scholars. Her best and most characteristic poems, such as “The Spirit of the Air,” “The Mermaid,” and “The Dark Ladie,” have the potential to spark debate and generate valuable discussion in classrooms. As scholars continue to reform and re-evaluate the literary canon in the future, Bannerman’s poems deserve to be anthologized alongside the works of Charlotte Smith, Anna Barbauld, and Joanna Baillie, as well as William Wordsworth, Samuel Coleridge, and Walter Scott. This edition of Bannerman’s poetry – the first and only complete collection of her work in over two hundred years – is intended to honor as well as preserve this mysterious, powerful, and dissenting voice.
I. Literary and Cultural Context: Romanticism & the Gothic

Anne Bannerman’s poems were published during the first wave of English Romanticism, a literary and cultural movement that flourished throughout Great Britain from the 1790s until about 1830. As a result, Bannerman’s poems share a number of thematic preoccupations with her Romantic-era contemporaries. In particular, her composition of original ballads placed her in the company of not only Walter Scott but also William Wordsworth and Samuel Taylor Coleridge – two of the most influential and highly regarded poets of the age – whose collaboration entitled *Lyrical Ballads* has become the cornerstone of Romanticism. Wordsworth and Coleridge revolutionized poetry by addressing mundane yet universal subjects that celebrated the everyday lives and struggles of common people. Their frequent use of the popular ballad form enabled their poetry to reach a wider audience without sacrificing the philosophical or imaginative characteristics that distinguished poetry as a powerful and transformative mode of expression.

In 1802, Wordsworth had just issued the third edition of *Lyrical Ballads* when Bannerman published *Tales of Superstition and Chivalry*, her own collection of original ballads. Bannerman’s volume was more daring in its utilization of the supernatural – a characteristic of popular ballads that was emphasized by Coleridge in *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner*, but downplayed in most of Wordsworth’s contributions to the *Lyrical Ballads*. Bannerman’s poetry overlaps with the work of Wordsworth in its reverence for nature, but it also confronts the same complex themes of isolation and alienation that characterize Wordsworth’s best and most thought provoking poems. Both Bannerman and Wordsworth challenge the common conceptualization of nature as a safe space for tranquil reflection and spiritual transcendence. Such anxious views of nature preoccupied the second-generation Romantics, whose tormented speakers and protagonists often found themselves at odds with the world and sometimes failed to
find comfort in nature or respond to its beauty. On account of the existential concerns of Bannerman’s melancholy narrators, the predominantly gloomy settings of her poems, and her willingness to foreground the supernatural, Bannerman’s poetry is especially useful in highlighting the connections between canonical Romantic poetry and Gothic literature. When placed in context with the supernatural-oriented poems and ballads of Matthew Lewis, Walter Scott, Robert Southey, Mary Robinson, and Charlotte Dacre, – as well as those by Wordsworth and Coleridge – Bannerman’s poetry serves as a catalyst for a more inclusive re-evaluation of the significance and prevalence of the Gothic aesthetic in Romantic poetry.

Another prominent Romantic characteristic of Bannerman’s poetry can be found in the reformatory and visionary qualities of her work. In his book *Anna Barbauld and Eighteenth-Century Visionary Poetics*, Daniel Watkins links Bannerman to several Romantic women writers who “wrote compellingly from a visionary stance, [and used] the strategies of poetic engagement to contest dominant and more culturally conservative modes of literary expression” (xii). Like other Romantic-era women writers, a number of the works included in Bannerman’s first volume of poems are concerned with the theme of powerlessness. Poems such as “The Nun” and the ode “To Pain” raise awareness regarding the difficulties that women faced in both their public and private lives, while poems like “Verses on an Illumination for Naval Victory” and the sonnet “The Soldier” address broader social issues through the unique lens of widowed women and grief-stricken mothers. Yet Bannerman’s most distinctive poems are characterized by more aggressive and vengeful female narrators who have chosen less orthodox methods to improve their circumstances or transcend the challenges of everyday life. The tragic stories of forsaken lovers and disconsolate nuns that appear in the 1800 volume are presented alongside poems about mischievous genii that have manipulated significant events throughout human history, and
sinister odes written from the perspective of embittered mermaids or destructive elemental spirits. These more antagonistic narrators function as clear alternatives to the submissive and sentimentalized heroines found throughout the poems and novels that were popular in Bannerman’s lifetime, and hint of the more defiant direction her second publication would take.

Watkins describes *Tales of Superstition and Chivalry* as “a radical volume that pushes further than perhaps any other volume of the period – further even than Blake’s poetry – to disclose the far-reaching implications of visionary poetics” (18). In particular, the introduction of more consistently Gothic and supernatural elements in *Tales* enables Bannerman to include more “radical” commentary on the misfortunes and difficulties women faced in a predominantly patriarchal society. Watkins explains that Bannerman “draws on the principles of gothic horror [to] suggest that the gothic is only a slightly exaggerated representation of the turmoil afflicting everyday human experience,” and that her poems aim “to show a way past that horror” (25). It is here where Bannerman’s perspective differs dramatically from her contemporaries, for Barbauld, Baillie, and others shared “the conviction that the principles of love, benevolence, and sympathy…[were] powerful enough to change the world” (Watkins ix). For Bannerman, any hope of transcendence requires violence, for it is the only agency powerful enough to confront the pervasive and culturally sanctioned ideologies that imprison women. Her poems imply that women must avenge themselves against those that mistreat them, or at the very least, they must stand up and speak up for themselves by refusing to tolerate infidelity, deception, physical, and/or emotional abuse by men in power.

In addition to the rebellious visionary qualities Watkins recognizes in *Tales of Superstition and Chivalry*, Andrew Elfenbein has drawn attention to other illuminating similarities between Bannerman’s poetry and the work of William Blake:
It draws eclectically on a wide range of sources and shows a particular interest in mythological alternatives to the traditional Greek and Roman models; deranges conventional narrative chronology to differentiate itself from the mode of the contemporary novel; and strives for the loftiest expression of the sublime. (Romantic 135)

The recurring theme of prophecy, however, is what most closely aligns Bannerman’s poems with the lofty ambitions of Blake and his “belief that literature can better the world by transforming human thought and spirit through language” (Ruppert 785). In a recent article, Timothy Ruppert has referred to Bannerman as “a rightful heir to an important British legacy of poetic vision and prophecy, an inheritance bequeathed by Chaucer, Shakespeare and John Milton” (784). Such comparisons may appear grandiose, but Ruppert’s estimation of the visionary aspect of Bannerman’s poetry is by no means unwarranted or exaggerated. The sheer intensity of her vision could partially account for the reasons her poetry has been condemned to obscurity; as Adriana Craciun has observed, “perhaps it was not in spite but because of Bannerman’s poetry’s strength and splendour that it has all but disappeared” (Fatal 182). The inaccessibility of her poetry was already recognized by those closest to Bannerman when she was still alive. In a letter addressed to the renowned antiquarian and editor Thomas Percy, Bannerman’s friend and patron Robert Anderson notes that “[h]er literary powers, eminent as they are, do not seem, for any of her efforts hitherto, to be of ready or popular application. They are, perhaps, better qualified to acquire fame than profit” (Anderson 140).

Unfortunately, Bannerman’s poetry earned her neither fame nor profit. Likening her once again to the misunderstood genius of Blake, Elfenbein observes that “a sense of loneliness

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1 Letter XLIV, 24 January 1804.
pervades the work of Blake and Bannerman, a feeling that they are writing in a vacuum for an
audience that will probably not be receptive. As would-be-geniuses, they build their own failure
into their poetry” (Romantic 135). As with countless examples of confrontational or difficult
works of art throughout history, a considerable amount of time must often pass before an artist’s
genius can be fully recognized. Although a prolific painter, poet, and engraver, Blake was
arguably just as obscure in his lifetime as Bannerman, yet his work was rescued by the Pre-
Raphaelites in the middle of the nineteenth century, debated and lauded by critics such as
Northrop Frye and Harold Bloom throughout the next century, and he is now considered a
preeminent figure of British Romanticism. The generations of readers and critics responsible for
shaping literary history were ultimately far kinder to the authors of the Lyrical Ballads and Songs
of Innocence and Experience than to the author of Tales of Superstition and Chivalry.

Like many women writers of the Romantic period, Bannerman was a casualty of
formalist canon makers such as Frye and Bloom because they privileged the works of Blake,
Wordsworth, Coleridge, Byron, Shelley, and Keats over their female counterparts. Scholars have
since learned that Joanna Baillie and Felicia Hemans were very popular throughout the first two
decades of the nineteenth century, and their works ranked alongside Byron and Scott in terms of
sales figures. But Bannerman’s publications never sold half as well as Baillie’s or Hemans’
works, so she never attained the same level of public recognition in her lifetime. As a result, it
was much easier to erase her from literary history.

Yet another explanation for Bannerman’s absence from the literary canon is the lack of
scandal or controversy in her life. The more infamous reputations of Mary Robinson, Lord
Byron, or Percy Bysshe Shelley made it difficult for any poet – let alone one as commercially
unsuccessful as Bannerman – to find their way into the public consciousness. Unlike Thomas Chatterton or John Keats, Bannerman’s life was not cut tragically short before she reached her creative potential. Instead she was forced to give up writing out of financial necessity and faded into the background, which prevented any romanticized posthumous success stories from securing her even a peripheral place in the literary canon. The supernatural and Gothic elements throughout Tales of Superstition and Chivalry aligned her with the work of Matthew Lewis, which in turn predisposed some critics to adopt a skeptical and dismissive attitude toward her second volume of poetry, but not enough ire was raised to create a memorable public scandal.

Finally, while many of her contemporaries enjoyed an academic renaissance in the late 1980s when Romantic scholars rediscovered the works of Smith, Baillie, Barbauld, Robinson, and Hemans, Bannerman’s work did not elicit any critical investigation beyond two journal articles by Andrew Elfenbein and Diane Hoeveler in the late 1990s, which were followed by a chapter in Adriana Craciun’s book Fatal Women of Romanticism in 2003. In the last fifteen years, Bannerman’s work has been the primary focus of less than a dozen academic publications.

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2 Mary Robinson (c.1757-1800) first appeared on the British social scene as an actress, who was embroiled in a highly publicized affair with the Prince of Wales. Her reputation expanded the readership of the various novels and poems she published throughout her lifetime. The notorious exploits of Lord Byron (1788-1824) and Percy Shelley (1792-1822) have been more widely documented. Byron developed a reputation as a voracious womanizer, risked indecency charges by appearing in public with his mistress disguised as a pageboy, and did very little in terms of discouraging readers from likening him to the brooding heroes of his narrative poems. Byron’s notoriety reached its zenith when rumors of an incestuous relationship with his half-sister Augusta began to circulate, and he left England in 1816 never to return. Shelley was expelled from Oxford after publishing a pamphlet entitled “The Necessity of Atheism,” espoused radical notions of free-love, abandoned his first wife and later invited her to cohabit with his mistress, seduced William Godwin’s daughter Mary and then persuaded her stepsister Claire Clairmont to run away with them to France – all before the age of twenty-five.

3 See the periodical reviews of Tales of Superstition and Chivalry reprinted in Appendix B.

As a result of these various factors working against her, Bannerman’s contributions to Romanticism and Gothic literature have remained woefully under-represented for over two hundred years.

II. Life, Biography, and Background

Very little information about Anne Bannerman’s personal life is available. Andrew Elfenbein published the first modern academic article on Bannerman for *ELH* in 1996 and uncovered some important details concerning Bannerman’s biography. Expanding on Elfenbein’s research, Adriana Craciun’s aforementioned book, as well as her contribution to the 2004 essay anthology *Scotland and the Borders of Romanticism*, provide fuller accounts of Bannerman’s history. Yet several facts about Bannerman’s life remain shrouded in mystery. Shortly after her death in late 1829, her letters and other important papers were apparently destroyed by a Mrs. Walker, a friend of Lady Frances Beresford of Exeter, for whom Bannerman served as a governess after she abandoned her literary aspirations in 1807 (Craciun *Fatal* 158-59, n.9 272-73). Only a single document in Bannerman’s hand has survived (a letter addressed to the publisher Mr. Hood, 17 October 1804), which is currently held by the British Library (Craciun *Fatal* n.2 272). Consequently, a number of basic questions about Bannerman’s life have been incredibly difficult to answer.

While scholars know for certain that Bannerman died in Portobello on 29 September 1829, there has been some debate in regard to her exact date of birth. Craciun’s research for

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5 Bannerman’s death notice, which appeared in the January 1830 issue of *Blackwood’s Edinburgh Magazine*, has provided the specific date of September 29: “At Portobello, Miss Anne Bannerman, author of "Poems, chiefly Lyrical," [sic] “Tales of Superstition and Chivalry," and other ingenious and elegant performances” (135). Katie Lister has recently discovered a burial record for Bannerman that indicates she “was interred at St. Johns, Edinburgh, in the Erskine’s family tomb” (169). This is likely a reference to the family of William Eskine of Edinburgh, who was a mutual friend of John Leyden and Bannerman.
Fatal Women of Romanticism uncovered a “parish registry entry for Anne Bannerman, 31 October 1765, Edinburgh,” and she concludes that Bannerman was “the daughter of William Bannerman and Isobel Dick” (272 n.2). When reviewing these records, Craciun also discovered that William Bannerman’s profession was listed as “running stationer,” which she describes as "a street merchant authorized to sell and sing broadside ballads” (Fatal 157). Craciun suggested that Bannerman’s father’s profession could account for the poet’s early exposure to and “familiarity with the ballad tradition” (Fatal 157). If this information is accurate, then Bannerman would have been thirty-four years old when Poems was published in the spring of 1800, and forty-two when Poems, A New Edition was published in 1807. But these facts do not entirely correspond with references to Bannerman’s age in the letters of her contemporaries, particularly those of Robert Anderson, whose correspondence has proven to be the best source of information regarding Bannerman’s life and career.

In his examination of Anderson’s letters, Andrew Elfenbein notes that Bannerman “is frequently referred to as a young woman” (951 n.1). In a letter from Anderson to the Irish scholar Joseph Cooper Walker dated 3 May 1800, Bannerman is described as “scarcely out of her teens” (Elfenbein 951 n.1; Makala 26).6 Another letter from Anderson addressed to Dr. James Currie from 28 June 1800 praises Bannerman for the “splendour & energy” of her work and proclaims that “so opulent a mind at such an age is a phenomenon” (qtd in Craciun Fatal 157-58).7 It is unlikely that Anderson would be so impressed with Bannerman’s abilities if she were a more mature woman in her mid-thirties. Her age would likely not be worth mentioning unless she was uncharacteristically young (or old). But as late as January 1804, Anderson – then

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6 According to Maria Edmundson Makala, this letter is held by the Edinburgh University Library, Anderson Letters, MS La.II.598 (177 n.14). Elfenbein also makes note of this reference, but instead cites Walker’s response to Anderson, dated 15 March 15 1800 (951 n.1).

7 Craciun notes that this letter is held by the Mitchell Library (Fatal 272 n.4).
fifty-four years old himself—refers to Bannerman in a letter to Thomas Percy as his “young friend” (Anderson 140). Since the bulk of Anderson’s comments seem to indicate that Bannerman was a precocious youth rather than a late-blooming talent, Elfenbein’s estimation that she was born sometime around 1780 rather than 1765 appears to be more accurate (951 n.1).

Several comments about Bannerman in Anderson’s correspondence reveal that she suffered from poor health and experienced extended periods of poverty throughout her life. If Bannerman was born in 1765, then she would have been a month shy of sixty-five at the time of her death in 1829. It is doubtful that someone in Bannerman’s circumstances would have lived to be sixty-four years of age in the early nineteenth-century. Perhaps this is why the poet Anne Grant expressed surprise in a letter from 1830 that she had “outlive[d]” Bannerman, when she herself had just turned seventy-five years old (148).\(^8\) Grant’s comments are more appropriate if we consider that she had outlived a much younger woman. If Bannerman was born closer to 1780, then she would have been around forty-nine or fifty when Grant made this remark.

The various discrepancies between references to Bannerman’s age in Anderson’s correspondence and the 1765 birth date provided by Adriana Craciun have prompted Katie Lister to revisit the Scottish church registries and genealogy records with the hope of “drawing the issue [of Bannerman’s birth date] to a close” (168). Lister’s research strongly suggests that the Anne Bannerman mentioned in the parish registry cited by Craciun was not the same woman that published *Poems or Tales of Superstition and Chivalry*.\(^9\) According to Lister, the Anne

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\(^8\) “Among others whom I little thought to outlive are General Stewart of Garth, my worthy and most primitive and original friend, Mrs. Hall, and Miss Bannerman” (148). See Grant’s letter to Miss Mercer from March 17, 1830 in Appendix B. The General referenced in this letter by Grant – David Stewart – was born in 1772 and was fifty-seven when he died in 1829; therefore, he was another younger friend whom the elder Grant expected would live much longer than her.

\(^9\) The various records that Lister discusses in her essay can be accessed (for a small registration fee) at the following website: http://www.scotlandspeople.gov.uk (Lister 183). It is worth noting that these records were
Bannerman born in 1765 had a brother named William, as well as a younger sister named Agnes, who was born 19 August 1768 (168). While there are specific references to the deaths of Bannerman’s mother and brother in Robert Anderson’s correspondence, there are no references to a sister. In fact, Anderson was especially anxious for Bannerman because she did not appear to have any living relatives besides her mother or brother. In a letter to Thomas Percy, Anderson admits, “my fears rise to a very painful height” on account of “her entire want of relations, for I do not know that she ever saw one who is entitled to that name” (Anderson 140, 163; Lister 168). There are no references to Bannerman’s father in any of Anderson’s letters, nor is her mother ever mentioned by name. Therefore, we cannot verify whether Bannerman’s mother’s name was in fact Isobel, nor can we conclude that her father’s name was William.

Lister’s research provides additional evidence that the Isobel Bannerman mentioned in the Edinburgh registry was not the poet Anne Bannerman’s mother. William Bannerman and Isobel Dick “both signed their marriage certificate with a cross rather than a signature. Whilst this does not definitively prove that the couple was illiterate, it does cast further doubt on them being the parents of the highly literate Anne Bannerman” (Lister 168-69). Lister also tracked down a burial record “in the parish log of Canongate, Edinburgh” from December of 1803, which reveals that a “‘Mrs. Bannerman’ was buried east of a ‘Col. Fraser’” (169). We can conclude that this record is definitely that of the poet’s mother, for the date is corroborated by references to Bannerman’s mother’s death in Robert Anderson’s letters. Lister notes that “at this time it was not compulsory to record a death in Scotland, let alone a burial, and as there was

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10 While it is possible that Agnes Bannerman may have died at a very young age and that her elder sister would not have remembered her, Lister was unable to find any death records for an Agnes Bannerman prior to 1804 (the year of Bannerman’s mother’s death, as indicated by Anderson’s letters) (Lister 168). So it is more likely that the poet never had a sister, and that she is not the same Anne Bannerman mentioned in this registry entry.
usually a fee for doing so the record of Mrs. Bannerman’s burial suggests she was a woman of some standing” (Lister 169). Therefore, it is highly unlikely that Bannerman’s mother was the Isobel Bannerman mentioned in the initial parish registry cited by Adriana Craciun: “as the wife of a tradesmen it would be highly unlikely that this Mrs. Bannerman would have had her burial recorded at all” (Lister 169). By extension, it is also unlikely that the ballad merchant and singer William Bannerman was the poet’s father, despite the rather intriguing connection between his profession and the publication of her own original ballads. Lister’s findings ultimately reveal that the poet cannot be the same Anne Bannerman that was born in 1765, and she reiterates the conclusion reached by Andrew Elfenbein in his 1996 essay that Bannerman was born sometime closer to 1780 (169).

The evidence recently brought forward by Katie Lister may help to resolve the question of Bannerman’s date of birth, but numerous questions about her life remain. While it is possible that additional archival documents pertaining to Bannerman’s background could be discovered in the future, the correspondence of Robert Anderson remains the best source for biographical information on her. As the editor of the *Edinburgh Magazine*, Anderson was a key figure in Edinburgh’s literary circle. Throughout the eighteenth century, the city of Edinburgh rose to prominence as “the cultural capital of Britain,” surpassing both London and Paris in terms of the number of universities it housed and the number of active printing presses and publishing companies stationed there (Benchimol 84). Periodicals such as the *Edinburgh Review*, *Blackwood’s Magazine*, as well as Anderson’s *Edinburgh Magazine* “came to dominate not only Scottish but British critical debates in the Romantic era” (Pittock *Edinburgh* 3).

Anderson spent several years preparing *The Works of the British Poets, with Prefaces Biographical and Critical*, which amounted to a total of fourteen volumes between 1792 and
1807. He was well acquainted with a coterie of important writers and poets, including Thomas Percy, Thomas Campbell, and Walter Scott (Anderson xv). But Anderson was especially concerned with “aiding and abetting authorship” by fostering new talent, and to “repay the consolation I find in literature by something of my own, something that is sound and faithful, something that may be classed among the useful, though not brilliant, labours of my contemporaries” (Anderson xiv). Bannerman was one of the many fledgling authors Anderson supported, for he published a few of her earlier poems under pseudonyms in the Edinburgh Magazine. His “connections opened doors for her to publish several poems in Richard Davenport’s Poetical Register and to contribute translations to the works of Joseph Cooper Walker, an Irish antiquarian who wrote an Irish and Italian literary history” (Elfenbein 936).

Anderson’s letters reveal that he was incredibly supportive of Bannerman, and that he used his wide-ranging connections to assist in the publication of her poetry and continued to do so until the prospects of a successful literary career were entirely exhausted. Anderson’s letters highlight the difficulties Bannerman faced once her mother – her primary “means of subsistence” – died in December of 1803 (Anderson 140). In a letter to Thomas Percy, Anderson confides the “extent of [his] anxiety about poor Miss Bannerman” and describes how the sudden reversal of fortune and the ensuing financial difficulties affected the poet:

Her health is at all times so uncertain and so ill-prepared to stand such a shock as it has been exposed to, that my fears are great; but when to her uncertain health I add the

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11 Two sonnets appeared in the February 1798 issue of the Edinburgh Magazine under the pseudonym Augusta. Both poems were eventually revised and republished in the 1800 edition of Poems as Sonnet VII (“Soft thro’ the woodland sighs the summer gale”) and Sonnet V (“To The Owl”) respectively. The poems Bannerman published in the Poetical Register include “Exile,” “Sonnet at the Sepulchre of Petrarch,” “The Nereid,” “The Fall of Switzerland,” and two sonnets (“Easter” and “Good Friday”). All of these poems were collected in Poems, A New Edition in 1807.

feverish inability of her mind, heightened by constitutional causes, — her total inability, from health and inclination, to pursue the ordinary means by which those of her sex are usually enabled to secure a livelihood, — her entire want of relations, for I do not know that she ever saw one who is entitled to that name, — I will acknowledge that my fears rise to a painful height. (Anderson 140).

Anderson’s letter reveals that Bannerman suffered from persistent health problems, but it also alludes to other personal details about her life. Her poor constitution – coupled with an implied quality of either stubbornness or, interestingly, a personal “inclination” – could partially account for why she never married, since marriage was most likely what Anderson meant when he referred to “the ordinary means by which those of her sex are usually enabled to secure a livelihood.”

Elfenbein’s study of Bannerman has made much of her status as a single woman. The fact that she was unmarried, and that “neither Anderson nor any of his circle hinted at the obvious answer to her financial woes,” provides circumstantial evidence that Bannerman may have been a lesbian (Elfenbein 938). Although Elfenbein is struck by the fact that Bannerman “is never mentioned in any record [he has] seen as being romantically involved with a man,” he is responsible and respectful enough of the poet’s privacy to admit that “the ‘fact’ of her sexuality cannot be proved” (937, 938).13

Shortly after Elfenbein’s essay was published, however, Craciun unearthed evidence of a possible (albeit failed) romantic attachment between Bannerman and the Scottish poet John

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13 Diane Hoeveler and Adriana Craciun have both taken Elfenbein to task for his speculations concerning Bannerman’s sexuality (See Hoeveler 101 and Craciun Fatal 278 n.59). Yet Elfenbein is clearly aware of the speculative nature of his argument, and his study remains valuable for the biographical information provided by his research. Furthermore, Elfenbein’s chief argument is not entirely predicated on the notion that Bannerman was homosexual; rather, his study is an archetypically ‘queer’ reading that examines how the female speakers and characters in Bannerman’s poetry deviate from conventional notions of sexuality and defy the stereotypical roles women were expected to play in the early nineteenth-century.
Leyden (1775-1811). Due to the scarcity of information about this particular aspect of Bannerman’s private life, I have taken the liberty of including Craciun’s helpful summary and reproduction of Leyden’s comments in their entirety:

In 1803, on the eve of his departure from Edinburgh on his way to India, Leyden had a disturbing confrontation with Bannerman that suggests he and Bannerman had been quite close, perhaps romantically; he confided to their mutual friend William Erskine\(^{14}\) that Bannerman’s “extreme irritability…for considerable times before my departure…rendered it quite impossible for me to keep any terms with her. Her character and temper is in some instances strangely unaccountable; but a few months before my departure, I was almost convinced (at least she strenuously attempted to convince me) that she had accomplished a quarrel…between us. As I could not forgive her for this, I saw her no more till the night of my departure for London…When I saw you [Erskine] my mind was a perfect vortex, and the ideas I had long cherished deep in my soul were too dear to me even to subject them to discussion. I forgot every unpleasant idea & ever attempted to retain only the recollection of Miss. B’s good qualities. My whole frame was indeed in a state of great exhaustion.” (\textit{Fatal} 279 n. 71)\(^{15}\)

Leyden’s confession to his friend Erskine may not definitively prove the particulars of Bannerman’s sexuality, but there is a strong implication of a potential romance with Leyden. Additionally, Leyden’s comments echo Anderson’s frustration with Bannerman’s seemingly unpredictable and surly temperament. We can infer from Leyden – coupled with additional comments made by Anderson as well as his close associate Thomas Park – that men found her

\(^{14}\) William Erskine (1773-1852) was a Scottish orientalist and historian from Edinburgh. He spent a considerable amount of time in Bombay, India and wrote on the country’s history.

\(^{15}\) Craciun’s research indicates that Leyden’s letter was dated 15 Sept. 1804, and is currently held at the National Library of Scotland (NLS MS 971).
difficult to manage or control. Park complained of Bannerman’s “loftiness of feeling, which…is too Chattertonian to enhance [his] respect or admiration” (qtd in Elfenbein 939). A particularly exasperated Anderson made a similar complaint about Bannerman to Percy: “her mind is so lofty and unaccommodating that it is exceedingly difficult, at all times, to do her any reasonable service” (Anderson 170). These comments reveal that even those who hoped to help her, found her to be difficult at times. Such a wild spirit could not be easily tamed and perhaps her friends and acquaintances recognized that such a temperament was ill-suited for marriage.

Another explanation for Bannerman’s “unsuitability for the marriage market may have arisen partly from physical disability” (Elfenbein Romantic 132). Elfenbein’s book points to a few incredibly disparaging comments about Bannerman’s physical appearance, which were made by Reverend Sydney Smith (1771-1845) in a letter addressed to the Scottish judge and literary critic Francis Jeffrey (1773-1850).¹⁶ Likely as a favor to Anderson, Jeffrey asked Smith on two occasions to help Bannerman by agreeing to purchase a subscription of her poems. In the first instance, Smith replies: “I will do for Anne Bannerman what I can, tho’ that I am afraid will be very little, as I have a moral antipathy to soliciting subscriptions” (104).¹⁷ In his subsequent response to Jeffrey, Smith admits, “I am afraid I shall not be able to do much for yr friend Miss Bannerman. I am so very modest a beggar even for myself that I find an indescribable difficulty in exercising the art of mendicant for others: but I will do my best” (105).¹⁸

Later that year, Smith mentions Bannerman to Jeffrey, and, although likely in jest, he suggests a potential governess position for her. Admittedly, Smith’s letters were never meant for

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¹⁶ Smith and Jeffrey co-founded the *Edinburgh Review* in October of 1802.

¹⁷ Letter 100. June 12, 1805 (Smith 104-05).

¹⁸ Letter 101. July 4, 1805 (Smith 105-06).
the public eye, but readers should keep in mind that the following comments originate from an Anglican preacher:

Tell me upon your solemn honor and word whether you think that crooked poetess whose subscription papers you sent to me would do for a governess to Sr. James McIntosh’s children at Bombay. Her ugliness and deformity are advantages as they would prevent her from marrying. Can she read without Scotch accent? Is she good tempered? Pray let Horner see her if you think there is any probability she will do: but let him see her under the influence of yr presence, or he will impregnate her. There is a fecundity in his very look; his smiles are seminal. (109) 22

However arrogant, cruel, or facetious Smith’s remarks may be, they nevertheless substantiate certain facts regarding Bannerman’s health, and the existence of a physical deformity of some kind, which would have prejudiced many potential suitors against her (except, of course, Francis Horner, apparently).

Whether Anne Bannerman was a lesbian, a bisexual, a spurned and unattractive heterosexual spinster, or simply a woman with enough self-respect and desire for autonomy that she avoided subjecting herself to an unhappy attachment, we may never know. However, it is eminently possible to appreciate, comprehend, and enjoy her poetry without knowing the particulars of its creator’s sexuality or private life. What we do know for certain is that Robert

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19 James Mackintosh (1765-1832) was a Scottish judge, lawyer, professor, and Whig.

20 Although Smith is expressing a typically English prejudice against the Scotch for their accents, his suggestion that Bannerman may have possessed a thick Scottish brogue provides an intriguing bit of biographical detail.

21 Francis Horner (1778-1817). Another Scottish lawyer and Whig. With Smith and Jeffrey, Horner was also one of the founders of the Edinburgh Review.

22 Letter 104. October 29, 1805 (Smith 108-110).
Anderson was deeply concerned about Bannerman’s future and his letters reveal his tireless efforts to assist her. In the aforementioned letter to Thomas Percy, Anderson states:

The Almighty regards with an equal eye all the works of his hand, but I cannot conceive what is to become of my young friend. I think that, from her own inability to earn a livelihood, her total want of relations, and her great merits, the public money might be worse applied than in affording her a small annuity. (140)

Percy’s reply to Anderson reveals that he did not turn a blind eye to Bannerman’s predicament: “I am much interested in the dreadful Scenes, which you describe and if any Subscription for Miss Bannerman could be proposed I will gladly promote it” (Anderson 142).²³ Perhaps as a sign of good faith, Percy forwarded a copy of his Reliques of Ancient English Poetry through Anderson to present to Bannerman as a gift.²⁴

Strangely, in a different letter to Thomas Percy dated 15 September of 1804,²⁵ Anderson reiterates his concerns for Bannerman’s welfare, and repeats the specific details nearly verbatim from the letter he sent earlier that year. The fact that Anderson makes the same plea to Percy twice reveals how preoccupied he was with Bannerman’s situation. It is clear that Anderson expressed his anxieties about Bannerman’s circumstances to several of his acquaintances and hoped to rally as many of them to act on her behalf as possible. In this case, he either forgot that he already informed Percy about her situation, or he deliberately repeated himself in order to solicit additional support from the older and influential editor.

²³ Letter XLV, dated 31 January 1804 (Anderson 141-43).
²⁴ Letter XLIX, dated May 26, 1804; Anderson acknowledged receipt of the volume on Bannerman’s behalf in Letter L, dated 26 July 1804 (Anderson 151-57).
²⁵ Letter LII (Anderson 159-164).
By the autumn of 1804, Bannerman’s situation had gone from bad to worse. Anderson informed Percy that in addition to the death of “her only parent,” Bannerman also “very lately [lost] her only brother in Jamaica,” which would place his death sometime in the late summer of 1804 (163). In this same letter, Anderson outlines his efforts to secure Bannerman an annuity:

I mentioned her case to Professor Richardson the confidential friend and adviser of the Duke of Montrose, a Cabinet Minister, who readily undertook to co-operate in any application that might be made to Government. The Duke is now at Buchanan House, and other channels are open, but no step has yet been taken in the business. Much do I wish, but little can I hope that your Lordship could bestow a few minutes reflection on the subject, and favour me with your opinion and advice. Perhaps an edition of her Poems by subscription might be brought forward at this time, with some success. (163)

Here, Anderson makes the first reference in his correspondence with Percy to a plan to compile what would eventually become Poems, A New Edition. The fact that the collection did not appear for nearly three more years adds further credence to claims made by Anderson elsewhere that Bannerman initially rejected the idea of publishing her poems by subscription. Percy, however, supported the idea of the publication, and his reply to Anderson on this occasion is more proactive and generous:

I sincerely grieve for the situation of Miss Bannerman and you may command my Subscription of 10 Guineas to be applied to her use in any shape you think proper and if

26 According to Craciun’s research, however, Bannerman’s brother was “a surgeon with the East India Company, who drowned off the coast of Africa” (Fatal 157). Jamaica is due west off the eastern coast of North Africa.

27 William Richardson (1743-1814), Scottish literary scholar and professor at the University of Glasgow.

28 James Graham, 3rd Duke of Montrose (1755-1836).

29 W.E.K. Anderson notes that Buchanan House was “near Professor Richardson’s home at Croy,” which was about “fifteen miles outside from Glasgow towards the Highlands” (n. 13 163; n. 2 153).
you devote the whole or any part of the present Draft to or for her I will make you a similar Remittance as soon as you inform me that this has come safe but in my present secluded Situation and Privation of Pen and Ink I fear I cannot solicit Literary Subscriptions from others (165).

Anderson’s letters to Percy make no further references to the Duke of Montrose, so it is doubtful that he was able to assist Bannerman in any significant way. For the rest of 1805, Anderson continued to petition his friends and colleagues for subscriptions to Bannerman’s poems and made additional attempts to secure her a financial annuity. Joseph Cooper Walker persuaded Lady Charlotte Rawdon to take up Bannerman’s cause, and the group next appealed to Henry Dundas, Lord Melville (1742-1811), but to no avail. Elfenbein speculates that Bannerman’s connection with Anderson’s circle of Whigs and Scotch liberals “could not have endeared her to the staunchly Tory Dundas” (937). The only good news for Bannerman came when Thomas Park managed to acquire a £20 award for her from the Royal Literary Fund (Craciun Fatal 158).

By the end of June 1806, Bannerman began the process of preparing Poems, A New Edition, with the plan to charge a guinea per subscription. Anderson admits that “[s]he was for some time averse to it; but it is now going on. She has about 250 names. From particular friends she takes, for her present subsistence, the price at subscription, reserving £200 for the expense of

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30 Lady Charlotte Adelaide Constantia Rawdon (1769-1834) was the daughter of Sir John Rawdon, first Earl of Moira and an Irish peer. She was an acquaintance of Walter Scott as well as Maria Edgeworth. Bannerman dedicated Poems, A New Edition to Lady Rawdon.

31 The Royal Literary Fund was founded in 1790 by the dissenting Welsh Reverend David Williams (1738-1816). The RLF offered financial assistance to several of Bannerman’s contemporaries, including Coleridge, James Hogg, Thomas Hood, Thomas Love Peacock, and Leigh Hunt (Smith “A Short History”).

32 Letter LXXIV, 28 June 1806 (Anderson 219-222).
printing” (221). At the close of this letter, Anderson takes the opportunity to ask Percy to send the £10 he promised for his subscription to Bannerman’s poems (221-22).³³

In a letter to Percy from March of the following year, Anderson prematurely announced that “Miss Bannerman’s poems are now under the hot press, and will be published next week,” and assured him that his “ten copies shall be forwarded to Belfast, in a package” (248).³⁴ The volume, however, was not actually printed until sometime in mid-July of 1807 (256).³⁵ Unfortunately, Poems, A New Edition was not the resolution to Bannerman’s economic woes that her friends had hoped it would be. The following month, Anderson updated Percy on Bannerman’s whereabouts and the failure of the subscription volume:

The interest you take in that accomplished Lady will excuse my mentioning here, that she is gone to Exeter,³⁶ as Governess to Lady Frances Beresford’s³⁷ daughter; a respectable and useful situation, which, in the judgment of all her friends, reflects more credit on her than all her poetry can do. She is now to earn her livelihood like other females in her circumstances, by the exercise of her own talents, to which she has become reconciled by the failure of every other plan for her comfortable provision. The situation was procured for her, through the intervention of a friend of mine in London in a very obliging and flattering manner. The family of Lady Frances is, I doubt not, well known to your Lordship (Anderson 256-57).

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³³ Letter LXXVII, 14 August 1806: Anderson acknowledges receipt of Percy’s subscription fee (Anderson 228).
³⁴ Letter LXXXVIII, March 11 1807 (Anderson 246-48).
³⁶ Located in the south west of England, on the River Exe.
³⁷ Lady Frances Arabella Beresford (née Leeson) (1771-1840). Lady Beresford’s only daughter was named Elizabeth, and was born between 1792 and 1797.
While there are traces of disappointment in Anderson’s comments to Percy, Elfenbein detects a stronger feeling of “relief that she would write no more” (939). It is clear that as Bannerman’s troubles began to escalate, Anderson’s encouragement of her literary pursuits began to wane. One statement in particular seems to contradict his initial encouragement of Bannerman to pursue her poetic talents: “my ideas of moral duty have inclined me, from the beginning, to give the preference to the scheme of tuition as the means of living a livelihood by the diligent & honourable exertions of her own talents and personal industry” (Craciun Fatal 158). In this same letter, Anderson confessed to Joseph Cooper Walker that since Bannerman was “born to the prospects of no pecuniary provision,” her literary ambitions were the consequence “of her receiving an education above her condition” (Craciun Fatal 158).38

In his reply to Anderson’s letter, Percy “rejoices that Miss Bannerman has obtained so good an Establishment through the Doct’s kind application, but shall be perfectly satisfied with four Copies of her Poems, if the remaining Six can be disposed for her benefit” (Anderson 259).39 After this exchange between Percy and Anderson, references to Bannerman in Anderson’s correspondence decrease dramatically. As a result, information about this period of Bannerman’s life is incredibly scarce. A few passing references, however, indicate that she enjoyed at least a temporary period of modest comfort and security. She appears to have remained in Exeter and served as the Beresford family’s governess for three years, “earning £60 per annum” (Craciun Fatal 158).40 Elfenbein concludes that “she returned to

38 Anderson to J. Cooper Walker, 4 December 1805 [Edinburgh University MS La II 598] (Craciun Fatal 272 n.6).

39 Letter XCII, August 12, 1807 (Anderson 259-261)

40 There are a few simple explanations for the relatively short duration of Bannerman’s time in Exeter. I have been unable to verify Elizabeth Beresford’s age, but her eldest brother was born in 1792, while her youngest brother was born in 1797. Therefore, Elizabeth was somewhere between the age of 11 and 14 when Bannerman arrived as a governess in 1807. It is quite possible that Elizabeth had outgrown the need of a governess by 1810.
Edinburgh at least by 1810 and lived in the home of a Mr. Hope, perhaps also as a governess” and possibly with the recommendation of Lady Beresford (Elfenbein 937, 955 n.55).41 Later that spring, Bannerman visited Thomas Park and his family, prompting him to express to Anderson his “sincere gratification to hear her establishment [with Mr. Hope] is so comfortable. May her strengthened health enable her to receive every enjoyment from it” (Craciun Fatal n.6 272).42

Both Elfenbein and Craciun confirm that after John Leyden’s death in 1811, Bannerman assisted his brother Robert by returning John’s correspondence, “which she had saved from almost certain destruction after Leyden’s executor had mysteriously abandoned the manuscripts” (Craciun Fatal 280 n.71).43 Elfenbein notes that neither Leyden’s biographer James Morton “nor anyone else who wrote on Leyden ever thanked her publicly” (937).

It appears unlikely that Bannerman continued to write poetry after 1807. In February of 1815, Richard Davenport, the editor of the Poetical Register, wrote to Anderson and inquired after new poems from Bannerman, but Anderson insisted rather tersely “that it would be useless to solicit her for original poetry” (Elfenbein 937).44 There is, however, a poem attributed to “Miss Bannerman” in The Casket, A Miscellany Consisting of Unpublished Poems, which was published by John Murray in 1829.45 The poem did not appear in either of Bannerman’s first two

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41 Thomas Park to Anderson. 24 January 1811. Elfenbein provides the following archival information: ADV. MS. 22.4.10, f. 257

42 Craciun provides the following archival information: NLS MS. 22.4.10.

43 Robert Leyden to Anne Bannerman, 7 March 1818. Craciun provides the following archival information: NLS MS 3391 f.104.

44 Elfenbein provides the following archival information: ADV. MS. 22.4.12, f.55.

45 See Appendix A for the complete text of this poem.
volumes, nor was it collected in *Poems, A New Edition*. If it is indeed a poem by Bannerman, it is the only poem she published after 1807. The poem, which is written from the perspective of a parent mourning the death of a child, is stylistically uncharacteristic of Bannerman in a few minor ways. The gloomy subject matter is of course familiar, and the sorrowful tone is in keeping with other reflections on death in her work. But the verses contain more syllables per line than any of Bannerman’s poems. It is possible that Bannerman was trying out a new style or approach with her versification. But the poem also features rather simple rhyming couplets, when Bannerman usually alternated the rhymes in her ballads and utilized more complex rhyming patterns for her narrative poems.

From a biographical perspective, the fact that Bannerman never had any children also calls her authorship of the poem into question. It is possible that Bannerman wrote the poem on behalf of a friend or acquaintance, and she challenged herself to adopt this unfamiliar perspective to capture the complex emotions of someone that had lost a child. In this respect, the poem is comparable to the cycle of sonnets she wrote from the perspective of Goethe’s Werther in her first volume of poems in 1800. In any event, there is no way to date the poem, so it could have been written a number of years after the materials in *Poems, A New Edition*. Neither Murray nor any of the other editors responsible for compiling the poems in *The Casket* explains how the poem came into their possession, nor do they explain their rationale for assigning its authorship to Bannerman. The poem is one of the many mysteries from this poorly documented period of the author’s life.

The most valuable glimpse into Bannerman’s later life is afforded by the correspondence of the Scottish writer Anne Macvicar Grant, author of the long poem *Eighteen Hundred and Thirteen*, as well as a fascinating collection of *Essays on the Superstitions of the Highlanders of*
Scotland. Grant’s letters reveal that Bannerman spent her final years as “a feeble invalid at Portobello,” a fashionable bathing resort located three miles east of Edinburgh, and that she visited Grant for a period of time in September of 1824 (42-43). Grant comments on Bannerman’s physical condition, noting that despite “external decay, her shattered frame is illuminated by a mind bright with genius, and rich in stores of intelligence” (43). Whatever physical ailments afflicted Bannerman when she was most active in Anderson’s literary circle had significantly worsened over the ensuing decades. Yet Grant’s descriptions of Bannerman portray her to be a lively and impressive conversationalist despite her troubled health:

Her style of conversation is so pure, her train of thinking so elevated, her piety so scriptural, so supporting: you see her setting in mild brightness, the too fervid energy of her mind now softened down by the sober certainty of her distinct, yet humble views of the futurity which seems glowing before her. But Miss Bannerman, to do her justice, with all her lights and shades (increasing lights and diminishing shades), would require a letter for the sole purpose of giving you some idea of what she is. I shall, therefore, only tell you that her intercourse with me provided by no means a tête-à-tête, for we had many visitors, all, or for the most part, tourists. (43)

Grant’s snapshot of Bannerman interestingly makes note of “her piety,” a characteristic that is never emphasized in earlier references to Bannerman by Anderson or others, and is not entirely supported by the bulk of her poetry (the sonnets on “Good Friday” and “Easter” serving as two exceptions). It was not uncommon, however, for individuals who possessed decidedly liberal or radical views on religion during their youth to develop more conservative notions of faith as they grow older and, presumably, are closer to death.46 Grant intimates that Bannerman was a

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46 Wordsworth’s shift toward conservatism after the French Revolution is well-documented, and inspired Percy Shelley’s disillusioned poem “To Wordsworth” in 1816. Mary Shelley is another noteworthy example of this
dynamic and multifaceted individual, and that she made a deep and lasting impression on her in a relatively short span of time.

Unfortunately, Grant’s acquaintance with Bannerman was short-lived, for their friendship was cut short by Bannerman’s death in September of 1829. Grant’s correspondence reveals that she was deeply affected by the poet’s death. In a letter from February of 1830, she writes: “Miss Bannerman’s departure was a blow much felt: her integrity and sound principle commanded my esteem, her intelligence amused, and her eloquence delighted me, and her little irritations never disturbed me on her own account” (143). Grant’s reference to Bannerman’s “little irritations” could substantiate some of Anderson, Park, and Leyden’s implications concerning her temperament; however, Grant may be referring more specifically to physical symptoms that resulted from Bannerman’s unspecified ailments. What Grant’s references to Bannerman repeatedly make clear, however, is that her conversational abilities and intellect remained sharp throughout her later years. In the same letter, Grant praises Bannerman for “all her high intellectual powers, valued, indeed revered, the sterling worth and humble piety of her whose whole life was one continued exercise in patience, forbearance, and charity in its most extensive sense” (144). Grant’s allusions to financial problems reveal that the struggles Bannerman faced throughout her years as a poet were known to Grant, and there is also a strong implication that her difficulties continued in the decades after she retired from writing poetry.

Grant continued to mourn Bannerman’s passing throughout the following month; in a letter to her friend Miss Mercer, Grant laments the recent losses of three “long attached and faithful friends [whose company] I daily want” (148). She fondly recalls the memory of Bannerman “with all her true piety, strong attachments, pure and fervent eloquence, high talents, phenomenon, for her changing attitudes on politics and religion influenced the 1831 revisions of *Frankenstein* thirteen years after it was first published.
and unbending, often unwelcome sincerity” (148). Grant offers a somewhat amusing glimpse into the character of Bannerman, whose “unwelcome sincerity” attests for a feisty, unaffected, and uncompromisingly honest woman despite the difficulties and disappointments she endured throughout her life.

A rather unique tribute to Bannerman can be found in a poem by the minor Irish poet William Preston, which makes allusions to scenes from *Tales of Superstition and Chivalry* as well as poems from the 1800 volume. Preston’s poem was published in *The Poetical Register and Repository of Fugitive Poetry for 1805* and was dedicated to Robert Anderson. The poem references the works of several authors that Anderson assisted or helped bring into print – including Thomas Campbell, Thomas Brown, and Mary Robinson – and devotes an entire stanza to Bannerman. As a poet, she is described in favorably hyperbolic and impressive terms – so much so that readers might assume she is one of Scotland’s most renowned poets. Preston’s verse reveals at least one biographical fact about Bannerman, which notes that she “hail[s] from winding Forth,” a river that flows through the heart of Scotland, on the outskirts of Edinburgh (63). Of Bannerman herself, Preston describes her as possessing both “female sweetness” and “manly worth,” which provides an early clue regarding her unconventional persona and suggests that those acquainted with her perceived both masculine and feminine traits in terms of how she conducted herself (64).

As Preston’s poem moves into direct references to Bannerman’s work, he alludes to both her political and supernatural poems. An illusion to “Verses on an Illumination for a Naval Victory” refers to her as “humanely wise,” with shrewd perceptive powers that enable her to see through “the dazzling things that lead the crowd astray” (68). He then emulates a recognizably

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47 Preston’s poem is printed in its entirety in *Appendix D*. 

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Gothic tone and imagines Bannerman – like Dante’s Virgil or Beatrice – leading the reader through the nightmarish landscapes of “The Prophetess of the Oracle of Seäm” and “The Mermaid” respectively:

Undaunted, now, she roams the wizard cave,
She scales the crag where deafening billows rave,
Or hears, at midnight hour, the mutter’d spell
Convok the shrouded dead, and forms of hell. (69-72)

Preston’s characterization of Bannerman as a fearless participant and witness to the terrors described in her poems is a delightfully post-modern meta commentary on the poet herself, which implies she is a strong, capable, and commanding woman. Preston recognizes Bannerman’s attempts to personify bewitching and powerful characters in poems like “The Mermaid,” as well as her efforts to act as a medium for victimized women in “The Dark Ladie.”

By playfully implying that Bannerman possesses the same occult powers she has attributed to the defiant heroines and imposing femmes fatales in her poetry, Preston reinforces Bannerman’s attempts to mythologize herself as a mysterious, formidable, and learned individual much older and wiser than her youth would suggest. Yet Preston also demonstrates an awareness of the ephemeral quality of Bannerman’s Gothic fantasies, for he concludes his tribute to her by acknowledging the personal and financial difficulties she faced:

If Heav’n will grant an idle poet’s prayer,
May Sorrow shun the gentle, good, and fair,
The web of Poetry be round thee cast,
To shield thee from Misfortune’s bitter blast. (73-76)
Preston’s poem provides evidence that Bannerman was respected and admired by other poets within Edinburgh’s literary scene, and that Anderson and Percy were not the only figures hoping for her success. However, the fact that Preston felt compelled to reference Bannerman’s practical struggles in an otherwise imaginative tribute suggests just how significant those obstacles were for her. By 1805, when Preston composed and published his poem, the prospects of Bannerman attaining literary success were even less likely than when Tales was first published two and half years earlier. His poem implies that the end of her career was in sight despite the efforts of her supporters.

III. Bannerman and Scottish Nationalism

Although Bannerman spent her life in Edinburgh, one peculiar aspect of her poetry is that it very rarely references Scotland or her Scottish heritage. When compared to other Scottish poets like Robert Burns or Walter Scott, Bannerman’s lack of national pride is somewhat anomalous. She does, however, make a conscientious effort to reference other cultures and traditions, most likely in an attempt to lend her poetry a more exotic and experienced air.

The correspondence of Robert Anderson and Thomas Park reveals that Bannerman was self-educated. While Anderson faulted Bannerman’s education for elevating the poet “above her condition” and fueling her doomed literary aspirations, her accomplishments are nevertheless impressive (Craciun Fatal 158). She taught herself Italian and French, which enabled her to translate the sonnets of Francesco Petrarch and Giovanni della Casa, and to produce one of the earliest – and possibly the only – English translations of Jean-Baptiste Rousseau’s ode “To the Nightingale.” She was incredibly well-read, for her work – and the scholarly notes she provides

48 I have been unable to locate any English translations of Rousseau’s ode, nor have I found an English edition of his collected or selected poems.
for all three volumes of her poetry – exhibits a wide range of knowledge, particularly in regard to the mythologies and customs of different cultures. As Annette Cafarelli explains, “one typical measure of the significance of a work of literature is its communication with monuments of the artistic past, whether voluntary or unawares, whether in imitation or in transgression” (84). Bannerman’s effort to foreground the extent of her learning in her poems is perhaps an attempt to legitimize the reputation of her work. Yet in order for her poetry to appeal to a wider audience, Bannerman may have felt it necessary to downplay her Scottish nationality. None of her poems are written in Scottish dialect, and the few direct references to Scotland are characterized by a considerable emotional distance and objectivity. Furthermore, when Tales of Superstition and Chivalry was first published in 1802, it contained two ballads that were inspired by Scottish legends; however, these two poems were omitted from Poems, A New Edition in 1807.

The defiant expressions of power and meditations on revenge that characterize Bannerman’s poetry distinguish her work from the sentimental productions of other popular female poets of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. But in terms of Bannerman’s nationality, she may have employed a more subtle strategy to distance herself from the provincial stereotypes associated with other Scottish poets. The reputation of Robert Burns was largely predicated on the notion that he was a self-educated anomaly, whose background and station in life made him an unlikely candidate for literary success. Corey E. Andrews argues that Burns’s humble Scottish origins were “a source of both power and weakness” for the poet, for he had to overcome the seeming discrepancy between his talent and background (3). As a result, Burns’s poems were not always taken seriously by influential and elitist English literary critics, who were already prejudiced against the Scottish for a myriad of political and historical reasons; they condemned his more risqué poems as immoral and dismissed his poems in dialect as
incomprehensible (Andrews 2-3). Many of Burns’s contemporaries attempted to dispel his reputation as a prodigy, or as Henry Mackenzie famously described him, a “Heaven-taught plowman” (Young 129). By drawing from a more diverse range of cultural traditions, Bannerman hoped to conceal her working-class status and humble Scottish origins by giving the impression that her poems were the product of a highly educated and cultured author. However, her continentally-inspired poems did not reach as a wide of an audience as she had hoped. Ironically, her more famous contemporary, Sir Walter Scott, rose to international prominence despite the unabashedly Scottish content of his poetry while Bannerman was consigned to literary oblivion.

It is important to reiterate that Bannerman had already published her first two volumes of poetry before Walter Scott published *The Minstrelsy of the Scottish Border* in 1802, and that his reputation and career as a poet was not solidified until the publication of his original narrative poems *The Lay of the Last Minstrel* in 1805 and *Marmion* in 1808. Although Scott had already tried his hand at composing new poems that emulated earlier ballad styles, he may not have served as a model for Bannerman to follow. In fact, it could be argued that Bannerman’s poetry paved the way for Scott, as *Tales of Superstition and Chivalry* was the first collection of poems entirely comprised of an author’s original and heavily-annotated ballads patterned after a so-called ancient style. Scott’s longer narrative poems – particularly *Marmion* with its depiction of oppressive convents and hypocritical nuns – aren’t very far removed from Bannerman’s ballads in terms of their subject matter. Bannerman’s “Prophecy of Merlin” reveals her knowledge of Arthurian legends and predates Scott’s *Lady of the Lake* by nearly eight years. Although Scott did not publicly comment on Bannerman until his essay on the ballad tradition in 1830, it is very likely that he was aware of her poems on account of his friendship with Robert Anderson.
Therefore, Scott had the privilege of observing the public’s reception of Bannerman’s poems, and was afforded the advantage of appropriating an approach and marketing strategy that differed from hers.

Like Bannerman, Scott began his career with a focus on ballads and translations, which eventually prompted him to compile *The Minstrelsy of the Scottish Border* collection. Prior to its publication, Scott translated a handful of supernatural German ballads for Matthew Gregory Lewis’s *Tales of Wonder* anthology between 1799 and 1801. Perhaps hoping to distinguish himself from Lewis, Scott included dozens of footnotes and an abundance of prefatory materials to emphasize the historical and anthropological significance of his ballad collection over the fantastical or Gothic elements. *The Minstrelsy* was well-received, yet “not all reviewers were impressed by the modern imitations” that Scott produced for the volume (“Minstrelsy,” par 6). Unlike Bannerman, who was perceived by reviewers as a mere clone or disciple of Lewis because of *Tales of Superstition and Chivalry*, Scott was careful to present himself more so as an editor rather than a creator of original ballads. Additionally, Scott contextualized the Gothic elements that appeared throughout *The Minstrelsy* as naïve products of a superstitious past. According to Michael Gamer, “Scott’s subsequent decision to write metrical romances on English and Scottish historical subjects completed his dissociation from contemporary practitioners of gothic while allowing him to continue exploring medieval and supernatural subject matter” (180). Therefore, Scott’s Gothic could be considered acceptable by critics as long as it was presented under the guise of history.

After *The Lay of the Last Minstrel* was published, Scott was praised in the *Critical Review* for his ability to transfer the “rich but unpolished ore” of ballad poetry into something more respectable and refined (239; “Lay,” par 4). The poem was not immune to criticism,
however, for Scott was subjected to accusations of obscurity from the *Literary Journal* and *Monthly Review*, the same complaint that critics frequently lodged against Bannerman’s *Tales*. Critics also frowned upon Scott’s use of the supernatural, claiming that “the goblin page was beneath the dignity of the poem” (“Lay,” par 4). While similar objections to Bannerman’s poems brought her career to a screeching halt, Scott’s *Lay of the Last Minstrel* managed to strike a chord with the public and his reputation only became stronger with each poem he published between 1805 and 1810.

In 1802, Bannerman had no way of foreseeing the success that awaited Scott throughout the rest of the decade, nor did she share the same advantages of gender or class status that may have enabled Scott to elevate himself within the literary marketplace. In downplaying her Scottish ancestry, she rejected the earlier model of Burns, but failed to successfully position herself as an erudite authority on ballads in the manner of Scott. Nevertheless, the careful construction of *Tales of Superstition and Chivalry* reveals that Bannerman certainly attempted to accomplish something similar to Scott. It appears that he was paying attention, for he did a much better job of capitalizing on the popularity of ballads but fashioned himself as a cultural curator as opposed to a simple balladeer.

Although Bannerman never attained the same level of recognition as other Scottish Romantic-era poets, and her poems lack the overt Scottish-ness that have come to define the poetry of Burns and Scott, her work does contain elements that could be considered nationalist and relevant to Scotland. Adriana Craciun has pointed out that “Bannerman’s ballads, while preoccupied with the force of the inescapable past…are not primarily set in Scotland’s historical past” (“Spinstrelsy” 213). This does not mean, however, that Bannerman’s narratives do not implicitly address the Scottish past or allude to its conflicts indirectly. In fact, the vengeful
desires that motivate and resurrect Bannerman’s ghostly *femmes fatales* articulate a kind of power fantasy with which Scotland’s disenfranchised populace could easily identify. Acts of cruelty and exploitation are repeatedly perpetrated against the disadvantaged in Bannerman’s poetry, which mirror the cyclical narrative of violence and victimization that constitutes the history of Scotland itself. This constant yearning to transcend and gain mastery over an oppressive force is a theme immensely appealing not only for a woman struggling to assert herself against patriarchal ideologies, but also to the natives of Scotland who struggled to assert their own identity and achieve independence from England.

Diane Hoeveler believes that the ballads in *Tales of Superstition and Chivalry* represent an alienated Scottish readership because they vividly capture and “express the melancholia, loneliness, disappointment, betrayal, and homelessness, that pervaded Scotland” after the controversial Union of 1707 (97). While this may indeed be true in regard to several of the sonnets appearing in Bannerman’s debut volume, the feelings of melancholia and disappointment that Hoeveler points to are not the primary focus of *Tales of Superstition and Chivalry*. In Bannerman’s Gothic ballads, the speakers’ initial feelings of despair are reabsorbed and transformed into active expressions of anger and hostility. In most cases, this process of emotional transformation occurs off stage or prior to the occasion of the poem. The poem itself, however, dramatizes the moment when the victim manages to *avenge* herself against her oppressor. If there is a nationalist agenda in Bannerman’s poetry, it is not to chronicle the crestfallen or dispirited state of a country in turmoil; rather, the promise of eventual empowerment and victory is foregrounded in the texts and could be a more covert expression of Scottish national pride, if not also a coded invitation to rebellion.
Although the speaker’s nationality remains undisclosed, the poem “Exile,” which was first published in The Poetical Register and Repository of Fugitive Poetry for 1801 and collected in the 1807 edition of Poems, emphasizes how closely one’s identity is aligned with his or her homeland. Bannerman also transformed a prose passage from Book VIII of MacPherson’s Ossian into a memorable sonnet lamenting Scotland’s war-torn past. Poems, A New Edition also includes a poem dedicated to Joanna Baillie, which encourages the elder poet to draw more inspiration from the history and mythology of Scotland in future writings. Furthermore, Bannerman’s poem to Baillie is likely modeled after William Collins’ “Ode on the Popular Superstitions of the Highlands,” which Collins dedicated to the Scottish playwright John Home with the hope that he would draw more freely from Scotland’s history in subsequent works.

While these brief allusions to Scotland appear in her poems, it is clear that Bannerman wanted her poetry to address a range of subjects far beyond quaint references to her native country. Instead, her poems convey a broad and scholarly awareness of many different literary and cultural traditions. Her work contributes to an ongoing project of historical revision and interpretation, for several of the poems she translated from Italian to English were already interpretations or translations of classical Greek or Roman mythology. The references to foreign locales such as Africa, Russia, and Norway invest her original poems with the kind of exoticism that would appeal to the tastes of her audience, but these references also demonstrate her ability to vividly render these far off places in her poetry. The international scope of Bannerman’s work therefore serves two specific purposes. First, by engaging with more established English and European traditions, Bannerman hopes that her poetry will be taken seriously by critics. But in addition to demonstrating her artistic competence, Bannerman also expanded the boundaries of Scottish poetry beyond the rustic settings and subjects of Burns. She shared a similar ambition...
with Walter Scott to elevate the tradition of Scottish poetry so that it could achieve recognition on the national stage. Had Bannerman’s poetry been more successful, it would have constituted a cultural victory for Scotland itself. Yet such a victory was reserved instead for Scott, whom his adoring public eventually dubbed the “Wizard of the North.”

IV. **Poems (1800)**

Anne Bannerman published *Poems* in the spring of 1800. The volume was published by Mundell and Son in Edinburgh, and by Longman, Rees, and J. Wright in London. These presses were responsible for publishing several important works from Bannerman’s contemporaries. Mundell and Son has the historic distinction of being the first press to bring Walter Scott into print in 1796, with his anonymous translation of two German ballads by Gottfried August Bürger. Mundell and Son were best known for producing several editions of Thomas Campbell’s successful poem *The Pleasures of Hope* between 1799 and 1805. As with Bannerman’s first volume, Mundell and Son partnered with Longman and Rees to publish Anne Grant’s *Poems on Various Subjects* in 1803. Shortly after publishing Bannerman’s *Poems* in London, Longman and Rees issued the second edition of *Lyrical Ballads* in two-volumes in late 1800, as well as several works from Robert Southey, most notably *Thalaba the Destroyer* in 1801 (more than a decade before he became Poet Laureate). Longman also published the second edition of Walter Scott’s *Minstrelsy of the Scottish Border* in 1803 and *Lay of the Last Minstrel* in 1805. It would seem that Bannerman was in good company, or at the very least, her work was published by reputable presses.
Although *Poems* did not sell enough copies to warrant a second edition, the volume was politely received and inspired positive reviews from critics.⁴⁹ *The New London Review* compared Bannerman favorably to William Collins and Thomas Gray and noted that “Miss Bannerman delights to soar in the loftiest regions of imagination, and gaze with undaunted ken⁵⁰ upon ‘prostrate worlds’ below; ⁵¹ nor does she fail in her airy flight to strike the chords of true poesy” (408). According to *The British Critic*, “the Poems of Mrs. Bannerman [sic] display much beauty of versification, and are in other respects worthy of patronage” (xvi). The volume was “entitled to the highest commendation for vigour, elegance, and harmony,” but the reviewer complained that “an air of fixed and deep melancholy diffused over the whole of this otherwise most agreeable performance” (139, 141). *The Monthly Magazine* also praised the volume for uniting “vigour, harmony, and taste” (610), while *The New Annual Register* claimed that Bannerman’s poems “exhibit satisfactory evidence, that the author’s imagination is lively and bold, that her taste is correct, that her ear is musical, and that she possesses much tenderness of feeling” (327). *The Critical Review* declared that Bannerman’s “effusions are the genuine offspring of a lively and excursive imagination, regulated by the principles of just taste, equally removed from the uninteresting dullness of common-place on one hand, and the false glitter of extravagance and ambitious ornament on the other” (435).

Unlike *Tales of Superstition and Chivalry*, which contains only ballads, *Poems* displays a wider range of formal versification, including odes, sonnets, translations, and narrative poems. The first half of the volume is comprised of three narrative poems (“The Genii,” “Verses on an Illumination for a Naval Victory” and “The Nun”), followed by five odes, which include “The

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⁴⁹ Each review of *Poems* is reprinted in its entirety in *Appendix B*.

⁵⁰ *ken*: the scope of one’s knowledge or sight.

⁵¹ An allusion to “The Spirit of the Air”: “O’er all the prostrate world, my power extends” (9).
Spirit of the Air,” “The Mermaid,” and “To Pain,” along with an untitled ode on the subject of grief, and a translation of Jean-Baptiste Rousseau’s ode “The Nightingale.” The rest of the volume is broken into three sections of sonnets. The first section features ten original sonnets, followed by eight translations of Francesco Petrarch, Giovanni della Casa, and Ossian into an English sonnet form. The final section is a cycle of ten more original sonnets inspired by Johann Wolfgang von Goethe’s novel The Sorrows of Young Werther. This diversity of composition attests to not only Bannerman’s range of interests and talents as a poet, but it also makes for an unpredictable and intriguing read. Additionally, the variety of subjects and references throughout the volume reveals the extent of Bannerman’s self-education. Nearly all of the poems include scholarly footnotes, which is also one of the distinguishing features of Tales of Superstition and Chivalry and the 1807 publication of Poems, A New Edition. Yet Bannerman first employed this successful strategy in her 1800 volume, and her debut publication should be recognized for spearheading this approach.

In terms of subject matter, Bannerman’s first collection is not as historically removed or detached from contemporary events as Tales of Superstition and Chivalry. “Verses on an Illumination for a Naval Victory” and the sonnet “The Soldier” – both of which emphasize the destructive futility of war – stand as Bannerman’s most overtly political poems. “The Spirit of the Air” contains a clear indictment of England’s involvement in the slave trade, while “The Nun” criticizes the treatment of women within the Catholic Church. When Poems is considered as a whole, the volume displays an impressive range of cultural influences, for Bannerman draws from Eastern, Italian, French, Scandinavian, Celtic, Greek, and German literary traditions. Therefore, Poems proves that Bannerman was always an ambitious visionary poet that wished to transcend cultural and national boundaries. Her debut volume set the cosmopolitan precedent
that she continued to develop throughout *Tales of Superstition and Chivalry*, which added Spanish, Russian, and Arthurian legends to the various myths and traditions her work has explored. Yet *Poems* also reserved enough space for Bannerman to comment more directly on some of the more immediate political conflicts that were unfolding during her lifetime.

*Poems* is also noteworthy because the volume shows that Bannerman regularly responded to or adapted the works of other poets. This is important because it demonstrates not only Bannerman’s awareness of literary traditions, but it reveals that “The Dark Ladie” – her response to one of Coleridge’s unfinished poems that has attracted the most attention from modern-day scholars – was not the first time she used her poems to criticize or revise the ideas of her contemporaries. Throughout the 1800 volume, Bannerman translates poems from Jean-Baptiste Rousseau, Francesco Petrarch, Giovanni della Casa, and reinterprets a prose passage from MacPherson’s *Ossian* saga into verse. In addition to Goethe, Bannerman’s *Werter* sonnet cycle reveals a connection to the poet Charlotte Smith, who also composed a series of sonnets based on the popular German novel. As well, the narrative technique Bannerman employs for the *Werter* sonnets is inspired by the dramatic theories outlined by Joanna Baillie for her 1798 publication *Plays on the Passions*.\(^{52}\) Just as Baillie attempted to “delineate the progress of the higher passions” in her plays, Bannerman explores how specific emotions can shape the speaker’s perspective with each successive sonnet (93). Other poems appearing in Bannerman’s first volume, such as “The Genii,” reveal the influence of Erasmus Darwin (*The Botanic Garden*), and “The Nun” was inspired by a play from the Comtesse de Genlis (*Cecile, ou le Sacrifice de l’Amitié*) as well as one of Alexander Pope’s most famous poems (*Eloisa to Abelard*). Finally,

\(^{52}\) See Appendix D for an excerpt from Baillie’s “Introductory Discourse.”
Bannerman’s original sonnets often emulate or allude to the contemplative style of late eighteenth-century graveyard poets like William Collins, Edward Young, and Thomas Gray.

Since the initial rediscovery of Bannerman’s poetry in the late 1990s, the handful of scholars that have written about her work have mostly overlooked her first volume. Andrew Elfenbein’s 1996 essay presents a close reading of the Werter sonnets and provides commentary on longer poems such as “The Spirit of the Air” and “The Nun.” In Fatal Women of Romanticism, Adriana Craciun mentions “The Spirit of the Air” and includes brief discussions of “The Mermaid” and “The Genii.” However, most recent publications have exclusively focused on Tales of Superstition and Chivalry (Fischer, Watkins, Ruppert, Makala). In other cases, scholars have chosen to closely examine specific poems from the second volume, such as “The Dark Ladie” (Miller) or “The Prophecy of Merlin” (Lister, Garner).

Readers likely gravitate toward Bannerman’s second volume on account of its more explicit Gothicism. As a collection of ballads, Tales also seems to promise a specific or unified thematic purpose and can be more easily contextualized. Elfenbein acknowledges that Poems was a “daring” and promising publication, but he claims that “Tales of Superstition and Chivalry pushed the role of the female genius in even more unconventional directions” (945). In his discussion of the visionary qualities of Bannerman’s poetry, Daniel Watkins describes Tales of Superstition and Chivalry as a “radical” volume because it breaks from traditional “biblical and Miltonic strategies of visionary expression” to instead emphasize broader historical concerns (18). Similarly, Timothy Ruppert claims that the combination of Gothicism and visionary traditions in Tales “assign[s] foremost importance to scrutinizing how the past affects the present and…touches the future” (787). While each of these observations regarding Tales of Superstition
and Chivalry is valid, the various poems that make up Bannerman’s first volume are just as unconventional, radical, and visionary, and also require further attention from scholars.

The scope of Bannerman’s artistic ambitions is on full display with her decision to begin the volume with “The Genii,” a long narrative poem that primarily draws upon Eastern myths and legends, but also manages to incorporate significant ideas regarding Christianity. At 406 lines, it is the longest poem Bannerman ever published, and is nearly twice the length of the longest ballads in Tales of Superstition and Chivalry. The poem begins by acknowledging the presence of the genii during the formation of the universe. They witness the Creation and initially hold dominion over the natural world. Like Milton’s Satan, the genii are threatened by the arrival of mankind, but the Fall provides them with the opportunity to regain their influence over the earth by manipulating humanity. The poem suggests that the genii have shadowed humankind ever since, acting as disruptive agents of chaos responsible for earthquakes, floods, volcanic eruptions, and other natural disasters throughout the world. The poem also suggests that the power of the genii extends beyond the natural elements, for their “malignant influence” is capable of disturbing the “domestic happiness” of mankind, thus accounting for the inconstant and selfish actions of humanity (“Argument”). The apocalyptic conclusion of the poem insists that the genii will continue to influence the world until the Day of Judgment.

With “The Genii,” Bannerman introduces the concept of spirit entities that “reign o’er the wild elements,” and can control the winds, storms, volcanoes, and other natural forces (125-26). In Islamic traditions, genii – or jinn – are described as “invisible spirit beings neither human nor angel, but a separate creation made from smokeless fire” (Burton and Grandy 143). What is immediately striking about these elemental spirits is the seemingly unlimited range of their powers: “Though invisible, jinn could take on many forms to become perceptible to human eyes.
Often they were seen riding across the desert in whirlwinds or sand” (Burton and Grandy 144). The poem’s opening address reveals that the influence of Bannerman’s genii has no boundaries, for they can traverse the globe and are capable of manipulating all four of the natural elements:

YES! ‘twas your thunder—Awful Genii, hail!
Who, thron’d in terrors, ride the Siroc gale,
Whose fires in Ætna’s sulph’rous bosom glow,
Whose cold, on Arctic rocks, congeals the snow;
By your dread talismans of fearful force,
Thro’ earth and air, you wing your vent’rous course;
Mov’d by their touch, the portals of the skies
Reveal their glories to your wond’ring eyes;
In every sea, dispart the foaming waves,
And yield their treasures, from their deepest caves;
The gloomy demons of the mines obey,
And Ocean’s spirits own your sov’reign sway. (1-12; emphasis original)

The powerful elemental forces in “The Genii” are the first of many similarly omnipotent beings that appear throughout Bannerman’s poetry. Although the gender of the genii is never specified or emphasized, when Bannerman returns to this concept again in “The Spirit of the Air” and “The Mermaid” – the other two overtly supernatural poems that appear in the 1800 volume – these forces are specifically personified as feminine, and are motivated by vengeance. As well, both “The Spirit of the Air” and “The Mermaid” are presented from an intimate first-person perspective, whereas the narrator of “The Genii” functions as an objective observer who reports the genii’s various acts of destruction from a detached third-person perspective. All three of
these violent supernatural poems emphasize what Adriana Craciun has identified as a “connection between imagination and destruction,” which reveals a poetic approach usually attributed to male Romantic poets like Blake, Coleridge, and eventually Shelley (Fatal 179).

According to the Qur’an, “jinn were part of the natural order and a means of explaining a wide range of happenings, some everyday and some anomalous” (Burton and Grandy 146). The majority of their influence, however, was negative, and Bannerman uses the genii to provide an intriguing theological explanation for a question that has perpetually plagued humankind: why do bad things happen to good people? Throughout the poem, Bannerman references specific natural disasters that occurred throughout European history, including the eruption of Hekla in Iceland in 1766 and the earthquake of Lima in 1746. These scenes capture not only the sublime terror of the events themselves, but they also enable Bannerman to explore the personal psychological trauma that follows in the aftermath of disasters. Survivors of catastrophic events often wonder why God would let such terrible things happen to them. The more cynically minded might push further and ask what they had done to deserve such punishment. But Bannerman’s poem proposes that these tragedies are caused by the genii rather than God, and their reign over the earth is ultimately part of God’s greater plan for humanity. Such a point of view might dissuade readers from believing that God has abandoned them, and rather than blaming a remote, uncaring deity for their troubles, the genii can be held responsible for all the terrible events that have plagued human history. In this respect, Bannerman provides an alternative to the theories of deism held by many intellectuals throughout the previous century.

“The Genii” is also a compelling example of apocalyptic, visionary Christian poetry, for it emphasizes the chaotic state of the world since the Fall described in Genesis. Because humanity has fallen, it is subject to suffering and temptation at the whims of the omnipresent
genii. Yet the poem ultimately promises that humanity’s suffering will end, and the wicked genii will be conquered on the Day of Judgment:

—But, when the skies shall glow, in living fire,

Your powers, your terrors, and your spells expire;

Your reign is finish’d, when, from shore to shore,

The seraph’s trump reveals, that Time shall be no more. (403-406)

For Bannerman, the apocalypse imagined in “The Genii” is definitive and final. The event envisioned at the end of the poem restores order and peace by purging the genii from the world and eradicating all of humanity along with them. In this respect, Bannerman’s vision anticipates the climax of Lord Byron’s apocalyptic poem “Darkness,” which appeared in 1816 and concludes with an eerie description of a stagnant yet tranquil world that continues on without sunlight, animals, or people. Both Bannerman and Byron imply that order can only be restored when the world is purged of those who make all the trouble, whether they are mischievous genii or self-centered humans.

Despite the poem’s daunting length and sweeping historical scope, it did not appear to be an obstacle for most readers when Poems was first published. “The Genii” was singled-out in two contemporary reviews to exemplify Bannerman’s talent. The Critical Review claimed that the “The Genii” possessed “uncommon merit” (438), while The British Critic referred to the poem as “a very spirited performance” and discussed it over the course of several pages (139). After a brief summary of the poem, the anonymous reviewer adds, “it will be easily perceived that this is a very bold attempt; but if it should not be found to hold closely together in a regular chain of systematic connection, the reader will be delighted with many animated apostrophes, and brilliant passages” (139). The review then reprints fifty lines (125-176) of the poem to serve
as “satisfactory proof” of Bannerman’s accomplishments, and concludes that “lovers of poetry will not want much further inducement to become more familiarly acquainted with this author” (139, 141).

Bannerman’s debut collection is perhaps most intriguing and valuable when it is examined from a feminist perspective. Nearly all of the poems focus on the experiences of women, or they examine the conflicting emotions of marginalized female characters. Various aspects of female oppression are explored in “The Nun,” which chronicles a self-sacrificing young woman’s feelings of despair and isolation after she agrees to enter a convent “to remove the only obstacle to a sister’s marriage” (p.37). In the final act of the original play by Madame de Genlis that inspired Bannerman’s poem, Cecile inherits a fortune from a distant relation and is spared from having to take the veil. But as Bannerman explains in the preface to “The Nun,” her heroine will follow through with her plan and “complete her sacrifice,” which leads to a life of “regret, and almost intolerable misery.” The poem echoes the same anti-Catholic sentiments expressed in popular Gothic novels like Matthew Lewis’s *The Monk* and Ann Radcliffe’s *The Italian*, which capture the feelings of powerlessness experienced by young women forced to enter convents. Lewis’s novel in particular suggests that imposing such strict living conditions on young people in the prime of their lives is inhumane and unnatural. This notion is best exemplified by the rapid corruption of the novel’s eponymous monk Ambrosio, and from a more sympathetic and sentimental perspective through the sufferings of Agnes, a young woman forced to deliver a stillborn child while incarcerated in a cell beneath a convent.

While not as lurid as Lewis’s novel, Bannerman’s description of life in a convent is presented with rich Gothic hyperbole, which appeals to popular interest in the Gothic, but also enables her to expose the deplorable conditions of convents by comparing them to crumbling
castles, ruins, and other traditionally oppressive locales. More importantly, the poem stresses that the cruelty experienced in convents is endured exclusively by women. Early in the poem, the narrator complains that she has been “immured forever in [a] living tomb” (3). As the full extent of her isolation sets in, she is overwhelmed by her dreary surroundings: “Breathless I listen’d for some cheering sound, / And the wind howl’d the vaulted caves around” (31-32). She recognizes on an instinctual level that her incarceration is unnatural, for “nature shiver’d through each chilly vein” (28). The conditions she describes are not only inhumane, but they also contradict the basic tenets of Christianity – a religion predicated upon love and forgiveness as opposed to punishment. Upon hearing the sighs and weeping of other unhappy occupants, the narrator describes the convent as a place “where tears of anguish praise th’insulted God” (6). Later, the routine of nightly prayers is presented as a reluctant gathering of frightened and uncomfortable women forced to express submission rather than exultation:

Rous’d from disturb’d repose, with ling’ring feet,
The pallid Sisters in affliction meet ;
Trembling they kneel the midnight shrine before,
While tears, in torrents, from their eye-lids pour.
Are these sad hearts, by hopeless anguish riv’n,
The welcome incense of approving Heav’n? (239-244)

These scenes and other similarly unsettling passages throughout the poem imply that God Himself would not approve of the way these women are treated.

Noting “the vehement anti-Catholicism” in the poem, Diane Hoeveler has argued that Bannerman “is attempting to persuade her readers of their mutual religious identity and superiority in a nationalized and rational Protestantism” (97). Yet beyond an ideological debate
that privileges Protestantism over Catholicism, the poem stresses that it is entirely irrational to subject women to such indignity and confinement for any reason. More broadly, religion is depicted throughout “The Nun” as a form of superstition that enables men to subjugate and control women under the false pretense of doing God’s will:

Shall man, with impious hand, thy mercy bind,
And rule at pleasure o’er an equal mind;
Throughout the bleeding earth extend his fame,
And shield his crimes beneath thine awful name? (247-250)

Despite the belief that God is omnipotent, merciful, and just, men are in control of society. Even if convents are overseen by other women, those women ultimately serve an unequivocally patriarchal institution.

Dating back to novels like Denis Diderot’s La Religieuse, the literature of the long eighteenth-century certainly has no shortage of cruel abbesses, domineering prioresses, or hypocritical “Mother Superiors” eager to reinforce the rigid and authoritarian hierarchies within the Church. Yet “The Nun” is quite a radical and transgressive poem, for it specifically draws attention to the stifling and at times nightmarish fate that women faced if they did not conform to the expectations of eighteenth and early nineteenth-century society. One of the narrator’s most chilling observations is summed up in a couplet that appears halfway through the poem, when she notes that “thousands share my lot severe, / How mad the aims of human kind appear!” (153-154). Women born into working-class families that were incapable of living independently, or women who failed to secure themselves a husband to provide for them (or worse yet, women who bore a child outside of wedlock) were frequently sent to convents. Rather than sanctuaries from the temptations of the modern world, convents were places equated with punishment,
reserved for women who simply did not fit into society. While convents were no longer common in England, they continued to proliferate throughout France, Spain, and other predominantly Catholic countries in Europe. Given the fact that England was at war with France when Bannerman published “The Nun,” her indictment of convents serves as a politically-motivated critique of France and its practices as well.

“The Nun” – along with several of Bannerman’s sonnets and translations – also challenges contemporary Romantic notions regarding nature and the imagination by presenting speakers who feel alienated rather than inspired by their surroundings. In this way, a significant portion of Bannerman’s work anticipates the skeptical attitudes on nature that were held by the second-generation of Romantic writers. The majority of Bannerman’s poems, however, emphasize a specifically female perspective on nature that differs from the transcendental views most closely aligned with William Wordsworth. In many of his poems – such as “Tintern Abbey” – the contemplation of natural scenery provides the speaker with a “tranquil restoration” of spirit, “in which the heavy and the weary weight / Of all this unintelligible world / is lighten’d” (31, 40-42). But for the narrators of Bannerman’s poems, their emotional burdens only seem to grow heavier when they contemplate their circumstances or surroundings.

Although most of Bannerman’s female characters regularly fail to find comfort in nature, another aspect of her poetry is very much aligned with Wordsworth and other visionary Romantic poets. The only genuine solace afforded to the narrator of “The Nun” derives from the boundlessness of her own vivid imagination. When left alone in the privacy of her cell, the narrator manages to “spurn her chain” by allowing her mind to drift freely through “fancy’s wide

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53 By the middle of the nineteenth-century, the asylum came to replace the convent as the dreaded institution where wayward Victorian women were sent if they were found to be disruptive or threatening to polite society. In this respect, the sensation novels of Wilkie Collins and Mary Elizabeth Braddon carry on the Gothic tradition of holding up a cracked mirror to the hypocrisies of conventional society.
domain” (174-175). Yet her visionary escapism is only temporary, for the narrator laments “to 
real life, at last, her flight must come,” and she is perpetually torn from her reveries when she 
remembers that the “dank cells, o’ergrown with hoary mould,/ [are] the only home [she] ever 
shall behold” (177, 179-180). More than a decade after Bannerman’s poem, Lord Byron makes a 
similar observation regarding the effects of captivity on the imagination in “The Sonnet of 
Chillon” (1816):

Eternal Spirit of the chainless Mind!
Brightest in dungeons, Liberty! thou art:
For there thy habitation is the heart —
The heart which love of thee alone can bind;
And when thy sons to fetters are consigned —
To fetters, and the damp vault's dayless gloom,
Their country conquers with their martyrdom,
And Freedom's fame finds wings on every wind. (1-8)

These ideas are given a fuller, intimate expression in Byron’s longer companion poem from the 
same year, “The Prisoner of Chillon,” which is told from the first-person perspective of the 
Genovese patriot François Bonivard (1493-1570). Additional similarities to Bannerman’s poem 
can be observed when the speaker recounts the effects of hearing a bird’s song while 
incarcerated in his cell (Stanza X) and the maddening disconnection from loved ones (Stanza 
XII). The closest parallel, however, occurs when Byron’s narrator steals a glimpse of the French 
countryside through his barred windows and admires the beauty of the natural landscape. The 
sight of a soaring eagle, however, snaps him out of his happy reverie, and the word choice and 
rhyme is remarkably similar to Bannerman’s earlier poem:
And then new tears came in my eye,
And I felt troubled—and would fain
I had not left my recent chain;
And when I did descend again,
The darkness of my dim abode
Fell on me as a heavy load. (356-61)

I have been unable to find any references to Bannerman in Byron’s correspondence, so the connections between the two works appear to be coincidental. However, both Bannerman and Byron foreground the limitations of the imagination, and their poems suggest that the mind is just as capable of sabotaging an individual’s sense of contentment as it is capable of nurturing or expanding it.

Other passages in “The Nun” reveal how memories fail to comfort the narrator, for they make her feel homesick and remind her of the freedom she once took for granted. From the window of her cloister, she can look upon the landscape and see the sunrise each morning, but she remains unmoved by the magnificence of nature. When she witnesses “the sinking sun’s impurpled glow” above “the groves in all their beauty,” she admits that “they charm no more” (96-98). Even the fresh summer air and “perfumes” of wildflowers fail to stir her senses, for she declares: “on me, they blow in vain: no breath divine / can charm the horrors of a fate like mine” (147-148). Because the narrator is physically separated from nature, any attempt to contemplate its beauty inevitably reminds her of her disadvantages.

Sentiments similar to those expressed in “The Nun” also appear in Bannerman’s original sonnets and form an overarching theme that encompasses most of the volume. “To the Owl” channels the macabre aesthetics of eighteenth-century graveyard poetry by presenting a speaker
who is soothed by the night bird’s “funereal cry” (2). Rather paradoxically, the narrator finds delight in a symbol that usually signifies isolation, fear, or death. But to the “visionary mind” of the narrator, the owl’s nocturnal cry is equated with a “call...to eternal rest,” which would signify an end to the speaker’s suffering (6, 7). As a creature on the margins of life and nature, the owl is an appropriate metaphor for the unhappy narrator who regards death as a lasting peace and yearns to escape from the difficulties of life. When compared to other contemporary Romantic-era poems, “To the Owl” is unconventional on account of Bannerman’s use of an ominous symbol from the natural world to inspire feelings of hope or comfort. Yet that comfort is found in the promise of death rather than in nature itself, and illustrates one of many examples where Bannerman’s conceptualization of Romantic transcendence appears more pessimistic than the poetic theories of her more popular contemporaries.

“Sonnet VIII” begins happily enough with two stanzas of descriptive verse that emphasize the beauty of the “verdant landscape” and “the fresh fragrance of the blushing rose” (2, 4). However, the joyful mood turns at the sonnet’s volta, when the speaker proclaims:

No summer scenes, alas! no vermil bloom
Soothe the sick soul, by every ill opress’d;
To wander, cheerless, thro’ the midnight gloom,
To brave the terrors of the wint’ry blast,
Whose swelling gusts ideal woes impart,
Are scenes more fitted—to a broken heart. (9-14)

Unlike most Romantic-era poems that celebrate spring or summer, Bannerman’s narrator expresses an unorthodox preference for winter because it is more in keeping with the speaker’s tumultuous state of mind. More importantly, nature offers her no lasting comfort. The summer sun reinforces her feelings of displacement and disconnection, while the winter landscape...
provides a more suitable backdrop for her downcast mood. The narrator only feels at one with nature when it appears to be in sympathy with her emotions. She is not inspired by nature to forget her woes and therefore fails to achieve any kind of emotional or spiritual transcendence.

Once again, such a perspective differs radically from that of Wordsworth, who once promised in his poem “The Tables Turned” that nature offers a “world of ready wealth” and “bliss” (17-18). Yet in some instances, nature appears to be openly hostile and antagonistic to Bannerman’s speakers. “To the Ocean,” for example, portrays nature as a cruel and dangerous force. The narrator warns that the sea may appear to be calm and inviting, but its tranquility ultimately masks a terrifying and destructive power. The final stanza details a violent shipwreck (perhaps alluding to the death of Bannerman’s own brother at sea) and concludes with an accusatory couplet: “Such are thy dreadful trophies, ruthless main! / What are thy triumphs—but another’s pain!” (13-14). Perhaps the most cynical of Bannerman’s original sonnets is “Sonnet VIII,” which opens with the following rhetorical questions:

    Is there a spot, in Nature’s wide domain,
    Where peace delights her fair abode to rear?
    Where the sad heart shall never sigh again,
    Nor the dim’d eye be sullied with a tear? (1-4).

The answer is a resoundingly affirmative “yes,” but the fancied locale is not within nature but beyond it in death, where “warring elements essay in vain / to wake the slumb’ring tenant of the grave” (11-12). The poem concludes by noting that “if still there’s peace for me, / that I that envied tenant soon may be!” (13-14). This kind of suicidal fatalism can be found throughout a significant portion of the volume, for the speaker of the tenth and final poem in this first cycle of sonnets bluntly confesses, “O that my weary soul could sink to rest, / And lose for ever all her miseries!” (3-4). When considered from a broader metaphorical perspective, Bannerman’s
morose point of view vividly captures the weariness and displacement that many women felt in a society that offered so few opportunities for them. In this way, Bannerman’s poems function less as a personal *cris de coeur* from the poet herself to instead provide a politicized snapshot of women at the dawn of the nineteenth century.

Bannerman’s sullen ruminations on nature and death are in line with ideas espoused by Percy Bysshe Shelley and Lord Byron throughout the second decade of the nineteenth-century. In poem’s such as Shelley’s “Stanzas Written in Dejection,” an isolated speaker is so consumed by his personal suffering that he is unmoved by the colorful scenery of Naples. Likewise, in Lord Byron’s closet-drama *Manfred*, the eponymous anti-hero stands amidst the sublime splendor of the Jungfrau mountains and contemplates the ferocious and predatory aspects of nature before concluding that the peaceful scenery below him would be an ideal place to take his own life (I.ii). These poems are theoretically and thematically opposed to Wordsworth’s most popular poems like “Tintern Abbey,” which depict nature as a comforting and inspiring presence capable of elevating the mind and assuaging feelings of sorrow.

Whatever may have motivated Byron or Shelley to challenge these theories of nature, Bannerman’s earlier challenge to this line of thinking is fueled by a far-more immediate concern with how nature is perceived by marginalized women. A poem like “The Nun” strongly implies that the quintessentially Romantic appreciation of nature is purely conditional. It is a luxury afforded only to privileged men. The nun’s confinement functions on a much larger scale as a metaphor for the entrapment of women within their limited social spheres or circumstances. Furthermore, each of Bannerman’s sonnets is presented by narrators whose impoverished, depressed, or disadvantaged circumstances make it rather difficult for them to reflect upon their emotions with the same freedom and ease as men like Wordsworth. As Anne Mellor has noted,
the work of canonical male Romantic poets is “the production of a leisured, bourgeois, racially
dominant class of men who are at least temporarily free from the physical deprivations of
hunger, cold and poverty, and thus have the luxury of constructing a mind detached from a body”
(157). For poets such as Wordsworth or Coleridge, the contemplation of nature or the self may
provide a moment of important reflection, but Bannerman’s work emphasizes that one’s
imagination can never entirely transcend real-life suffering. Her poetry shows that traditionally
Romantic views concerning nature and the transformative power of the imagination are purely
theoretical or philosophical meditations, but are not necessarily practical or capable of
permanently alleviating pain or unhappiness.

Bannerman’s deconstruction of traditionally (male) Romantic poetical theories regarding
nature and the imagination are not limited to her original poems, for the same themes can be
found throughout her translations of Petrarch, as well as her sonnets based on Goethe’s Sorrows
of Young Werther. In fact, Bannerman likely chose these particular texts to translate or
reinterpret because they reinforce the perspectives on nature that appear throughout the first half
of her volume. Nevertheless, the volume undergoes a significant shift in perspective at this point,
as the texts comprising the second half of Poems are not as immediately concerned with the
feelings or experiences of women, as they appear to be written from the perspective of male
rather than female narrators. This shift in perspective succeeds in widening the scope of the
volume, and brings additional issues regarding gender to the surface.

The first four of Bannerman’s original sonnets (“The Watch-man,” “The Soldier,” “The
Benighted Arab,” and “The Norwegian”) are written in a neutral third person voice, but they
focus on reclusive and isolated male characters. In this respect, they form a series of masculine
counterparts to the female characters that appear in “The Nun” and the other six original sonnets.
These poems offer subtle reminders that suffering and isolation are not exclusive to women. However, the male characters in question convey the same feelings of resignation and passivity that characterize some of the female speakers in her debut volume, and serve as rather unconventional exemplars of masculinity. In “The Benighted Arab,” for example, a parched traveller wanders alone through the desert near the brink of death. When he spies his enemies making camp later that night, he retreats and longs to find the “shelter of the grave” rather than engage his foes in battle (14). The Arab is an atypical yet ultimately rational hero, for his weakened condition all but guarantees he would not be victorious if he confronted his foes. The more noble choice is to pursue a peaceful death in the desert rather than make a vainglorious sacrifice on the battlefield. Bannerman’s depiction of a noble Arab runs somewhat counter to prominent stereotypes regarding so-called Orientals throughout the nineteenth century. According to Edward Said’s influential book *Orientalism*, “an assumption had been made that the Orient and everything in it was, if not patently inferior to, then in need of corrective study by the West” (48–49). In this instance however, the pacifist rationale of the East serves as an instructive counterpoint to the war-fueled aggression of the West.

Of the four sonnets, “The Soldier” stands out as one of Bannerman’s few overtly political poems. The poem describes a wounded veteran’s return from war, but he discovers that his wife has died, his home has fallen to ruin, and he has no means of making a living to provide for himself. Like so many of Bannerman’s other despondent narrators in *Poems*, the soldier has nothing to look forward to but “the cold grave” (12). Bannerman’s usual mood of restrained melancholy is countered by the biting observation that despite the soldier’s “years of blood and toil,” loss and a feeling of utter displacement was “all [his] country gave” (14).
Bannerman’s sonnets also depict nature in unfavorable ways. The Watch-man looks on in dread as a storm gathers along the horizon, for he anxiously anticipates the dangers awaiting not only himself (for the waves seem to be wearing away the foundations of his tower), but also those returning home from their adventures at sea. With shades of Coleridge’s Ancient Mariner, the speaker of “The Norwegian” regards “the harsh sea-eagle” as a bird of ill-omen as he attempts to make his way across the turbulent ocean (10). He fears that his “frail bark” may not withstand the brewing storm, and he looks upon nature with a wariness that comes from a lifetime of experience: “No thrilling rapture swells his simple breast, / From all the glories, rushing on his eye, / The awful sweep of waves, and star encircled sky” signify a very practical threat to the sailor rather than a source of philosophical inspiration (5, 12-14).

The snapshots of masculinity that appear in Bannerman’s original sonnets are not necessarily critiques of male behavior, for both the Watch-man and the Norwegian exhibit a respectfully pragmatic rather than romanticized reaction to their natural surroundings. Even the Arab’s perceived cowardice can be interpreted as an admirably pacifist alternative to engaging in unnecessary combat and stereotypically masculine aggression, whereas the subject of “The Soldier” is the victim of circumstance and is forgotten by his country. The representations of nature in these poems provide additional examples of Bannerman’s thematic explorations of loneliness, isolation, and the promise of peace in death that appears throughout the rest of the volume.

Each of the eight texts that Bannerman decided to translate for the next section of Poems was originally written by a male writer. In addition to the Petrarch translations and the sonnets inspired by Goethe, Bannerman also translated two short texts by Giovanni della Casa and James MacPherson. Since the primary point of view was male in Bannerman’s source materials, readers
would not be remiss to assume that the same gender perspective is carried over and Bannerman’s translations and interpretations also feature male narrators. However, Andrew Elfenbein’s reading of the Petrarch and Goethe poems offers a different theory. He argues that Bannerman deliberately experimented with gender roles not “by writing overtly as a male character,” but because “she foregrounds [a] lesbian element…by expressing desire for another woman” in the poems (935). While there is a recognizably transgressive quality in the fact that the poems could be read as declarations of passion from a female author to another idealized female character, another way to read the poems is to simply focus on the passionate, unrestrained “intensity of expression” found throughout these works, particularly when compared to the Werther-inspired sonnets written by Charlotte Smith a few decades earlier (Elfenbein 935). In this respect, Bannerman may have been compelled to write the Werter sonnets not to articulate a coded expression of homosexual desire, but to merely show that she was capable of writing more provocative and emotionally charged verse than Charlotte Smith. Once again, we have another example of Bannerman asserting herself as a writer by positioning herself alongside other authors that have inspired or influenced her, and forming a kind of literary dialogue with their works. In this case, I would simply argue that Bannerman hoped to present more dramatically passionate poetry than Smith, which differed from the more formal and reserved poetry of her contemporaries.54

54 In 2011, vocalist Stevie Nicks released a musical adaptation of Edgar Allan Poe’s “Annabel Lee” – perhaps one of the most famous poems to passionately lament a woman’s death from the perspective of a male narrator. Nicks’s interest in Poe and her arrangement of the song date back to when she was a teenager: “I remember sitting on my bed, in my mom and dad’s house, writing that song and being so overwhelmed with the romanticism of it” (Hernandez). The poem has also been interpreted and performed by Joan Baez. As far as I can ascertain, the sexuality of neither Nicks nor Baez has ever been questioned on account of their decision to perform the song with the original ‘she’ pronouns intact. Like Nicks, the youthful Bannerman may have been “overwhelmed with the romanticism” of Petrarch’s poems, Goethe’s novel, or Charlotte Smith’s Werther sonnets, and hoped to match – or exceed – that intensity in her own verse.
It is also important to note that both the Petrarch and Werter sonnets read as faithful and sympathetic tributes to their sources. They do not deviate from the original plots, criticize the main characters, or challenge any of the ideas originally espoused by Petrarch or Goethe. As in the original texts, Bannerman’s poems relay the experiences and feelings of the narrators, while Laura and Charlotte – two classic examples of idealized female archetypes - continue to float on the periphery of the texts. The identities of both Laura and Charlotte are limited to the effects the two ideal women have upon their suitors. If, for example, Bannerman found fault in the over-idealization of Laura or Charlotte in service of the male narrator’s ego, she may have rewritten the poems from Laura or Charlotte’s perspective - a technique she had already tried out with the first draft of “The Dark Ladie” in early 1800. Furthermore, we know Bannerman felt no reservations about writing new conclusions to works that inspired her, as exemplified by her revision of Madame Genlis’ source material for “The Nun.” Therefore, we can conclude that Bannerman deliberately selected these particular texts because they were in keeping with the ideas and themes that informed the rest of Poems. Although she shifts the focus from marginalized women to examples of disadvantaged or suffering men, the result is a more inclusive and comprehensive vision that is in conversation with Romantic-era ideas regarding nature, the imagination, and humanity’s place in the world.

Bannerman’s translations of Petrarch highlight fascinating thematic connections between late Medieval poetry and contemporary Romantic thought, and manage to bridge a cultural gap that exceeds four centuries. Each of the half-dozen Petrarch sonnets that Bannerman translated are unified by the recognizably Romantic notion that dreams and visions are ultimately more fulfilling than the experiences offered by the natural or material world. Yet in order to illustrate this point, Bannerman chose to translate the most mournful of Petrarch’s poems, which
dramatize the narrator’s inconsolable grief in the aftermath of his beloved Laura’s death. Once again, peace and hope can only be found after death, and nature affords no lasting comfort.

In the first sonnet, the narrator cannot appreciate the beauty of a summer’s day because he is too distracted by the memories of his departed lover: “Vain to this sick’ning heart these scenes appear; / No form but hers can meet my tearful eyes; / In every passing gale, her voice I hear” (5-7). The specter of Laura has all but eclipsed nature, and the narrator convinces himself that he must wait until his “span of time / has join’d eternity’s unchanging tide” to be happy again (11-12). In “Sonnet IV,” the narrator’s physical body – his “soul immers’d in clay” – serves as a constant, tangible reminder that he is separated from Laura (9-10). The physical world ultimately acts as a barrier between the living and the dead, for Laura has been transformed into a spirit while the narrator is grounded firmly upon the earth. In “Sonnet VI,” the narrator revisits the “sweet hills” and “green summits” where Laura once walked (2, 3). But he curses the lush Italian countryside and blames “stern remembrance” for tormenting him with Laura’s absence (7). The landscape appears empty and uninviting because Laura’s bodily presence no longer occupies it. As in Bannerman’s original sonnets, the narrator in the Petrarch poems is tortured by memories and mocked by his surroundings, which remain out of sync with his feelings. The sun continues to shine, and the flowers continue to bloom despite his pain. The narrator’s only solace is in death, where he believes he will be reunited “in the dust” with Laura once again (9).

The correlation between death and nature reaches a thematic climax in the ten Werter sonnets that conclude Bannerman’s debut volume. Both sonnet cycles reveal several thematic similarities between the works of Petrarch and Goethe, and the two sets of poems mirror one another in striking ways. Just as the lovesick speaker of the Petrarch sonnets is entirely
preoccupied with an idealized image of Laura, the narrator of the Werter\textsuperscript{55} sonnets is obsessively fixated upon a young woman named Charlotte. In Goethe’s original novel, Charlotte is kind to Werther, but she is engaged to another man and does not return Werther’s affections. At the novel’s close, Werther borrows a set of pistols from Charlotte’s fiancé under false pretenses and shoots himself in the head. As noted earlier, Bannerman utilizes the same techniques that informed Joanna Baillie’s \textit{Plays on the Passions} and uses each sonnet to dramatize the progression of Werter’s emotions as his hopeless yearning for Charlotte intensifies. Throughout each successive poem, Werter reaches many of the same conclusions regarding nature that Bannerman already explored in her original sonnets and her cycle of Petrarch’s translations. However, Werter’s responses to his circumstances are more desperate, and the promise of Christian salvation in the afterlife that informed the Petrarch poems is noticeably absent in the Werter sonnets.

In the first sonnet, Werter’s comments about Charlotte are almost identical to those made by the speaker in Bannerman’s first Petrarch sonnet: “I see but her, in earth, in air, and skies; / I feel but her, in all my burning brain” (3-4).\textsuperscript{56} The similarity between the poems suggests a deliberate correlation between the two sonnet cycles, and a reiteration of nature’s secondary role after the preoccupations of each narrator with their respective love interests. For the second sonnet, Bannerman’s note to the poem indicates that she was inspired by a passage from the original novel where Werter admits: “Nature displays all her beauties before me, exhibits the most enchanting scenes, and my heart is unmoved” (p.103). This reveals that Goethe had already touched upon these ideas regarding nature’s inability to affect the emotions in his work several

\textsuperscript{55} Bannerman’s omission of the ‘h’ in Werther’s name is likely an attempt to reproduce the hard ‘t’ sound of the German pronunciation.

\textsuperscript{56} The narrator of the first Petrarch sonnet claims, “No form but hers can meet my tearful eyes; / In every passing gale, her voice I hear” (6-7)
years before Bannerman was writing. The conclusion of the poem reiterates that Werter’s solitary journey through the forest is “toilsome” as opposed to inspirational: “No balm relieves the anguish I endure, / Save the fond, feeble hope, that thou art near, / To soothe my sufferings with an angel’s tear” (11-14). It is his proximity to Charlotte – not the beauty of nature – that manages to offer him relief.

As Werter grows more restless and anxious with his longing for Lotte in “Sonnet V,” he notes “how the terrors of…fearful night / bear kindred horrors to [his] fiery soul” (5-6). Once again, nature is not a source of comfort, but instead a foreboding reflection of the narrator’s increasing distress. By “Sonnet VII,” Werter is literally being torn apart by nature, yet he continues onward, a veritable masochist seemingly inviting physical pain:

Pierc’d by the rugged thorn, I burst my way
Thro’ tangled thickets, which oppose in vain ;
Would that my streaming blood might now allay
My soul’s deep agony and fever’d brain! (1-4)

At least metaphorically speaking, Werter has become one with nature, for he has consecrated the soil itself by spilling his blood throughout the forest. In “Sonnet IX,” Werter is relieved that his “eyes shall never more behold the sun,” once again subverting traditional Romantic conventions by transforming a symbol of hope into a metaphor for death (2). Like so many of Bannerman’s other restless narrators, Werter only welcomes nature when it appears to be in sympathy with him, which negates any possibility of emotional reflection or transcendence. In the final “Sonnet X,” Werter pauses to address a “fair star,” and refers to it as a “favourite beam” – but only because he is prepared to depart the “world of woe” and take his own life (5-6).
Bannerman does not dramatize the drawn out and anguished hours that precede Werter’s actual death, because most readers were already well-acquainted with his tragic fate on account of the popularity of Goethe’s novel. Yet it is important to reiterate the unmistakable finality of his act. The persona behind the Petrarch sonnets merely fantasizes about joining Laura in the afterlife, whereas Werter actually takes his own life. Werter’s perspective is also far more pessimistic than that of Bannerman’s other unhappy narrators. He regards death as a definitive end to his suffering rather than a prelude to a more promising or fulfilling afterlife. Werter longs for a means to escape the seemingly insurmountable obstacles of his life, and he wishes to leave Charlotte and his painful memories behind. He expresses no hope of one day reuniting with Lotte in heaven, nor does he presume that she will come to regret her rejection of him. He simply wishes to remove himself from the proverbial equation, and hopes that she will “be at peace” once he is gone (13). Therefore, Werter finds the peace in death that so many of Bannerman’s other narrators throughout Poems only wished to achieve.

The Werter sonnets represent a decisive culmination of Bannerman’s exploration of these themes. It is no surprise that the poems conclude the volume, for she had pushed this fatalistic vision as far as it could go. The depressive impact of the poems, however, is somewhat softened due to Bannerman’s use of such a well-known and culturally pervasive character like Goethe’s Werther to personify these gloomy ideas. Nevertheless, when the volume is read in sequence and considered as a whole, it is a remarkably dark production, and Bannerman’s

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57 For readers less familiar with the novel, it takes Werter nearly twelve painfully unromantic and unforgivably realistic hours to die from his self-inflicted gunshot wound.

58 It is important to note that Bannerman’s vision in Tales of Superstition and Chivalry is significantly different than that of Poems. Rather than advocate suicide or the pursuit of a lasting peace in death, the characters in Tales often return from death in search of justice or revenge, which yields a far more aggressive yet surprisingly more optimistic point of view.
conceptualization of nature and its inability to alleviate the suffering of her troubled narrators differs dramatically from the more optimistic ideas of early Romantic poets.

Contemporary critics certainly acknowledged the aura of gloom that pervaded Bannerman’s debut volume. Although it was praised “for vigour, elegance, and harmony,” the British Critic also warned that “an air of fixed and deep melancholy diffused over the whole of this otherwise most agreeable performance” (139, 141). This chief complaint appears to have been anticipated by Bannerman, for she offers a kind of apology in the preface to “The Nun.” Discussing the nun’s decision to “sacrifice” her freedom and enter a convent, Bannerman states: “It may be objected, that the regret, and almost intolerable misery, which succeed it, are wholly inconsistent with a mind capable of such exalted generosity. But, let it be remembered, that, in a moment of enthusiasm, we may do what we repent for ever” (p.37). In other words, the young nun should not be faulted for feeling regret or doubts about her act of self-sacrifice. Whether the nun’s decision was impulsive or carefully considered, the great irony of Bannerman’s poem is the fact that the heroine has willingly entered the convent by her own volition. She was not condemned to the nunnery by a wicked stepmother or scheming relative; instead, she hoped to help her family by forgoing her inheritance, and essentially erasing herself from existence so that her younger sister could marry. The dutiful nun’s self-sacrifice exemplifies the kind of altruistic behavior expected of women in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Women were expected to be passive, and to place the needs of others – particularly the needs of family members – before their own desires.

However, such selflessness is unfulfilling, and in many cases, debilitating. Bannerman’s comments prior to “The Nun” reveal this rather frustrating double-bind that implies that women have no right to express any displeasure or discontentment with the rather limited circumstances
of their lives. Women must conform to social conventions, behave in a manner deemed appropriate by society, and above all, they are to remain silent. If a woman voices an objection, she runs the risk of condemnation or accusations of ingratitude. This is best exemplified in “The Nun” when the narrator is overwhelmed by feelings of guilt and selfishness when she remembers that her sacrifice and current discomfort has enabled her sister’s freedom:

How can I thus repine,
While peace, and ease, and liberty, are thine?
Art thou not dearer to this aching breast,
Than joy, and freedom, happiness, and rest?
O! spare me, heaven! my fainting frame sustain;
The pray’r of misery can ne’er be vain:
To fear, remorse, and agony, a prey,
Why is my bosom torn, from day to day?
Why will thy ministers, with cruel art,
Tear its last shelter from a broken heart?
Pure was the awful sacrifice it made;
Hard fate impos’d the task, and friendship paid.
Ah! had it falter’d, less severely firm,
And, trembling, shudder’d at the first alarm,
To selfish joy confin’d its fervent glow,
What guilt had spar’d its peace, what lasting woe! (109-24)

This passage demonstrates just how deeply feelings of guilt and domestic responsibility have become embedded within the conscience of the narrator, and more importantly, it symbolizes
how deeply engrained such feelings have become within women in general. The narrator has every right to express her discontentment, for her circumstances are far worse than she likely anticipated when she first agreed to enter the convent. Yet she feels that the purity of her “awful sacrifice” is somehow compromised by not maintaining a stoic attitude in the face of her newfound adversity. In this case, the narrator is denied the ability to express her true feelings. The “joy, and freedom, happiness, and rest” of her sister is more important than her own experiences of physical and psychological torment. The *proper* response from the narrator – and by extension all women – is to suffer in silence, or face the inevitable criticism that will result from speaking out.

However much Bannerman’s debut volume draws attention to the difficulties and disadvantages faced by women, a handful of poems are designed to highlight the *strength* of women as well. A brief scene occurs in “The Genii,” for example, where a young woman exhibits great bravery and strength. The heart of the poem includes a description of a momentous earthquake; yet rather than linger on the details of the destruction of the city, Bannerman focuses on the “affrighted victims” who manage to survive the event (99). A moment of maternal tenderness is highlighted amidst the chaos and confusion:

> …the frantic mother, clasping wild
> 
> To her quick-heaving heart her sleeping child,
> 
> On some torn fragment of the shatter’d wall,
> 
> Awaits the shock, so soon to level all. (102-105)

While such a scene captures the sublime terror of the earthquake itself, it also enables Bannerman to show the courage of this exemplary mother, who despite her fear and the prospect of danger to herself, she is foremost concerned with protecting her child for as long as possible.
One of Bannerman’s most personal and autobiographical poems is the ode “To Pain,” which is characterized by its speaker’s admirable fortitude in the face of physical discomfort and illness. Aishah Sulaiman Alshatti’s reading of this ode concludes that through both physical and existential suffering, “the speaker learns how to co-exist with her pains instead of resisting them” (127). Although the narrator is forced to “bend” to the proverbial “throne” of pain, her faith in the promise of heaven – “where all is peace, and all is joy” – has granted her the ability to endure and “follow through” until her physical suffering on earth has ended (35, 30, 40). The emphasis upon physical pain resulting from illness also provides a more tangible – rather than existential – source for the narrator’s complaints. She has a legitimate reason to lament her lot in life, yet she perseveres and endures her discomfort with grace and humility. Whereas silence is equated with meekness or oppression in a poem like “The Nun,” here silence is synonymous with strength. The narrator of “To Pain” chooses not to complain about her discomfort. Not because she is forbidden to do so, but because she refuses to allow her physical suffering to dominate her spirit.

Bannerman’s debut volume might conclude with the Werter sonnets and what appears to be a tentative defense or justification for suicide, but Poems also offers more optimistic alternatives – and it should not be overlooked that the presumably female narrator of the ode “To Pain” possesses far greater strength than the impulsive male narrator of the Werter poems. She chooses to forge ahead despite her pain, whereas the narrator of the Werter poems has given up on account of Lotte’s rejection of him.

The metaphor of determination informing “To Pain” can be extended beyond the personal difficulties experienced by women to address larger and broader social issues. The greater visionary scope of poems such as “The Nun” or “To Pain” can be found in Bannerman’s implication that the first step in improving the circumstances of life is to expose what is wrong.
with a particular scenario before a better alternative can be discovered. In most cases, women are at the heart of Bannerman’s reformative visions. Nowhere is this more prominent in the 1800 volume than in the narrative poem “Verses on an Illumination for a Naval Victory,” which criticizes Britain’s involvement in the Napoleonic Wars. According to Paula Backscheider and Catherine Ingrassia, the occasion for the poem is “General Howe’s defeat of the French fleet on 1 June 1794” (450). Sometimes referred to as the Glorious First of June, the battle was considered England’s first major naval engagement with the French during the Revolutionary War. Admiral Richard Howe (1726-1799) led the attack, and despite losing seven ships in the skirmish, the battle was considered a draw since the French were also forced to retreat (“Glorious,” par 1). Bannerman’s interest in this particular historical event (which occurred six years prior to the publication of Poems) stems from the public’s mixed perception of the conflict. Both the British and the French declared the battle a victory, “and the outcome of the battle was seized upon by the press of both nations as a demonstration of the prowess and bravery of their respective navies” (“Glorious,” par 3). Therefore, Bannerman’s poem seeks to “illuminate” the fact that the concept of victory in war is essentially arbitrary.

“Verses on an Illumination for a Naval Victory” boldly defies established eighteenth-century literary traditions, for many writers used poetry to “celebrate the accomplishments of prominent military figures or specific naval or land victories. Such poems allowed poets to display their patriotism or political allegiances and to capitalize on the market for these poems” (Backscheider and Ingrassia 419-20). However, Bannerman’s poem is designed to expose the futility of war rather than commemorate a particular victory. She immediately takes a rebellious stance by using a French text as an epigraph for a poem inspired by a British naval battle. The passage comes from Jean-Baptiste Rousseau’s “Ode à la Fortune,” which condemns the violence
of war and culminates in the following translated lines: “How false, alas! The voice of Praise /
How senseless is renown.”59 The powerful opening stanzas of Bannerman’s poem are concerned
with the paradox of “public triumph in the face of personal loss,” for war is never a time to
rejoice, regardless of whether a particular battle is considered a strategic victory (Ingrassia 112).
Both sides inevitably suffer casualties, therefore any celebration of victory is in poor taste
because it does not account for the “thousands in untimely graves,” or the bodies of dead soldiers
heaped upon “the pile of human sacrifice” (8, 12). Bannerman suggests that public behavior
during wartime is unnatural, for “shrinking Nature mourns her unbroken laws” at the sounds of
“triumph and applause” throughout the masses (10).

Bannerman deliberately contrasts these “bloody scene[s]” of “human sacrifice” with
descriptions of grieving women to emphasize the personal consequences of war:

Hid in some dark retreat, the widow weeps
Her heart’s best treasure buried in the deeps;
The frantic mother’s cries of Heaven implore
Some youthful warrior—she shall meet no more: (11-16)

The widow and mother withdraw from the public eye to privately mourn the loss of their loved
ones, which exemplifies a more humane response to war. Subsequent lines reiterate that the grief
and suffering occasioned by war is pervasive and overshadows everyday occurrences:

From the first beam, that wakes the golden day,
To ling’ring twilight’s melancholy ray,
No respite comes, their breaking hearts to cheer,
Or, from the fount of misery, steal a tear! (17-20)

59 Perhaps to avoid controversy or potential accusations that Bannerman was unpatriotic, the epigraph was
Both the grieving widow and the distressed mother accept the reality of their losses, and each woman recognizes that there is no sense in trying to deny the “misery” of their respective situations. With each new day, they must face their pain directly until they are capable of moving forward. The general public, on the other hand, represses its grief, and instead seeks to feed a seemingly insatiable appetite for violence and vengeance by rushing into further conflict.

The distinction between masculine aggression and female compassion is further underscored in the poem’s third stanza, which moves the intimate domestic setting focused on grieving women to a more visceral scene that highlights the bloodthirsty behavior of men. With a wild and desolate landscape providing a suitably ominous backdrop, this portion of the poem follows an “uncultur’d savage [who] spurns the arts of peace” (22). Driven by “hatred” and guided by “revenge,” the man spends his days wandering the earth in search of conflict and passes his nights dreaming of how he will murder his enemies (23-30). When he awakens from his violent nightmares, the man is drawn into a ferocious encounter with another ruthless warrior like himself:

…Afar he sees a form,

Half-viewless, stalking thro’ the misty storm ;

Nearer he comes ; his frantic eye-balls glare,

And yells inhuman ring along the air :

They meet, engage ; affrighted Nature flies ;

A fearful darkness dims the low’ring skies ;

Revenge beside them points th’ envenom’d stings,

And murder shrouds them, with his gory wings! (31-38)
This short Gothic-tinged episode emphasizes the monstrous and “inhuman” characteristics of hand-to-hand combat. Bannerman bluntly uses the word “murder” to describe the conflict, to ensure that readers will not mistake this battle for a noble or righteous cause. The behavior of the fighting men is so repulsive, that Nature is driven away and the landscape undergoes an aberrant, nearly apocalyptic change. Bannerman’s use of Gothic elements in this portion of the poem relies upon the original associations of the term “gothic” to signify the barbaric and uncivilized characteristics of those eager to go to war. In this way, Bannerman manages to simultaneously thrill her readers with a tense and violent scene, but she also makes a critical observation on the political repercussions of masculine aggression.

In the next two stanzas of the poem, Bannerman highlights the hypocrisy of an allegedly merciful and Christian society that continues to engage in politically-motivated wars. Soldiers are compared to “demons” eager to “scatter death around,” and they remain “unmoved” by the bloodshed and carnage they unleash (49-51). Once again, Bannerman likens warfare to “untutor’d Murder,” yet reminds readers that such atrocities are the product of nationally sanctioned efforts and carefully planned human strategy: “all its keener, deadlier arts – are ours” (53, 54). Ultimately it makes no difference whether combat takes place in a darkened forest or on a formal battlefield – it is still murder, and it is always wrong. The poem builds to one overarching question: how can humankind be responsible for such horror, “yet look to brighter worlds, for endless bliss?” (73-74). Bannerman’s depiction of Great Britain during wartime strongly implies that the concept of heaven and the primary teachings of Christianity are irreconcilable with the behavior and actions of English society at large.

After identifying the violent realities of the Napoleonic Wars and exposing the ugly impulses that appear to govern society, Bannerman introduces an omnipresent and benevolent
“Spirit” to the plot of the poem (55). Using lush and vivid descriptions, she invites readers to imagine how this impartial spirit would react favorably to the natural beauty of the world. By pausing to imagine the Spirit’s reaction to the natural world, readers are expected to recognize how they have grown accustomed to the world’s natural beauty and have taken it for granted. The “Spirit” is horrified when it witnesses the violent aftermath of war, and Bannerman immediately follows the fourth stanza’s serene descriptions of nature with a return to apocalyptic imagery for the fifth stanza, which places the disheartened Spirit at the center of the battlefield:

Let Him stand, where hostile armies join,
By the red waters of the rushing Rhine,
Amid thick darkness, hear the trumpets blow,
And the last shriek of Nature quiver low,
Mark the full tide of Desolation spread,
And count, at eve, the dying and the dead: (65-70)

The incredulous Spirit fails to understand how humanity could possess “some trace…of an immortal mind” yet condone such senseless violence (72). Bannerman’s Spirit, however, is not driven away by humanity’s flaws, instead, it hopes to inspire the world to change. The poem ultimately appeals to the reason – as well as the national pride – of readers by inviting them to imagine how despicable and monstrous humanity would appear to a more enlightened, supernatural being, with the hope of inspiring readers to re-examine their behavior and their continuing support of the Napoleonic Wars. Bannerman’s poem emphasizes a positive domestic culture as opposed to engaging in destructive wars on foreign lands.

60 William Wordsworth will make a similar point about how the general populace has become indifferent to the natural beauty of their surroundings in his 1807 sonnet “The World is too Much with Us”: “Little we see in nature that is ours…/ For this, for everything, we are out of tune” (3,8).
“Verses on an Illumination for a Naval Victory” is one of several poems where Bannerman attempts to evoke sympathy in readers by emphasizing the perspective of women in the face of violence or suffering. She was certainly not the first to utilize this didactic strategy, as several Romantic-era women poets ranging from Catherine Rebecca Manners to Anna Seward also wrote poems imbued with “graphic imagery [that] reflects the changing reality of warfare and vividly reminds readers of the human price of war” (Backscheider and Ingrassia 420-21).

About five years after Bannerman retired from the literary scene, Anna Letitia Barbauld published the long poem *Eighteen Hundred and Eleven*, which also emphasizes the experiences of mothers and widows to reinforce an anti-war stance:

> Fruitful in vain, the matron counts with pride  
> The blooming youths that grace her honoured side;  
> No son returns to press her widow'd hand,  
> Her fallen blossoms strew a foreign strand.

> ...  
> Oft o'er the daily page some soft-one bends  
> To learn the fate of husband, brothers, friends,  
> Or the spread map with anxious eye explores,  
> Its dotted boundaries and penciled shores,  
> Asks where the spot that wrecked her bliss is found,  
> And learns its name but to detest the sound. (23-26, 33-38)

The number of Romantic-era women poets who wrote responses to the war was quite voluminous, and includes noteworthy poems from Charlotte Smith, Ann Yearsley, Mary Robinson, and Amelia Opie. But Bannerman was one of the first to so forcefully equate military
aggression with *masculine* aggression, and to deliberately juxtapose the behavior of men and women during times of war. In this respect, “Verses on an Illumination for a Naval Victory” is an important precursor to Barbauld’s more well-known and controversial poem that would appear a decade later.

Barbauld’s *Eighteen Hundred and Eleven* depicts war as an affront to civilized culture and the product of a savage race. But she infuriated readers foremost by presenting her poem as a prophecy, which warned that if England continued to engage with France in the Napoleonic Wars, eventually America would supersede Great Britain as the most powerful and prosperous country in the world and England would fall to disgrace.⁶¹ In fact, Barbauld’s poem strongly implies that it is already too late for the country to be saved. Daniel Watkins’ reading of Barbauld’s controversial poem locates a particularly pacifist solution embedded within the narrative: “The better course of action…is to focus on building a new reality based on principles other than brute force and power” (46). Barbauld’s overarching argument is severe yet logically sound, for she suggests that if “the nation is weakened to the point of collapse…it should be allowed to collapse” (Watkins 189).

Although Bannerman’s earlier poem articulated a similarly pointed critique of war, Barbauld was already a respected poet, essayist, and editor by the time she published *Eighteen Hundred and Eleven* and had been a major figure in the British literary scene since the early 1790s. Therefore, Barbauld’s prophetic satire reached a far wider audience than Bannerman’s poem and was able to generate more controversy as a result. Nevertheless, there are a number of parallels between the two works that deserve closer inspection – not necessarily to prove that

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Barbauld was directly influenced by Bannerman, but to demonstrate that Bannerman was just as politically engaged and shrewd in her observations of the world around her, and that she was cognizant of the roots of the political problems that persisted in England over the course of the first decade of the nineteenth century.

It is eminently possible, however, that Barbauld was aware of Bannerman’s “Verses on an Illumination for Naval Victory.” Compelling evidence of the elder poet’s familiarity with Bannerman’s earlier poem can be found in the conclusion of *Eighteen Hundred and Eleven*. Like Bannerman, Barbauld also introduces an omnipotent and omniscient “Spirit” at the end of the poem, which is designed to sting the national pride of readers by implying that humanity would appear to be contemptible in the eyes of more enlightened supernatural forces. Bannerman’s Spirit is hopeful that humanity can amend its ways through a change in perspective, but Barbauld’s Spirit is less forgiving, aloof, and judgmental. That the conclusions to both poems utilize such a similar technique warrants further investigation from Romantic scholars.

Barbauld concludes her poem to great effect by warning readers that just as the “Spirit of Genius” and the seat of culture once moved from classical Greece and Rome to Great Britain centuries ago, that Spirit will relocate again if England continues to squander its resources and sacrifice its population in battle. Barbauld reminds readers that behind any civilized culture is a history of barbarism that can only be dispelled through education and enlightenment:

…the human brute awakes,

And, roused to better life, his sordid hut forsakes:

He thinks, he reasons, glows with purer fires,

Feels finer wants, and burns with new desires: (219-222).

Despite centuries of progress and development, Britain was once again on the brink of decay at
the dawn of the nineteenth century, and its people were reverting back to their baser, more violent instincts.

Although Barbauld’s poem does not place as prominent an emphasis on the role of gendered behaviors, she does champion a clearly pacifist stance that is informed by characteristics and traits more commonly associated with feminine rather than masculine behavior. In “Verses on an Illumination for a Naval Victory,” Bannerman’s vision repeatedly stresses the importance of “Fancy,” which must combat “mad Ambition” to produce a more harmonious world (83, 89-91). Ultimately, feeling must be stronger than the promise of power. Therefore, a change in perspective must occur if there is any hope of restoring peace, for men have been taught from a young age to believe that warfare is a direct path to glory and success:

The polish’d youth, whom Europe rears to arms,

And glory flatters, with deceitful charms,

Chills each fine impulse of the glowing soul,

And, pressing onward to the laurel’d goal,

Forgets that feeling ever warm’d his breast,

Or Pity pleaded for the heart opprest. (107-112)

Humanity – and men in particular – have grown numb to “feeling” and “Pity,” and until there is a collective reconsideration of how each individual perceives the world, the cycle of war will continue to “rage, [and] Man with Man eternal warfare [shall] wage” (91-92). Bannerman concludes the poem by addressing those who have lost loved ones in battle, and makes an appeal that their sorrow will awaken more noble and peaceful feelings:

May piercing anguish spare his arrows keen,

And pity soothe you, as ye weep unseen!
May peace pervade, where faithful sorrow reigns,
And charm the grief, that not an eye profanes!
Ah! think, tho’ ling’ring years unblest decay,
To troubled night succeeds untroubled day!
Time’s feeble barrier bounds the painful course,
But joy shall reign, eternal as its source. (134-142)

The final stanza’s references to “unseen” expressions of grief recall the depictions of private mourning exemplified earlier in the poem by widows and mothers who have lost soldiers in the war. Once again, the more modest behavior of women exemplifies the proper way to react to the misfortunes of war. By yielding fully to feelings of loss, and not allowing oneself to get caught up in public expressions of vengeance, the process of healing can run its “painful course.”

As powerful as Bannerman’s socially-conscious and redemptive vision appears to be in “Verses on an Illumination for a Naval Victory,” it is clear that she was not entirely certain that an idealized and pacifist perspective was the only response to personal or political conflict. Adriana Craciun’s discussion of Bannerman in Fatal Women of Romanticism stresses that “the violence of Bannerman’s imagination is…at odds with her own political and poetic idealism, which often and self-consciously seeks refuge from injustice and war in moments of transcendence” (179). Part of what makes Bannerman such a fascinating and thought-provoking poet is her tendency to swing from one extreme perspective to another throughout Poems, and her endorsement of seemingly conflicting points of view throughout the volume. Despite the number of passive or victimized narrators throughout Poems, there is an undercurrent of violence and aggression just beneath the surface that is ready to erupt. However much the narrator of “The Nun” may be oppressed, the poem’s pervasive melancholy doesn’t entirely succeed in masking
Bannerman’s genuine anger that women are continually victimized within the Church and throughout society at large. It is not until *Tales of Superstition and Chivalry* that Bannerman adopts a consistently uninhibited and rebellious voice, but readers can detect the seeds of what was to come in the 1800 volume with poems such as “The Spirit of the Air” and “The Mermaid,” which introduce Bannerman’s first supernatural *femmes fatales*. In fact, these two violent poems contain arguably the most intimidating and unrestrained expressions of female vengeance and power in Bannerman’s entire *oeuvre*. Yet it would not be accurate to suggest that these two poems represent her ‘true’ vision, for there are limitations and certain caveats to be considered when these poems are examined from a specifically feminist perspective as well.

There is an immediacy and visceral intensity in both “The Spirit of the Air” and “The Mermaid” that is never quite matched by any of the ballads collected in *Tales of Superstition and Chivalry*. “The Spirit of the Air” was singled out and reproduced in its entirety by the *Critical Review* in 1801, and cited as “irrefragable proof that the ardour, whatever be its gender, which gives birth to lofty thought and bold expression may glow within a female breast” (435). Although Bannerman already introduced supernatural elements in “The Genii” and “Verses on an Illumination for Naval Victory,” those poems were written from an omniscient third-person perspective and the supernatural elements were secondary to other thematic concerns. For “The Spirit of the Air” and “The Mermaid,” Bannerman switches to a more intimate first-person point of view and writes as if she is a formidable supernatural creature. She seems to relish the creative freedom of inhabiting such unrestrained and powerful personas, and the poems mark another unmistakable shift in tone when they first appear about a third of the way through the volume.

Unlike the narrator of “The Nun” or the various victimized subjects of Bannerman’s sonnets, the speaker of “The Spirit of the Air” is a powerful advocate for those too weak or
disadvantaged to empower themselves. In the opening stanza of the poem, the spectral narrator asserts the awesome magnitude of her powers:

   My will supreme, mine awful sway,
   The earth, the air, the sea obey;
   My glance pervades the realms of space;
   Each hidden spring, this arm can trace;
   O’er all the prostrate world, my power extends,
   Alike on Zembla’s ice, on Zaara’s burning sands. (5-10)

The Spirit professes a command over three of the four elements, and although she does not mention a mastery of fire, there appears to be no limit to her influence, for she claims to be equally formidable in the Polar Regions as she is within the desert. A similar description also appears in the early stanzas of “The Genii,” where the narrator elaborates upon the various powers and capabilities of the genii and their control over the natural elements. The difference in “The Spirit of the Air” is that the narrator is now boasting of her own powers, as shown through the repeated use of the possessive plurals “my” and “mine.” Additionally, the poem is distinguished in terms of how the omnipotent Spirit decides to direct her powers – and who she identifies as her primary opposition:

   I come, on viewless winds reclin’d,
   To cheer the wretch, whom fetters bind,
   To crush the oppressor’s giant crest,
   To hurl destruction on his breast,
   Amid the spoils his abject soul adores;
   And trembling earth recoils along her utmost shores. (15-20)
The Spirit acts exclusively on behalf of women, slaves, and other minorities who are incapable of defending themselves, and she seems to specifically target cruel and tyrannical men as her victims. In a discussion of Bannerman’s ballads from *Tales of Superstition and Chivalry*, Melissa Edmundson Makala has explained that Bannerman’s apparitions “not only seek vengeance, but [they] also return from their graves in order to educate other women, who are in danger of making the same mistakes” (25). Although Makala doesn’t discuss “The Spirit of the Air,” her theory that Bannerman’s female specters come to the aid of victimized women can be extended to this earlier poem as well. The supernatural force in “The Spirit of the Air” goes beyond merely educating women – it directly intervenes into their affairs, fights on their behalf, and attacks their enemies.

One of the most memorable passages in “The Spirit of the Air” recounts the horrific suicide of a desperate mother aboard a slave ship. Rather than face whatever torments the slave traders have in store for her and her infant son, she opts to take her own life and the life of her child by jumping overboard into the sea. The men aboard the ship make no effort to save her, yet the Spirit ensures that they will not remain unpunished:

   Proceed unmov’d, ye men of blood!

   Your course along the waters urge ;

62 More than a century and a half before the advent of comic book superheroes, Bannerman imagines a benevolent protector swooping through the skies in search of evil, injustice, and other wrongs that must be righted. In a rather unexpected way, Bannerman’s Spirit anticipates a character like Wonder Woman, who was created by William Moulton Marsten to serve as a symbol of peace and compassion in the increasingly aggressive and masculine climate of World War II. Although diplomacy is considered one of her greatest strengths, Wonder Woman often resorts to combat or violence if pacifism fails to resolve a particular conflict. And also like Wonder Woman, Bannerman’s idealized Spirit is especially concerned with protecting women and children from cruel or dishonest men. However, the Spirit’s vengeful demeanor is more in line with darker vigilante characters such as Batman or The Punisher. Although male, both of these comic book characters are driven by an obsessive desire to avenge the crimes that claimed the lives of their families. In any case, Bannerman’s poem might have a surprising resonance for students growing up in a culture that is currently experiencing a renewed interest in superheroes on television and in film.
No winds shall vex the unruffled flood,
Nor toss on high the deaf’ning surge.
Now, for your happy homes prepare;
But, curb your joy, I meet you there.
Then, as your friends, your infant race,
Rush wildly to your fond embrace,
Before your eyes a ghastly form shall stand,
And o’er her infant weep, and wave her beck’ning hand. (31-40)

Instead of calling up storms to drown the men at sea, the Spirit vows to enact her vengeance by following the men to their “happy homes” and manifesting in the spectral form of the drowned slave. The Spirit chooses to attack the men when they are at their most vulnerable and where they feel the safest and most secure. The men are also humiliated in front of their families when their crimes are exposed – a tactic Bannerman will also use to great effect in “The Dark Ladie” when the eponymous revenant interrupts a dinner celebration to reveal the crimes of its host before his entourage of knights and kinsmen. In both of these poems, the punishment is perfectly tailored to suit the original crime in a manner reminiscent of the conceptualizations of justice in the Old Testament, as well as medieval morality plays and traditional Scottish and English ballads. While vengeance is the primary theme that informs the ballads comprising Tales of Superstition and Chivalry, it is important that Poems is also recognized by critics for its earlier engagement with these ideas.

Each of Bannerman’s Gothic and supernatural poems emphasize an incredibly important gender component within their depictions of female vengeance and justice. If masculine power is predicated upon aggression, then it is necessary for women to adopt an even more aggressive
strategy; and if power is understood to be synonymous with masculinity, then the most effective way to divest men of their dominance is to expose their weaknesses and fears. Therefore, Bannerman’s use of the Gothic and her tendency to endow her heroines in *Tales of Superstition and Chivalry* with occult and supernatural powers is one very direct way to capitalize upon male fear and anxiety and to ultimately level the playing field.

The latter half of “The Spirit of the Air” continues to showcase not only the full extent of the ghostly avenger’s powers, but also a sense of discomfiting unpredictability. She intervenes in wars by toppling and dismantling entire armies, yet also commands the elements to cause devastating shipwrecks to presumably villainous navies in search of further plunder. But what is perhaps most striking of all – and what makes the poem such an exhilarating and unforgettable read – is the sense of sheer confidence that the narrator possesses. Compared to the oppressive sense of entrapment that characterizes a poem such as “The Nun,” or the ever-present air of melancholy of the sonnets, “The Spirit of the Air” stands out from the rest of *Poems* as an expression of unbridled freedom. The Spirit literally encounters no boundaries or limitations to her own power. She “ride[s] sublime thro’ æther blue” and holds sway over the earth, the sea, and the sky as well: “I bid the rose in crimson glow, / And spread the lily’s robe of snow; / I waft from heaven the balmy breeze / That sighs along the sleeping seas” (82, 85-88). But above all, she is in command of herself, boasting of an unwavering fearlessness and invulnerability in the ode’s concluding lines:

O’er me nor cold, nor heat, prevails,
Nor poison from malignant gales;
I glide along the trackless coast,
That binds the magazines of frost;
Encompass’d by the raging storm,
I smile at danger’s threat’ning form;
I mock destruction on his tow’ring seat,
And leave the roaring winds, contending at my feet. (95-102)

This is a remarkably different voice and perspective than much of the rest of the narration found in *Poems*. Although the Petrarch translations and *Werter* sonnets are also unmistakably passionate poems, they are informed by grief and the pangs of unfulfilled love and ultimately serve as expressions of profound loss or discontentment. “The Spirit of the Air,” on the other hand, offers a very different perspective on passion that is fueled by hope, justice, and empowerment in the face of suffering, loss, and abuse. In this vision of the world, great wrongs are righted, balance is restored, victims are avenged, and evil does not go unpunished.

“The Spirit of the Air” is immediately followed by “The Mermaid,” an even more intense and violent ode that is also written from a confident and forceful first-person narrative perspective. But rather than utilize her occult gifts to benefit others, the Mermaid revels in chaos and causes harm to those unfortunate enough to cross her path. The opening stanza of “The Mermaid” immediately establishes a darker and more turbulent tone with its vivid description of a storm-ravaged coastline, complete with “death-fraught whirlwinds,” allusions to “demons,” “impenetrable clouds,” and “raging tempests” (1, 3, 7, 9). Like the Spirit that appears at the end of “Verses on an Illumination for a Naval Victory,”

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63 If the supernatural being at the heart of “The Spirit of the Air” is comparable to a modern-day superhero or vigilante, then the enraged siren that narrates “The Mermaid” can be likened to an angry super-villain who has been corrupted by power.
the Mermaid watches and observes destruction unfolding around her; however, rather than feeling discouraged by the turmoil she witnesses, she is positively enraptured by it. Furthermore, she is the direct cause of it. At the start of the second stanza, the Mermaid salutes the “eternal world of waters” because its violence mirrors her own tumultuous feelings (11). Although the narrator is not a native of the cold and forsaken region described, she finds that the “unbounded waste of seas, / where never sigh’d the vernal breeze” is a perfectly suitable backdrop for her feelings of rage and unresolved grief (17-18). Once again, nature functions as a reflection of the narrator’s emotions, rather than a determinate influence on the speaker’s feelings. The Mermaid is also partial to this desolate area because “within [the] caves [her] lover lies,” which confirms that her feelings of frustration and bitterness are the result of her lover’s death (12).

The epigraph that precedes the poem indicates that Bannerman’s source for “The Mermaid” was the Danish legend of Ajut and Anningait, which was retold and discussed by Samuel Johnson in his magazine The Rambler in December of 1751. In the original version of the story, Ajut took a fishing boat out to sea to search for Anningait after he went missing. Johnson explains that the fate of the two lovers is unknown, but some stories claim that “Anningait was seized in his passage by the Genius of the Rocks, and that Ajut was transformed into a Mermaid, and still continues to seek her lover in the deserts of the sea” (p.58). Yet once again, Bannerman departs from her source material to stress that Ajut welcomed the transformation and willingly adopted her new role as a vengeful mermaid: “Mine was the choice, in this terrific form, / To brave the icy surge, to shiver in the storm” (19-20). Adriana Craciun’s reading of “The Mermaid” argues that Bannerman “revises the male-authored femme fatale, not into a sympathetic character, the abandoned woman who laments her fate, but into a more spectacular destroyer whose chief weapon is her song” (Fatal 176-77). Bannerman’s
interpretation of the story invests the female character with greater agency and power, and is adamant that the Mermaid determines her own fate and controls her own destiny. The transformation from mortal to mermaid is not the result of a curse or a punishment for a transgression against the gods; the poem implies that the narrator has willed her body to undergo a physical and preternatural change. The curse in Bannerman’s poem is cast by the mermaid herself, and it is directed against mankind.

In the third stanza, the Mermaid admits that she has become a monster: “Yes! I am chang’d.—My heart, my soul, / Retain no more their former glow” (21-22). Her sole purpose is “to lure the sailor to his doom” with her “syren-song of woe” (26, 27). Whereas Bannerman’s “Spirit of the Air” calls up storms to drown criminals that have abused or terrorized the innocent, the Mermaid’s rage is indiscriminate. She causes shipwrecks simply to observe the helpless crew as they struggle and die:

| I mark each hardy cheek grow pale, |
| And the proud sons of courage fail ; |
| Till the torn vessel drinks the surging waves, |
| Yawns the disparted main, and opes its shelving graves. (37-40) |

Presumably the Mermaid feels a temporary and misguided satisfaction knowing that others will grieve just as she has done. But this forms an interesting contrast with “The Spirit of the Air,” which features a supernatural being that acts on behalf of women that have been wronged in some capacity. In “The Mermaid,” the jealous siren causes pain for other women by killing their husbands, brothers, and sons. Yet the bitter irony of the poem is that no genuine satisfaction or peace can be gained from the Mermaid’s savage acts of violence, for her lover can never be
restored to her. Rather than fighting to earn women respect or more humane treatment, the Mermaid establishes a sense of equality by ensuring that others share her suffering.

The Mermaid is also fully cognizant of her malevolent nature, for she takes pride in the fact that her spells are appalled by “earth and heaven” (43). Furthermore, she boasts that a “gifted wizard calls” upon her to wreak further havoc at sea by controlling the elements and lending supernatural strength to the already devastating ocean storms (44). Once again, Bannerman engages with an earlier poem that was well-known to her contemporaries, for she clarifies in a footnote that the reference to wizards and spell-casting is derived from a short passage in William Collins’ “Ode on the Superstitions of the Highlands.” Yet in Bannerman’s allusion to Collins, the “hideous spells” of “the gifted wizard” pale in comparison to the Mermaid’s powers, so he must turn to her to compensate for his weaker command of the spirits (Collins 53-55).64

The reversal in gender dynamics is certainly noteworthy, but one might question whether the Mermaid’s “potent agency” is to be celebrated or reviled (60). Although she possesses great power, the Mermaid’s scornful demeanor and blind rage forms a considerable contrast to the vengeful yet heroic supernatural force in “The Spirit of the Air.” However much readers might sympathize with the Mermaid, she cannot necessarily be considered an admirable character. As Makala’s study of Bannerman’s ballads has shown, the dead often return to life for a specifically benevolent purpose – usually to ensure that an unrepentant criminal is punished or to safeguard unwary female victims from potential dangers. Ballads such as “The Dark Ladie” and “The Perjured Nun” feature revenants more in line with the ghostly vigilante of “The Spirit of the Air,” who intercede into human affairs to expose the guilt of outwardly respectable men who

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64 Collins’ poem is reprinted in its entirety in Appendix D.
commit crimes against vulnerable women. But the Mermaid stands apart from Bannerman’s other supernatural figures, for she is a personification of pure hatred and unadulterated rage. Rather than use her powers to prevent others from experiencing the same tragedies, the Mermaid believes it is her “fearful destiny” “to scatter death” across the sea (61, 66). She spends the duration of her existence luring scores of sailors to their watery graves for no purpose beyond her own sadistic pleasure:

Thro’ time’s long ages I shall wait
To lead the victims to their fate;
With callous heart, to hidden rocks decoy,
And lure, in seraph-strains, unpitying, to destroy. (67-70)

Her use of presumably melodious “seraph-strains” to charm the sailors toward destruction adds deception to her arsenal, for she masks her wicked intentions behind a disguise of beauty. Yet the poem’s final couplets reinforce a static fate for the Mermaid. Nothing ever changes or improves for her, and the ode concludes without any indication of progress or development. Instead, the Mermaid remains fixed at the edge of the sea and continues to play the role of a merciless monster.

“The Mermaid” stands as Bannerman’s most ruthless and violent poem. It emphasizes violence simply for the sake of violence, regardless of the personal tragedy or loss that initially fueled the Mermaid’s despair. The poem articulates the kind of frustration and rage that Bannerman’s more repressed and victimized narrators were incapable of expressing on account of fear, hopelessness, or mere propriety. But “The Mermaid” is an unmistakable exception, and it is certainly no coincidence that in addition to her command of the winds and seas, the Mermaid’s voice is her most formidable weapon. Her unbridled anger gives voice to passionate and ugly
feelings concerning grief, rage, and vengeance that polite society would deem inappropriate for women to express. By adopting the role of a monster, Bannerman is able to speak more freely as a poet, and she sets herself in opposition to the kinds of conventional and predominantly Christian ideologies that limit female expression. In lieu of traditionally Christian concepts of restraint, forgiveness, patience, or humility, Bannerman’s supernatural poems endorse vengeance, violence, indulgence, and decisive action against enemies and any form of oppression. In this way, her supernatural poems articulate a rebellious alternative vision and perspective that is comparable to the Satanic aesthetics of Blake, Byron, and Shelley. In her discussion of “The Mermaid,” Craciun concludes that “Bannerman’s poem celebrates the demonic, not the divine” and “challenges any assumption that the demonic or Satanic poet is consistently male” (Fatal 177).

The term “Satanic” is an especially provocative and often misunderstood word. The etymological origin of the word is the adjectival form of the Hebrew word for “adversary,” as in “one who plots against another,” or one with a tendency “to oppose” (OED). According to Peter A. Schock, the concept of Romantic Satanism is concerned with more extreme “attitudes or stances” within Romantic literature involving “individualism, rebellious or defiant self-assertion, and daemonic sublimity” (4). It articulates a point of view that “conveys…moral transgressiveness” and can be traced back to Milton’s depiction of Satan in Paradise Lost, particularly the character’s “defiant assertion of autonomy” (3). The Mermaid’s relentless fixation on revenge, and her insistence that it is her “choice” to embrace her monstrous form and plague humankind, bears more than a passing resemblance to Milton’s Satan. Schock argues that Satan’s mythical “apotheosis” was especially significant to Romantic-era writers, for it provided them with “an emblem of an aspiring, rebelling, rising human god who insists he is self-created”
that they could aspire toward themselves (38). Both “The Mermaid” and “The Spirit of the Air” feature remarkably autonomous and fully-realized supernatural beings at the very height of their power and influence. Bannerman does not dramatize the Mermaid’s transformation from a lovesick mortal woman into the vengeful siren she is destined to become; she is already a force of unquestionable power and strength when the poem begins, and could represent an inspirational figure for women in the same manner that Milton’s Satan inspired male Romantic poets and writers. Schock notes that the “various forms” of Romantic Satanism are “adaptable to a range of thematic situations,” but it was primarily useful to socially-conscious Romantic poets because “it provided them with a mythic medium for articulating the hopes and fears their age aroused, for prophesysing [sic] and inducing change” (6).

The appeal of an oppositional or Satanic perspective for Bannerman is quite clear from a feminist perspective, for it enables her to target the social conventions and traditions that she found most prejudicial or oppressive to women. The more sensational forms of Satanism – the hints of blasphemy in “The Mermaid,” the vengeful conceptualizations of justice in “The Spirit of the Air,” and the various Old World Pagan mythologies that inform many of Bannerman’s ballads – will appeal to a popular readership already steeped in Gothic conventions in the early nineteenth-century. Furthermore, like the contrarian ideas proposed by Blake in works such as The Marriage of Heaven and Hell, Bannerman likely hoped to shock readers into awareness and draw attention to perspectives or ideas regarding women that she found particularly objectionable. By investing her female characters with supernatural or occult powers, the proverbial playing field for gender inequality is not only leveled but turned upside down. It is no surprise that Bannerman would continue to develop these ideas and themes in her next volume of poetry, which can at least partially account for why so many ghostly femmes fatales appear in
Tales of Superstition and Chivalry. As discussed earlier, the contemporary critical response to Poems was relatively enthusiastic, and neither “The Spirit of the Air” nor “The Mermaid” generated any controversy. Both poems, along with “The Genii,” were praised and singled-out by critics as exemplary performances. But Bannerman’s second volume was poorly received, and it was largely on account of its rebellious and consistently Gothic elements.

As a means of defiant expression, the Gothic fantasies of supernatural empowerment and vengeance that inform “The Spirit of the Air” and “The Mermaid” – as well as the majority of the ballads in Tales of Superstition and Chivalry – articulate an alternative possibility for women. The irony, of course, is that these occult fantasies are ultimately an unsuccessful model for producing legitimate social change or improving the conditions experienced by women. There are, after all, no such things as ghosts and women cannot return from the dead to avenge those who have mistreated or murdered them. Women cannot call up storms or elemental spirits, nor can they cast spells upon their enemies or oppressors. The stark realization that women cannot harness, amass, or direct power in their everyday lives, and that freedom can only exist within their imaginations, represents the fundamental horror and frustration informing Bannerman’s most powerful poems.

On the other hand, a more traditionally visionary poem such as “Verses on an Illumination for a Naval Victory” reminds readers that humanity must ultimately take responsibility for itself and improve its conditions by emulating the more compassionate and peaceful example epitomized in the behavior of women. The supernatural is introduced to “Verses” simply to provide a contrast to emphasize the faults of humanity. Rather than avenging injustice, that Spirit witnesses the worst of humanity, but chooses not to intervene with the affairs of humankind. The poem ultimately stresses that humanity is responsible for saving itself.
The problem, of course, is that humanity does not appear to be on a path toward enlightenment; instead, each generation continues to make the same foolish mistakes, and seems to be on a trajectory toward destruction rather than salvation.

*Poems* is ultimately a volume of extremes, contraries, and contradictions – “The Nun” is preoccupied with oppression and restraint, while the *Werter* sonnets romanticize fatalistic passion; The concept of vengeance is perceived to be noble in “The Spirit of Air,” yet the same theme appears monstrous and cruel in “The Mermaid.” There are depictions of strong and admirable women such as the speaker of “To Pain,” the brave mother who protects her child in “The Genii,” and the honorable widows of “Verses on an Illumination for a Naval Victory,” which are intentionally juxtaposed with accounts of deceptive and duplicitous men. Bloodthirsty soldiers are condemned for their pursuit of combat in the “Naval Victory” poem, while in “The Benighted Arab,” the decision to avoid confrontation is shown to be a more rational response to war. Yet violence is rendered sublime and symbolic of female empowerment in “The Mermaid” and “The Spirit of the Air.”

These seeming contradictions distinguish *Poems* as a complex and provocative collection of texts that is designed to challenge its audience and inspire them to think more critically. Bannerman’s first public poetic statement should not be considered secondary to the (slightly) more popular *Tales of Superstition and Chivalry*, but instead read alongside it to recognize the full scope of her abilities and poetic talents. The emphasis upon the strengths and struggles of women, the fascination with the Gothic and the supernatural, and the rebellious disposition that has come to fascinate the growing coterie of modern day scholars that have discovered Bannerman’s ballads was already present in her impressive debut collection.
V. Tales of Superstition & Chivalry (1802)

Whatever minor recognition Bannerman enjoys with literary scholars and readers in the twenty-first century is almost entirely predicated upon Tales of Superstition and Chivalry, her second and final collection of completely original poetry. Yet ironically, the volume caused irrevocable damage to her budding reputation when it was first published, and initiated the decline and premature end of her poetic career. Quite simply, the collection was ahead of its time, and it required the passing of nearly two hundred years before readers more experienced with post-modernist narrative techniques could begin to recognize and fully appreciate Bannerman’s visionary ambition.

The volume consists of ten original ballads inspired by the myths and legends of Spain, Russia, France, Scandinavia, and the British Isles. Each of the ballads is firmly rooted in the Gothic tradition, and feature ghosts, prophecies, magic, occult rituals, and other supernatural elements. The poems take place in a variety of exotic locations, and Bannerman demonstrates a remarkable gift for creating rich atmospheres through the use of dramatic set pieces involving thunderstorms, shipwrecks, haunted castles, darkened forests, battle fields, and in one memorable instance, a church confessional. Although the ballads possess an antiquated air and take place in the distant medieval past, the poems address issues concerning gender, religion, and power that were relevant to audiences in Bannerman’s lifetime, and continue to resonate today.

The rebellious attitude that characterizes the more defiant poems from Bannerman’s 1800 volume is carried over to the ballads in Tales. Noted ballad scholar Douglass H. Thomson has referred to Bannerman’s poems as “innovative” and praised them for introducing “a mediating intelligence – a woman’s perspective – that reflects critically on the [ballad] tradition” (85).
The theme of vengeance is prominent in several of the ballads, yet Bannerman uses it to specifically highlight the imbalance of power between privileged men and disadvantaged women. In poems such as “The Dark Ladie,” “The Perjured Nun,” and “The Penitent’s Confession,” victimized women are given a chance to return from the grave and punish the men responsible for their deaths.

Compared to the debut volume, *Tales of Superstition and Chivalry* is a more confident and conceptually focused collection. A letter from Robert Anderson to Thomas Percy reveals that the young poet had already developed the concept and began working on “nine or ten tales of superstition and chivalry” as early as June of 1801 (Anderson 62-63). The first poem in the volume – “The Dark Ladie” – originally appeared in the *Edinburgh Magazine* for March of 1800, roughly around the same time that her debut collection *Poems* was published. It was likely too late for “The Dark Ladie” to have been included in the 1800 collection, but this afforded Bannerman the opportunity to write more ballads in the same mold for her follow-up collection.

Bannerman had already experimented with a variety of poetic forms in *Poems*, so her decision to publish a volume containing only ballads exhibits a certainty of vision rather than a step backward in terms of artistic ability or range. The various formal strengths of *Poems* appear again in her sophomore volume, including the use of scholarly footnotes, which further attests for her impressive self-education. However, her decision to foreground the supernatural in her ballads was a risky move, and can possibly account for her decision to publish the volume anonymously. English critics had already grown weary of Gothic novels by the time *Tales* appeared, and the book received a predominantly negative critical reception.

*Tales of Superstition and Chivalry* was published by Vernor and Hood in late October or early November of 1802. Although Bannerman’s name was not on the title page, it seems that
her authorship was not a closely guarded secret. By early 1803, she was publicly identified as the author in a review of Tales that appeared in the January issue of The British Critic. Sales for the volume, however, were modest and a second edition was never issued. The publishing firm was located on Poultry Street in London, and overseen by Thomas Hood (father of the Victorian poet of the same name) and Thomas Vernor (Sher 354). After the death of Vernor, Charles Sharpe partnered with Hood in early 1806, expanding the company name to Vernor, Hood, and Sharpe (Jerrold 4). In late 1798, Vernor and Hood began publishing The Monthly Mirror, a periodical devoted to the London theatre scene, as well as poetry. The company published two successful collections of poems by Robert Bloomfield, including The Farmer’s Boy in 1800 and Rural Tales, Ballads, and Songs in 1802, but primarily focused on publishing new editions of older books. For example, the firm were the first to issue the collected works of Henry Kirke White, a promising pre-Romantic poet associated with the graveyard school, who died of consumption at the age of twenty-one (Thornbury 417). The edition of White’s poems and letters first appeared in 1807 in two volumes, and included a biographical preface by Robert Southey. In addition to poetry, Vernor and Hood reprinted several popular travel narratives, such as Paolino Da San Bartholomaeo’s A Voyage to the East Indies (1800) and Jacques-Henri Bernardin de Saint-Pierre’s A Voyage to the Isle of France (1800). Between 1799 and 1806, the company also published several volumes entitled The German Theatre, which included Benjamin Thompson’s translations of plays from Augustus von Kotzebue, Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, Friedrich Schiller, and others.

Vernor and Hood’s publication of German drama is particularly interesting, for it shows the company was partially responsible for disseminating a kind of literature that – while in public demand – had fallen out of favor with English critics. In his study Romanticism and the Gothic,
Michael Gamer chronicles the “contentious” critical reception of Gothic literature between 1790 and 1820 despite its “immense popularity” (7). He notes that the adjectives “German” and “Gothic” were often used synonymously in the early nineteenth-century, and encompassed not only drama, but fiction and poetry as well (3, 79). A dismissive remark by none other than William Wordsworth in the “Preface” to the 1800 edition of *Lyrical Ballads* typifies the “almost unanimous critical vilification” of the Gothic in the first few years of the nineteenth-century (Gamer 23). Although Coleridge was especially fond of Schiller’s drama *Die Räuber*, Wordsworth’s opinion of the genre was not favorable, and he irritably condemned the public’s infatuation with “sickly and stupid German tragedies” (177). The fact that Bannerman’s publishers contributed to this particular trend likely had an adverse effect on the company’s reputation with conservative critics, and may have prompted them to regard other publications from Vernor and Hood with a jaundiced eye.

Early nineteenth-century critics objected to Gothic literature for a variety of reasons, but three of the most common complaints were also lodged against *Tales of Superstition and Chivalry*. Because the primary audience of the Gothic was believed to be “young, female, naïve, and easily manipulated,” the genre was regularly dismissed as juvenile or excessively feminine – two immediate strikes against Bannerman as a young female poet (Gamer 38). Secondly, since so many popular texts were saturated with clichéd or poorly executed ghostly manifestations, the supernatural was no longer taken seriously by critics. Any writer that included supernatural elements in their work risked “their cultural legitimacy, social respectability, and standing as serious authors” (Gamer 42). Such concerns prompted Wordsworth to re-examine the content of the second edition of *Lyrical Ballads*. On account of “the old words and the strangeness,”

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Gamer is careful to note, however, that the term “Gothic” was retrospectively applied to a specific genre and was not used by critics until “two decades into the nineteenth century” (49).
Wordsworth feared that Coleridge’s *Rime of the Ancient Mariner* was “an injury to the volume,” and at one point considered omitting it altogether, before he decided to place it near the end of the first volume in the 1800 edition (Gamer 116, 119). Even though Bannerman introduces ghosts and other Gothic tropes to make rather advanced observations regarding male/female relationships throughout the volume, critics appear to have overlooked or dismissed the possibility of deeper metaphors because they harbored such disdain for her methods. Finally, Gamer’s study reiterates that “gothic fiction and drama were perceived as threats to political and social order” (Gamer 31). The depiction of vengeful women regularly getting the upper hand on men throughout *Tales* would certainly be perceived as a challenge to “social order.” Several of the ballads question the efficacy and relevance of respected institutions, particularly the Catholic Church. Although criticism of the Church is rather common in Gothic novels and the literature of Protestant England as a whole, the frequent triumph of pagan and occult forces over Christian armies, priests, and kings suggests something more subversive is at work in Bannerman’s poems.

For these reasons, *Tales of Superstition and Chivalry* was doomed by its association with the Gothic, and its ill-timed publication placed the volume within the crosshairs of changing and increasingly hostile critical debates. Unlike the reviews for *Poems*, Bannerman did not receive any further compliments on the excellence of her “taste” once the supernatural became such a prominent aspect of her work.\textsuperscript{66} The British Critic linked Bannerman’s poems to *Tales of Wonder* (1801), Matthew Lewis’ much-maligned collection of supernatural ballads, and condemned the volume’s Gothic elements: “The Tales abound with fancy; but it is fancy perverted to the purpose of raising only horror, and raising it by præternatural agency. This

\textsuperscript{66} Each review of *Tales of Superstition and Chivalry* is reprinted in its entirety in Appendix B.
uniformity has an effect not pleasing to those who have not learnt to accommodate their taste to a transient fashion; and we, who can see through the disguise the marks of talent formed for better things, cannot but regret that the volume is not of a more miscellaneous kind” (78). The review concludes with a half-hearted recommendation of “the book to those who love to shudder o’er the midnight fire, [but] we advise the author to make a livelier and better use of a fancy stored with images” (79). The review suggests that Bannerman’s poetry is beneath the tastes of more refined and sophisticated readers – a typical strategy of periodical reviews of the time who adopt the roles of “experienced Men of Letters” offering “paternalistic advice” to less experienced – and usually female – readers and writers (Gamer 36, 42).

A similar attitude of condescension is expressed by The Annual Review, which dismisses the “fashionable fictions” of the Gothic and complains that “the author of these tales is capable, we are inclined to think, of higher productions” (720). The review singles out “Basil” as “well-told,” but concludes that Bannerman’s talents are squandered on the volume’s sensational subject matter: “a few gems of poetry are scattered over it, which induces us to believe, that the mine which produced them is worth being wrought” (721). The New Annual Register “perceive[d] more smoke than fire, more imitation than original genius; the aim being grand without the power of magnificence” (318). The Poetical Register acknowledged that Bannerman’s “tales contain many passages of no common merit. The language is frequently in a high degree poetical, and the incidents well imagined,” but emphasized that “obscurity” is “one fault…[that] runs nearly through the whole volume” (431-32). This sense of obscurity was also singled out by Anna Seward in reference to Bannerman’s debut collection. In a letter to Thomas Park in the fall of 1800, Seward praises Edmund Burke’s conceptualization of the sublime, but stresses that his aesthetic “is totally different in its nature to the strained and abortive conceptions of Miss
Bannerman’s pen!” (324). Instead of sparking the imagination of readers with suggestions, Seward claims Bannerman’s use of obscurity is the kind “which puzzles a reader, who has poetic sensibility and taste, to guess what the author means, [and] is a great inexpiable fault” (324-25).

The harshest response to Tales of Superstition and Chivalry appeared in The Critical Review, which echoed both Seward’s opinions and the charges of obscurity that appeared in the Poetical Register: “the author has heard that obscurity is one source of the sublime, and has therefore veiled his [sic] sublimity in impenetrable darkness” (110). The remainder of the review is equally severe and concludes with a mean-spirited sexist remark, which claims that Bannerman “has contrived to leap over, not the dull parts, but what would in ordinary hands have formed the main action. The beginning of every poem excites expectation of something very great: when the explanation should come, we are always reminded of the country-schoolmistress—‘What, can't you spell the word, you little dunce? Well, then, skip it and go on!'” (110). Such undisguised arrogance exemplifies how frequently “gender and class inflections…invade and often take over the act of reviewing” in early nineteenth-century periodicals, and epitomizes the kind of hostile critical landscape that Bannerman was expected to navigate (Gamer 36).

The only positive review of Tales of Superstition and Chivalry appeared in The Monthly Mirror, which – perhaps not coincidentally – was also published by Vernor and Hood. The review linked Tales of Superstition and Chivalry to Lewis and the Gothic tradition as well, but was more forgiving of the associations and identified Bannerman’s Scottish heritage as a unique advantage: “the author has taken for her model the ancient ballads of her native country, and in some instances has certainly caught their spirit” (102). Finally, the review recognized

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67 Seward’s letters concerning Bannerman are reprinted in Appendix C.
Bannerman’s poetic talents and potential: “the versification is simple and easy, and the language unaffected. If the collection does not rise to the highest degrees of excellence, it does very considerable honour to the fair writer, who has devoted her time to the cultivation of her poetical talents, and merits a friendly reception from its readers” (102).

However, the volume received anything but “a friendly reception” from critics, and it failed to generate any additional recognition for Bannerman from her contemporaries. I have not uncovered any direct references to Tales of Superstition and Chivalry or Bannerman’s debut volume in the correspondence of Wordsworth, Coleridge, or Southey, nor does she appear to have been known to Byron, Shelley, or Keats. In terms of Romantic-era women poets, only Anne Grant and Joanna Baillie have acknowledged her work (See Appendix D). Bannerman’s closest contemporary in terms of subject matter was Charlotte Dacre, yet I haven’t found any substantial evidence that Bannerman’s work influenced Hours of Solitude, Dacre’s first collection of predominantly Gothic poems that appeared in 1805. Surprisingly, Matthew Lewis never commented on Bannerman’s work, despite his enthusiastic interest in ballads and the supernatural. The only major writer from the Romantic period to publicly acknowledge Bannerman is Walter Scott, whose praise for Tales can be found in his “Essays on Imitations of the Ancient Ballads,” which is cited at the start of this introduction and partially reprinted in Appendix D. Unfortunately, Bannerman died the year before Scott’s essay was published, and his endorsement did not initiate any kind of posthumous rediscovery of her work.

Tales of Superstition and Chivalry did elicit private praise from Thomas Percy, the editor of Reliques of Ancient English Poetry and a close friend of Bannerman’s mentor Robert Anderson. Percy was largely responsible for initiating the ballad revival in England with Reliques, and was a significant influence on Lewis’ and Scott’s investment in ballads, as well as
the poetry of Wordsworth and Coleridge. After receiving a copy of Bannerman’s *Tales* from Anderson, Percy expressed his admiration of the volume in a letter to Anderson: “Miss Bannerman has compressed in her little elegant Volume a fund of poetical Terrors, which would deserve to be expanded thro’ many a folio of Amadises and Tristans” (Anderson 123). He then asks Anderson to “hint…without reserve what literary or other presents would be most acceptable” to send to Bannerman as a token of his appreciation (123).

In regard to the second generation of Romantics, a young Thomas De Quincey – author of *Confessions of an English Opium Eater* (1821) – was captivated by *Tales of Superstition and Chivalry* as a teenager, and the poem “Basil” in particular, which he described as “beautifully sketched” and “one of [her] striking…metrical tales” (qtd in Bridgwater 23). Patrick Bridgwater claims that Bannerman’s impression on De Quincey “went way beyond a surface reaction to a text he read in his teens” on account of the descriptive parallels between her mysterious “Dark Ladie” and the veiled “Lady of Darkness” who appears in De Quincey’s 1845 prose poem *Suspira de Profundis* (23). It is uncertain to what extent Bannerman influenced Walter Scott, since he did not publicly comment on her work until nearly thirty years after her first two publications, but De Quincey represents at least one well-known Romantic-era figure whose work was affected by his reading of Bannerman.

Before moving into a discussion of the poems themselves, there are other more general features of *Tales of Superstition and Chivalry* that distinguish it from Bannerman’s debut volume and warrant further discussion. The book includes a set of original black-and-white illustrations that correspond with four of the ballads and offer compelling visual components to those poems.

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68 *Amadis*: a knight, or a model hero of chivalric romance. The reference originates from Garci Rodríguez de Montalvo’s sixteenth-century Spanish romance *Amadis de Gaul* (1508). *Tristan*: A reference to the lovelorn hero of the medieval French Romance *Tristan and Iseult*, which dates back to the twelfth century (with even earlier Celtic origins).
The title page is inscribed with an enigmatic Italian verse, and alludes to the volume’s overarching themes concerning misperception and the limitations of knowledge. Before readers even encounter the collection’s first proper ballad, a fourteen-line sonnet simply entitled “Prologue” appears and essentially dares readers to continue reading. Finally, an appendix of endnotes – a device also used in Poems – continues to showcase Bannerman’s knowledge of other cultures and provides an air of scholarly erudition to the volume. These various ancillary materials prove that Bannerman put a great deal of thought into the overall design and presentation of the volume, and provide additional evidence that the contents of Tales are unified by a coherent concept.

The four illustrations throughout Tales were created by E.W. Thomson (1770-1847), an English portrait artist, and then engraved by a printmaker with a surname of MacKenzie. Initially, Bannerman requested woodcuts to accompany the poems to further emphasize the medieval aesthetic of her ballads, but she was forced to settle for illustrations, which were more cost-effective for Vernor and Hood (Craciun Fatal 184). The publication of the volume was delayed so that Thomson and MacKenzie could complete the final two illustrations. Close inspection of the images reveal two different dates⁶⁹ – “The Dark Ladie” and “The Penitent’s Confession” are dated June 1, 1802, whereas “The Murcian Cavalier” and “The Prophecy of Merlin” are dated October 12, 1802. The dates of the illustrations help to substantiate an approximate publication date for Tales of late October or early November of 1802, which is reinforced by references in letters between Thomas Park and Robert Anderson.

⁶⁹ Additionally, Thomson’s name is misspelled “Thompson” in the second pair of drawings, which suggests either a simple error or the name was overlooked because the illustrations were produced in haste to meet a publication deadline.
Craciun notes that Bannerman was able “to select the subject of the engravings herself;” but explains that the illustration for “The Prophecy of Merlin,” which features a fully-clothed rendering of King Arthur kneeling before a nude goddess, was designed by Park and generated a minor controversy within Edinburgh’s literary circle (Fatal 184). At least one individual acquainted with Park claimed the image was “offensive to decency,” and warned him that if it went to print, there were certain critics already “complotting to give the fair authoress disquiet & to make the work misprised” (Craciun Fatal 184). Park’s comment suggests that Bannerman – rather than Park or the publishers – was unfairly singled out as the target for criticism, which further reveals the kinds of prejudice and intimidation female authors experienced in male-dominated publishing circles. Park reiterates that “Miss B. is guiltless of offense,” and admits that he took on the role of “knight-errant” to defend the poet’s honor (Craciun Fatal 184). Craciun has remarked that “the incident… becomes an opportunity for masculine jests suggesting that the age of chivalry is not dead,” which hints that Park and Anderson did not necessarily take the subject matter of Bannerman’s ballads as seriously as the works of their male counterparts, and “also reveals that Park (and Anderson) viewed the world of publishing as essentially masculine, where fair authoresses venture at their peril, and must be rescued by heroic male patrons” (Fatal 184). Nevertheless, Bannerman’s patrons managed to avoid any formal indecency charges, for “Park requested that the offensive engraving be removed from copies of Tales…still in the publisher’s possession, and it seems a half-hearted effort was made to follow his direction (which may or may not have represented the author’s wishes). An examination of 16 [extant] copies of Tales reveals that in fact only five copies are missing the final engraving, whereas 10 copies include all four” (Craciun Fatal 184). At the very least, Vernor and Hood removed the illustration from copies of the volume intended for periodicals, as the review of
Tales that appears in The British Critic only acknowledges three engravings, and none of the reviews reference the potentially objectionable image (Craciun Fatal 185).

Craciun’s summation of these events draws attention to the patronizing “sexual politics” that female writers were forced to endure in order to see their work into print (Fatal 183). Yet for Bannerman, the most frustrating issue regarding the “Prophecy of Merlin” illustration is that the image does not accurately represent the meeting of Arthur and the mysterious Queen of Beauty as it occurs in the poem, but presents instead a sensationalized portrait of a voluptuous Botticellian Venus. Bannerman’s physical description of the Queen is rather vague and does not specifically indicate that she is naked; although her hand is described as “snowy white,” and her face is “blushing,” this is all part of a “smooth disguise” designed to distract Arthur and camouflage her “demon-smile” (137, 135, 155, 156). Despite her beauty, the Queen is not to be trusted. She is another femme fatale figure that tricks Arthur into drinking from a poisoned chalice. The benevolent appearance of the Queen reiterates one of the volume’s major themes—that looks can be deceiving. But the illustration places too great of an emphasis upon the sensuality of the Queen, which renders the scene as a rapturous moment of seduction and mutual erotic pleasure as opposed to deception. Therefore, the “anxiety” Bannerman apparently felt about the illustration was not on account of its nudity, but that she might find herself at the center of an embarrassing scandal based on an image that failed to properly represent her poem (Craciun Fatal 186).

The Italian epigraph that appears on the title page of Tales is attributed to the poet and playwright Giovanni Battista Guarini (1538-1612), and is taken from Act I, Scene V of his play Il Pastor Fido (The Faithful Shepherd), which was published in 1590. An English translation of the play was produced in 1647 by the poet Richard Fanshawe (1608-1666), and his rendering of
the passage quoted by Bannerman reads as follows: “So talk or look, or think, or laugh or cry, / Seem or seem not, walk, stand, or sit, ye lye” (44). Daniel Watkins has closely examined the significance of the Guarini epigraph – and the play as a whole – in relation to Bannerman’s *Tales*. Guarini’s play defies the usual expectations of a pastoral drama, for “the pastoral landscape is never a space of pure safety and peace; it is always under threat” from external forces or human machinations (Watkins 20). In this respect, the play serves as an additional model for the rejection of poetic conventions in Bannerman’s own verse. The lines that comprise the epigraph are spoken by an ill-tempered satyr in the midst of a tirade condemning women for their supposed inconstancy. Watkins suggests that the misogynist accusations of the satyr could align with Bannerman’s “interest in the way women are feared, abused, and idealized” (21). However, assuming that readers are fluent enough in Italian to translate the epigraph in the first place, it may not be apparent to them that the lines pertain to women if they are unfamiliar with Bannerman’s source. When considered out of context, Watkins proposes that “the lines offer a general statement about perception and knowledge… [and] state explicitly that everything we see or think we know is a lie” (Watkins 21). This notion – “that everything we see or think we know is a lie” – is the primary theme informing each of the ten ballads in *Tales of Superstation and Chivalry*, and the epigraph serves as the governing statement and key to understanding the entire volume.

The “Prologue” that begins the book expounds upon these ideas further with an unexpected warning to readers. The opening lines advise readers not to continue reading “if search of gay delight / lead thy vain footsteps back to ages past!” (1-2). Rather than a nostalgic depiction of an idealized golden age, Bannerman cautions readers that her understanding of the past yields a darker vision, one comprised of “blighted flowers” and landscapes shrouded in
“monastic night” (3, 4). Despite what the volume’s descriptive title might suggest, these lines indicate that Bannerman is ultimately more concerned with exploring the effects of “superstition” than recounting the glories of “chivalry.”

Bannerman certainly makes no attempt to conceal or downplay the Gothic elements of her collection with such a dramatic and foreboding introduction. But the “Prologue” does much more than establish an appropriately ominous tone for the ten ballads that follow it. Watkins has stressed that “the prologue is astonishingly bold in its claims about the visionary imagination” (22). Like Blake and Milton before her, Bannerman believes that humanity requires “an adjustment of consciousness,” and that poetry has the potential to alter the perceptions of readers (Watkins 21). By stimulating or appealing to the imagination, the mind is inspired to re-evaluate or re-examine information in a new light. Bannerman’s emphasis on the sensational, supernatural, and the Gothic is ultimately a strategy to capture the general interest and stimulate the imaginations of her readers.

The visionary significance of the “Prologue” is brought to the forefront in its second stanza, where Bannerman introduces a presence she calls “the long-lost Spirit of forgotten times” (6). This omnipotent “Spirit” guardian is comparable to the spectral entities that appear in poems such as “The Genii” and “The Spirit of the Air” in her debut volume. Although this “prophetic” voice once “rul’d the nations,” it has been “hush’d” in the present day, and can only be accessed through the imagination, or as she defines it, the “Fancy” (7,8,9). Bannerman implies that she will act as a conduit for this forsaken voice, and that it will speak through her to reach a new audience through the medium of her poetry. But once again, she warns readers that the past is steeped in “terrors wild, and legends drear,” and that one must confront many unpleasant truths before a more comprehensive and thorough understanding of the truth can be obtained (11). It is
in this way that Watkins believes Bannerman’s poetry “directly links the gothic and historical
imagination, [by] calling attention…to history that has been lost or marginalized” (22). If poetry
is the medium through which one can reconnect with history, it possesses a kind of power that is
tantamount to necromancy, for “the unearthly habitants of faery ground” are “rous’d [and]
embodied” once again within the imagination (14, 13). Once we cease to regard the world
through “the eye of Fear,” the prejudices responsible for our misunderstandings and
misperception fall away and we can see the world more clearly.

The “Prologue” reveals the grand scope of Bannerman’s poetic ambitions. She positions
herself from the outset of the volume as a kind of prophet in the visionary tradition that seeks to
“better the world by transforming human thought and spirit through language” (Ruppert 785).
For Watkins, the “Prologue” serves as a manifesto for Bannerman’s “prophetic vision,” which
rejects Biblical and Miltonic traditions to draw inspiration from the “margins of British history”
and expose the horrors of the past (22-23). Bannerman’s poems serve a much greater purpose
than simply frightening audiences with a collection of fire-side ballads; she aims to inspire her
readers to think more critically about the past, particularly in regard to the power dynamics
between powerful men and not-so-powerful women, and the various systems – the church,
royalty, chivalry – that have enabled such oppression to become the norm.

The first ballad in Tales of Superstition and Chivalry is “The Dark Ladie,” and it
prominently showcases the intricacies of Bannerman’s elaborate poetic vision. In many respects,
the poem is a kind of baptism by fire, for it directly engages with the ideas regarding the
limitations of knowledge and the dangers of misperception outlined in the “Prologue” and the
Guarini epigraph and puts them immediately into practice. As if to prove to readers that they
cannot always comprehend what they perceive, the poem’s narrative is often cryptic and
deliberately vague. Many basic facts regarding the history of its primary characters are obscured and can only be pieced together through speculation and hearsay. The ballad concludes with a series of unanswered questions and offers no definitive resolutions. Yet what the poem *does* do is force readers to evaluate the information they are given more carefully, and to recognize that there is more to the story than what they are being told: “Bannerman presents characters whose haunted lives occasion haunting stories, and these strange narratives, whether told or retold, test the beliefs and values of those who listen (and, by extension, of those who read)” (Ruppert 787). By starting the volume its most complex and difficult poem, readers are tested to determine whether they should heed the warning at the start of the “Prologue” and “turn from the path” if they are unwilling to accept Bannerman’s challenging vision of the world.

“The Dark Ladie” has a longer and more complex history when compared to the other ballads that make up the volume, as it first appeared in the March 1800 issue of *The Edinburgh Magazine* – more than two years prior to the publication of *Tales* – and it is a direct response to a lesser-known poem by Samuel Taylor Coleridge entitled “Introduction to the Tale of the Dark Ladie,” which was published in the same magazine a month before Bannerman’s poem.70

Coleridge’s poem is modeled upon traditional English ballads and is told from the perspective of an enterprising troubadour who attempts to seduce a young woman named Genevieve by telling her stories about a knight’s tragic adventures. The majority of the poem focuses on the narrator’s ability to keep his beloved in a state of anxiety and suspense with each new thrilling detail he teasingly reveals. However, the ballad abruptly ends just as he is about to

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70 Coleridge’s poem first appeared in the December 1799 edition of *The Morning Post*, and was reprinted in the February edition of *The Edinburgh Magazine*. It is possible that Thomas Vernor and the magazine’s editors reprinted the poem in anticipation of Bannerman’s response the following month. Coleridge revised the “Introduction to the Tale of the Dark Ladie” for publication in *Lyrical Ballads* (1800) and simplified the title to “Love.” The poem is reprinted in its entirety in *Appendix D*. 
share the story concerning the “Dark Ladie” that is promised in the title. By this point, Genevieve is practically hysterical with anticipation – as evidenced by her heaving bosom, “inward sighs,” and tear-drenched cheeks – and has thrown herself into the narrator’s arms (101-108). This, of course, has been the narrator’s plan all along, and his victory is secured with Genevieve’s physical submission to him. At the conclusion of the poem, the narrator alludes to a “sister tale” concerning “man’s perfidious cruelty” and the “cruel wrong” reserved for a “dark ladie” (129-132). However, since Genevieve has already yielded to him, there is no need to actually share the story within the context of the poem. As a result, narrative expectations are frustrated and readers are forced to only imagine the “woeful tale of love” that Coleridge never completed (122).

Bannerman decided to pick up where Coleridge left off and responded with her own ballad dedicated to “The Dark Ladie.” However, she uses the opportunity to tell a more complex story that revolves around a victimized woman’s pursuit of revenge against a well-respected knight that has betrayed her. Craciun has argued that Bannerman’s response to Coleridge’s poem is “remarkable” for “providing not another tale of women’s victimization but one of woman’s revenge” (Fatal 165). Bannerman dramatizes an incident in which a “man’s perfidious cruelty” against a woman is actually punished rather than simply recounted to evoke pathos or pity.

The events of “The Dark Ladie” are set in medieval England and take place sometime during one of the Christian Crusades. An army of knights led by Sir Guyon have just returned

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71 Coleridge did, however, begin to write a follow-up to the poem, entitled “The Ballad of the Dark Ladie,” but he never finished it. The 60-line fragment was not published until after Coleridge’s death in 1834 in The Poetical Works of S.T. Coleridge. I have not found any evidence confirming that Coleridge was aware that Bannerman had already written a sequel to his poem. While there are some similarities between Bannerman’s “Dark Ladie” and Coleridge’s unfinished version, Coleridge’s depiction of the “dark ladie” – as perhaps expected - is a far more passive and stereotypically sentimental character. In both Bannerman and Coleridge’s poems, the lady has been seduced and forsaken by a man. Coleridge’s “Dark Ladie” lingers in “silent pain” and fantasizes about the wedding day that she’ll never experience (6). Yet Bannerman’s “Dark Ladie” decides to confront the man that has broken his promises to her. This poem of Coleridge’s is also reprinted in Appendix D.
from the “Holy Land” and have gathered for a banquet at his castle (1). Their host, however, seems preoccupied and nervous, and keeps looking apprehensively toward the door. The festivities are interrupted when a mysterious woman suddenly appears, clad in black and “ghastly white” veils (25). At first, the Ladie remains silent until she has captured the attention of the court. Her presence unsettles the knights, but she has a particularly disturbing effect upon Sir Guyon, who looks upon her with “smother’d fury” and undisguised dread (37). She seems to possess uncanny powers, and has partially hypnotized the men and robbed them of their ability to speak: “For thro’ the foldings of her veil…/ A light was seen to dart from eyes / That mortal never own’d” (31, 33-34). At the stroke of midnight, the Ladie breaks her silence and raises a toast to Sir Guyon and his entourage before she disappears. Astonished, the men retire to bed, where they are plagued with terrible dreams of the Dark Ladie throughout the night.

The next morning, the men confer with one another and attempt to make sense of what they have witnessed. Recalling Sir Guyon’s strange behavior the night before, they begin to suspect that their host is guilty of a terrible transgression. One of the knights reminds the group that the otherwise “brave” Sir Guyon “grew pale and trembled” when they passed “the Blessed Cross” on their journey home from battle, and that “his face became as livid clay” when he heard “the blessed name” of Christ (83-93). Another knight by the name of Huart interjects and shares what he has learned from a “hoary headed” servant that occupies the castle (101). The servant tells Huart that late one night, Sir Guyon brought the veiled Ladie back to the castle. At first, she refused to allow Sir Guyon to see her without her veils, but he eventually managed to catch a glimpse of her face, and is horrified by whatever he discovers. The servant, however, does not tell Huart what Sir Guyon saw, nor does he clarify how long ago these events took place in relation to the previous evening’s banquet. The servant only tells Huart that Sir Guyon was never
the same again, and that the Ladie’s “fixed eye” “glar’d for ever on his sight…/ Till life became a heavy load” (137-39). He tells Huart that the Ladie confined herself to a “curtain’d tower,” and claims to have witnessed strange lights and sounds in the vicinity of her private chamber (125).

Whatever happened next between the Dark Ladie and Sir Guyon is never revealed to Huart, as the old man’s recollections break off to relay another brief anecdote regarding the Dark Ladie’s past. The servant explains that “he heard / some story [about] how this poor Ladie / Had left... her husband’s home” with Sir Guyon, and also left behind a “little son” (141-43, 149). This information provides Huart and the knights with the particulars of the Dark Ladie’s origins, as well as Sir Guyon’s role in her ruin by presumably convincing her to abscond with him. Yet Huart’s narrative concludes with a series of questions that remain unresolved not only to him and the other knights, but to readers of the poem as well:

“But where Sir Guyon took her then,

Ah! none could ever hear or know,

Or, why, beneath that long black veil,

Her wild eyes sparkle so.

“Or whence those deep unearthly tones,

That human bosom never own’d ;

Or why, it cannot be remov’d,

That folded veil that sweeps the ground?” (153-60)

After Huart repeats these questions and reiterates what he does not know, the ballad ends. We never learn precisely what transpired between the Dark Ladie and Sir Guyon. Above all, the mysteries pertaining to the appearance of the Dark Ladie herself are never revealed.
Upon completing the poem, there are still more questions and basic plot points that remain unresolved and unclear to readers. It is important to reiterate that all information regarding the Dark Ladie’s past is acquired second-hand and from potentially unreliable sources. Gregarious and overly superstitious servants are a stock convention of eighteenth-century Gothic fiction, and are responsible for the majority of miscommunication in the novels of Walpole, Radcliffe, Lewis, and their various imitators. It is possible that the “hoary-headed” servant’s account of Sir Guyon bringing the Ladie to the castle and the events that followed may have been exaggerated. Furthermore, the fact that the servant’s story is being relayed to the knights by Huart poses additional problems, for Huart may have embellished portions of the servant’s story to maintain the interest of the knights. In either case, the information is twice-removed from fact. The account of the Dark Ladie’s decision to leave behind her husband and child is even further removed, for the servant claims to have heard that story from another unspecified source. Consequently, readers cannot fully trust what they have learned about the Dark Ladie from the conversations that take place between Sir Guyon’s knights in the second half of the poem. This forces readers to revisit the first portion of the poem where the Dark Ladie actually appears in the banquet hall to search for clues to acquire a better understanding of her.

However, the Dark Ladie’s characterization in the poem’s banquet scene is just as ambiguous and open to interpretation. In particular, the impenetrable veils that envelop her body make it impossible to determine if she is a ghost or a flesh-and-blood woman. The frequent references to her hypnotic eyes, sinister voice, and ability to appear and disappear so suddenly strongly suggests that she is a supernatural figure, and that she has returned from the grave to punish Sir Guyon. But it is also possible that she has merely disguised herself as a ghost to intimidate Sir Guyon – a plot device that was not uncommon in the Gothic novels produced in
Bannerman’s lifetime, and especially in the popular and influential works of Ann Radcliffe. In this case, the Dark Ladie relies on Sir Guyon’s feelings of guilt and the superstitious beliefs of the knights to pull off an elaborate hoax that will expose Sir Guyon’s mistreatment of her. The poem, of course, can be read either way, but neither a supernatural nor a rational interpretation of the events manages to answer all of the questions that arise from the narrative.

If the Dark Ladie is not a ghost, how did she escape from Sir Guyon when he first brought her to the castle? Did he attempt to murder her and believe that he had succeeded? This could account for why her appearance as a ghost would be so effective and, like Macbeth’s encounter with the specter of Banquo, could cause him to issue a terrified confession. But if she is a ghost, how exactly did she die? Was she murdered by Sir Guyon to keep his transgressions a secret? Or did she feel so much guilt for betraying her husband and child that she opted to take her own life? Did she willingly leave her family behind? Or was she abducted by Sir Guyon against her will? Was there already something unnatural about the Ladie before Sir Guyon brought her to his castle? Is that the reason she insisted he never look beneath her veil? Could that account for the strange lights and sounds the old servant claims to have seen emanating from her room in the castle’s tower? Did Sir Guyon kill her because he discovered she was some kind of inhuman or deformed sorceress? Finally, what happens to Sir Guyon after the night of the banquet? Do the knights confront him and is he held accountable for his crimes? What happens to the Dark Ladie? Do any of the knights ever see her again? Does she continue to haunt the castle or did her spirit finally find peace once Sir Guyon’s crimes are exposed?

The fact that “The Dark Ladie” inspires such a staggering number of questions and can yield so many conflicting interpretations might appear to some as an indication that Bannerman’s poem fails to deliver a coherent or effective narrative. Contemporary critics certainly thought so;
a review of Tales that appears in the Poetical Register complains that “the author…has often left so much to be imagined by the reader that he [sic] is turned aside from the general beauty of the poem to discover the connexion or the meaning of particular parts” (431-32). However, in her close reading of “The Dark Ladie,” Ashley Miller points out that “what appears, to critics, as faults in Bannerman’s poetics are in fact deliberate and intrinsic to the project of her poetry” (par 12). She argues that “Bannerman’s fragmented text quite purposefully explores and interrogates” the limitations of storytelling and “readability” (par 2). The “Prologue” firmly establishes that the purpose of Tales of Superstition and Chivalry is to explore different avenues of interpretative possibility, and the indeterminacy of “The Dark Ladie” perfectly epitomizes the volume’s implication that things are never precisely what they seem.

Miller suggests that the technique of disrupting the expectations of readers was already modeled for Bannerman by Coleridge when he chose not to reveal the fate of the Dark Ladie in his original poem. The successful seduction of Genevieve is intended to “provide narrative closure,” but readers remained curious about the unfinished story of the Dark Ladie that was alluded to throughout the poem (Miller, par 4). Bannerman recognized the potential of introducing certain ideas or characters in order to peak the curiosity of readers. Although the Dark Ladie is the central character of the ballad, Bannerman deliberately maintains an aura of mystery around her by remaining very selective in regard to what she is willing to reveal about the Ladie’s past. As Miller explains, “the mysterious Dark Ladie remains nearly as unknowable as she is in Coleridge’s fragment,” and is able to make a lasting and powerful impression upon readers as a result of that mysteriousness (par 5).

In this respect, Bannerman was ahead of her time. Although critics claimed that she misunderstood Edmund Burke’s theories of the sublime and “veiled [her] sublimity in
impenetrable darkness,” her use of obscurity and ambiguity was quite advanced and anticipates similar techniques used by Edgar Allan Poe and Henry James in the latter half of the nineteenth-century (Critical Review 110). Bannerman recognized that her Gothic ballads would be more engaging and memorable to readers if they were forced to examine them more closely. The unresolved mysteries and unanswered questions continue to preoccupy – and unsettle – readers long after they finish reading the poem. In an examination of narrative techniques in Gothic fiction, Terry Heller has used the term “anticlosure” in relation to stories such as Poe’s “Ligeia” or James’s Turn of the Screw to account for how these works entrap readers into a “highly absorbing” process of active re-reading and re-examination to “resolve the ambiguity” found in the texts (202). Such works are ultimately more effective because they demand a greater engagement from readers; they can also seem more frightening because they literally haunt readers – perhaps over the course of several years – as they attempt to fully comprehend the text. Unfortunately for Bannerman, most of the readers in her lifetime were not prepared for such a demanding reading experience and they simply gave up on her.

Tim Ruppert’s reading of “The Dark Ladie,” however, is surprisingly optimistic and offers a very compelling means of escaping the maze of narrative entrapment. Ruppert’s interpretation accepts the idea that the Ladie is a supernatural being, but he stresses that she “does not perform her ghostly pledge because she wishes simply to spellbind the knights and so render them victims in a programme [sic] of revenge. Rather, she wants to take advantage of having found for her story a fit audience” (788). The Ladie raises a toast to the knights because they will finally share her story with others. The reason Sir Guyon is so distracted during the banquet is because he knows it is only a matter of time before the ghost will appear and his crimes will be exposed (this, however, does not entirely account for why Sir Guyon decided to
host the party at his castle if he knew the Ladie was going to appear). Ruppert concludes that “her appearance in the banquet hall initiates a series of events during which her story eventually becomes known to people who will transport that story beyond the walls of their leader’s estate and who will either retell the tale publicly or revisit it privately” (788).

The Ladie’s dependence on the knights to keep her story in circulation is shown the very next morning, as the knights gather together and attempt to make sense of what they witnessed. The knights begin to doubt Sir Guyon, and they piece together the Ladie’s story to the best of their ability. The poem’s unresolved ending strongly suggests that the knights will continue to talk about and share the Ladie’s strange and tragic story well beyond the castle walls. In this respect, “The Dark Ladie” perfectly articulates Bannerman’s visionary aims. Ruppert explains, “visionary art always involves collaborative acts of reading and of interpretation that carry stories and ideas forward in time and through space” (789). This process is demonstrated within the plot and action of “The Dark Ladie” itself, and serves as a model for readers to follow as they analyze and interpret events in their own lives.

In addition to Bannerman’s experimentations with narrative, there are other aspects of “The Dark Ladie” and its symbolism that are subversive, and pose challenges to conventional ideas and institutions. Bannerman’s choice of Sir Guyon to play the role of a dishonest knight is especially ironic since he exemplifies the virtue of Temperance in Book II of Edmund Spenser’s epic poem *The Faerie Queene* (1590). Yet Bannerman’s characterization of Sir Guyon as a villain – and an enemy to women in particular – is not without precedent, as Spenser’s original poem hints of deeper conflicts in his disciplined hero. In the twelfth and final canto of Book II, Sir Guyon defeats Acrasia, a villainous *femme fatale* and sorceress, by capturing her in a net and then binding her with chains. He then proceeds to angrily raze the Bower of Bliss, Acrasia’s
enchanted home and temptation-filled garden. Since Spenser’s poem is an allegory, one can’t help but wonder if Sir Guyon’s hostile reaction to both Acrasia and the Bower of Bliss is an outward manifestation of the various sexual energies he has long repressed as the embodiment of Temperance. Like Acrasia, Bannerman’s Dark Ladie represents a kind of female energy and power that cannot be confined or restrained. Whether she is dead or alive, the return of the Dark Ladie to Sir Guyon’s castle signifies a reversal of traditional male/female power dynamics.

According to Craciun, “Bannerman’s Dark Ladie imprisons her captor and a succession of men like him in the very castle in which he sought to imprison her, by compelling these knights to repeat the tale of her seduction and destruction…to destroy them, not simply to elicit their pity (Fatal 165). The depiction of Sir Guyon and his knights as villains represents a clear challenge to the chivalric code, and by extension, medieval Christian belief systems. Knights were expected to serve their king and God, and – however patronizing to modern sensibilities – they were bound to protect women as well. According to Aishah Sulaiman Alshatti, Sir Guyon is guilty of two crimes: “breaking the sanctity of the family order and breaking the chivalric code,” and she adds that “in seducing the Dark Ladie and encouraging her to desert her husband and child, Sir Guyon commits a serious breach of this code” (139-40). Bannerman’s strategy is to show that the medieval concept of chivalry was ultimately a façade. Men like Sir Guyon exploited their power and hid behind the formality of decency yet committed atrocities that ran the gamut of rape, pillaging, and murder. Once again, to return to the Guarini epigraph from the volume’s title page, much of what we think we know about the purported golden age of chivalry is in actuality a bold-faced lie.

Finally, “The Dark Ladie” also draws attention to issues concerning race and nationalism. As the poem’s opening lines indicate, Sir Guyon and his “armed train” have just returned from
their invasion of the “Holy Land” (1-2). At one point in the poem, one of the knights casually mentions how “infidels” were slain “beneath the blessed Cross” during their campaign, and seems completely unfazed by the prospect (83-84). The poem explicitly states that Sir Guyon encountered the Dark Ladie in his travels into a foreign land. While her physical appearance may be a mystery, her racial identity is less ambiguous, for she is likely of Arabian or Mediterranean descent. The title of the poem acquires another meaning then, and refers specifically to the Ladie’s non-white complexion. And while her veils lend an otherworldly air to her appearance, and are in keeping with depictions of shrouded supernatural figures in other contemporary Gothic texts, the veils further reinforce the Dark Ladie’s Eastern origins, as Muslim women wore veils as a sign of modesty (Craciun Fatal 169). Therefore, the Ladie’s role as Other is multiplied, for she inspires fear as a supernatural being, but she also arouses feelings of guilt and terror within Sir Guyon and the knights because she is a reminder of the culture they recently invaded and conquered. As Alshatti’s reading of the poem stresses, veils “underscore what a culture tends to reject and cover” (138). In this case, the Dark Ladie’s affiliation with a race that has been dominated by Sir Guyon, his knights, and the kingdom they represent, brings an additional political edge to the poem. The Dark Ladie’s desire for revenge could be more than just a personal vendetta, but could also be interpreted as an act of retaliation on behalf of her own country and culture.

Despite its complexity, “The Dark Ladie” is arguably Bannerman’s definitive composition, for her powers as both a captivating storyteller and rebellious provocateur are on full display. The poem has received the most attention from modern day scholars and has figured prominently in nearly every published discussion of Bannerman’s work to date. Yet it is important to recognize just how quickly Bannerman must have composed the poem. The first
published draft from March 1800 is practically identical to the final version that appears in Tales, give or take a few minor word changes or punctuation changes. Therefore, the poem was conceptualized, written, and prepared for publication in less than one month after Coleridge’s ballad was reprinted in The Edinburgh Magazine, or at most, three months after it first appeared in the December 1799 issue of The Morning Post, if that was in fact the first time she had read it. “The Dark Ladie” is a remarkable achievement, but it is by no means the only impressive or thought-provoking ballad to be found in Tales of Superstition and Chivalry.

“The Prophetess of the Oracle of Seām” is the second poem to be appear in the original volume. At 212 lines it is the longest ballad in Tales, and continues to experiment with narrative ambiguity and the use of multiple perspectives. According to Craciun, the poem “uses a complex and deliberately disorienting series of narrative frames… to undermine the possibility of narrativity itself” (Fatal 172). Although the plot does not raise as many convoluted questions as “The Dark Ladie,” it features incidents that are never explained and introduces characters whose perspectives are not entirely reliable. As such, it is an engrossing and enigmatic poem that presents another variation on the trope of veils and veiling, and effectively advances the volume’s thematic concerns with the limitations of knowledge and perception.

The majority of the poem takes place in the vicinity of an island off the coast of Brittany, in the northwest of France, which is reputed to be inhabited by a mysterious sorceress. In a note originally included in an Appendix to the volume, Bannerman cites two sources as inspiration for the poem, one of which served as a source for the other. Watkins has indicated that the use of


73 Craicun has suggested another possible source of inspiration for the ballad in Friedrich Schiller’s poem “The Veiled Image of Saïs,” where “an Egyptian youth penetrates beyond the veil in the temple of Isis in order to see the truth unveiled, and pays with his life, being afterward stunned into silence” (Fatal 170-171) Translations of Schiller’s poems often appeared in the same periodicals that published Bannerman’s poems (Craicun Fatal 275). And as noted earlier, many of Schiller’s plays were translated and reprinted by Vernor & Hood.
two different sources on the same subject is a deliberate strategy designed “to destabilize a reader's expectation that knowledge be firm and graspable” (25). In this respect, the information that provides the foundation of the poem is already unstable. With the additional component of a third-person narrator to relay the poem’s events, readers are thrice-removed from the truth.

The title of the poem also alludes to the notion of epistemological distance in other subtle ways. Readers will encounter the poem’s title before they are exposed to its content, and the phrasing “the prophetess of the oracle” might appear awkward or redundant at first. If the two nouns are read as synonyms, the title infers that “the prophetess” may be a subordinate or apprentice of “the oracle,” and readers will then expect to be introduced to two individuals capable of divination in the poem. However, once the poem is read, it’s clear that Bannerman is not using the term “oracle” to signify a person but rather a place where fortunes are told. While Bannerman could have simplified the title of the poem to “The Prophetess of Seäm,” the finalized title manages to disorient readers even before they have committed themselves to reading the poem. And of course, one cannot overlook the likely pun within the name “Seäm,” a homophone for “seem,” to further reiterate the overarching theme that things are never quite what they appear to be.

The action of the poem begins at sea, on a calm yet uncharacteristically dark night. A ship comprised of sailors and a priest named Father Paul has lost its way in the dark. The crew is unsettled after hearing screams in the distance, and Father Paul attempts to console the sailors by leading them in prayer. Upon hearing another “shriek of woe” when their prayers are completed, Father Paul is prompted to relay a local legend involving “the Prophetess and the Oracle” rumored to live upon the nearby island of Seäm (34-36). He explains that on nights such as this, when the winds are still, sacrifices are demanded by the Prophetess and are performed in the
underground caves hidden on the island. How or why a priest is familiar with such sinister pagan rites and legends should immediately give readers pause; furthermore, one might also inquire why Father Paul had accompanied the crew in the first place, if he was already aware of the potential dangers associated with this particular portion of the sea. With these subtle and inexplicable facts, Bannerman peaks the curiosity of readers, and inspires them to push onward with the narrative.

As Father Paul continues his story, he reveals that he has acquired his knowledge of the island’s legends from another troubled priest, who claims to have had a terrifying encounter while exploring the cave in his youth. Once again, the source of information is secondary, and potentially muddied with the passage of an unspecified amount of time. This story is relayed to the crew, through Father Paul, and from the unnamed priest from St. Thomas’ hall, which significantly distances the information from the potential truth. Just as Bannerman raises suspicions about Father Paul and his knowledge of the occult when he is first introduced in the poem, the anonymous priest is also positioned to be a potentially unreliable source of information. Father Paul tells the sailors that the cleric “never had bow’d before the cross / Till he touch’d his dying hour” (46-47). Another stroke of irony is introduced when instead of comforting the sailors, Father Paul decides to share a story that only exacerbates the crew’s feelings of fear and anxiety as they drift helplessly toward their doom at sea.

Father Paul reveals that it was he who performed the Last Rites on the priest of St. Thomas, and that he learned of his strange experiences on the island through the man’s death-bed confession. The priest told Father Paul that he took a boat to the island to investigate a series of screams he heard late one night when the winds, of course, were inexplicably calm and still. The priest traced the cries to a cave on the island, where he heard a disembodied voice calling out to
him. He was then led by an unseen apparition into the inner chamber of the oracle. Father Paul suddenly interjects to explain that just as the priest was about to reveal what he saw in the cave, he was seized by convulsions and died before the rest of his story could be told. Recalling the conclusion of “The Dark Ladie,” where Huart raises a series of unresolved questions about the mysterious veiled figure, Bannerman uses Father Paul to acknowledge another series of questions that are raised by the priest’s interrupted narrative:

“And he told not how he left the cave
When that dreadful sacrifice was o’er;
But some have thought he was preserv’d
By the crucifix he wore!

“And some have thought he had bent his knee
At Seäm’s dark, unhallow’d shrine;
And that might be his agony
When they rais’d the blessed sign!” (73-80)

How the priest managed to escape the cave with his life and sanity intact becomes a matter of pure speculation that points to two possibilities. Either the priest’s faith as a Christian protected him from harm, or more diabolically, he renounced his faith and pledged himself to the occult forces he encountered, and may have even actively participated in the sacrificial rites. With the repeated use of the phrase “some have thought,” Bannerman underscores the wide range of interpretative possibilities, and reiterates how the priest’s story can affect those that hear it in a variety of ways and inspire them to reach two very different conclusions.

The narrative of the poem briefly returns to focus on the crew of the ship. Like the knights who witness the manifestation of the Dark Ladie during the banquet at Sir Guyon’s
castle, the sailors are rendered speechless by Father Paul’s unsettling account. Now believing it is their destiny to become victims of this sinister Prophetess, the crew turns to Father Paul for protection:

They press’d around that aged priest,
And he rais’d the crucifix on high!
And they look’d for nothing now to come,
But that they all must die!... (85-88)

The protection afforded by Father Paul is rather short-lived and proves to be ineffective, as the narrative abruptly skips ahead once again to reveal that the ship has already sunk, and the unlucky crew were “buried in the waves” (92). Craciun’s reading of the poem highlights the agency of the Prophetess, for she “does not wait… for young men to seek her out and violate her temple – she destroys passing ships with her voice and selects specific men – priests – to bring behind the veil” (Fatal 171). What remains unclear, however, is why Father Paul has placed himself and the sailors within her crosshairs and knowingly allowed them to venture so closely to her shrine. One can only infer that he was haunted by the anonymous priest’s story, and that he was compelled to investigate it firsthand. There is no concrete evidence to suggest he has gone to exorcise the island of its inhabitant, but his role as a Christian hero upon a crusade to eradicate evil becomes one of the various possibilities embedded within the narrative.

After the shipwreck, the ballad’s point of view remains with Father Paul, who has somehow managed to survive the sinking of the ship, swam ashore, and has taken shelter at the mouth of the cave. Bannerman continues to raise suspense through a long sequence that depicts Father Paul inching deeper into the catacomb, brandishing the same crucifix that failed to protect him and the crew in the previous scene. His precarious journey into the cave mirrors the same
descent previously undertaken by the anonymous priest, as Father Paul is also beckoned to
proceed further into the sanctum by an unseen hand. The use of repetition heightens the sense of
dread as readers expect Father Paul to penetrate further into the mysterious lair, and at one point,
he even pauses to consciously reflect and demonstrates his awareness of how he is retracing the
priest of St. Thomas’s ill-fated steps. Bannerman does not entirely defy the expectations of
readers, for Father Paul does have a direct encounter with the elusive Prophetess – but her figure
remains veiled behind an ornate curtain. The ballad builds to a thrilling climax when the
Prophetess’ pale hand emerges from behind the screen, and with a silent gesture, she commands
Father Paul to cast aside his cross.

At this point, the poem suddenly breaks off and jumps ahead forty years into the future,
once again frustrating narrative expectations. The setting shifts to Father Paul’s church in
Einsidlin, and the point of view is transferred to a third priest, who notices a figure lingering in
the rear of the church one night after evening masses have concluded. When he approaches the
man, the priest recognizes Father Paul, despite how significantly his appearance has changed in
the years “since he was with the dead” (196). Clearly, Father Paul’s reputation has preceded him,
and the latest priest residing at the church is aware of his story. Yet just like the other anonymous
priest from St. Thomas who recounted his experience to Father Paul, readers never learn how
Father Paul survived his encounter with the Prophetess, nor is it revealed whether his faith was
strong enough to reject her or if he submitted to her to spare his life. Instead, Bannerman “leaves
all possibilities open, so that…readers are in the same position as those who listen, spellbound, to
the legendary tale of the powers of this oracle” (Craicun Fatal 175). The inability to ascertain
precisely what happened with each of the men after their encounter with the Prophetess
ultimately stands as a metaphor for the undefinable nature of truth itself. Some things are simply
not meant to be known, and the pursuit of knowledge will always yield unpredictable or unforeseen results.

The final lines of the poem reveal the Prophetess’ far-reaching influence, along with the seemingly contagious affect her story has upon those privy to even a portion of it. Craciun has stressed that Father Paul’s reappearance at the church “creates another silent and haunted figure in the new priest presiding at the altar” (Fatal 174). In this respect, the conclusion of Bannerman’s poem is reminiscent of Coleridge’s Rime of the Ancient Mariner, for the new priest of Einsidlin is left awestruck by the implications of Father Paul’s return in much the same way that the Wedding Guest is stunned after hearing the tale of the Mariner (Craciun Fatal 172). The third priest remains frozen in silent contemplation long after Father Paul departs the church and the poem has reached its end. On one hand, Bannerman leaves readers wondering if yet another curious priest is about to embark upon an ill-fated journey to the dangerous isle of Seäm; yet another more optimistic reading of the poem’s conclusion speaks to the larger visionary concerns of the volume. By ending with the image of the priest and showing how deeply he has been affected by his encounter with Father Paul, Bannerman emphasizes the powerful and “transformative effect” that storytelling can have upon individuals (Ruppert 790).

With “The Perjured Nun,” the next poem that appears in the collection, Bannerman continues to highlight “the continuities that narratives create between people,” and provides a more specific example that shows how “individuals [are] brought together through narrative” (Ruppert 790). The poem tells the story of a young woman named Geraldine, who occupies a

74 The use of the name “Geraldine” provides another link between Bannerman and Coleridge, for he uses the same name for the supernatural antagonist of his poem Christabel. The characterization of Bannerman’s Geraldine, however, has more in common with the more timid namesake of Coleridge’s poem. The names may ultimately be nothing more than a coincidence, as Geraldine was also the name of the heroine in the popular 1792 novel Desmond by Charlotte Smith, one of Bannerman’s influences as revealed by the Werter sonnet cycle in her 1800 volume. Although Coleridge’s Christabel was begun as early as 1795, it was not published until 1817,
castle with her husband, Lord Henrie. Geraldine is frightened by rumors that the eastern portion of the castle is haunted by the spirit of “the Perjur’d Nun” (12). Rather than assuage his wife’s fears, Lord Henrie fuels her anxieties by frequently venturing to that part of the castle on his own, and by forbidding her to accompany him. One night, Geraldine disobeys Lord Henrie after spending several nerve-wracking hours worrying about the potential dangers her husband might encounter during his solitary vigil. Bannerman spends much of the poem building suspense as Geraldine tests her courage and timidly approaches the haunted wing of the castle. She finally bursts through a door expecting to meet her husband, but encounters the ghost of the nun instead. The ghost then recounts her tragic story, and reveals that Lord Henrie was the reason she “resign’d [her] vows” and “forsook [her] God” (97, 101).

Although a rather predictable turn of events, particularly in regard to the poem’s similarities to not only the popular episode of the Bleeding Nun from Lewis’ novel *The Monk*, but also the way in which the story of the Perjured Nun and Lord Henrie so closely mirrors that of the Dark Ladie and Sir Guyon, the scene is still admirably rendered and atmospheric. It provides more concrete information regarding the specter’s past than both “The Dark Ladie” and “The Prophetess of the Oracle of Seäm,” which is accomplished by reserving the space for the Perjured Nun to directly tell her story to Geraldine in the final twenty lines of the poem. Bannerman manages to elevate this rudimentary supernatural encounter to serve a higher visionary purpose, for Geraldine is transformed and enlightened by what she learns from the ghost.

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fifteen years after the publication of *Tales of Superstition and Chivalry*. This introduces the possibility that Bannerman may have read a manuscript version of Coleridge’s poem, which would prove the two poets may have directly corresponded with one another and were perhaps acquainted. At this time, however, I have not been able to uncover any correspondence to substantiate this tantalizing possibility.
Melissa Edmundson Makala identifies the nun as “a sympathetic being who…relates the story of her sin in order to instruct Geraldine,” and prevents her “from endangering her own virtue by continuing her relationship with Henrie” (29). Although the poem ends before Geraldine can respond to the ghost, it is implied that the experience is a significant moment in her life, and that it will serve as the catalyst for her to become a more mature and less naïve woman. Geraldine’s process of maturation is already foreshadowed by her decision to put her fears aside and investigate the alleged haunting on her own. Furthermore, by disobeying her husband and disregarding his warnings not to pursue him into the tower, she is clearly already beginning to think for herself and make her own decisions. When Geraldine learns that she has no reason to fear the ghost of the nun, she also discovers that she has no reason to fear Lord Henrie, for the vengeful nun has murdered him, which is implied when the ghost insists, “his faithless heart is cold!” (108). Therefore, the poem emphasizes a sense of community between these two women, who have mutually benefitted from sharing their stories with one another. Not only is Geraldine spared the pains of being deceived by Lord Henrie, the guilty nun is able to partially redeem herself by ensuring that others do not make the same mistakes that she has made.

That is not to say that “The Perjured Nun” does not contain its own fair share of ambiguity and unresolved issues. Although a slightly more straightforward poem compared to “The Dark Ladie” and “The Prophetess of the Oracle of Seäm,” it continues to explore the volume’s themes concerning the limits of knowledge and perception. First and foremost, despite her benevolent exchange with Geraldine and her seeming concern for her successor’s well-being, the nun has not entirely redeemed herself. If the ghost has in fact murdered Lord Henrie, she is now guilty of committing an even graver sin than giving up her vows. Secondly, because the
spectral nun is given the final word in the poem, Geraldine’s reaction to all that she has learned and witnessed remains a mystery. The discovery of her husband’s dishonest behavior and his previous involvement with the nun (and possible role in her death) would certainly spark a variety of emotions within her. His sudden death would certainly come as a shock, but her grief would be compounded with terror, for she has also learned that supernatural forces are not only real, but that they are capable of interacting with the physical world and can commit murder. These unresolved issues do not inspire the same degree of frustration or confusion as the previous two poems; instead, the ballad concludes with Geraldine poised upon the cusp of new possibilities and with options for her future that were not previously afforded to her.

“The Perjured Nun” is followed by “The Penitent’s Confession,” the most gruesome and macabre ballad of Tales. Once again, the motif of veiling is at the forefront, yet this particular poem is distinguished by the fact that it does not shy away from or deflect the grand revelation of its climax. It is the first poem where a veil is genuinely lifted to reveal the secret horrors hidden beneath it. Additionally, the poem is underscored with criticisms of the Catholic Church and the practice of formal confession, which find Bannerman using her ballads to critique religious institutions in a manner similar to her indictment of chivalry in “The Dark Ladie.” The poem also builds upon the condemnations of Catholicism that stretch back to “The Nun” in her debut collection from 1800, and reveals another thematic connection that runs throughout several of Bannerman’s poems.

Compared to the ballads that proceed it, “The Penitent’s Confession” relies less on ambiguity or obscurity and stands as one the most direct and straight-forward narratives to appear in Tales. The pace of the poem moves quickly and is more in keeping with the brisk German ballads of Goethe and Schiller, and comparable to those of Lewis and Scott as well. The
setting of the poem immerses readers in the exotic and ecclesiastical atmosphere of a candle-lit monastery in Northern Israel. As the resident priest makes his way “to the high Confessional,” the omniscient narrator notes in passing that five years have elapsed since anyone has visited the church to make a confession, which implies that the Church and the practice of confession may not be particularly respected or highly regarded by the local community (12, 13-14). This confessional dry spell is unexpectedly interrupted when a disheveled and visibly distraught man suddenly appears and demands the priest’s attention. With very little in the way of an introduction, the man launches into his confession. He admits that he is responsible for the murder of a woman named Ellinor, but he also implies that her ghost continues to haunt him. In the passages that follow, the Penitent reveals that he has spent three nights holding a vigil over Ellinor’s corpse. It is clear that he has already begun to feel the pangs of guilt and remorse, which compel him to return to the scene of his crime and observe the girl’s funeral from afar. The priest listens attentively, but unlike the characters in Bannerman’s other poems, he does not interrupt the Penitent’s recollections.

The Penitent’s frantic story takes a turn toward the otherworldly when he recounts how the lady’s shrouded form pursued him through the woods the night after her death. Terrified by the sight of her white-clad figure and maddened by the sounds of her “flapping” robes, the Penitent attempts to escape but the lady catches up to him and grabs him by his wrist (70, 79). It is here where Bannerman’s narrative goes beyond the exclusively psychological terror of writers such as Ann Radcliffe and experiments with the tangible, physical horror associated with the graphic writings of Matthew Lewis. The Penitent’s frightened narrative emphasizes the physicality of the ghost, for he specifically recalls the “dull and deadly weight” of the specter’s touch and the unnerving proximity of her body to his own: “On my face I felt its streaming hair,
All wet with the rain and mist” (84-86). He claims to have “moved on,” but simultaneously substantiates his guilt and fear by noting, “that weight of death / will never leave my brain! / I thought I never might uncling / That ghastly arm again!” (89-92). He concludes his story by revealing that “twice twenty years have come and gone” since he was accosted by the ghost of Ellinor, which, coincidentally, is the same number of years that elapse between Father Paul’s paranormal encounter and his reappearance in the church at the end of “The Prophetess of the Oracle of the Seām” (97-98).

Until this point in the Penitent’s wild confession, careful readers – trained by Bannerman’s insistence throughout the volume that things are never quite what they seem – might be prone to doubt the veracity of the man’s extraordinary story. Even with the repeated emphasis on the ghost’s corporeal state and its ability to affect the physical world, the murderer is the only witness to the ghost’s manifestations, and readers would be remiss to trust the claims of a guilt-ridden killer. Yet Bannerman appears to have anticipated such skepticism and pushes her story even further into the realms of Gothic horror. The Penitent poses a rhetorical question to the priest (and to the poem’s enlightened readers) – “May’st think thee that a dream of night / my senses did deceive?” (99-100) – and the ballad reaches its startling climax:

“See, holy priest!” and he bar’d his arm,

“Was never to mortal shown!”

And there, O Heaven, for living flesh,

Was a dry and wither’d bone. (101-104).

With this gruesome revelation, Bannerman defies the expectations she has thus far established throughout the volume. Rather than breaking off the narrative or relying upon suggestive ambiguity to temper or defer the climactic moment as she has done in “The Dark Ladie” and
“The Prophetess of the Oracle of Seām,” the horrific revelation is directly presented, and the shock is all the more powerful as a result.75

From a thematic perspective, the reaction of the priest is perhaps more significant than the unveiling of the Penitent’s arm, “for he quak’d to think that arm had met / the touch of Ellinor” (107-108). The priest is more disturbed by Ellinor’s power to transcend the grave than he is with the Penitent’s crime, and he is more repulsed by the physical proof of her intervention than his proximity to a man responsible for committing a mortal sin. The priest expresses no condemnation of the murder, nor does he move to “pardon” the Penitent as his role as confessor necessitates (113). Instead, the priest confines himself to his cell after hearing the Penitent’s confession and never emerges again. The squeamish behavior exhibited by the priest is especially ironic, for the Penitent’s condition is comparable to a kind of leprosy, and priests were expected to tend to the sick and the dying. But the priest’s treatment of the Penitent and his reaction to his deformity is anything but Christ-like.

Like so many other men affiliated with hierarchical institutions in Bannerman’s poems, the priest is initially paralyzed and dumbstruck by what he has learned. Depending on the reader’s point of view, the transformative effect that knowledge has upon the priest can be read as a potentially positive or negative outcome. Like the knights who were forever altered by their encounter with the Dark Ladie, and the priests whose lives were derailed by their knowledge of the Prophetess of Seām, the priest in “The Penitent’s Confession” has been infected by a persistent and contagious supernatural influence. And just as the Penitent is haunted by Ellinor’s curse, the priest is haunted by “the deep, deep groans of the kneeling wretch” for the rest of his life.

75 Although “The Penitent’s Confession” is one of the four ballads in the volume accompanied by an illustration, the image does not render the poem’s climatic revelatory moment; instead, it captures an earlier portion of the ballad, when the Penitent’s arm is still hidden beneath the folds of his loosely-fitting garments.
life (114-115). On one hand, the effective termination of the priest’s career would appear to be a victory for irreligious readers. Yet to others, the priest’s loss of faith and the abandonment of his duties to the Church might symbolize the triumph of evil over good. The references that occur earlier in the poem suggest, however, that the influence or power of this particular priest and his Church were already on the wane. Once again, the possibility of multiple interpretations reveals that Bannerman expects her readers to engage with her work, and to reach their own conclusions regarding how to best interpret it.

The fate of the Penitent also warrants acknowledgement, for the punishment he experiences at the hands of Ellinor is one of the nastiest forms of retribution throughout the entire volume. We never learn what became of Sir Guyon in “The Dark Ladie,” but it is presumed that the former man’s crimes are eventually exposed by the members of his court. “The Perjured Nun” implies that the life of Lord Henrie is brought to an end by the ballad’s eponymous specter. The Penitent’s punishment, however, is ongoing; his rotting arm is a constant physical reminder of his sin, which he will be forced to confront for the rest of his life. He is equally plagued in mind and spirit with his feelings of guilt for the murder of Ellinor. Finally, the Penitent is also crippled with fear because he believes the ghost of Ellinor continues to shadow his every move. Like Coleridge’s Ancient Mariner, the Penitent’s suffering is everlasting. The most obvious difference between the two figures, of course, is that the Penitent is arguably far more deserving of such relentless punishment. Coleridge’s Mariner seems to experience a temporary reprieve to his pain when he is afforded the opportunity to share his story with someone, but the Penitent’s suffering seems to only increase when he is forced to relive the frightening events of his past. The fact that the Penitent never receives absolution from the priest is significant, because it renders his confession to the priest and his entire experience with the
Church meaningless. There appears to be nothing that can ever bring him peace, so he will spend the rest of his days paying for his crime.

“The Penitent’s Confession” is a significant turning point in *Tales of Superstition and Chivalry*. The narratives of the volume’s first four poems gradually become more direct, and Bannerman becomes increasingly less selective about what she is willing to reveal with each successive poem. In “The Dark Ladie” and “The Prophetess of the Oracle of Seäm,” for example, very few facts can be substantiated about either of the eponymous female characters. Yet in “The Perjured Nun,” the character directly relays her own story. The Dark Ladie never verbally accuses Sir Guyon of any misconduct, and the Prophetess never speaks at all; but Bannerman permits the Perjured Nun to speak directly and condemn Lord Henrie in her own words. Likewise, “The Penitent’s Confession” provides an account of a woman’s murder from the perspective of her own killer. But the pivotal moment is the climactic unveiling of the Penitent’s rotten arm, which introduces an element of unpredictability to the volume. After the first three poems, readers are accustomed to expect some form of equivocation, yet Bannerman manages to defy those expectations by actually following through and allowing the unveiling to take place. If we remind ourselves that Bannerman’s reliance upon obscurity and such evasive narrative techniques was a strategy intended to disrupt readers’ original expectations, it becomes somewhat ironic to recognize that Bannerman managed to defy the expectations of readers by giving them what they initially wanted in the first place!

These ideas are instrumental in understanding the significance of “The Festival of St. Magnus the Martyr,” the fifth ballad that appears in *Tales*. As in “The Penitent’s Confession,” Bannerman presents another climactic unveiling at the end of the poem, but this unveiling only manages to complicate rather than resolve the issues that are introduced throughout the ballad.
Furthermore, what is revealed beneath the veil is not nearly as gruesome as the rotting arm of the previous ballad, but it is significantly more perplexing. The poem marks a return to an emphasis on ambiguity and is more in keeping with the narrative approaches used in “The Dark Ladie” and “The Prophetess of the Oracle of Seäm.”

“The Festival of St. Magnus the Martyr” is the second poem in the volume to be derived from Arthurian legends, and features the character of Sir Ewaine. As with the inclusion of Sir Guyon in “The Dark Ladie,” Bannerman’s selection of Ewaine is also deliberate and highly symbolic. Her likely source for the poem is *Yvain, the Knight of the Lion* (c.1170) by Chrétien de Troyes, a French poet of the twelfth-century. According to de Troyes’ version of the knight’s story, Yvain neglects his wife in order to perform his knightly duties. When he returns to her after several years away, she refuses to see him and Yvain embarks on another quest to regain his lady’s favor. Bannerman transforms Yvain’s story into a tragedy by depicting the consequences of his neglect. Her ballad focuses on his wife Ellenor, who becomes increasingly more paranoid and is eventually driven mad by the absence of her husband.

The poem opens by depicting the passing of the seasons as Lady Ellenor anxiously waits for Sir Ewaine’s return. When his hunting party arrives without him, Lady Ellenor is beside herself in grief. Hoping to alleviate the concerns of his mistress, a servant by the name of Josceline informs her that Sir Ewaine might have gone to the nearby church (where the tomb of St. Magnus resides), for he has seen him go there in the past. Josceline tells Lady Ellenor to go to the church herself and that he will meet her there shortly. Lady Ellenor follows the instructions of Josceline, but is disappointed to find neither her husband nor the servant at the tomb. What she discovers instead is a loose brick along the steps leading to the chancel door, which appears
to be stained with blood. This presumably plants the idea in Lady Ellenor’s mind that her husband has been murdered.

Utilizing the techniques that proved so effective in raising suspense in “The Dark Ladie” and “The Prophetess of the Oracle of Seäm,” the narrative suddenly breaks off and the point of view briefly returns to Josceline. A single stanza depicts the servant’s surprise to find that neither Lady Ellenor nor her husband have arrived at the tomb. The poem flashes forward to the next morning, where local monks and nuns have gathered to celebrate the festival of St. Magnus. As the priest makes reference to “the sin of blood” in his sermon, the ceremony is interrupted by a shrill scream from the rear of the church (90). The congregation turns to see a veiled nun slowly gliding up the aisle. When the figure reaches the chancel door, it tears away its veil to reveal the “ashen” face of Lady Ellenor (116). She then proceeds to point to the blood-stained brick on the floor, extinguishes the candles, and disappears. The final lines of the poem suggest that the chapel continues to be haunted, for every “St. Magnus’ Festival / When “blood for blood” is read, / the last response, that echoes it, / is the shrill voice of the dead!” (125-128).

As with Bannerman’s other ballads, “The Festival of St. Magnus the Martyr” inspires several questions. Among the most pertinent is the fate of Sir Ewaine. Was Lady Ellenor correct in assuming her husband had been murdered? And if so, who was responsible for his death? What exactly was Josceline’s role in this mystery? Was there something more sinister at play? Perhaps Sir Ewaine murdered someone else and Lady Ellenor inadvertently discovered her husband’s crime? Weirder still, perhaps Lady Ellenor has had a premonition of her own death, and the red stains she sees foreshadow the spilling of her own blood by her husband. This reading can more adequately account for Lady Ellenor’s ghostly appearance in the church – she is in fact dead, and she has manifested before the church’s congregation in search of justice. But
why has she donned the garb of a nun? This circles back to a non-supernatural reading that suggests that the possibility of her husband’s death has sent her over the edge and that she is no longer sound of mind. Bannerman’s master stroke in the story is the fact that even though Lady Ellenor dramatically unveils her face before the congregation, the revelation of her identity only compounds the mystery and sheds no further light on the circumstances that led to her appearance in the church. Bannerman describes Ellenor’s exposed face as having an “ashen” hue, which could signify both madness and the unnatural pallor of living death. Therefore, the poem’s climactic unveiling actually reveals nothing at all!

The primary narrative of the poem can stand on its own and serves as a competent Gothic tale in and of itself, but it is especially interesting when it is read in context with the four poems that precede it. “The Festival of St. Magnus the Martyr” acts as a kind of distorted mirror that reflects various details and ideas from the previous ballads. The poem’s characters, their names, the circumstances they find themselves in, and the conclusion of the poem all hearken back to aspects of the four other ballads. This use of repetition is a deliberate strategy by Bannerman, which is designed to disorient readers. The feeling of familiarity that arises as readers experience the poem contributes to the overall atmosphere of strangeness.

Although Sir Ewaine’s wife is named Laudine in the Chrétien de Troyes’ account of the knight’s story, Bannerman has changed her name to Ellenor, the same name as the ill-fated woman that appears in “The Penitent’s Confession,” but with a minor variant in the spelling. The Ellenor of “The Festival of St. Magnus the Martyr,” however, bears little resemblance to the Ellinor that haunts the Penitent in the previous poem. Instead, this Ellenor is actually a kind of double for Geraldine in “The Perjured Nun.” Both poems feature women who are left alone by their husbands. Lord Henrie isolates himself by going to the eastern wing of his castle, while Sir
Ewaine is prone to sometimes visit the tomb of St. Magnus, which is located in the eastern portion of the church. Both Geraldine and Lady Ellenor decide to pursue their husbands. Geraldine defies her husband’s orders, while Lady Ellenor is specifically instructed by Josceline and told where she might find Sir Ewaine. She, like Geraldine, does not find her husband; instead, she discovers the mysterious blood-stained brick. For Lady Ellenor, the brick serves as an important catalyst that forever changes her life, just as Geraldine’s encounter with the ghost of the Perjured Nun changes hers. Finally, Lady Ellenor’s appearance in the guise of a nun at the end of the poem recalls the veiled figures of the Dark Ladie, the Prophetess, the Perjured Nun, and the white-robed specter of the first Ellinor found in “The Penitent’s Confession.” Lady Ellenor’s manifestation heralds the revelation of a crime, and specifically the exposure of a murder, and is therefore comparable to the ghostly manifestations of the Dark Ladie, the Perjured Nun, and Ellinor in “The Penitent’s Confession” as well!

This repetition and the uncanny dreamlike correlations between the poems might appear redundant, and it may not be immediately clear how this particular poem advances the visionary themes of the volume. In the simplest sense, the repetition emphasizes the ubiquity of crimes against women at the hands of men, particularly men that women trust. The transgressions of Sir Ewaine may not be as severe as the crimes committed by the other male characters in the ballads so far, but he is still responsible for neglecting his wife. Like Sir Guyon, he too has failed to uphold the code of chivalry in terms of his lack of dedication to his family. In his absence, his wife is left vulnerable, and it is in her pursuit of him where she is led astray and either meets an untimely end or is driven past the brink of hysteria into madness. The story of Lady Ellenor represents a tragic variation on Geraldine’s pursuit of knowledge in “The Perjured Nun,” for what Lady Ellenor learns ultimately destroys rather than enlightens her. Yet both poems are
necessary to fully represent Bannerman’s vision of the world. Women must be brave like Geraldine and make decisions for themselves, but they must also be cautious and maintain control of their emotions. Sir Ewaine’s neglect is inexcusable, but Lady Ellenor’s dependence on her husband appears to have made her idle and susceptible to paranoia, and thus her story partially serves as a cautionary tale to readers. However, without previously demonstrating the ways in which women are routinely abused and victimized by their husbands and lovers in the previous poems, “The Festival of St. Magnus the Martyr” might have placed too great of an emphasis on Lady Ellenor’s shortcomings and naivety, therefore the poem greatly benefits when it is read within the context of the volume as a whole.

For one reason or another, “The Festival of St. Magnus the Martyr” was omitted from Poems, A New Edition in 1807. Whether Bannerman had misgivings about how the poem fit in with the rest of the volume, or she had second thoughts about the general quality or efficacy of the poem itself, it is impossible to know. As with so many of the strange incidents in her ballads, we must also rely on speculation about her editorial decisions since none of her personal papers have survived to shed any further light on the issue. The poem has also been overlooked by the handful of scholars that have published studies on Bannerman. At the time of this writing, Aishah Alshatti’s dissertation for the University of Glasgow is the only scholarly work that discusses the poem, but she merely provides a summary of the plot and sites it as a secondary example of Bannerman’s use of veils. Hopefully, as more scholars begin to discover the works of Bannerman, “The Festival of St. Magnus the Martyr” will benefit from additional study and elucidation.

While “The Festival of St. Magnus the Martyr” reflects on the four ballads that come before it, “Basil” – the sixth poem in the volume – appears to look ahead, and broadens the scope
of Tales with a significant shift in atmosphere and setting. Thus far, Bannerman’s ballads have mostly taken place at night or in close, claustrophobic spaces, but the events of “Basil” occur within an open and lush sea-side landscape. It is also the first of four poems that appear in the second half of the volume to focus on male rather than female protagonists. Bannerman’s depiction of Basil is predominantly sympathetic. He differs dramatically from the murderous and deceptive male characters that appear in the first half of the volume. Unlike Father Paul, the most sympathetic male character to appear in the volume so far, Basil’s history and conduct is not particularly suspicious nor does it suggest he is an unreliable narrator. Nevertheless, embedded within Bannerman’s characterization of Basil is a very different critique of male behavior that raises questions regarding his judgment, his intellect, and possibly even his sanity.

The first half of “Basil” is especially Romantic in its evocative depiction of the eponymous young boy’s close relationship with nature. Steve Newman has observed that “the poem offers an image of the Romantic Child of Nature,” which he connects to the writings of William Wordsworth (17). Bannerman’s characterization of Basil is certainly comparable to the various simple and solitary characters found throughout Lyrical Ballads. Yet beyond the immediate similarities in regard to Basil’s reverence for nature and the role his rural upbringing has had in shaping his benevolent character, the poem’s emphasis on the destructive role of superstition is particularly reminiscent of Wordsworth’s poem “Goody Blake and Harry Gill,” a ballad concerning two feuding neighbors. When Harry catches Goody in the act of gathering sticks in his yard to build a fire for herself, he scolds the poor woman and forbids her from taking them. She responds in turn with a curse, and vows that Harry will never be warm again. From this point forward, Harry is constantly cold. The poem implies that Harry’s symptoms are purely psychosomatic, and that even though he consciously believes that the old woman has hexed him,
his unconscious guilt for treating her so unkindly has manifested itself in the form of his strange physical ailment. Although played humorously, Wordsworth’s poem attests to the power that superstition and a belief in the supernatural can have upon an uncultivated mind.

In Bannerman’s ballad, Basil is driven from his home because he comes to believe it is inhabited by a supernatural being. The poem contains the requisite elements of ambiguity in that Basil’s experiences may or may not involve the paranormal, and his response to the incident raises a number of questions. Like Wordsworth’s ballad, Bannerman also emphasizes how superstitious fears can affect the mind; but the poem ultimately differs from the majority of Wordsworth’s poetry because it suggests that rather than enlightening or elevating his mind, Basil’s isolation within nature is responsible for arresting his development and stunting his intellectual growth.

In the early portions of the poem, the narrator emphasizes Basil’s deep connection with his natural surroundings: “the sobbings of the ocean waves, / were all the notes that Basil knew” (1-2). Bannerman’s characterization of “the rude sea boy” shows him to possess a kind disposition, for his heart is said to be “Pity’s resting place” (16, 19). He is well-liked and respected by the local community, but has no family of his own. Instead, he finds solace in nature rather than his interactions with others: “The tones, that sooth’d this lonely heart / Came not from human kind!” (38-39). But the poem implies that Basil’s limited experience has made him vulnerable and rather impressionable; he is described as “unknown, untutor’d, unrepress’d,” which can partially account for his naïve reaction to the mysterious crisis that occurs at the heart of the poem (15).

In addition to establishing Basil as a character, the first 54 lines of the poem are spent creating an idyllic yet otherwise ordinary atmosphere for Bannerman to eventually disrupt. When the prospect of the supernatural is introduced, it is all the more powerful and impressive when
Basil’s rustic paradise is suddenly lost. One winter’s night, Basil is overcome with an inexplicable sense of dread: “it was not fear of tide or wind,” for these are things that he has long been accustomed to, but rather “the low breathlessness of mind, / when the heart-veins congeal” (67, 68-69). This impression overtakes Basil before anything out of the ordinary happens, which suggests that the particularly sensitive boy may have experienced a kind of psychic premonition, or what Scottish Highlanders have commonly referred to as “second sight” (O’Neill, par 3). Basil’s fears are realized once he discerns “a moan that seem’d to come / from some lost wretch, that made his home of the desert and the sky” (72-75). Bannerman’s description here is quite clever, for the moan could be attributed to either a homeless vagrant that has lost his way through the storm, or a disembodied and specifically elemental spirit (like those that appear in earlier poems like “The Genii” or “The Spirit of the Air”). Both could theoretically make their “home of the desert and the sky.”

However, as the sounds draw “nearer” to his cottage, Basil seems to acknowledge his visitor’s mortal origin: “the stifled groan was a voice in death” and he is able to “count the ebbing breath” (75, 77-78). His anxiety reaches a fever pitch when he hears a heavy thump against “his unfasten’d door” (76). When he peeks through “the spaces of his window-bars,” he sees a corpse lying face down in the snow (85-90). Terrified “that he must cross the dead” to escape, Basil finally musters up the courage to open the door and flees into the night (95). Bannerman does a fantastic job of creating suspense and depicting Basil’s growing terror at his unexpected late night visitor; however, the great irony of the scene resides in Basil’s decision not to open the door sooner. Had he done so, he may have saved the life of the poor wretch that perished on his doorstep! Basil’s irrational and unsubstantiated fear that the person lurking around his cottage could be a criminal, or something inhuman altogether, has resulted in the
death of an innocent person. If his heart is “Pity’s resting place,” why does Basil allow his suspicions to prevent him from performing an act of kindness by taking the stranger in?

On one hand, Basil should not be faulted for the concern for his safety from a robber or possibly homicidal intruder. But at the same time, his decision not to help the stranger is incompatible with his kind reputation. His behavior is not that of a Good Samaritan, and could also be perceived as cowardly. However, the thought of admitting the stranger never occurs to Basil – he seems to be convinced from the start that the presence intends him harm. This suggests that his conduct should be regarded critically, which is further reinforced by Basil’s actions in the final portions of the ballad.

After abandoning his home, Basil takes refuge in a cave. Alone with only his thoughts throughout the day, it is not long before another idea “settled on his brain” (102). He seems to have recognized in hindsight that the individual outside his cottage was not a ghost, but this leads Basil to conclude that “his mountain-home is tenanted / by the spirit of the slain!” (110). Dispossessed of his home, Basil becomes a kind of phantom himself, for “he wanders on the desert beach, / Like some lone ghost of air, / Scarce human like” (111-113). By the end of the poem, Basil is literally made one with nature; by relocating to live in the mountain cave, he has taken withdrawal from human society to its most extreme end. However, he is not any better for it. Basil is now plagued by “wilder fits and drearier dreams,” and when he is most unhappy, “he drags his worn and naked feet / across the crag, whose chasms meet, / to gaze on his forsaken home!” (122, 125-127). His home is now desolate, and the body of the ill-fated visitor has been buried beside the cottage, and “a heap of stones” have been placed to mark his grave (130). The poem’s conclusion implies that Basil will remain estranged from his home, but the grave will serve as a “beacon” to guide sailors toward the shore (133).
In his reading of “Basil,” Tim Ruppert advances additional “visionary” aspects of the poem, and concludes that Basil is actually responsible for burying the body and erecting the monument of stones beside the cottage (792). Ruppert claims that “the boy’s impressive act of magnanimity” presents “an image of human beings responding to revelations about their world by transforming some part of that world for the better” (792). Yet the poem clearly indicates that Basil is too afraid to return to his cottage, so it is incredibly unlikely that he is the one that placed the stones there. Rather, it appears that another unknown occupant of the village is responsible for this act of kindness and has played the role of Good Samaritan instead of Basil. The poem does conclude with a symbol of “humaneness,” and there is a visionary component to the final scene – the “heap of stones” is built to honor the dead, but it also communicates to and assists the living (Ruppert 792). However, this act of “magnanimity” cannot be attributed to Basil, which provides additional evidence that readers are to regard the character with a critical eye.

“Basil” is one of the only ballads in Tales where Bannerman stresses the incredulity of the supernatural rather than its legitimacy. Basil’s belief in the supernatural has an unquestionably negative effect on his life. His decision to flee the cottage is incredibly foolish, for he’s given up the few comforts of his life on account of a superstitious delusion. Furthermore, his unfounded fears are directly responsible for a death that could have been prevented. Therefore, Bannerman continues to defy expectations in the volume by suggesting the possibility of the supernatural not only to debunk it, but to also suggest that Basil’s belief in ghosts is a sign of his naivety and the reason for his downfall. Once again, things are not what they seem, and Bannerman finds a new and unexpected way to reinforce the volume’s primary theme. Then again, Basil’s cottage could in fact be haunted, but the poem’s frequent gestures toward nature and hints of Basil’s limited intellect seem to invite a significantly more grounded interpretation.
Bannerman’s use of the supernatural in “Basil” reinforces another pattern that can be perceived throughout *Tales*. Thus far, the supernatural has been depicted as a force that assists the heroines in Bannerman’s ballads. However, Basil’s belief in the supernatural proves to be his undoing. The primary difference, of course, is that Basil is male. With the exception of “The Murcian Cavalier” (which I will discuss shortly), women are aided by the supernatural whereas men are tormented by it. “Basil” represents a unique variation on the theme; the male characters in poems such as “The Dark Ladie” or “The Penitent’s Confession” are terrorized by supernatural forces on account of their crimes against women. Yet Basil’s belief that he is the victim of the supernatural is the result of his own limited perception, which points to a broader and more general critique of Romanticism. A life spent isolated in nature has had an adverse effect on Basil’s intellect and his ability to distinguish fantasy from reality.

In “Basil,” Bannerman dramatizes the repercussions that unfold when an impressionable young man jumps at figurative shadows. The volume’s next ballad, “The Fisherman of Lapland,” details a strange and inexplicable encounter with a *literal* shadow. Like “Basil,” the poem also focuses on male characters, and takes place in another coastal setting, this time in the frigid polar climate of northern Russia. The narrative structure of the ballad recalls the nested storytelling techniques in both “The Prophetess of the Oracle of Seäm” and the latter half of “The Dark Ladie,” where information is relayed second-hand to the narrator, and then imparted to the audience. Once again, the sense of removal from the actual events described casts some doubt upon the authenticity of the narrative, and Bannerman continues to prompt readers to actively engage with the poem and question the information they read.

At 64 lines, “The Fisherman of Lapland” is the shortest ballad in *Tales*, yet it manages to concisely reflect several of the primary themes of the volume. The poem introduces another
exotic setting, emphasizes the importance of perception, and describes a rather unique supernatural phenomenon. The poem is presented in the first person, and the narrator is presumably speaking to another unnamed individual that has accompanied him to a particular spot along the Russian coastline. After pointing out where the boat of a fisherman named Peter crashed in a storm some years before, the narrator recounts a story that he has heard from another anonymous traveler. Having no prior knowledge of the site’s tragic history, the traveler claims to have seen a mysterious shadow lingering on the spot where the old fisherman allegedly died. Hoping to solve the mystery, he attempts to trace the source of the shadow, but cannot account for its origin: “Around it, and round, he had ventur’d to go, / But no form, that had life, threw the stamp on the snow” (47-48). Several minutes elapse and the shadow eventually disappears, along with the uneasy feelings the encounter inspired in the traveler. It is not until much later, during the traveler’s conversation with the poem’s narrator, that he learns about the shipwreck at the site and reaches the startling conclusion that the shadow belonged to the undead fisherman.

The final lines of the poem return to the perspective of the narrator, who insists that the traveler’s ghostly story is true. He reminds his silent partner (and readers) that he has heard the story firsthand, and stresses that “had you seen” the look in the traveler’s eye “when he spoke of the place where the shadow had been,” and then, more importantly, “had you seen” the traveler’s surprised reaction “when I told of the night.../ And the rock, where old Peter of Lapland was lost,” then there would be no doubt that the traveler’s story is true (53-60). Therefore, the narrator provides the missing link in the story, and confirms the authenticity of the traveler’s paranormal experience. The fact that the traveler did not already know the history of the coastline adds credibility to his narrative. Of course, the narrator’s friend – the stand-in for Bannerman’s readers and audience – does not have the luxury of directly witnessing the
traveler’s reactions, and thus, we are left with the option of accepting or rejecting the narrator at his word.

Daniel Watkins is the only critic to have discussed “The Fisherman of Lapland,” and he argues that the poem’s refusal “to follow the path of literary convention” is additional evidence of “Bannerman’s visionary poetic strategy” throughout Tales (23). Watkins points out that even though the poem is presented from a first person perspective, Bannerman “places the narrative entirely within quotation marks, even though these are unnecessary, given that no one else speaks; there is not even an omniscient narrator” (23). He adds that “the effect of this strategy is unsettling because it turns the poem into a free-floating expression that seems to desire but cannot discover a governing or stabilizing voice outside itself” (23). In this respect, the poem’s central supernatural episode acts as a metaphor for the pursuit of knowledge itself. Just as the traveler seeks to “apprehend and comprehend” the elusive shadow of the departed fisherman, readers attempt to make sense of their own life experiences and sometimes cannot successfully do so (Watkins 23). Watkins concludes that “the sort of vision that Bannerman advances…push[es] the reader to contemplate the terrifying possibilities that life – and death – lack any discernible guiding authority” (24). Although a rather pessimistic claim, Watkins’ reading of the poem reveals the far-reaching visionary concerns of a ballad that at first glance seems relatively slight and simplistic in comparison to the longer poems that have come before it. From this perspective, this rather quaint supernatural tale acquires an even more chilling philosophical significance.

Bannerman returns her focus to a female protagonist in “The Murcian Cavalier,” the next ballad to appear in Tales. Yet she continues to defy expectations by presenting a passive damsel-in-distress as opposed to another strong-willed femme fatale. The poem is further distinguished
by the fact that its heroine is a victim of the supernatural, rather than assisted by it. Bannerman’s depiction of the melancholy Queen of Castellan highlights the limited options that many women faced in ages past, and she returns to the world of knights and ladies to expose the less idyllic side of chivalry. The plot of the poem revolves around the concept of a specter bridegroom, a popular motif in German as well as English ballads, where a young woman is abducted by a supernatural suitor. Bannerman transfers the theme from its Germanic origins to the medieval courts of Spain, and appropriates the idea to imply that it was not uncommon for women in arranged marriages to find themselves wed to monsters of a very different sort.

In much the same way that Bannerman responds to Coleridge with “The Dark Ladie,” “The Murcian Cavalier” appears to be a more subtle retelling of Matthew Gregory Lewis’s ballad “Alonzo the Brave and Fair Imogene,” which appeared in the first edition of The Monk in 1796, and was also collected in Tales of Wonder in 1801. Lewis’s poem tells the story of a knight who returns from the grave to abduct his intentioned bride after he discovers that she has married another man. In Lewis’s ballad, Imogene is punished for not remaining faithful to the memory of Alonzo after his death. Although they never married, the specter insists that his claim of possession over Imogene is a divine right:

God grants, that, to punish thy falsehood and pride,
My ghost at thy marriage should sit by thy side,
Should tax thee with perjury, claim thee as bride,
And bear thee away to the grave! (64-67).

Bannerman’s revision of Lewis’s poem and the specter bridegroom motif removes any notion of betrayal or culpability from the lady. She transforms Lewis’s parable of an unfaithful woman’s

76 Lewis’s poem is reprinted in Appendix D.
punishment into a sharp critique of chivalry and medieval marriage practices. The female protagonist in “The Murcian Cavalier” has no prior knowledge of the man to whom she is pledged to marry. She simply adheres to the expectations and rules of the court, and performs her duty as Queen. But the destined groom is not who or what he pretends to be, and readers are reminded once again that things are not always what they seem.

At the start of the ballad, we learn that several knights are competing in a tournament to win the hand of the Spanish Queen. The Queen, however, is not permitted to attend the contest; she is “far from gay Castile / at the lone towers of Castellan” (12-13). The ballad’s first two stanzas deliberately juxtapose the active physicality of the jousting knights with the passive isolation of the secluded Queen. Bannerman uses these early stanzas to demonstrate just how little power the Queen possesses, and to show how drab her life is in comparison to the lives of the knights:

Far, far remote were revelry,

And feast, and pomp, and pride.

Who is the fairest of that circle?

Who was there fair but one?

And she, upon a distant tow’r,

By her heart-pulse counts the pausing hour,

Untended and alone…. (21-27)

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77 “The Murcian Cavalier” is accompanied by a third illustration from Thomson and MacKenzie, which shows the pensive Queen gazing sadly out her window. Another female figure is positioned behind the Queen, whose face bears a similar expression of melancholy. The second figure is partially veiled in shadow, and the lower portion of her torso seems to merge with a swirl of fabric. At first glance, one might assume the second figure is the Queen’s servant Inez, who appears early in the poem. However, it seems more likely that the second figure is an apparition of the Queen herself, and foreshadows her transformation into the ghostly and forlorn “Ladie of the Wood” in the ballad’s final lines (172).
Although she is the coveted prize of the contest, the Queen is not allowed to witness the event, let alone participate in it or have any influence over its outcome. Even as a Queen, she has no choice in the matter of her own personal happiness. Her choices are made for her, presumably in the interest of strengthening the kingdom of Castellan and securing her family’s continued influence over the region. These chivalric notions of power and family are ultimately in service of a patriarchal world, and Bannerman’s ballads continue to stress that a knight’s supposed duty to honor and respect women is nothing more than a formal pretense since the desires and opinions of women are secondary considerations for the kings, knights, and priests in command. It is also worth noting that Bannerman never even provides a formal name to the Queen, which reinforces the fact that she has no identity of her own.

While brooding over the circumstances of her unhappy life, the Queen hears the sound of horses below her window. She reluctantly descends and enters the carriage of the Murcian Cavalier, the knight she presumes has won her hand at the tournament. Seemingly indifferent to her fate, the Queen asks no questions of her suitor and remains silent as the carriage journeys through the woods toward the Cavalier’s distant home. Bannerman’s description of the ominous journey through the nighttime forest is reminiscent of other contemporary Gothic ballads such as “Tam O Shanter” by Robert Burns, Goethe’s “The Erl-King,” Gottfried Bürger’s “The Wild Huntsman” (both of which were translated by Walter Scott for Lewis’s Tales of Wonder collection), as well as Raymond’s journey with the disguised ghost of the Bleeding Nun in The Monk. In these scenes, the Queen’s growing sense of unease is mirrored within the gloomy landscape that surrounds her:

Nature seem’d to be

But one unfathom’d tomb!
Many a rugged, trackless path,
Amid that gloom, they pass’d. (111-114).

In the aforementioned German ballads like those of Goethe and Bürger, the protagonist is usually fleeing from supernatural forces, but in Bannerman’s poem, although the Queen does not recognize it yet, she has already been captured by a supernatural being and is speeding through the woods with a ghost at her side.

Just before dawn, the carriage arrives at the Cavalier’s castle. The Queen is confused to find no servants there to welcome her, and the castle appears to be unlit and empty. As the knight leads her into his desolate abode, the Queen observes that his hand feels “still, and damp, and numb!” (130). The description of the dreary castle forms a startling parallel to the world of empty opulence the Queen has left behind. She has exchanged the pretense of a living tomb for a literal one, and it appears that she sensed this was the case all along: “A strange and nameless terror ran / Along her shiv’ring brain; / Something like this her heart had known” (131-133).

The correlations with Lewis’s “Alonzo the Brave and Fair Imogene” become more explicit in the final few stanzas of the poem, particularly when the Queen catches her first real glimpse of the Murcian Cavalier’s face. The climax of Lewis’s ballad occurs when Alonzo lifts his helmet to reveal “a skeleton’s head” to Imogene and the guests attending her wedding reception (56). Never one to miss an opportunity to shock his audience, Lewis describes the dead lover’s skull in gruesome detail: “the worms they crept in, the worms they crept out, / And sported his eyes and temples about” (59-60). Although lacking the same crude detail, Bannerman’s Queen experiences a similar shock when she studies the face of her betrothed:

O’er ev’ry feature clear she saw
Unearthly beauty wave!
The purest white, the softest red,

The eye alone was glaz’d and dead,

As the sleeper’s in the grave! (140-144).

Lewis’s ballad concludes when Alonzo wraps his arms around Imogene and the two suddenly disappear “through the wide yawning ground” and Imogene is never seen alive again (70). In Bannerman’s poem, however, only the undead Cavalier decomposes and disappears upon making physical contact with the Queen:

When it rais’d, with faint, unsteady strength,

One stiffen’d arm’s unmeasur’d length,

As it had mov’d in pain.

Then with a crash, that ran along,

Till it rock’d beneath her tread,

That arm fell down upon the stone,

And her stunned senses fled! (152-158).

Both poems conclude with the transformation of living women into ghostly apparitions of their former selves. The narrator of Lewis’s ballad claims that Imogene is doomed to appear “at midnight four times each year,” still clad in her “bridal apparel of white” (78, 80). She is forced to dance “with the skeleton-knight” in a grotesque ceremony that parallels the wedding banquet from which she was stolen (81). The wedding guests are replaced by “pale spectres” that “drink [blood] out of skulls newly torn from the grave” and toast “the health of Alonzo the Brave, / and his consort the False Imogene” (83-87). The details of Imogene’s macabre fate are almost comedic on account of Lewis’s morbid excess, but the fate of the Queen in Bannerman’s ballad is considerably more somber and tragic. The Murcian Cavalier is never seen again, but the figure
of the Queen continues to haunt the castle, and it is unclear whether she is now a ghost herself, or if she has instead surrendered so entirely to her duties that she simply occupies the castle while it decays around her:

And still, upon the battlement,
She walks at shut of even:
Her face is pale, her air is wild,
And her looks are toward heaven!
And ever, when a deeper shade
Hangs on these forests rude;
The Spanish shepherd girls will tell
How they hear, far off, in a desert dell,
The Ladie of the Wood! (164-172)

The destiny of Bannerman’s Queen is a fate shared by many women throughout history whose lives were disrupted when they were married off to strangers. Like Bannerman’s other ballads, “The Murcian Cavalier” contains many ambiguous elements and raises several questions (“What is the Queen’s name?” “Who was the Murcian Cavalier?” “Why in particular did he choose the Queen?” “Where is he now?” “What was the purpose of his abduction?”) However, the themes of ambiguity and obscurity are also embedded within the action of the poem itself, and can be found in the Queen’s uncertainty about her future. Bannerman’s poem brings to the surface what Lewis takes for granted in his ballad. Lewis’s Imogene is a victim as well, for she attempts to take action for herself and is punished as a result. Rather than mourn the death of Alonzo, she seeks happiness elsewhere and is condemned for her attempt to move forward. Lewis’s poem (perhaps inadvertently) emphasizes the fact that women were merely the property of other men;
so much so, that one returns from the dead to claim what he believes to be his rightful property. The fact that Alonzo and Imogene were never formally married is of no consequence. In the skewed morality of Lewis’s ballad, Imogene is getting what she deserved for betraying the man who expected to eventually own her.

Perhaps the most significant question that remains at the ballad’s conclusion is why the Queen remains at the castle if the ghost of the Murcian Cavalier is no longer there to detain her? The simplest answer is that she has no better options or opportunities to pursue. In fact, the Queen has more freedom at the unoccupied castle than she ever had at her home in Castellan. She only has to answer to herself and can presumably make her own decisions. From this perspective, the poem implies that the Queen has been aided by supernatural powers after all, for the specter of the Murcian Cavalier has rescued her from a life of dullness and servitude. However, the unhealthy pallor and “wild” “air” attributed to the Queen by the “Spanish shepherd girls” who claim to have seen her apparition gliding along “the battlement” suggests she is not any happier at the castle than when she lived in Castellan. But the implication remains that the Queen is better off a ghost than a flesh-and-blood woman. However one chooses to interpret the poem, the Queen’s passivity and sense of resignation remains paramount. Her characterization differs dramatically from the more active and vengeful women in Bannerman’s other ballads, which makes her lack of agency all the more clear and noticeable. She has no power, and she has no influence. Even more frightening, she seems to have no purpose at all.

With the allusions to Lewis and other popular German and English ballads, “The Murcian Cavalier” could easily be mistaken as the most unoriginal or derivative poem in Tales of Superstition and Chivalry. This could perhaps account for why Adriana Craciun and other modern critics have never discussed the poem in their studies of Bannerman’s work. However,
the ballad may prove to be the most realistic and terrifying portrait of womanhood in 
Bannerman’s entire oeuvre, for it emphasizes that women ultimately have very few options when 
it comes to obtaining control over their own lives. The poem depicts the exchange of one 
negative scenario for circumstances that prove to be even worse. In Bannerman’s other ballads, 
the supernatural grants women the opportunity for escape, or leads them to discover long-hidden 
truths, and of course, it provides them a means to pursue vengeance against those who have 
harmed them. But “The Murcian Cavalier” leaves readers with the image of a woman who has 
no means of escape or transcendence from the unfortunate circumstances of her life. In this 
respect, it is a compelling poem that warrants further discussion and analysis.

The ninth and penultimate ballad in Tales of Superstition and Chivalry is entitled “The 
Black Knight of the Water” and is a bit of an anomaly when considered in context with the 
volume as a whole. In addition to shifting the focus from women back to male characters, it is 
the only poem of Bannerman’s that takes place in Scotland. The opening stanza indicates that the 
action begins near “the princely pile of Scoone,” or rather Scone Abbey, which was once the site 
of coronation in the Southeast of Scotland (4). In addition to the poem’s ill-fated hero Earl 
William, the ballad also includes “King Robert” as a principle character, or Robert the Bruce 
(1274-1329) as as he is better known throughout history (5). A reference to a “proud baron, the 
bold Lord John” organizing a small army against Robert provides further historical context, and 
is likely an allusion to John III Comyn, Lord of Badendoch (d. 1306), a rebel that challenged 
Robert’s claim to the throne (10). Comyn was eventually stabbed to death by Robert the Bruce at 
the Greyfriars church in Dumfries, so the poem must take place early in Robert’s reign as king 
and during the early stages of his feud with Lord John. The character of Earl William, King 
Robert’s trusted aid, appears to have sprung from the imagination of Bannerman. He of course
shares his first name with the famous Scottish hero William Wallace (d.1305) who was also a close ally of Robert the Bruce, but Wallace was executed prior to Robert’s ascension to the throne and therefore, it is unlikely that Earl William is intended to be William Wallace.

Bannerman’s primary source for “The Black Knight of the Water” appears to be the second edition of *The Musical and Poetical Relicks of the Welsh Bards* (1794) by Edward Jones (1752-1824), which she likely discovered through her friendship with the antiquarian and poet John Leyden, or through reading his edition of *The Complaynt of Scotland* in 1801 (Garner 21). However, in Jones’ translation of the Welsh poet Sir Gruffudd Llwyd’s “Ode to Owain Glyndwr,” it is King Urien who confronts and eventually defeats “the grim, black warrior of the flood” (p.41). Urien was initially a popular figure in Welsh mythology, but was eventually incorporated into Arthurian legends, where he was known as the brother-in-law of King Arthur. In Bannerman’s interpretation of the myth, her hero, Earl William, is defeated and killed by the Black Knight. In many respects, the poem is a kind of rehearsal or prelude to “The Prophecy of Merlin,” the final poem in the volume which is an even more subversive revision of Arthurian myths and legends. In both of Bannerman’s poems, the heroes are defeated by supernatural beings, which has significant political implications in “The Prophecy of Merlin.”

“The Black Knight of the Water” is also the second poem from the original edition of *Tales of Superstition and Chivalry* that is omitted in *Poems, A New Edition* in 1807. As with “The Festival of St. Magnus the Martyr,” Bannerman does not provide any explanatory notes in the 1807 publication to explain why the poem was not reprinted, nor have I found any references to these poems in the correspondence of Anderson or Park. One theory, as I advanced earlier in this introduction, is that Bannerman omitted the poem on account of its overt connections to

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78 Leyden was also a friend of Walter Scott and contributed a handful of ballads to the *Minstrelsy of the Scottish Border* in 1802.
Scotland and Scottish history because she hoped to distinguish herself from other more provincial Scottish authors such as Robert Burns or James Hogg (who published his first collection *The Mountain Bard* in February 1807 and *The Shepherd’s Guide*, a “practical treatise on sheep” the same year). On the other hand, by 1807, Walter Scott was the most successful and popular poet throughout Great Britain and it is possible that Bannerman felt that “The Black Knight of the Water” was too similar to Scott’s work, which may have led to unfavorable comparisons to his poetry.

It is also eminently possible that Bannerman simply disliked the poem, or felt that it did not entirely fit alongside the other ballads of *Tales of Superstition and Chivalry*. “The Black Knight of the Water” features a few vividly rendered and memorable passages, but it is arguably the weakest poem in the volume if it is judged upon its engagement with the themes prominently explored in the other ballads. While there are some elements of ambiguity in regard to the character and origins of the Black Knight itself, the ballad does not raise the same kinds of compelling questions that perplex and continue to haunt readers after they finish ballads like “The Dark Ladie” or “The Prophecy of the Oracle of Seäm.” Women are also entirely absent from the poem, so it does not advance any of Bannerman’s proto-feminist ideas, and the theme of vengeance is only partially alluded to in regard to the ongoing conflict between King Robert and Lord John. The civil unrest of Scotland only serves as a minor backdrop for the ballad, which instead focuses upon the character of Earl William, whose absent-mindedness and inability to follow a simple direction leads to fatal consequences. The supernatural plays a prominent role in the poem, and the manifestation of the eponymous Black Knight is an impressive scene. But the elements of suspenseful Gothic terror are somewhat undermined by the ballad’s rather unexpected didacticism and a surprisingly traditional Christian message.
The plot of the poem is straightforward enough: King Robert dispatches Earl William to ride to the other side of his kingdom to determine how many men Lord John has assembled in his army. However, King Robert issues a stern warning, which “may not waved be!” and gives William the following set of instructions:

“When you leave the cross of the holy St. Mark,
Beware of the marsh of sedge!
And utter thrice the name in Heav’n!
Ere you reach the water’s edge …” (24-28)

But Earl William neglects to say the prayer and forges ahead on his journey, knowing that he has many miles to travel before he reaches his destination. When he arrives at the marshland, his horse refuses to proceed any further, which forces Earl William to dismount in frustration and fear. After a strange wind begins to swirl around the center of the lake, an enormous knight clad “in coal-black iron” springs from the churning waves (77).

Bannerman’s description of the spectral knight includes several unique and admirably sinister details; although the figure emerges from the waters, “not one drop of water wet / the meshes of his mail” (83-84). And when he steps upon the shore, “the spot of earth, where his foot came down, / did wither up and shrink” (87-88). Earl William stands his ground, but his resolve begins to wane when he “mark’d the with’ring grass / as the water-knight drew near” (89-90). When he attempts to engage the knight in battle, Earl William discovers that the creature is invulnerable to his attacks:

But not one pass of that massy spear
Could reach the iron knight:
It bended back like an autumn leaf,
He might not touched be!

That sword of proof, it wav’d in the wind,

Like a branch of the willow tree! (94-100).

The pestilential knight not only renders Earl William’s weapons ineffective, but it saps the physical vitality and strength from him as well: “Earl William felt his palsied arm, / and the vital heat decay” (101-102). This particular detail involving the “palsied arm” recalls the poisonous touch of Ellinor in “The Penitent’s Confession,” but Bannerman stops short of presenting any further graphic or descriptive details concerning the Black Knight’s defeat of Earl William. Once again, the “whistling gale” rises from the marsh and overtakes Earl William before he falls senseless, “never [to] move again” (105, 112). The poem concludes in a customary fashion, noting how soldiers and hunters continue to “pass Earl William’s gate” but “all is still within” (113, 116). The final lines hint that Earl William’s body was never recovered, and that people deliberately go out of their way to avoid the accursed spot where Earl William died.

Despite the aura of weirdness surrounding the Black Knight itself, the poem’s conclusion is somewhat lackluster and unsatisfying, but in a very different and less dramatic way when compared to Bannerman’s other ballads. While one might feel sympathy for Earl William’s tragic end, the ballad strongly indicates that he’s culpable for his own demise. He is punished because he failed to heed the warning of King Robert and neglected to say the prayer to protect himself. In this way, Bannerman introduces a malevolent supernatural force to punish a man who has lapsed in his duties as both a knight and as a Christian. While Bannerman’s other ballads question the concept of medieval chivalry by providing knights who have failed to honor and respect women, “The Black Knight of the Water” introduces a knight that has failed to honor his King as well as his God. One could argue, however, that Earl William’s decision to ignore the
superstitious command of King Robert exemplifies a more rational and enlightened response. Rather than delaying and circling back to the cross of St. Mark to say the prayer, he deemed it more important to continue riding in order to obtain information regarding the army assembling against the king. However, he never reaches his destination and fails in his mission to acquire this information. If one wishes to read further into the symbolism of the poem, Earl William has literally turned his back on the sign of the cross and is overtaken by a devilish force as a result.

Such conventional and conservative didacticism is rather uncharacteristic of Bannerman, but not of the wider tradition of Romantic and Gothic ballads as whole. For example, Gottfried August Bürger’s ballad “Lenore” (and its translation by William Taylor) was extremely popular in England, and revolved around a young woman whose fixation on her deceased fiancé inspires her to renounce God because He failed to answer her prayers. Late one night, William returns from the grave and the reunited lovers speed through the forest on horseback to a cemetery, where a group of restless spirits surround Lenore and condemn her for her blasphemy. Although Lenore’s renunciation of God is a far more deliberate and defiant act, Earl William’s minor religious transgression results in a similarly gruesome fate. On its own, “The Black Knight of the Water” is a competent example of a Gothic ballad, but it pales in comparison to the other more unorthodox and challenging ballads Bannerman presents throughout Tales – and the volume’s next ballad in particular.

“The Prophecy of Merlin” is the tenth and final ballad in Tales, and it may stand as the volume’s most politically subversive poem. The preoccupation with medieval knights and sinister femmes fatales reaches its apotheosis, as Bannerman takes on the legendary character of King Arthur and offers a dramatic retelling of the myths surrounding his death. The specific prophecy alluded to in the title originates from King Arthur’s trusted friend and magician Merlin,
who foresees the death of Arthur but claims that he will one day return to save England.

Bannerman, however, has other plans for Arthur, and her description of his fate deviates dramatically from tradition and has significant political implications. In most stories, Arthur’s body is taken by the sorceress Morgan Le Fay to the Isle of Avalon where his wounds are healed and he is restored to life. But in Bannerman’s ballad, Arthur is taken to another remote island where he meets a mysterious woman known as the Queen of the Yellow Isle, or the Queen of Beauty, who ensures that Arthur will never return to England again (88, 136).

After “The Dark Ladie,” “The Prophecy of Merlin” has received the most attention from modern scholars. Discussions of the poem and its engraving figure prominently in the work of Craciun, Watkins, and Ruppert, and it has been the exclusive subject of two essays recently published by Katie Lister and Katie Garner. Watkins has stated that the poem offers Bannerman’s “most compelling visionary considerations of the relationship between life and death” (24). Lister traces how Bannerman “manipulates expected outcomes” of Arthurian myths and legends “to further her own feminist agenda” (167). Similarly, Garner sees the poem as an important “female examination” of Arthurian myths and legends, which challenges many assumptions regarding masculinity in chivalric literature (58). Garner also argues that Bannerman’s knowledge of Arthurian legends was a “serious enterprise,” but the controversy regarding the engraving drew attention away from the amount of research and scholarship she underwent to prepare the poem (60, 66).

Bannerman’s primary source for “The Prophecy of Merlin” is The History of the Kings of Britain (1136) by Geoffrey of Monmouth (c.1095-1155), which includes a section that gathers all of Merlin’s alleged prophecies, while another portion of the text is devoted to the history of King Arthur. As Garner has noted, the ballad is “the most densely annotated of the ten ballads
which make up the *Tales*” and includes references to several different sources (59). In addition to Monmouth, Bannerman cites Michael Drayton’s *Poly-Olbion* (1612) and John Selden’s explanatory notes to that poem, Book III of Edmund Spenser’s *Faerie Queene*, and *Some Specimens of the Poetry of the Antient Welsh Bards* (1764) by the Welsh poet and historian Evan Evans (1731-1789). Finally, one of the notes that reference Evans points to Gregory Way and George Ellis’s *Fabliaux; or Tales* (1796), another “collection of French Romances in translation containing several Arthurian texts” (Garner 60). The notes exemplify the extent of Bannerman’s scholarly research on the subject of Arthurian legends, but as Katie Lister has proposed, her “intellectual engagement” with the subject also reveals her to be ahead of aesthetic and cultural trends: “As the nineteenth century wore on, interest in Arthuriana developed into a craze that almost bordered on obsession as the legends were retold again and again in literature and art. Bannerman's early interest in the subject thus locates her at the earliest stages of the Arthurian revival” (175).

The ballad itself begins on the night before Arthur’s battle with the villain Modred. After a clandestine meeting with Merlin, Arthur is troubled and spends a restless night on watch. The wizard shares his prophecy with Arthur, but Bannerman does not disclose the conversation and withholds the content of the prophecy until the final two stanzas of the poem. By keeping the conversation offstage, Bannerman peaks the curiosity of readers unfamiliar with the myths, and begins to build anticipation and suspense for those who do. The middle of the poem dramatizes Arthur’s battle with Modred, wherein the latter is slain and Arthur is severely wounded. Using techniques similar to “The Prophetess of the Oracle of Seām,” the perspective of the ballad then shifts to a group of knights who discover Arthur’s empty armor on the battlefield of Camlan. Once again, the element of ambiguity underlies the action of the poem, as the knights are
dumbfounded when they discover that Arthur has vanished, and they cannot settle on any explanation for his disappearance. Garner’s interpretation of the scene finds yet another critique of chivalry embedded in Bannerman’s ballads: “the Round Table are no more than a nameless and ultimately ineffectual band of knights who offer Arthur little support besides waving his…sword…over his wounded body” (57). Like Earl William in “The Black Knight of the Water,” Arthur’s knights have failed in their mission to successfully serve their king. Bannerman’s depiction of the knights as incompetent differs significantly from her source materials, where Arthur frequently benefits from the loyalty and strength of his knights throughout his adventures. Rather than reproducing such typically masculine conquests and glories, Bannerman’s ballad emphasizes “the shortcomings of knightly fealty” (Garner 57).

In the final third of the poem, the point of view returns to Arthur, who awakens from a “deep and death-like sleep” and finds himself alone on a boat, surrounded by nothing but water (86, 87). Having lost track of time and still uncertain of his location, Arthur reflects on the night before the battle, where he experienced a strange vision of a “hand of blood” clasped within his own (123). Bannerman’s use of a flashback in this sequence is disorienting and the reference to the “hand of blood” is somewhat forced, but it serves to foreshadow what lies ahead for Arthur, and immerses the reader within his uneasy state of mind. The scene also offers yet another comparison to Coleridge, as Arthur’s lonely journey on a seemingly enchanted boat is reminiscent of part V of The Rime of the Ancient Mariner (although Arthur is truly isolated and without the advantage of a living dead crew) (Watkins 24). Garner has also drawn attention to the ways in which Arthur is feminized by Bannerman throughout these passages: “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” (57). Like any one of Ann Radcliffe’s perpetually endangered heroines, Arthur has been ostensibly kidnapped and awakens in the midst of a strange journey to an unknown destination. This is the first step in Bannerman’s undermining of King Arthur’s status as Britain’s Christ-like savior.

When Arthur arrives at his destination on the Yellow Isle, he is greeted by the Queen of Beauty. She offers him a cup to drink, which he accepts with some misgiving, as he again reflects upon “what the hand of blood / had mingled in the cave” (143-44). Although he feels some apprehension of the lady at first, he is won over by her seemingly benevolent demeanor and beauty: “he fix’d his eyes on that ladie’s face, / and trembled at the thought” of his initial suspicions (147-48). When Arthur senses a “mild reproach” in the Queen’s “eyes, of softest blue” for not trusting her, he gives in and drinks the potion she has offered him (151,150). But appearances, of course, are often deceptive, and the “raptur’d eyes” of Arthur prove to be easily manipulated (154). Beneath the Queen’s “smooth disguise” of innocence and modesty lurks “a demon-smile” (156, 155). Arthur is then shocked “when she rais’d aloof the other arm, / And he knew the hand of blood!” (160). Compared to other ballads in the volume, the Queen’s revelation as a fatal woman is somewhat anti-climactic. The obvious foreshadowing and belated references to the mysterious “hand of blood” telegraphs the ending for readers before Arthur recognizes the Queen’s duplicitous nature himself. But the scene reiterates the primary themes of the volume by showing how easily Arthur is misled by the Queen’s coy appearance. The accompanying illustration suggests he is distracted by her sensuous figure, but the text implies

79 Katie Lister has suggested that the Queen of Beauty is actually Acraila, the villainess of Book II of The Faerie Queene. Book II is the same portion of Spenser’s epic poem that features Sir Guyon, the knight haunted by “The Dark Ladie.” Therefore, Tales would be bookended by two explicit Spenserian references and allusions. Daniel Watkins has argued that such “circular structure…is unsettling” because it disrupts “any expectation that a reader might have of linear progression” (20). When the Tales material was reordered and rearranged for Poems, A New Edition, “The Dark Ladie” and “The Prophecy of Merlin” remained the first and last poems in the volume.
that Arthur is blindsided by her apparent goodness. Garner’s reading of the poem notes that “Arthur’s attention is firmly concentrated on her facial features,” and she adds that “the Queen’s supernatural power lies in her gaze” (62-63). Arthur equates the Queen’s kind looks with trustworthiness, and the mistake is fatal for him.

The ballad’s significant shock, however, is not the revelation of the Queen as a scheming femme fatale; it is the manner in which the final lines of the poem undermine the prophecy of Merlin itself:

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. … (173-176).

The poem’s conclusion strongly implies that Arthur will not return as England’s champion. Not only has no one found the site of his burial, but he has not emerged from his grave and the poem hints that he never will. Garner’s interpretation of the poem’s “open-endedness” notes that “the repeated negation that structures the final stanza (‘not’; ‘nor’; ‘nought’)…leaves the possibility of Arthur’s return wholly unconfirmed” (56). As a Scottish poet writing about the defeat of a legendary English king, the political symbolism is unmistakable: England will never be saved. According to Garner, “Bannerman’s poem poses an indirect challenge to Scotland’s subordination to the English centre since the 1707 Act of Union” (62).

Bannerman’s final note to “The Prophecy of Merlin” indicates that she anticipated some controversy regarding her depiction of Arthur’s death: “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 fairy-ground, and a poetical community of right to its appropriation has
never been disputed.” However, as already discussed, the only controversy that arose from the poem involved the illustration, and it appears that the ballad’s political implications were overlooked by contemporary reviewers as they make no derogatory references to Bannerman’s revision of Arthurian legend. Despite her disclaimer, there is ample evidence to support the notion that “The Prophecy of Merlin” is designed to punctuate the volume with a subversive political statement.

Another of Bannerman’s notes, which cites Evans’ Specimens, includes the following commentary on Arthur: “his death was politically concealed, lest it should dispirit the Britons. Hence arose so many fabulous stories about it.” While Bannerman’s poem contributes another link in a long chain of such “fabulous stories,” it differs from other examples because it appears to be intentionally designed to “dispirit the Britons.” Rather than shrouding Arthur’s death in mystery, Bannerman provides a decisive description of his death at the hands of the Queen of Beauty, which ultimately denies him the possibility of a heroic resurrection.

Garner’s essay explains that “to those in the know, the title of Bannerman’s poem established the expectation of national political commentary” (61). Her research reveals that Bannerman was informed by the rebellious political ideas regarding King Arthur that were expressed by her acquaintance John Leyden in The Complaynt of Scotland. According to Leyden, “the English had employed the prophecies of Merlin as a political engine, to intimidate the minds of the Scottish nation…and subjugate their courage, by familiarizing their minds to the idea of being conquered” (qtd in Garner 62). Bannerman uses her poem to turn the tables against the English, mining the same sources used to bolster their national pride to instead present a tale that prophesizes their defeat. Perhaps there is a bit of Bannerman herself in the Queen of Beauty, for while the Queen’s complicity in Arthur’s downfall positions the character to be a kind of
femme fatale and enemy to Britain, she is ostensibly a hero to Scotland for what she ultimately represents – the triumph of an underestimated force that has been dismissed as a viable threat.

With “The Prophecy of Merlin,” Bannerman concludes Tales with a clear reiteration of her broader visionary and philosophical concerns. As Watkins has noted, Bannerman has not only “rewritten the story of Arthur to suit her own imaginative purpose,” she has once again challenged the belief “that events and persons can be held to a single interpretation or grounded with a single understanding” (26). Each of the ten ballads in Tales of Superstition and Chivalry challenge certain preconceived notions and assumptions about history – whether it be the eventual return of King Arthur, the merits of the chivalric code, the dynamics between men and women, the consequences of unhappy marriages, or the authority of the church. The overarching theme of Bannerman’s ballads repeatedly stresses that “all that we know and believe is a lie, and breaking out of the structures of value and thought that form the cultural core of that lie is the purpose of her visionary imagination” (Watkins 27). In other words, the volume is designed to inspire readers to deconstruct these widely held assumptions about the past to discover how to improve the future.

Tales of Superstition and Chivalry is an incredibly important text; it demonstrates that the Gothic imagination was not exclusively confined to fiction, but also flourished within poetry. It is also a unique example of visionary Romanticism, for its Gothic elements were designed not to terrify, but to enrich and expand the minds of readers. Therefore, Bannerman’s poems are especially useful in highlighting the closely knit relationship between the Gothic and Romantic poetry. Tales appeared at a crucial moment in the early history of Romanticism, which saw the publication of not only Wordsworth’s and Coleridge’s Lyrical Ballads, but also other volumes of poetry that are deeply informed by both Gothic and Romantic elements, including Mary
Robinson’s *Lyrical Tales* (1800), Matthew Lewis’s *Tales of Wonder* (1801), Robert Southey’s *Thalaba the Destroyer* (1801), Walter Scott’s *Minstrelsy of the Scottish Border* (1803), and Charlotte Dacre’s *Hours of Solitude* (1805). These volumes form their own canon of Romantic-era Gothic poetry, yet the concept of Gothic poetry as either its own tradition or a legitimate counterpart to Romanticism has only been partially recognized.  

*Lyrical Ballads* is the only collection to have achieved canonical status, but Bannerman’s own conceptual collection of ballads is another ambitious and revolutionary text that was produced within the same cultural moment. The timing of Bannerman’s publication of *Tales* reveals that she was working in tandem with not only Lewis and Scott, but Wordsworth and Coleridge as well. While Scott’s initial contribution to the ballad craze in early Romantic England was a volume comprised mostly of translations or collections of popular ballads, Bannerman’s *Tales* was an entirely original work that stemmed from an incredibly unique and vivid imagination. As such, it deserves to be revisited by Romantic scholars, but also brought to the attention of readers beyond those who specialize in the Gothic.

**VI. Poems, A New Edition (1807)**

After the publication of *Tales of Superstition and Chivalry*, Bannerman continued to struggle financially. The back-to-back deaths of her mother and brother in late 1803 and early 1804 left her without any family relations, and on the verge of financial destitution. Against the practical advice of a small circle of patrons led by Robert Anderson, Bannerman made one final attempt to launch her literary career. When an effort to secure a public annuity was unsuccessful, she began soliciting subscriptions for a third volume of poetry. In July of 1807, *Poems, A New Edition* (1807)
Edition was printed by Mundel, Doig, & Stevenson. According to a letter from Anderson to Thomas Percy, the subscription fee was a single guinea and Bannerman had secured 250 names (221). In the same letter, Anderson also notes that £200 was reserved for printing costs, which left Bannerman with a profit of approximately £60 (221). Because the volume was issued by subscription, there were no reviews published in journals or periodicals.

Bannerman dedicated Poems, A New Edition to Lady Charlotte Rawdon, an Irish patron of the arts who was acquainted with Maria Edgeworth and Walter Scott. Anderson’s correspondence reveals that he and Joseph Cooper Walker brought Bannerman and her work to the attention of Lady Rawdon, with the hope that she would utilize her artistic connections on Bannerman’s behalf. Unfortunately, Anderson’s correspondence also confirms that the volume was not a success for Bannerman, for by late 1807, she had already accepted a position as governess at the residence of Lady Frances Beresford in Exeter, England. The failure of the volume to generate any further interest in her poetry was surely a major disappointment for her. Barring a single poem attributed to “Miss Bannerman” in John Murray’s literary miscellany The Casket in 1829, it appears that Bannerman abandoned the pursuit of writing poetry altogether after Poems, A New Edition. Therefore, the volume is significant as it represents Bannerman’s last official public and formal poetic statement.

Rather than take the commercial risk of publishing an entire volume of new poems, Bannerman’s decision to present a compilation of her previous works suggests that she continued to feel confident about the material five years after the lukewarm response to Tales of

82 Letter LXXIV, 28 June 1806 (Anderson 219-222).
83 The e-text version of Poems, A New Edition that is in circulation in the public domain does not include the subscription list.
Superstition and Chivalry, and nearly seven years after her debut collection. The majority of the volume consists of selections from Poems, which was received more favorably than Tales upon its initial publication in 1800. The content from the debut volume was re-ordered, and grouped into four new sections – “Lyrical Pieces,” “Sonnets from Werter,” “Sonnets from Petrarch &c,” and “Original Sonnets.” Longer narrative poems such as “Verses on an Illumination for a Naval Victory” and “The Nun” appear before each of the two sonnet sections, while “The Genii” – Bannerman’s longest poem, and the first poem in the debut collection – has been repositioned as the last poem before the final section, which is comprised of all but two of the ballads from Tales of Superstition and Chivalry. Interspersed throughout each of the first four sections are a total of eleven new poems that were either unpublished or appeared in miscellaneous periodicals between 1803 and 1805. The previously uncollected material includes two narrative poems (“The Fall of Switzerland” and “Exile”), a new autobiographical poem entitled “To a Friend,” two new original sonnets (“Good Friday” and “Easter”), two poems dedicated to Robert Anderson and Joanna Baillie respectively, and four new translations.

Nearly all of the poems that originally appeared in the 1800 volume are reprinted for Poems, A New Edition; however, the original sonnet “The Benighted Arab,” as well as two of the Petrarch translations, have been omitted. Additionally, Bannerman replaced her translation of a poem by Giovanni della Casa with a translation of Lazzarini di Morro’s “At the Sepulchre of Petrarch.” The majority of Bannerman’s editorial revisions throughout the volume consists of modernizing certain words, or doing away with antiquated capitalization and stylistic apostrophes (e.g. mis’ry’s → misery’s). Longer poems such as “The Nun” and “The Genii” have
been subtly pruned to produce a tighter and more fluid narrative, but none of the poems are significantly impacted by Bannerman’s minor grammatical revisions.\textsuperscript{84}

Eight of the ten ballads from \textit{Tales of Superstition and Chivalry} are presented as their own section to conclude the volume, with a new sequence and running order. As noted in the previous section, both “The Festival of St. Magnus the Martyr” and “The Black Knight of the Water” have been omitted, along with all four of the original illustrations. The defiant “Prologue” remains, but the Guarini epigram from the 1802 title page is not reproduced. The ballads are still framed by “The Dark Ladie” and “The Prophecy of Merlin,” but the others have been shifted around to produce a different reading experience. In the original sequence of poems, the supernatural elements gradually intensify throughout the first four ballads. Each paranormal encounter is decisively more physical than the last, culminating with the poisonous touch of Lady Ellinor in “The Penitent’s Confession.” In the new running order, “The Dark Ladie” is no longer followed by “The Prophetess of the Oracle of Seäm” – another ballad that pits men against a mysterious veiled \textit{femme fatale} – but is instead followed by “Basil,” a significantly more Romantic than Gothic poem, which implies that the protagonist’s belief in the supernatural is the product of naivety and inexperience. “Basil” is then followed by “The Penitent’s Confession,” which makes for a rather startling shift from an incredulous depiction of supernatural terror to the volume’s most graphic and genuinely horrific poem. The climactic unveiling of the Penitent’s rotten arm is also diminished by placing it after “Basil” in the volume, for the new sequence fails to build suspense in the same way as the original running order. Furthermore, it renders poems such as “The Fisherman of Lapland” and “The Perjured Nun” –

which immediately follow – as somewhat quaint in their comparably more restrained Gothic elements. The only advantage of the new running order of the *Tales* ballads is that they appear more diverse in their tone and subject matter, and one could argue that the poems also seem to stand more on their own as unique pieces. However, the original sequence of ten rather than eight poems exhibits an arguably more impressive conceptual design that better showcases how each of the ballads build upon and mirror one another.

The eleven new offerings that appear in *Poems, A New Edition* can be loosely grouped into three categories – personal poems, narrative poems, and translations. With the exception of “The Car of Death,” Bannerman’s translation of Antonio Allamanni’s sixteenth-century poem about an extravagant funeral procession, the Gothic and supernatural elements are not as prominent in these poems. Instead, the narrative poems are more politically topical while the others offer a slightly more candid glimpse into Bannerman’s personal life. Two of the shorter poems are addressed to specific individuals that had a significant impact on her life, while a third, simply entitled “To A Friend,” is most likely informed by memories of her brother who died at sea while employed in the British Navy in 1804. The “Friend” of the title is never identified, but appears to be a suitor of some kind; however, the speaker implies that she is too grief-stricken and unhappy to accept any attention or romantic gestures. The poem possesses an air of hardened experience and emotional maturation that is absent in the more sentimental poems from the 1800 volume. In particular, the poem laments the finality of death and presents a more agnostic view in regard to the supernatural:

For Hope cannot stand by the mouldering tomb,  
And summon the dead from that fathomless gloom;  
They have pass’d into darkness, in silence repos’d,
Their race is accomplish’d – their wayfaring clos’d. (13-16)

In so many of Bannerman’s ballads and in the most Gothic poems from the debut collection, the supernatural signified possibility and offered spiritual transcendence by providing a means for the restless dead to avenge themselves or communicate information they were incapable of sharing while still alive. But in this poem, the dead are irrevocably silent, and can offer no comfort or confirmation of an after-life – they simply vanish and leave their loved ones behind to mourn them. The speaker admits that she “cannot forget” or fully accept the loss she has experienced, but has come to terms with the fact that her own life will never be the same (20). It is important to note, however, that the tone of the poem is one of cold resignation rather than a bid for self-pity. She very pragmatically states that while “the hopes that have beam’d on my life in its prime” have faded, there is no reason for her anonymous “friend” to share the same unhappy fate (21). The concluding lines imply that it would be best for the friend to move on, rather than become burdened by the speaker’s incapacity to return his feelings.

“To Robert Anderson, M.D.” is a significantly more cheerful poem, in which Bannerman humbly expresses her gratitude to her long-time mentor and patron who oversaw the publication of all of her work. In her “faint tribute” she notes how his “friendship smooth’d the perils of the way,” referring to her financial and personal struggles, but also in retrospect could serve as an allusion to his support for her after the rough reception of *Tales* (6). She also notes how his experience “to youth’s unsteady breast decision brought / Calm’d the rude fear, and nerv’d the timid thought” (7-8). The reference to her “youth” is another valuable confirmation of Bannerman’s young age at the time of her first volume’s publication, which would place her birthdate much closer to 1780 than 1765, as Katie Lister’s recent research has confirmed.
Perhaps most interesting of the collection’s personal poems is Bannerman’s expression of admiration for Joanna Baillie, which was originally sent to the Scottish poet and playwright after the publication of her highly-successful \textit{Plays on the Passions} in 1798. The poem contains Bannerman’s most favorable references to her native country, for she encourages Baillie to more frequently mine the myths and legends of Scotland in future plays and poems. The poem is also fascinating in its boldness. After favorably comparing Baillie to Shakespeare, the unknown Bannerman offers unsolicited advice to a far more popular and established writer. Yet what is most perplexing about the poem is that Bannerman never applies her advice to her own work, for her poems rarely consider her “native plains” of Scotland (42). One way to interpret this paradox points to Bannerman’s self-deprecation, for she implies that a poet like Baillie is better suited to represent her country: “These accents for their country claim / The pride, the honour, of thy native name” (44-45). Baillie herself was considerably flattered, but she also downplayed her significance as a national poet:

\begin{quote}
I received yesterday the very elegant copy of verses with which you have honour’d me, and return you my sincere thanks, tho’ I feel myself altogether unworthy of the high praise you have bestow’d upon me. To be thought well of by my country women, and remember’d in the land which I love, will always be to me the most gratifying reward of my labours. (McLean 33).
\end{quote}

Baillie exhibited further grace and humility by signing her short response to Bannerman as “your much obliged servant” (McLean 33). Surely, the younger poet was thrilled to have received such a kind response from an author she admired so deeply.

A pair of religious poems “Good Friday” and “Easter” appear in \textit{Poems, A New Edition} and are an unexpected addition to Bannerman’s oeuvre. The poems first appeared in \textit{The
Poetical Register and Repository of Fugitive Poetry for 1803, which was published by F. and C. Rivington in London in early 1805. The poems come across as more than mere occasional verse inspired by the Easter holiday. Although conventionally religious, both poems are vivid, descriptive, and sincere – particularly “Good Friday,” which features powerfully evocative imagery of Christ’s suffering on the cross. Beginning with an allusion to Christ’s famous last words, the initial ten lines are rife with violent and nearly Gothic descriptive elements: “Rent is the mystic veil of power in twain, / And light in thickest darkness shrouds his beams” (3-4). The poem channels Christ’s agony on “that cross of pain” yet notes the look of “mercy” in His “last expiring gaze” (1, 2). Recalling some of the gloomy landscapes in her other poems, Bannerman describes Golgotha as “that dread abode / Whence Nature shrunk in doubt – or despair” (7-8). Yet these ominous descriptions shift at the volta and segue into a celebration of Christ’s sacrifice for the salvation of humanity. Instead of “tears,” the narrator calls for “deep Hosannas” and “pealing adorations” (10, 11, 12). By the poem’s end, the victimized Christ is transformed to a “kingly Victor,” and humanity can rejoice with “no more…fear” (13, 14). While not a traditionally Gothic poem, Bannerman uses foreboding descriptive language to intensify her depiction of Christ’s crucifixion. It is a religious poem filtered through a semi-Gothic sensibility, but it is not sensationalized, nor is it designed to raise fear as much as sympathy for the torment endured by Christ.

The triumphant poem “Easter” is unsurprisingly the more conventional of the two poems, but it does contain at least one unique and memorable image of Christ “bursting the grave” (5). Bannerman’s depiction of Christ is akin to the sweeping omnipotent supernatural beings in her earlier poems like “The Genii” or “The Spirit of the Air.” Like a victorious general at war, He
declares “dominion o’er the last of foes” (7). He offers “immortal life” to believers and the
promise of liberation to those “who bear / Life’s fitful storm, or wait the king of fears!” (8, 9-10).
Once again, the supernatural – in this case, the holiest and most powerful form of the
supernatural in the Christian sense – offers hope to the disenfranchised or downtrodden. In the
final four lines, Bannerman poses a question that invites readers to consider the extent of Christ’s
sacrifice in relation to their own pride. If a being as powerful as Christ – one “whose eternal
years / had seen the advent of created Time” – was willing to “stoop” to experience shame,
torture, and death, why “shall man reluctant bow, to purchase bliss sublime?” (12-13, 11, 13-14).
Although the orthodox religious sentiments of “Good Friday” and “Easter” are somewhat
anomalous to Bannerman’s usually personal or Gothic subjects, they still possess certain
defining characteristics that connect them to her greater body of work, which suggests that even
when she branched out in terms of poetic subject matter, her poems still have a particular style
that is unique to her.

The two new narrative poems collected in *Poems, A New Edition* are significant because
they respond to early nineteenth-century political issues stemming from the Napoleonic Wars. In
“The Fall of Switzerland,” Bannerman expresses feelings of disappointment and disillusion after
Switzerland was twice invaded by France in 1798 and 1802. The poem reflects changing
attitudes and sensibilities toward Switzerland in the wake of French occupation. According to
Patrick H. Vincent, Switzerland was regarded by early nineteenth-century British artists as an
idyllic nation where “liberty, nature, and manners elegantly mirror one another” (136). The
opening two stanzas of the poem reinforce such emblematic idealism, in praising the county’s

85 Yet another link to Coleridge is forged with “The Fall of Switzerland,” for he composed a similar poem in
February of 1798 entitled “France: An Ode.” Both poems juxtapose the celebrated natural landscapes with
images of battle, although Coleridge’s is perhaps the more sanguinary of the two, evoking images of “blood-
stained streams” and “mountain-snows” spotted with “bleeding wounds” (67, 69-70).
renowned natural landscapes and noting how the “forests.../ have nurs’d the good, the brave, / And stretch’d o’er many a partriot grave” (1-3). But this Edenic paradise is lost “when o’er the cliffs the Spoiler came, / with banners red, and arms of flame” (10-11). The British public was shocked that the French chose to invade the non-aggressive country of Switzerland, but was even further dismayed by how easily the country yielded to Napoleon’s forces (Vincent 137). As a result of the country’s defeat, “British public opinion shifted away from the eighteenth-century image of the Swiss as moral exemplars with a heroic, virile history, toward a more negative idea of Switzerland as passive, feminized, and complicit in its fate” (Vincent 138).

Bannerman’s poem captures these feelings of disappointment, asking “Where, Glory now, thy chiefs of old, / To stem the tide of slavery?” (15-16). At the heart of the poem, the embittered narrator sums up Switzerland’s political fate and culpability for its own defeat:

Victor no more! – yield, Valour, yield
Thy sacred arms and shatter’d shield,
And humbled on thy chosen field,
Await the chains of tyranny. (25-28)

Where Switzerland was once an exemplar of freedom, Bannerman declares that “no glory beams where Freedom died” (30). The final stanzas of the poem are aimed at the national pride of Swiss readers, for Bannerman sharply reminds them of past military glories: “in ages rude, / …many a band of freeman stood, / o’er hills of ice and fields of blood / to charge the invading ravager” (33-36). She adds, “what echoing plain, what mountains hoar / heard not your storm of battle roar?” (41-42). Although Switzerland did not always win these ancient battles, those men at least “fought” and “fell,” while the current “sons of fame... / blush not for [their] country’s shame” (37-38).
For Bannerman, the events that inspired “The Fall of Switzerland” exemplify why pacifism is often an ineffectual political stance. Aggression must be met with resistance, which in turn requires an expression of strength and further aggression. Like so many of Bannerman’s Gothic ballads, the poem’s final couplet implies that vengeance is the only noble response possible for the Swiss if they wish to honor their country’s former legacy and reputation: “What heart shall trace thy trophied road, / nor burn to ‘venge thy destiny?” (47-48). Therefore, the same rebellious and antagonist sentiments that motivate the persecuted women in her ballads are presented as an equally viable political solution for a country in turmoil.

While she never makes the connection directly herself, the description of Switzerland’s defeat by Napoleon parallels the political unrest within Bannerman’s native Scotland. Conflicts between the English and the Scottish stretch back to the time of Robert the Bruce and William Wallace to the more recent clashes behind the Jacobite Rebellions of 1707 and 1745. Bannerman forges a link between Scotland and Switzerland’s heroic past by demanding, “Where, Glory now, thy chiefs of old / To stem the tide of slavery?” (15-16). The reference to “chiefs” calls to mind an image of a Highland warrior. Although the Swiss themselves are responsible of relinquishing their arms to the French, the poem’s seventh stanza could also possibly allude to the Disarming Acts and Act of Proscription that were passed in the first half of the eighteenth-century, which prohibited the Scottish from not only brandishing weapons, but also forbade them from wearing tartans, kilts, and other traditional garments:

Victor no more! – yield, Valour, yield
Thy sacred arms and shatter’d shield,
And humbled on thy chosen field,
Await the chains of tyranny (25-28).
Unlike the Swiss, of course, the Scottish rebelled and refused to entirely “yield.” Although they were defeated, they remained an antagonistic presence and continued to be a thorn in the side of the English for decades to come. For Bannerman, even if she does not always wear her Scottish pride emblazoned upon her sleeve, such submission from the Swiss might have appeared even more distasteful and frustrating, given her native country’s struggles against the English for several centuries.

Compared to “The Fall of Switzerland,” the political connotations of “Exile” – the second ‘new’ narrative poem to appear in the 1807 edition – are more subtle. Feelings of national pride, however, cannot compete with the pangs of personal loss, for the narrator of the poem is compelled to depart her country on account of the painful memories evoked by the natural landscape. Also originally published in the Poetical Register (but one year earlier than the previous poem), “Exile” is in keeping with other Romantic-era works that inhabit the alienated perspective of individuals who have become disenchanted with their home country and have fled to another. Jane Stabler has explained that “Romantic-period writers sought to identify themselves with historical and literary outcasts and aliens to forward political protest, but also to understand their own states of mind” (4). In the late eighteenth-century, works such as Oliver Goldsmith’s “The Deserted Village” (1770) and Charlotte Smith’s The Emigrants (1793) popularized the theme of exile and transformed “the concept …from an externally imposed sentence into a form of identity” (Stabler 2). Wordsworth further romanticized the notion of exile early in his poetic career, first with “Salisbury Plain” (1793) as well as within several poems in the Lyrical Ballads, most notably in “The Female Vagrant,” “The Thorn,” and “The Mad Mother,” which depicted characters on the borders of civilized society and clearly influenced Bannerman’s poetry. The more philosophical notion of a writer exiled within his own thoughts is
captured in the early portions of Wordsworth’s “Tintern Abbey,” and then developed further in longer works such as *The Excursion* and eventually *The Prelude*.

Bannerman’s poem on the subject can be situated between the two generations of Romantic poets. Her poem is contemporaneous with Wordsworth’s explorations in *Lyrical Ballads*, and appeared about a year before François-René de Chateaubriand’s influential novella *René* (1802), which popularized the theme of exile on the continent, and preceded Lord Byron’s quintessential reflections on the theme in *Childe Harold’s Pilgrimage* by more than a decade. Yet Bannerman’s poem continues to exemplify the shifting sensibilities between the generations of Wordsworth and Byron, for her treatment of nature throughout “Exile” is more aligned with the cynical views of Childe Harold and Manfred. As in several of the sonnets in the 1800 edition of *Poems*, nature is an antagonistic rather than inspirational force for the poem’s unhappy narrator. There is a Romantic and meditative reverence for Nature early in the poem, but these sentiments are quickly subverted to symbolize feelings of enduring agony and disappointment.

The speaker begins by bidding “adieu” to the rolling hills and “soft…blue” skies of her homeland (1). But what is most “sacred” to the narrator are the ghostly memories of bygone military sacrifices heard within “the roar of the wave / That mingles its tide with the blood of the brave,” which continues to be haunted by “the blasts of the trumpets for battle” (5-7). The source of the narrator’s despair is revealed to have originated from the loss of a loved one, for she explains that on this same battlefield, a treasured “heart was laid low that gave rapture to mine” (8). In noting this particular consequence of war, the speaker’s decision to leave her country acquires a clearly political dimension. Because she condemns her country’s involvement in the war, she no longer wishes to live within its borders. The landscape has been transformed to a hostile and unpleasant domain, which prompts her to reach an embittered conclusion: “Nature is
nought to the eye of despair / But the image of hopes that have vanish’d in air” (11-12). While
the landscape itself remains objectively beautiful, the speaker no longer derives any inspiration
from its beauty: “Again ye fair blossoms of flower and of tree, / Ye shall bloom to the morn, tho’
ye bloom not for me” (13-14). Instead, the speaker is reminded of happier times of peace and
contentment that cannot be restored: “never to me shall the summer renew / The bowers where
the days of my happiness flew” (17-18). These “bowers” are all the more significant, for they
are also the place “where [her] soul found her partner” before his life was claimed by the war
(19). As in Wordsworth’s poems, nature and memory are inextricably bound, but the memories
that nature invokes in the mind of Bannerman’s narrator are ultimately painful rather than
transcendent; it is “too faithful [a] recorder of times that are past” (21).

In the poem’s final stanza, the narrator remains steadfast that the charms of her homeland
are forever lost. Although the “summits of green / shall charm thro’ the distance of many a
scene,” she likens the possibility of one day returning to her country to that of one “in woe, and
in wandering, and deserts return / Like the soul of the dead to the perishing urn!” (27-28). Yet
the poem’s final irony attests for the unbreakable connection that one has with their homeland.
Despite her vow never to return, she can’t entirely dissolve the emotional and physical
connection she has to the land: “As I cleave the dark waves of your rock-rugged shore, / And
ask of the hovering gale if it come / From the oak-towering woods on the mountains of home”
(30-32). The narrator still hopes to catch one last fragrant breath of the familiar air she’s breathed
since her youth.

Bannerman’s talents as an accomplished translator are also showcased throughout Poems,
A New Edition with four previously uncollected poems that appeared in other publications
between 1803 and 1805. Three of the newly translated poems appear early in the volume in the
first section devoted to “Lyrical Pieces.” They are preceded by five of Bannerman’s strongest narrative poems, and positioned alongside her translation of Jean-Baptiste Rousseau’s “The Nightingale” from the original edition of Poems. The first of the group is the “Chorus of Dryads,” a passage from Fabula di Orfeo (c.1480) by the obscure Italian poet and playwright Angelo Ambrogini (a.k.a. as Poliziano or Politiano (1454-1494). As a result, classical Greek mythology can be added to Bannerman’s repertoire, specifically the myth of the poet Orpheus and the beautiful wood-nymph Eurydice. The poem takes place after Eurydice’s death, when others of her kind gather together to remember her. One of the dryads must then break the tragic news to Orpheus. Bannerman’s rendering of the scene is vivid and appropriately funereal, and she strongly ties the dryad’s lamentations with the natural landscape itself: “every flower of summer seems, / Eurydice! In faded bloom…/ while drooping Nature dies” (7-8, 10). The poem is most distinguished, however, by its somber refrain – the actual “chorus” referenced in the title – which is repeated at the end of each of the three verses:

    Hark, hark! the soft winds low resound,
    Our hopes are gone, our glory fled!
    Mourn, mourn! ye rivers murmuring round,
    Ye drink the tears that ’balm the dead!

Despite the poem’s roots in Greek myth and medieval Italian poetry, the Gothic elements and similarities with graveyard poetry shine through, just as they did in Bannerman’s translations of Petrarch. Additionally, Bannerman’s use of pathetic fallacy and the correlation between nature and the dryads’ expressions of despair is also recognizably Romantic. Therefore, she is once again carefully choosing texts to translate that correspond with the themes and ideas of her own original poetry.
Bannerman translated this short excerpt from Politiano’s play for Joseph Cooper Walker’s *Historical and Critical Essay on the Revival of the Drama in Italy*, which was published by Mundell & Sons in 1805. She was likely introduced to Walker through Robert Anderson, and it appears that he was quite impressed with Bannerman (Elfenbein 936). In the preface to his essay, he praises *Tales of Superstition and Chivalry*: “Miss Bannerman has displayed a richness of fancy, an energy of thought and expression, and a strength and brilliancy of colouring, which have not often been surpassed” (ix-x). He later sheds light on the personal circumstances surrounding the composition of the poem, and explains that Bannerman worked on her translation shortly after her mother’s death: “Of the excellence of this version it is not for me to speak: I shall only observe, that its pathetic graces were probably heightened by the circumstances under which it was executed, the pressure of the heaviest misfortune incident to life, the loss of a beloved parent! In consequence of this melancholy event, the version was late in reaching me, else it should have embellished my Analysis of the drama to which it belongs” (32).

Despite the delay in receiving the poem, Walker was so pleased by the “rich and flowing dress” the translation “received at the hands of Miss Bannerman” that he requested she produce a second translation of “The Car of Death” by Antonio Alamanni (1464-1528) for the same volume (31-32). The poem chronicles an elaborate and spectacular funeral procession, involving a black carriage drawn by four large buffalo and flanked by dozens of black-clad mourners in death-masks carrying torches and candles. Presiding over the morbid parade is the figure of Death itself, shrouded in a black hood and wielding a large scythe.

Rather than incorporate the details of the procession itself into her poem, Bannerman includes a footnote that reproduces a meticulous description of the spectacle by Sir Richard
Clayton that Walker quoted in his History. Bannerman’s poem instead functions as a *memento mori* – a solemn reminder that death is always present and that life itself is mutable. The subject matter of Alamanni’s poem enables Bannerman to juxtapose austere religious sentiments with macabre imagery. In doing so, she highlights the kinship between medieval Christian dogma and the Gothic aesthetic, for both attempt to alter the consciousness of its target audience by evoking fear. This particular brand of medieval Christianity threatens the prospect of hell and damnation, whereas the Gothic literature popular in Bannerman’s lifetime stimulated thrills and chills but also reinforced conventional notions of good and evil.

The overarching theme of “The Car of Death” is that of “penitence,” and this key word is exclaimed twice at the end of each of the poem’s seven verses. The words are spoken by “the livid band of wandering dead” who have intruded upon “the feast and carnival” to frighten the celebrants and inspire them to reflect upon the state of their sinful souls (3,13). As with “The Chorus of Dryads,” Bannerman’s translation of Alamanni’s poem is distinguished by a foreboding refrain that intensifies with each successive stanza. Just as the funeral procession itself progresses along its preordained path through the carnival, the concept of penitence undergoes its own transformation within the poem. The poem begins by noting that the living will one day join the ranks of the dead, and warns the unrepentant that their guilt-ridden and fearful cries for “Penitence!” will be ignored. But the dead explain that the purpose of their procession is to “ring [their] warning chime / o’er the earth” and inspire sinners to seek penitence “ere [they] die” (17-18, 19). The next verse insists that all earthly goods and concerns are transient, and subject to “an arm that none can stay” (23). The presence of the masquerading dead marching through the streets is symbolic of consciousness beyond the grave – a fact meant to further reinforce the necessity of spiritual penitence.

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The poem’s turning point comes with stanza five, when the dead insist that penitence can be achieved if humanity is humbled enough to “kneel and praise” (33). The penultimate verse is defined by an eloquent Christian paradox that states: “Living, all shall sink to dust, / Dying, every soul shall live” (34-35). Although “all have sinn’d,” forgiveness remains possible for the truly penitent and those willing to profess love of God and fellowship with others (37). But the final stanza is as aggressively foreboding as it is hopeful:

He that shrinks from other’s woe,

The worm shall gnaw that never dies;

But blessed are the tears that flow

From mercy’s heart when sorrow sighs; (41-45)

Even more so than the pair of “Good Friday” and “Easter” poems, Bannerman seems to enjoy mixing religious iconography with Gothic horror and terror. While she does not test the boundaries of good taste or flirt with blasphemy like her contemporary Matthew Lewis, Bannerman’s few forays into religious poetry fully retain her penchant for Gothic gloom. Yet like the contemplative and pious graveyard poets before her, these poems provide further evidence of how deeply the classic Gothic aesthetic has been informed by Christianity.

Another translation of Bannerman’s translations collected in Poems, A New Edition is “The Nereid,” which was originally written by the eighteenth-century French poet and playwright Jean-Baptiste-Louis Gresset (1709-1777). Bannerman’s version of the poem first appeared alongside “The Fall of Switzerland” in The Poetical Register and Repository of Fugitive Poetry for 1802 and could be regarded as a lighter and more optimistic counterpart to her original ode to “The Mermaid” from 1800. Unlike sirens, the nereids often assisted sailors – most famously in the tale of the Argonauts, whose ship was guided and protected by a large
gathering of the benevolent sea-nymphs (Smith 66-67). Nereids were regularly depicted as beautiful and kind, and their songs were considered melodious and uplifting. Rather than use their beauty to seduce unwary men, they had more in common with the figure of the traditional Greek muse. Additionally, nereids were not confined to water, and could live on land as well as the sea.

While “The Nereid” alludes to “the Ocean’s stormy wave” that provided the backdrop of Bannerman’s earlier poem of a spurned siren’s revenge, the atmosphere of “The Nereid” is predominantly calm and sunny, taking place in an idyllic setting of “fair fields” and “among…emerald bowers” (3-5). Whereas the vengeful mermaid emerged from her hiding place near the sea to raise storms and cause havoc, this comparably simpler poem serves as an invitation to a shy Nereid to leave her “pearly caves” and “hail the Sun of day,” and to exchange the deafening “roar of tossing waves” for “the music of the May” (21-24). The poem ultimately presents a pleasing portrait of the various comforts the reclusive creature has missed as a result of her isolation, and offers a significantly different point of view compared to Bannerman’s ballads or exotic narrative poems. No correspondence has survived to indicate why Bannerman chose to translate this particular poem by Gresset. Unlike the translations of Politiano or Allamanni, she was not commissioned by Anderson or Walker to produce a new version of the poem for any particular publication, which leads me to believe that she enjoyed the poem, but also saw it as a thematic counterpoint to “The Mermaid.”

This is not exactly the case with Bannerman’s version of “At the Sepulchre of Petrarch” by Lazzarini di Morro (c.1668-c.1736), the final uncollected translation that she quietly snuck into the “Sonnets from Petrarch &c” section of the 1807 volume. Joseph Walker had already discussed di Morro and the Italian poet’s tribute to Petrarch in his *Historical Memoir on Italian*
Tragedy in 1799, which included the poem in both the original Italian and an English translation by Antonio Zatta (c.1722-c.1804). While it is unknown whether Walker approached Bannerman for the translation, it is likely that she was first exposed to the obscure text through his earlier book. The passionate reverence expressed by di Morro in his ode to Petrarch would certainly have resonated with Bannerman, for she makes no secret of her admiration for so many of her own literary forebears. Just as Bannerman has directly expressed or demonstrated her devotion to Baillie, Smith, Goethe, Coleridge, or Lewis in her work, di Morro memorializes the “youthful rapture” Petrarch inspired within him and attests that even “still in hoary age” he returns to the elder poet’s works (2, 4). While Bannerman must adopt some creative license to inhabit the world-weary perspective of di Morro in his advanced age, the predominant sentiment remains unchanged, for she shares the same ambitions in regard to her own work: “O that my spirit, which to thine aspires, / Like thine could live, and triumph o’er the tomb” (13-14). In many respects, Bannerman’s translation of di Morro encapsulates the vision she held for her own career. Just as di Morro hoped to follow in Petrarch’s footsteps, Bannerman hoped to be accepted among her peers and see her name immortalized through the success of her own works. The inclusion of the poem in her final collection ultimately acquires a bittersweet significance, for she would be forced to concede her literary ambitions and accept a job as a governess shortly after the publication of Poems, A New Edition, and her name is now recognized by general audiences perhaps only a little more regularly than that of Lazzarini di Morro.
VII. Conclusion

Since I began preparing this project nearly a decade ago, the market for printed books has dramatically declined in favor of electronic texts prepared for portable devices such as Kindles and iPads. At the same time, there has been a positive avalanche of print-on-demand books that reprint texts in the public domain, which has muddied the online marketplace with poorly prepared editions of classic literature. While there are significant advantages in making rare or lost texts available again for websites or in affordable paperback editions, many of these books are of rather dubious quality. They often contain grammatical errors or are riddled with mistakes that occurred when the material was scanned and automatically transferred to a digital format. If scholars and general readers still wish to purchase quality printed material, then a need remains for editors to oversee this process and prepare critical editions of classic texts. Despite the various changes that have taken place, I still believe that a critical edition of Anne Bannerman’s works are necessary and I am proud to be one of the individuals responsible for producing it.

Anne Bannerman deserves a place on the bookshelves of nineteenth-century Romantic and Gothic literature specialists. The works of Bannerman belong next to those of Smith, Barbauld, Baillie, Robinson, Dacre, Hemans, Landon – each of which has at least one authoritative and reliable critical edition of their work currently in print. The time, effort, and research that I have dedicated to this project will ensure that Bannerman’s poetry is preserved in print, whether it be through the avenue of an academically-endorsed university press, an independent publisher, or within a carefully edited and designed edition I will prepare, finance, and print myself. I am committed to doing my small part in ensuring that her spirit acquires the means to “triumph o’er the tomb.”
A Note on the Texts

According to Adriana Craciun, Anne Bannerman’s manuscripts, letters, and other private papers were destroyed after her death in 1829. A letter from Lady Frances Beresford – who employed Bannerman as a governess in 1807 – indicates that a Mrs. Walker was tasked with the destruction of Bannerman’s letters: “They cannot be in safer hands than yours” (Craciun Fatal 158-59, n.9 272-73). In preparing this critical edition of Bannerman’s complete works, I have relied upon facsimiles and reproductions of her published materials.

The copy text of Bannerman’s first volume of poems from 1800 is a facsimile of the first edition published by Mundell and Sons obtained from the British Library. The copy text of Tales of Superstition and Chivalry is a facsimile from the Lennox Library of New York of the first edition of the volume published by Vernor and Hood in 1802. The copy text of Poems, A New Edition was published by Mundell, Doig, and Stevenson in 1807, and is currently held at the Library of the Taylor Institution at the University of Oxford.

The 1807 volume of Poems, A New Edition was presumably the last publication to be prepared, overseen, and approved by Bannerman, therefore it is the closest thing we have to an authoritative text. However, there are minor variations between the 1800 edition of Poems, the original 1802 version of Tales of Superstition and Chivalry, and the 1807 version of Poems, A New Edition that I had to consider before I could begin to work on this project.

Although Poems, A New Edition can theoretically serve as Bannerman’s ‘final word’ on her poetry, I believe that preparing a critical edition of this volume by itself would be extremely short-sighted. When Poems, A New Edition was published in 1807, four poems that originally appeared in the 1800 edition of Poems were omitted. While the material from Tales of Superstition and Chivalry was still clearly separated from the other poems in the 1807 edition,
two lengthy narrative poems from the 1802 publication were omitted, and the sequence of the *Tales* poems was reordered. Bannerman also added eleven new poems to the 1807 edition and integrated them alongside older poems from the earlier 1800 volume. These changes make it very difficult to distinguish the poems that were originally published in the 1800 edition from those that were written later. Nearly all of the poems from Bannerman’s previously published volumes are included in the 1807 edition, but it is still not a complete collection of her poetry, and the presentation of the original material has been altered by the rearrangement of the poems.

Therefore, Bannerman produced an entirely ‘new’ text for *Poems, A New Edition* – one that provides a significantly different reading experience from her first two publications and stands as a remarkable achievement on its own. I believe that Bannerman’s decision to rearrange the texts, and to mix old poems with new poems, requires further scholarly evaluation. New meanings emerge when certain poems are placed alongside others. For these reasons, I have reproduced all three of Bannerman’s publications exactly as they originally appeared in order to preserve the artistic integrity of each individual volume.

The 1802 edition of *Tales of Superstition and Chivalry* contained four original illustrations inspired by the poems “The Dark Ladie,” “The Penitent’s Confession,” “The Murcian Cavalier,” and “The Prophecy of Merlin.” The last illustration, which features a nude female figure, caused a minor controversy for Bannerman and her publishers. This likely explains why all four of the illustrations were omitted from *Poems, A New Edition* in 1807.

I have restored the illustrations to a close approximation of their original places within the contents of *Tales of Superstition and Chivalry*. Due to variations in page size and font size, a larger portion of text appears on each page of this edition, resulting in a slight difference in
appearance from the original publication. I believe, however, that the integrity of the original reading experience has been preserved.

I have included four separate appendices. Appendix A features the poem “On the Loss of a Child in Infancy,” which was attributed to Bannerman in 1829 and may be the only poem of hers published after Poems, A New Edition in 1807. Appendix B is comprised of eleven critical reviews (five for Poems and six for Tales of Superstition and Chivalry). I was unable to trace any reviews for Poems, A New Edition. Appendix C reprints a series of letters pertaining to Bannerman from Joanna Baillie, Anna Seward, and Anne Grant. Each of these letters are valuable and illuminate important contextual facts about the literary and social scene in which Bannerman hoped to position herself. In particular, Grant’s first letter from 1829 describes a visit Grant received from Bannerman, which provides some of the only biographical details we have about Bannerman this late in her life. The second letter finds Grant mourning for Bannerman after learning of her death in 1830. Both letters provide thoughtful commentary on the merit of Bannerman’s poetry as well as her distinction as a person.

Appendix D is comprised of poetry and prose from Bannerman’s contemporaries and primary influences, including William Collins, Charlotte Smith, Samuel Taylor Coleridge, Matthew Lewis, and William Preston, whose poem “An Epistle To Robert Anderson, M.D.” makes several favorable allusions to Bannerman’s poetry. In addition to the aforementioned poems, I have also reprinted a few selections of prose from Edmund Burke’s treatise on the Sublime and from Joanna Baillie’s “Introductory Discourse,” which outlines her theories concerning dramatic characterization and composition. Appendix D concludes with an excerpt from Sir Walter Scott’s “Essays on Imitations of the Ancient Ballads,” which presents a brief
history of Scottish poetry and ballads, and concludes with a generous endorsement of Bannerman’s work.

In regard to annotations, my editorial notes appear as numbered footnotes. Bannerman’s original footnotes are presented within brackets, and accompanied in the actual text of the poems by their original editorial symbols (asterisks, daggers, double daggers, etc.). In most cases, I have added brief supplementary notes on Bannerman’s commentary after the brackets. I have utilized this same procedure for any editorial notes that appear in the materials reprinted in the appendices.

Bannerman provided endnotes for several of the poems in *Poems, A New Edition*. In following the designs and layouts of other modern and reader-friendly critical editions, I have converted all of Bannerman’s endnotes to footnotes, with one notable exception. For the reproduction of the 1800 edition of *Poems*, the notes to the “Sonnets from Werter” remain as endnotes since they immediately follow the poems and conclude the volume. However, for the reproduction of *Poems, A New Edition*, I have converted the original endnotes to footnotes for the convenience of readers and to maintain the pattern of annotations I have used for the rest of that particular volume.

Finally, in reference to the text itself, I have maintained the original spelling, punctuation, capitals, and italics of the poems, with one exception: the long’s’ typescript that appears throughout the 1800 edition of *Poems* has been modernized. Textual variations between the original versions of the poems as they appeared in the 1800 edition of *Poems* and *Tales of Superstition and Chivalry* are indicated in a section of endnotes immediately following the section reproducing *Poems, A New Edition*. 
POEMS

BY

ANNE BANNERMAN

EDINBURGH:

PRINTED BY MUNDELL & SON, ROYAL BANK CLOSE;
FOR MUNDELL & SON EDINBURGH; AND LONGMAN & REES,
AND J. WRIGHT, LONDON.

1800.
ADVERSTISEMENT.

As the first piece of this collection must necessarily appear to some disadvantage, from its resemblance, in several points, to the *Botanic Garden*,¹ it may not be improper to mention, that the similarity can be only accidental; the *Genii* having been written six months previously to the perusal of that Poem.

¹ *The Botanic Garden; A Poem, in Two Parts* (1791) by Erasmus Darwin (1731-1802). The first part of the poem, *The Economy of Vegetation*, uniquely fuses world mythology and natural history in order to chronicle the scientific and technological progress of civilization. The more popular second part of the poem, entitled *The Loves of the Plants*, features personifications of plants with human characteristics and sensibilities. Darwin aimed to entertain as well as educate readers, and the poem went through several editions throughout the late eighteenth and early nineteenth-centuries. See Janet Browne’s “Botany for Gentlemen: Erasmus Darwin and ‘The Loves of the Plants’” (1989) and Martin Priestman’s, *The Poetry of Erasmus Darwin: Enlightened Spaces, Romantic Times* (2013).

This advertisement was not reprinted in *Poems, A New Edition*. The “resemblance” that Bannerman refers to can be found throughout *The Economy of Vegetation*, which includes descriptions of the formation of the universe and other natural phenomena such as volcanoes, earthquakes, whirlpools, etc.
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THE GENII.
ARGUMENT.

Address to the Genii—Their existence before the formation of the world—Their power over the elements—Their palaces in the centre of the earth, in the mines of the Potosi—Their operation in earthquakes—Earthquake at Lima—Malignant influence of the Genii on domestic happiness—Address to the beneficent spirits of the air—Excursions of the Genii to the frigid and torrid zones—Power of the Genii over water—Whirlpool of Maelstrom—Dead sea off Cape Verde—Abodes of the Genii in the Pacific Ocean—Negro-diving—Presence of the Genii at the Deluge—Power of the Genii in air—In fire—Their Burning Island—Mount Hecla—Final destruction of the Genii by fire.

1 Potossi: City in Bolivia, which lies at the foot of the Cerro Rico (or “rich mountain”) and known for its silver ore.  
2 Lima: Capital city of Peru. The city was affected by two major earthquakes in 1687 and 1746.  
3 Frigid and torrid Zones: The Frigid Zone, or the Polar Regions, are those surrounding the Arctic and Antarctic circles. The Torrid Zone, or Tropics, refer to regions near the Equator, specifically between the Tropic of Cancer and the Tropic of Capricorn.  
4 Maelstrom: “A powerful whirlpool, originally…one in the Arctic Ocean off the west coast of Norway, which was formerly supposed to suck in and destroy all vessels within a wide radius” [OED].  
5 Cape Verde: An archipelago, or island country, located in the center of the Atlantic Ocean, approximately 350 miles west of Africa. A key location for slave traders throughout the 17th and 18th centuries.  
6 Negro-diving: i.e. forcing slaves to dive into the sea and scour the ocean floor in search of pearls.  
7 The Deluge: The great flood chronicled in chapters 6 through 9 in the Book of Genesis.  
8 Mount Hecla: Hekla, a volcano located in Iceland.
THE GENII.

YES! ‘twas your thunder—Awful Genii, hail!
Who, thron’d in terrors, ride the Siroc gale, ¹
Whose fires in Ætna’s² sulph’rous bosom glow,
Whose cold, on Arctic rocks, congeals the snow ;
By your dread talismans of fearful force,
Thro’ earth and air, you wing your vent’rous course ;
Mov’d by their touch, the portals of the skies
Reveal their glories to your wond’ring eyes ;
In every sea, dispart³ the foaming waves,
And yield their treasures, from their deepest caves ;
The gloomy demons of the mines obey,
And Ocean’s spirits own your sov’reign sway.

Ere sprung the world from Chaos’ dreary bound,
And the bright planets wheel’d their placid round,
Gigantic masters of the realms of night!
No fair proportions met your sullen sight ;
In frightful state, the dark abyss you trod,
And held, in chasm’d cells, your drear abode ;
Till the green earth, in lavish beauty gay,

¹ Siroc: A forceful Mediterranean wind originating in the Sahara desert.
² Ætna: Mount Etna, an active volcano in Sicily.
³ Dispart: “to part asunder, to cleave” [OED]. Rare. The OED traces the use of the word as a verb to Book I of Spenser’s Faerie Queene.
Spread her sweet verdure⁴ to the new-born day;
When shone the hills, beneath the solar beam,
And the moon trembled in the twilight stream;
You first beheld the earliest flow’rets blow,
And purple tinges on the conclave glow,
Heard the faint flutter of the summer breeze,
When first it sported on the curling seas.
Firm on its central base, when nature stood,
And Power Omniscient found that all was good,⁵
In this fair region, you possess’d the throne,
And o’er its varied climates reign’d alone.
Short was your triumph. When the Son of Heaven,
The earth’s wide shores to his dominion giv’n,
In godlike innocence, in Eden’s bower,
Assum’d the ensigns of imperial power,
Scowling, you fled: —the swelling ocean gave
Her cells to shroud, and op’d the clifted cave.
—But, when that awful hour of terror came,
Which stain’d the honours of a heavenly name,
When Man retreated from his Maker’s eye,
To hide in deepest gloom his head—and die:
—Well pleas’d you heard earth’s solid centre reel,
When the bright angel * grasp’d the flaming steel;

---

⁴ verdure: Green plants, flourishing vegetation.

⁵ all was good: “And God saw everything that he had made, and it was very good.” GEN. Chap I. Verse 34.
Your spells regaining their primeval sway,
Again you saw the elements obey;
Again you thunder’d with triumphant ire,
And shook the mass with subterraneous fire;
Firm in unconquer’d strength, your hands uptore
The rooted rocks, and rent the farthest shore.

Yes, fateful powers! your awful years display
No feeble pageant of the passing day:
The lapse of ages has beheld you tower
Above the monuments of human power;
Alike in land, and sea, and air, and fire,
To rule supreme, your daring souls aspire;
As fancy wills, you rear the pillar’d dome,
In earth’s deep caverns, or in ocean’s foam,
Hang your transparent temples high in air,
Or to the realms of flame, your glory bear.

Hark! to the music of the echoing lyre,
The mighty pillars of the earth retire;
The long-extending palaces unfold
Their glitt’ring thrones*, and canopies of gold.

---

* [“And the Lord placed at the east of the garden of Eden cherubims, and a flaming sword which turned every way.” GEN. Chap III.] Verse 24.
* [“Abudab, in the morning, when he awakened, was surprised at an unusual glitter around him; and looking more steadfastly, he found the tree wherein he sat to be of pure gold; and the leaves of silver, with fruit like rubies hanging in clusters from the branches. On every side appeared the most glorious palaces that could be conceived. Trees, and shrubs of silver and gold, met his eye, growing almost visibly around him.” TALISMAN OF OROMANES. TALES OF THE GENII].

Tales of the Genii: Or, The Delightful Lessons of Horam, The Son of Asmar (1764) by Sir Charles Morell, a pseudonym for James Kenneth Ridley (1736-1765). The book was presented as an authentic translation of a Persian manuscript; however, it was later revealed to have been written entirely by Ridley, who drew from the Arabian Nights (1706). The passage quoted by Bannerman appears in the first tale of the volume, entitled “The History of the Merchant Abudah, or The Talisman of Oromanes.”
Incluster’d diamonds, on the loaded spray,
In changing colours, meet the orient ray;
The burning ruby gives his blushing power,
To deck the gorgeous wreath, and silver bower.
—All powerful Genii! ye, who, rulers here,
May spurn the riches of another sphere,
From mounts of gold you lead, thro’ many a soil,
And many a winding road, the shining spoil;
From cumb’ring clay the precious ore refine,
To form the treasures of the dreary mine.

Ere Spain’s tremendous and unpitying host
Led death and slaughter to the western coast,
Ere the vaults echoed to the miner’s moan,
You fill’d Potosi’s 6 silver-beaten throne:
From their dark channels, in refulgent pride,
Unfading light the blazing gems supplied;
Pure were the balmy gales, like those that play
Around the footsteps of the vernal day.

Then slept your vengeance; every breath was still;
No earthquakes thunder’d your relentless will;
Till thrift of gain allur’d the spoiler’s feet,
To stain the lustre of your favourite seat.

Hark the loud axe! where the ponderous stroke
Waves its firm strength, the massy bars unlock,

6 Potossi: City in Bolivia, which lies at the foot of the Cerro Rico (or “rich mountain”) and known for its silver ore. According to local myths and legends, the mountain itself was believed to have been made entirely of silver. In the 16th century, it was the primary source of silver for the Spanish army. By the time of Bannerman’s writing, much of the mountain’s silver resources had been depleted and the city’s primary export was tin.
Unwearied crowds the lofty pillars rend;
A passage form’d, they enter, and descend.
Unmov’d you stand, while terror-working spells
Bring hideous spectres from their yawning cells,
To brew the blast, whose pestilential breath
May sweep for ever thro’ the caves of death;
That the same rock, whose rifted channels gave
The envied ore, might also yield a grave.

Imperious kings! when darkness shrouds the skies,
And the hush’d city sunk in slumber lies,
Beneath the earth your massy engines play,
And tremulous motions scatter cold dismay;
The affrighted victims, rous’d from soft repose,
By the dim twilight, see the earth disclose,
With sound of thunders, her unfathom’d caves,
And the rent ocean toss his furious waves.
—Lo! where the frantic mother, clasping wild
To her quick-heaving heart her sleeping child,
On some torn fragment of the shatter’d wall,
Awaits the shock, so soon to level all.

Such was the dreadful scene, when fell the blow
That laid the glitt’ring pride of Lima low;
When he, who, terror-struck upon the tower,
The sea receding with convulsive power,
Heard the loud crash, that told th’ impending doom,
When the earth open’d, for a general tomb,
And saw the mountain-wave’s returning force
Whelm spires and temples, in its sweeping course.
As wild he gaz’d, where Callao’s* turrets rear’d
Their shining glories, and no trace appear’d,
Death’s sullen spectre scowling by his side,
Lo! driv’n infuriate o’er the gloomy tide,
A boat appears; his frozen pulses beat,
When the wild billow throws it at his feet;
The love of life all thrilling in his breast,
He springs to reach it, and he sinks opprest;
And scarce can bless, while riding on the wave,
The hand benign, that snatch’d him from the grave.

Tremendous Genii! not alone you reign
O’er the wild elements, and stormy main,
Pervade the subtile air’s mysterious frame,
Or scatter horror from volcanic flame;
But, in an humbler range, your hands destroy
The blissful image of domestic joy.

Say, powerful rulers! your unchanging days
Exist uninjur’d, while the earth decays,—
Has ever pity view’d your starting tear,

* [The eruption of the sea, during the earthquake at Lima, entirely swept away the neighbouring port-town of Callao. The singular circumstance of the preservation of only one man, who escaped by means of a boat, is mentioned by some authors who record the event. Though, from a narrative published at Lima, there appears to have been nearly two hundred, who saved themselves on planks, which the wreck of vessels, torn from their anchorage in the harbor, threw in their way. See Relation of the Earthquake at Lima—London 1748].

Bannerman is paraphrasing an account recorded in A True and Particular History of Earthquakes (1748). In addition to the earthquake occurring in Lima on October 28, 1746, the text also chronicles a Jamaican earthquake in 1692, as well as “others in different Parts of the World.” The title page attributes the publication to the pseudonym PHILOTHEUS, who has “extracted” information from “Authors of the most unexceptionable Credit and Reputation.” The original Philotheus was born in Thessaloniki around 1300, and served as Archbishop of Constantinople in the mid-14th century.
Where faithful friendship wept on virtue’s bier?
Where love’s fond eye, ere yet the spirit flew,
Beam’d every blessing in the last adieu?
Heav’d not your hearts, as wild on Tunis’ plain,
The grateful Hamet tore * the captive’s chain,
And madly strain’d, to agony oppress’d,
His youthful saviour to his swelling breast!
Ah no! —Mark yon pale mourner sit to cheer,
While every smile of anguish hides the tear,
The hapless maniac, thro’ the ling’ring day;
No heart-wrung sighs her agonies betray.
—Oft, as her faded eyes begin to trace
Each alter’d feature of that long-lov’d face,
those eyes, where smiles of joy no longer glow,
That heart serene ‘mid agonizing woe,
Ah! then her stifled feelings spurn control,
And tears of keenest pain unbidden roll.

Benignant spirits! ye, who range the air,
And bind the wounds of sublunar care!
Who, calm at eve on silver clouds reclin’d,

---

* [For the story of Hamet, see History of Sandford and Merton, by Mr. Day].

The History of Sandford and Merton by Thomas Day (1748-1789). A collection of short stories for children influenced by Jean-Jacques Rousseau’s (1712-1778) theories on education. Day published the first volume anonymously in 1783, followed by two additional volumes in 1786 and 1789. Hamet was Turkish slave and his story appears as “The Story of the Grateful Turk.” The son of a wealthy merchant takes an interest in Hamet, and asks his father to assist Hamet in gaining his freedom. The merchant tests Hamet’s virtue by promising to arrange Hamet’s liberation if he agrees to assassinate one of the merchant’s enemies. Hamet, however, refuses and the merchant acquires Hamet’s freedom. Later, Hamet returns to the city and rescues the merchant’s son from a house fire.
Inhale the fragrance of the summer wind,
Descend! —Your angel smiles will chase away
The storms that shake the tenements of clay.
—O! let your aid the sinking spirit raise
To higher objects, and sublime days!
In midnight slumbers, to the fancy bring
Elysian bowers, and an eternal spring,
With love congenial to the mind convey
What golden glories wake the heavenly day,
What rapt’rous joys the hallow’d soul impress
With full enjoyment, and unmingled bliss!
—Say, tho’ the boast of human pride is o’er,
And hope extinguish’d, to revive no more,
That life eternal shall repair the woe,
And soothe the memory of the scenes below;
—Say, that, invested with a purer frame,
The soul unchang’d shall ever be the same,
Shall turn to every friend, with guardian care,
And soothe, and soften, when their hearts despair;
—Say, that the parted soul shall pierce the gloom,
Which lowrs⁸ tremendous o’er the sullen tomb,
And come by night, the messenger of peace,
To speak of joys, that never shall decrease.⁹

---

⁸ *Lowrs*: i.e. lowers, or low’rs. The word appears in “The Genii” again as “lowrs” in line 352. However, it appears as “low’rs” in “Verses on an Illumination of Naval Victory” (line 53) and “The Mermaid” (line 25).

⁹ Lines 125-176 were reproduced in a review of Poems that appeared in The British Critic in 1800 as “a satisfactory proof” of the volume’s “many animated apostrophes, and brilliant passages” (140). See Appendix B.
O ye dark Genii! can your magic charms,
In Stygian\textsuperscript{10} darkness form’d, and drear alarms ;
Can all the pomp of universal sway
One throb of rapture to your hearts convey?
No! while the powers of desolation wait
Upon your footsteps, ministers of fate,
Beneath those skies, where Boreal\textsuperscript{11} tempests roll
O’er the long twilight of the desert pole :
Unseen and fearless, you delight to go,
O’er hills of frozen earth, and wreaths of snow ;
To mark the sheeted ice, by whirlwinds tost,\textsuperscript{12}
Descend, in splinter’d heaps, upon the coast ;
Or, far at sea, when floating masses urge
Their gelid\textsuperscript{13} mountains o’er the troubled surge,
You give command : the stormy billows roar,
And dash the mighty mounds upon the shore.
Swell’d by the flakes of ever-falling snows,
Their icy bulk no dissolution knows ;
Still their high tops, the same cold terrors wear,
And chill, thro’ many a mile, the ambient air.

All hail, terrific kings! whose giant throne,
From the bleak pole, extends thro’ every zone!

\textsuperscript{10} \textit{Stygian}: “Pertaining to the river Styx, or, in wider sense, the infernal regions of classical mythology...Dark or gloomy as the region of the Styx” [OED].

\textsuperscript{11} \textit{Boreal}: “Of or pertaining to the north wind” [OED].

\textsuperscript{12} \textit{Tost}: i.e. tossed.

\textsuperscript{13} \textit{Gelid}: “Extremely cold...icy” [OED].
Beneath the burning line, your feet have trac’d
The unknown horrors of the Lybian\textsuperscript{14} waste:
Expanding shores have met your piercing sight,
That long have slept, in undiscover’d night.
Involving woods, impervious to the day,
Where the keen tyger shuns the noon-tide ray,
Whence, proudly spurning his paternal den,
The noble lion seeks the haunts of men,
Pursues his way, thro’ solitary lands,
Where Gambia\textsuperscript{15} revels on his golden sands,
Drinking the sweet freshness of the cooling wave,
And digs his dwelling in the deepest cave.
Scarce has his dreadful voice, along the coast,
Defy’d the proudest of th’ embattled host,
When a wild troop his lonely den surround,
With shining javelins, pointed to the ground.
Sullen he comes, and, to their gleaming arms,
Shakes his long main, unconscious of alarms;
With frightful roarings, and indignant ire,
While his eyes sparkle, like consuming fire;
On the proud leader of the band he flies,
And, in his mighty grasp, the victim dies!
With frantic fury now he turns around,
His fierce front sever’d with the frequent wound;

\textsuperscript{14} \textit{Libyan}: “Of or pertaining to Libya, the ancient name of a large country in North Africa” [OED].

\textsuperscript{15} \textit{Gambia}: A country in West Africa.
The motion giv’n, the intrepid phalanx\textsuperscript{16} meet,  
And lay the kingly tyrant at their feet,  
His monst’rous fangs, unclench’d in death, survey,  
And boast the terrors of the perilous day;  
With shouts victorious beat their glory home,  
And wave th’ impurpl’d spear, o’er conquests yet to come.

Ye powerful Genii! while your glance surveys  
The polar night alike, and tropic blaze,  
You guide the world of waters, as you will,  
Expend the billows, or the channels fill;  
Smooth the dead surface, or the whirlwind urge,  
To toss, above the cliff, the mountain surge.

Far in the coral caves, where the ocean keeps  
The long unrifled treasures of the deeps,  
On thrones of burning gems, you rule below,  
And hear above th’ undreaded tempests blow;  
The waves submitted to your proud control,  
In pomp sublime, you rest, while ages roll.

But, when dark fury sways, with lightning spell  
You drag the tempest from its channel’d cell,  
With souls unmov’d survey, and gloomy joy,  
Its fateful progress, rapid to destroy.

Thus, where dark Maelstrom’s furious torrents boil,

\textsuperscript{16} \textit{Phalanx}: “A number or set of persons...banded together for a common purpose, esp. in support of or in opposition to some cause; A united front.” [OED].
Round the rough marge* of Moskoe’s fearful isle,
When ebbs the flood, the turning current forms
Its rapid vortex, and avenging storms.
Deep from beneath, you thunder at the source,
And lend the whirlpool its destructive force;
The black’ning waves in circling eddies wheel,
And the dark caverns to their centre reel.
Meantime, uprising from his giant cave,
His huge bulk lashing the resounding wave,
The mighty monarch of the northern sea,
Caught by the current, struggles to be free;
With frightful cries†, and frantic with despair,
He flings his monstrous water-spouts in air;
In the dread circle of the gulf of death,
Yet, yet he rallies his decaying breath;
The raging surge his firmest effort mocks,
And the wild whirlwind drives him on the rocks;
Like the loud cataract, the billows roar;
Awhile he struggles—and is seen no more.

In that dead sea, which not a breath deforms,
No sweeping whirlwinds, or internal storms,
You rule, terrific masters of the deep!

* [“Round the moist marge of each cold Hebrid isle.” COLLINS].

William Collins (1721-1759), from “Ode on the Popular Superstitions of the Highlands of Scotland,” line 141. See Appendix D.

Marge: The edge or border of a body of water. Shore. [OED]. Moskoe: i.e. Moscow.

† [Whales are frequently carried into the vortex of Maelstrom, and the moment they feel the force of the water, they struggle against it with all their might, howling in a frightful manner].
And the hush’d waves in sullen silence keep.
What horror thrills the mariner, to feel
A death-like calm arrest his stiffen’d keel;
In vain he watches for th’ accustom’d gale,
To move the bark, or fill the flagging sail;
In vain he hopes, while gloom obscures the way;
The clouds distend; and, rapid from the skies,
Descend the rains, but not a zephyr 17 flies.
Above, the lightning’s sheeted flames illume
The darken’d skies, and pierce the thick’ning gloom.

O ye soft spirits of the fluid air!
From heav’n’s high arch, the fav’ring breezes bear,
In lock’d surges move the secret springs,
And o’er the ocean wave your dewy wings.
Your power prevails; the grateful pilot hails
The wind’s first breath, and spreads the swelling sails;
Swift to his breast the flame of hope returns;
Again he guides the helm, the vessel turns.

Malignant tyrants! with vindictive ire,
The ocean heaving as your steps retire,
You trace the bark along the yielding main,
And smile, indignant—where your power was vain.
Hence, like the lightning’s flash, you rapid sweep
O’er the wild waters of the Atlantic deep,
Thro’ the long course of Orellana 18 run,

17 Zephyr: A westerly wind.
To climes illumin’d by their parent sun;
Where, o’er Pacific seas, the tempests blow,
You rear your coral palaces below;
On crystal pedestals the emeralds raise,
And bid the sapphires on their summits blaze.
Your wat’ry reign no wanderer annoys,
Nor dares your deep retreats, or gloomy joys,
Save the poor Negro*, on his dangerous way,
Thro’ the deep caverns of Panama’s bay,
While the black billows thro’ their fissures swell,
From fractur’d rocks to wrest the pearly shell.
As o’er the cliffs, he holds his slippery road,
To drag the treasures from their dark abode,
Your jealous eyes, tremendous rulers! spy
The fated victim you have doom’d to die.
Thus, when, all fainting with the tedious toil,
His weak frame loaded with the sever’d spoil,
He springs on high the surface to regain,
Repair his sinking strength, and breathes again;
From some wild gulf, that pours the sweeping storm,
The furious shark uprears his scaly form,
In awful hunger, rolls his flaming eyes;
The luckless sufferer turns, and shrieks, and dies.

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18 Francisco de Orellana (1511-1546) was a Spanish explorer, and the first to navigate the Amazon River.

* [The Spaniards employ their negro slaves in diving for pearls, along the coast of Terra Firma, and particularly in the Bay of Panama].

Mysterious witnesses of ages past!
When darkness veil’d the illimitable vast,
You saw the expanding* firmament divide
The waste of waters from ocean’s tide;
And, when the voice of heav’n, on ev’ry shore,
Bade the wide vengeance of the Deluge pour †,
When heav’d the billows from their lowest bed,
And hills tumultuous from their places fled,
Far, far below, you heard the waters rise,
With sounds, like rushing torrents, to the skies:
Deep, while Omnipotence in thunder spoke,
And ev’ry mountain trembled at the shock;
Not unappal’d, you felt the rocks divide,
And, their deep channels rending by your side,
With sinking heart, you turn’d to ev’ry sound,
When the loud thunderbolt upheav’d the ground;
The tow’ring cliﬀs in thousand fragments spread,
Till spoke the Eternal ‡, and the waters fled.
—You saw the earth emerge, the hills return,
Like life reviving from the recent urn;
The swelling seas regain their distant shores,
And baffled Plenty renovate her stores;
You stood secure, and triumph’d at the sight,

* [“And God said, let there be a firmament in the midst of the waters, and let it divide the waters from the waters.” GEN. Chap. I]. Verse 6.

† [“The same day were all the fountains of the great deep broken up, and the windows of heaven were opened”]. From GEN. Chap. VII. Verse 11.

‡ [“And God made a wind to pass over the earth, and the waters assuaged.” GEN. Chap. VIII]. Verse 1.
And bless’d again the sun, and hail’d the light.

Swift as the wind, impetuous powers! you fly
Thro’ all the regions of the vaulted sky
Thro’ keenest air, and clouds of frozen hail,
Beneath the burning sun, and scorching gale;
Thro’ the wide course of many a circling sphere,
No power opposing your sublime career.
Regents of space! you range thro’ worlds unknown,
Where Saturn, freezing with his pallid zone,
While his dim moons, in feeble lustre gleam,
Turns his huge surface to the distant beam.

—What is the lonely gloom of nights like ours,
When on the polar shores the winter lowrs,
—What is the darkness of our darkest caves,
Or the blast dashing on Norwegian waves?19
—What are the dreams, that prompt our midnight fears,
To the long horrors of a night of years?

Ye sullen rulers! while your eyes behold
Suns ever burning, on their thrones of gold,
Unnumber’d spheres their blissful seats disclose,
And worlds where spirits of the just repose,
How must the knowledge of your meaner joy
Heave your hard hearts, and all your hours annoy,
Correct your triumph, as you proudly tower,
In space unlimited, supreme in power!

19 The lack of punctuation at the close of this line appears to be a misprint. The line ends with a question mark in Poems, A New Edition.
Dread kings! when earth, and air, and ocean tire,
Your spells can penetrate the realms of fire.
—Amid th’ Antarctic wind’s eternal toil,
You hide the summits of your* burning isle;
Far, far around, the affrighted waves retire
Before your torrents of dissolving fire;
The glowing stream beneath the billow plays,
And the green ocean glitters in the blaze.

Or to that coast, where wilder tempests sweep,
In the cold breast of Iceland’s snowy deep,
When freezing winter bids the sun disown
The skies, to revel on his tropic throne;
You ride, undaunted, on the whirlwind’s wings,
And Hecla20 opens to receive her kings.
—What lakes sulphureous, at her centre, frame
The eternal deluges of liquid flame!
What giant wheels the sounding engines turn!
What gleaming furnaces forever burn! —
Thro’ mines unknown, and dreary gulfs you glide,
Where boiling Geyser throws her fiery tide,

* [“The island was now discovered, and in the midst of it a huge mountain, whose summit reached far above the fleeting clouds, where a volcano vomited forth a deluge of liquid fire, with terrible roarings and a mighty sound, as of winds bursting from the deep caverns of the earth.—The glowing deluge descended down the mountain, in a sheet of fire, and, rushing violently into the sea, drove back the affrighted waves in dreadful hisses from its surface; and, for a long time, preserved its fiery course beneath the waters that foamed above it.” SADAK. TALES OF THE GENII].

From Tales of the Genii (1764) by James Kenneth Ridley (writing as Sir Charles Morell). The story of Sadak appears as “Sadak and Kalafrade,” Tale IX, and is found in Volume Two.

20 Hecla: Hekla, a volcano located in the southern region of Iceland. Hekla is a particularly active volcano, with over twenty eruptions recorded since the 9th century. At the time of Bannerman’s writing, the most recent eruption occurred in 1766 and continued for two years.
In spouting torrents, from unnumber’d springs,
While deep below, the frequent earthquake rings.
   Or to the confines of the Nile you bea[r,]21
On wings of death, the suffocating air ;
With clouds of moving sand, impetuous driv’n,
Involve the azure canopy of heav’n :
All life arresting with its scorching breath,
You lend the gale your magazines of death.

Imperious rulers! dare you still aspire
To wield the sceptre of the realms of fire?
That ardent element, you conquer now,
Whose meaner deities before you bow,
Shall, for your ruin, all its force combine,
To sweep from nature’s face your dreadful line.
Thro’ rolling ages, and the tide of time,
In strength uninjur’d, piercing, and sublime,
Your eyes shall stretch along the track of day,
And scan its glories,—till they all decay.
—But, when the skies shall glow, in living fire,
Your powers, your terrors, and your spells expire ;
Your reign is finish’d, when, from shore to shore,
The seraph’s trump reveals, that Time shall be no more.

21 Another misprint in the 1800 edition. In order to maintain the rhyme, the word is clearly ‘bear,’ as indicated in Poems, A New Edition.
VERSES

ON

AN ILLUMINATION FOR A NAVAL VICTORY.
Quels traits me présentent vos fastes,
Impitoyables conquérans?
—Des murs, que la flamme ravage,
—Des vainquers, fumants de carnage,
Un peuple au fér abandonné.
Juges insensés que nous sommes,
Nous admirons de tels exploits.

J.B. ROUSSEAU ¹

¹ Jean-Baptiste Rousseau (1671-1741). French poet and dramatist. From “Ode VI. A La Fortune” (c.1723). Bannerman quotes most of the sixth stanza, and the first two lines of the seventh stanza. She omits lines 53-54 and 58-60, and misspells “conquerants,” “fumants,” and “flame.” The original French – as well as a rare English translation by John Quincy Adams – is as follows:

Quels traits me présentent vos fastes,
Impitoyables conquérans?
Des voûtes outrés, des projets vastes,
Des rois vaincus par des tyrans,
Des murs que la flamme ravage,
Des vainqueurs fumants de carnage,
Un peuple au fér abandonné,
Des mères pâles et sanglantes,
Arrachant leurs filles tremblantes
Des bras d’un soldat effréné.

Juges insensés que nous sommes,
Nous admirons de tels exploits!

Relentless Lords! what bloody lines
Your cruel annals stain:
Desires unbounded—vast designs—
Just kings by tyrants slain.
Here blazing cities fiercely roar—
There smoking victors stalk in gore;
Whole fetter’d Nations gasp—
Lo! pallid matrons, struggling wild,
In vain, to spare a virgin child
From licens’d Rapine’s grasp.

How false, Alas! the voice of Praise!
How senseless is renown!


This epigraph is not reproduced in Poems, A New Edition (1807).
VERSES ON AN ILLUMINATION.

HARK! ’tis the note of joy; the trumpet’s voice
Swells in the wind, and bids the world rejoice;
From street to street, in artificial light,
The blaze of torches glitters on the night;
Loud peals of triumph rend the startled sky:
Rejoice; it is the shout of victory!
Rejoice o’er thousands in untimely graves;
Rejoice! for Conquest rides the crimson’d waves.

Is this a time for triumph and applause,
When shrinking Nature mourns her broken laws?
Wide o’er the bloody scene, while glory flies
To heap the pile of human sacrifice;
Hid in some dark retreat, the widow weeps
Her heart’s best treasure buried in the deeps;
The frantic mother’s cries of Heaven implore
Some youthful warrior—she shall meet no more:
From the first beam, that wakes the golden day,
To ling’ring twilight’s melancholy ray,
No respite comes, their breaking hearts to cheer,
Or, from the fount of misery, steal a tear!

Rough as the storm that rends the icy seas,
Th’ uncultur’d savage spurns the arts of peace;
Impell’d by hatred, and revenge his guide,
He leaves* his native mountain’s shelt’ring side,
Thro’ trackless deserts holds his bloody way,
With toil unwearied, thro’ the tedious day;
At night, reposing on the blasted heath,
In dreams, his fancy points the stroke of death,
Exults horrific o’er his prostrate foe,
And aims anew the visionary blow.
Starting he wakes: afar he sees a form,
Half-viewless, stalking thro’ the misty storm;
Nearer he comes; his frantic eye-balls glare,
And yells inhuman ring along the air:
They meet, engage; affrighted Nature flies;
A fearful darkness dims the low’ring skies;
Revenge beside them points th’ envenom’d stings,
And murder shrouds them, with his gory wings!

“Accurs’d the deed!” the Sons of Europe cry,
While the tear starting, trembles in their eye;
Yes! ye may boast, from feeling’s source sublime,
That milder mercy gilds your favour’d clime;
With eager joy, you bid oppression cease,
And lull the jarring universe to peace!
Alas! Humanity would shroud the sight,

* [“A fragile warrior, prompted by caprice or revenge, will take the field alone, and march several hundred miles to surprise and cut off a straggling enemy.” ROB. HIST. AMER. VOL. II].

From The History of America (1777) by William Robertson (1721-1793), Scottish historian and principal of the University of Edinburgh. The passage quoted by Bannerman actually appears in Volume IV of Robertson’s history (See page 187 of Robertson’s History of America, Complete in One Volume).
And wrap Destruction in his native night;
With breasts begirt with steel, in dread array,
The glitt’ring legions flash upon the day;
Brothers in Science, at the trumpet’s sound,
Like daemons meet, and scatter death around.

Unmov’d they stand, and view the living tide
Pour, with a torrent’s force, on every side.
On Andes’\(^1\) cliffs, untutor’d Murder low’rs,
But all its keener, deadlier arts—are ours.

O! could some Spirit, from the fields of day,
To this fair planet wing his vent’rous way,
Inhale the freshness of the vernal breeze,
And mark the sun, reflected in the seas,
View where, abundant, on a thousand shores,
The waving harvests yield their golden stores;
Gay Beauty smiling in the sweets of morn,
The op’ning violet, and the flow’ring thorn,
Th’ expanding fields of every varied hue,
And the clear concave of unclouded blue!

Then let Him\(^2\) stand, where hostile armies join,
By the red waters of the rushing Rhine,\(^3\)
Amid thick darkness, hear the trumpets blow,
And the last shriek of Nature quiver low,

---

1. *Andes*: Mountain range along the west coast of South America.
2. *Him*: i.e. the “Spirit” introduced in line 55.
3. *Rhine*: Major European river, which forms part of the borders between Germany, Switzerland, France, and Austria.
Mark the full tide of Desolation spread,

And count, at eve, the dying and the dead:

How would he pause! How seek, in vain, to find

Some trace, in Man, of an immortal mind;

Man, who can glory in a scene like this,

Yet look to brighter worlds, for endless bliss!

O! for a lodge, where Peace might love to dwell,

In some sequester’d, solitary dell!

Some fairy isle, beyond the Southern wave,

Where War ne’er led his victims to the grave;

Where, mid the tufted groves, when twilight pale

Peoples with shadowy forms the dewy dale,

The lone Enthusiast, wrapt in trance sublime,

Might soar, unfetter’d by the bounds of time,

Might bask in Fancy’s reign, where scenes appear

Of blooms perpetual, thro’ the vernal year;

Where heav’nly odours scent the zephyr’s wing,

And fruits and flow’rs, in wild luxuriance spring!

Such were the dreams, that sooth’d the pensive breast,

And lull’d the soul to visionary rest.

Such were the scenes, the poet’s fancy drew,

While Rapture hail’d the moments, as they flew:

[O! for a lodge in some vast wilderness,
Some boundless contiguity of shade. COWPER’S TASK].

William Cowper (1731-1800). English poet and precursor of Romantic poetry on account of his meditative preoccupations with nature and rural life. The Task was his most popular poem and was first published in 1785. The lines Bannerman quotes are the opening lines of Book II.
Till mad Ambition bade the battle rage,
And Man with Man eternal warfare wage [.]  
    Ah! did our years thro’ circling ages flow,
Or Fate secure the heart from private woe ;
Did strength for ever in the arm reside,
Or the firm frame retain its youthful pride ;
The eye that saw th’ embattled hosts extend,
Might also hope to see their discord end ;
The heart, which Sorrow never taught to feel,
Might point, with surer aim, th’ avenging steel :  
    Ah! when a few short years have roll’d away,
The foes shall rest, unjarring, in the clay.
The Tartar-Chief,\(^5\) expiring on the plain,
Amid the multitudes his arm has slain,
Yields his fierce soul, ere half his years are run,
And ends his fiery course, when scarce begun.
The polish’d youth, whom Europe rears to arms,
And glory flatters, with deceitful charms,
Chills each fine impulse of the glowing soul,
And, pressing onward to the laurel’d goal,
Forgets that feeling ever warm’d his breast,
Or Pity pleaded for the heart opprest.  
    All hail, ye joys! to genuine feeling dear,
The heart’s warm transport, and the gushing tear!
Welcome the sigh, and from pity’s altar stole,
Ye calm the tumult of the troubled soul.

\(^{5}\) **Tartar-Chief**: Leader in the Turkish Army, which formerly occupied the Russian Empire.
O! on whatever shore, by fortune cast,
My shatter’d bosom finds a home at last;
Whatever ills, in sorrow’s ample reign,
May wring my heart, with aggravated pain;
Still, at those hours, when, hush’d in deep repose,
The happy lose their joys, the sad their woes,
May fancy lead me to the desert steep,
Stupendous frowning o’er the sullen deep;
To hear the ship-wreck’d mariner deplore
His doom relentless, on the rocky shore!
Even when the winds their awful fury urge,
And, heap’d like mountains, raves the foaming surge,
Less dread the terrors of the turbid main,
Than Carnage, stalking o’er th’ ensanguined plain!

And ye, who, bending o’er the untimely urn,
Will see nor joy, nor happiness return;
Thro’ your chang’d homes, who wildly seek in vain
For those who slumber in the stormy main;
May piercing anguish spare his arrows keen,
And pity soothe you, as ye weep unseen!
May peace pervade, where faithful sorrow reigns,
And charm the grief, that not an eye profanés!
Ah! think, tho’ ling’ring years unblest decay,
To troubled night succeeds untroubled day!
Time’s feeble barrier bounds the painful course,
But joy shall reign, eternal as its source.
THE NUN.
For the origin of the following poem, see a Drama, entitled *Cecile, ou le Sacrifice de l’Amitié*, in Madam Genlis’s Theatre of Education, Vol. II.¹

To remove the only obstacle to a sister’s marriage, Cecilia gives up her patrimony, and retires to take the vows in a convent in Provence; but, previously to her profession, a fortune is left her by a relation. This restores her to the world.

In the following pages, the story is so far altered, that the heroine completes her sacrifice. It may be objected, that the regret, and almost intolerable misery, which succeed it, are wholly inconsistent with a mind capable of such exalted generosity. But, let it be remembered, that, in a moment of enthusiasm, we may do what we repent for ever.

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¹ *Cecile, ou le Sacrifice de l’Amitié* (1780) by Stéphanie Félicité du Crest de Saint-Aubin, Comtesse de Genlis (1746-1830). French writer and educator, known primarily for didactic morality plays and works for children. Madame de Genlis issued *Théâtre d’éducation* in four volumes between 1779 and 1780. All four volumes were translated to English and published by T. Cadell in 1781. The English translation of the play is titled, “Cecilia, or the Sacrifice of Friendship, A Comedy.”
THE NUN.

YES! it is done; the frightful conflict’s o’er;
And peace is fled,—to visit me no more.
Immur’d for ever in this living tomb,
How my soul sickens at her hated doom!
—Ye darksome caverns, mis’ry’s black abode,
Where tears of anguish praise th’ insulted God;
Ye waving pines, that brave the midnight air,
To you I breathe the accents of despair,
On your deaf ear the tale of sorrow pour,
Till death shall bring to all my woes—a cure.

Eternal friendship! dare I turn mine eyes
To thy pure shrine, yet mourn the sacrifice?
O! sister of my soul! I seek you here;
In vain I seek you, thro’ caverns drear;
Falsely I triumph’d, when I bade adieu
To social life, to happiness,—to you.
Tho’ on my face delusive pleasure shone,
And peace sat, smiling, on a falling throne,
While not a pang betray’d internal smart,
The scorpion anguish stung me to the heart.

Ne’er shall the hour, with keenest horror fraught,
By time be banish’d from my aching thought,
When clos’d the massy gates, with hollow sound,
And lock’d me, shuddering, in their dreary bound.
Transfix’d with agony’s convulsive dart,
No gush of sorrow eas’d my swelling heart.
“These walls,” I cried, “I never pass again :”
And nature shiver’d through each chilly vein.
Grim as the grave, before my troubled eyes
I saw the giant form of terror rise ;
Breathless I listen’d for some cheering sound,
And the wind howl’d the vaulted caves around.
Ye frowning cliffs, whose hoary tops sublime
For ever mock the ravages of time!
When the wild tempest sweeps each awful height,
And warring elements convulse the night,
In all the tearless horror of despair,
I turn, to witness desolation there :
Sullen, I trace the lightnings, as they fly,
And hail the thunder’s stroke, that rends the sky ;
I hear the Var\(^1\) re-bellow to his source,
And bless the heaving storm’s tyrannic force.

The groaning exile, mid Siberian snows,
Feels distant freedom cheer surrounding woes ;
Weary and faint, at eve, his shivering form
Sustains the fury of the polar storm ;
To guide him on his way, no glimmering light,
With ray benignant, breaks the gloom of night ;

\(^1\) *Var:* River in Southeastern France.
No faithful partner, breathless with her fears,
Welcomes the wand’rer, with a flood of tears,
To lull his sick’ning spirit to repose,
Around, horrific, howl his shaggy foes.
Still fancy dreams, for hope assists her flight,
Of scenes far distant, of renew’d delight;
Again, with rapture’s swelling tide oppress’d,
He clasps his children to his burning breast,
Again he rushes to a friend’s embrace,
And feels the big tears bathe his grief-worn face:
—The pathless desert, lock’d in endless frost,
The long long prospect of the shipless coast,
Forgotten all; fair freedom’s magic power
Can lull his sorrows, in their fiercest hour;
A few short months to drag the iron chain,
And triumph leads him to the world again.
But me, no hope shall soothe, no time release,
No promis’d freedom give me back my peace.
Should these dim walls, these galling fetters bind,
In endless slav’ry, the reluctant mind?
No! Heaven’s immortal light shall shine on those,
Whose lips ne’er utter what their hearts oppose;
For them shall Piety, on seraph wings,
Waft bliss unmingled, from Elysian² springs;
Hush’d at the midnight hour to balmy rest,
Their guiltless souls commingle with the blest;

² _Elysian_: beautiful, glorious, heavenly. In Greek mythology, Elysium is the abode of the blessed dead.
By rapture borne, they pierce the incumbent night,
And lave\(^3\) in yielding seas of liquid light.
Me, heav’n disclaims—while, stupified with woes,
I mourn for ever, o’er my lost repose.
Have I not bath’d, bewilder’d with my fears,
Its spotless altar with unceasing tears?
Yes! Conscience, strike ; thy fiercest sting prepare,
And bring distraction, to relieve despair.

To yonder distant wood of shadowy pine,
When peace, and health, and liberty, were mine,
Oft have I wander’d, pensive, to behold
The sun departing tinge the clouds with gold :
Wrapt in the music of the sighing wind,
All joys alike, and sorrows left behind,
My soul, unconscious of her earthly frame,
Has kindled rapture at devotion’s flame :
Or, in the mimic woes that fancy drew,
I heard affection sigh the last adieu ;
I trac’d the spirit to her native skies ;
And tears of mix’d emotion dim’d mine eyes.
Thro’ the dark grating of my casement low,
I mark the sinking sun’s impurpled glow ;
I see the groves in all their beauty shine ;
They charm no more,—but ah! the change is mine.

\(^3\) *Lave*: To wash or bathe.
And thou, for whom my faithless love resign’d  
Each glowing vision of my youthful mind;  
To save whose peace, I gave my own away.  
And chas’d from life each pleasurable ray!  
Could thy fond eye this midnight cell explore,  
These walls re-echoing to the torrent’s roar;  
How wouldst thou mourn, that, yielding to my pray’r,  
Thou gav’st thy sister to eternal care!  
—Methinks I hear thee at my fate rejoice,  
And bless the quiet of my hallow’d choice,  
And be it so! —How can I thus repine,  
While peace, and ease, and liberty, are thine?  
Art thou not dearer to this aching breast,  
Than joy, and freedom, happiness, and rest?  
O! spare me, heaven! my fainting frame sustain;  
The pray’r of misery can ne’er be vain:  
To fear, remorse, and agony, a prey,  
Why is my bosom torn, from day to day?  
Why will thy ministers, with cruel art,  
Tear its last shelter from a broken heart?  
Pure was the awful sacrifice it made;  
Hard fate impos’d the task, and friendship paid.  
Ah! had it falter’d, less severely firm,  
And, trembling, shudder’d at the first alarm,  
To selfish joy confin’d its fervent glow,  
What guilt had spar’d its peace, what lasting woe!
Proud that I was! I bade my soul aspire,
And catch from heav’n the animating fire,
In virtue’s race th’ eternal path pursue,
Nor saw I follow’d, but as feeling drew.
Thine is this cheek, where grief’s untimely tears
Have worn the furrows of autumnal years:
Thine is the ceaseless storm, that rends my soul,
And drives sick reason to distraction’s goal:
O! mid the varied woes, that heap thy shrine,
May none e’er pay an offering like mine!
May none e’er covet thy bewitching joys!
Hard is the purchase, and unwise the choice.
One blissful tear thro’ rapture’s channel flows,
And thousands stream o’er wounds which never close.
   Oft have my sleepless eyes, at early morn,
Mark’d the first dew-drop glitter on the thorn,
And trac’d, on Ocean’s breast, the quiv’ring ray,
Whose dubious light proclaims the King of Day:
Immortal verdure crowns the waving woods,
And, clear as chrystal, gush the whit’ning floods,
Celestial balm from ev’ry flow’r exhales,
And Heav’n’s pure breath perfumes the summer gales.
On me, they blow in vain: No breath divine
Can charm the horrors of a fate like mine.
   Alas! while all around, in freedom gay,
Exult, unfetter’d, in the face of day,
In this dim sepulchre I hide my head;
The gloom, but not the quiet of the dead:
And view, for thousands share my lot severe,
How mad the aims of human kind appear!
Ah! could they think, while commerce crowds their shores,
With ev’ry different clime’s exhaustless stores,
While all the arts their varied powers combine,
To lavish gifts on cultivation’s shrine,
That He, whose mercy gave this earthly ball,
With plenty stor’d, impartially, to all,
Will weigh, in equal balance, ev’ry soul,
From Afric’s deserts to the freezing pole:
One tear of anguish wip’d from mis’ry’s eye,
One heave, responsive to the sufferer’s sigh,
Will raise their owner’s unobtrusive name
Above the proudest boast of mortal fame.

But what have I to do, intomb’d below,
And drinking to the dregs the cup of woe,
To paint their bliss, to whom the hand of heav’n,
The glorious power of doing good has giv’n!
Once I had hop’d, —this bosom then was warm,
And life had many a tie, and many a charm;
Once I had wish’d,—gay Hope his pinions spread;
I turn’d to grasp;—the heavenly vision fled.

What tho’ the soul, indignant, spurn her chain,
And fly, uncurb’d thro’ fancy’s wide domain;
To real life, at last, her flight must come,
And flutter round the happy scene of home.
Yes! ye dank cells, o’ergrown with hoary mould,
The only home I ever shall behold!
To you I come, from skies of cloudless light,
From scenes of pure and ever-gay delight.
—Here, as I sit and weep, unheard, unknown,
Save while the echoes give me back my moan,
My weary spirit seeks another scene,
Nor bars, nor chains, can interpose between.

Far o’er the bosom of th’ Atlantic waves,
Where fierce, thro’ trackless wilds, the tempest raves,
Unpolish’d nature holds her throne sublime,
And rears the children of her fav’rite clime ;
Wild as the desolate, uncultur’d soil,
She strings each nerve, to vigour and to toil ;
Fearless, amid the unfathom’d gulfs, they play,
Or, thro’ the swampy fens, explore their way,
Trace the fierce cataract to its foaming source,
Nor ask a partner, in their dang’rous course ;
Alone the savage stands : —His giant soul,
Indignant, mocks the shadow of control ;
Each softer glow his bosom scorns to own ;
He rests enjoyment on himself alone.

To hearts less callous, souls of softer form,
Within the circle of the Arctic storm,
I turn, to Iceland’s melancholy shore,
And sigh, that liberty is mine no more.
Pale from his wint’ry cave, the native braves
The rattling tumult of the crashing waves,
Unwearied, till the light’s departing ray
Flings her long shadows on the wat’ry way;
Swift thro’ the icy heaps, with daring keel,
He drives his boat against the diving seal. 210

Or when, outstretch’d upon the frozen deep,
He marks the shaggy bear, in awful sleep,
Shudd’ring, he winds along the ice-pil’d rock,
And whelms his cruel foe, with mortal stroke.

At night, returning to his shelt’ring cave,
Affection hails him, weary from the wave.
Within, contentment cheers the happy scene,
Prompts the sweet smile, and smooths the brow serene,
Hard and laborious tho’ his lot may be,
Still, still, his heart can tell him—he is free! 220

On Europe’s plains, I rest my wearied eyes;
Yes! light celestial gilds the favour’d skies.
Each finer feeling of the ennobled mind,
Each thought, by science and by taste refin’d,
Each purer enterprise, to virtue dear,
And all the arts of polish’d life, are here.
Here too, religion rears the mimic tomb,
And shrouds the suff’rer in a dungeon’s gloom;
Enwrapt in superstition’s iron chains,
How the blood rushes thro’ my shivering veins!
The sick’ning spirit wears the powers away,
Which genius kindled with his brightest ray.
Mistrust and guile, in every frightful cell,
Usurp the place, where piety should dwell;
The heart, affection sooth’d with many a tear,
By harshness broken, ends its sorrows here.

Hark! mingling with the shrill wind’s rising swell,
Slow steal the chimings of the vesper-bell;
Rous’d from disturb’d repose, with ling’ring feet,
The pallid Sisters in affliction meet;
Trembling they kneel the midnight shrine before,
While tears, in torrents, from their eye-lids pour.
Are these sad hearts, by hopeless anguish riv’n,
The welcome incense of approving Heav’n?
O Power Eternal! while, thine arm sustains
This ample world, and yonder starry plains;
Shall man, with impious hand, thy mercy bind,
And rule at pleasure o’er an equal mind;
Throughout the bleeding earth extend his fame,
And shield his crimes beneath thine awful name?
‘Twas here, in former times, religion pour’d
The blood of thousands on the insatiate sword:
And now, ev’n now, upon a sister shore,
How long, humanity! shalt thou deplore
That dread tribunal, horror’s darkest cave,
Where ruthless murder heaps the midnight grave?
But here must nature pause;—the arm of time
May root these terrors from the groaning clime;

---

4 *Vesper-bell*: Church bells announcing evening prayer.
May tear from superstition’s torturing hand,
The bloody ensigns of her black command;
Call the pale victims to the light of day,
To peace, to mercy’s tolerating sway.

Meantime, like some sad wreck, by tempests blown,
Forlorn and desolate, I stand alone.
—O’er the wild deep, the heaving vessel rides,
Around, destruction heaps the adverse tides;
Till the sunk rock receives the fated prey,
And ruin stalks upon the wat’ry way.

The dream is o’er! —within my troubled breast,
The grasp of pain unlocks the gates of rest.
I feel, while nature stems the burning tide,
Thro’ every vein the deadly poison glide.
O Death! what dark and melancholy muse
Has hung thine altar with unhallow’d yews?
Bring every flower, that scents the southern skies,
Or glows in beauty in unnumber’d dyes,
With deathless amaranth the wreath entwine;
These grateful hands shall deck th’ unheeded shrine.

How oft, when ling’ring twilight’s welcome ray
Has clos’d the circle of a tedious day;
To-morrow’s sun my swelling spirit cries,
May wing thee, happy, to unclouded skies,
May see thee shelter’d from the storms of time,
And sooth’d to lasting peace, in bliss sublime.

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5 *Amaranth*: A mythical flower that never fades or withers.
Thus, in those mansions of relentless toils,
Whence nature, shudd’ring at the sight, recoils;
The wretched miner hails the swift decay,
That, inly working, steals his life away.
—Hark! the loud voice of tyranny appals,
And his faint frame to endless labour calls;
As slow he moves, the rifted rocks below,
Where pestilential gales for ever blow,
Sudden, before his dim and less’ning sight,
Descend the thick’ning shades of deepest night;
O’er his pale front, the vapour’s mortal breath
Spreads the last hectic,6 and the dews of death.
He sinks—The quiv’ring spirit tow’rs away,
And meets the splendor of eternal day.

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6 Hectic: fever, consumption.
ODES.
ODE I.

THE SPIRIT OF THE AIR.

I.

Be hush’d, ye angry winds, that sweep,
   Resistless, o’er the polar coast:
Thou swell’st no more, tremendous deep!
   I lock thee in eternal frost.
My will supreme, mine awful sway,
   The earth, the air, the sea obey;
My glance pervades the realms of space;
   Each hidden spring, this arm can trace;
O’er all the prostrate world, my power extends,
Alike on Zembla’s ice, on Zaara’s burning sands.  

II.

Amid the lightning’s forky flame,
   While, driven on high, the billows roll;
‘Tis mine to loose the struggling frame,
   And mine to soothe the parting soul:
I come, on viewless winds reclin’d,

---

1 Zembla: An imaginary and distant northern kingdom. See Alexander Pope’s An Essay on Man (1734): “Ask where’s the north? at York, ‘tis on the Tweed; / In Scotland, at the Orcades; and there, / At Greenland, Zembla, or the Lord knows where” (II.222-224). Zaara: A rare and archaic variant for the Sahara desert.

2 Forky: Forked.

3 Billows: ocean waves produced by the wind.
To cheer the wretch, whom fetters bind,
To crush the oppressor’s giant crest,
To hurl destruction on his breast,
Amid the spoils his abject soul adores;
And trembling earth recoils along her utmost shores.  

III.
What form is that, half-hid in air,
   Round whose pale brow the torrents roar?
’Tis Freedom! mark her deep despair;
   She points to Afric’s bleeding shore.
Hark! what a groan!—with horror wild,
   I see the mother clasp her child;
“My son, my son!” she madly cries;—
   Spare, monsters, spare her agonies.—
Too late, for, rapid, to the vessel’s side
She flies, and, plunging, sinks beneath the billowy tide.

IV.
Proceed unmov’d, ye men of blood!
   Your course along the waters urge;
No winds shall vex the unruffled flood,
   Nor toss on high the deaf’ning surge.
Now, for your happy homes prepare;
But, curb your joy, I meet you there.
Then, as your friends, your infant race,
Rush wildly to your fond embrace,
Before your eyes a ghastly form shall stand,
And o’er her infant weep, and wave her beck’ning hand.

V.
Fierce thro’ the desert’s frightful sand,
When Cancer rules the burning day,4
The Arab leads his daring band,
Exulting on their perilous way.
“Prepare,” he cries, “prepare for war:
“Mark yonder sandy cloud afar;
“We share the blood, we share the toil,
“And we shall share the glorious spoil;
“Collect your courage, now the foe is nigh;
“Victorious, we return;—subdued, revenge and die.”

VI.
But, vengeful, on the rushing wind,
I come to toss the sandy waves;
To whelm5 the spoilers of their kind,
Inglorious, in untimely graves.
Yon livid flame, that flings on high
Its terrors thro’ the redd’ning sky;
Glares on your van,6 in awful state,

---

4 When Cancer rules the burning day: In regions located within the Tropic of Cancer, the sun can appear directly overhead at the peak of day.

5 Whelm: Overwhelm.

6 Van: vanguard. The front line of an advancing military or navy force. [OED].
The herald of impending fate.
I speak—the suffocating blast descends
In clouds of fluid fire; and nature’s conflict ends.

VII.
Where the wild ocean’s heaving waves
Boil round Magellan’s stormy coast;\(^7\)
When long and loud the tempest raves,
I mark the straining vessel tost,
By night along unfathom’d\(^8\) seas,
I see the living current freeze;
As horror grasps each fainting form,
High mid the fury of the storm;
Till the tall masts in scatter’d fragments lie,
And, plung’d amid the surge, the sufferers sink, and die.

VIII.
Soft be your bed, and sweet your rest,
Ye luckless tenants of the deep!
And, o’er each cold and shroudless breast,
May spirits of the waters weep!
And still, when awful midnight reigns,
My harp shall join in solemn strains;

---
\(^7\) Magellan’s stormy coast: Ferdinand Magellan (1480-1521), Portuguese explorer and leader of the Spanish expedition to the East Indies, which resulted in the first circumnavigation of the Earth. Located between the Tierra del Fuego islands and the coast of South America, the Strait of Magellan connects the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans. The narrow passageway is dangerous on account of unpredictable winds and currents.

\(^8\) Unfathom’d: unknown or unexplored.
My voice shall echo to the waves,
That dash above your coral graves;
Blest be the gloom, that wraps each sacred head,
And blest th’ unbroken sleep, and silence of the dead!

IX.
High on yon cloud’s cerulean\(^9\) seat,
I ride sublime thro’ æther blue,
To fling, while reigns the power of heat,
On fainting earth the summer dew:
I bid the rose in crimson glow,
And spread the lily’s robe of snow;
I waft from heaven the balmy breeze,
That sighs along the sleeping seas;
What time the spirit of the rock is nigh,
To pour upon the night his heaven-taught melody.

X.
But, far beyond the solar blaze,
Again I wing my rapid flight;
Again I cleave the liquid maze,
Exulting in immortal might.
O’er me nor cold, nor heat, prevails,
Nor poison from malignant gales;
I glide along the trackless coast,
That binds the magazines of frost;

---

\(^9\) *Cerulean*: pure blue, of the sky.
Encompass’d by the raging storm,
I smile at danger’s threat’ning form;
I mock destruction on his tow’ring seat,
And leave the roaring winds, contending at my feet.
ODE II.

THE MERMAID.

“When at last they retired to rest, Ajut went down to the beach, where finding a fishing-boat, she entered it without hesitation, and, telling those who wondered at her rashness, that she was going in search of Anningait, rowed away with great swiftness, and was seen no more.

“The fate of these lovers gave occasion to various fictions and conjectures. Some are of the opinion that they were changed into stars; others imagine, Anningait was seized in his passage by the Genius of the Rocks, and that Ajut was transformed into a Mermaid, and still continues to seek her lover in the deserts of the sea.”

**The Rambler** No 187

I.

**B**LOW on, ye death-fraught whirlwinds! blow,

Around the rocks, and rifted caves;

Ye demons of the gulf below!

I hear you, in the troubled waves.

High on this cliff, which darkness shrouds

In night’s impenetrable clouds,

My solitary watch I keep,

And listen, while the turbid deep

Groans to the raging tempests, as they roll

Their desolating force, to thunder at the pole.

---

1 *The Rambler*: Periodical written by Dr. Samuel Johnson (1709-1784). New issues were released every Tuesday and Saturday between 1750 and 1752. The issue cited by Bannerman appeared on Tuesday, December 31, 1751. Johnson’s discussion of the Danish legend of Ajut and Anningait began in the previous issue. According to Bate and Strauss, Johnson’s account of the story drew from Hans Egede’s *A Description of Greenland* (1745).
II.

Eternal world of waters, hail!
   Within thy caves my lover lies;
And day and night alike shall fail,
   Ere slumber lock my streaming eyes.
Along this wild untrodden coast,
Heap’d by the gelid hand of frost;
Thro’ this unbounded waste of seas,
   Where never sigh’d the vernal breeze;
Mine was the choice, in this terrific form,
To brave the icy surge, to shiver in the storm.

III.

Yes! I am chang’d.—My heart, my soul,
   Retain no more their former glow.
Hence, ere the black’ning tempests roll,
   I watch the bark, in murmurs low,
(While darker low’rs the thick’ning gloom)
To lure the sailor to his doom;
Soft from some pile of frozen snow
   I pour the syren-song\(^2\) of woe;
Like the sad mariner’s expiring cry,
As, faint and worn with toil, he lays down to die.

---

\(^2\) *Syren-song*: In classical mythology, sirens were female creatures (often described as beautiful despite having bird-like or serpentine characteristics) that entranced sailors with their singing, usually causing fatal shipwrecks. See Book XII of Homer’s *Odyssey*.
IV.

Then, while the dark and angry deep
   Hangs his huge billows high in air ;
And the wild wind, with awful sweep,
   Howls in each fitful swell—beware!
High on the rent and crashing mast,
   I lend new fury to the blast ;
I mark each hardy cheek grow pale,
   And the proud sons of courage fail ;
Till the torn vessel drinks the surging waves,
   Yawns the disparted main, and opes its shelving graves.

V.

When Vengeance bears along the wave
   The spell, which heaven and earth appals ;
Alone, by night *, in darksome cave,
   On me the gifted wizard calls.
Above the ocean’s boiling flood
   Thro’ vapour glares the moon, in blood :
Low sounds along the waters die,
   And shrieks of anguish fill the sky ;
Convulsive powers the solid rocks divide,
   While, o’er the heaving surge, th’ embodied spirits glide.

* ['Tis thine to sing, how, framing hideous spells
In Sky’s lone isle the gifted wizard sits.
Waiting in wint’ry cave his wayward fits.

COLLINS’ ODE ON THE SUPERSTITIONS OF THE HIGHLANDS].

Lines 53-55. See Appendix D.
VI.
Thrice welcome to my weary sight,
Avenging ministers of wrath!
Ye heard, amid the realms of night,
The spell, that wakes the sleep of death.
Where Hecla’s flames the snows dissolve,
Or storms, the polar skies involve;
Where, o’er the tempest-beaten wreck,
The raging winds billow and break
On the sad earth, and in the stormy sea,
All, all shall shudd’ring own your potent agency.

VII.
To aid your toils, to scatter death,
Swift, as the sheeted lightning’s force,
When the keen north-wind’s freezing breath
Spreads desolation in its course,
My soul, within this icy sea,
Fulfils her fearful destiny.
Thro’ time’s long ages I shall wait
To lead the victims to their fate;
With callous heart, to hidden rocks decoy,
And lure, in seraph-strains, unpitying, to destroy.
ODE III.

TO PAIN.

I.

HAIL! fiercest herald of a power,

Whose harsh control each nerve obeys!
I call thee, at this fearful hour;
To thee my feeble voice I raise.
Say, does compassion never glow
Within thy soul, and bid thee know
The pangs, with which thou fir’st\(^3\) the breast?
Or dost thou never, never mourn,
To plant so deep the hidden thorn,
Forbidding aid, and blasting rest?

II.

Think’st thou my wavering fickle mind
Requires so much, to break her chain?
Alas! what earthly joys can bind
The wretch, who sees thy figure, Pain!
For ever fleet before his eyes;
For him, no glories gild the skies;
No beauties shine in nature’s bound,
In vain with verdure glows the spring,
If, from within, thy gnawing sting
Bid only demons scowl around.

---

\(^3\) *Fir’st*: i.e. first. To burn or scorch.
III.
Too sure, I feel, in every vein,
    With thee soft Pity ne’er can dwell.
Shall pleasure never smile again
    Or health thro’ ev’ry channel swell?
Yes! tho’ thy hand hath crush’d the rose
Before its prime, another blows,
    Whose blossoms thy breath can ne’er destroy ;
Say, can thy keen and cruel chains
Corrode, where bliss seraphic reigns,
    Where all is peace, and all is joy.

IV.
Then, wherefore sighs my fearful heart,
    And trembles thus my tottering frame?
Alas! I feel thy deadly dart,
    More potent far than fancy’s flame :
I bend, grim tyrant! at thy throne ;
But spare, ah! spare that sullen frown,
    Relax the horrors of thy brow!
O! lead me, with a softer hand,
And lo! I come at thy command,
    And, unrepining, follow through.
ODE IV.

I.

WHEN many a tear bedims the sight,
And pleasure wings her hasty flight
   To hearts untouch’d by sorrow’s dart ;
Ah! can the muse her strains prolong,
Or try to swell the choral song,
   When grief weighs heavy on the bursting heart?

II.
Fain would I, hanging round thy tomb
The flowers of never-fading bloom,
   Thy name from dark oblivion save ;
Fain would I bid upon thy breast
Lightly the mould’ring greensward rest,
   And no rude hand disturb thy grave.

III.
Alas! another hand than mine
Must for thy brow the laurel twine,
   Lamented brother of my soul!
Another tongue thy virtues swell,
And pensive strike the plaintive shell,
   To bid the tear of pity roll :
IV.
Bid spring, with humid hand, entwine
His earliest flowers, to deck the shrine,
Where rests thy cold insensate clay;
There bid the visionary mind
Hear, in the pauses of the wind,
Some mournful cadence die away.

V.
And, while upon the moonlight green
The airy minstrel glides unseen,
And sweetly swells the silver lyre;
As softly float the notes along,
Echo shall still their sounds prolong,
A kindred breast with ecstacy to fire!
ODE V.

TO THE NIGHTINGALE.

Translation of the 15th Ode of Rousseau.

I.

WHY, plaintive warbler! tell me why

For ever sighs thy troubled heart?

Cannot these groves, that glowing sky,

A solace to thy woes impart?

Shall spring his blooming wreaths entwine,

To circle every brow, but thine?

II.

See! nature, at thy wish’d return,

Renews her robe of gayest green;

And can thy wayward bosom mourn,

When nature wakes the vernal scene;

When every dryad\(^2\) lends her shade,

For thine and contemplation’s aid.

---

1 “A Philomèle” (c.1723) by Jean-Baptiste Rousseau (1671-1741). The opening lines of the original poem in French are as follows: “Pourquoi, plaintive Philomèle.” The number of the ode varies according to individual editions. Bannerman omits the specific number of the ode for Poems, A New Edition in 1807 and simply notes “From Rousseau” as a subtitle.

In mythology, Philomela was transformed into a nightingale after she is raped by King Tereus, her sister’s husband. See Book VI of Ovid’s *Metamorphoses*.

As noted by Robert G. Lewis and Walter J. Morris, English translations of J.B. Rousseau’s poetry are rare (454). Bannerman’s translation may in fact be the only English translation of this poem to date.

2 *Dryad*: In Greek and Roman mythology, a female creature that inhabits a forest. A wood nymph.
III.
See! from thy haunts the stormy north
   His surly blasts leads far away;
Each blossom of the teeming earth,
   The glories of the op’ning day;
The promise of the coming year,
All, all, sweet bird, for thee appear[.]

IV.
For thee, Aurora³ steeps in dews
   The new-born flow’rets of the dale;
For thee, with liberal hand, she strews
   Her fragrance on the western gale;
And rifles all the sweets of morn,
To deck her fav’rite’s mossy thorn.

V.
Hark! while thy sad strain seems to tell
   Some mournful tale of luckless love;
On each soft note’s ecstatic swell,
   In silence hang the warbling grove;
And e’en the fowler loves to spare
The Poet of the midnight air.

³ Aurora: Roman goddess of the dawn.
VI.
O! if a friend’s untimely tomb
  Bids all the tide of sorrow flow;
Alas! ev’n there, thy wretched doom
  Is mercy to my weight of woe;
For pain now past, thy bosom sighs;
Mine, present always,—never flies.

VII.
Thee, bounteous nature blooms to cheer,
  And beauty smiles, thy woes to still;
To nature, love, and pity dear,
  Well may’st thou yield thy load of ill,
To beings, as forlorn as I,
  Denied the freedom of a tear,
The rapture of a single sigh.

4  [While only beings as forlorn as I. MRS. SMITH].

From “Sonnet LXVII: On Passing Over A Dreary Tract” in Elegiac Sonnets (1784) by Charlotte Turner Smith (1749-1806), English poet and novelist:

    Swift fleet the billowy clouds along the sky,
    Earth seems to shudder at the storm aghast;
    While only beings as forlorn as I
    Court the chill horrors of the howling blast. (3-4)

5  [The rapture of a single tear. SCHILLER].

From Die Räuber (1781) by Friedrich von Schiller (1759-1805), German poet, philosopher, and dramatist: “I would toil till the sweat of blood dropt from my brow, to purchase the luxury of one sound sleep, the rapture of a single tear” (III.ii).

An English translation entitled The Robbers appeared in 1792 and was published by G.G.J. & J. Robinson in London. The play was widely read and admired by Samuel Taylor Coleridge, Johanna Baillie, and Lord Byron.
ORIGINAL SONNETS.
SONNET I.

THE WATCH-MAN.

FROM some rude rock, that overhangs the deep,

    When the low winds proclaim the autumnal storm,
And murm’ring sounds along the waters sweep;
    Where the lone light-house lifts its spiral form;

I mark, between the blast’s infuriate\(^1\) fits,

    The gleaming taper’s solitary ray,
And fancy wanders, where the watch-man sits,
    With fearful heart, to view the lightnings play

Upon the surface of the gloomy waves;

    As burst the thunders on his rocking tower,
And at its foot the mining ocean raves;
    Appall’d, he listens thro’ the midnight hour,
And calls on Heaven:—The billows urge their way,

Upheave the rooted base, and all is swept away.

\(^1\) **Infuriate:** “excited to fury, enraged” [OED].
SONNET II.

THE SOLDIER.

WITH swelling heart I hear thy stifled sigh,
Poor time-worn vet’ran! on thy hoary head
Beats the keen fury of the winter’s sky,
And slow thou mov’st, “to beg thy bitter bread,”¹

While heaves impetuous thine indignant breast;
O! when the vessel cut the Atlantic foam,
And bore thee, sick, and wounded, and oppress’d,
Then rush’d thy fancy on the scene of home;

On all its guiltless pleasures;—her, who chas’d
With looks of anxious tenderness, thy woes.
Eternal Heaven! that home—a dreary waste!
And the cold grave, where thy fond hopes repose,
Were all that met thee on thy native soil,
And all thy country gave, for years of blood and toil.

¹ An allusion to The Complaint: or, Night-Thoughts on Life, Death, & Immortality by Edward Young (1683-1765). An important example of the “graveyard school” of contemplative elegiac poetry, Night Thoughts was published in nine volumes between 1742 and 1745. The passage Bannerman alludes to appears in Night I:

Some for hard masters, broken under arms,
In battle lopt away, with half their limbs,
Beg bitter bread thro’ realms their valour saved. (I. 248-50)
SONNET III.¹

THE BENIGHTED² ARAB.

IN the wild desert’s solitary sands,
Faint with the fervors of the tropic fire,
Deserted, and alone, the Arab stands,
Beneath the tower’s tall ruin, to expire;

And, as he views the night’s last shadows fall,
Some faint hopes still his parting soul arrest,
And, rudely, shelter’d by the tott’ring wall,
He hails the bleak wind on his throbbing breast.

Then, as his heart resigns to peace awhile,
And life, returning to her channel, glows;
What horror thrills him, when, across the pile,
By their dim fires, he marks his deadly foes;
Again his trembling feet the desert brave,
To seek, amid the sands, the shelter of the grave.

¹ This sonnet was not reprinted in the 1807 edition.

² Benighted: Overtaken by darkness. To lose one’s way due to the onset of night.
SONNET IV.
THE NORWEGIAN.

WHEN doubtful twilight dims the polar noon,
    And rays, reflected from the mountains, glow,
Against the rising of the winter moon,
    The cold Norwegian from involving snow
Clears his frail bark:—and, when the first faint ray
    Shines on the billow’s ice-encumber’d foam,
Fearless he launches on his trackless way,
    And on the stormy ocean hails his home.

When o’er his head, upon the misty height,
    The harsh sea-eagle rears her airy nest,
And cheers, with clamours rude, the boreal night;
    No thrilling rapture swells his simple breast,
From all the glories, rushing on his eye,
    The awful sweep of waves, and star-encircled sky.

1 Involving: Encompassing.

2 Boreal: “Of or pertaining to the north wind” [OED].
SONNET V.

TO THE OWL.¹

I LOVE ² thee, cheerless, melancholy bird!

Soothing to me is thy funereal cry;

Here build thy lonely nest, and ever nigh
My dwelling, be thy sullen wailings heard.

Amid the howlings of the northern blast,

Thou lov’st to mingle thy discordant scream,
Which to the visionary mind may seem
To call the sufferer to eternal rest.

And sometimes, with the Spirit of the deep,

Thou swell’st the roarings of the stormy waves;

While, rising shroudless from their wat’ry graves, Aerial forms along the billows sweep.

Hark! loud, and louder still, the tempest raves;—

And still I hear thee from the dizzy steep.

¹ Originally published in issue no. 11 of the *Edinburgh Magazine* (February 1798) under the pseudonym of Augusta.

² Changed from “woo” in the original magazine version. In terms of word choice, the rest of the poem is identical to the version published in *Poems* (1800); however, there are some variants in punctuation and capitalization. The poem is more significantly altered for *Poems, A New Edition* in 1807. See Textual Variants, p. 409.
SONNET VI.
TO THE OCEAN.

HUSH'D are thy stormy waves, tempestuous main!
Light o’er thy surface sports the genial air!
Ah! who would think, that danger lurks within,
That ev’n thy murm’ring seems to say—beware.

To my corroded mind, destructive deep!
Thy smiling aspect only brings despair,
Reminds me, when angry whirlwind’s sweep
Along thy bosom, now so calm, so fair.

Reminds me, when unpitying and untrue,
On the sunk rock thou driv’st the fated bark,
Whelm’st in thy wat’ry breast the luckless crew,
And smil’st delighted in a scene so dark.
Such are thy dreadful trophies, ruthless main!
What are thy triumphs—but another’s pain!
SONNET VII.¹

SOFT thro’² the woodland sighs the summer gale,

    With many a hue, the verdant landscape glows,
And, breathing sweets along the cultur’d vale,
    Steals the fresh fragrance of the blushing rose.

The roaring billows of the stormy deep,      5
    Hush’d to repose, their hostile rage forbear ;
And the low winds on the calm surface sleep,
    Cooling the ardour of the noontide³ air.

No summer scenes, alas! no vermil bloom
    Soothe the sick soul, by every ill opress’d ; 10
To wander, cheerless, thro’ the midnight gloom,
    To brave the terrors of the wint’ry blast,
Whose swelling gusts ideal woes impart,⁴
Are scenes more fitted—to⁵ a broken heart.

¹ Originally published in issue no. 11 of the Edinburgh Magazine (February 1798) under the pseudonym of Augusta.
² “thro’” has been abbreviated from “through” in the original magazine version of the poem.
³ “noontide” has replaced “tepid.”
⁴ This entire line was enclosed in parenthesis in the magazine version of the poem.
⁵ “to” has replaced “for.”
SONNET VIII.¹

Is there a spot, in Nature’s wide domain,
   Where peace delights her fair abode to rear?
Where the sad heart shall never sigh again,
   Nor the dim’d eye be sullied with a tear?

Yes! to the sick’ning soul, by woes oppress’d,
   And doom’d the pride of ignorance to bear,
Ev’n in this world there is one place of rest,
   One sure asylum from corroding care.

Keen blows the wint’ry wind, and beats the rain,
   And o’er its grassy roof the thunders rave; —
But warring elements essay in vain,
   To wake the slumb’ring tenant of the grave.
Vouchsafe, oh Heaven! if still there’s peace for me,
That I that envied tenant soon may be!

¹ In the 1807 edition, this poem appears before the previous untitled sonnet.
SONNET IX.

TO THE CYPRESS.

THRO’ the long grass, that shrouds the lonely grave,

When bleak at eve the gusts of winter blow,
I love to mark thy gloomy branches wave,
And bend, lamenting, o’er the dust below.

Hush’d every accent, save the tempest’s moan,

Which waves the tall weeds on the mould’ring sod:
Thou, faithful partner of the tomb! alone
Dar’st own thy master, in his last abode.

Blest be thy shade, in endless verdure\(^1\) blest,

And hallow’d every foot, that lingers near!
Ah! when the turf shall on my bosom rest,
Still may’st thou murmur, ‘mid the silence drear,
To soothe, when ev’n affection shall decay,
And leave the slumberer, to his kindred clay!

\(^1\) verdure: Green plants, flourishing vegetation.
SONNET X.

IN some deep solitude’s romantic breast,
   Beneath the azure of unchanging skies,
O that my weary soul could sink to rest,
   And lose for ever all her miseries!

Yes! I have found the tale of Hope untrue,
   And seen affection vanish like a dream.
Alas! while fancy as the vision flew,
   Threw on the passing pomp the transient beam ;

Had some prophetic accents reach’d mine ear,
   “Beware, fond fool! it dazzles, to betray!
Soon shall the heart-wrung sigh, and gushing tear,
   Chase the fair promise of thy life away :”
My soul has stifled her expanding glow,
Nor, sought for rapture, to encounter woe.
SONNETS

FROM PETRARCH, OSSIAN, &c.
SONNET I.
Se lamentar augelli, o verdi fronde.¹

MOV’D by the summer wind, when all is still,
The light leaves quiver on the yielding spray;
Sighs from its flow’ry banks the lucid rill,
While the birds answer in their sweetest lay.

Vain to this sick’ning heart these scenes appear;
No form but hers² can meet my tearful eyes;
In every passing gale her voice I hear;
It seems to tell me, “I have heard thy sighs.”

“But why,” she cries, “in Manhood’s tow’ring prime,
In grief’s dark mist thy days, inglorious, hide?
Ah! dost thou murmur, that thy span of time
Has join’d eternity’s unchanging tide?
Yes! tho’ I seem’d to shut mine eyes in night,
They only clos’d to wake, in everlasting light.”

¹ From Francesco Petrarch (1304-1374). In the appendix of Poems, A New Edition (1807), Bannerman cites this as Sonnet XI. However, the numbering of Petrarch’s sonnets are inconsistent and vary with each individual translation and edition. Petrarch’s original poems can be traced using the epigraphs that Bannerman has included, which present the opening lines for each sonnet in the original Italian.

Petrarch’s poem was previously translated by Charlotte Smith (1749-1806) as “Sonnet XV” in Elegiac Sonnets (1784). Subtitled “From Petrarch,” the opening lines are: “Where the green leaves exclude the summer beam, / And softly bend as balmy breezes blow.” The poem was later translated by Barbarina Brand, Lady Dacre (1768-1854) in Dramas, Translations and Occasional Poems in 1821. The opening lines of Lady Dacre’s translation are as follows: “If the lorn bird complain, or rustling sweep / Soft summer airs o’er foliage waving slow.”

² Hers: Laura, to whom Petrarch dedicated over three-hundred sonnets, collected in the Rime Sparse (Scattered Rhymes), or Il Canzoniere (Song Book). Possibly Laura de Noves (1310-1348), however, her actual identity has never been confirmed. With her fair skin, blonde hair, and blue eyes, Petrarch’s descriptions of Laura contributed to subsequent stereotypes and idealizations of feminine beauty.
SONNET II.

Alma felice, che sovente torni.¹

WHEN welcome slumber locks my torbid frame,

   I see thy spirit in the midnight dream;
   Thine eyes, that still in living lustre beam,
In all, but frail mortality the same.

Ah then! from earth and all its sorrows free,

   Methinks I meet thee, in each former scene,
   Once the sweet shelter of a heart serene,
Now vocal only, while I weep for thee.

For thee? ah no! from human ills secure,

   Thy hallow’d soul exults in endless day.
   ‘Tis I, who linger on the toilsome way;
No balm relieves the anguish I endure,

   Save the fond, feeble hope, that thou art near,
   To soothe my sufferings with an angel’s tear.

¹ Also by Petrarch. Bannerman refers to this poem as Sonnet XIV in the notes to Poems, A New Edition.
SONNET III.
Discolorato hai morte, il pui bel volto.¹

WHERE now the beauty of thy heavenly face?

In vain I seek what I shall meet no more!
Fled the pure soul, that wak’d to life before
Each tender smile, and animated grace:

For never now shall thy bewitching tongue 5
Revive my weary spirit, woe-deprest;
Or lull again to transitory rest
This heart, so many agonies have wrung.

O! as the ling’ring years of life decay 10
Beneath keen sorrow’s unrelenting power,
No peace I find, save when, in fancy’s hour,
With thee I wander thro’ cerulean day,
And taste fond pleasure, as I see thee shine,
And as I think thee, tho’ immortal, mine.

¹ Referred to as Sonnet XV in Poems, A New Edition. The word “pui” is also changed to “più”
SONNET IV.

Levommi il mio pensier’ in parte ; ov’era.¹

YES! mid the blissful band, in yonder skies,
   I see her lovely, as in former days:
Soft pity trembles in her humid eyes,
   And veils the lustre of the seraph’s blaze.

“Here too,” she cries, “when life’s rude blast is o’er,
   If virtue shrink not at the syren’s voice,
Here shalt thou rest with me to part no more,
   And in unsullied happiness rejoice!

Rejoice? And can the soul immers’d in clay,
   Conceive the raptures, that inspire the blest!
For thee I wait. —Ah! tho’ I fled away,
   Let heavenly hope illume thy darken’d breast.”
Why was she silent, when my soaring soul
Already touch’d th’ anticipated goal!

¹ Referred to as Sonnet XXXIV in Poems, A New Edition.
SONNET V.
Quel Rosignol, che si soave piagne.¹

FORLORN complainer of the midnight hour!

Where has thy sweet voice caught the tale of woe?
Has fate, relentless, laid thy lover low,
And left thee desolate in hill and bow’r?

Ah! tho’ thy nightly melodies are vain,
Vain, as the phantoms, I pursued so long,
Cease not the magic of thy soothing song:
O! could it lure thee to the world again?

Lamented angel! No! thine alter’d eyes
Are clos’d for ever: yet I linger here,
And, vainly shedding on thy grave the tear,
I feel that all, on which the soul relies,
May vanish, like visionary light
That mocks the wand’rer’s eye, amid the gloom of night.

¹ This sonnet was not reprinted in the 1807 version of Poems, A New Edition. In Robert M. Durling’s authoritative edition of Petrarch’s poems, this sonnet is numbered 311. The exact opening lines are: “Quel rosigniuol che si soave piagne” (Bannerman misspelled ‘rosignioul’ in the epigraph). Petrarch’s sonnet was adapted by the Italian composer Ildebrando Pizzetti (1880-1968) for a series of three sonatas for piano and voice in 1923.
SONNET VI.¹

Sento l’aura mia antica, é i’dolci colli.

ONCE more, ye balmy gales! I feel you blow,
   Again, sweet hills! I mark the morning beams
   Gild your green summits; while your silver streams,
   Thro’ vales of fragrance, undulating, flow:

But you, ye dreams of bliss! no longer here
   Give life and beauty to the glowing scene;
   For stern remembrance stands, where you have been,
   And blasts the verdue of the blooming year!

O Laura! Laura! in the dust with thee,
   Would I could find a refuge from despair!
   Is this thy boasted triumph, Love! to tear
   A heart, thy coward malice dare not free,
   And bid it live, when every hope is fled,
   To weep, among the ashes of the dead?

¹ This sonnet was also omitted from Poems, A New Edition. The sonnet is numbered 320 in Durling’s edition.
SONNET VII. ¹
FROM LA CASA.²
Questa vita mortal, &c.³

COLD as the shiv’ring twilight of the tomb,

When fancy wakes the shadows of the dead,
In sorrow shrouded and nocturnal gloom,
The weary summer of my life has fled.

Now, God eternal! while mine alter’d soul

This far-stretch’d earth, yon distant heav’n surveys,
The burning trophie, and the freezing pole,
Siberia’s ice, and Magadoxa’s⁴ blaze,

I find Thee every where! In power sublime

Thou call’dst these wonders from th’abyss of night.
Thro’ circling ages, and on every clime,
Thy sun hath shone with undiminsh’d light.
From thee they came, on thee the links depend,
Wherever life informs, or rolling worlds extend.

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¹ This sonnet was also omitted from the 1807 edition.
² Giovanni della Casa (1503-1556). Florentine poet, writer, and diplomat. Author of Il Galateo overo de’ costum (1558), a treatise on polite behavior, fashion, and social customs. He began his career with verse that deliberately departed from Petrarchan traditions. Near the end of his career, his verse grew darker and more introspective, anxiously focusing on the themes of lost love, mutability, and death.
³ From “Sonneto LIX.” It is alternatively listed as “Sonnet LXIV” on the Italian website, Biblioteca Virtuale Online. The poem’s opening lines are as follows: “Questa vita mortal, che ‘n una o ‘n due.”
⁴ Magadoxa: Archaic name for the city of Essaouira, located on the western coast of Morocco.
SONNET VIII.
FROM OSSIAN.
Green thorn of the hill of ghosts, that shakest thy head to nightly winds! &c.

TEMORA, BOOK VII.¹

SHOOK in the whistling wind, that sweeps by night,
    Waves the dark thorn upon the twilight hill.
    Hark! thro’ the murmuring leaves, that shiver still,
Some spirit rustles, in its airy flight.

For oft, in wint’ry storms, the eddying blast
    Bears, on its viewless wings, the shadowy dead;
    When the faint moon conceals her pallid head,
Amid the darkness of th’ unfathom’d vast.

O! hear me, voices of the days of old!
    I hear not you, departed sons of song!
    Say, do ye sweep the lyre, the clouds among?
Or, in the morning mist aerial roll’d,
    Glide the green ocean’s foamy breast along,
When gleam the sun-beat waves in liquid gold?

¹ From Book VII of Temora (1763) by James MacPherson (1736-1796). Between 1761 and 1765, MacPherson published several poems reputed to be translations of the works of an ancient Scottish poet known as Ossian. After Macpherson’s death, Malcolm Laing concluded publicly in 1800 that Macpherson was the author of the allegedly ancient poems.
SONNETS

FROM WERTER.¹

¹ Werter: The titular character of Die Leiden des jugen Werthers (The Sorrows of Young Werther) by Johann Wolfgang von Goethe (1749-1832). The novel was initially published in Leipzig by Christian Friedrich Weygand in 1774. The first English translation was published by J. Dodsley in 1779.

Bannerman’s omission of the ‘h’ in Werther’s name is likely an attempt to reproduce the hard ‘t’ sound of the German pronunciation.

Charlotte Smith also wrote a series of sonnets based upon Goethe’s famous novel. See Appendix D.
“Why dost thou awake me, O gale!” it seems to say, “I am covered with the drops of heaven. The time of my fading is near, and the blast that shall scatter my leaves. To-morrow shall the traveler come, he that saw me in my beauty shall come: his eyes will search the field, but they will not find me.”

OSSIAN.²

² From Berrathon by James MacPherson. In letter dated 12 October in Goethe’s novel, Werter discovers MacPherson’s Ossian poems and memorizes the latter portion of the passage Bannerman uses for the epigraph here. Later in the novel, in his final meeting with Lotte, Werter reads his translation of the Ossian poems aloud to her. Overcome with emotion, Werter recites this particular passages aloud and steals a kiss from Lotte, prompting her to send him away. Shortly thereafter, Werter sends a letter requesting to borrow Lotte’s fiancé’s pistols. Lotte begrudgingly agrees and Werter shoots himself.
SONNET I.

WHEN the first beams of morn illume the sky,

    “To-day I see her,” and I hail the sun;
    “To-day I see her,” and the moments run,
    And life, and time, and all unheeded fly.

O how I grasp delusions! form again

    The frantic hopes, my firmer mind denies!
    I see but her, in earth, in air, and skies ;
    I feel but her, in all my burning brain.

Then, as I think upon the woes to come,

    Bereav’d of comfort, how I hate the day!
    Tears, from a heart of anguish, force their way,
    And oft I wish to make the grave my home ;
    To drink the bitter cup, while yet I may,
    Before my strength is gone, and all my powers decay.

---

1 Her: Charlotte, or “Lotte,” the object of Werter’s unrequited affections. The character was modeled on Charlotte Buff (1753-1828), whom Goethe met and fell in love with when he was twenty-three years old. Charlotte, however, was already engaged to Johann Christian Kestner, and the couple wed in 1772.
SONNET II.

Is this sad heart, so cold and vacant, mine?

Enchanting scenes! I know you now no more!
The soft stream winds beneath th’ o’erhanging pine;

Ye shine in summer pride—but mine is o’er.

O could I place my woes in lowring skies,
In dismal seasons, or capricious care,
In the wild whirl ambition’s strife supplies,

My tighten’d heart might breathe in freer air.

Wretch that I am! this bosom once so blest,
Contains the poison, which consumes its peace;

In vain I stretch my arms, and seek for rest;

Dark clouds surround, forbidding all release.

Yes! I must fill the measure of my woes,
And then I find the road, that leads me to repose.
WHERE is that sentiment which warm’d my breast,
    That pour’d around me torrents of delight,
    That brought all paradise before my sight,
And wrapt my soul in visions of the blest!

How often has the wand’ring sea-bird’s flight
    Across the vast immeasurable deep,
    Borne my free spirit, in its rapid sweep,
Thro’ living waters, and immortal light,
To taste beatitude, where raptures flow.
    Oh! how this heart is chang’d!—For blissful dreams
    Of life eternal, dim before me gleams
The deep and fathomless abyss of woe,
    Where, hurried headlong thro’ the black’ning wave,
    Or dash’d upon the rocks, I soon must find my grave.
SONNET IV.

AH! not on me she turn’d her wand’ring eyes!
    On me who saw but her, but her alone!
Yet still I thought! Alas! my soul relies
    On airy phantoms, when its peace is gone.

Yes! I would go! could this devoted breast
    Give back her image? —but in vain I rave:
For ever present, on my brain impress’d,
    Her eye’s dark lustre lights me to the grave!

Thus the dead loadstone, on the torrid steep,
    Rocks the tall vessel on her straining keel,
Draws from the oozing seams the central steel;
    The masts’ torn fragments drifting on the deep:
Yes! one must perish! Charlotte! be it mine
    To give my life, and purchase peace to thine!
SONNET V.

HOWLS the sad wind, amid the torrents drear,
    That pour impetuous from the mountain’s brow,
And thro’ incumbent clouds the moon’s wan sphere
    Illumes, with scatter’d light, th’ abyss below.

O how the terrors of this fearful night
    Bear kindred horrors to my fiery soul!
Should aught but desolation meet my sight?
    No! As I mark the flaming tempests roll,

Methinks, to toss the foaming surge on high,
    And join the tumult of the warring skies,
Commingled with the wind, my soul could fly,
    And soar sublime, beyond her agonies!
And cannot I? —It is not yet my time:
All, all my wishes now are in another clime.
WHY will she look, as if her soul were mine?

Mine? Power Eternal! how my plastic brain
Gives form to shadows, while I seek in vain
For love, where only tears of pity shine.

Alas! she knows not, that her soften’d eyes
Shed deadly poison thro’ my blighted breast.
Oft, while I gaze, and think myself at rest,
As in the morn, that saw my hopes arise;

Ah! then conviction, like the lightning’s flash,
Gleams on the gulf, where all my hopes shall cease;
Dark terror scatters every beam of peace;
And then I fly, to hear the thunder’s crash
On some wild rock: —‘Tis music to my ears,
And lends my swelling heart the luxury of tears.
SONNET VII.¹

PIERC’D by the rugged thorn, I burst my way

Thro’ tangled thickets, which oppose in vain;
Would that my streaming blood might now allay
My soul’s deep agony and fever’d brain!

Oft, when the shudd’ring damps my frame benumb,

Shines on my blasted head th’ unclouded moon;
Till, faint with anguish, and with thirst o’ercome,
Amid the silence of the night’s pale noon,

I sink exhausted till the dawn of morn!

O God! the darkest dungeon which entombs
The living victim, or the racking steel
By the last tears of groaning nature wore,
Were ease to what my ebbing life consumes,
Were bliss and luxury to what I feel!

¹ In Elegiac Sonnets, Charlotte Smith draws from this same scene in Goethe’s novel. cf. “Sonnet XXII (“To Solitude”) in Appendix D.
SONNET VIII.

YES! it is well: Avenging Heav’n! ‘tis well.
   This night—this awful night has strung my soul.
A few short hours, and I shall reach the goal,
   And still the storm, I cannot now repel.

O! should stern Virtue’s happier sons deny
   To mix their ashes, in a grave with mine;¹
In some lone valley let my relics lie,
   Unfollow’d, Charlotte! with a tear—but thine.

And, if a wanderer should chance to stray,
   Where deep forgetfulness around me reigns,
And, sadly seated by my bed of clay,
   Call down a blessing on my spurn’d remains,
I ask no more.—Let none profane the tomb;
Mysterious silence rest for ever on my doom.

¹ To mix their ashes, in a grave with mine: If Werter commits suicide, he will not be permitted a proper Christian burial in consecrated ground.
SONNET IX.

I FEEL, I feel, that all is over now.
    My eyes shall never more behold the sun.
Thick fogs involve, and Nature veils her brow,
    At the last conflict of a wretch undone.

Like some torn wreck, along the waters driv’n,
    And, unresisting, tost from shore to shore ;
When midnight darkness shrouds the light of Heav’n,
    And angry winds, and raging billows roar,

I rush insensate to the brink of death :
    I plunge uncall’d, amid unfathom’d seas.
Thine anguish, Charlotte!—with my latest breath,
    I call on Heav’n, to lull thy soul to peace.
And, now be calm,—we meet—we meet again :
And to secure thy peace, I shall not die in vain.
SONNET X.

‘Tis midnight now,—all silent as the tomb,
  Thou sleep’st, my Charlotte! while thy lover dies.
  O that one tear would bathe my burning eyes,
And soothe my sullen soul’s tremendous gloom!

Once more, fair star! I hail thy favourite beam;
  Thou shin’st unsullied, on a world of woe,
  When gleam the hills, in thy revolving glow,
My soul, reviving, from a troubled dream,

Shall soar, unfetter’d, tho’ the waste of day.
  O thou! for whom I liv’d, for whom I die,
  Farewell!—farewell!—the awful hour is nigh,
That sees this active heart a clod of clay.

The knell is rung.—Ah, Charlotte! be at peace
  And lose my error, in my blest release.
NOTES ON THE SONNETS FROM WERTER.

SONNET I.
As soon as I opened my window this morning, I said, “To-day I shall see her,” and calmly looked at the sun.

WERTER, Vol. I. LET. 22. ¹

SONNET II.
Nature displays all her beauties before me, exhibits the most enchanting scenes, and my heart is unmoved.

WERTER, Vol. II. LET. 66.

SONNET III.
That ardent sentiment which animated my heart with the love of nature, which poured in upon me a torrent of delight, which brought all paradise before me, is now become an insupportable torment.


SONNET IV.
I watched Charlotte’s eyes; they wandered from one to the other, but did not light on me; upon me, who stood there motionless, and who saw nothing but her.

You know the story of a mountain of loadstone. When any vessels came near it, the nails flew to the mountain, and the unhappy crew perished amidst the disjointed planks.

WERTER, Vol. I. [LET. 17, 25.] ²

SONNET V.
It was a gloomy and awful sight, the moon was behind a cloud, but by means of a few scattered rays, I could perceive the foaming waves rolling over the fields and meadows.

I drew near to the precipice; I wished and shuddered; I stretched out my arms. I leaned over, I sighed, and lost myself in the happy thought of burying all my sufferings, all my torments, in that abyss, and tossing amidst the waves.

WERTER, Vol. II. LET. 75.

¹ I have replaced Bannerman’s original abbreviation of ‘l’ with ‘LET,’ the abbreviation used in the 1807 edition.

² In the 1800 edition, Bannerman only provides the Volume number for Sonnet IV. However, she provided the specific letter numbers in the 1807 edition, so I have included them here.
SONNET VI.
I found her alone and was silent; she looked steadfastly at me: The fire of genius, the charms of beauty were fled: but I saw in her countenance an expression much more touching—the expressions of soft pity, and the tenderest concern. 

WERTER, Vol. II. LET. 70.

SONNET VII.
I break my way through copses, amongst thorns and briers, which tear me to pieces, and I feel a little relief. Sometimes I lie stretched on the ground, overcome with fatigue, and dying with thirst; sometimes, late in the night, when the moon shines upon my head, I lean against a bending tree in some sequestered forest, and quite worn out and exhausted, I sleep till break of day.

The dismal cell, the sackcloth, girdle, with sharp points of iron, would be indulgence and luxury in comparison of what I now suffer.


SONNET VIII.
“I have passed a dreadful night—or rather let me call it a propitious one, for it has determined me; it has fixed my purpose: I am resolved to die.”

WERTER, Vol. II. p. 137

SONNET IX.
“For the last last time I now open my eyes. Alas! they will behold the sun no more; a thick and gloomy fog hides it.”

WERTER, Vol. II. p. 157

SONNET X.
“Be at peace; let me entreat you, be at peace! They are loaded—the clock strikes twelve—I go Charlotte!—Charlotte! Farewell! Farewell!”

WERTER, Vol. II. p.182.

FINIS.
ANALYSIS.¹

FAYETTE released from his dungeon at Olinutz, perceives his health rapidly declining, and feels symptoms of approaching decay—To vindicate his fame, he addresses General Washington—Reminds him of their ancient friendship—Asserts his own upright views in the French Revolution—Description of the horrors and crimes which attended it—Contrasted with the virtue and happiness of America—Folly of thinking so corrupted a people as the French were capable of liberty—Character of Necker—His Presumption—His fate—Character of the Illuminati—Their fate—Final Destiny of France—Address to Great Britain—To America—American War—Conduct of British Generals—Eulogism on General Washington—His parting with his Army—Anticipation of his fate—Fayette’s misery—His Expiring Prayer—The Conclusion.

¹ This analysis appears on the final page of the 1800 edition of Bannerman’s Poems. It is a summary of the poem "Epistle from the Marquis de Lafayette to General Washington," which was published anonymously by Mundell and Sons in Edinburgh, and Longman and Rees in London. As a result, this poem has been linked and tentatively attributed to Bannerman by Adriana Craciun in the Oxford Dictionary of National Biography and Andrew Elfenbein (Romantic Genius: The Prehistory of a Homosexual Role). I am of the opinion, however, that this was simply an advertisement for another poem from the publisher and that Bannerman had nothing to do with its composition.

The poem has also been attributed to George Hamilton, which is likely a reference to the Reverend George Hamilton (d.1832), who was the minister of Gladsmuir in East Lothian, Scotland. Hamilton contributed an article about the history of Gladsmuir in The Statistical Account of Scotland in 1793 (p. 316-22), but I have been unable to confirm if he also wrote poetry.
TALES
OF
SUPERSTITION
AND
CHIVALRY.

———E ciò che’n te si vede,
E ciò che non si vede, o parli, o pensi,
O vada, o miri, o pianga, o ridi, o canti,
Tutto è mengogna!—

GUARINI.¹

LONDON:
PRINTED FOR VERNOR AND HOOD, POULTRY,
BY JAMES SWAN,
Angel Street, Newgate Street

1802.

¹ Giovanni Battista Guarini (1538-1612). Italian poet and playwright, author of Il Pastor Fido (1590). The play was translated to English as The Faithful Shepherd by the poet Richard Fanshawe (1608-1666) in 1647. The quote appears in Act I, Scene V of Guarini’s play. Fanshawe’s translation is as follows: “So talk or look, or think, or laugh or cry / Seem or seem not, walk, stand, or sit, ye lye” (44).
PROLOGUE.

Turn from the path; if search of gay delight
Lead thy vain footsteps back to ages past!
Frail are the blighted flowers, and thinly cast
O’er the dim regions of monastic night.

Yet in their cavern’d, dark recesses, dwells
The long-lost Spirit of forgotten times,
Whose voice prophetic reach’d to distant climes,
And rul’d the nations from its witched cells;

That voice is hush’d! But still in Fancy’s ear
Its first unmeasur’d melodies resound!
Blending with terrors wild, and legends drear,
The charmed minstrelsy of mystic sound,
That rous’d, embodied, to the eye of Fear,
The unearthly habitants of faery ground.
ERRATA

Page 121, line 93,  
for named read nam’d.

134, 112,  
for dark read dank.

142, 1,  
read Ah! why do you grieve and look so wild,

145, 68,  
for deadly read deathly,

193, 171,  
for distant read desert,
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THE DARK LADIE.
THE knights return’d from Holy Land,
Sir Guyon\(^2\) led the armed train\(^3\);  
And to his castle, on the sea,  
He welcom’d them again.

He welcom’d them with soldier glee,  
And sought to charm away their toil;  
But none, on Guyon’s clouded face,  
Had ever seen a smile!

\(^1\) First published in the March 1800 issue of *The Edinburgh Magazine*. Bannerman’s ballad is a direct response to the poem “Introduction to the Tale of the Dark Ladie” by Samuel Taylor Coleridge (1772-1834), which appeared a month earlier in the February issue of the same magazine. See Appendix D.

\(^2\) *Sir Guyon*: Embodying the virtue of Temperance, Sir Guyon was the hero of Book II of *The Faerie Queene* (1590) by Edmund Spenser (c.1552-1599). Bannerman’s choice of Sir Guyon for the poem is especially ironic since the Dark Ladie reveals the knight to be irresponsible and indulgent rather than virtuous or restrained.

\(^3\) *Train*: A group of soldiers traveling together.
And, as the hour of eve drew on,
That clouded face more dark became,
No burst of mirth could overpow’r
The shiverings of his frame;

And often to the banner’d door,
His straining eyes, unbidden, turn’d;
Above, around, they glanced wild,
But ever there return’d.

At every pause, all breathless then,
And pale as death, he bent his ear,
Tho’ not a sound the silence broke,
He seemed still to hear!

And when the feast was spread, and all
The guests, assembled, were at meat,
There pass’d them by, with measur’d step,
And took the upper seat,
A Ladie, clad in ghastly white,
And veiled to the feet:⁴

---

⁴ The poem’s versification becomes irregular with the first appearance of the Dark Ladie. The pattern is repeated when she speaks aloud in lines 51-56, and signifies her disruptive effect upon the atmosphere of the court.
She spoke not when she enter’d there;  
She spoke not when the feast was done;  
And every knight, in chill amaze,  
Survey’d her one by one: 5

For thro’ the foldings of her veil,  
Her long black veil that swept the ground,  
A light was seen to dart from eyes  
That mortal never own’d.

And then the knights on Guyon turn’d  
Their fixed gaze, and shudder’d now;  
For smother’d fury seem’d to bring  
The dew-drops on his brow.

But, from the Ladie in the veil,  
Their eyes they could not long withdraw,  
And when they tried to speak, that glare  
Still kept them mute with awe!

---

5 Bannerman’s description of the Dark Ladie’s unnerving silence and hypnotic eye is comparable to Matthew Lewis’ depiction of the Bleeding Nun in *The Monk* (1796). Although the specter is veiled when she first appears to Raymond, she eventually removes it to reveal the face of “an animated corse…her eye-balls, fixed steadfastly upon me, were lusterless and hollow…My nerves were bound up in impotence, and I remained in the same attitude inanimate as a statue…There was something petrifying in her regard” (140). When she finally speaks to him, she possesses “a low, sepulchral voice” (140). Finally, the manifestations of the Bleeding Nun and the Dark Ladie are both governed by the chiming of clocks. Each night at one o’clock, the ghost returns to Raymond’s room, stands beside his bed, and stares at him in silence until the clock strikes two and she disappears.

Additionally, the Dark Ladie’s hypnotic eye is also reminiscent of Coleridge’s Ancient Mariner (1798), who transfixes the Wedding Guest “with his glittering eye” (17).
Each wish’d to rouse his failing heart,
Yet look’d and trembled all, the while;
All, till the midnight clock had toll’d
Its summons from the southern aisle.

And when the last dull stroke had rung,
And left behind its deep’ning knell,
The Ladie rose, and fill’d with wine,
Fill’d to the brim, the sparkling shell.

And to the alarmed guests she turn’d,
No breath was heard, no voice, no sound,
And in a tone, so deadly deep,
She pleg’d them all around,
That in their hearts, and thro’ their limbs,
No pulses could be found.

And, when their senses back return’d,
They gaz’d upon the steps of stone
On which the Dark Ladie had stood,
They gaz’d…but she was gone!...

Then Guyon rose,…and ah! to rest,
When every weary knight was led,
After what they had seen and heard,
What wonder, slumber fled!
The Dark Lady

Published by Vernor & Hood June 1, 1802.
For, often as they turn’d to rest,
And sleep prest down each heavy eye,
Before them, in black veil wrapt,
They saw the Dark Ladie.

And then the voice, the tone, that stopt
Thro’ all their limbs, the rushing blood ;
The cup which she had fill’d with wine,
The steps on which she stood.

The sound, the tone,…no human voice
Could ever reach that echo, deep ;
And, ever as they turn’d to rest,
It roused them from sleep!...

The morning dawns…the knights are met,
And seated in the arched hall,
And some were loud, and some spoke low,
But Huart none at all!

“Dost not remember, well, cries one,
When wide the sacred banners flew,
And when, beneath the blessed Cross,
The infidels we slew.
“This same Sir Guyon, erst so brave,
In fight, who ever led the van,
Soon as the Sepulchre he saw,
Grew pale and trembled then?

“And as the kneeling knights ador’d,
And wept around that holy place,
O God! I’ve seen the big drops burst
For hours upon his face!

“And when I nam’d⁶ the blessed name,
His face became as livid clay,
And, on his foamy lips, the sounds,
Unutter’d, died away!”

“But O! that Ladie! Huart cries,…
That Ladie, with the long black veil,
This morn I heard!...I hear it still,
The lamentable tale!

“I hear the hoary-headed man,
I kept him till the morning dawn,
For five unbroken hours he talk’d,
With me they were as one!

⁶ Changed from “named” as directed by ERRATA.
“He told me he had lived long
Within this castle, on the sea;
But peace, O Heaven! he never had,
Since he saw the Dark Ladie!

‘Twas chill,” he said, “a hazy night,
Just as the light began to fail,
Sir Guyon came and brought with him
The Ladie in the veil:

“Yes! to this castle on the sea,
The wild surge dashing on its base,
He brought her in that frightful veil
That ever hides her face.

“And many a time, he said, he tried
That ne’er-uncover’d face to see:
At eve and morn, at noon and night;
But still it could not be!

“Till once! but O! that glaring eye,
It dried the life-blood, working here!
And when he turn’d to look again,
The Ladie was not near!
“But, sometimes, thro’ her curtain’d tower,
A strange uncolour’d light was seen,
And something, of unearthly hue,
Still passed on between:

“And then aloof its clasped hands
Were wrung, and tossed to and fro!
And sounds came forth, dull, deep, and wild,
And O! how deadly slow!

“He quak’d to tell!...But, never more,
In quiet sleep, he rested long;
For still, on his alarmed ear,
    That rousing echo rung!

“It glar’d for ever on his sight,
That fixed eye, so wildly keen!
Till life became a heavy load;
And long had heavy been.

“He told me that, at last, he heard
Some story, how this poor Ladie
Had left, alas! her husband’s home
With this dread knight to flee:
“And how her sinking heart recoil’d,
And how her throbbing bosom beat,
And how sensation almost left
Her cold convulsed feet:

“And how she clasp’d her little son,
Before she tore herself away;
And how she turn’d again to bless
The cradle where he lay.

“But where Sir Guyon took her then,
Ah! none could ever hear or know,
Or, why, beneath that long black veil,
Her wild eyes sparkle so.

“Or whence those deep unearthly tones,
That human bosom never own’d;
Or why, it cannot be remov’d,
That folded veil that sweeps the ground?”
THE

PROPHETESS OF THE ORACLE

OF SEAM.
ROUND Seäm’s isle the black waves boil
On the rough, rough rocks below,
And none can tell the date or time
Since they were tossed so!

 Yet there comes a night, at the equinox height,
 When the waters sleep below,
 And a sound is heard, that stoppeth not,
 Like the shrieks of a soul in woe!

* [“Those nuns of yore / Gave answers from their caves and took what shapes they please.”

DRAYTON’S Poly. Olbion. Song I.]

From the Poly-Olbion (1612) by Michael Drayton (1563-1631), Elizabethan-era poet. The Poly-Olbion is a
topographical poem comprised of thirty songs that describe the landscapes, customs, and histories of England
and Wales. Bannerman quotes from lines 60-61 in the first Song.

[In the Seam, (an isle by the coast of the French Bretagne,) nine virgins were priests of the famous oracle. Their
profession, or religion, was in an arbitrary metamorphosing themselves, charming the winds, (as of later times
the witches of Lapland and Finland,) skill in predictions, &c. SEDEN’S Notes].

Bannerman has reproduced part of an annotation by seventeenth-century scholar John Selden (1584-1654),
which accompanied the first volume of Drayton’s poem.
‘Twas on that night, when the winds were dumb,
And the tossing waters still,
That a ship was ‘nighted,¹ on her way,
By the rocks of Seäm’s isle.

They had mounted fast the high topmast,
To watch for the beacon’s light;
On the right, on the left, they can trace it not
Thro’ the darkness of the night!

When the first hour came to change the watch
On the deck and middle shroud,
The sound drew near that stoppeth not,
And they heard it sob aloud.

Was never a soul within that ship
Could know why they were troubled so;
But their courage failed them, at once,
When they heard that shriek of woe.

Was never a soul within that ship
Could tell where they were driven at all,
But a Monk of the choir of Einsidlin,²
The holy Father Paul!

¹ ‘nighted: i.e. benighted, or led astray due to the onset of night.
² Einsidlin: Einsiedeln Abbey, a monastery located in the Canton of Schwyz, Switzerland. The monastery was founded by the hermit Saint Meinrad (c.797-861). St. Meinrad claimed to have a statue of the Virgin Mary reputed to have miraculous powers.
Full well he knew the death that hung
O’er every soul that breathed there,
And he beckon’d them to kneel around,
While he rais’d his hands in prayer!

When prayer was past, he sat him down,
And listen’d to the shriek of woe:
“And he told them of the Prophetess
And the Oracle\(^3\) below!

“He told the tale of Seäm’s isle,
He told the terrors of its caves,
That none had passed them with life
When that sleep was on the waves!

“He told them, when the winds that roar’d
Around the isle had ceas’d to breathe,
Was the fated night of sacrifice
In the gloomy vaults beneath.

---
\(^3\) Oracle: An individual (usually a priest but in this case, a priestess) through whom the gods were believed to speak or prophesize. Can also refer to the location where such advice or prophecy was sought [OED].
“He told them, he remember’d once
A father of St. Thomas’ tower, 4
Who never had bow’d before the cross
Till he touch’d his dying hour.

“That then he named to the priest
What he had seen in Seäm’s caves,
For he had reach’d them in a ship
When the calm was on the waves!

“Thro’ the sleepless nights of thirty months,
He had listen’d to that shriek of woe;
But he never had seen the Prophetess
Of the Oracle below!

“Till that chilly night, at the equinox height,
When the thirty months were gone,
As he listen’d, in the outer cave,
To that unbroken groan,

“A hand, he saw not, dragg’d him on,
The voice within had call’d his name!
And he told all he witnessed
At the Oracle of flame!

___

4 St. Thomas’ tower: One of the twenty-one buildings comprising the original Tower of London. This portion of the tower was built by King Edward I between 1275-79, and has served as a defensive stronghold as well as a holding cell throughout its long history.
“But when he came to tell, at last,
What fearful sacrifice had bled,
His agony began anew,
And he could not raise his head!

“And he never spoke again at all,
For he died that night in sore dismay:
So sore, that all were tranç’d\(^5\) for hours
That saw his agony!

“And he told not how he left the cave
When that dreadful sacrifice was o’er;
But some have thought he was preserv’d
By the crucifix he wore!

“And some have thought he had bent his knee
At Scäm’s dark, unhallow’d shrine;
And that might be his agony
When they rais’d the blessed sign!”

Sorely wrung was every heart,
Within that ship, that heard the tale!
They listen’d still, in dumb despair,
By the unmoving sail!

\(^5\) tranç’d: entranced
They press’d around that aged priest,
And he rais’d the crucifix on high!
And they look’d for nothing now to come,
But that they all must die!...

His hoary hair is wet with dew,
He sits alone in Seäm’s caves!
For the ship, and all that breathed there,
Are buried in the waves!

He bow’d him down, that holy priest,
Before the symbol cross of God!
For he held it still amid the deeps,
And in that dark abode!

That stilly calm had left the seas,
And the surging waters toss and boil!
And he heard them dash, above his head,
On the rocks of Seäm’s isle:

He heard the loud winds blow along,
And the billows wash his living grave;
For he was shut from all the earth
Within that gloomy cave!
But, when he thought upon the hour,
He kneeled on the deck at prayer,
When he heard the cries within that ship
Of all that perish’d there.

His aged heart was not so cold
But he could feel it throb and swell,
Though he had found a sepulcher
In that dank\(^6\) and chilly cell!

For every soul, among the dead,
That died in sin, he smote his breast,
And he utter’d on the crucifix
The burial-prayer of rest!

‘Twas now the eve of the second night
That shriek had never ceas’d to be,
That he could not settle him to sleep
For the roaring of the sea!

When he heard, as it were, a sound so near,
So close it seemed by his side;
He rais’d himself upon his arm;…
‘Twas the dashing of the tide!

\(^6\) Changed from “dark” as directed by ERRATA
He was turn’d again to broken rest, 125
And sunk upon that rugged rock,
When a voice came near, that roused him,…
‘Twas the Oracle that spoke!

The hand, he saw not, dragg’d him on,
When the voice was still’d that nam’d his name! 130
And he found himself in the inner cave
By the Oracle of flame.

Never a sound was utter’d there,
Nor the roar of wind or wave!
Nought could be more deathly still, 135
But the silence of the grave!

Than that, O Heaven! he had rather heard
The surging waters toss and boil;
Or e’en the voice that stopped not,
When they struck on Seäm’s isle; 140

O how he bless’d the blood that ran
His dull and frozen heart around,
When he heard the pulse that throbbed wild!
It was a living sound!...
Where he stood was all rugged rock,
But the shrine was girt with an iron frame,
And a curtain hid the Prophetess
As she watched by the flame!

One hand she stretch’d without that veil,
And pointed to the inner space ;
And she beckon’d him to lay the cross
On that unhallow’d place :

He felt it heave upon his heart,
And he press’d it in the blessed name!
For that moving finger was like death,
And that unquenched flame!

Ah no! his vital blood should flow
Where many a sacrifice had bled!
He knew that he could only die,
And he was satisfied.

He knew not yet the sight to come,
Before his heart could rest on this,
When he thought his eyes, unmov’d, could look
Upon the Prophetess!
Like a dream it flitted o’er his brain,
That miserable hour!
When the father died, in agony,
In the cell of St. Thomas’ tower ;

For he had said the veil was drawn
That hid the sacrifice within ;
That his eyes had seen the Prophetess
At that uncover’d shrine ;

But whether his knee had bended there
Was buried with him in the grave ....
He felt that doubt more terrible
Than the terrors of the cave....

That Monk was never seen again,
Till forty years were pass’d, or more ;
’Twas in the aisle of Einsidlin,
As even-prayer was o’er ;

The priest had clos’d the service-rite,
For the eve of Holy Ghost ;
He was seated in the upper choir,
‘Twas the feast of Pentecost : 

---

feast of Pentecost: A Christian celebration that takes place fifty days after Easter Sunday. The feast commemorates the descent of the Holy Spirit upon the Apostles of Christ (see Acts 2:1–31).
When he saw a Monk, by the altar-rail,  
Kneel down upon the step to pray;  
The dying lights were glimmering,  
And all had gone away:  

The priest descended from the choir,  
By the lamp that burn’d on the wall,  
And he look’d on that uncover’d face,  
‘Twas the holy Father Paul!  

He stood like one in trance, to gaze  
Upon that mild and sacred head;  
Forty years had pass’d away  
Since he was with the dead.  

Forty years had pass’d away  
Since the ship had struck on Seâm’s steep;  
And every soul that breath’d there  
Had perish’d in the deep!  

In all that time, if he liv’d still,  
That none should see the Father Paul,  
It awed the priest of Einsidlin,  
And he could not speak at all!
That aged Monk had left the aisle,
And the dying tapers sink and fail;
All, but the lights on the high altar,
And they are dim and pale:

The priest was still by the altar-rail
On the morn of Holy Ghost;
When the bell was done for matin\textsuperscript{8} prayers,
At the feast of Pentecost.

\textsuperscript{8} matin prayers: Morning prayers.
THE PERJURED NUN.
THE PERJURED NUN.

“AH! why do you grieve and look so wild,”¹
Lord Henrie, tell it to me!
And why do you say you must watch till day,
Where, alas! I may not be?

“O take me then to the aisle of the tower,
And my fears you shall not see;
My heart shall be still in the midnight aisle,
If I may but watch with thee;

“I hate the gloom of the eastern tower,
And its dismal hall I shun;
I have heard it said ‘tis the haunt of the dead,
The haunt of the Perjur’d Nun!”²

“The Nun! the Nun! and his cheek grew pale,
But I know you are jesting now;
The dead are at rest and their wand’rings past,
And he press’d his livid brow!

¹ The word “you” has been added between “do” and “grieve,” as directed by the ERRATA.
² Perjur’d Nun: A nun that has broken her vows.
“The Nun! the Nun!…what a dream is this!
And he shudder’d at the name;
‘Tis an idle tale of a spectre pale,
And his colour went and came!

“But hear me now!…till the morning light,
Thro’ the dreary, midnight hour;
I must watch alone, at the altar’s stone,
In the aisle of the eastern tower;

“And urge me not, my own Geraldine!
For it may not, cannot be!
I am doom’d to this, and I may not miss,
But none must watch with me…

“Thro’ this fated night let the tapers burn
And the lamp on the armed wall;
For the light is dim thro’ the window’s brim
On the roof of the eastern hall:

---

3 Geraldine: Geraldine is also the name of the supernatural antagonist in Coleridge’s poem Christabel. In Coleridge’s poem, the specific details of Geraldine’s past are shrouded in mystery, yet she claims to have been abducted and then abandoned by a group of knights—a fate similar to that of Bannerman’s Dark Ladie and the nun introduced in the present poem. Coleridge began writing Christabel as early as 1795, but it was not published until 1816, therefore any similarities between his poem and Bannerman’s are either coincidental, or more compellingly, circumstantial evidence that the two poets may have corresponded with one another after the publication of Bannerman’s “Dark Ladie” in 1800. See the introduction for a more detailed discussion of Bannerman’s connections with Coleridge.
“When the clock strikes two, if the tapers burn
And the lamp on the marble stair;
You will know by them if I living am,
But you may not venture there!

“And mark, mark well, when the castle bell
And the clock ring three and one;
If the lamps expire and the lights retire,
You may know that my life is gone!

“My own Geraldine! how your heart beats now,
By the blessed God you must swear!
Tho’ the lamps burn dim and you know by them
That my hour of fate is near;

“Tho’ the flame goes round with a hissing sound
From the lamp on the marble stair;
You must swear to God, on the holy rood,
That you will not seek me there!

“And hear once more!…at the pausing knell,
When the clock rings deep at four;
Let your soul be at peace and your watching cease,
You may look for me no more!”
The clock strikes one to the charmed moon,
And poor Geraldine is alone!

And the pulses beat, in her heart, in her feet,
As the second hour draws on.

It rings! it rings! from the sounding tower,
And her heart-pulse stops with fear,
As she turns to gaze where the tapers blaze,
But they still are burning clear…

‘Tis hush’d again! and the swell is past,
The clock’s dull knell at two!
But the hour is to come that seals her doom,
And the lamps are burning blue!

Hark! hark! the clock,…’tis the fated hour,
On her listening ear it toll’d,
The pulse leaps now thro’ her burning brow,
And her limbs are deathly cold;

Her fingers cling to the closing door,
But the key she scarce can turn!
‘Tis the last of the clock ere the bars unlock,
And the lights have ceas’d to burn!

---

4 According to Western folklore, a blue flame indicates the presence of a spirit or supernatural force.

5 The word “deadly” has been replaced with “deathly” as directed by the ERRATA.
She paus’d, she paus’d on the marble stair,
And she gazed wild around;
She turns to hear, is it hope? is it fear?
Or a low and measur’d sound!

It comes! it comes! with a measur’d step,
From the aisle of the eastern tower;
She would fly to meet, but her stiff’ning feet
Have lost their living power.

It is nearer now! but the sound, the sound,
Ah! why does it move so slow?
She would rush to the stair to meet him there,
If her heart did not tremble so!…

The blood rush’d back to her clay-cold feet,
And her heart took courage then;
She burst thro’ the door to the eastern floor,
To welcome her love again!

But O! her shriek!…Like the dead from the grave
Was the form she had clasp’d around!
And the phantom turn’d where the lamps had burn’d
And stood on the marble ground.
“You sought not me! cries the hollow voice,
You came not to welcome me!
Let your watching cease, and depart in peace,
For him you shall never see….

“For him! for him, I resign’d my vows,
And the guilt is on my head.
I could conjure here! but my hour draws near,
And I may not rouse the dead!

“For him! for him! I forsook my God,
And his soul unblest shall be!
And the sacred blood for man that flow’d,
O Heaven! will it plead for me!

“I hear a call you can never hear,
And I may not now unfold!
Let your soul be at peace, and your watching cease,
For his faithless heart is cold!

“The aisle! the aisle of the eastern tower
Your feet must ever shun!
For dark and dread is the haunt of the dead,
The haunt of the Perjur’d Nun!”
THE

PENITENT’S CONFESSION.
THE PENITENT’S CONFESSION.

FROM St. Peter’s tower the bell had toll’d,
For the Carmelite Monks to pray,
And the holy priest by the altar kneel’d
On the eve of St. Peter’s day!  

The sacred lights on the altar burn’d,
Where the blessed symbol lay;
The mass for the dead and the rites were said
For a soul that had pass’d away. …

When the priest came down the altar steps,
He has pass’d through the abbey aisle;
He has mounted, alone, the stair of stone,
To the high Confessional!

---

1 Carmelite Monks: An order founded in the 12th century on Mount Carmel, a mountain range located in Northern Israel near the Mediterranean Sea. The Carmelites are known for their emphasis on contemplation, and are believed to be protected by the Virgin Mary.

2 Eve of St. Peter’s Day: The Feast of Saints Peter and Paul is a solemn celebration in honor of the martyrdom of both saints, which is observed on the 29th of June.
The Penitent's Confession

Published by Vernor & Hood June 1st, 1802.
In that holy place, for five years' space,
Had never soul confess'd,
Till that hallow'd eve of St. Peter's Cross,
And the sign was on his breast. …

But the deep, deep groans of that kneeling wretch,
That low at his footstool lay,
His groanings deep, ah! nought could still,
And the priest arose to pray.

And thrice he cross'd his forehead, bare,
And thrice he cross'd his breast,
And the Penitent's groans, so deep and dread,
Were soften'd into rest!…

“At the dead of night the deed was done,
And I saw her laid upon the bier;
But that stiffening hand and straining eye
Are ever, ever near!

“No soul shall know from whence, or where,
I came with Ellinor!…
That cry, I heard at deep midnight,
I hear for evermore!
“Three nights I watched by that livid corse, 3
They are stamp’d upon my brain!
My heart’s best blood I would have given
To have roused life again. 4

“I follow’d the hearse to the convent aisle,
But the prayers I dar’d not hear:
‘Twas nearly dusk when the rites were done;
I knew not what to fear! 40

“I stood without till all was past,
And the funeral train 5 was gone;
The gathering mist it roll’d like smoke,
I journey’d all alone.

“I heard the bell of the convent tower,
It toll’d for the newly dead,
I had reach’d the wood as the sound began,
I dar’d not turn my head.

---

3 *corse*: corpse.

4 A similar incident involving the nervous observation of a corpse occurs in Act IV, Scene III of Joanna Baillie’s play *De Monfort* (1798). De Monfort fears that the shrouded corpse of Rezenvelt – a man he has recently murdered – has moved and groaned on its bier. He tears off the shroud and the sight of the corpse causes De Monfort to collapse with guilt for his crime. Later in the century, the unnamed protagonist of Edgar Allan Poe’s short story “Ligeia” (1838) observes the faint stirrings of his dead wife Rowena. When the corpse does rise, the narrator is thrilled to discover that his first wife has been resurrected instead. Both Bannerman and Poe were likely inspired by Baillie, but it is tempting to wonder if Poe had read Bannerman as well.

5 *funeral train*: procession of mourners.
“Through the trees’ thick tops, all tufted high,
I could hear the night wind swell;
I burst the briars…I pierc’d the brake…
I did not hear the bell!

“By midnight then I clear’d the wood,
And I kept by the river’s edge;
‘Twas all I could, through the mist, descry
The watch-light on the bridge.

“On the middle arch…I did not dream!
‘Twas close by the broken ridge:
On the midmost arch, just then, I saw
A figure on the bridge.

“Its stiff, white arms were stretched wide;
I could not pass it then;
I tried to cross on either side,
But it was all in vain.

“And still I saw the outstretch’d arms
Between, and the misty sky!
No power could urge me on, to pass
That waving figure by.
“The form! the height!…I stood and gaz’d!
The robes were white it wore!
One thought of horror struck my heart,
That it was Ellinor!…

“It could not be! her grave had clos’d,
And it covered was for aye.
I had seen the body on the bier,
And it was stiffen’d clay :

“How long I stood, I know not now,
Or how it gained near ;
But I heard the flapping of the robe,
O holy Father! hear!…

“Three paces brought us side by side,
I had turn’d to the pale watch light,
When it lean’d, O heaven! upon my arm,
Its dull and deadly weight!

“On my face I felt its streaming hair,
All wet with the rain and mist,…
I spoke not, for the blood fled back,
And center’d in my breast!
“I moved on,…but that weight of death
Will never leave my brain!
I thought I never might uncling
That ghastly arm again!

“And on, and on, till day-light shone,
All to the beach of the sandy sea,
The figure dragg’d me by the arm,
And there it quitted me.

“Twice twenty years have come and gone
Since I wander’d on that fated eve;
May’st think thee that a dream of night
My senses did deceive?

“See, holy priest! and he bar’d his arm,
Was never to mortal shown!”
And there, O Heaven! for living flesh,
Was a dry and wither’d bone.

The father rose, and bow’d his head
On the blessed cross he wore!
For he quak’d to think that arm had met
The touch of Ellinor.
He has drawn aside a velvet shroud,
That hung from the marble wall ;
He has kneeled down within the veil,
He spoke not once at all!

Not once of heaven, or pardon given,
By that sacred cross he wore ;
For the deep, deep groans of that kneeling wretch,
He heard for evermore!

Now the night was done and the Penitent gone,
But where, were none to tell ;
For, from that hour, the holy priest
Hath never left his cell.

O there were masses for the dead,
And fast and prayers by light and gloom!
And the cross was borne, at deep midnight,
Along the charnel tomb!
THE

FESTIVAL OF ST. MAGNUS

THE MARTYR.
THE

FESTIVAL OF ST. MAGNUS

THE MARTYR. ¹

The first time Sir Ewaine² ahunting went,
The light spring leaves were on the tree,
And the Ladie Ellenor³ sat in her hall,
That gallant train to see. …

When Sir Ewaine return’d from that hunting, ⁵
The summer fruits were past and gone ;
But Josceline⁴ had seen his lord
At St. Magnus⁵ the Martyr’s stone…. 

¹ This poem was not reprinted in the 1807 edition.
² Sir Ewaine: One of the Knights of the Round Table in Arthurian legend and nephew to King Arthur. Sir Ewaine is the son of King Urien and the sorceress Morgan le Fay (King Arthur’s sister). Sir Ewaine (sometimes spelled Uwain, Ywain, or Yvain) appears throughout Sir Thomas Malory’s La Morte D’Arthur (1485), but he is the hero of Yvain, the Knight of the Lion (c.1170) by Chrétien de Troyes, a French poet of the 12th Century. According to de Troyes’ version of the knight’s story, Yvain neglects his wife in order to perform his knightly duties. When he returns to her after several years away, she refuses to see him and Yvain embarks on another quest to regain his lady’s favor.
³ Ladie Ellenor: Sir Ewaine’s wife in de Troyes’ account is named Laudine.
⁴ Josceline:
⁵ St. Magnus the Martyr: Magnus Erlendsson, Earl of Orkney (c.1075-c.1115). The Orkney Islands, located off the northern coast of Scotland, were invaded by Norway in 875. Eminently pious and opposed to war, Magnus
The next time Sir Ewaine a hunting went,
The autumn leaves had left the tree,
And the Ladie Ellenor sat in her hall,
And she wept bitterlie.

‘Twas past the hour that Josceline
Had left his watch below;
‘Twas past the hour for the chancel vault,
Where her lord was wont to go.

“Keep thee in thy bower, ladie!
That hunting train are gone;
Two by two, they passed through,
Sir Ewaine rode alone!

“Keep thee in thy bower, ladie,
Till the deep, deep night be come,
And I shall be in the Martyr’s aisle,
By good St. Magnus’ tomb.

served as the Earl of Orkney between 1106 and 1115. After failing to resolve a dispute regarding the earldom, Magnus was murdered by his cousin Haakon Paulsson. At first Magnus’ body was interred on the spot of his murder, which was said to have transformed into a green field after his death. Magnus’ mother arranged for her son’s body to be moved to Christchurch at Birsay, where additional miracles and mysteries were said to have occurred. After the Bishop of Orkney dismissed these rumors, he went blind. His eyesight, however, was restored after he prayed at Magnus’ tomb. Magnus was canonized in 1135, and his nephew erected St. Magnus Cathedral in 1137, where his uncle’s remains and relics were interred.

The history of Magnus can be found in the Orkneyinga Saga (c. 1230).

6 Chancel: The eastern portion of the church.
“I have kept the watch till now,
In the arch that opens on the sea,
And have strewn the steps, to the chancel door,
With the dry earth of the lea.\(^7\)

“And, two by two, that hunting train
Shall part at yon hilly heath:
But thy lord shall cross the Martyr’s aisle,
To the chancel underneath….

“No foot can go, or back return,
But the print will stamped be,…
Watch! and guard it as thy life,
Thou speak not once to me!

“Stop not in the Martyr’s aisle,
Tho’ me you may not see: …
Shrink not at that hollow tomb,
Alone thou wilt not be.” …

Dark and darker fell the eve,
Till the deep, deep night was come;
That ladie is in the Martyr’s aisle,
By good St. Magnus’ tomb:…

\(^7\) Lea: A meadow or open field.
She look’d athwart\footnote{\textit{Athwart}: across, and then side to side.} the dim arches,  
All lengthening and drear!  
She look’d around for Josceline,  
But all was silent there.  

Twice she turn’d her shrinking feet,  
Ere she pass’d that hollow tomb;  
Though she knew the shadow was her own,  
That waved in the gloom!  

In the last arch she rested once,  
The heavy air fell damp,…  
It prest upon the hazy flame  
That burned in the lamp.  

She shiver’d as she reach’d the place,  
The stair that arched over head,…  
And she search’d along, and step by step,  
Where the earth was scattered.  

On the first step the clay was moist,  
Where the prints were plain of footsteps three;  
But, on the rest, to the chancel door,  
Was the dry earth of the lea!
She raised, in her death-white hand,
The hard-prest clay below;
And dark-red was the colouring,
Where it was matted so!…

‘Twas neither the damp from the deep, deep moss,
Nor the salt brine from the sea,
That had moisten’d, on the outer step,
The dry earth of the lea! …

Josceline is in the tomb,
The eerie hours are slow:
That ladie is not return’d again
From the chancel vault below:…

On the morn was St. Magnus’ festival, 9
And they rung the matin bells; 10
And there came to the mass the Monks of the choir,
And the Nuns of Drakenfels: 11

The Bishop Hubert bore in his hands
The image of the Saint:

9 St. Magnus’ festival: April 16, the date of St. Magnus’ death.
10 Matin Bells: Bells announcing morning prayers.
11 Nuns of Drakenfels: The Drachenfels, or “Dragon’s Rock,” is one of seven mountains located in the North Rhine-Westphalia area of Germany. A convent was once located on the nearby islet of Nonnenwerder. The region became a popular tourist destination after Lord Byron (1788-1824) referenced the Drachenfels in Canto III, stanza LV of Child Harold’s Pilgrimage (1816).
Hubert was seventy years and nine,
And his sight had waxed faint.

As he knelt upon the cushion-seat,
In that blessed Martyr’s aisle,
And a priest stood by, to read the prayers
For that sacred festival.

It came to pass, as the priest had done
The prayer for the sin of blood,
When a Nun had given the last response
For the holy sisterhood,

That the bishop rose, and wav’d his hand,
To cease,…and it was done,…
Save the long aisles, that gave again
The shrill voice of the Nun! …

Still’d was every earthly sound,
As every breath would fail ;
The blood, that fled from Hubert’s face,
Had left it ghastly pale….  

Still’d was every earthly sound,
As life itself had fled :
That last response, that echoes yet,
Is the shrill voice of the dead! …
Onward came that veiled Nun,
Onward came with heavy tramp!
Twice she shook the misty flame
That flutter’d in her lamp:

She pass’d that bishop side by side,
As he stood upon the floor;
She pass’d the arch of St. Magnus’ tomb,
To the under chancel door;

There she turn’d, and rent the veil
That cover’d her from view,…
That face is the Ladie Ellenor’s,
That face of ashen hue!…

She stoop’d, and raised in her hand
The hard-prest clay below;
And pointed to the red colour,
Where it was matted so!

Then she blew upon the lamp,
And its misty flame expir’d,
While, long beneath that deep chancel,
Her heavy tramp was heard: …
And still at St. Magnus’ Festival,
When “blood for blood” is read,
The last response, that echoes it,
Is the shrill voice of the dead!
BASIL.
B A S I L.

The sobbings of the ocean waves
Were all the notes that Basil\(^1\) knew;
He lov’d them since his ear could dwell
With gladness on their first low swell,
When the soft south-wind blew:

Like a wild flow’r of the wilderness,
He grew, amid the mountain air;
The rock had been his cradle-bed,
And never were his slumbers made
The holier for a mother’s pray’r!

The skies, the woods, the winding shore,
Were imag’d\(^2\) on his desert\(^3\) breast;
His deep, dark eye was stern and keen,
It was the fire of soul unseen,
Unknown, untutor’d, unrepress’d. …

---

\(^1\) Basil: Also the name of the hero of the first play in *Plays on the Passions* (1798) by the Scottish poet and playwright Joanna Baillie (1762-1851). The play is a tragedy that revolves around the passion of love.

\(^2\) Imag’d: embedded.

\(^3\) Desert: impressionable.
The rude sea-boy was all the name
That every tongue to Basil gave;
The rude sea wind had marr’d his face,
But his heart! ’twas Pity’s resting place.
And he sung dirges for the dead,
In music like the mournful wave:

Young Basil wrought the fisher’s nets,
And plied the heavy oar;
A lonely home he had! but oh!
That aught, that bore the human form,
Should bear the night, and nightly storm,
In that hut, on the wild sea-shore!

Yet there were hearts that beat and heav’d,
With flutt’ring love and tender joy,
To hear th’ unprison’d tempest rise,
When all were safe from wind and skies,
And winter’s keen inclemency!  

But there was none whose eye pursu’d
This youth’s unfollow’d footsteps home;
And he had steel’d his heart to bear,
Till the pulse, that should have quiver’d there,
Was feelingless and numb!…

---

4 Inclemency: severe weather.
The tones, that sooth’d this lonely heart
Came not from human kind!
He watch’d the breeze that sigh’d along,
To him it was the even-song
Of some hallow’d seraph-mind ;

And then the sun would leave behind
Such lovely tints on cloud and tree ;
O, how unlike this jarring world
That silentness of place and hour!
As if a breath would overpow’r
The murmur of the sea :

And from the stars of Heaven he drew
His picture of a place of rest!
Their sacred light was so serene,
It settled on his soul like love,
When he number’d every orb above
As the brothers of his breast…..

But one drear night the stars withdrew
As Basil reach’d his shed ;
The drifting torrent rattled rude
On the creaking rafts of shatter’d wood,
That stretch’d above his head.
Basil had heard the mountain storm
And the winter tempest beat;
Night after night he had slept, when shut,
Alone, within that rocking hut,
With the snow-wreaths at his feet;

But the awe, the dread that o’er him came,
This fateful night he quak’d to feel!
It was not fear of tide or wind,…
‘Twas the low breathlessness of mind,
When the heart-veins congeal.

Whether it was the billow’s sob,
Or the wild sea-eagle’s cry,
He heard a moan that seem’d to come
From some lost wretch, that made his home
Of the desert and the sky!

It nearer came, till it sank at once
Close to his unfasten’d door,…
The stifled groan was a voice in death,
And he could count the ebbing breath,
Till his own would note no more!

Then he heard footsteps rattling run
Across the frozen hill;
Their least, last sound, his stunned ear
Would measure, as if coming near,
They rung around him still!

But the weight that fell without, the corse,
As he heard it die,
Thro’ the spaces of his window-bars,
By the dawn-light he just could trace,
Where it lay along upon its face,
As life did never lie!…

Poor Basil wrench’d the feeble bar
To leave that dreary shed,
‘Twas all too narrow for his flight,
And it robb’d his starting eyes of sight,
That he must cross the dead…

With frantic arm he burst the door,
That shiver’d to his blow;
One step, …but oh! that one to take,
He wish’d that life had been the stake,
That he might have giv’n it now:

[“As life did never lie!”
I looked but once, yet life did never lodge
In any form so laid.

De Montfort Act IV].

From the tragedy De Monfort by Joanna Baillie. De Monfort explores the passion of hatred and appears with Basil and The Tryal in the first volume of Baillie’s Plays on the Passions (1798).
And on that long, dread night, he thought,
Till it settled on his brain;
And his heart grew bold,…for, at break of morn,
He had reach’d a rock, where a cave was worn
By the surges of the main….  

The hours went on till fall of eve,
And the stars arose again!
Basil must make the rock his bed,
For his mountain-home is tenanted
By the spirit of the slain…. 

He wanders on the desert beach,
Like some lone ghost of air,
Scarce human like,…but then, his eye
Retains the keen and fiery dye
That wont⁶ to kindle there!

His dreams! the hopes that o’er his soul
Had wander’d of a brighter scene!
They sometimes come to soothe him still,
Such as he imag’d them at even,
When his joy was in the light of Heaven,
Where all was so serene.

⁶ Wont: customary, expected.
But wilder fits and drearier dreams
Will oft upon him come;
And, when his brain is most perturb’d,
He drags his worn and naked feet
Across the crag, whose chasms meet,
To gaze on his forsaken home!…

The harsh sea-birds inhabit it
With the spirit of the slain!
And close beside, a heap of stones,
Is laid above these hollow bones,
That the mariner can see afar,
As a beacon, on the main.
THE

FISHERMAN OF LAPLAND.
THE

FISHERMAN OF LAPLAND. ¹

“DOST see by that rock, with its summit of snow,
Which the frost-ribbed billows are mining below ;
‘Twas there that one night, …to the tempest that came,
The ice-winds of Greenland were pow’rless and tame :

“When the high-swollen Dwina² redoubled the roar
Of the horrors that ravag’d on Archangel’s³ shore,
‘Twould have chill’d the best heart to have seen, on the main,
The fishers’ small skiffs as they neared in vain :

“When in cliffs of the rocks, as midnight came on,
The torches were plac’d for a beacon that shone ;
When afar stream’d the red-light,…and nought did it show,
But the foam-cover’d ocean that gulphed below.

¹ Lapland: Region in Northern Russia, Finland, Sweden, and Norway.
² Dwina: Dvina, River in Northern Russia.
³ Archangel: City in Northern Russia.
“Mid the boats which the ice-isles had driven on the coast,
‘Twas there that old Peter’s of Lapland was lost;
For there it was seen, when the tempest came on,
And they saw but that rock…when its fury was done.

“And here hangs the tale!…If thy heart be not cold,
It will sigh as the fate of poor Peter is told;
Since his boat disappear’d, at yon perilous steep,
On the night of that storm on the terrible deep….

“‘Twas at even, in the dusk!…scarce a sea-breeze would blow,
And the moans of the ocean were sullen and low,
That a traveler stopt, as he journey’d that way
From Ildega’s forests to Archangel’s bay.

“All faint was this stranger,…the night is fell fast,
And the plain, from the mountain, stretch’d gloomy and vast:
Not a hut could he spy, for a shelter to crave,
Nor a sound broke the calm, but the sobs of the wave.

“One star, as it shone thro’ the haze of the night,
Threw its line on the waters, so chilly and white;
In the wide path of sky, but that star, there was none;
Like the way-worn traveler it journey’d alone….

---

4 Ildega: Possibly a misprint for Taiega, a range of forests that spans the northern hemisphere, including portions of Finland, Sweden, Norway, and Russia. It has been referred to as the “snow forest” or “boreal forest.”
“It journey’d on high, until midnight or more,
When the full-flowing tide reach’d the rock on the shore,
’Twas then that the heart of that stranger gave way,
And long were the hours till the dawning of day….

“On the top-cliff he stood,…when, gazing around,
A shadow there fell on the snow-cover’d ground ;
Like the motionless form of a man it was there,
But no form could he see between and the air.

“The night-noon was deep,…yet, at distance descried,
Were the smoke-frosts, that rose from the rents of the tide.
The night-noon was deep,…but, between and the sky,
No figure could be unperceiv’d by his eye :

“The star flitted on,…till he saw it depart,
But that shadow was fix’d,…as the blood at his heart.
Around it, and round, he had ventur’d to go,
But no form, that had life, threw the stamp on the snow.

“Unmoving and still, as that terrible form,
He stood on the ice-ridges, cleft by the storm.
Thro’ the night’s lonely watches not once had he turn’d,
But the figure he saw not,…when feeling return’d :…
“This stranger, I heard!...his eye had you seen,
When he spoke of the place where the shadow had been;
That form on the snow, as he saw it imprest,
And the death-like, dull slumber, that fell on his breast.  

“His eye had you seen, when I told of the night,
When the far-streaming torches were wav’d from the height,
When the skiffs on the wild-heaving ocean were tost,
And the rock, where old Peter of Lapland was lost;...

“Dost see where the thin mists are rising between,
On that summit it was where the stranger had been;
Where the shadow appear’d on the colourless snow:
And poor Peter’s cold bed,...is the ocean below!”...
THE MURCIAN CAVALIER.
The Murcian Cavalier.

Published Oct. 20th. by PEMOR & HOOK, Poultry.
THE MURCIAN CAVALIER.

‘TWAS the Pentecost time of tournament¹
At the court of high Castile,²
And the first, among the Spanish knights,
Was the prince of proud Seville.³
And ‘tis all to win Castile’s fair Queen
That they meet to break the spear;
The last, to day, on the list of fight,
Are Seville’s fam’d prince and a stranger knight,
The Murcian Cavalier.⁴

¹ [“‘Twas the Pentecost time of tournament!”

It was on the three or four great annual festivals of the church, that the ancient courts displayed their highest magnificence. These assemblies were announced in the different cities by heralds and public messengers, and were resorted to, not only by the nobility of the country, but by strangers.

WAY’S Fabliaux, Vol. I. Notes].

From Fabliaux or Tales, Abridged from French Manuscripts of the XIIth and XIIIth Centuries (1796). The original French version (Fabliaux ou Contes des douzième et treizième siècles, traduits ou extraits d’après les manuscrits) was published in three-volumes by the French historian Pierre Jean-Baptiste Legrand d’Aussy (1737-1800). The English version was translated by Gregory Lewis Way (1757-1799), and included a preface, annotations, and an appendix prepared by the poet and historian George Ellis (1753-1815).

Pentecost time: Fifty days after Easter Sunday.

² Castile: the Medieval court of Spain.

³ Seville: large city in Spain.

⁴ Murcian Cavalier: A knight or mounted soldier hailing from the region of Murcia, located in Southeast Spain on the Mediterranean coast.
But the trumpets scarce had sounded clear,
‘Twas still but morning dawn,
When the Queen was far from gay Castile,
At the lone towers of Castellan.  
The hours, till even, she spent in pray’r
At the Holy Virgin’s feet,
And when the night’s ungentle breeze
Blew hollow thro’ the orange trees,
She stood to hear the torrent beat.

And to the courts of high Castile
She turn’d her eyes, and sigh’d!
Far, far remote were revelry,
And feast, and pomp, and pride.
Who is the fairest of that circle?
Who was there fair but one?
And she, upon a distant tow’r,
By her heart-pulse counts the pausing hour,
Untended and alone….

“‘Tis a horse’s hoof from the tournament,
Dost hear the tramp on the plain?”
‘Ladie! ‘tis but the waterfall
On the rocks of Castellan!’
“Inez! Inez! thou hearest nought

---

5 *Castellan*: castle (usually the governor or ruler of a castle, but Bannerman uses the word to signify a place rather than a person).
But the tumbling waterfall!
My ear has caught the faintest sound;
When the winds on the waters were loud around,
And I heard them not at all.”

‘O Ladie, leave the battlement,
For the night is drawing near,
And the sighing of the forest trees
‘Tis sorrowful to hear!’

“I would, Inez! ‘twere sorrowful,
But it is nought to me!
I would that my crush’d heart had room
For these unpainful fears that come
From the rustling of a tree!”

The Queen bent down her death-like cheek
On the marble pillar-stone:
And she wav’d her hand to Inez,
That she would be alone.
Like a flame the moon was in the sky,
As thro’ the mist it shone;
In the Tagus’6 wave, as in a glass,
Its face was red as burning brass,
On the sun agoing down.

Whether it had been hope, or nought
But the water’s overflow;

---

6 Tagus: River that flows through Portugal and Spain.
The sound had pass’d away, that came
From the deep dell below.
…The fairest face in Spain is wet
With the falling dews of air:
That heart, for which so many pine,
Is watching for a distant sign,
As if life were treasur’d there!

…‘Tis the trampling now of horses hoofs,
For the river wave is still,
That scarce beyond the forest’s edge
Is gaining on the hill:…
“Yester-morn, said that Ladie,
I was Queen of high Castile:
But the hour is come that I must leave
These princely towers, a fugitive,
And a wanderer at will:”

The Queen has left the battlement
Without a sigh or tear!
That horseman fleet, that kneels at her feet,
Is the Murcian Cavalier:
But to his vows of love and truth
She spoke not once again;
For her heart was swelling in her breast,
With grief subdu’d and fear supprest,
As it would rend in twain.
They have journey’d on by day, by night,
Till, behind them many a mile,
They left the wand’ring Tagus’ course,
And the plans of fair Castile:

...Soft and cool the eventide fell
On the heats of the high day-noon;
The fiery sun’s descending blaze
Had cover’d, with a purple haze,
The woods of dark Leon.  

These woods, so deep, so lone, and wild,
The Queen survey’d, and sigh’d!
She turn’d to catch a distant gleam
Of the Douro’s yellow tide:
With intermingling tops, the trees
An awful cov’ring made:
And then that sky, of dusky red,
The dead of night had been less dread
Than that uncertain shade.

Far to the westerward she had seen
The winding Douro part;
And she paus’d, amid that solitude,
To still her throbbing heart!
The Murcian Knight was by her side,

---

7 _Leon_: León is a capital city in the northwest of Spain.

8 _Douro_: Another major river that flows through Spain and Portugal.
But he spoke not now at all…
Her anxious thoughts he seem’d to guess,
And, with mute and mournful steadiness,
He watch’d the dim night-fall.

It came! among these forests deep,
As the darkest midnight gloom!
It came!...and nature seem’d to be
But one unfathom’d tomb!
Many a rugged, trackless path,
Amid that gloom, they pass’d,
Till, close above a tree decay’d,
A turret threw its spiral shade,
Dim, desolate, and vast!

Between and the open’d gleam, was plain
That lonely castle’s height.
The Queen’s quick eye was traversing
The home of the Murcian Knight.
All silently she gave her hand,
To mount the marble stair ;
A massy⁹ door he open’d wide,
But the lofty halls, on either side,
Were tenantless and bare!

Save the dull echoes of their feet,
All other sounds were dumb!

---

⁹ Massy: solid, heavy.
And she felt the hand that grasped hers
Was still, and damp, and numb!
A strange and nameless terror ran
Along her shiv’ring brain;
Something like this her heart had known,
When, alas! she heard no voice but one,
At the towers of Castellan.

They paus’d! where, from an inner hall,
A lamp was burning bright!
It stream’d, with full and steady glare,
On the face of the Murcian Knight.
O’er ev’ry feature clear she saw
Unearthly beauty wave!
The purest white, the softest red,
The eye alone was glaz’d and dead,
As the sleeper’s in the grave!

Around and round her gaz’d the Queen,
By the lamp’s unshaken light;
On the roof, like a spirit’s swathed form,
Was the shadow of the Knight.
On that thin shape her eyes were fix’d,
That she could not turn again,
When it rais’d, with faint, unsteady strength,
One stiffen’d arm’s unmeasur’d length,
As it had mov’d in pain.
Then with a crash, that ran along,
Till it rock’d beneath her tread,
That arm fell down upon the stone,
And her stunned senses fled!

…The morning sun, with ruby tinge,
O’er the woods began to peer,
When the Queen was at the window tow’r ;
But no more was seen, from that dread hour,
The Murcian Cavalier!

And still, upon the battlement,
She walks at shut of even :
Her face is pale, her air is wild,
And her looks are toward heaven!
And ever, when a deeper shade
Hangs on these forests rude ;
The Spanish shepherd girls will tell
How they hear, far off, in a desert¹⁰ dell,¹¹
The Ladie of the Wood!

¹⁰ “Desert” has replaced “distant” as directed by the ERRATA.
¹¹ [That stood farre off in a lonely dell.
Heire of Linne. PERCY’S Reliques. Vol. II].

Thomas Percy (1729-1811). Percy’s Reliques of Ancient English Poetry was first published in 1765 and initiated a revival of public and scholarly interest in English songs and ballads. Bannerman has slightly misquoted the original line from The Heir of Linne: “That stood farre off in a lonely glenne” (44).
THE
BLACK KNIGHT
OF THE WATER.


THE BLACK KNIGHT

OF THE WATER. ¹

EARL WILLIAM left his castle hall,
When the sun shone, burning bright, at noon,
He rode, rode on thro’ many a town
To the princely pile² of Scoone³!

King Robert⁴ stood on the battlements’ height,
His train⁵ was bold, but few ;
And he mark’d the course of that foaming horse,
Ere the crest of the knight he knew.

¹ This poem was not reprinted in Poems, A New Edition (1807).
² Pile: Castle
³ Scoone: Scone Abbey in the southeast of Scotland, once the site of coronation for Scottish Kings.
⁴ King Robert: Most likely Robert the Bruce (1274-1329), who was appointed King of Scots in 1306.
⁵ Train: Group of soldiers.
“All hail and welcome, William, he said,
For thine arm\textsuperscript{6} shall set me free!
In rest and rout\textsuperscript{7}, in weal\textsuperscript{8} and woe,
Thou still hast stood by me….\textsuperscript{9}

“That proud baron, the bold Lord John,\textsuperscript{10}
Has rung his bugle horn,
And his rebel train have met on the plain,
Since the dawning of the morn ;

“Earl William, you must ride, this night,
To his castle on the hill ;
And count that train, as they sleep on the plain,
But hold thee close and still….\textsuperscript{20}

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{6} \textit{Arm}: Armor, i.e. his willingness to do battle. \\
\textsuperscript{7} \textit{Rout}: Loud, boisterous gathering. \\
\textsuperscript{8} \textit{Weal}: Wealth. \\
\textsuperscript{9} \textit{Earl William}: I have been unable to discover an exact historical counterpart for Earl William. William Wallace (d. 1305) was, of course, a close ally of King Robert the Bruce during the Scottish Wars of Independence in the early 14\textsuperscript{th} century. However, Wallace did not meet his fate after a confrontation with a ghostly knight in black armor; he was sentenced to death (in a very public execution) by King Edward I of England for treason, and was executed before Robert was appointed king. \\
\textsuperscript{10} \textit{Lord John}: Possibly John III Comyn, Lord of Badenoch (d. 1306), an agitator of Robert the Bruce, who was eventually stabbed to death by Robert at the Greyfriars church at Dumfries. Another possible correlation is John Baliol (c. 1249 – 1314), a claimant for the Scottish crown during the “Great Cause,” an interregnum period that lasted between 1290 and 1292. Baliol was appointed King of the Scots between 1292 and 1296, but abdicated the throne when Edward I invaded Scotland. He continued to profess claims to the throne until his death in 1314. 
\end{flushright}
“You must ride, ride on, by grass and stone,
Where the cross stands high on the lea;
You will tarry there, and repeat a prayer,
It may not waved be!

“When you leave the cross of the holy St. Mark,
Beware of the marsh of sedge!\(^\text{11}\)
And utter thrice the name in Heav’n!
Ere you reach the water’s edge:

“And God thee speed, for thy king in need!”
Earl William bent his knee!

“May Heav’n me requite, if I fail this night
To bring that list to thee.”…

“O he hath rode till the sun declin’d,
He hath rode by hill and brake\(^\text{12}\);
Ere he saw, on the right, the dank marsh weed,
And beyond, the stagnant lake….

As he pass’d by the cross of the holy St. Mark,
He remember’d not to pray;
And he dar’d not turn his horse again,
‘Twas the closing of the day….

\(^{11}\) Marsh of sedge: damp, low-lying and grassy area.

\(^{12}\) Brake: Clump of bushes, briers, tree stumps. A thicket.
The sun now sunk, and a stream of fire
Shone still on the saddle-bow;
And the gath’ring blast was coming fast,
With many a mile to go!

Earl William’s courser\textsuperscript{13} rear’d and rear’d,
As they pass’d by the marsh of sedge!
Earl William’s courser rear’d and rear’d,
Till they reach’d the water’s edge.

Then all at once it stopp’d and still’d,
Save that it shook from knee to knee!
Earl William was wroth, and spurr’d and spurr’d,
But it might not moved be!

‘Twas then he felt his heart beat hard,
And he thought on the sacred creed,
He lean’d his breast on the high lance-rest,\textsuperscript{14}
By the mane of his tranced\textsuperscript{15} steed.

\textsuperscript{13} Courser: large, powerful horse.

\textsuperscript{14} Lance-rest: “A projection attached to the right side of the cuirass against which a thick piece of leather nailed around the butt end of the lance was held during the charge, preventing the lance from being driven back upon impact” [OED].

\textsuperscript{15} Tranced: En trance d.
A wind blew up,...it was sultry warm,
It shook the saddle-bow!\(^{16}\)
But not one hair of that bristly mane
Was waved to and fro....

Earl William sprung from his stiff’ning steed,
As it stood by the water’s edge,...
On the lake he gaz’d, and round and round,
And all by the marsh of sedge ;

When rushing quick, that wind came by,
And he felt his armour shake ;
And it whirl’d in wreaths for five feet round
The middle of the lake.

All white with foam, like a tossing sea,
Did that spot of water boil ;
But, without that bound, and all around,
It was glassy-smooth and still....

With a moveless belt, that, heaving deep,
The stagnant waves inclose ;
When the turbid waters rent in twain,
And an armed knight arose!

---

\(^{16}\) *Saddle-bow:* the arched front portion of a saddle.
In coal-black iron he was brac’d,
From the shoulder-tip to the heel!
All but the cross-belts\textsuperscript{17} at his knee,
And they were burnish’d steel:

On the waves he stood, that foamed high
O’er his helm of the silver pale;
But not one drop of water wet
The meshes of his mail!

With couched lance one step he made,
From that whirling pool to the brink;
And the spot of earth, where his foot came down,
Did wither up and shrink:

Earl William mark’d the with’ring grass,
As the water-knight drew near;
His coal-black mail and the silver pale,
And he grasp’d his trusty spear….

On a mound of earth he held him firm,
And he wav’d his arm of might;
But not one pass of that massy spear
Could reach the iron knight:

\textsuperscript{17} \textit{Cross-belts}: “a belt worn over both shoulders, and crossing in front of the breast” [OED]
It bended back like an autumn leaf,
He might not touched be!
That sword of proof,\(^{18}\) it wav’d in the wind,
Like a branch of the willow tree! …

Earl William felt his palsied\(^{19}\) arm,
And the vital heat decay;
And the dull, dead eye of his courser nigh,…
He turn’d his eyes away!

Again there came that whistling gale
From the marsh and stagnant shore:
On the blasted ground it whizzed round,
Earl William mov’d no more! …

The form, o’er which that gale hath pass’d,
Will never life retain!
The eye, that hath seen the water-knight,
Will never move again….

\(^{18}\) Proof: “Of tried or proven strength or quality” [OED].

\(^{19}\) Palsied: physically weak, deprived of strength.
The hunters pass Earl William’s gate,
Where the warder’s\textsuperscript{20} horn had been!
The hunters pass Earl William’s hall,
And all is still within:

They have courséd wide by the river’s side,
And all by the marsh of sedge;
But that waveless lake they cannot search,
Nor the bulrush\textsuperscript{21} on its edge.

\textsuperscript{20} Warder: soldier assigned to guard an entrance.

\textsuperscript{21} Bulrush: Tall grass that grows near water.
THE

PROPHECY OF MERLIN.
The Prophecy of Merlin.

Published Oct 20, 1806, by Furner & Board, Poulter.
THE

PROPHECY OF MERLIN.

FOR three long nights had King Arthur watch’d,
The light from the turret shone!
For three long nights had King Arthur wak’d,
He pass’d them all alone!

On the fourth, at the first hour’s summon bell,
As the warder walk’d his round,
A figure cross’d at the postern\(^{22}\) gate,
That enters underground;

All wrapt it was in a monkish cowl,
By the gate-lamp burning dim,
When a double shadow slid across,
And another stood by him!

\(^{22}\) Postern: Back or side.
In low and broken tones they spoke,
Till the fourth hour ceas’d to ring: …
That monk had Merlin’s\textsuperscript{23} giant form,
The other was the king....

The morning shone on Camlan\textsuperscript{24} hills,
And the summon horn was blown ;
But not a knight would mount the tow’r
Where Arthur watch’d alone!

When noon was past, the king came down,
He bore his dragon shield ;
And dark and dread was his clouded brow,
On the eve of Camlan field!

Slowly past that fateful eve,
And sad it wore away ;
And sad and silent was the king
As he watch’d the break of day ;

All down the slope of Camlan hill,
And along the river’s side,
The rebel bands were posted round,
Since the fall of eventide :

\textsuperscript{23} Merlin: Powerful wizard and magician in Arthurian legends.

\textsuperscript{24} Camlan: The Battle of Camlan was King Arthur’s final battle. The precise location of Camlan is unknown.
From the signal posts the shout begins,
When the sky was bright and clear;
And the red sun shone on the steel dragon,
On King Arthur’s standard-spear!

Above the rest was Britain’s crest
In living flame enroll’d!
And the Virgin’s form, in silver wrought,
With the brazen dragon bold!  

O! in the field of Camlan fight,
Ere the burning noon was o’er,
The red blood ran, like a river-wave,
On the dry and parched shore:

King Arthur spurr’d his foaming horse
Amid that living flood!  
And twice he wav’d his witched sword
Where the dauntless Modred stood!

[And the Virgin’s form in silver wrought / With the brazen dragon bold.

Arthur’s shield had on it the picture of our Lady, and his helm, an engraven dragon.
Selden’s Notes to the Poly. Olb. Song IV].

From the Poly-Olbion (1612) by Michael Drayton (1563-1631). The notes to Drayton’s poem were provided by scholar John Selden (1584-1654).

[King Arthur spurr’d his foaming horse / Amid that living flood.

Pendragon’s worthie sonne, who waded there in blood.
Poly-Olb. Song IV].

Witched sword: Excalibur, Arthur’s reputedly enchanted sword.
But who could stand by Arthur’s side,
When that steel of terror shone?
When the fire of wroth\textsuperscript{29} was in his eye,
And he rais’d his arm alone!

That sun that blaz’d in middle sky,
And flam’d on hill and dell;
Its westering light had sunk in night,
When the mighty Modred fell! …

But the blood that flows is Arthur’s blood,\textsuperscript{30}
His fiery eye is dim!
And a dew like death is on his face,
And over every limb! …

He lean’d him down on his dragon shield,
He clasp’d his beaver\textsuperscript{31} on!

\textsuperscript{28} \textit{Modred}: In most legends, Mordred is the illegitimate son of Arthur and his half-sister, the sorceress Morgan le Fay.

\textsuperscript{29} \textit{Wroth}: Anger, fury.

\textsuperscript{30} [But the blood that flows is Arthur’s blood!]

King Arthur, according to our ancient historians, slew Modred with his own hand; but received his death-wound himself, and retired to Ynys Ofallon, or Glastenbury, where he soon afterwards died. His death was politically concealed, lest it should dispirit the Britons. Hence arose so many fabulous stories about it. [\textit{Evans’s Specimens of Welsh Poetry}].

From \textit{Some Specimens of the Poetry of the Antient Welsh Bards} (1764) by the Welsh poet and historian Evan Evans (1731-1789).

\textsuperscript{31} \textit{Beaver}: “The lower portion of the face-guard of a helmet, when worn with a visor” [\textit{OED}]
And the gushing blood it ceas’d at once,
But they heard no dying groan. …

O! how they strove till the night came on,
And all to raise that masque again!
And every arm by turns had tried,
But every arm was vain! …

They held him in their arms, and wept
With tears of deep despair!
Till they fear’d to touch that plate armour,
For the sound was hollow there!

Then they drew that witched sword,
And they heard the armour ring!
They wav’d it twice in Merlin’s name,
Before they touch’d the king. …

At once the cross-lace open’d wide,
They felt the rushing air!
But that mail was hollow as the grave,
Nor form, nor body there. …

As wild they gaz’d, the iron rings
Were clasp’d as before!
But the tongue that call’d on Merlin’s name
Was dumb for ever more!
Mean time, the king was borne away,
In deep and death-like sleep the while,
To the charmed sea, by magic spell,
By the Queen of the Yellow Isle!

And when his tranced soul was rous’d,
He thought, and thought how this might be,
For there was nought but sea and sky
As far as he could see….

King Arthur gaz’d on the calmed surge,
So clear beyond compare!
But neither the form of living man,
Nor the sound of life was there :

The ship it mov’d on the sleeping wave
Like a bird upon the air ;
He knew it gained on the deep,
But he felt no motion there!

O, then! he had no trace of time
How long he was on the pathless sea!
But he could have rested there for aye,
So sweet it seem’d to be!
How many times he watch’d the sun,
And saw it sink, he never knew;
For it ne’er was more than faint twilight
In that sky of stainless blue!

Ah! then he thought, within that ship
He ever more was doom’d to be!
And he had not once bethought him yet
Of Merlin’s prophecy!

Those sleepless nights he watch’d alone,
When the damps of midnight fell!
That voice, of more than human tone,
He heard in Merlin’s cell;\(^\text{32}\)

That night, the eve of Camlan fight,
When he felt his courage fail;
When the chill of death was on his brow,
Like a bloodless vision pale;

\(^{32}\) [That voice, of more than human tone, / He heard in Merlin’s cell!]

There the wise Merlin, whilome wont, (they say,)
To make his wonne, low underneath the ground
In a deep delve, farre from the vew of day
That of no living wight he mote be found,
When so he counseld, with his sprights encompast round:
And if thou ever happen that same way
To traveill, go to see that dreadful place:
It is an hideous hollow cave, (they say,)
Under a rock.

Spenser’s Faery Queene. Book III. Can. III.]

From \textit{The Faerie Queene} (1590) by Edmund Spenser (c.1552-1599). These lines comprise the latter half of stanza 7 and the first four lines of stanza 8.
That night, his knocking knees refus’d
To bear him from the cave;
When, press’d in his, the hand of blood
Its deadly pressure gave! …

Clear was the sky, and O! with this\[125\]
What summer could compare?
What woes could press on Arthur’s heart,
When he breath’d that blessed air?

Clear was the sky! that ship drew near\[130\]
Without the aid of wind or toil!
And, lighted by the morning sun,
He saw the charmed Isle!

The ship was steady on her keel,
Wash’d by that soft and lovely flood;
And, blushing, on the yellow beach,
The Queen of Beauty stood….

High in one hand, of snowy white,
A cup of sparkling pearl she bore;
And she reach’d it to the tranced king
As he knelt upon the shore:…\[140\]
All pallid now was Arthur’s brow,
While he took the draught she gave;
For he thought on what the hand of blood
Had mingled in the cave:

He thought on what the fiend pronounc’d,
That Merlin’s spirit brought;
And he fix’d his eyes on that ladie’s face,
And trembled at the thought….

Ah! in those eyes, of softest blue,
What magic dwells, to lull the soul!
And Arthur saw their mild reproach;
And rais’d the fraughted bowl!

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!...
The voice, that answer’d to his call,
Was that he heard within the cave!
When the mighty form of Urien
Was roused from the grave!\(^{33}\)

It told him, that the hour was come
He too must slumber in the cave;
When nought would reach his burial-place,
But the murmurs of the wave! …

It told him of the years to pass
Before his kingdom he could see: …
And Arthur knew he would return,
From Merlin’s prophecy. …\(^{34}\)

\(^{33}\) [When the mighty form of Urien / Was roused from the grave.

Urien Regen, king of Cambria and a great part of Scotland, as far as the river Clyde. His brave actions are celebrated by Taliessin. EVANS’S Specimens].

\(^{34}\) [And Arthur knew he would return, / From Merlin’s prophecy.

The bard-songs suppose, that, after the battle of Camlan in Cornwall, where Modred was slain and Arthur wounded, Morgan le Fay, an elfin lady, conveyed the body to Glastenbury, to cure it; which done, Arthur is to return to rule his country.

By prophecy Merlin set the date,
Among princes king incomparable,
His seat againe to Carlian to translate.
The *Parchas sustrem* sponne so his fate,
His epitaphe recordeth so certaine
*Here* lieth King Arthur that shall reigne againe.

DAN Lidgate. See Notes to the Poly. Olb. Song III.

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 fairy-ground, and a poetical community of right to its appropriation has never been disputed].
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. …

FINIS.
POEMS,

BY

ANNE BANNERMAM

A NEW EDITION.

EDINBURGH:
PRINTED BY MUNDEL, DOIG, & STEVENSON.

1807.
TO THE

RIGHT HONOURABLE

LADY CHARLOTTE RAWDON,¹

THE FOLLOWING POEMS

ARE RESPECTFULLY

INSCRIBED,

BY HER LADYSHIP’S

MOST OBDIENT HUMBLE SERVANT,

THE AUTHOR.

¹ Lady Charlotte Adelaide Constantia Rawdon (1769-1834), daughter of Sir John Rawdon, first earl of Moira and an Irish peer. Lady Charlotte was acquainted with Maria Edgeworth and Sir Walter Scott (the National Library of Scotland has a record of correspondence with Scott that took place between 1804 and 1811).
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LYRICAL PIECES.
THE SPIRIT OF THE AIR.

Be hush’d, ye angry winds! that sweep,
   Resistless, o’er the polar coast:
Thou swell’st no more, tremendous deep!
   I lock thee in eternal frost.
My will supreme, mine awful sway,
   The earth, the air, the sea obey;
My glance pervades the realms of space;
   Each hidden spring, this arm can trace;
O’er all the prostrate world, my power extends,
Alike on Zembla’s ice, on Zaara’s burning sands.²

Amid the lightning’s forky³ flame,
   While, driven on high, the billows⁴ roll;
‘Tis mine to loose the struggling frame,
   And mine to soothe the parting soul:
   I come, on viewless winds reclin’d,

² Zembla: An imaginary and distant northern kingdom. See Alexander Pope’s An Essay on Man (1734): “Ask where’s the north? at York, ‘tis on the Tweed; / In Scotland, at the Orcades; and there, / At Greenland, Zembla, or the Lord knows where” (II.222-224). Zaara: A rare and archaic variant for the Sahara desert.

³ Forky: forked.

⁴ Billows: ocean waves produced by the wind.
To cheer the wretch, whom fetters bind,
To crush the oppressor’s giant crest,
To hurl destruction on his breast,
Amid the spoils his abject soul adores;
And trembling earth recoils along her utmost shores.

What form is that, half-hid in air,
   Round whose pale brow the torrents roar?
’Tis Freedom! mark her deep despair;
   She points to Afric’s bleeding shore.
Hark! what a groan!—with horror wild,
   I see the mother clasp her child;
“My son, my son!” she madly cries;—
   Spare, monsters, spare her agonies.—
Too late, for, rapid, to the vessel’s side
She flies, and, plunging, sinks beneath the billowy tide.

Proceed unmov’d, ye men of blood!
   Your course along the waters urge;
No winds shall vex the unruffled flood,
   Nor toss on high the deaf’ning surge.
Now, for your happy homes prepare;
   But, curb your joy—I meet you there.
Then, as your friends, your infant race,
   Rush wildly to your fond embrace,
Before your eyes a ghastly form shall stand,
And o’er her infant weep, and wave her beck’ning hand.
Fierce thro’ the desert’s frightful sand,
   When Cancer rules the burning day,5
The Arab leads his daring band,
   Exulting on their perilous way.
“Prepare,” he cries, “prepare for war : 45
“Mark yonder sandy cloud afar ;
“We share the blood, we share the toil,
“And we shall share the glorious spoil ;
“Collect your courage, now the foe is nigh ;
“Victorious, we return ;—subdued, revenge and die.” 50

But, vengeful, on the rushing wind,
   I come to toss the sandy waves ;
To whelm6 the spoilers of their kind,
   Inglorious, in untimely graves.
Yon livid flame, that flings on high 55
   Its terrors thro’ the redd’ning sky ;
Glares on your van,7 in awful state,
   The herald of impending fate.
I speak—the suffocating blast descends
   In clouds of fluid fire ; and Nature’s conflict ends. 60

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5 When Cancer rules the burning day: In regions located within the Tropic of Cancer, the sun can appear directly overhead at the peak of day.
6 Whelm: Overwhelm.
7 Van: vanguard. The front line of an advancing military or navy force. [OED].
Where the wild ocean’s heaving waves
    Boil round Magellan’s stormy coast; 8
When long and loud the tempest raves,
    I mark the straining vessel tost
By night along unfathom’d 9 seas.
I see the living current freeze,
    As horror grasps each fainting form,
High mid the fury of the storm;
Till the tall masts in scatter’d fragments lie,
And, plung’d amid the surge, the sufferers sink, and die.

Soft be your bed, and sweet your rest,
    Ye luckless tenants of the deep!
And, o’er each cold and shroudless breast,
    May spirits of the waters weep!
And still, when awful midnight reigns,
    My harp shall join in solemn strains;
My voice shall echo to the waves,
    That dash above your coral graves;
Blest be the gloom, that wraps each sacred head,
And blest th’ unbroken sleep, and silence of the dead!

---

8 *Magellan’s stormy coast*: Ferdinand Magellan (1480-1521), Portuguese explorer and leader of the Spanish expedition to the East Indies, which resulted in the first circumnavigation of the Earth. Located between the Tierra del Fuego islands and the coast of South America, the Strait of Magellan connects the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans. The narrow passageway is dangerous on account of unpredictable winds and currents.

9 *Unfathom’d*: unknown or unexplored.
High on yon cloud’s cerulean\textsuperscript{10} seat,
   I ride sublime thro’ ether blue,
To fling, while reigns the Power of heat,
   On fainting earth the summer dew:
I bid the rose in crimson glow,
   And spread the lily’s robe of snow;
I waft from heaven the balmy breeze,
   That sighs along the sleeping seas;
What time the spirit of the rock is nigh,
To pour upon the night his heav’n-taught melody.

But, far beyond the solar blaze,
   Again I wing my rapid flight;
Again I cleave the liquid maze,
   Exulting in immortal might.
O’er me nor cold, nor heat, prevails,
Nor poison from malignant gales;
I glide along the trackless coast,
   That binds the magazines of frost;
Encompass’d by the raging storm,
   I smile at Danger’s threat’ning form;
I mock Destruction on his tow’ring seat,
And leave the roaring winds, contending at my feet.

\textsuperscript{10} Cerulean: pure blue, of the sky.
YE mountain forests proudly wave,

Your shades have nurs’d the good, the brave,
And stretch’d o’er many a patriot grave
   Its solitary canopy.

Ages have roll’d, and suns gone down,
Helvetia, o’er thy high renown,
Since Freedom sprurn’d all other crown
   Than Nature’s hoary diadem.

Hide, Valour now, thy blighted fame!
When o’er thy cliffs the Spoiler came,
With banners red, and arms of flame,
   And clarions shouting hollowly;

---

1 First published in The Poetical Register and Repository of Fugitive Poetry for 1802 (1803), p. 56-57. The poem was also reprinted in a review of The Poetical Register that appeared in issue 23 of The British Critic in 1804. A short preface notes the poem’s “melancholy subject,” but states that it “does great honour to the female pen from which it proceeded” (618).

2 Helvetia: Poetical and nationalist female personification of Switzerland, usually depicted in a flowing gown and carrying a shield and spear. The name is derived from a tribe of Gauls that once inhabited Switzerland.

3 hoary diadem: i.e. a crown marred by age.

4 the Spoiler: France, or more specifically, Napoleon. The French invaded Switzerland in 1798, which culminated in the Battles of Zurich in 1799. While occupied, the area was known as the Helvetic Republic.

5 clarions: a shrill trumpet common in war.
Then o’er thy glacier-summits cold
The trumpet-knell of Freedom toll’d!
Where, Glory now, thy chiefs of old,

To stem the tide of slavery?

Victor so long—to arms! to arms!
Hands that the pulse of Freedom warms!
Again thro’ carnage and alarms

Unfurl the flag of victory.

Ye patriot legions charge—repel—
Fall freemen as your fathers fell!
Here shall your blood’s impetuous swell

Proclaim your glorious ancestry!

Victor no more!—yield, Valour, yield
Thy sacred arms and shatter’d shield,
And humbled on thy chosen field,

Await the chains of tyranny.

Master of Fate!—thy laurels⁶ hide,
No glory beams where Freedom died:
Tear from thy Gallic⁷ standards wide

The insulted crest of Liberty.

⁶ laurels: a common symbol of victory in war, or accomplishment in poetry.
⁷ Gallic: a disparaging term for the French.
Beneath that sign, in ages rude,
Hath many a band of freeman stood,
O’er hills of ice and fields of blood,
To charge the invading ravager!

They fought—they fell—ye sons of fame!
You blush not for your country’s shame;
Could not your deeds and victor-name
    Redeem her holy solitudes?

What echoing plain, what mountains hoar
Heard not your storm of battle roar?
That trump\(^8\) is hush’d—to sound no more
        That led the free to victory!

Yet, Freedom, o’er thy lost abode,
Which many a godlike foot hath trode,
What heart shall trace thy trophied road,
        Nor burn to ‘venge thy destiny?

---

\(^8\) \textit{trump}: trumpet. According to the OED, ‘trump’ can also signify a thing of small value or a trifle.
EXILE.¹

YE hills of my country, soft fading in blue,
The seats of my childhood, for ever adieu!
Yet not for a brighter, your skies I resign,
When my wand’ring footsteps revisit the Rhine:²
But sacred to me is the roar of the wave,
That mingles its tide with the blood of the brave;
Where the blasts of trumpets for battle combine,
And the heart was laid low that gave rapture to mine.

Ye scenes of remembrance that sorrow beguil’d³
Your uplands I leave for the desolate wild;
For Nature is nought to the eye of despair
But the image of hopes that have vanish’d in air.
Again ye fair blossoms of flower and of tree,
Ye shall bloom to the morn, tho’ ye bloom not for me;
Again your lone wood-paths that wind by the stream,
Be the haunt of the lover—to hope—and to dream.

² *Rhine*: Major European river, which forms part of the borders between Germany, Switzerland, France, and Austria.
³ *beguil’d*: self-deluded or mistaken.
But never to me shall the summer renew
The bowers where the days of my happiness flew ;
Where my soul found her partner, and thought to bestow
The colours of heaven on the dwellings of woe!

Too faithful recorders of times that are past,
The Eden of Love that was ever to last!
Once more may soft accents your wild echoes fill,
And the young and the happy be worshippers still.

To me ye are lost!—but your summits of green
Shall charm thro’ the distance of many a scene ;
In woe, and in wandering, and deserts return,
Like the soul of the dead to the perishing urn!
Ye hills of my country! farewel evermore,
As I cleave the dark waves of your rock-rugged shore,
And ask of the hovering gale if it come
From the oak-towering woods on the mountains of home.
TO PAIN.

HAIL! fiercest herald of a Power,

Whose wide controul the earth obeys!
I call thee, at this fearful hour ;
To thee my feeble voice I raise.
Say, does compassion never glow
Within thy soul, and bid thee know
The pangs with which thou fir’st¹ the breast?
Or dost thou never, never mourn,
To plant so deep the hidden thorn,
Forbidding aid, and blasting rest?

Think’st thou my wavering fickle mind
Requires so much, to break her chain?
Alas! what earthly joys can bind
The wretch, who sees thy figure, Pain!
For ever fleet before his eyes ;
For him, no glories gild the skies ;
No beauties shine in Nature’s bound ;

¹ *Fir’st*: i.e. fir'est. To burn or scorch.
In vain with verdure glows the spring,
If, from within, thy gnawing sting

    Bid only demons scowl around.

Too sure, I feel, in every vein,
    With thee soft Pity ne’er can dwell.
Shall pleasure never smile again,
    Or health thro’ ev’ry channel swell?
Yes! tho’ thy hand hath crush’d the rose
Before its prime, another blows,
    Whose blossoms thy breath can ne’er destroy ;
Say, can thy keen and cruel chains
Corrode, where bliss seraphic reigns,
    Where all is peace, and all is joy.

Then, wherefore sighs my fearful heart,
    And trembles thus my tottering frame?
Alas! I feel thy deadly dart,
    More potent far than Fancy’s flame :
I bend, grim tyrant! at thy throne ;
But spare, ah! spare that sullen frown,
    Relax the horrors of thy brow!
O! lead me, with a softer hand,
And lo! I come at thy command,
    And, unrepining, follow through.
THE MERMAID.

“When, at last, they retired to rest, Ajut went down to the beach, where finding a fishing-boat, she entered it without hesitation, and, telling those who wondered at her rashness, that she was going in search of Anningait, rowed away, with great swiftness, and was seen no more.

“The fate of those lovers gave occasion to various fictions and conjectures. Some are of the opinion, that they were changed into stars; others imagine, Anningait was seized, in his passage, by the Genius of the Rocks, and that Ajut was transformed into a *Mermaid*, and still continues to seek her lover in the deserts of the sea.”——RAMBLER No 187 1

BLOW on, ye death-fraught whirlwinds! blow,

Around the rocks, and rifted caves;

Ye demons of the gulf below!

I hear you, in the troubled waves.

High on this cliff, which darkness shrouds

In night’s impenetrable clouds,

My solitary watch I keep,

And listen, while the turbid deep

Groans to the raging tempests, as they roll

Their desolating force, to thunder at the pole.

Eternal world of waters, hail!

Within thy caves my Lover lies;

---

1 *The Rambler*: Periodical written by Dr. Samuel Johnson (1709-1784). New issues were released every Tuesday and Saturday between 1750 and 1752. The issue cited by Bannerman appeared on Tuesday, December 31, 1751. Johnson’s discussion of the Danish legend of Ajut and Anningait began in the previous issue. According to Bate and Strauss, Johnson’s account of the story drew from Hans Egede’s *A Description of Greenland* (1745).
And day and night alike shall fail,
  Ere slumber lock my streaming eyes.
Along this wild untrodden coast,
Heap’d by the gelid hand of frost ;
Thro’ this unbounded waste of seas,
Where never sigh’d the vernal breeze ;
Mine was the choice, in this terrific form,
To brave the icy surge, to shiver in the storm.

Yes! I am chang’d.—My heart, my soul,
  Retain no more their former glow.
Hence, ere the black’ning tempests roll,
  I watch the bark, in murmurs low,
(While darker low’rs the thick’ning gloom)
To lure the sailor to his doom ;
Soft from some pile of frozen snow
  I pour the syren-song² of woe ;
Like the sad mariner’s expiring cry,
As, faint and worn with toil, he lays down to die.

Then, while the dark and angry deep
  Hangs his huge billows high in air ;
And the wild wind with awful sweep,
  Howls in each fitful swell—beware!
Firm on the rent and crashing mast,

² *Syren-song*: In classical mythology, sirens were female creatures (often described as beautiful despite having
bird-like or serpentine characteristics) that entranced sailors with their singing, usually causing fatal shipwrecks.
See Book XII of Homer’s *Odyssey*. 
I lend new fury to the blast;
I mark each hardy cheek grow pale,
And the proud sons of courage fail;
Till the torn vessel drinks the surging waves,
Yawns the disparted main, and opes its shelving graves.  

When Vengeance bears along the wave
   The spell, which heaven and earth appals;
Alone, by night, in darksome cave,
   On me the gifted wizard calls.  
Above the ocean’s boiling flood
   Thro’ vapour glares the moon, in blood:
Low sounds along the waters die,
   And shrieks of anguish fill the sky;
Convulsive powers the solid rocks divide,
While, o’er the heaving surge, th’ embodied spirits glide.

Thrice welcome to my weary sight,
   Avenging ministers of wrath!
Ye heard, amid the realms of night,
   The spell, that wakes the sleep of death.
Where Hecla’s flames the snows dissolve,
Or storms, the polar skies involve;

\[^{a}\] ‘Tis thine to sing how, framing hideous spells
In Sky’s lone isle the gifted wizard sits.
Waiting in wint’ry cave his wayward fits.
\[*Collins’ Ode on the Superstitions of the Highlands*\].

\[^{a}\] Lines 53-55. *See Appendix D.*
Where, o’er the tempest-beaten wreck,
    The raging winds billow and break;
On the sad earth, and in the stormy sea,
All, all shall shudd’ring own your potent agency.  

To aid your toils, to scatter death,
    Swift, as the sheeted lightning’s force,
When the keen north-wind’s freezing breath
    Spreads desolation in its course,
My soul within this icy sea,
    Fulfils her fearful destiny.
Thro’ Time’s long ages I shall wait
    To lead the victims to their fate;
With callous heart, to hidden rocks decoy,
And lure, in seraph-strains, unpitying, to destroy.
CHORUS OF DRYADS.

FROM THE ORFEO OF POLITIANO.\textsuperscript{b}

HARK, hark! the soft winds low resound,
Our hopes are gone, our glory fled!
Mourn, mourn! ye rivers murmuring round,
Ye drink the tears that ’balm\textsuperscript{1} the dead!

Before thy shadows, Death, decline
The stars of heaven, and veil their beams;
And every flower of summer seems,
Eurydice\textsuperscript{2} in faded bloom,

\textsuperscript{b} [“L’aria di pianti s’oda risuonare,” &c.]

A particular analysis of this first model of the pastoral drama will be found in a late learned and elegant work, “On the Revival of the Drama in Italy,” by Joseph Cooper Walker, Esq. p. 112. For that work the “Chorus of Dryads” was originally translated.]

Joseph Cooper Walker (1761-1810) was an author, historian, and antiquary from Dublin. Well-versed in both Irish and Italian history, Walker was the author of Historical Memoirs of the Irish Bards (1786), as well as A Historical Memoir on Italian Tragedy (1799). The work referenced by Bannerman – An Historical and Critical Essay on the Revival of the Drama in Italy – was published by Mundell and Son in 1805.


For more on Poliziano, see Fantazzi (2001).

\textsuperscript{1} ’balm: embalm

\textsuperscript{2} Eurydice: In Greek myth, Eurydice is a Dryad, or wood nymph. She is one of Apollo’s daughters and beloved wife of the musician and poet Orpheus. After her death, Orpheus mourns deeply and ventures to the underworld to rescue her. Hades agrees to allow Eurydice to return to the upperworld, but under the condition that Orpheus never looks back on her as he leads her to safety. Orpheus fails to uphold the bargain and Eurydice is swept back into the underworld.
To feel the breath that blighted thine.
And Love, while drooping Nature dies,
In deeper woe shall mingle sighs,
    Eurydice! that thou wert lur’d
    By cruel Fate’s avenging doom,
From hope, from life, to darkness and the tomb.
    Hark, hark! &c. ³

Ah Fortune! serpent, mining deep,
    In fear, in grief, in wrath reveal’d!
    Torn as a lily from the field,
        She wither’d like the rose of morn,
        Before the tempest’s whelming sweep.—
Pale is that face, and humbled low,
That blush’d in beauty’s living glow:
    Our joys are dust! our sun decay’d!
    Those lucid eyes are quench’d in night,
That shone to gladden earth, and minister delight.
    Hark, hark! &c.

And Thou, whose soul-entrancing breath
    First wak’d the lyre to love and woe!
    All silent now that magic flow,
        That hush’d to peace the warring winds,
        And charm’d the iron ear of Death!

³ The poem’s first four lines provide the refrain. The marginal line numbers have been adjusted to count the refrains.
Can music soothe when thou art lost,
Exulting Nature’s proudest boast?

Thou troubled ocean! murmur deep—
Let loud lamentations rise,
From desolated earth, and pierce the darken’d skies.

Hark, hark! the soft winds low resound,
Our hopes are gone, our glory fled!

Mourn, mourn! ye rivers murmuring round,
Ye drink the tears that ’balm the dead!
TO THE NIGHTINGALE.

FROM ROUSSEAU.¹

WHY, plaintive warbler! tell me why
For ever sighs thy troubled heart?
Cannot these groves, that glowing sky,
A solace to thy woes impart?
Shall spring his blooming wreaths entwine,
To circle every brow, but thine?

See! Nature, at thy wish’d return,
Renews her robe of gayest green;
And can thy wayward bosom mourn,
When Nature wakes the vernal scene;
When every Dryad² lends her shade,
For thine and contemplation’s aid.

¹ “A Philomèle” (c.1723) by Jean-Baptiste Rousseau (1671-1741). The opening lines of the original poem in French are as follows: “Pourquoi, plaintive Philomèle.”

In mythology, Philomela was transformed into a nightingale after she is raped by King Tereus, her sister’s husband. See Book VI of Ovid’s Metamorphoses.

As noted by Robert G. Lewis and Walter J. Morris, English translations of J.B. Rousseau’s poetry are rare (454). Bannerman’s translation may in fact be the only English translation of this poem to date.

² Dryad: In Greek mythology, a female creature that inhabits a forest. A wood nymph.
See! from thy haunts the stormy North
   His surly blasts leads far away;
Each blossom of the teeming earth,
   The glories of the op’ning day;
The promise of the coming year,
All, all, sweet bird, for thee appear.

For thee, Aurora\(^3\) steeps in dews
   The new-born flow’rets of the dale;
For thee, with libr’al hand, she strews
   Her fragrance on the western gale;
And rifles all the sweets of morn,
To deck her fav’rite’s mossy thorn.

Hark! while thy sad strain seems to tell
   Some mournful tale of luckless love,
On each soft note’s ecstatic swell,
   In silence hang the warbling grove;
And ev’n the fowler loves to spare
The Poet of the midnight air.

O! if a friend’s untimely tomb
   Bid all the tide of sorrow flow;
Alas! ev’n there, thy wretched doom
   Is mercy to my weight of woe;
For pain now past, thy bosom sighs;
Mine, present always,—never flies.

\(^3\) *Aurora*: Roman goddess of the dawn.
Thee, bounteous Nature blooms to cheer,
And beauty smiles, thy woes to still;
To nature, love, and pity dear,
    Well mayst thou yield thy load of ill,
To beings, as forlorn as I, c
    Denied the freedom of a tear,
The rapture of a single sigh. d

[While only beings as forlorn as I. Mrs. Smith’s Sonnets.]

From “Sonnet LXVII: On Passing Over A Dreary Tract” in Elegiac Sonnets (1784) by Charlotte Turner Smith (1749-1806), English poet and novelist:

Swift fleet the billowy clouds along the sky,
Earth seems to shudder at the storm aghast;
While only beings as forlorn as I
Court the chill horrors of the howling blast. (3-4)

[The rapture of a single tear. Schiller.]

From Die Räuber (1781) by Friedrich von Schiller (1759-1805), German poet, philosopher, and dramatist: “I would toil till the sweat of blood dropt from my brow, to purchase the luxury of one sound sleep, the rapture of a single tear” (III.ii).

An English translation entitled The Robbers appeared in 1792 and was published by G.G.J. & J. Robinson in London. The play was widely read and admired by Samuel Taylor Coleridge, Johanna Baillie, and Lord Byron.
THE NEREID.

FROM GRESSET.¹

Deep in thy ruby-colour’d cave,
Hear, Nereid² of the sacred main!
And, from the Ocean’s stormy wave,
To these fair fields return again.
Blows there among thy emerald bowers
A gale like this, that, fluttering still,
Attendant on the month of flowers,³
Breathes on this green and sunny hill?

What tho’ along thy foamy verge
The Halcyon⁴ skims her downy breast;
And, cradled on the murmuring surge
The west-wind rocks her sea-weed nest:

¹ First published in The Poetical Register and Repository of Fugitive Poetry for 1802 (1803) p. 64-65.

The poem is attributed to Jean-Baptiste-Louis Gresset (1709–1777), a French poet and playwright. I have not been able to locate the original source of Bannerman’s translation or interpretation. The rather unique term “Néréide” appears twice in Gresset’s complete works: in “Églogue VII” and “Sur L’Harmonie Discours.”

Gresset is best known for the poem *Vert-Vert* (1734), a humorous account of a parrot sent from one convent to another. The bird mimics the bad language of the ruffians that convey it between destinations, and also repeats the petty preoccupations and gossip of the first group of nuns.

² *Nereid*: In Greek myth, a benevolent sea nymph. Unlike sirens, they often assisted sailors led astray by storms.

³ *month of flowers*: the month of May

⁴ *Halcyon*: In Greek myth, a bird (usually the kingfisher) that laid its eggs in a nest floating in the ocean. The bird was believed to inspire a period of tranquility and calm at sea so that its eggs could hatch in peace.
Thou hear’st not in thy crystal cell
The morning anthem of the year;
The music of thy spiral shell,
The wild waves deafen, sobbing drear!

O to these bowers, the bowers of Spring,
The shades of Nature, holy gloom!
While Heaven’s soft dews at twilight fling
On grass and flower their living bloom,
Climena,\(^5\) from thy pearly caves
Return, and hail the Sun of day,
Nor for the roar of tossing waves
Resign the music of the May.

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\(^5\) Climen: Clymene, a Nereid mentioned in Book XVIII of Homer’s Iliad.
THE CAR OF DEATH.

FROM ANTONIO ALLAMANNI.

ANGUISH, and tears, and penance dread,

For ever torture here;

This livid band of wandering dead

Go crying, to the slumbering ear

Penitence! penitence!—Mortals hear!

[For the origin of that species of dramatic entertainment entitled Mascherate, or Pageants, see Mr. Walker’s “Essay on the Revival of the Drama in Italy,” p. 99, and appendix, No. IX. The following is a description of the Car of Death.

“In the Carnival, and in the night of its greatest festivity, the citizens gazed in horrid silence on this frightful scene, as it passed along the streets. It consisted of a black funeral car, on which were painted white crosses, and dead men’s bones. It was drawn by four buffaloes, and a ghastly figure with a scythe sat upon it. This figure represented Death, and had at its feet graves opening, out of which skeletons were continually issuing. Many hundred persons, clothed in black, with masks resembling death’s heads, marched before it, as well as followed it, with lighted flambeaux in their hands. The lights were so well regulated, and fell so exactly on the car and the procession, that the whole appeared very natural. Numbers of other masks, not less frightful, mounted on the poorest horses that could be found, with black housings trailing the ground, carried standards of black taffety, embroidered with crossed bones and tears. The skeletons, in trembling and mournful voices, sung penitential psalms with the Miserere; and the instrumental music, corresponding with the vocal, added to the melancholy and petrifying spectacle. The car and the procession stopped before the palace of Gonfalonier Soderini and those of the principal citizens, apparently to do them honour; and the skeletons immediately began the chorus of

Morte siam,’ come vedete;
Cosi morti vedrem’ voi:
Fummo già, come voi sete,
Voi sarete come noi.”


From Joseph Cooper Walker’s An Historical and Critical Essay on the Revival of the Drama in Italy (1805).

Antonio Alamanni (1464-1528) was an Italian poet, and also the author of the comedy The Conversion of St. Mary Magdalene (1521). The Italian quote Walker provides comes from the second volume of Memoirs of the House of Medici (1797) by Nicolas Tenhove. The verse roughly translates to:

Dead we are, as you see;
So we shall see you dead:
We were already like you,
You will be like us
Living once, as now thou art ;
Thou too, shalt be as we ;
Dead as thou seest we are, thy heart
As dead as ours shall be :
Unrepenting, woe to thee!  

For thou shalt cry, in guilt and fear,
Penitence, penitence!—none will hear.

Like thee at feast and carnival,
We mock’d the speeding time ;
Adding, till the cup was full,
Joy to joy, and crime to crime :
Now we ring our warning chime
O’er the earth, in funeral cry,
Penitence, penitence!—ere thou die.

Blind, weak, and senseless, humbled kneel!
All things shall pass away ;¹
Honours, and state, and glory feel
An arm that none can stay :
Unrepentant, who shall say
In the grave we rest at last?
Penitence, penitence!—all is past.

¹ Cf. Matthew 24:35: “Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away,” and John 2:17: “The world and its desires pass away, but whoever does the will of God lives forever.”
We bear a scythe whose gleaming blade
   Mows down the nations at a blow; ²
Vital still, and undecay’d,
   On from life to life we go;
But the life is bliss or woe:
Vaunt not then of cloudless days,
Penitence, penitence!—kneel and praise.

Living, all shall sink to dust,
   Dying, every soul shall live;
Lord of lords! the law is just,
   All have sinn’d—forgive, forgive!
Penitent, thou wilt save alive:
But ere dust to dust return,
Penitence, penitence!—read the urn.

He that shrinks from other’s woe,
   The worm shall gnaw that never dies;
But blessed are the tears that flow
   From mercy’s heart when sorrow sighs;
Belov’d on earth, to glory rise!
Thou shalt not call in fear to heaven
Penitence, penitence! unforgiven.

² Cf. “Damon the Mower” by Andrew Marvell (1621-1678): “And there among the grass fell down, / By his own scythe, the Mower mown” (lines 79-80).
WHEN many a tear bedims the sight,
And Fancy wings her airy flight
    To scenes that fairer hopes impart;
Ah! can the Muse her strains prolong,
Or try to swell the choral song,
    When grief weighs heavy on the bursting heart?

Fain would I, hanging round thy tomb
The flowers of never-fading bloom,
    Thy name from dark oblivion save;
Fain would I bid upon thy breast
Lightly the mould’ring greensward rest,
    And no rude hand disturb thy grave.

Alas! another hand than mine
Must o’er thy dust the cypress twine,
    Lamented brother of my soul!
Another tongue thy virtues swell,
And pensive strike the plaintive shell,
    To bid the tear of pity roll.

Bid Spring, with humid hand, entwine
His earliest flowers, to deck the shrine,
    Where rests thy cold insensate clay;
There bid the visionary mind
Hear, in the pauses of the wind,
   Some mournful cadence die away.

Fond hope and vain! no dewy spring
His early offerings there shall bring,
   No finer feelings swell!
Wild o’er that rude and parched strand
The tropic lion prints the sand,
   And fiery tigers yell!

Yet, to that spot where Afric pours
The ocean round his eastern shores,
   Full many a soul with mine may turn,
In Memory’s anguish, trace again
The staggering wreck—the raging main,—
   And bathe with tears the funeral urn!

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1 The entire fifth stanza (lines 25-30) was rewritten for Poems, A New Edition; the sixth stanza (lines 31-36) was added in the revised addition.

f [On the night of the 20th of August 1792, the Winterton East-Indiaman was lost, off the island of Madagascar, on her passage to India—“ A scene,” says one of the few survivors, “perhaps as pregnant with misery, with distraction, and with horror, as any that ever occurred in the eventful history of mariners.”
See Mr. Dale’s Narrative.]

From A Narrative of the Loss of the Winterton, on Her Passage to India, the 20th of August, 1792, on a Reef of Rocks off the Island of Madagascar (1794) by John Dale, the 3rd Mate.
TO A FRIEND.¹

Was thine the command, with the rigours of truth,
To blend the fair visions of Fancy and youth?
By these shall that spirit be charm’d to repose,
Whose morn of existence is dark as the close?
For Life is all past when the gales of the spring
Return from the hills, and no happiness bring;
When the music of Nature is nought to the ear,
But the murmurings of Time for the lost and the dear!

A tempest, more rude than the winds of the sky,
Must beat on the heart ere it wither and die!
O’er mine it has breath’d, and its fervors are past,
And Hope, ev’n thine, that forsook it the last!—
For Hope cannot stand by the mouldering tomb,
And summon the dead from that fathomless gloom;
They have pass’d into darkness, in silence repos’d,
Their race is accomplish’d—their wayfaring clos’d.—

¹ I have not been able to verify the recipient of this poem, but the reference to a “shipwreck” in line 18 strongly suggests it is a lament for Bannerman’s brother, who died in 1804.
Then deem it not strange, when all desolate cast,
Like a beacon to warn where the shipwreck has past,
This footstep should faulter;—this spirit decline,
Which cannot forget, and which may not repine:
For the hopes that have beam’d on my life in its prime,
With the peace I have lost in the tempests of Time,
Round thee may they brighten, (and Fate will be just,)
And thy heart wake to rapture—when mine shall be dust.
SONNETS FROM WERTER.\textsuperscript{g} \textsuperscript{1}

\textsuperscript{8} [The capital defect of the sonnet will be found to consist in the tedium and monotony attending the perusal of a numerous collection of small unconnected pieces of fourteen lines. To remedy, in some measure, this defect, an attempt has been made in the “Sonnets from Werter,” to delineate the progress of a passion, and to render each sonnet a distinct picture of a strong situation arising from that which preceded, and preparatory to that which is to succeed. In this manner a unity may be communicated, which may tend to keep the interest alive:—and the plan is attended with this farther advantaged, that by seizing only the more important moments, the events of the longest portion of time may be included in a short series of progressive sonnets].

Bannerman is applying Joanna Baillie’s theories concerning the exploration of a single passion in a play to individual sonnets. See Introduction and Appendix D.

\textsuperscript{1} Werter: The titular character of Die Leiden des jugen Werthers (The Sorrows of Young Werther) by Johann Wolfgang von Goethe (1749-1832). The novel was initially published in Leipzig by Christian Friedrich Weygand in 1774. The first English translation was published by J. Dodsley in 1779.

Bannerman’s omission of the ‘h’ in Werther’s name is likely an attempt to reproduce the hard ‘t’ sound of the German pronunciation.

Charlotte Smith also wrote a series of sonnets based upon Goethe’s famous novel. See Appendix D.
I.

WHEN the first beams of morn illume the sky,

“To-day I see her,” and I hail the sun;
“To-day I see her,” and the moments run,
And Life, and Time, and all unheeded fly.

O how I grasp delusions! form again
The frantic hopes, my firmer mind denies!
I see but her, in earth, in air, and skies;
I feel but her, in all my burning brain.

Then, as I think upon the woes to come,
Bereav’d of comfort, how I hate the day!

Tears, from a heart of anguish, force their way,
And oft I wish to make the grave my home;

To drink the bitter cup, while yet I may,
Before my strength is gone, and all my powers decay.

[“As soon as I opened my window this morning, I said, “To-day I shall see her,” and calmly looked at the sun.” Werter, vol. i, let. xxii.]

Her: Charlotte, or “Lotte,” the object of Werter’s unrequited affections. The character was modeled on Charlotte Buff (1753-1828), whom Goethe met and fell in love with when he was twenty-three years old. Charlotte, however, was already engaged to Johann Christian Kestner, and the couple wed in 1772.
Is this sad heart, so cold and vacant, mine?

Enchanting scenes! I know you now no more!
The soft stream winds beneath th’ o’erhanging pine;
Ye shine in summer pride—but mine is o’er.
O could I place my woes in low’ring skies,
In dismal seasons, or capricious care,
In the wild whirl Ambition’s strife supplies,
My tighten’d heart might breathe in freer air.
Wretch that I am! this bosom, once so blest,
Contains the poison, which consumes its peace;
In vain I stretch my arms, and seek for rest;
Dark clouds surround, forbidding all release.
Yes! I must fill the measure of my woes,
And then I find the road, that leads me to repose.

—[“Nature displays all her beauties before me, exhibits the most enchanting scenes, and my heart is unmoved.” Werter, vol. ii, let. lxvi.]
WHERE is that sentiment which warm’d my breast,
Which pour’d around me torrents of delight,
Which brought all paradise before my sight,
And wrapt my soul in visions of the blest!
How often has the wand’ring sea-bird’s flight
Across the vast immeasurable deep,
Borne my free spirit, in its rapid sweep,
Thro’ living waters, and immortal light,
To taste beatitude, where raptures flow.

Oh! how this heart is chang’d!—For blissful dreams
Of life eternal, dim before me gleams
The deep and fathomless abyss of woe,
Where, hurried headlong thro’ the black’ning wave,
Or dash’d upon the rocks, I soon must find my grave.

[“That ardent sentiment which animated my heart with the love of nature, which poured in upon me a torrent of delight, which brought all paradise before me, is now become an insupportable torment.”

Werter, vol. i, let. xxxi.]
IV.

AH! not on me she turn’d her wand’ring eyes!
On me who saw but her, but her alone;
Yet still I thought! Alas! my soul relies
On airy phantoms, when its peace is gone.
Yes! I would go! could this devoted breast
Give back her image? —but in vain I rave :
For ever present, on my brain impress’d,
Her eye’s dark lustre lights me to the grave!
Thus the dead loadstone, on the torrid steep,
Rocks the tall vessel on her straining keel,
Draws from the oozing seams the central steel ;
The masts’ torn fragments drifting on the deep :
Yes! one must perish! Charlotte! be it mine
To give my life, and purchase peace to thine!

[I watched Charlotte’s eyes; they wandered from one to the other, but did not light on me; upon me, who stood there motionless, and who saw nothing but her.”
“You know the story of a mountain of loadstone. When any vessels came near it, the nails flew to the mountain, and the unhappy crew perished amidst the disjointed planks.”

Werter, vol. i, let. xvii, xxv.]
HOWLS the sad wind, amid the torrents drear,

That pour impetuous from the mountain’s brow,
And thro’ incumbent clouds the moon’s wan sphere
Illumes, with scatter’d light, th’ abyss below.

O how the terrors of this fearful night

Bear kindred horrors to my fiery soul!
Should aught but desolation meet my sight?

No! As I mark the flaming tempests roll,
Methinks, to toss the foaming surge on high,

And join the tumult of the warring skies,

Commingled with the wind, my soul could fly,

And soar sublime, beyond her agonies!

And cannot I? —It is not yet my time:

All, all my wishes now are in another clime.

[“It was a gloomy and awful sight, the moon was behind a cloud, but by means of a few scattered rays, I could perceive the foaming waves rolling over the fields and meadows. I drew near to the precipice; I wished and shuddered; I stretched out my arms. I leaned over, I sighed, and lost myself in the happy thought of burying all my sufferings, all my torments, in that abyss, and tossing amidst the waves.”

Werter, vol. ii, let. lxxv.]
VI.

WHY will she look, as if her soul were mine?

Mine? Power Eternal! how my plastic brain
Gives form to shadows, while I seek in vain
For love, where only tears of pity shine.

Alas! she knows not, that her soften’d eyes
Shed deadly poison thro’ my blighted breast.

Oft, while I gaze, and think myself at rest,
As in the morn, that saw my hopes arise;
Ah! then conviction, like the lightning’s flash,
Gleams on the gulf, where all my hopes shall cease;
Dark terror scatters every beam of peace;

And then I fly, to hear the thunder’s crash

On some wild rock: —‘Tis music to my ears,
And lends my swelling heart the luxury of tears.

[“I found her alone, and was silent. She looked steadfastly at me: the fire of genius, the charms of beauty were fled: —but I saw in her countenance an expression much more touching:—the expressions of soft pity, and the tenderest concern.” Werter, vol. ii, let. lxx.]
PIERC’D by the rugged thorn, I burst my way
Thro’ tangled thickets, which oppose in vain;
Would that my streaming blood might now allay
My soul’s deep agony and fever’d brain!
Oft, when the shudd’ring damp my frame benumb,
Shines on my blasted head th’ unclouded moon;
Till, faint with anguish, and with thirst o’ercome,
Amid the silence of the night’s pale noon,
I sink exhausted till the dawn of morn!
O God! the darkest dungeon which entombs
The living victim, or the racking steel
By the last tears of groaning Nature worn,
Were ease to what my ebbing life consumes,
Were bliss and luxury to what I feel!

[I break my way through copses, amongst thorns and briers, which tear me to pieces, and I feel a little relief. Sometimes I lie stretched on the ground, overcome with fatigue, and dying with thirst; sometimes, late in the night, when the moon shines upon my head, I lean against a bending tree in some sequestered forest, and quite worn out and exhausted, I sleep till break of day. The dismal cell, the sackcloth, girdle, with sharp points of iron, would be indulgence and luxury in comparison of what I now suffer.”

Werter, vol. i, let. xxxv.]

In Elegiac Sonnets, Charlotte Smith draws from this same scene in Goethe’s novel. cf. “Sonnet XXII (“To Solitude”) in Appendix D.
YES! it is well: Avenging Heav’n! ‘tis well.

This night—this awful night has strung my soul.
A few short hours, and I shall reach the goal,
And still the storm, I cannot now repel.
O! should stern Virtue’s happier sons deny
To mix their ashes, in a grave with mine;¹
In some lone valley let my relics lie,
Unfollow’d, Charlotte! with a tear—but thine.
And, if a wanderer should chance to stray,
Where deep forgetfulness around me reigns,
And, sadly seated by my bed of clay,
Call down a blessing on my spurn’d remains,
I ask no more.—Let none profane the tomb;
Mysterious silence rest for ever on my doom.

¹ To mix their ashes, in a grave with mine: If Werter commits suicide, he will not be permitted a proper Christian burial in consecrated ground.
I feel, I feel, that all is over now.

My eyes shall never more behold the sun.

Thick fogs involve, and Nature veils her brow,

At the last conflict of a wretch undone.

Like some torn wreck, along the waters driv’n,

And, unresisting, tost from shore to shore;

When midnight darkness shrouds the light of Heav’n,

And angry winds, and raging billows roar,

I rush insensate to the brink of death:

I plunge uncall’d, amid unfathom’d seas.

Thine anguish, Charlotte!—with my latest breath,

I call on Heav’n, to lull thy soul to peace.

And, now be calm,—we meet—we meet again:

And to secure thy peace, I shall not die in vain.

[“For the last last time I now open my eyes. Alas! they will behold the sun no more; a thick and gloomy fog hides it.”

Werter, vol. ii, p. 157.]
‘Tis midnight now,—all silent as the tomb,

Thou sleep’st, my Charlotte! while thy lover dies.

O that one tear would bathe my burning eyes,
And soothe my sullen soul’s tremendous gloom!

Once more, fair star! I hail thy favourite beam ;

Thou shin’st unsullied, on a world of woe,

When gleam the hills, in thy revolving glow,

My soul, reviving, from a troubled dream,

Shall soar, unfetter’d, tho’ the waste of day.

O thou! for whom I liv’d, for whom I die,

Farewel!—farewel!—the awful hour is nigh,

That sees this active heart a clod of clay.

The knell is rung.—Ah, Charlotte! be at peace
And lose my error, in my blest release.

[“Be at peace; let me entreat you, be at peace! They are loaded—the clock strikes twelve—I go Charlotte!—Charlotte! farewell! farewell!”

Werter, vol. ii, p.182.]
VERSES ON AN ILLUMINATION FOR
A NAVAL VICTORY
VERSES ON AN ILLUMINATION.

HARK! ‘tis the note of joy—the trumpet’s voice
Swells in the wind, and bids the world rejoice;
From street to street, in artificial light,
The blaze of torches glitters on the night;
Loud peals of triumph rend the startled sky:
Rejoice! it is the shout of victory;
Yes! tho’ enthron’d upon a thousand graves,
Rejoice! for Conquest rides the crimson’d waves.
Is this a time for triumph and applause,
When shrinking Nature mourns her broken laws?
Wide o’er the bloody scene, while Glory flies
To heap the pile of human sacrifice;
Hid in some dark retreat, the widow weeps
Her heart’s best treasure buried in the deeps;
The frantic mother’s cries of Heaven implore
Some youthful warrior—she shall meet no more:
From the first beam, that wakes the golden day,
To ling’ring twilight’s melancholy ray,
No respite comes, their breaking hearts to cheer,
Or, from the fount of misery, steal a tear!
Rough as the storm that rends the icy seas,
Th’ uncultur’d savage spurns the arts of peace;
Impell’d by hatred, and revenge his guide,
He leaves his native mountain’s shelt’ring side, h
Thro’ trackless deserts holds his bloody way,
With toil unwearied, thro’ the tedious day;
At night, reposing on the blasted heath,
In dreams, his fancy points the stroke of death,
Exults horrific o’er his prostrate foe,
And aims anew the visionary blow.
Starting he wakes—afar he sees a form,
Half-viewless, stalking thro’ the misty storm;
Nearer he comes—his frantic eye-balls glare,
And yells inhuman ring along the air:
They meet, engage—affrighted Nature flies;
A fearful darkness dims the low’ring skies;
Revenge beside them points th’ envenom’d stings,
And Murder shrouds them with his gory wings!

   “Accurs’d the deed!” the Sons of Europe cry,
While the tear starting, trembles in their eye;
Yes! ye may boast, from feeling’s source sublime,
That milder mercy gilds your favour’d clime;
With eager joy, you bid oppression cease,
And lull the jarring universe to peace!
Alas! Humanity would shroud the sight,
And wrap Destruction in his native night;

---

h [A single warrior, prompted by caprice or revenge, will take the field alone, and march several hundred miles to surprise and cut off a straggling enemy.
Rob. Hist. Amer. vol. ii.]

From The History of America (1777) by William Robertson (1721-1793), Scottish historian and principal of the University of Edinburgh. The passage quoted by Bannerman actually appears in Volume IV of Robertson’s history (See page 187 of Robertson’s History of America, Complete in One Volume).
With breasts begirt with steel, in dread array,
The glitt’ring legions flash upon the day;
Brothers in Science, at the trumpet’s sound,
Like demons meet, and scatter death around.
Unmov’d they stand, and view the living tide
Pour, with a torrent’s force, on every side.
On Andes’\(^1\) cliffs, untutor’d Murder low’rs,
But all his keener, deadlier arts—are ours.

O! could some Spirit, from the fields of day,
To this fair planet wing his vent’rous way,
Inhale the freshness of the vernal breeze,
And mark the sun, reflected in the seas,
View where, abundant, on a thousand shores,
The waving harvests yield their golden stores;
Gay Beauty smiling in the sweets of morn,
The op’ning violet, and the flow’ring thorn,
Th’ expanding fields of every varied hue,
And the clear concave of unclouded blue!

Then let Him\(^2\) stand, where hostile armies join,
By the red waters of the rushing Rhine,\(^3\)
Amid thick darkness, hear the trumpets blow,
And the last shriek of Nature quiver low;
Mark the full tide of Desolation spread,

---

\(^1\) *Andes*: Mountain range along the west coast of South America.

\(^2\) *Him*: i.e. the “Spirit” introduced in line 55.

\(^3\) *Rhine*: Major European river, which forms part of the borders between Germany, Switzerland, France, and Austria.
And count, at eve, the dying and the dead:
How would he pause! How seek, in vain, to find
Some trace, in Man, of an immortal mind;
Man, who can glory in a scene like this,
Yet look to brighter worlds, for endless bliss!

O! for a lodge,\(^1\) where Peace might love to dwell,
In some sequester’d, solitary dell!
Some fairy isle, beyond the Southern wave,
Where War ne’er led his victims to the grave;
Where, mid the tufted groves, when twilight pale
Peoples with shadowy forms the dewy dale,
The lone Enthusiast, wrapt in trance sublime,
Might soar, unfetter’d by the bounds of time;
Might bask in Fancy’s reign, where scenes appear
Of blooms perpetual, thro’ the vernal year;
Where heav’nly odours scent the zephyr’s wing,
And fruits and flow’rs, in wild luxuriance spring!

Such were the dreams, that sooth’d the pensive breast,
And lull’d the soul to visionary rest;
Such were the scenes, the poet’s fancy drew,
While Rapture hail’d the moments, as they flew:
Till mad Ambition bade the battle rage,
And Man with Man eternal warfare wage.

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\(^1\) [“O! for a lodge in some vast wilderness,
Some boundless contiguity of shade.” *Cowper’s Task.*]

William Cowper (1731-1800). English poet and precursor of Romantic poetry on account of his meditative preoccupations with nature and rural life. *The Task* was his most popular poem and was first published in 1785. The lines Bannerman quotes are the opening lines of Book II.
Ah! did our years thro’ circling ages flow,
Or Fate secure the heart from private woe;
Did strength for ever in the arm reside,
Or the firm frame retain its youthful pride;
The eye that saw th’ embattled hosts extend,
Might also hope to see their discord end;
The heart, which Sorrow never taught to feel,
Might point, with surer aim, th’ avenging steel:
Ah! when a few short years have roll’d away,
The foes shall rest, unjarring, in the clay.
The Tartar-Chief,⁴ expiring on the plain,
Amid the multitudes his arm has slain,
Yields his fierce soul, ere half his years are run,
And ends his fiery course, when scarce begun.
The polish’d youth, whom Europe rears to arms,
And Glory flatters, with deceitful charms,
Chills each fine impulse of the glowing soul,
And, pressing onward to the laurel’d goal,
Forgets that feeling ever warm’d his breast,
Or pity pleaded for the heart opprest.

All hail, ye joys! to genuine feeling dear,
The heart’s warm transport, and the gushing tear!
Welcome the sigh, and from Pity’s altar stole,
Ye calm the tumult of the troubled soul.
O! on whatever shore, by fortune cast,
My shatter’d bosom finds a home at last;

⁴ Tartar-Chief: Leader in the Turkish Army, which formerly occupied the Russian Empire.
Whatever ills, in Sorrow’s ample reign,
May wring my heart, with aggravated pain;
Still, at those hours, when, hush’d in deep repose,
The happy lose their joys, the sad their woes,
May fancy lead me to the desert steep,
Stupendous frowning o’er the sullen deep;
To hear the shipwreck’d mariner deplore
His doom relentless, on the rocky shore!
Even when the winds their awful fury urge,
And, heap’d like mountains, raves the foaming surge,
Less dread the terrors of the turbid main,
Than Carnage, stalking o’er th’ ensanguined plain!

And ye, who, bending o’er the untimely urn,
Will see nor joy, nor happiness return;
Thro’ your chang’d homes, who wildly seek in vain
For those who slumber in the stormy main;
May piercing Anguish spare his arrows keen,
And Pity soothe you, as ye weep unseen!
May peace pervade, where faithful sorrow reigns,
And charm the grief, that not an eye profanes!
Ah! think, tho’ ling’ring years unblest decay,
To troubled night succeeds untroubled day!
Time’s feeble barrier bounds the painful course,
But joy shall reign, eternal as its Source.
SONNETS FROM PETRARCH &c.\textsuperscript{j}

\textsuperscript{j} The original text included an endnote ['j'] after the title for this next section, which then led to individual notes on each of the translated poems. Rather than simply omit it here, I have preserved it to avoid confusion and to prevent readers from assuming a letter or footnote had been omitted when they encounter the ‘k’ footnote for “The Nun.”
WHEN welcome slumber locks my torbid frame,

I see thy spirit\(^1\) in the midnight dream;

Thine eyes, that still in living lustre beam,

In all, but frail mortality the same.

Ah! then, from earth and all its sorrows free,

Methinks I meet thee, in each former scene,

Once the sweet shelter of a heart serene,

Now vocal only, while I weep for thee.

For thee? ah no! from human ills secure,

Thy hallow’d soul exults in endless day.

‘Tis I, who linger on the toilsome way;

No balm relieves the anguish I endure,

Save the fond, feeble hope, that thou art near,

To soothe my sufferings with an angel’s tear.

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\(^1\) thy spirit: Laura, to whom Petrarch dedicated over three-hundred sonnets, collected in the *Rime Sparse* (*Scattered Rhymes*), or *Il Canzoniere* (*Song Book*). Possibly Laura de Noves (1310-1348), however, her actual identity has never been confirmed. With her fair skin, blonde hair, and blue eyes, Petrarch’s descriptions of Laura contributed to subsequent stereotypes and idealizations of feminine beauty.
MOV’D by the summer wind, when all is still,
   The light leaves quiver on the yielding spray;
Sighs from its flow’ry banks the lucid rill,
   While the birds answer in their sweetest lay.
Vain to this sick’ning heart these scenes appear;
   No form but hers can meet my tearful eyes;
In every passing gale her voice I hear;
   It seems to tell me, “I have heard thy sighs.”
“But why,” she cries, “in Manhood’s tow’ring prime,
   In Grief’s dark mist thy days, inglorious, hide!
Ah! dost thou murmur, that thy span of Time
   Has join’d Eternity’s unchanging tide?
Yes! tho’ I seem’d to shut mine eyes in night,
   They only clos’d to wake, in everlasting light.”

° Se lamentar augelli, o verdi fronde, &c.       Pet. Son. XI.

This sonnet was previously translated by Charlotte Smith (1749-1806) as “Sonnet XV” in *Elegiac Sonnets* (1784). Subtitled “From Petrarch,” the opening lines are: “Where the green leaves exclude the summer beam, / And softly bend as balmy breezes blow.”

The poem was also translated by Barbarina Brand, Lady Dacre (1768-1854) in *Dramas, Translations and Occasional Poems* in 1821. The opening lines of Lady Dacre’s translation are as follows: “If the lorn bird complain, or rustling sweep / Soft summer airs o’er foliage waving slow.”
WHERE now the beauty of that heav’nly face?

In vain I seek what I shall meet no more!

Fled the pure soul, that wak’d to life before
Each tender smile, and animated grace:

For never now shall thy bewitching tongue

Revive my weary spirit, woe-deprest;

Or lull again to transitory rest

This heart, so many agonies have wrung.

O! as the ling’ring years of life decay

Beneath keen Sorrow’s unrelenting pow’r,

No peace I find, save when, in Fancy’s hour,

With thee I wander thro’ cerulean day,

And taste fond pleasure as I see thee shine,

And as I think thee, tho’ immortal, mine.

° [Discolorato hai, Morte, il più bel volto, &c. "Pet. Son. XV." ]
IV.

YES! mid the blissful band, in yonder skies,
   I see her lovely, as in former days:
Soft pity trembles in her humid eyes,
   And veils the lustre of the seraph’s blaze.
“Here too,” she cries, “when life’s rude blast is o’er,
   If virtue shrink not at the syren’s voice,
Here shalt thou rest with me to part no more,
   And in unsullied happiness rejoice!
Rejoice? And can the soul immers’d in clay,
   Conceive the raptures, that inspire the blest!
For thee I wait.—Ah! tho’ I fled away,
   Let heav’nly hope illume thy darken’d breast.”
Why was she silent, when my soaring soul
Already touch’d th’ anticipated goal!

° [Levommi il mio pensier’ in parte ov’era, &c. Pet. Son. XXXIV.]
V.°

AT THE SEPULCHRE OF PETRARCH.

FROM LAZZARINI DI MORRO.¹

WHAT lingering years have fled, since first I hung
With youthful rapture o’er thy hallow’d urn!
Yet still I wander where that lyre was strung,
Yet still in hoary age to thee I turn.
Even in this time-chill’d heart where no return
Of new-born life shall rouse the expiring flame;
Warm in its pristine youth, nor faint, nor worn
Glows the first transport which awak’d thy name.
That soul sublime, whose ever-living living fires
Shed on my early days their fairy bloom;
Now, on my tottering age, when Hope retires
Lends its sweet lustre to beguile the gloom:
O that my spirit, which to thine aspires,
Like thine could live, and triumph o’er the tomb.

¹ Domenico Lazzarini di Morrovale (c.1668-c.1736) was an Italian poet and dramatist active during the first half of the eighteenth-century. According to Walker, Domenico Lazzarini was elected Professor of Eloquence at the University of Padua in 1710. He was also the author of a tragedy entitled Ulise il giovane (The Young Ulysses), which first appeared in 1719, a comedy The Sienese (1734), and Osservazioni sopra la Merope, which appeared posthumously in 1743. (In Greek myth, Merope is one of the seven Pleiades, or daughters of Atlas and Pleione. The seven sisters are eventually transformed into a cluster of stars).
VI.

FROM OSSIAN.

SHOOK in the whistling wind, that sweeps by night,

    Waves the dark thorn upon the twilight hill;
    Hark! thro’ the murmuring leaves, that shiver still,
Some spirit rustles, in its airy flight.
For oft, in wintry storms, the eddying blast,

    Bears, on its viewless wings, the shadowy dead;
    When the faint moon conceals her pallid head,
Amid the darkness of th’ unfathom’d vast.
O! hear me, voices of the days of old!

    I hear not you, departed sons of song!
    Say, do ye sweep the lyre, the clouds among?
Or, in the morning mist aerial roll’d,

    Glide the green ocean’s foamy breast along,
    When gleam the sun-beat waves in liquid gold?

[Green thorn of the hill of ghosts, &c.  
Ossian, Temora, Book viii.]
THE NUN.\textsuperscript{k}

\textsuperscript{k} [To remove the only obstacle to a sister’s marriage, Cecilia gives up her patrimony, and retires to take the vows in a convent of Provence; but previously to her profession, an unexpected fortune restores her to the world. In “The Nun” the story is so far altered, that the heroine completes her sacrifice.


Bannerman’s 1807 endnote on “The Nun” is much shorter than the original full-page commentary that appeared on the page facing the poem in the 1800 edition.

_Cecile, ou le Sacrifice de l’Amitié* (1780) by Stéphanie Félicité du Crest de Saint-Aubin, Comtesse de Genlis (1746-1830). French writer and educator, known primarily for didactic morality plays and works for children. Madame de Genlis issued *Théâtre d’éducation* in four volumes between 1779 and 1780. All four volumes were translated to English and published by T. Cadell in 1781. The English translation of the play is titled, “Cecilia, or the Sacrifice of Friendship, A Comedy.”
THE NUN.

Yes! it is done; the frightful conflict’s o’er;
And peace is fled,—to visit me no more.
Immur’d for ever in this living tomb,
How my soul sickens at her hated doom!
—Ye darksome caverns, misery’s black abode,
Where tears of anguish praise th’ insulted God;
Ye waving pines, that brave the midnight air,
To you I breathe the accents of despair,
On your deaf ear the tale of sorrow pour,
Till death shall bring to all my woes—a cure.

Eternal Friendship! dare I turn mine eyes
To thy pure shrine, yet mourn the sacrifice?
O! Sister of my soul! I seek you here;
In vain I seek you, thro’ caverns drear;
Falsely I triumph’d, when I bade adieu
To social life, to happiness,—to you.
Tho’ on my face delusive pleasure shone,
And Peace sat, smiling, on a falling throne,
While not a pang betray’d internal smart,
The scorpion anguish stung me to the heart.

Ne’er shall the hour, with keenest horror fraught,
By time be banish’d from my aching thought,
When clos’d the massy gates, with hollow sound,
And lock’d me, shuddering, in their dreary bound.
“These walls,” I cried, “I never pass again :”
And nature shiver’d through each chilly vein.
Grim as the grave, before my troubled eyes
I saw the giant form of terror rise ;
Breathless I listen’d for some cheering sound ;
And the wind howl’d the vaulted caves around.

Ye frowning cliffs, whose hoary tops sublime
For ever mock the ravages of time!
When the wild tempest sweeps each awful height,
And warring elements convulse the night,
In all the tearless horror of despair,
I turn, to witness desolation there :
Sullen, I trace the lightnings, as they fly,
And hail the thunder’s stroke, that rends the sky ;
I hear the Var\(^1\) re-bellow to his source,
And bless the heaving storm’s tyrannic force.

The groaning Exile, mid Siberian snows,
Feels distant freedom cheer surrounding woes ;
Weary and faint, at eve, his shivering form
Sustains the fury of the polar storm ;
To guide him on his way, no glimmering light,
With ray benignant, breaks the gloom of night ;
No faithful partner, breathless with her fears,
Welcomes the wand’rer, with a flood of tears ;

---

\(^1\) *Var*: River in Southeastern France.
To lull his sick’ning spirit to repose,
Around, horrific, howl his shaggy foes.
Still Fancy dreams, for Hope assists her flight,
Of scenes far distant, of renew’d delight;
Again, with rapture’s swelling tide oppress’d,
He clasps his children to his burning breast,
Again he rushes to a friend’s embrace,
And feels the big tears bathe his grief-worn face:
—The pathless desert, lock’d in endless frost,
The long long prospect of the shipless coast,
Forgotten all; fair freedom’s magic power
Can lull his sorrows, in their fiercest hour;
A few short months to drag the iron chain,
And triumph leads him to the world again.
But me, no hope shall soothe, no time release,
No promis’d freedom give me back my peace.
Should these dim walls, these galling fetters bind,
In endless slav’ry, the reluctant mind?
No! Heaven’s immortal light shall shine on those,
Whose lips ne’er utter what their hearts oppose;
For them shall Piety, on seraph wings,
Waft bliss unmingled, from Elysian\(^2\) springs;
Hush’d at the midnight hour to balmy rest,
Their guiltless souls commingle with the blest;
By rapture borne, they pierce the incumbent night,
And lave\(^3\) in yielding seas of liquid light.

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\(^2\) *Elysian*: beautiful, glorious, heavenly. In Greek mythology, Elysium is the abode of the blessed dead.

\(^3\) *Lave*: to bathe, to immerse.
To yonder distant wood of shadowy pine,
When peace, and health, and liberty, were mine,
Oft have I wander’d, pensive, to behold
The sun departing tinge the clouds with gold:
Wrapt in the music of the sighing wind,
All joys alike, and sorrows left behind,
My soul, unconscious of her earthly frame,
Has kindled rapture at devotion’s flame:
Or, in the mimic woes that fancy drew,
I heard affection sigh the last adieu;
I trac’d the spirit to her native skies;
And tears of mix’d emotion dimm’d mine eyes.—
Thro’ the dark grating of my casement low,
I mark the sinking sun’s impurpled glow;
Immortal verdure crowns the waving woods,
And, clear as crystal, gush the mountain floods;
Celestial balm from every flower exhales,
And Heaven’s own breath perfumes the summer gales:
Afar the ocean’s whit’ning billows shine,
They charm no more,—but ah! the change is mine.

And thou, for whom my faithless love resign’d
Each happier vision of my youthful mind;
To save whose peace, I gave my own away,
And chas’d from life each pleasurable ray!
Could thy fond eye this midnight cell explore,

3 Lave: To wash or bathe.
These walls re-echoing to the torrent’s roar;
How wouldst thou mourn, that, yielding to my pray’r,
Thou gav’st thy Sister to eternal care!
—Methinks I hear thee at my fate rejoice,
And bless the quiet of my hallow’d choice.
O! spare me, Heaven! my fainting frame sustain;
The pray’r of misery can ne’er be vain:
Why will thy ministers, with cruel art,
Tear its last shelter from a broken heart?
Pure was the awful sacrifice it made;
Hard fate impos’d the task, and Friendship paid.
Ah! had it falter’d, less severely firm,
And, trembling, shudder’d at the first alarm,
To selfish joy confin’d its fervent glow,
What guilt had spar’d its peace, what lasting woe!
   Proud that I was! I bade my soul aspire,
And catch from heav’n the animating fire,
In virtue’s race th’ eternal path pursue,
Nor saw I follow’d, but as Feeling drew.
Thine is this cheek, where grief’s untimely tears
Have worn the furrows of autumnal years:
Thine is the ceaseless storm, that rends my soul,
And drives sick reason to distraction’s goal:
O! mid the varied woes, that heap thy shrine,
May none e’er pay an offering like mine!
May none e’er covet thy bewitching joys!
Hard is the purchase, and unwise the choice.
One blissful tear thro’ rapture’s channel flows,
And thousands stream o’er wounds which never close.
   Alas! while all around, in freedom gay,
Exult, unfetter’d, in the face of day,
In this dim sepulchre I hide my head;
The gloom, but not the quiet of the dead:
And view, for thousands share my lot severe,
How mad the aims of human kind appear!
Ah! could they think, while Commerce crowds their shores,
With ev’ry diff’rent clime’s exhaustless stores,
While all the arts their varied powers combine,
To lavish gifts on cultivation’s shrine,
That He, whose mercy gave this earthly ball,
With plenty stor’d, impartially, to all,
Will weigh, in equal balance, ev’ry soul,
From Afric’s deserts to the freezing pole:
One tear of anguish wip’d from misery’s eye,
One heave, responsive to the sufferer’s sigh,
Will raise their owner’s unobtrusive name
Above the proudest boast of mortal fame.
   But what have I to do, intomb’d below,
And drinking to the dregs the cup of woe,
To paint their bliss, to whom the hand of heav’n,
The glorious power of doing good has giv’n!
Once I had hop’d, —this bosom then was warm,
And life had many a tie, and many a charm;
Once I had wish’d,—gay Hope his pinions spread;
I turn’d to grasp;—the heavenly vision fled.

What tho’ the soul, indignant, spurn her chain,
And fly, uncurb’d thro’ Fancy’s wide domain;
To real life, at last, her flight must come,
And flutter round the happy scene of home.

Yes! ye dank cells, o’ergrown with hoary mould,
The only home I ever shall behold!
To you I come, from skies of cloudless light,
From scenes of pure and ever-gay delight.

—Here, as I sit and weep, unheard, unknown,
Save while the echoes give me back my moan,
My weary spirit seeks another scene,
Nor bars, nor chains, can interpose between.

Far o’er the bosom of th’ Atlantic waves,
Where fierce, thro’ trackless wilds, the tempest raves,
Unpolish’d Nature holds her throne sublime,
And rears the children of her fav’rite clime;
Wild as the desolate, uncultur’d soil,
She strings each nerve, to vigour and to toil;
Fearless, amid the unfathom’d gulfs, they play,
Or, thro’ the swampy fens, explore their way,
Trace the fierce cataract to its foaming source,
Nor ask a partner, in their dang’rous course;
Alone the savage stands: —His giant soul,
Indignant, mocks the shadow of control;
Each softer glow his bosom scorns to own;
He rests enjoyment on himself alone.
To hearts less callous, souls of softer form,
Within the circle of the Arctic storm,
I turn, to Iceland’s melancholy shore,
And sigh, that liberty is mine no more.
Pale from his wint’ry cave, the native braves
The rattling tumult of the crashing waves,
Unwearied, till the light’s departing ray
Flings her long shadows on the wat’ry way;
Swift thro’ the icy heaps, with daring keel,
He drives his boat against the diving seal.
Or when, outstretched upon the frozen deep,
He marks the shaggy bear, in awful sleep,
Shudd’ring, he winds along the ice-pil’d rock,
And whelms his cruel foe, with mortal stroke.
At night, returning to his shelt’ring cave,
Affection hails him, weary from the wave.
Within, contentment cheers the happy scene,
Prompts the sweet smile, and smooths the brow serene,
Hard and laborious tho’ his lot may be,
Still, still, his heart can tell him—he is free!

On Europe’s plains, I rest my wearied eyes;
Yes! light celestial gilds the favour’d skies.
Each finer feeling of the ennobled mind,
Each thought, by science and by taste refin’d,
Each purer enterprise, to virtue dear,
And all the arts of polish’d life, are here.
Here too, religion rears the mimic tomb,
And shrouds the suff’rer in a dungeon’s gloom;
Enwra’t in superstition’s iron chains,
How the blood rushes thro’ my shivering veins!
The sick’ning spirit wears the powers away,
Which Genius kindled with his brightest ray.
Mistrust and guile, in every frightful cell,
Usurp the place, where piety should dwell;
The heart, affection soothisd with many a tear,
By harshness broken, ends its sorrows here.

O Power Eternal! while, thine arm sustains
This ample world, and yonder starry plains;
Shall man, with impious hand, thy mercy bind,
And rule at pleasure o’er an equal mind;
Throughout the bleeding earth extend his fame,
And shield his crimes beneath thine awful Name?
‘Twas here, in former times, religion pour’d
The blood of thousands on the insatiate sword:
And now, ev’n now, upon a sister shore,
How long, humanity! shalt thou deplore
That dread Tribunal, horror’s darkest cave,
Where ruthless murder heaps the midnight grave?
But here must Nature pause;—the arm of Time
May root these terrors from the groaning clime;
May tear from Superstition’s torturing hand,
The bloody ensigns of her black command;
Call the pale victims to the light of day,
To peace, to Mercy’s tolerating sway.
Meantime, like some sad wreck, by tempests blown,
Forlorn and desolate, I stand alone.—
O’er the wild deep, the heaving vessel rides,
Around, destruction heaps the adverse tides;
Till the sunk rock receives the fated prey,
And ruin stalks upon the wat’ry way.

The dream is o’er! —within my troubled breast,
The grasp of pain unlocks the gates of rest.
I feel, while Nature stems the burning tide,
Thro’ ev’ry vein the deadly poison glide.
O Death! what dark and melancholy muse
Has hung thine altar with unhallow’d yews?
Bring every flower, that scents the southern skies,
Or glows in beauty in unnumber’d dyes,
With deathless amaranth⁴ the wreath entwine;
These grateful hands shall deck th’ unheeded shrine.

How oft, when ling’ring twilight’s welcome ray
Has clos’d the circle of a tedious day;
To-morrow’s sun my swelling spirit cries,
May wing thee, happy, to unclouded skies,
May see thee shelter’d from the storms of time,
And sooth’d to lasting peace, in bliss sublime.

Thus, in those mansions of relentless toils,
Whence Nature, shudd’ring at the sight, recoils;
The wretched miner hails the swift decay,
That, inly working, steals his life away.—

⁴ Amaranth: A mythical flower that never fades or withers.
Hark! the loud voice of tyranny appals,
And his faint frame to endless labour calls;
As slow he moves, the rifted rocks below,
Where pestilential gales for ever blow,
Sudden, before his dim and less’ning sight,
Descend the thick’ning shades of deepest night;
O’er his pale front, the vapour’s mortal breath
Spreads the last hectic, and the dews of death.
He sinks—The quiv’ring spirit tow’rs away,
And meets the splendor of eternal day.

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5 *Hectic:* fever, consumption.
ORIGINAL SONNETS.
I.

THE WATCHMAN.

FROM some rude rock, that o’erhangs the deep,
When the low winds proclaim the autumnal storm,
And murm’ring sounds along the waters sweep,
Where the lone lighthouse lifts its spiral form;
I mark, between the blast’s infuriate\(^1\) fits,
The gleaming taper’s solitary ray,
And fancy wanders, where the Watchman sits,
With fearful heart, to view the lightning’s play
Upon the surface of the gloomy waves;
As burst the thunders on his rocking tower,
And at its foot the mining ocean raves;
Appall’d, he listens thro’ the midnight hour,
And calls on Heav’n:—The billows urge their way,
Upheave the rooted base, and all is swept away.

\(^1\) *Infuriate*: “excited to fury, enraged” [OED].
II.

THE SOLDIER.

WITH swelling heart I hear thy stifled sigh,

Poor time-worn vet’ran! on thy hoary head
Beats the keen fury of the winter’s sky,

And slow thou mov’st, “to beg thy bitter bread,” 1

While heaves impetuous thine indignant breast ;

O! when the vessel cut the Atlantic foam,
And bore thee, sick, and wounded, and opresst,

Then rush’d thy fancy on the scene of home ;
On all its guiltless pleasures ;—her, who chas’d

With looks of anxious tenderness, thy woes.

Eternal Heav’n! that home—a dreary waste!

And the cold grave, where thy fond hopes repose,
Were all that met thee on thy native soil,

And all thy country gave, for years of blood and toil.

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1 An allusion to The Complaint: or, Night-Thoughts on Life, Death, & Immortality by Edward Young (1683-1765). An important example of the “graveyard school” of contemplative elegiac poetry, Night Thoughts was published in nine volumes between 1742 and 1745. The passage Bannerman alludes to appears in Night I:

Some for hard masters, broken under arms,
In battle lopt away, with half their limbs,
Beg bitter bread thro’ realms their valour saved. (l. 248-50)
III.

THE NORWEGIAN.

When doubtful twilight dims the polar noon,

And rays, reflected from the mountains, glow,

Against the rising of the winter moon,

The cold Norwegian from involving snow

Clears his frail bark:—and, when the first faint ray

Shines on the billow’s ice-encumber’d foam,

Fearless he launches on his trackless way,

And on the stormy ocean hails his home.

When o’er his head, upon the misty height,

The harsh sea-eagle rears her airy nest,

And cheers, with clamours rude, the boreal night;

No thrilling rapture swells his simple breast,

From all the glories, rushing on his eye,

The awful sweep of waves, and star-encircled sky.

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1 Involving: Encompassing.

2 Boreal: “Of or pertaining to the north wind” [OED].
IV.

TO THE OWL.¹

Herald of night and storm! save thine alone
No other accents wake the sullen gloom,
As from thy nest, within the sculptur’d tomb,
Thou pour’st to midnight thy portentous moan.

Amid the howlings of the northern blast,
Thou lov’st to mingle thy discordant scream,
Which to the visionary mind may seem
To call the sufferer to eternal rest.
And sometimes, with the Spirit of the deep,
Thou swell’st the roarings of the stormy waves;
While, rising shroudless from their wat’ry graves,
Aerial forms along the billows sweep.

Hark! loud, and louder still, the tempest raves;—
And still I hear thee from the dizzy steep.

¹ Originally published in issue no. 11 of the Edinburgh Magazine (February 1798) under the pseudonym of Augusta, and first collected in Poems (1800). The first four lines of the poem have been significantly revised for Poems, A New Edition.
HUSH’D are thy stormy waves, tempestuous main!

Light o’er thy surface sports the genial air!

Ah! who would think, that danger lurks within,

That ev’n thy murmurings seem to say—beware.

To my corroded mind, destructive deep!

Thy smiling aspect only brings despair,

Reminds me, when angry whirlwind’s sweep

Along thy bosom, now so calm, so fair.

Reminds me, when unpitying and untrue,

On the sunk rock thou driv’st the fated bark,

Whelm’st in thy wat’ry breast the luckless crew,

And smil’st delighted in a scene so dark.

Such are thy dreadful trophies, ruthless main!

What are thy triumphs—but another’s pain!
VI.¹

Is there a spot, in Nature’s wide domain,
   Where Peace delights her fair abode to rear?
Where the sad heart shall never sigh again,
   Nor the dimm’d eye be sullied with a tear?
Yes! to the sick’ning soul, by woes oppress’d,
   And doom’d the pride of ignorance to bear,
Ev’n in this world there is one place of rest,
   One sure asylum from corroding care.
Keen blows the wint’ry wind, and beats the rain,
   And o’er its grassy roof the thunders rave; —
But warring elements essay in vain,
   To wake the slumb’ring tenant of the grave;
And tempests keener than the troubled air
Alike are powerless and unheeded there!

¹ In the 1800 edition, this poem appears after the next untitled sonnet.
VII.

SOFT thro’ the woodland sighs the summer gale,
With many a hue the verdant landscape glows,
And, breathing sweets along the cultur’d vale,
Steals the fresh fragrance of the blushing rose.
The roaring billows of the stormy deep,
Hush’d to repose, their hostile rage forbear;
And the low winds on the calm surface sleep,
Cooling the ardour of the noontide air.
No summer scenes, alas! no vermil bloom
Soothe the sick soul, by every ill opress’d;
To wander, cheerless, thro’ the midnight gloom,
To brave the terrors of the wint’ry blast,
Whose swelling gusts ideal woes impart,
Are scenes more fitted—to a suffering heart.
THRO’ the long grass, that shrouds the lonely grave,

When bleak at eve the gusts of winter blow,
I love to mark thy gloomy branches wave,
And bend, lamenting, o’er the dust below.

Hush’d every accent, save the tempest’s moan,
That waves the tall weeds on the mould’ring sod:
Thou, faithful partner of the tomb! alone
Wilt own thy master, in his last abode.
Blest be thy shade, in endless verdure\(^1\) blest,
And hallow’d every foot, that lingers near!

Ah! when the turf shall on my bosom rest,
Still may’st thou murmur, ‘mid the silence drear,
To soothe, when ev’n affection shall decay,
And leave the slumberer, to his kindred clay!

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\(^1\) *Verdure*: Green plants, flourishing vegetation.
IX.

IN some deep solitude’s romantic breast,
   Beneath the azure of unchanging skies,
O that the weary soul could sink to rest,
   And lose for ever all her miseries!
Yes! I have found the tale of Hope untrue,
   And youth’s depictur’d happiness a dream.
Alas! while fancy as the vision flew,
   Threw on the passing pomp the transient beam;
Had some prophetic accents reach’d mine ear,
   “Beware, fond fool! it dazzles, to betray!
Soon shall the heart-wrung sigh, and gushing tear,
   Chase the fair promise of thy life away :”
My soul has stifled her expanding glow,
   Nor, sought for rapture, to encounter woe.
GOOD FRIDAY.¹

ALL, all is finish’d!² From that cross of pain

*His* last expiring gaze in mercy gleams:—
Rent is the mystic veil of power in twain,
   And light in thickest darkness shrouds his beams.
Then bow’d thy sacred head, thou sent of God!
   Ev’n in its last disgrace, our form to share ;
Hallowing for evermore that dread abode
   Whence Nature shrunk in doubt—or despair.
Shall mortal homage now, the Might that bow’d
   From highest heaven to earth, with tears bewail?
Rather let deep Hosannas shout aloud,—
   Rather let pealing adorations hail
The kingly Victor, who descended here
That trembling penitence no more might fear.

¹ First published in *The Poetical Register and Repository of Fugitive Poetry for 1803* on p. 166. A footnote indicates that Bannerman composed the poem in April of 1803.

² *All is finish’d:* cf. John 19:30: “So when Jesus had received the sour wine, He said, “It is finished!” And bowing His head, He gave up His spirit.”
XI.

EASTER.¹

His kingdom comes! Reveal’d as now, from high
Shall Earth again behold her Judge return;
When Faith shall worship, with adoring eye,
The blest effulgence of celestial morn.
Bursting the grave He comes—the First that rose—
Pledge of immortal life to them that sleep!
Pledge of dominion o’er the last of foes,
“That they who sow in tears, in joy shall reap.”²
Yes! they shall reap joy, e’en now who bear
Life’s fitful storm, or wait the king of fears!
When That transcendent glory stoop’d to wear
Death’s icy fetters, whose eternal years
Had seen the advent of created Time;
Shall man reluctant bow, to purchase bliss sublime?

¹ This poem also first appeared in The Poetical Register and Repository of Fugitive Poetry for 1803 on p. 167.
² Psalm 126:5: “They that sow in tears shall reap in joy.”
TO ROBERT ANDERSON, M.D. 1

WITH A COPY OF THE FIRST EDITION OF THE AUTHOR’S POEMS.

LAUNCH’D on that gulfy sea, whose restless tide,
The myriad voices of Opinion guide;
Amid the warring waves and tempest’s roar,
With eye reverting to the parted shore,
This one faint tribute to that Mind I pay,
Whose friendship smooth’d the perils of the way;
To youth’s unsteady breast decision brought,
Calm’d the rude fear, and nerv’d the timid thought.

Nor will thine eye, which trac’d the halo’d blaze
Around the altars of departed days!
Mark’d the first beams of genius quiver bright
Thro’ the long mist of ages and of night!
Turn from the page, where no attendant Power

1 According to a review of the 1800 edition of Poems published in The British Critic, the volume “offers itself to the world in a plain, simple, and modest garb, without any ostentatious promise of title-page, or vain parade of preface; and is merely addressed to a friend, in the following chaste and beautiful lines.” The review then reprints the poem dedicated to Robert Anderson in its entirety (p. 139). However, the facsimile of the 1800 volume I obtained from the British Library does not include the poem to Anderson. As far as I have been able to discover, the poem first appeared in the British Critic, and was then collected in Poems, A New Edition.

Dr. Robert Anderson (1750-1830) was an author, editor, and critic from Edinburgh. Anderson was the editor of the Edinburgh Magazine, and spent over fifteen years preparing The Works of the British Poets, with Prefaces Biographical and Critical in 14 volumes (1792–1807). Anderson was one of the primary champions of Bannerman’s work.
Breath’d inspiration in his tranced hour.

Yet tho’ no light from heav’n hath wak’d to day
The immortal shell, impervious to decay;
If one faint murmur of the trembling strings
Arrest fair Poesy’s receding wings;
Round the weak chords attract the transient flame;
‘Tis all I hop’d to gain—and all I claim.
TO MISS BAILLIE,\footnote{Joanna Baillie (1762-1851). Scottish poet and playwright. Her first volume, Poems, appeared in 1790, followed by three volumes of Plays on the Passions in 1798, 1802, and 1812. A presentation copy of this poem was sent to Baillie in late May or early June of 1800. Baillie responded to Bannerman with a letter dated June 9th 1800, which appears in Appendix C.}

ON THE PUBLICATION OF HER FIRST VOLUME OF PLAYS
ON THE PASSIONS

WHEN Genius, bursting from the depth of night,
Unfurl’d his wings, and rear’d his giant height,
Dispell’d the gloom that hid the solar ray,
And call’d the Muses from their seats of day,
One mighty demi-god his spirit rais’d,
And wondering Britain on her Shakespeare gaz’d!—\footnote{Shakespeare: Baillie was frequently compared favorably to Shakespeare. Sir Walter Scott referred to Baillie as "the best dramatic writer since the days of Shakespeare and Massinger" (Familiar Letters p.99). In her autobiography, Harriet Martineau (1802-1876) claims that Baillie “enjoyed a fame almost without parallel, and…that she was second only to Shakespeare” (358).}

Hark! the deep shell—on every concord\footnote{concord: “A state of peace and amity between contending parties or nations” [OED]} rings
The war of nations, and the fate of kings;
Or slow vibrations wake the softer tones,
And tranced Love the pausing cadence owns.

Here hast thou stood to watch, with terror pale,
The unbodied shadow in the armed mail!\footnote{The unbodied shadow in the armed mail: the ghost of Banquo in Shakespeare’s Macbeth (Act III, Scene IV).}
To view, while horror thrill’d each freezing vein,
The sleeping murd’ress wipe the crimson stain.
There in the charmed isle thy musing feet
Have cross’d the Spirit in his green retreat,
To catch the tale ecstatic Love reveals,
When the clear moon-beam on the ocean steals.

Warm from those visions of eternal hue
Thy daring hand the soul of Monfort drew!
That fearful pause amid the deepening wood,
When still as death the dread assassin stood;
When chilly Silence trod the wild alone,
And Nature hid her face—till all was done.

Or in that lonely cave where frantic Woe
And blasted Honour aim’d the mortal blow,

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5 *horror thrill’d each freezing vein*: In “On the Supernatural In Poetry,” the popular gothic novelist Ann Radcliffe (1764-1823) offers a clear distinction between terror and horror: “Terror and horror are so far opposite, that the first expands the soul, and awakens the faculties to a high degree of life; the other contracts, freezes, and nearly annihilates them” (p.XXX). Radcliffe’s essay was published posthumously in 1826, but it was likely written sometime in 1799 or 1800. Radcliffe’s commentary on the physical and debilitating effects of horror had not been made public when Bannerman’s poem was written.

6 *The sleeping murd’ress*: Lady Macbeth. A reference to her famous “out, damned spot” soliloquy, from Act V, scene I of *Macbeth*, when she imagines that her hands are stained with blood.

7 *charmed isle*: Scotland.

8 *Monfort*: De Monfort, the main character of the third and final play in the first edition of Baillie’s *Plays on the Passions*, who is undone by his obsessive and irrational hatred of his acquaintance Rezenvelt.

9 *dread assassin*: Under the cover of night, De Monfort silently observes Rezenvelt in the forest and plots to murder him (Act IV, Scene I).

10 *Nature hid her face*: De Monfort’s attack and murder of Rezenvelt takes place off stage. Rezenvelt’s screams are overheard by a nun at a nearby convent, and his body is discovered by a monk in Act IV, Scene II.

11 *Lonely cave*: Basil, the eponymous character in Baillie’s tragedy on love, is distracted from his duties as a soldier by his obsessive love of a young woman named Victoria. When he is disgraced and his army is defeated in battle, Basil retreats to a cave with a pair of pistols and takes his own life (Act V, Scene II).
Thine arm from heaven the hues of Passion\textsuperscript{12} stole,  
To tinge the conflict of the lover's soul!  

O as the tear of youth, of Love bedews  
Thine altar, priestess of the tragic muse!  

Think, tho’ no living blooms are offer’d here,\textsuperscript{13}  
No brighter gift can flow than Nature’s tear!  

What is the praise that language can impart  
To the low murmurs of the swelling heart?  

Yes! tho’ these lines the feeble effort own,  
The soul that stamps them bears another tone!  

Thro’ realms of beauty, and thro’ darkest night,  
That soul hath trac’d thee in thy towering flight,  
Trac’d the fair forms thy plastic\textsuperscript{14} hand combin’d  
With all the fervor of impulsive mind!  

Amid those scenes where busy tumult reigns,  
If ere thy fancy seek thy native plains,  
Recal their pleasures, while Remembrance sighs  
Beneath the azure arch of southern skies;  
Then may these accents for their country claim  
The pride, the honour, of thy native name;  
And with the voice of Fame delighted join  
To hail the triumph of the sex—in thine.

\textsuperscript{12} the hues of Passion: Baillie emphasized the effect of a single passion on the mental processes of her characters. Each of her plays explored a different passion.

\textsuperscript{13} here: Scotland.

\textsuperscript{14} Plastic: capable of molding or shaping. “Causing the growth or production of natural forms, esp. of living things…an attribute of an alleged principle, virtue, or force in nature” [OED].
THE GENII.
ARGUMENT.

Address to the Genii—Their existence before the formation of the world—Their power over the elements—Their palaces in the centre of the earth, in the mines of Potosi¹—Their operation in earthquakes—Earthquake at Lima²—Malignant influence of the Genii on domestic happiness—Address to the beneficent spirits of the air —Excursions of the Genii to the frigid and torrid zones³—Power of the Genii over water—Presence of the Genii at the Deluge⁴—Whirlpool of Mælstrom⁵—Dead sea off Cape Verde⁶—Abodes of the Genii in the Pacific Ocean—Negro-diving⁷—Power of the Genii in air—In fire—Their Burning Island—Mount Hecla⁸—Final destruction of the Genii by fire.

¹ Potosí: City in Bolivia, which lies at the foot of the Cerro Rico (or “rich mountain”) and known for its silver ore.

² Lima: Capital city of Peru. The city was affected by two major earthquakes in 1687 and 1746.

³ Frigid and torrid Zones: The Frigid Zone, or the Polar Regions, are those surrounding the Arctic and Antarctic circles. The Torrid Zone, or Tropics, refer to regions near the Equator, specifically between the Tropic of Cancer and the Tropic of Capricorn.

⁴ Presence of the Genii at the Deluge: This summation – which refers to the great flood chronicled in chapters 6 through 9 in the Book of Genesis – was moved to this point in the Argument to reflect the revisions and rearrangements Bannerman made for the 1807 version of the poem. Originally, this passage occurred between “Negro-diving” and “Power of the Genii in the air” (lines 317-340). It now appears in lines 231-254.

⁵ Mælstrom: “A powerful whirlpool, originally...one in the Arctic Ocean off the west coast of Norway, which was formerly supposed to suck in and destroy all vessels within a wide radius” [OED].

⁶ Cape Verde: An archipelago, or island country, located in the center of the Atlantic Ocean, approximately 350 miles west of Africa. A key location for slave traders throughout the 17th and 18th centuries.

⁷ Negro-diving: i.e. forcing slaves to dive into the sea and scour the ocean floor in search of pearls.

⁸ Mount Hecla: Hekla, a volcano located in Iceland.
THE GENII.

YES! ‘twas your thunder—Awful Genii, hail!

Who, thron’d in terrors, ride the Siroc gale,¹
Whose fires in Ætna’s² sulph’rous bosom glow,
Whose cold, on Arctic rocks, congeals the snow ;
By your dread talismans of fearful force,
Thro’ earth and air, you wing your vent’rous course ;
Mov’d by their touch, the portals of the skies
Reveal their glories to your wond’ring eyes ;
In every sea, dispart³ the foaming waves,
And yield their treasures, from their deepest caves ;
The gloomy demons of the mines obey,
And Ocean’s spirits own your sov’reign sway.

Ere sprung the world from Chaos’ dreary bound,
And the bright planets wheel’d their placid round,
Gigantic masters of the realms of night!
No fair proportions met your sullen sight ;
In frightful state, the dark abyss you trod,
And held, in chasm’d cells, your drear abode ;
Till the green earth, in lavish beauty gay,

¹ Siroc: A forceful Mediterranean wind originating in the Sahara desert.
² Ætna: Mount Etna, an active volcano in Sicily.
³ Dispart: “to part asunder, to cleave” [OED]. Rare. The OED traces the use of the word as a verb to Book I of Spenser’s Faerie Queene.
Spread her sweet verdure\textsuperscript{4} to the new-born day;
When shone the hills, beneath the solar beam,
And the moon trembled in the twilight stream;
You first beheld the earliest flow’rets blow,
And purple tinges on the conclave glow,
Heard the faint flutter of the summer breeze,
When first it sported on the curling seas.
Firm on its central base, when Nature stood,
And Power Omniscient found that all was good,\textsuperscript{5}
In this fair region, you possess’d the throne,
And o’er its varied climates reign’d alone.
Short was your triumph. When the Son of Heaven,
The earth’s wide shores to his dominion giv’n,
In godlike innocence, in Eden’s bower,
Assum’d the ensigns of imperial power,
Scowling, you fled: —the swelling ocean gave
Her cells to shroud, and op’d the clifted cave. —
But, when that awful hour of terror came,
Which stain’d the honours of a heav’nly name,
When Man retreated from his Maker’s eye,
To hide in deepest gloom his head— and die: —
Well pleas’d you heard Earth’s solid centre reel,
When the bright angel \textsuperscript{6} grasp’d the flaming steel;

\textsuperscript{4} \textit{verdure}: Green plants, flourishing vegetation.

\textsuperscript{5} \textit{all was good}: “And God saw everything that he had made, and it was very good.” GEN. Chap I. Verse 34.
Your spells regaining their primeval sway,
Again you saw the elements obey;
Again you thunder’d with triumphant ire,
And shook the mass with subterraneous fire;
Firm in unconquer’d strength, your hands uptore
The rooted rocks, and rent the farthest shore.

Yes, fateful Powers! your awful years display
No feeble pageant of the passing day:
The lapse of ages has beheld you tower
Above the monuments of human power;
Alike in land, and sea, and air, and fire,
To rule supreme, your daring souls aspire;
As fancy wills, you rear the pillar’d dome,
In earth’s deep caverns, or in ocean’s foam,
Hang your transparent temples high in air,
Or to the realms of flame, your glory bear.

Hark! to the music of the echoing lyre,
The mighty pillars of the earth retire;
The long-extending palaces unfold
Their glitt’ring thrones,7 and canopies of gold.

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6 bright angel: For the 1800 edition, Bannerman provided the following note: [“And the Lord placed at the east of the garden of Eden cherubims, and a flaming sword which turned every way.” GEN. Chap III.]

The specific verse referenced here is 24.

7 Bannerman provided the following note for the 1800 edition:

[“Abudab, in the morning, when he awakened, was surprised at an unusual glitter around him; and looking more steadfastly, he found the tree wherein he sat to be of pure gold; and the leaves of silver, with fruit like rubies hanging in clusters from the branches. On every side appeared the most glorious palaces that could be conceived. Trees, and shrubs of silver and gold, met his eye, growing almost visibly around him.”

TALISMAN OF OROMANES. TALES OF THE GENII]
Incluster’d diamonds, on the loaded spray,
In changing colours, meet the orient ray;
The burning ruby gives his blushing power,
To deck the gorgeous wreath, and silver bower.—
All powerful Genii! ye, who, rulers here,
May spurn the riches of another sphere,
From mounts of gold you lead, thro’ many a soil,
And many a winding road, the shining spoil;
From cumb’ring clay the precious ore refine,
To form the treasures of the dreary mine.

Ere Spain’s tremendous and unpitying host
Led death and slaughter to the western coast,
Ere the vaults echoed to the miner’s moan,
You fill’d Potosi’s silver-beaten throne:
From their dark channels, in refulgent pride,
Unfading light the blazing gems supplied;
Pure were the balmy gales, like those that play
Around the footsteps of the vernal day.

Then slept your vengeance; every breath was still;
No earthquakes thunder’d your relentless will;
Till thrift of gain allur’d the spoiler’s feet,

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*Tales of the Genii: Or, The Delightful Lessons of Horam, The Son of Asmar* (1764) by Sir Charles Morell, a pseudonym for James Kenneth Ridley (1736-1765). The book was presented as an authentic translation of a Persian manuscript; however, it was later revealed to have been written entirely by Ridley, who drew from the *Arabian Nights* (1706). The passage quoted by Bannerman appears in the first tale of the volume, entitled “The HISTORY of the Merchant ABUDAH, or The TALISMAN of OROMANES.”

Potossi: City in Bolivia, which lies at the foot of the Cerro Rico (or “rich mountain”) and known for its silver ore. According to local myths and legends, the mountain itself was believed to have been made entirely of silver. In the 16th century, it was the primary source of silver for the Spanish army. By the time of Bannerman’s writing, much of the mountain’s silver resources had been depleted and the city’s primary export was tin.
To stain the lustre of your favourite seat.

Hark! on the fretted roof, at every stroke
That yields the axe, the massy bars unlock,
Unwearied crowds the lofty pillars rend;
A passage form’d, they enter, and descend.
Unmov’d you stand, while terror-working spells
Bring hideous spectres from their yawning cells,
To brew the blast, whose pestilential breath
May sweep for ever thro’ the caves of death;
That the same rock, whose rifted channels gave
The envied ore, might also yield a grave.

Imperious kings! when darkness shrouds the skies,
And the hush’d city sunk in slumber lies,
Beneath the earth your massy engines play,
And tremulous motions scatter cold dismay;
The affrighted victims, rous’d from soft repose,
By the dim twilight, see the earth disclose,
With sound of thunders, her unfathom’d caves,
And the rent ocean toss his furious waves.—
Lo! where the frantic mother, clasping wild
To her quick-heaving heart her sleeping child,
On some torn fragment of the shatter’d wall,
Awaits the shock, so soon to level all.

Such was the dreadful scene, when fell the blow
That laid the glitt’ring pride of Lima low;
When He, who, terror-struck upon the tower,
The sea receding with convulsive power,
Heard the loud crash, that told th’ impending doom,
When the earth open’d, for a general tomb,
And saw the mountain-wave’s returning force
Whelm spires and temples, in its sweeping course.
As wild he gaz’d, where Callao’s \(^1\) turrets rear’d
Their shining glories, and no trace appear’d,
Death’s sullen spectre scowling by his side,
Lo! driven infuriate o’er the gloomy tide,
A boat appears; his frozen pulses beat,
When the wild billow throws it at his feet;
The love of life all thrilling in his breast,
He springs to reach it, and he sinks opprest;
And scarce can bless, while riding on the wave,
The hand benign, that snatch’d him from the grave.

Tremendous Genii! not alone you reign
O’er the wild elements, and stormy main,
Pervade the subtile air’s mysterious frame,
Or scatter horror from volcanic flame;

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\(^1\) The eruption of the sea, during the earthquake at Lima, entirely swept away the neighbouring port-town of Callao. The singular circumstance of the preservation of only one man, who escaped by means of a boat, is mentioned by some authors who record the event; though, from a narrative published at Lima, there appears to have been nearly two hundred, who saved themselves on planks, which the wreck of vessels torn from their anchorage in the harbor threw in their way. See Relation of the Earthquake at Lima, London 1743.

Bannerman is paraphrasing an account recorded in A True and Particular History of Earthquakes (1748). In addition to the earthquake occurring in Lima on October 28, 1746, the text also chronicles a Jamaican earthquake in 1692, as well as “others in different Parts of the World.” The title page attributes the publication to the pseudonym PHILOTHEUS, who has “extracted” information from “Authors of the most unexceptionable Credit and Reputation.” The original Philotheus was born in Thessaloniki around 1300, and served as Archbishop of Constantinople in the mid-14\(^{th}\) century.

There is a misprint in the 1807 edition, as Bannerman’s endnote provides the date 1743 (three years before the earthquake occurred) instead of 1748. The 1800 edition, however, correctly lists the publication of the account as 1748.
But, in an humbler range, your hands destroy
The blissful image of domestic joy.

    Say, pow’rful rulers! your unchanging days
Exist uninjur’d, while the earth decays, —
Has ever Pity view’d your starting tear,
Where faithful friendship wept on Virtue’s bier?
Where Love’s fond eye, ere yet the spirit flew,
Beam’d every blessing in the last adieu?—
Heav’d not your hearts, as wild on Tunis’s⁹ plain,
The grateful Hamet toreᵐ the captive’s chain,
And madly strain’d, to agony oppress’d,
His youthful saviour to his swelling breast!
Ah no! — Mark yon pale mourner sit to cheer,
While every smile of anguish hides the tear,
The hapless maniac, thro’ the ling’ring day;
No heart-wrung sighs her agonies betray.
—Oft, as her faded eyes begin to trace
Each alter’d feature of that long-lov’d face,
Those eyes, where smiles of joy no longer glow,
That heart serene ‘mid agonizing woe,

⁹ Tunis: The capital city of Tunisia, the northernmost country in Africa.

ᵐ [For the story of Hamet, see History of Sandford and Merton, by Mr. Day].

The History of Sandford and Merton by Thomas Day (1748-1789). A collection of short stories for children influenced by Jean-Jacques Rousseau’s (1712-1778) theories on education. Day published the first volume anonymously in 1783, followed by two additional volumes in 1786 and 1789. Hamet was a Turkish slave and his story appears as “The Story of the Grateful Turk.” The son of a wealthy merchant takes an interest in Hamet, and asks his father to assist Hamet in gaining his freedom. The merchant tests Hamet’s virtue by promising to arrange Hamet’s liberation if he agrees to assassinate one of the merchant’s enemies. Hamet, however, refuses and the merchant acquires Hamet’s freedom. Later, Hamet returns to the city and rescues the merchant’s son from a house fire.
Ah! then her stifled feelings spurn controul,
And tears of keenest pain unbidden roll.

Ye softer Spirits, who from yonder sky
On Earth’s dread warfare bend a brother’s eye,
Who, calm at eve on silver clouds reclin’d,
Inhale the fragrance of the summer wind,
Descend! —Your angel smiles will chase away
The storms that shake the tenements of clay.
—O! let your aid the sinking spirit raise
To higher objects, and sublime days!
In midnight slumbers, to the fancy bring
Elysian bowers, and an eternal spring,
With love congenial to the mind display
What golden glories wake the heavenly day,
What rapt’rous joys the hallow’d soul impress
With full enjoyment, and unmingled bliss!
Say, tho’ the boast of human pride be o’er,
And hope extinguish’d, to revive no more,
That life eternal shall repair the woe,
And soothe the memory of the scenes below;
Say, that, invested with a purer frame,
The soul unchang’d shall ever be the same,
Shall turn to every friend, with guardian care,
And soothe, and soften, when their hearts despair.  

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10 Lines 125-172 – as well as four additional lines from the 1800 text that Bannerman omitted for the 1807 edition – were reproduced in a review of Poems that appeared in The British Critic in 1800 as “a satisfactory proof” of the volume’s “many animated apostrophes, and brilliant passages” (140). See Appendix B.
O ye dark Genii! can your magic charms,
In Stygian\textsuperscript{11} darkness form’d, and drear alarms;
Can all the pomp of universal sway
One throb of rapture to your hearts convey?
No! while the powers of desolation wait
Upon your footsteps, ministers of fate,
Beneath those skies, where Boreal\textsuperscript{12} tempests roll
O’er the long twilight of the desert pole:
Unseen and fearless, you delight to go,
O’er hills of frozen earth, and wreaths of snow;
To mark the sheeted ice, by whirlwinds tost,\textsuperscript{13}
Descend, in splinter’d heaps, upon the coast;
Or, far at sea, when floating masses urge
Their gelid\textsuperscript{14} mountains o’er the troubled surge,
You give command: the stormy billows roar,
And dash the mighty mounds upon the shore.
Swell’d by the flakes of ever-falling snows,
Their icy bulk no dissolution knows;
Still their high tops, the same cold terrors wear,
And chill, thro’ many a mile, the ambient air.

All hail, terrific kings! whose giant throne,
From the bleak pole, extends thro’ every zone!

\textsuperscript{11} \textit{Stygian}: “Pertaining to the river Styx, or, in wider sense, the infernal regions of classical mythology...Dark or gloomy as the region of the Styx” [OED].

\textsuperscript{12} \textit{Boreal}: “Of or pertaining to the north wind” [OED].

\textsuperscript{13} \textit{Tost}: i.e. tossed.

\textsuperscript{14} \textit{Gelid}: “Extremely cold...icy” [OED].
Beneath the burning line, your feet have trac’d
The unknown horrors of the Lybian waste:
Expanding shores have met your piercing sight,
That long have slept, in undiscover’d night;
Involving woods, impervious to the day,
Where the keen tyger shuns the noon-tide ray;
Whence, proudly spurning his paternal den,
The noble Lion seeks the haunts of men,
Pursues his way, thro’ solitary lands,
Where Gambia revels on his golden sands,
Drinking the sweet freshness of the cooling wave,
And digs his dwelling in the deepest cave.
Scarce has his dreadful voice, along the coast,
Defy’d the proudest of th’ embattled host,
When a wild troop his lonely den surround,
With shining javelins, pointed to the ground.
Sullen he comes, and, to their gleaming arms,
Shakes his long mane, unconscious of alarms;
With frightful roarings, and indignant ire,
While his eyes sparkle, like consuming fire;
On the proud leader of the band he flies,
And, in his mighty grasp, the victim dies!
With frantic fury now he turns around,
His fierce front sever’d with the frequent wound;

15 *Libyan*: “Of or pertaining to Libya, the ancient name of a large country in North Africa” [OED].

16 *Gambia*: A country in West Africa.
The motion giv’n, the intrepid phalanx\textsuperscript{17} meet,  
And lay the kingly tyrant at their feet,  
His monst’rous fangs, unclench’d in death, survey,  
And boast the terrors of the perilous day;  
With shouts victorious beat their glory home,  
And wave th’ impurpl’d spear, o’er conquests yet to come.  

Ye powerful Genii! while your glance surveys  
The polar night alike, and tropic blaze,  
You guide the World of Waters, as you will,  
Expend the billows, or the channels fill;  
Smooth the dead surface, or the whirlwind urge,  
To toss, above the cliff, the mountain surge.  

Mysterious witnesses of ages past!  
When darkness veil’d the illimitable vast,  
You saw the expanding\textsuperscript{18} firmament divide  
The waste of waters from ocean’s tide;  
And, when the voice of heav’n, on ev’ry shore,  
Bade the wide vengeance of the Deluge pour,\textsuperscript{19}  
When heav’d the billows from their lowest bed,  
And hills tumultuous from their places fled,  
Far, far below, you heard the waters rise,  
With sounds, like rushing torrents, to the skies:

\textsuperscript{17} Phalanx: “A number or set of persons...banded together for a common purpose, esp. in support of or in opposition to some cause; A united front.” [OED].

\textsuperscript{18} Specific allusions to Genesis were footnoted in the 1800 edition: [“And God said, let there be a firmament in the midst of the waters, and let it divide the waters from the waters.” GEN. Chap. I]. Verse 6.

\textsuperscript{19} [“The same day were all the fountains of the great deep broken up, and the windows of heaven were opened”]. From GEN. Chap. VII. Verse 11.
Deep, while Omnipotence in thunder spoke,
And ev’ry mountain trembled at the shock;
Not unappal’d, you felt the rocks divide,
And, their deep channels rending by your side,
With sinking heart, you turn’d to ev’ry sound,
When the loud thunderbolt upheav’d the ground;
The tow’ring cliffs in thousand fragments spread,
Till spoke the Eternal, and the waters fled.
You saw the earth emerge, the hills return,
Like life reviving from the recent urn;
The swelling seas regain their distant shores,
And baffled Plenty renovate her stores;
You stood secure, and triumph’d at the sight,
And bless’d again the sun, and hail’d the light.

Now in the coral caves, where ocean keeps
The long unrifled treasures of the deeps,
On thrones of burning gems, you rule below,
And hear above th’ undreaded tempests blow;
The waves submitted to your proud controul,
In pomp sublime, you rest, while ages roll.
But, when dark fury sways, with lightning spell
You drag the tempest from its channel’d cell,
With souls unmov’d survey, and gloomy joy,
Its fateful progress, rapid to destroy.
Thus, where dark Maelstrom’s furious torrents boil,

\[\text{20 From the 1800 edition: [“And God made a wind to pass over the earth, and the waters assuaged.” GEN. Chap. VIII]. Verse 1.}\]
Round the rough marge\(^n\) of Moskoe’s fearful isle,
When ebbs the flood, the turning current forms
Its rapid vortex, and avenging storms.
Deep from beneath, you thunder at the source,
And lend the whirlpool its destructive force;
The black’ning waves in circling eddies wheel,
And the dark caverns to their centre reel.
Meantime, uprising from his giant cave,
His huge bulk lashing the resounding wave,
The mighty monarch of the northern sea,
Caught by the current, struggles to be free;
With frightful cries,\(^o\) and frantic with despair,
He flings his monstrous water-spouts in air;
In the dread circle of the gulf of death,
Yet, yet he rallies his decaying breath;
The raging surge his firmest effort mocks,
And the wild whirlwind drives him on the rocks;
Like the loud cataract, the billows roar;
Awhile he struggles—and is seen no more.
   In that dead sea, which not a breath deforms,
No sweeping whirlwinds, or internal storms,
You rule, terrific masters of the deep!
And the hush’d waves in sullen silence keep.

\(^n\) [“Round the moist marge of each cold Hebrid isle.” COLLINS]. William Collins (1721-1759), from “Ode on the Popular Superstitions of the Highlands of Scotland,” line 141. See Appendix D.

Margé: The edge or border of a body of water. Shore. [OED]. Moskoe: i.e. Moscow.

\(^o\) [Whales are frequently carried into the vortex of Maelstrom, and the moment they feel the force of the water, they struggle against it with all their might, howling in a frightful manner].
What horror thrills the mariner, to feel
A death-like calm arrest his stiffen’d keel ;
In vain he watches for th’ accustom’d gale,
To move the bark, or fill the flagging sail ;
In vain he hopes, while gloom obscures the way ;
The clouds distend ; and, rapid from the skies,
Descend the rains, but not a zephyr\(^{21}\) flies.
Above, the lightning’s sheeted flames illume
The darken’d skies, and pierce the thick’ning gloom.

\[\text{O ye soft spirits of the fluid air!}\]
From heav’n’s high arch, the fav’ring breezes bear,
In lock’d surges move the secret springs,
And o’er the ocean wave your dewy wings.
Your power prevails ; the grateful pilot hails
The wind’s first breath, and spreads the swelling sails ;
Swift to his breast the flame of hope returns ;
Again he guides the helm, the vessel turns.

Malignant tyrants! with vindictive ire,
The ocean heaving as your steps retire,
You trace the bark along the yielding main,
And smile, indignant—where your power was vain.
Hence, like the lightning’s flash, you rapid sweep
O’er the wild waters of the Atlantic deep,
Thro’ the long course of Orellana\(^{22}\) run,

\(^{21}\) Zephyr: A westerly wind.

\(^{22}\) Francisco de Orellana (1511-1546) was a Spanish explorer, and the first to navigate the Amazon River.
To climes illumin’d by their parent sun;
Where, o’er Pacific seas, the tempests blow,
You rear your coral palaces below;
On crystal pedestals the emeralds raise,
And bid the sapphires on their summits blaze.
Your wat’ry reign no wanderer annoys,
Nor dares your deep retreats, or gloomy joys,
Save the poor Negro,p on his perilous way,
Thro’ the deep caverns of Panama’s bay,
While the black billows thro’ their fissures swell,
From fractur’d rocks to wrest the pearly shell.
As o’er the cliffs he holds his slippery road,
To drag the treasures from their dark abode,
Your jealous eyes, tremendous rulers! spy
The fated victim you have doom’d to die.
Thus, when, all fainting with the tedious toil,
His weak frame loaded with the sever’d spoil,
He springs on high the surface to regain,
Repair his sinking strength, and breathes again;
From some wild gulf, that pours the sweeping storm,
The furious shark uprears his scaly form,
In awful hunger, rolls his flaming eyes;
The luckless sufferer turns, and shrieks, and dies.

p [The Spaniards employ their negro slaves in diving for pearls, along the coast of Terra Firma, and particularly in the Bay of Panama].

Swift as the wind, impetuous Powers! you fly
Thro’ all the regions of the vaulted sky
Thro’ keenest air, and clouds of frozen hail,
Beneath the burning sun, and scorching gale ;
Thro’ the wide course of many a circling sphere,
No power opposing your sublime career,
Regents of space! you range thro’ worlds unknown,
Where Saturn, freezing with his pallid zone,
While his dim moons, in feeble lustre gleam,
Even his huge surface to the distant beam.
What is the lonely gloom of nights like ours,
When on the polar shores the winter low’rs?—
What is the darkness of our darkest caves,
Or the blast dashing on Norwegian waves?
What are the dreams, that prompt our midnight fears,
To the long horrors of a night of years?
Ye sullen rulers! while your eyes behold
Suns ever burning, on their thrones of gold,
Unnumber’d spheres their blissful seats disclose,
And worlds where spirits of the just repose ;
How must the knowledge of your meaner joy
Heave your hard hearts, and all your hours annoy,
Correct your triumph, as you proudly tower,
In space unlimited, supreme in power!
Dread kings! when earth, and air, and ocean tire,
Your spells can penetrate the realms of fire.
Amid th’ Antarctic wind’s eternal toil,
You hide the summits of your 23 burning isle;
Far, far around, the affrighted waves retire
Before your torrents of dissolving fire;
The glowing stream beneath the billow plays,
And the green ocean glitters in the blaze.

Or to that coast, where wilder tempests sweep,
In the cold breast of Iceland’s snowy deep,
When freezing winter bids the sun disown
The skies, to revel on his tropic throne;
You ride, undaunted, on the whirlwind’s wings,
And Hecla 24 opens to receive her kings.—
What lakes sulphureous, at her centre, frame
The eternal deluges of liquid flame!
What giant wheels the sounding engines turn!
What gleaming furnaces forever burn! —
Thro’ mines unknown, and dreary gulfs you glide,
Where boiling Geyser throws her fiery tide,
In spouting torrents, from unnumber’d springs,
While deep below, the frequent earthquake rings.

The 1800 edition of Poems included the following footnote:

[“The island was now discovered, and in the midst of it a huge mountain, whose summit reached far above the fleeting clouds, where a volcano vomited forth a deluge of liquid fire, with terrible roarings and a mighty sound, as of winds bursting from the deep caverns of the earth.—The glowing deluge descended down the mountain, in a sheet of fire, and, rushing violently into the sea, drove back the affrighted waves in dreadful hisses from its surface; and, for a long time, preserved its fiery course beneath the waters that foamed above it.” SADAK. TALES OF THE GENII].

From Tales of the Genii (1764) by James Kenneth Ridley (writing as Sir Charles Morell). The story of Sadak appears as “Sadak and Kalafrade,” Tale IX, and is found in Volume Two.

Hecla: Hekla, a volcano located in the southern region of Iceland. Hekla is a particularly active volcano, with over twenty eruptions recorded since the 9th century. At the time of Bannerman’s writing, the most recent eruption occurred in 1766 and continued for two years.
Or to the confines of the Nile you bear,
On wings of death, the suffocating air;
With clouds of moving sand, impetuous driv’n,
Involve the azure canopy of heav’n:
All life arresting with its scorching breath,
You lend the gale your magazines of death.

Imperious rulers! dare you still aspire
To wield the sceptre of the realms of fire?
That ardent element, you conquer now,
Whose meaner deities before you bow,
Shall, for your ruin, all its force combine,
To sweep from Nature’s face your dreadful line.

Thro’ rolling ages, and the tide of time,
In strength uninjur’d, piercing, and sublime,
Your eyes shall stretch along the track of day,
And scan its glories,—till they all decay.
But, when the skies shall glow, in living fire,
Your powers, your terrors, and your spells expire;
Your reign is finish’d, when, from shore to shore,
The Seraph’s trump reveals, that Time shall be no more.
TALES OF SUPERSTITION AND CHIVALRY.
PROLOGUE.

Turn from the path; if search of gay delight
Lead thy vain footsteps back to ages past!
Frail are the blighted flowers, and thinly cast
O’er the dim regions of monastic night.

Yet, in their cavern’d dark recesses, dwells
The long-lost Spirit of forgotten times,
Whose voice prophetic reach’d to distant climes,
And rul’d the nations from its witched cells;

That voice is hush’d!—But still in Fancy’s ear
Its first unmeasur’d melodies resound!
Blending with terrors wild, and legends drear,
The charmed minstrelsy of mystic sound,
That rous’d, embodied, to the eye of Fear,
The unearthly habitants of faery ground.
THE DARK LADIE.¹

The knights return’d from Holy Land,
Sir Guyon² led the armed train³;
And to his castle, on the sea,
He welcom’d them again.

He welcom’d them with soldier glee,
And sought to charm away their toil;
But none, on Guyon’s clouded face,
Had ever seen a smile!

And, as the hour of eve drew on,
That clouded face more dark became,
No burst of mirth could overpow’r
The shiverings of his frame;

¹ First published in the March 1800 issue of the *Edinburgh Magazine*. Bannerman’s poem is a direct response to the poem “Introduction to the Tale of the Dark Ladie” by Samuel Taylor Coleridge (1772-1834), which appeared a month earlier in the February issue. *See Appendix D.*

² *Sir Guyon*: Embodying the virtue of Temperance, Sir Guyon was the hero of Book II of *The Faerie Queene* (1590) by Edmund Spenser (c.1552-1599). Bannerman’s choice of Sir Guyon for the poem is especially ironic since the Dark Ladie reveals the knight’s irresponsible indulgence as opposed to virtuous restraint.

³ *Train*: A group of soldiers traveling together.
And often to the banner’d door,
His straining eyes, unbidden, turn’d ;
Above, around, they glanced wild,
But ever there return’d.  

At every pause, all breathless then,
And pale as death, he bent his ear,
Tho’ not a sound the silence broke,
He seemed still to hear!  

And when the feast was spread, and all
The guests, assembled, were at meat,
There pass’d them by, with measur’d step,
And took the upper seat,
A Ladie, clad in ghastly white,
And veiled to the feet :  

She spoke not when she enter’d there ;
She spoke not when the feast was done ;
And every knight in chill amaze,
Survey’d her one by one :  

For thro’ the foldings of her veil,
Her long black veil that swept the ground,
A light was seen to dart from eyes
That mortal never own’d.
And then the knights on Guyon turn’d
Their fixed gaze, and shudder’d now;
For smother’d fury seem’d to bring
The dew-drops on his brow.

But, from the Ladie in the veil,
Their eyes they could not long withdraw,
And when they tried to speak, that glare
Still kept them mute with awe!

Each wish’d to rouse his failing heart,
Yet look’d and trembled all, the while;
All, till the midnight clock had toll’d
Its summons from the southern aisle.

And when the last dull stroke had rung,
And left behind its deep’ning knell,
The Ladie rose, and fill’d with wine,
Fill’d to the brim, the sparkling shell.

And to the alarmed guests she turn’d,
No breath was heard, no voice, no sound,
And in a tone, so deadly deep,
She pleg’d them all around,
That in their hearts, and thro’ their limbs,
No pulses could be found.
And, when their senses back return’d,
They gaz’d upon the steps of stone
On which the Dark Ladie had stood,
They gaz’d—but she was gone!—

Then Guyon rose,—and ah! to rest,
When every weary knight was led,
After what they had seen and heard,
What wonder, slumber fled!

For, often as they turn’d to rest,
And sleep press’d down each heavy eye,
Before them, in black veil wrapt,
They saw the Dark Ladie.

And then the voice, the tone that stopt
Thro’ all their limbs, the rushing blood;
The cup which she had fill’d with wine,
The steps on which she stood.

The sound, the tone,—no human voice
Could ever reach that echo deep;
And, ever as they turn’d to rest,
It roused them from sleep!—
The morning dawns—the knights are met,
And seated in the arched hall,
And some were loud, and some spoke low,
But Huart none at all!

“Dost not remember, well, (cries one),
When wide the sacred banners flew,
And when, beneath the blessed Cross,
The infidels we slew.

“This same Sir Guyon, erst so brave,
In fight, who ever led the van,
Soon as the Sepulchre he saw,
Grew pale and trembled then?

“And as the kneeling knights ador’d,
And wept around that holy place,
O God! I’ve seen the big drops burst
For hours upon his face!

“And when I nam’d the blessed name,
His face became as livid clay,
And, on his foamy lips, the sounds,
Unutter’d, died away!”
“But O! that Ladie! (Huart cries),—
That Ladie, with the long black veil,
This morn I heard—I hear it still,
The lamentable tale!

“I hear the hoary-headed man,
I kept him till the morning dawn,
For five unbroken hours he talk’d,
With me they were as one!

“He told me he had lived long
Within this castle, on the sea ;
But peace, O Heaven! he never had,
Since he saw the Dark Ladie!

“‘Twas chill,” he said, “a hazy night,
Just as the light began to fail,
Sir Guyon came and brought with him
The Ladie in the veil :

“Yes! to this castle on the sea,
The wild surge dashing on its base,
He brought her in that frightful veil
That ever hides her face.

“And many a time, he said, he tried
That ne’er-uncover’d face to see :
At eve and morn, at noon and night;
But still it could not be!

“Till once! but O! that glaring eye,
It dried the life-blood, working here!
And when he turn’d to look again,
The Ladie was not near!

“But, sometimes, thro’ her curtain’d tower,
A strange uncolour’d light was seen,
And something, of unearthly hue,
Still passed on between:

“And then aloof its clasped hands
Were wrung, and tossed to and fro!
And sounds came forth, dull, deep, and wild,
And O! how deadly slow!

“He told me that, at last, he heard
Some story, how this poor Ladie
Had left, alas! her husband’s home
With this dread knight to flee:

“And how her sinking heart recoil’d,
And how her throbbing bosom beat,
And how sensation almost left
Her cold convulsed feet:
“And how she clasp’d her little son,
Before she tore herself away;
And how she turn’d again to bless
The cradle where he lay.

“But where Sir Guyon took her then,
Ah none could ever hear or know,
Or, why, beneath that long black veil,
Her wild eyes sparkle so.

“One whence those deep unearthly tones,
That human bosom never own’d;
Or why, it cannot be remov’d,
That folded veil that sweeps the ground?”
THE sobblings of the ocean waves
Were all the notes that Basil\(^1\) knew;
He lov’d them since his ear could dwell
With gladness on their first low swell,
When the soft south-wind blew:

Like a wild flow’r of the wilderness,
He grew, amid the mountain air;
The rock had been his cradle-bed,
And never were his slumbers made
The holier for a mother’s pray’r!

The skies, the woods, the winding shore,
Were imag’d\(^2\) on his desert\(^3\) breast;
His deep, dark eye was stern and keen,
It was the fire of soul unseen,
Unknown, untutor’d, unrepress’d;

---

\(^1\) *Basil*: Also the name of the hero of the first play in *Plays on the Passions* (1798) by Joanna Baillie. The play is a tragedy that revolves around the passion of love.

\(^2\) *Imag’d*: embedded.

\(^3\) *Desert*: impressionable.
The rude sea-boy was all the name
That every tongue to Basil gave;
The rude sea wind had marr’d his face,
But his heart!—‘twas Pity’s resting place;
And he sung dirges for the dead,
In music like the mournful wave.

Young Basil wrought the fishers’ nets,
And plied the heavy oar;
A lonely home he had! but oh!
That aught, that bore the human form,
Should bear the night, and nightly storm,
In that hut, on the wild sea-shore!

Yet there were hearts that beat and heav’d,
With flutt’ring love and tender joy,
To hear th’ unprison’d tempest rise,
When all were safe from wind and skies,
And winter’s keen inclemency!  

But there was none whose eye pursu’d
This youth’s unfollow’d footsteps home;
And he had steel’d his heart to bear,
Till the pulse, that should have quiver’d there,
Was feelingless and numb!

---

4 Inclemency: severe weather.
The tones, that sooth’d this lonely heart
Came not from human kind!
He watch’d the breeze that sigh’d along,
To him it was the even-song
Of some hallow’d seraph-mind ;

And then the sun would leave behind
Such lovely tints on cloud and tree ;
O! how unlike this jarring world
That silentness of place and hour!
As if a breath would overpow’r
The murmur of the sea :

And from the stars of Heaven he drew
His picture of a place of rest!
Their sacred light was so serene,
It settled on his soul like love,
When he number’d every orb above
As the brothers of his breast.

But one drear night the stars withdrew
As Basil reach’d his shed ;
The drifting torrent rattled rude
On the creaking rafts of shatter’d wood,
That stretch’d above his head.
Basil had heard the mountain storm
And the winter tempest beat;
Night after night he had slept, when shut,
Alone, within that rocking hut,
With the snow-wreaths at his feet;

But the awe, the dread that o’er him came,
This fateful night he quak’d to feel!
It was not fear of tide or wind;
’Twas the low breathlessness of mind,
When the heart-veins congeal.

Whether it was the billow’s sob,
Or the wild sea-eagle’s cry,
He heard a moan that seem’d to come
From some lost wretch that made his home
Of the desert and the sky!

It nearer came, till it sank at once
Close to his unfasten’d door;
The stifled groan was a voice in death:
And he could count the ebbing breath,
Till his own would note no more!

Then he heard footsteps rattling run
Across the frozen hill;
Their least, last sound, his stunned ear
Would measure, as if coming near,
They rung around him still!

But the weight that fell without, the corse,
As he heard it die,
Thro’ the spaces of his window-bars,
By the dawn-light he just could trace,
Where it lay along upon its face,
As life did never lie! q

Poor Basil wrench’d the feeble bar
To leave that dreary shed,
‘Twas all too narrow for his flight,
And it robb’d his starting eyes of sight,
That he must cross the dead.

With frantic arm he burst the door,
That shiver’d to his blow ;
One step—but oh! that one to take,
He wish’d that life had been the stake,
That he might have given it now :

q  [“As life did never lie!”

I looked but once, yet life did never lodge
In any form so laid.

De Montfort Act iv].

From the tragedy De Monfort by Joanna Baillie. De Monfort explores the passion of hatred and appears with Basil and The Tryal in the first volume of Baillie’s Plays on the Passions (1798).
And on that long, dread night, he thought,
Till it settled on his brain;
And his heart grew bold—for, at break of morn,
He had reach’d a rock, where a cave was worn
By the surges of the main.  

The hours went on till fall of eve,
And the stars arose again!
Basil must make the rock his bed,
For his mountain-home is tenanted
By the spirit of the slain.

He wanders on the desert beach,
Like some lone ghost of air,
Scarce human like—but then, his eye
Retains the keen and fiery dye
That wont5 to kindle there!

His dreams! the hopes that o’er his soul
Had wander’d of a brighter scene!
They sometimes come to soothe him still,
Such as he imag’d them at even,
When his joy was in the light of Heaven,
Where all was so serene.

5 Wont: customary, expected.
But wilder fits and drearier dreams
Will oft upon him come;
And, when his brain is most perturb’d,
He drags his worn and naked feet
Across the crag, whose chasms meet,
To gaze on his forsaken home!…

The harsh sea-birds inhabit it
With the spirit of the slain!
And close beside, a heap of stones,
Is laid above these hollow bones,
That the mariner can see afar,
As a beacon, on the main.
THE PENITENT’S CONFESSION.

FROM St. Peter’s tower the bell had toll’d,
For the Carmelite\textsuperscript{1} monks to pray,
And the holy priest by the altar kneel’d
On the eve of Saint Peter’s day! \textsuperscript{2}

The sacred lights on the altar burn’d,
Where the blessed symbol lay ;
The mass for the dead, and the rites were said
For a soul that had pass’d away.

When the priest came down the altar steps,
He has pass’d thro’ the abbey aisle ;
He has mounted, alone, the stair of stone,
To the high Confessional!

\textsuperscript{1} Carmelite Monks: An order founded in the 12\textsuperscript{th} century on Mount Carmel, a mountain range located in Northern Israel near the Mediterranean Sea. The Carmelites are known for their emphasis on contemplation, and are believed to be protected by the Virgin Mary.

\textsuperscript{2} Eve of St. Peter’s Day: The Feast of Saints Peter and Paul is a solemn celebration in honor of the martyrdom of both saints, which is observed on the 29\textsuperscript{th} of June.
In that holy place, for five years' space,  
Had never soul confess’d,  
Till that hallow’d eve of Saint Peter’s Cross,  
And the sign was on his breast.  

But the deep, deep groans of that kneeling wretch,  
That low at his footstool lay,  
His groanings deep, ah! nought could still,  
And the priest arose to pray.

And thrice he cross’d his forehead bare,  
And thrice he cross’d his breast,  
And the Penitent’s groans, so deep and dread,  
Were soften’d into rest!

“No soul shall know from whence, or where,  
I came with Ellinor!

That cry, I heard at deep midnight,  
I hear for evermore!

“At the dead of night the deed was done,  
And I saw her laid upon the bier;  
But that stiffening hand and straining eye  
Are ever, ever near!
“Three nights I watched by that livid corse,  
They are stamp’d upon my brain!  
My heart’s best blood I would have given  
To have roused life again.  

“I follow’d the hearse to the convent aisle,  
But the prayers I dar’d not hear:  
’Twas nearly dusk when the rites were done;  
I knew not what to fear!  

“I stood without till all was past,  
And the funeral train was gone;  
The gathering mist it roll’d like smoke,  
I journey’d all alone.  

“I heard the bell of the convent tower,  
It toll’d for the newly dead,  
I had reach’d the wood as the sound began,  
I dar’d not turn my head.

---

3 *corse*: corpse.

4 A similar incident involving the nervous observation of a corpse occurs in Act IV, Scene III of Joanna Baillie’s play *De Monfort* (1798). De Monfort fears that the shrouded corpse of Rezenvelt – a man he has recently murdered – has moved and groaned on its bier. He tears off the shroud and the sight of the corpse causes De Monfort to collapse with guilt for his crime. Later in the century, the unnamed protagonist of Edgar Allan Poe’s short story “Ligeia” (1838) observes the faint stirrings of his dead wife Rowena. When the corpse does rise, the narrator is thrilled to discover that his first wife has been resurrected instead. Both Bannerman and Poe were likely inspired by Baillie, but it is tempting to wonder if Poe had read Bannerman as well.

5 *funeral train*: procession of mourners.
“Thro’ the trees’ thick tops, all tufted high,
I could hear the night-wind swell;
I burst the briars—I pierc’d the brake—
I did not hear the bell!

“By midnight then, I clear’d the wood,
And I kept by the river’s edge ;
‘Twas all I could, through the mist, descry
The watch-light on the bridge.

“On the middle arch—I did not dream!
‘Twas close by the broken ridge :
On the midmost arch, just then, I saw
A figure on the bridge.

“Its stiff, white arms were stretched wide ;
I could not pass it then ;
I tried to cross on either side,
But it was all in vain.

“And still I saw the outstretch’d arms
Between, and the misty sky!
No power could urge me on, to pass
That waving figure by.
“The form! the height!—I stood and gaz’d!
The robes were white it wore!
One thought of horror struck my heart,
That it was Ellinor!

“It could not be! her grave had clos’d,
And it covered was for aye.
I had seen the body on the bier,
And it was stiffen’d clay:

“How long I stood, I know not now,
Or how it gained near;
But I heard the flapping of the robe,
O holy Father! hear!

“Three paces brought us side by side,
I had turn’d to the pale watch light,
When it lean’d, O Heav’n! upon my arm,
Its dull and deadly weight!

“On my face I felt its streaming hair,
All wet with the rain and mist;
I spoke not, for the blood fled back,
And center’d in my breast!
“I moved on,—but that weight of death
Will never leave my brain!
I thought I never might uncling
That ghastly arm again!

“And on, and on, till day-light shone,
All to the beach of the sandy sea,
The figure dragg’d me by the arm,
And there it quitted me.

“Twice twenty years have come and gone
Since I wander’d on that fated eve;
May’st think thee that a dream of night
My senses did deceive?

“See, holy priest! and he bar’d his arm,
Was never to mortal shown!”
And there, O Heav’n! for living flesh,
Was a dry and wither’d bone.

The father rose, and bow’d his head
On the blessed cross he wore!
For he quak’d to think that arm had met
The touch of Ellinor.
He has drawn aside a velvet shroud,
That hung from the marble wall; 110
He has kneeled down within the veil,
He spoke not once at all!

Not once of heaven, or pardon given,
By that sacred cross he wore;
For the deep, deep groans of that kneeling wretch,
He heard for evermore!

Now the night was done and the Penitent gone,
But where, were none to tell;
For, from that hour, the holy priest
Hath never left his cell. 120

O there were masses for the dead,
And fast and pray’rs, by light and gloom!
And the cross was borne, at deep midnight,
Along the charnel tomb!
THE FISHERMAN OF LAPLAND. 1

“Dost see by that rock, with its summit of snow,
Which the frost-ribbed billows are mining below;
‘Twas there that one night,—to the tempest that came,
The ice-winds of Greenland were pow’rless and tame:

“When the high-swollen Dwina2 redoubled the roar
Of the horrors that ravag’d on Archangel’s3 shore,
‘Twould have chill’d the best heart to have seen, on the main,
The fishers’ small skiffs as they neared in vain:

“When in cliffs of the rocks, as midnight came on,
The torches were plac’d for a beacon that shone;
When afar stream’d the red-light,—and nought did it show,
But the foam-cover’d ocean that gulfed below.

1 Lapland: Region in Northern Russia, Finland, Sweden, and Norway.
2 Dwina: Dvina, River in Northern Russia.
3 Archangel: City in Northern Russia.
“Mid the boats which the ice-isles had driven on the coast,
‘Twas there that old Peter’s of Lapland was lost;
For there it was seen, when the tempest came on,
And they saw but that rock—when its fury was done.

“And here hangs the tale!—If thy heart be not cold,
It will sigh as the fate of poor Peter is told;
Since his boat disappear’d, at yon perilous steep,
On the night of that storm on the terrible deep.

“‘Twas at even, in the dusk!—scarce a sea-breeze would blow,
And the moans of the ocean were sullen and low,
That a traveler stopt, as he journey’d that way
From Ildega’s forests to Archangel’s bay.

“All faint was this stranger,—the night is fell fast,
And the plain, from the mountain, stretch’d gloomy and vast:
Not a hut could he spy, for a shelter to crave,
Nor a sound broke the calm, but the sobs of the wave.

“One star, as it shone thro’ the haze of the night,
Threw its line on the waters, so chilly and white;
In the wide path of sky, but that star, there was none;
Like the way-worn traveler it journey’d alone.

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4 _Ildega_: Possibly a misprint for Taiega, a range of forests that spans the northern hemisphere, including portions of Finland, Sweden, Norway, and Russia. It has been referred to as the “snow forest” or “boreal forest.”
“It journey’d on high, until midnight or more,
When the full-flowing tide reach’d the rock on the shore,
‘Twas then that the heart of that stranger gave way,
And long were the hours till the dawning of day.

“On the top-cliff he stood,—when, gazing around,
A Shadow there fell on the snow-cover’d ground;
Like the motionless form of a man it was there,
But no form could he see between and the air.

“The night-noon was deep,—yet, at distance descried,
Were the smoke-frosts, that rose from the rents of the tide;
The night-noon was deep,—but, between and the sky,
No figure could be unperceiv’d by his eye:

“The star flitted on,—till he saw it depart,
But that shadow was fix’d,—as the blood at his heart;
Around it, and round, he had ventur’d to go,
But no form, that had life, threw the stamp on the snow.

“Unmoving and still, as that terrible form,
He stood on the ice-ridges, cleft by the storm.
Thro’ the night’s lonely watches not once had he turn’d,
But the figure he saw not,—when feeling return’d:—
“This stranger, I heard!—his eye had you seen,
When he spoke of the place where the shadow had been;
That form on the snow, as he saw it imprest,
And the death-like, dull slumber, that fell on his breast.

“His eye had you seen, when I told of the night,
When the far-streaming torches were wav’d from the height,
When the skiffs on the wild-heaving ocean were tost,
And the rock, where old Peter of Lapland was lost;—

“Dost see where the thin mists are rising between,
On that summit it was where the stranger had been;
Where the shadow appear’d on the colourless snow:
And poor Peter’s cold bed,—is the ocean below!”—
THE PERJURED NUN.

“Ah! why do you grieve and look so wild,

Lord Henrie, tell it to me!
And why do you say, you must watch till day,
Where, alas! I may not be?

“O take me then to the aisle of the tower,

And my fears you shall not see;
My heart shall be still in the midnight aisle,
If I may but watch with thee;

“I hate the gloom of the eastern tower,

And its dismal hall I shun;
I have heard it said ‘tis the haunt of the dead,
The haunt of the Perjur’d Nun!”

“The Nun! the Nun! and his cheek grew pale,

But I know you are jesting now;
The dead are at rest and their wand’rings past,
And he press’d his livid brow!

---

1 Perjur’d Nun: A nun that has broken her vows.
“The Nun! the Nun!—what a dream is this!
And he shudder’d at the name;
‘Tis an idle tale of a spectre pale,
And his colour went and came!

“But hear me now!—till the morning light,
Thro’ the dreary, midnight hour;
I must watch alone, at the altar’s stone,
In the aisle of the eastern tower;

“And urge me not, my own Geraldine!²
For it may not, cannot be!
I am doom’d to this, and I may not miss,
But none must watch with me.

“Thro’ this fated night let the tapers burn
And the lamp on the armed wall;
For the light is dim thro’ the window’s brim
On the roof of the eastern hall:

² Geraldine: Geraldine is also the name of the supernatural antagonist in Coleridge’s poem Christabel. In Coleridge’s poem, the specific details of Geraldine’s past are shrouded in mystery, yet she claims to have been abducted and then abandoned by a group of knights—a fate similar to that of Bannerman’s Dark Ladie and the nun introduced in the present poem. Coleridge began writing Christabel as early as 1795, but it was not published until 1816, therefore any similarities between his poem and Bannerman’s are either coincidental, or more compellingly, circumstantial evidence that the two poets may have corresponded with one another after the publication of Bannerman’s “Dark Ladie” in 1800. See the introduction for a more detailed discussion of Bannerman’s connections with Coleridge.
“When the clock strikes two, if the tapers burn
And the lamp on the marble stair;
You will know by them if I living am,
But you may not venture there!

“And mark, mark well, when the castle bell
And the clock ring three and one;
If the lamps expire and the lights retire,
You may know that my life is gone!

“My own Geraldine! how your heart beats now,
By the blessed God you must swear!
Tho’ the lamps burn dim and you know by them
That my hour of fate is near;

“Tho’ the flame goes round with a hissing sound
From the lamp on the marble stair;
You must swear to God, on the holy rood,
That you will not seek me there!

“And hear once more!—at the pausing knell,
When the clock rings deep at four;
Let your soul be at peace and your watching cease,
You may look for me no more!” —
The clock strikes one to the charmed moon,
And poor Geraldine is alone!
And the pulses beat, in her heart, in her feet,
As the second hour draws on.

It rings! it rings! from the sounding tower,
And her heart-pulse stops with fear,
As she turns to gaze where the tapers blaze,
But they still are burning clear.

‘Tis hush’d again! and the swell is past,
The clock’s dull knell at two!
But the hour is to come, that seals her doom,
And the lamps are burning blue!  

Hark! hark! the clock,—’tis the fated hour,
On her listening ear it toll’d,
The pulse leaps now thro’ her burning brow,
And her limbs are deadly cold;

Her fingers cling to the closing door,
But the key she scarce can turn!
‘Tis the last of the clock, ere the bars unlock,
And the lights have ceas’d to burn!

---

3 According to Western folklore, a blue flame indicates the presence of a spirit or supernatural force.
She paus’d, she paus’d on the marble stair,
And she gazed wild around;
She turns to hear, is it hope? is it fear? 75
Or a low and measur’d sound!

It comes! it comes! with a measur’d step,
From the aisle of the eastern tower;
She would fly to meet, but her stiff’ning feet
Have lost their living power. 80

It is nearer now! but the sound, the sound,
Ah! why does it move so slow?
She would rush to the stair, to meet him there,
If her heart did not tremble so!

The blood rush’d back to her clay-cold feet, 85
And her heart took courage then;
She burst thro’ the door, to the eastern floor,
To welcome her love again!

But O! her shriek!—Like the dead from the grave
Was the form she had clasp’d around! 90
And the phantom turn’d, where the lamps had burn’d
And stood on the marble ground.
“You sought not me! cries the hollow voice,
You came not to welcome me!
Let your watching cease, and depart in peace,
For him you shall never see.—

“For him! for him! I forsook my God,
And his soul unblest shall be!
And the sacred blood for man that flow’d,
O Heaven! will it plead for me!

The wrongs, the woes this heart hath borne
I may not now unfold!
Let your soul be at peace, and your watching cease,
For his faithless heart is cold!

“The aisle! the aisle of the eastern tower
Your feet must ever shun!
For dark and dread is the haunt of the dead,
The haunt of the Perjur’d Nun!”
THE MURCIAN CAVALIER.

‘Twas the Pentecost time of tournament
At the court of high Castile,
And the first, among the Spanish knights,
Was the prince of proud Seville.
And ‘tis all to win Castile’s fair Queen
That they meet to break the spear;
The last, to-day, on the list of fight,
Are Seville’s fam’d prince and a stranger knight,
The Murcian Cavalier.

---

[“‘Twas the Pentecost time of tournament!”

It was on the three or four great annual festivals of the church, that the ancient courts displayed their highest magnificence. These assemblies were announced in the different cities by heralds and public messengers, and were resorted to, not only by the nobility of the country, but by strangers.  

Way’s Fabliaux, Vol. I. Notes].

From Fabliaux or Tales, Abridged from French Manuscripts of the XIIth and XIIIth Centuries (1796). The original French version (Fabliaux ou Contes des douzième et treizième siècles, traduits ou extraits d’après les manuscrits) was published in three-volumes by the French historian Pierre Jean-Baptiste Legrand d’Aussy (1737-1800). The English version was translated by Gregory Lewis Way (1757-1799), and included a preface, annotations, and an appendix prepared by the poet and historian George Ellis (1753-1815).

Pentecost time: Fifty days after Easter Sunday.

1 Castile: the Medieval court of Spain.

2 Seville: large city in Spain.

3 Murcian Cavalier: A knight or mounted soldier hailing from the Region of Murcia, located in Southeast Spain on the Mediterranean coast.
But the trumpets scarce had sounded clear,
‘Twas still but morning dawn,
When the Queen was far from gay Castile,
At the lone towers of Castellan.¹
The hours, till even, she spent in pray’r
At the Holy Virgin’s feet,
And when the night’s ungentle breeze
Blew hollow thro’ the orange trees,
She stood to hear the torrent beat.

To the proud courts of high Castile
She turn’d her eyes, and sigh’d!
Far, far remote were revelry,
And feast, and pomp, and pride.
Who is the fairest of that circle?
Who was there fair but one?
And she, upon a distant tow’r,
By her heart-pulse counts the pausing hour,
Untended and alone.—

“‘Tis a horse’s hoof from the tournament,
Dost hear the tramp on the plain?”
‘Ladie! ‘tis but the waterfall
On the rocks of Castellan!’
“Inez! Inez! thou hearest nought

¹ Castellan: castle (usually the governor or ruler of a castle, but Bannerman uses the word to signify a place rather than a person).
But the tumbling waterfall!
My ear has caught the faintest sound;
When the winds on the waters were loud around,
And I heard them not at all.”

‘O Ladie, leave the battlement,
For the night is drawing near,
And the sighing of the forest trees
‘Tis sorrowful to hear!’

“I would, Inez! ‘twere sorrowful,
But it is nought to me!
I would that my crush’d heart had room
For these unpainful fears that come
From the rustling of a tree!”

The Queen bent down her death-like cheek
On the marble pillar-stone:
And she wav’d her hand to Inez,
That she would be alone.
Like a flame the moon was in the sky,
As thro’ the mist it shone;
In the Tagus’5 wave, as in a glass,
Its face was red as burning brass,
On the sun agoing down.

---

5 Tagus: River that flows through Portugal and Spain.
Whether it had been hope, or nought
But the water’s overflow;
The sound had pass’d away, that came
From the deep dell below.
The fairest face in Spain is wet
With the falling dews of air:
That heart, for which so many pine,
Is watching for a distant sign,
As if life were treasur’d there!

‘Tis the trampling now of horses hoofs,
For the river wave is still,
That scarce beyond the forest’s edge
Is gaining on the hill:
“Yester-morn, said that Ladie,
I was Queen of high Castile:
But the hour is come that I must leave
These princely towers, a fugitive,
And a wanderer at will.”

The Queen has left the battlement
Without a sigh or tear!
That horseman fleet, that kneels at her feet,
Is the Murcian Cavalier:
But to his vows of love and truth
She spoke not once again;
For her heart was swelling in her breast,
With grief subdu’d and fear supprest,
As it would rend in twain.

They have journey’d on by day, by night,
Till, behind them many a mile,
They left the wand’ring Tagus’ course,
And the plans of fair Castile:
—Soft and cool the eventide fell
On the heats of the high day-noon;
The fiery sun’s descending blaze
Had cover’d, with a purple haze,
The woods of dark Leon.6

These woods, so deep, so lone, and wild,
The Queen survey’d, and sigh’d!
She turn’d to catch a distant gleam
Of the Douro’s yellow tide:
With intermingling tops, the trees
An awful cov’ring made:
And then that sky, of dusky red,
The dead of night had been less dread
Than that uncertain shade.

Far to the westerward she had seen
The winding Douro7 part;
And she paus’d, amid that solitude,

---

6 **Leon**: León is a capital city in the northwest of Spain.
7 **Douro**: Another major river that flows through Spain and Portugal.
To still her throbbing heart!
The Murcian Knight was by her side,
But he spoke not now at all.
Her anxious thoughts he seem’d to guess,
And, with mute and mournful steadiness,
He watch’d the dim night-fall.

It came! among these forests deep,
As the darkest midnight gloom!
It came!—and Nature seem’d to be
But one unfathom’d tomb!
Many a rugged, trackless path,
Amid that gloom, they pass’d,
Till, close above a tree decay’d,
A turret threw its spiral shade,
Dim, desolate, and vast!

Between and the open’d gleam, was plain
That lonely castle’s height.
The Queen’s quick eye was traversing
The home of the Murcian Knight.
All silently she gave her hand,
To mount the marble stair ;
A massy\textsuperscript{8} door he open’d wide,
But the lofty halls, on either side,
Were tenantless and bare!

\textsuperscript{8} Massy: solid, heavy.
Save the dull echoes of their feet,
All other sounds were dumb!
And she felt the hand that grasped hers
Was still, and damp, and numb!

A strange and nameless terror ran
Along her shivering brain;
Something like this her heart had known,
When, alas! she heard no voice but one,
At the towers of Castellan.

They paus’d! where, from an inner hall,
A lamp was burning bright!
It stream’d, with full and steady glare,
On the face of the Murcian Knight.
O’er ev’ry feature clear she saw
Unearthly beauty wave!
The purest white, the softest red,
The eye alone was glaz’d and dead,
As the sleeper’s in the grave!

Around and round her gaz’d the Queen,
By the lamp’s unshaken light;
On the roof, like a spirit’s swathed form,
Was the shadow of the Knight.
On that thin shape her eyes were fix’d,
That she could not turn again,
When it rais’d, with faint, unsteady strength,
One stiffen’d arm’s unmeasur’d length,
As it had mov’d in pain.

Then with a crash, that ran along,
Till it rock’d beneath her tread,
That arm fell down upon the stone,
And her stunned senses fled!
The morning sun, with ruby tinge,
O’er the woods began to peer,
When the Queen was at the window tow’r ;
But no more was seen, from that dread hour,
The Murcian Cavalier!

And still, upon the battlement,
She walks at shut of even :
Her face is pale, her air is wild,
And her looks are toward heaven!
And ever, when a deeper shade
Hangs on these forests rude ;
The Spanish shepherd girls will tell
How they hear, far off, in a desert dell,\(^s\)
The Ladie of the Wood!

---

\(^s\) [That stood farre off in a lonely dell. *Heire of Linne. Percy’s Reliques. vol.ii*].

Thomas Percy (1729-1811). *Percy’s Reliques of Ancient English Poetry* was first published in 1765 and initiated a revival of public and scholarly interest in English songs and ballads. Bannerman has slightly misquoted the original line from *The Heir of Linne*: “That stood farre off in a lonely glenne” (44).
THE PROPHETESS OF THE ORACLE OF SEAM. 

ROUND Seam’s isle the black waves boil
On the rough, rough rocks below,
And none can tell the date or time
Since they were tossed so!

Yet there comes a night, at the equinox height,
When the waters sleep below,
And a sound is heard, that stoppeth not,
Like the shrieks of a soul in woe!

‘Twas on that night, when the winds were dumb,
And the tossing waters still,
That a ship was ‘nighted, \(^1\) on her way,
By the rocks of Seam’s isle.

\(^1\) [——Those nuns of yore / Gave answers from their caves, and took what shapes they please.”

Drayton’s Poly-Olbion. Song I.]

From the Poly-Olbion (1612) by Michael Drayton (1563-1631), Elizabethan-era poet. The Poly-Olbion is a topographical poem comprised of thirty songs that describe the landscapes, customs, and histories of England and Wales. Bannerman quotes from lines 60-61 in the first Song.

[In the Seam, (an isle by the coast of the French Bretagne,) nine virgins were priests of the famous oracle. Their profession, or religion, was in an arbitrary metamorphosing themselves, charming the winds, (as of later times the witches of Lapland and Finland,) skill in predictions, &c. Selden’s Notes].

Bannerman has reproduced part of an annotation by seventeenth-century scholar John Selden (1584-1654), which accompanied the first volume of Drayton’s poem.

\(^1\) ‘nighted: i.e. benighted, or led astray due to the onset of night.
They had mounted fast the high topmast,
To watch for the beacon’s light;
On the right, on the left, they can trace it not
Thro’ the darkness of the night!

When the first hour came to change the watch
On the deck and middle shroud,
The sound drew near that stoppeth not,
And they heard it sob aloud.

Was never a soul within that ship
Could know why they were troubled so;
But their courage failed them, at once,
When they heard that shriek of woe.

Was never a soul within that ship
Could tell where they were driven at all,
But a Monk of the choir of Einsidlin,
The holy Father Paul!

Full well he knew the death that hung
O’er every soul that breathed there,
And he beckon’d them to kneel around,
While he rais’d his hands in prayer!

---

2 *Einsidlin*: Einsiedeln Abbey, a monastery located in the Canton of Schwyz, Switzerland. The monastery was founded by the hermit Saint Meinrad (c.797-861). St. Meinrad claimed to have a statue of the Virgin Mary reputed to have miraculous powers.
When prayer was past, he sat him down,
And listen’d to the shriek of woe:
“And he told them of the Prophetess
And the Oracle\(^3\) below!

“He told the tale of Seam’s isle,
He told the terrors of its caves,
That none had passed them with life
When that sleep was on the waves!

“He told them, when the winds that roar’d
Around the isle had ceas’d to breathe,
Was the fated night of sacrifice
In the gloomy vaults beneath.

“He told them, he remember’d once
A father of St. Thomas’ tower,
Who never had bow’d before the cross
Till he touch’d his dying hour.\(^4\)

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\(^3\) **Oracle**: An individual (usually a priest but in this case, a priestess) through whom the gods were believed to speak or prophesize. Can also refer to the location where such advice or prophecy was sought [OED].

\(^4\) **St. Thomas’ tower**: One of the twenty-one buildings comprising the original Tower of London. This portion of the tower was built by King Edward I between 1275-79, and has served as a defensive stronghold as well as a holding cell throughout its long history.
“That then he named to the priest
What he had seen in Seam’s caves,  
For he had reach’d them in a ship
When the calms was on the waves!

“Thro’ the sleepless nights of thirty months,
He had listen’d to that shriek of woe ;
But he never had seen the Prophetess  
Of the Oracle below!

“Till one chilly night, at the equinox height,
When the thirty months were gone,
As he listen’d, in the outer cave,
To that unbroken groan,

“A hand, he saw not, dragg’d him on,
The voice within had call’d his name!
And he told all he witnessed
At the Oracle of flame!

“But when he came to tell, at last,  
What fearful sacrifice had bled,
His agony began anew,
And he could not raise his head!
“And he never spoke again at all,
For he died that night in sore dismay:
So sore, that all were tranc’d \(^5\) for hours
That saw his agony!

“And he told not how he left the cave
When that dreadful sacrifice was o’er;
But some have thought he was preserv’d
By the crucifix he wore!

“And some have thought he had bent his knee
At Seam’s dark, unhallow’d shrine;
And that might be his agony
When they rais’d the blessed sign!”

Sorely wrung was every heart,
Within that ship, that heard the tale!
They listen’d still, in dumb despair,
By the unmoving sail!

They press’d around that aged Priest,
And he rais’d the crucifix on high!
And they look’d for nothing now to come,
But that they all must die!

\(^5\) *tranc’d*: entranced
His hoary hair is wet with dew,
He sits alone in Seam’s caves!
For the ship, and all that breathed there,
Are buried in the waves!

He bow’d him down, that holy Priest,
Before the symbol cross of God!
For he held it still amid the deeps,
And in that dark abode!

That stilly calm had left the seas,
And the surging waters toss and boil!
And he heard them dash, above his head,
On the rocks of Seam’s isle :

He heard the loud winds blow along,
And the billows wash his living grave ;
For he was shut from all the earth
Within that gloomy cave!

But, when he thought upon the hour,
He kneeled on the deck at prayer,
When he heard the cries within that ship
Of all that perish’d there.
His aged heart was not so cold
But he could feel it throb and swell,
Though he had found a sepulcher
In that dank and chilly cell!

For every soul, among the dead,
That died in sin, he smote his breast,
As he utter’d on the crucifix
The burial-prayer of rest!

‘Twas now the eve of the second night
That shriek had never ceas’d to be,
That he could not settle him to sleep
For the roaring of the sea!

When he heard, as it were, a sound so near,
So close it seemed by his side;
He rais’d himself upon his arm;
‘Twas the dashing of the tide!

He was turn’d again to broken rest,
And sunk upon that rugged rock,
When a voice came near, that roused him;
‘Twas the Oracle that spoke!
The hand, he saw not, dragg’d him on,
   When the voice was still’d that nam’d his name!
And he found himself in the inner cave
   By the Oracle of flame.

Never a sound was utter’d there,
   Nor the roar of wind or wave!
Nought could be more deathly still,
   But the silence of the grave!

Than that, O Heaven! he had rather heard
The surging waters toss and boil;
Or e’en the voice that stopped not,
When they struck on Seam’s isle;

O how he bless’d the blood that ran
His dull and frozen heart around,
When he heard the pulse that throbbed wild!
It was a living sound!

Where he stood was all rugged rock,
   But the shrine was girt with an iron frame,
And a curtain hid the Prophetess
   As she watched by the flame!
One hand she stretch’d without that veil,
And pointed to the inner space ;
And she beckon’d him to lay the cross
On that unhallow’d place :  

He felt it heave upon his heart,
And he press’d it in the blessed name!
For that moving finger was like death,
And that unquenched flame!  

Ah no! his vital blood should flow
Where many a sacrifice had bled!
He knew that he could only die,
And he was satisfied.  

He knew not yet the sight to come,
Before his heart could rest on this,
When he thought his eyes, unmov’d, could look
Upon the Prophetess!

Like a dream it flitted o’er his brain,
That miserable hour!
When the father died, in agony,
In the cell of St. Thomas’ tower ;
For he had said the veil was drawn
That hid the sacrifice within;
That his eyes had seen the Prophetess
At that uncover’d shrine;

But whether his knee had bended there
Was buried with him in the grave:
He felt that doubt more terrible
Than the terrors of the cave.

That Monk was never seen again,
Till forty years were pass’d, or more;
‘Twas in the aisle of Einsidlin,
As even-prayer was o’er;

The priest had clos’d the service-rite,
For the eve of Holy Ghost;
He was seated in the upper choir,
‘Twas the feast of Pentecost: 6

When he saw a Monk, by the altar-rail,
Kneel down upon the step to pray;
The dying lights were glimmering,
And all had gone away:

---

The priest descended from the choir,
By the lamp that burn’d on the wall,
And he look’d on that uncover’d face,
‘Twas the holy Father Paul!

He stood like one in trance, to gaze
Upon that mild and sacred head;
Forty years had pass’d away
Since he was with the dead.

Forty years had pass’d away
Since the ship had struck on Seam’s steep;
And every soul that breathed there
Had perish’d in the deep!

In all that time, if still he liv’d,
That none should see the Father Paul,
It awed the priest of Einsidlin,
And he could not speak at all!

That aged Monk had left the aisle,
And the dying tapers sink and fail;
All, but the lights on the high altar,
And they are dim and pale:
The priest was still by the altar-rail
On the morn of Holy Ghost;
When the bell was done for matin\textsuperscript{7} prayers,
At the feast of Pentecost.

\textsuperscript{7} matin prayers: Morning prayers.
THE PROPHECY OF MERLIN.

For three long nights had King Arthur watch’d,
The light from the turret shone!
For three long nights had King Arthur wak’d,
He pass’d them all alone!

On the fourth, at the first hour’s summon bell,
As the warder walk’d his round,
A figure cross’d at the postern gate,
That enters under ground;

All wrapt it was in a monkish cowl,
By the gate-lamp burning dim,
When a double shadow slid across,
And another stood by him!

In low and broken tones they spoke,
Till the fourth hour ceas’d to ring: —
That monk had Merlin’s giant form,
The other was the king.

---

1 Postern: Back or side.

2 Merlin: Powerful wizard and magician in Arthurian legends.
The morning shone on Camlan\textsuperscript{3} hills,  
And the summon horn was blown;  
But not a knight would mount the tow’r  
Where Arthur watch’d alone!  

When noon was past, the king came down,  
He bore his dragon shield;  
And dark and dread was his clouded brow,  
On the eve of Camlan field!  

Slowly past that fateful eve,  
And sad it wore away;  
And sad and silent was the king  
As he watch’d the break of day;  

All down the slope of Camlan hill,  
And along the river’s side,  
The rebel bands were posted round,  
Since the fall of eventide:  

From the signal posts the shout begins,  
When the sky was bright and clear;  
And the red sun shone on the steel dragon,  
On King Arthur’s standard-spear!

\textsuperscript{3} \textit{Camlan}: The Battle of Camlan was King Arthur’s final battle. The precise location of Camlan is unknown.
Above the rest was Britain’s crest
In living flame enroll’d!
And the Virgin’s form, in silver wrought, \(^u\)
With the brazon dragon bold!

O! in the field of Camlan fight,
Ere the burning noon was o’er,
The red blood ran, like a river-wave,
On the dry and parched shore:

King Arthur spurr’d his foaming horse \(^v\)
Amid that living flood!
And twice he wav’d his witched sword\(^4\)
Where the dauntless Modred\(^5\) stood!

\(^u\) “And the Virgin’s form, in silver wrought.”
Arthur’s shield had on it the picture of our Lady, and his helm, an engraven dragon.
Notes to the Poly-Olb. Song IV.

From the Poly-Olbion (1612) by Michael Drayton (1563-1631). The notes to Drayton’s poem were provided by scholar John Selden (1584-1654).

\(^v\) “King Arthur spurr’d his foaming horse / Amid that living flood!”
Pendragon’s worthie sonne, who waded there in blood.
Poly-Olb. Song IV.

From Some Specimens of the Poetry of the Antient Welsh Bards (1764) by the Welsh poet and historian Evan Evans (1731-1789).

\(^4\) Witched sword: Excalibur, Arthur’s reputedly enchanted sword.

\(^5\) Modred: In most legends, Mordred is the illegitimate son of Arthur and his half-sister, the sorceress Morgan le Fay.
But who could stand by Arthur’s side,
When that steel of terror shone?
When the fire of wroth\(^6\) was in his eye,
And he rais’d his arm alone!

That sun, which blaz’d in middle sky,
And flam’d on hill and dell;
Its westering light had sunk in night,
When the mighty Modred fell!

But the blood that flows is Arthur’s blood,\(^w\)
His fiery eye is dim!
And a dew like death is on his face,
And over every limb!

He lean’d him down on his dragon shield,
He clasp’d his beaver\(^7\) on!
And the gushing blood it ceas’d at once,
But they heard no dying groan.

---

\(^6\) *Wroth*: Anger, fury.

\(^w\) [“But the blood that flows is Arthur’s blood!”]

King Arthur, according to our ancient historians, slew Modred with his own hand; but received his death-wound himself, and retired to Ynys Ofallon, or Glastenbury, where he soon afterwards died. His death was politically concealed, lest it should dispirit the Britons. Hence arose so many fabulous stories about it.

*Evans’s Specimens of Welsh Poetry*.

From *Some Specimens of the Poetry of the Antient Welsh Bards* (1764) by the Welsh poet and historian Evan Evans (1731-1789).

\(^7\) *Beaver*: “The lower portion of the face-guard of a helmet, when worn with a visor” [OED]
O! how they strove till the night came on,  
And all to raise that masque again!  
And every arm by turns had tried,  
But every arm was vain!

They held him in their arms, and wept  
With tears of deep despair!  
Till they fear’d to touch that plate armour,  
For the sound was hollow there!

Then they drew that witched sword,  
And they heard the armour ring!  
They wav’d it twice in Merlin’s name,  
Before they touch’d the king.

At once the cross-lace open’d wide,  
They felt the rushing air!  
But that mail was hollow as the grave,  
Nor form, nor body there.

As wild they gaz’d, the iron rings  
Were clasp’d as before!  
But the tongue that call’d on Merlin’s name  
Was dumb for evermore!
Meantime, the king was borne away,
In deep and death-like sleep the while,
To the charmed sea, by magic spell,
By the Queen of the Yellow Isle!\(^8\)

And when his tranced soul was rous’d,
He thought, and thought how this might be,
For there was nought but sea and sky
As far as he could see.

King Arthur gaz’d on the calmed surge,
So clear beyond compare!
But neither the form of living man,
Nor the sound of life was there:

The ship it mov’d on the sleeping wave
Like a bird upon the air;
He knew it gained on the deep,
But he felt no motion there!

Ah! then he thought, within that ship
He ever more was doom’d to be!
And he had not once bethought him yet
Of Merlin’s prophecy!

\(^8\) Queen of the Yellow Isle:
Those sleepless nights he watch’d alone,
When the damps of midnight fell!
That voice, of more than human tone, x
He heard in Merlin’s cell ;

That night, the eve of Camlan fight,
When he felt his courage fail ;
When the chill of death was on his brow,
Like a bloodless vision pale ;

That night, his knocking knees refus’d
To bear him from the cave ;
When, press’d in his, the hand of blood
Its deadly pressure gave!

Clear was the sky, and O! with this
What summer could compare?
What woes could press on Arthur’s heart,
When he breath’d that blessed air?

x [“That voice, of more than human tone, / He heard in Merlin’s cell!]

There the wise Merlin, whilome wont, (they say,)  
To make his wonne, low underneath the ground  
In a deep delve, farre from the vew of day  
That of no living wight he mote be found,  
When so he counseld, with his sprights encompast round :  
And if thou ever happen that same way  
To traveill, go to see that dreadful place :  
It is an hideous hollow cave, (they say,)  
Under a rock.

Spenser’s Faery Queene. Book iii. Can. 3].

From The Faerie Queene (1590) by Edmund Spenser (c.1552-1599). These lines comprise the latter half of stanza 7 and the first four lines of stanza 8.
Clear was the sky! that ship drew near
Without the aid of wind or toil!
And, lighted by the morning sun,
He saw the charmed Isle!

The ship was steady on her keel,
Wash’d by that soft and lovely flood;
And, blushing, on the yellow beach,
The Queen of Beauty stood.

High in one hand, of snowy white,
A cup of sparkling pearl she bore;
And she reach’d it to the tranced king
As he knelt upon the shore:

All pallid now was Arthur’s brow,
While he took the draught she gave;
For he thought on what the hand of blood
Had mingled in the cave:

He thought on what the fiend pronounc’d,
That Merlin’s spirit brought;
And he fix’d his eyes on that Ladie’s face,
And trembled at the thought.
Ah! in those eyes, of softest blue,
What magic dwells, to lull the soul!
And Arthur saw their mild reproach,
And rais’d the fraughted bowl!

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!

The voice, that answer’d to his call,
Was that he heard within the cave!
When the mighty form of Urien
Was roused from the grave!

---

[“When the mighty form of Urien / Was roused from the grave.”]

Urien Regen, king of Cambria and a great part of Scotland, as far as the river Clyde. His brave actions are celebrated by Taliessin. Evans’s Specimens]

Taliessin: 6th century poet whose works are collected in The Book of Taliesin, a 14th century Welsh manuscript.
It told him, that the hour was come
He too must slumber in the cave ;
When nought would reach his burial-place,
But the murmurs of the wave!

It told him of the years to pass
Before his kingdom he could see :
And Arthur knew he would return,⁴
From Merlin’s prophecy.

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.

⁴ [“And Arthur knew he would return, / From Merlin’s prophecy.”]

The bard-songs suppose, that, after the battle of Camlan in Cornwall, where Modred was slain and Arthur wounded, Morgan le Fay, an elfin lady, conveyed the body to Glastenbury, to cure it; which done, Arthur is to return to rule his country.

By prophecy Merlin set the date,
Among princes king incomparable,
His seat againe to Carlian to translate.
The Parchas sustrem sponne so his fate,
His epitaph recordeth so certaine
Here lieth King Arthur that shall reigne againe.

Dan Lidgate. See Notes to the Poly-Olb. Song III.

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 fairy-ground, and a poetical community of right to its appropriation has never been disputed.

From John Selden’s notes to Drayton’s Poly-Olbion. The verse is from Book VIII of The Fall of Princes by Daniel John Lydgate (1370-1451), a monk and poet from Suffolk, England.
Textual Variants in *Poems, A New Edition*

Bannerman’s endnotes for *Poems, A New Edition* have been transformed to footnotes. These notes are presented in brackets, and appear with alphabetical letters. All changes in word choice, capitalization, and punctuation are recorded below.

**THE SPIRIT OF THE AIR.**

Line 1:  winds[,] winds!
Line 36:  your joy, I meet] your joy—I meet
Line 60:  nature] Nature’s
Line 64:  tost[,] tost
Line 65:  seas[,] seas.
Line 66:  freeze[,] freeze,
Line 82:  æther] ether
Line 83:  power] Power
Line 90:  heaven-taught] heav’n-taught
Line 100: danger] Danger
Line 101: destruction] Destruction

**THE FALL OF SWITZERLAND and EXILE.**
“The Fall of Switzerland” was first published in *The Poetical Register and Repository of Fugitive Poetry for 1802* (1803), p. 56-57. “Exile” first appeared in *The Poetical Register and Repository of Fugitive Poetry for 1801* (1802), p. 12-13. Barring a few minor punctuation changes, the texts for the 1807 versions of these poems are the same as when they first appeared in *The Poetical Register*.

**TO PAIN.**
Appears as “Ode III. To Pain,” with numbered stanzas, in *Poems* (1800).

Line 1:  power] Power
Line 2:  Whose harsh control each nerve obeys!] Whose wide control the earth obeys!
Line 7:  The pangs[,] The pangs
Line 17:  nature’s bound[,] Nature’s bound;
Line 23:  again] again,
Line 34:  fancy’s] Fancy’s

**THE MERMAID.**
A few minor changes in spacing and punctuation were made in the epigraph from Johnson’s *Rambler*.

“When at last they ] “When, at last, they
  The fate of these lovers] The fate of those lovers
  of the opinion] of the opinion,
  was seized in his passage by] was seized, in his passage, by

Line 12: lover] Lover
Line 33: wind, with] wind with
Line 35: High] Firm
Line 46: moon, in] moon in
Line 54: spell, that] spell that
Line 58: and break] and break;
Line 65: soul, within] soul within
Line 67: time’s] Time’s

**CHORUS OF DRYADS.**
First published in Joseph Cooper Walker’s *An Historical and Critical Essay on the Revival of the Drama in Italy* in 1805.

**TO THE NIGHTINGALE.**


Line 7:  nature] Nature
Line 10:  nature] Nature
Line 11: dryad] Dryad
Line 13: north] North
Line 21: liberal] lib’ral
Line 26:  love; ] love,
Line 29: e’en] ev’n
Line 32: Bids] Bid
Line 37: nature] Nature
Line 40: may’st] mayst

**THE NEREID.**
First published in *The Poetical Register and Repository of Fugitive Poetry for 1802* (1803) p. 64-65.
“WHEN MANY A TEAR BEDIMS THE SIGHT”
This untitled poem appears as “Ode IV.,” with numbered stanzas, in Poems (1800).

Line 2:  And pleasure wings her hasty flight] And Fancy wings her airy flight
Line 3:  To hearts untouch’d by sorrow’s dart:] To scenes that fairer hopes impart;
Line 4:  muse] Muse
Line 14:  Must for thy brow the laurel twine,] Must o’er thy dust the cypress twine,
Line 18:  roll :) roll.
Line 19:  spring] Spring

The original concluding stanza [lines 25-30] are as follows:
   And, while upon the moonlight green         The airy minstrel
   glides unseen,                        glides unseen,
   And sweetly swells the silver lyre ;   And sweetly swells the silver lyre ;
   As softly float the notes along,   As softly float the notes along,
   Echo shall still their sounds prolong,    Echo shall still their sounds prolong,
   A kindred breast with ecstasy to fire!

SONNETS FROM WERTER.

For Poems, A New Edition, each of the ten ‘Werter’ sonnets are presented in fourteen unbroken lines; the line spacing for the original versions can be seen in the Poems section of this edition.

I.
Line 4:  And life, and time, and all unheeded fly.] And Life, and Time, and all unheeded fly.

II.
Line 5:  lowring] low’ring
Line 7:  ambition’s] Ambition’s
Line 9:  this bosom once so blest,] this bosom, once so blest,

III.
Line 2:  That pour’d] Which pour’d
Line 3:  That brought] Which brought

IV.
Line 2:  alone!] alone;

VII.
Line 12:  nature worn,] Nature worn,

VIII.
Line 1:  well:] well,

X.
Line 11:  Farewell!—farewell!] Farewel!—farewel!—
VERSES ON AN ILLUMINATION FOR A NAVAL VICTORY.
An epigraph attributed to J.B. Rousseau originally appeared on the page facing the opening lines of the poem in Poems, A New Edition. This epigraph was omitted from Poems, A New Edition.

Line 1: joy ; the] joy—the
Line 6: Rejoice ; it is the shout of victory!] Rejoice! it is the shout of victory;
Line 7: Rejoice o’er thousands in untimely graves ;] Yes! tho’ enthron’d upon a thousand graves,
Line 11: glory] Glory
Line 31: wakes : afar] wakes—afar
Line 33: comes ; his] comes—his
Line 35: engage ; affrighted] engage—affrighted
Line 38: And murder shrouds them, with his gory wings!] And Murder shrouds them with his gory wings!
Line 50: daemons] demons
Line 54: its] his
Line 68: low,] low ;
Line 82: time,] time ;
Line 88: rest,] rest ;
Line 108: glory] Glory
Line 112: Pity] pity
Line 115: pity’s] Pity’s
Line 119: sorrow’s] Sorrow’s
Line 125: ship-wreck’d] shipwreck’d
Line 135: anguish] Anguish
Line 136: pity] Pity
Line 142: source.] Source.

SONNETS FROM PETRARCH &c.
For Poems, A New Edition, these six sonnets are presented in fourteen unbroken lines; the line spacing for the original versions can be seen in the Poems section of this edition.

The first two poems appear in reverse order in Poems (1800); two Petrarch translations are omitted from the 1807 edition (“Sonnet V” and “Sonnet VI”), as well as a translation of a poem by Giovanni della Casa. The della Casa poem is replaced with Bannerman’s translation of “At The Sepulchre of Petrarch” by Lazzarini di Morro, which did not appear in the 1800 edition. The final poem in each sequence is an interpretation of a passage from James MacPherson’s Ossian, which is renumbered from VIII to VI for the 1807 edition.

I.
Line 5: Ah then!] Ah! then,
II.
Line 10: In grief’s dark mist thy days, inglorious, hide?\] In Grief’s dark mist thy days, inglorious, hide!
Line 11: time\] Time
Line 12: eternity’s\] Eternity’s

III.
Line 1: thy heavenly\] that heav’nly
Line 10: Beneath keen sorrow’s unrelenting power,\] Beneath keen Sorrow’s unrelenting pow’r,
Line 11: fancy’s\] Fancy’s
Line 13: pleasure, as\] pleasure as

IV.
Line 12: heavenly\] heav’nly

VI.
Line 2: hill. \] hill ;
Line 5: wint’ry\] wintry

THE NUN.
Line 5: mis’ry’s\] misery’s
Line 11: friendship!\] Friendship!
Line 13: sister\] Sister
Line 18: peace\] Peace

Two lines (25-26) from the 1800 edition are omitted:
Transfix’d with agony’s convulsive dart,
No gush of sorrow eas’d my swelling heart.

Six lines (originally lines 77-82) from the 1800 edition are omitted:
Me, heav’n disclaims—while, stupified with woes,
I mourn for ever, o’er my lost repose.
Have I not bath’d, bewilder’d with my fears,
Its spotless altar with unceasing tears?
Yes! Conscience, strike ; thy fiercest sting prepare,
And bring distraction, to relieve despair.

Line 86: dim’d mine eyes.] dimm’d mine eyes.—
Lines 89 – 92 have been added to the 1807 edition.

Line 93:  I see the groves in all their beauty shine ; ] Afar the ocean’s whit’ning billows shine,
Line 96:  glowing] happier
Line 102:  sister] Sister
Line 104:  choice,] choice.

Four lines (originally lines 109-112) from the 1800 edition are omitted:
And be it so! —How can I thus repine,
While peace, and ease, and liberty, are thine?
Art thou not
dearer to this aching breast,
Than joy, and freedom, happiness, and rest?

Line 105:  heaven!] Heaven!

Two lines (originally lines 115-116) from the 1800 edition are omitted:
To fear, remorse, and agony, a prey,
Why is my bosom
torn, from day to day?

Line 110:  friendship] Friendship
Line 118:  feeling } Feeling

Ten lines (originally lines 139-148) from the 1800 edition are omitted:
Oft have my sleepless eyes, at early morn,
Mark’d the first dew-drop glitter on the thorn,
And trac’d, on Ocean’s breast, the quiv’ring ray,
Whose dubious light proclaims the King of Day :
Immortal verdure crowns the waving woods,
And, clear as chrystal, gush the whit’ning floods,
Celestial balm from ev’ry flow’r exhales,
And Heav’n’s pure breath perfumes the summer gales.
On me, they blow in vain : No breath divine
Can charm the horrors of a fate like mine.

Line 135:  commerce] Commerce
Line 143:  mis’ry’s] misery’s
Line 156:  fancy’s] Fancy’s
Line 169:  nature] Nature
Line 212:  genius] Genius

Eight lines (originally lines 237-244) from the 1800 edition are omitted:
Hark! mingling with the shrill wind’s rising swell,
Slow steal the chimings of the vesper-bell
Rous’d from disturb’d repose, with ling’ring feet,
The pallid Sisters in affliction meet ;
Trembling they kneel the midnight shrine before,
While tears, in torrents, from their eye-lids pour.
Are these sad hearts, by hopeless anguish riv’n,
The welcome incense of approving Heav’n?

Line 222: name? ] Name?
Line 229: But here must nature pause;—the arm of time] But here must Nature pause ;—the arm of Time
Line 231: superstition’s] Superstition’s
Line 234: mercy’s] Mercy’s
Line 236: alone.] alone,—
Line 237: —O’er] O’er
Line 243: nature] Nature
Line 244: ev’ry
Line 258: nature] Nature
Line 260: away.] away.—
Line 261: —Hark!] Hark!

ORIGINAL SONNETS.
As with the other sonnets reprinted or appearing in Poems, A New Edition, Bannerman’s original sonnets are presented in fourteen unbroken lines; the line spacing for the original versions can be seen in the Poems section of this edition. The poem “The Benighted Arab” from Poems has been omitted. The placement of two untitled sonnets (“Is there a spot…” and “Soft thro’ the woodland…”) are reversed for the 1807 revision. The poems “Good Friday” and “Easter” first appeared The Poetical Register and Repository of Fugitive Poetry for 1803 and did not appear in the 1800 volume.

I.  THE WATCHMAN
Originally appeared as “The Watch-man.”

Line 1: overhangs] o’erhangs
Line 3: sweep ;] sweep,
Line 4: light-house] lighthouse
Line 7: watch-man] Watchman
Line 8: lightnings] lightning’s
Line 13: Heaven: ] Heav’n:

II.  THE SOLDIER
Line 11: Heaven] Heav’n
IV. TO THE OWL
The first four lines have been significantly revised for *Poems, A New Edition*. The original opening was as follows:

I love thee, cheerless, melancholy bird!
Soothing to me is thy funereal cry;
Here build thy lonely nest, and ever nigh
My dwelling, be thy sullen wailings heard.

VI.
Line 2: peace] Peace
Line 4: dim’d] dimm’d
Line 12: grave.] grave;
Line 13: Vouchsafe, oh Heaven! if still there’s peace for me,] And tempests keener than the troubled air
Line 14: That I that envied tenant soon may be!] Alike are powerless and unheeded there!

VII.
As a result of the omission of the poem “The Benighted Arab” and the repositioning of the previous untitled sonnet, this sonnet maintains the same roman numeral designation of “VII” from the 1800 volume.

Line 2: hue, the] hue the
Line 14: broken] suffering

VIII. TO THE CYPRESS.
Line 6: Which] That
Line 8: Dar’st] Wilt

IX.
Line 3: my] the
Line 6: And seen affection vanish like a dream.] And youth’s depictur’d happiness a dream.

X. GOOD FRIDAY and XI. EASTER
“Good Friday” and “Easter” both appeared in *The Poetical Register and Repository of Fugitive Poetry for 1803* (1805) on p. 166-167.

THE GENII
Line 27: nature] Nature
Line 36: cave.] cave.—
Line 37: —But,] But,
Line 38: heavenly] heav’nly
Line 40: die:) die: —
Line 49: powers!] Powers!
Line 66: bower.] bower. —
Line 67: —All] All
Line 85: Hark the loud axe! where the ponderous stroke] Hark! on the fretted roof, at every stroke
Line 86: Waves its firm strength, the massy bars unlock,) That yields the axe, the massy bars unlock;
Line 102: waves.] waves,—
Line 103: —Lo!] Lo!
Line 109: he] He
Line 118: driv’n] driven [The 1807 edition also has a misprint of “goomy” for “gloomy” in this line]
Line 131: powerful] pow’rful
Line 133: pity] Pity
Line 134: virtue’s] Virtue’s
Line 135: love’s] Love’s
Line 136: adieu?] adieu?—
Line 149: control,] controul,
Line 151: Benignant spirits! ye, who range the air,) Ye softer Spirits, who from yonder sky
Line 152: And bind the wounds of sublunary care!] On Earth’s dread warfare bend a brother’s eye,
Line 161: convey] display
Line 165: —Say,) Say, / is] be
Line 169: —Say,) Say,
Line 172: despair ; ] despair.

Four lines (originally lines 173-176) from the 1800 edition are omitted:
—Say, that the parted soul shall pierce the gloom,
Which lowrs tremendous o’er the sullen tomb,
And come by night, the messenger of peace,
To speak of joys, that never shall decrease.

Line 187: command : the] command—the
Line 198: night.] night ;
Line 200: ray,] ray ;
Line 202: lion] Lion
Line 212: main,] mane,
Line 227: world of waters] World of Waters

Line 231-254: These lines originally appeared as lines 317-340 in the 1800 version of the poem.

Line 245: —You] You
Far in the coral caves, where the ocean keeps,
Now in the coral caves, where ocean keeps
control,
powers!
Powers!
career.
—What
lowrs,
low’rs?
—What
—What
—What
—What
—What
—What
—What
(a misprint in the 1800 edition)
nature’s
nature’s
—But.
—But.
seraph’s
seraph’s

TALES OF SUPERSTITION AND CHIVALRY.

PROLOGUE.
Yet in their cavern’d, dark recesses, dwells
Yet, in their cavern’d dark recesses, dwells
That voice is hush’d: But still in Fancy’s ear
That voice is hush’d!—But still, in Fancy’s ear,
The unearthly
—The unearthly] Th’ unearthly

THE DARK LADIE.
knight, in
knight in
They gaz’d...but she was gone!
They gaz’d—but she was gone!—
rose,...and
rose,—and
press’d
press’d
tone, that
tone that
tone,...no
tone,—no
echo, deep ;
echo deep ;
sleep!...]
sleep!—
dawns...the
dawns—the
cries one,
cries one,)
(H uart cries),—
heard!...[
heard—I

Two four-line stanzas (originally lines 133-140) from the 1802 edition are omitted:
“He quak’d to tell!...But, never more,
In quiet sleep, he rested long;
For still, on his alarmed ear,
That rousing echo rung!

“It glar’d for ever on his sight,
That fixed eye, so wildly keen!
Till life became a heavy load;
And long had heavy been.

Line 146: Ah! none] Ah none  

BASIL.
Line 15: unpress’d. […] unpress’d;
Line 19: But his heart!…”twas Pity’s resting place.] But his heart!—‘twas Pity’s resting place;
Line 21: wave:] wave.
Line 22: fisher’s] fishers’
Line 37: numb![…] numb!
Line 45: O, how] O! how
Line 54: breast[…] breast.
Line 67: wind,[…] wind;
Line 73: wretch, that] wretch that
Line 76: door[…] door;
Line 77: death,] death:
Line 90: lie!] lie!
Line 95: dead[…] dead.
Line 98: step, […] but] step,—but
Line 100: giv’n] given
Line 103: bold[,] for[,] bold—for,
Line 105: main[…] main.
Line 110: slain[…] slain.
Line 113: like[,] but] like— but  

THE PENITENT’S CONFESSION.
Line 2: Monks] monks
Line 4: St.] Saint
Line 7: dead and] dead, and
Line 8: away[,] away.
Line 10: through] thro’
Line 15: St.] Saint
Line 16: breast[,] breast.
Line 21: forehead, bare[,] forehead bare,
Line 24: rest!] rest!

Stanzas 7 and 8 have been reversed for Poems, A New Edition.
THE FISHERMAN OF LAPLAND.

THE PERJURED NUN.
Line 49: more!...at] more!—at  
Line 52: more!”] more!”—  
Line 60: clear...] clear.  
Line 63: come that] come, that  
Line 65: clock,...’tis] clock,—’tis  

Line 68: In the 1802 edition, the errata indicates that the word ‘deadly’ should be substituted with the word ‘deathly.’ However, ‘deadly’ is used once again in the 1807 edition.  
Line 71: clock ere] clock, ere  
Line 83: stair to] stair, to  
Line 84: so!] so!  
Line 87: door to] door, to  
Line 89: shriek!] Like] shriek!—Like  
Line 91: turn’d where] turn’d, where  
Line 96: see...,] see.—  

One four-line stanza (originally lines 97-100) from the 1802 edition has been omitted:  
“...For him! for him, I resign’d my vows,  
And the guilt is on my head.  
I could conjure here! but my hour draws near,  
And I may not rouse the dead!”  

Line 101: “I hear a call you can never hear, ] The wrongs, the woes this heart hath borne  
Line 102: And I may not not unfold! ] I may not now unfold!  

THE MURCIAN CAVALIER.  
Line 7: to day,] to-day,  
Line 19: And to the courts] To the proud courts  
Line 27: alone...] alone.—  
Line 59: ...The] The  
Line 64: ...‘Tis] ‘Tis  
Line 67: hill :...] hill :  
Line 72: will :”] will.”  
Line 86: ...Soft] —Soft  
Line 105: all...] all.  
Line 111: came!...and nature] came!—and Nature  
Line 159: ...The] The  

THE PROPHETESS OF THE ORACLE OF SEAM.  
Line 1: Seäm’s] Seam’s  
Line 12: Seäm’s] Seam’s  
Line 37: Seäm’s] Seam’s  
Line 50: Seäm’s] Seam’s  
Line 57: that] one
THE PROPHECY OF MERLIN.

Two four-line stanzas (originally lines 101-108) from the 1802 edition have been omitted:

O, then! he had no trace of time
How long he was on the pathless sea!
But he could have rested there for aye,
So sweet it seem’d to be!

How many times he watch’d the sun,
And saw it sink, he never knew ;
For it ne’er was more than faint twilight
In that sky of stainless blue!

Line 116: gave! …] gave!
Line 128: stood….] stood.
Line 132: shore :... ] shore :
Line 139: ladie’s] Ladie’s
Line 140: thought.... ] thought.
Line 143: reproach ;} reproach,
Line 149: up!...he] up!—he
Line 152: blood!...] blood!
Line 160: wave! ...] wave!
Line 162: see : ...] see :
Line 164: prophecy. ....] prophecy.
Line 166: grave : ...] grave :
Line 168: wave. ...] wave.
Our beauteous child we laid amidst the silence of the dead,
We heap’d the earth and spread the turf above the cherub head;
We turn’d again to sunny life, to other ties as dear,
And the world has thought us comforted when we have dried the tear!

And Time has roll’d his onward tide, and, in its ample range,
Has pour’d along the happiest path vicissitude and change,
The flexile flowers of infancy their early leaves have shed,
And the strong and stately forest trees are waving in their stead.

We guide not now our children’s steps, as we were wont before,
For they have sprung to warrior-men, they lean on us no more!
We gaze upon the lofty brow, — but thought and time have cast
A shade, thro’ which we seek in vain the traces of the past! —

And do we mourn the utter change that mocks our memory there?
Ah no! ‘tis but the answer’d wish of many a secret prayer!
Centre of all our dearest hopes, we live but in their fame,
But our love — as to a little child — how can it be the same?

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1 From *The Casket, A Miscellany Consisting of Unpublished Poems*. London: John Murray, Albemarle-Street, 1829. 349-350. The poem is attributed to “Miss Bannerman” in the index, where the title of the poem is revised to “On the Loss of a Child In Infancy” (450). If the attribution to Bannerman is correct, it is the only poem of Bannerman’s to be published after *Poems, A New Edition* in 1807. The exact date of composition remains unknown.
We still have one — an only one — secure in sacred trust,
It is the lone and lovely one that’s sleeping in the dust;
We fold it in our arms again, we see it by our side,
In the helplessness of innocence, that sin hath never tried.

All earthly taint, all mortal years, however light they fly,
Must darken on the glowing cheek, and tame the eagle eye!
But thee! — our bright, unwithering flower! — our spirits’ hoarded store!
We keep thro’ ev’ry chance and change, the same for evermore!
A P P E N D I X  B .

C R I T I C A L  R E V I E W S

P O E M S


When the ear of a Reviewer is palled, and his attention is nearly exhausted, by listening to the monotonies of mediocrity which sound from modern lyres, it is a rich reward for his labour, it is a cordial for his wearied spirits, to hear the breathings of ardent Genius, and to hail the approaches of the real muse. Such recompence have we experienced from the energetic numbers of Miss Bannerman, and such relief has been imparted by the soothing influence of her charmed song.

Miss Bannerman delights to soar in the loftiest regions of imagination, and gaze with undaunted ken upon “prostrate worlds”¹ below; nor does she fail in her airy flight to strike the chords of true poesy, with the melting pathos of Collins,² and the romantic ardour of Gray.³

The British Critic 16 (August 1800): xvi, 139-141.

“The Poems of Mrs. Bannerman [sic] display much beauty of versification, and are in other respects worthy of patronage” (Preface xvi).

We are always pleased when we have the opportunity, which but too rarely occurs, of placing before our readers specimens of poetical performances of merit. The present publication will be found entitled to the highest commendation for vigour, elegance, and harmony. It offers itself to the world in a plain, simple, and modest garb, without any ostentatious promise of title-page, or

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¹ An allusion to Bannerman’s “The Spirit of the Air”: “O’er all the prostrate world, my power extends” (9).

² William Collins (1721-1759), author of Odes on Several Descriptive and Allegorical Subjects (1747) and “Ode on the Popular Superstitions of the Highlands of Scotland” (1750). See Appendix IV.

³ Thomas Gray (1716-1771), author of “Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard” (1751).
vain parade of preface; and is merely addressed to a friend, in the following chaste and beautiful lines.

[Review Reprints “To Robert Anderson, M.D.” in its entirety] ⁴

The volume consists of three Poems, to which are prefixed the names of The Genii, Verses on an Illumination for a Naval Victory, and The Nun. The first of these is indeed a very spirited performance; it represents the existence of Genii before the formation of the world, their power over the elements, their residence in the centre of the earth, their operation in earthquakes, on domestic happiness, their excursions to the torrid and frigid zones, their power in water, air, and fire, their presence at the Deluge, and finally their destruction by fire. It will be easily perceived that this is a very bold attempt; but if it should not be found to hold closely together in a regular chain of systematic connection, the reader will be delighted with many animated apostrophes, and brilliant passages. Of this assertion, the following must be considered satisfactory proof.

[Review quotes lines 125 – 176 of “The Genii” and reproduces Bannerman’s editorial footnote on Hamet, but adds a note objecting to the use of the word “savior.”]

“Tremendous Genii! not alone you reign
O’er the wild elements, and stormy main,
Pervade the subtile air’s mysterious frame,
Or scatter horror from volcanic flame;
But, in an humbler range, your hands destroy
The blissful image of domestic joy.

Say, powerful rulers! your unchanging days
Exist uninjur’d, while the earth decays, —
Has ever pity view’d your starting tear,
Where faithful friendship wept on virtue’s bier?
Where love’s fond eye, ere yet the spirit flew,
Beam’d every blessing in the last adieu?
Heav’d not your hearts, as wild on Tunis’ plain,
The grateful Hamet tore⁵ the captive’s chain,
And madly strain’d, to agony oppress’d,
His youthful saviour⁶ to his swelling breast!

⁴ Not in the facsimile copy of Poems (1800) that I obtained from the British library. The poem appears in Poems, A New Edition in 1807.

⁵ "For the story of Hamet, see History of Sandford and Merton, by Mr. Day." [Bannerman’s Original Note].
Ah no! — Mark yon pale mourner sit to cheer,
While every smile of anguish hides the tear,
The hapless maniac, thro’ the ling’ring day;
No heart-wrung sighs her agonies betray.

—Oft, as her faded eyes begin to trace
Each alter’d feature of that long-lov’d face,
Those eyes, where smiles of joy no longer glow,
That heart serene ‘mid agonizing woe,
Ah! then her stifled feelings spurn control,
And tears of keenest pain unbidden roll.

Benignant spirits! ye, who range the air,
And bind the wounds of sublunary care!
Who, calm at eve on silver clouds reclin’d,
Inhale the fragrance of the summer wind,
Descend! —Your angel smiles will chase away
The storms that shake the tenements of clay.

—O! let your aid the sinking spirit raise
To higher objects, and sublime days!
In midnight slumbers, to the fancy bring
Elysian bowers, and an eternal spring,
With love congenial to the mind convey
What golden glories wake the heavenly day,
What rapt’rous joys the hallow’d soul impress
With full enjoyment, and unmingled bliss!

—Say, tho’ the boast of human pride is o’er,
And hope extinguish’d, to revive no more,
That life eternal shall repair the woe,
And soothe the memory of the scenes below;

—Say, that, invested with a purer frame,
The soul unchang’d shall ever be the same,
Shall turn to every friend, with guardian care,
And soothe, and soften, when their hearts despair;

—Say, that the parted soul shall pierce the gloom,
Which lowrs tremendous o’er the sullen tomb,
And come by night, the messenger of peace,
To speak of joys, that never shall decrease.

The lovers of poetry will not want much further inducement to become more familiarly acquainted with this author. The Ode to the Nightingale is very pleasing, and the Sonnets, though by some they may be denominated illegitimate; show much sensibility and true poetic taste. It is with deep unfeigned regret that we perceive an air of fixed and deep melancholy diffused over the whole of this otherwise most agreeable performance.

† We must always object against such introduction of that appropriated title. [Original Editor’s Note].
The New Annual Register 21 (1800): 327.

The volume of “Poems by Anne Bannerman” consists of odes, sonnets, and miscellaneous pieces, which have afforded us much pleasure in the perusal. They exhibit satisfactory evidence, that the author’s imagination is lively and bold, that her taste is correct, that her ear is musical, and that she possesses much tenderness of feeling.


Miss Anne Bannerman has published a volume of “Poems,” in which are united vigour, harmony, and taste.

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The author of “An Epistle from the Marquis de la Fayette to Washington” has attributed to the marquis sentiments which it is possible he would not acknowledge: the author’s poetical powers are by no means despicable.5


As it is with reluctance we condemn at any time the productions of the fair sex, so we experience a more than ordinary satisfaction in paying a just tribute of applause to their meritorious compositions. This satisfaction we feel in the present instance; for we have perused the modest volume of the poems of Anne Bannerman with almost unmixed appropriation. Her effusions are the genuine offspring of a lively and excursive imagination, regulated by the principles of just taste, equally removed from the uninteresting dullness of common-place on one hand, and the false glitter of extravagance and ambitious ornament on the other.

As the terms by means of which we endeavour to describe the phaenomena of the mind, are necessarily borrowed from the vocabulary of sensible objects, we are accustomed to characterise the sublime and more energetic strains of poesy as the productions of a masculine spirit. But

5 An advertisement for “An Epistle from the Marquis de la Fayette to Washington” appeared at the end of Bannerman’s first volume of Poems in 1800. As a result, the poem has been attributed to her by some sources. The fact that the reviewers of The Monthly Magazine do not discuss the poem in relation to Bannerman’s volume indicates that at the time of publication, the poem was not connected to Bannerman or believed to have been written by her. The poem was likely written by the Reverend George Hamilton, minister in the Scottish village of Gladsmuir, but this has not been fully substantiated.
some stout champions of the ‘Rights of Women’ have asserted that mind is of no sex. We do not intend to enter upon the discussion of this difficult and delicate question (for the fair decision of which it is obviously requisite that one half the jury should be composed of discreet matrons); but we may be permitted to observe that Anne Bannerman’s Odes may be quoted as an irrefragable proof that the ardour, whatever be its gender, which gives birth to lofty thought and bold expression may glow within a female breast.— Witness ‘The Spirit of the Air.’

[Review reprints “The Spirit of the Air” in its entirety]

The poem entitled ‘The Genii’ appears to us to possess uncommon merit; and much correctness of thought and tenderness of feeling pervade the ‘Verses on an Illumination for a Naval Victory.’ ‘The Nun’ is the least successful of these poetical pieces. The subject, and indeed several passages of this composition, reminded us of Pope’s Epistle from Eloisa to Abelard, perhaps the most exquisitely finished poem in the English language—a competition with which may be an indication of spirit, but is certainly attended with the greatest possible risk. The sonnets, ten of which are original, eight translated, and ten founded on incidents in the Sorrows of Werter, are, in general, highly wrought. We shall conclude our notice of this elegant production by transcribing the last of these sonnets which the following passage of Goethe’s celebrated novel is the germ:

“Be at peace; let me entreat you, be at peace! they are loaded—the clock strikes twelve.—I go, Charlotte! —Charlotte! Farewell! Farewell!”

[“Sonnet X” is reprinted in its entirety].

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6 Alexander Pope (1688-1744). *Eloisa to Abelard* (1717) is inspired by a medieval story about a young woman who falls in love with her mentor. After Eloisa’s parents have Abelard castrated, he enters a monastery and Eloisa withdraws to a convent. There, she yearns to forget the doomed affair but to no avail. Eloisa’s impassioned letters to Abelard comprise the majority of Pope’s poem.

7 *The Critical Review* has reprinted Bannerman’s appendix note to lead into the sonnet.
TALES OF SUPERSTITION AND CHIVALRY

The Poetical Register 2 (1802): 431-32.¹

These tales contain many passages of no common merit. The language is frequently in a high degree poetical, and the incidents well imagined. One fault, however, runs nearly through the whole of the volume. It is obscurity. The 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.

The New Annual Register 23 (1802): 318.

“Tales of Superstition and Chivalry,” in which we perceive more smoke than fire, more imitation than original genius; the aim of being grand without the power of magnificence.

The British Critic 21 (January 1803): xiv, 78-79.

The Tales of Superstition will not discredit the pen of Miss Bannerman, nor will require any emphatic praise to recommend them to those readers whose imaginations are habituated to derive delight from that fashionable stimulus (Preface xiv).

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This beautiful little book belongs, as its title implies, to the family of Tales of Wonder.² It is printed without a name; but, if we are not misinformed, it is the production of Miss Bannerman, already known for poetical talents. The Tales abound with fancy; but it is fancy perverted to the purpose of raising only horror, and raising it by præternatural agency. This uniformity has an effect not pleasing to those, who have not learnt to accommodate their taste to a transient fashion; and we, who can see through the disguise the marks of talent formed for better things, cannot but regret that the volume is not of a more miscellaneous kind. In contents there are ten Tales, illustrated by three plates;³ the third of which, prefixed to “the Murcian Cavalier,” is not

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¹ Two of Bannerman’s poems were published in The Poetical Register for 1802. “The Fall of Switzerland” appears on pages 56-57, and “The Nereid” appears on pages 64-65.

² Tales of Wonder (1801) by Matthew Gregory Lewis. The collection of ballads includes original poems by Lewis, as well as contributions from Sir Walter Scott, Robert Southey, and John Leyden.

³ There were originally four plates, but the illustration for “The Prophecy of Merlin” was withdrawn on account of its depiction of a nude female figure. See Craciun, Fatal 183-190.
without elegance. The following almost regular Sonnet, is placed at the beginning, under the title of "PROLOGUE."

[The “Prologue” is quoted in its entirety]

The measure used in most of the Tales is of the ballad kind, and an imitation of ancient simplicity seems everywhere to be intended. As the effect of such narratives arises from the whole context, we shall not attempt to give a partial specimen; but, recommending the book to those who love to shudder o’er the midnight fire, we advise the author to make a livelier and better use of a fancy stored with images.

*Miss Bannerman, of Edinburgh [Original Editor’s Note].

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4 Another reference to Lewis’ collection of ballads. “Tales of Horror,” however, may have been a mistake for “Tales of Terror,” the title of an anonymous collection of ballads from 1801 that was often attributed to Lewis, or the title of Sir Walter Scott’s “An Apology for Tales of Terror.” After Lewis delayed the publication of Tales of Wonder, Scott published his “Apology” in a limited run in 1799. See Douglass H. Thomson’s edition of Tales of Wonder for Broadview Press.
uncouth in their embellishments. In imitating the works of former ages, we should study to render them pleasing to modern eyes and ears. However much we approve of these poems, we think the following extract justifies our observation.

“In all that time, if he liv’d still,
“That none should see the Father Paul;
“It awed the priest of Einsidlin,
“And he could not speak at all!”

Amongst others we noticed such rhymes as these, “bled”—“satisfied,”—“aisle” and “confessional,” &c, &c.

Adherence to the ancient style has its merits, but, in such instances, appears to us “more honoured in the breach than the observance.”

Notwithstanding our conviction of the illusion, tales of this description, in general, create much interest. Those we have reviewed have, in this respect, an eminent claim to our appropriation, and we strongly recommend them to the lovers of this pleasing kind of composition.

The language of these Tales is made up of imitations, chiefly from Mr. Scott's and Dr. Leyden's ballads, and the poems of Mr. Wordsworth. ‘Omne ignotum pro magnifico’ should have been the motto: the author has heard that obscurity is one source of the sublime, and has therefore veiled his sublimity in impenetrable darkness. He has perceived how rapidly good poets connect their narratives, and this also he has imitated; but, with great originality, has contrived to leap over, not the dull parts, but what would in ordinary hands have formed the main action. The beginning of every poem excites expectation of something very great: when the explanation

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5 Lines 201-204 of “The Prophetess of the Oracle of the Seam.”


7 Latin translation: “Everything unknown appears magnificent.” From Book I, section 30 of Agricola (c. 98) by Publius Cornelius Tacitus (c.56-c.117), senator and Roman historian.

8 Unaware of Bannerman’s authorship, the reviewer assumes that the author is male.
should come, we are always reminded of the country-schoolmistress—‘What, can't you spell the word, you little dunce? well, then, skip it and go on!’

To evince the justice of our censure, we will analyse one of these poems. A ship is becalmed near the island of Seäm, and the crew are all terrified by ‘a sound that stoppeth not, like the shrieks of a soul in woe!’ Father Paul, a monk of Einsidlin, is on board, and he terrifies them still more, by his account of their danger.

[Review reprints lines 45-80 of “The Prophetess of the Oracle of Seam”]

The vessel is lost, and only father Paul remains alive in the cave and he is dragged into the inner cave by the oracle of flame. The prophetess stretches her hand from behind the veil, and points to him to lay aside his crucifix. Father Paul remembers then the man whom he had seen die in such agony; and he felt that recollection more terrible than the terrors of the cave. What, then, did father Paul do? —here the author skips and goes on.

[Review next reprints lines 177-212]

And here the poem ends.

There was once a painter, who painted one daub of red, and called it the passage of the Israelites, over the Red Sea, ‘Where are the Israelites?’ asked a critic.— ‘All safely got over.’— ‘But where are the Egyptians?’—‘Where should they be?’ replied the painter: ‘all drowned, to be sure.’ Our author’s ballads are like the picture of the Red Sea.


It is not one of the least objections against these fashionable fictions that the imagery of them is essentially monstrous. Hollow winds, clay-cold hands, clanking chains, and clicking clocks, with a few similar et ceteras, are eternally tormenting us.

The author of these tales is capable, we are inclined to think, of higher productions. The tale of Basil is well told, and a few gems of poetry are scattered over it, which induces us to believe, that the mine which produced them is worth being wrought. This little volume is ornamented with plates.

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9 From lines 7-8.
Joanna Baillie to Anne Bannerman (9 June 1800) ¹

Hampstead June 9th 1800

Madam,

I received yesterday the very elegant copy of verses with which you have honour’d me,² and return you my sincere thanks, tho’ I feel myself altogether unworthy of the high praise you have bestow’d upon me. To be thought well of by my country women, and remember’d in the land which I love, will always be to me the most gratifying reward of my labours.

I am

Madam

your much obliged servant

J: Baillie

Address: Miss Bannerman / Nicholson Street / Edinburgh

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Joanna Baillie (1762-1851). Scottish poet and playwright. Her first volume, Poems, appeared in 1790, followed by three volumes of Plays on the Passions in 1798, 1802, and 1812.

² A manuscript version of “Verses to Miss Baillie, on the Publication of her First Volume of Plays on the Passions,” which was first published in Poems, A New Edition in 1807. Although Baillie’s reply has survived, Bannerman’s original letter to the elder poet has been lost.
Anna Seward to Thomas Park, Esq. (25 September 1800) ¹

Lichfield, Sept. 25, 1800.

…And now, what shall I say to you on the subject of Miss Bannerman’s volume? ² Long as my letter already is, I feel that I have much to add on the subject, to justify my utter dissent from you on that theme. Dr. A’s³ lavish praise of powers, which appear to me of such strutting feebleness, surprises me much less than yours, since he pronounced the prosaic and long defunct Leonidas⁴ a fine epic poem.

In the first place, you style Miss. B. pre-eminent as a Scotish poetess. Ah! have you forgotten Helen Williams and her Peru,⁵ published when she was under twenty? I confess an epic poem was too arduous an attempt for years so blossoming, an unclassic education, and inexperience in criticism. Peru, consequently, wants strength, and a sufficient portion of characteristic variety, and its metaphors and epithets are sometimes incongruous; but the numbers are richly harmonious, the landscapes vivid, and the fancy wildly and luxuriantly elegant.

Have you forgotten, also, that Miss Baillie, just emerged as the acknowledged author of the Plays on the Passions,⁶ is a Scotish woman; and, in my estimation, if indeed they are her’s, as


² Seward is discussing Bannerman’s first volume, *Poems*, throughout her letter.


⁴ *Leonidas, A Poem* (1737) by Richard Glover (1712-1785). Based on the life of the Spartan king, Glover’s poem contained veiled allusions to contemporary British politics and was popular enough to warrant several editions throughout the eighteenth-century.

⁵ Helen Maria Williams (1759-1827). *Perù, A Poem in Six Cantos* (1784). Williams was a dissenter, abolitionist, and supporter of the early French Revolution. She found an admirer in a young William Wordsworth, who wrote a “Sonnet On Seeing Miss Helen Maria Williams Weep At A Tale Of Distress” in 1787. Williams’ dissenting views led to her eventual imprisonment in the Bastille, and a decline in her reputation in Britain. Williams was also the author of *Edwin and Eltruda, A Legendary Tale* (1782) and *The Bastille, A Vision* (1790).

⁶ Joanna Baillie (1762-1851). The full title of Baillie’s volume is *A Series of Plays: In Which It Is Attempted To Delineate The Stronger Passions Of The Mind. Each Passion Being The Subject of a Tragedy and a Comedy*
nobody seems to doubt, a very great poet. Whatever may be the faults of her two tragedies,
poetic strength and beauty are found in them, which place her in the first rank of those who, in
this period, have struck the Delphic lyre. No plays, except Jephson’s, approach Shakespeare’s
so nearly.

Surely that obscurity, which Burke pronounces a source of the sublime, is totally different in
its nature to the strained and abortive conceptions of Miss Bannerman’s pen! The obscurity he
means, is where sentiment is rather hinted than expressed; and, to an intelligent mind, conveys a
different meaning to that which the words simply bear.

Certainly an author is not obliged to find his reader brains; but that obscurity which puzzles a
reader, who has poetic sensibility and taste, to guess what the author means, is a great inexpiable
fault; and if it occurs frequently, is as sure a proof of weakness in the powers of composition, as
the former species is of strength.

There are other things, as you well know, which may render poetry obscure to the prosers,
without fault in the composer;—as inversions, using epithets as verbs-active, or as noun-
substatives, together with the bold and graceful omissions of the conjunctives.

But the palpable obscure in which Miss B’s ideas are perpetually struggling, is not the result
of the poetic licenses, any more than of that mode of expression, which purposely leaves
something to be supplied by the imagination of the reader. Unquestionably she has a good ear
for the construction of numbers; her lines flow tunefully. Flowing numbers are, however, but the
drapery of poetry, valuable when they clothe clear and vigorous thoughts and striking imagery;
but worth little when they enrobe such blown and empty conceptions as I find on the pages of
Miss B.

(1798). The first volume contained the plays Count Basil, The Tryal, and De Monfort. The first two editions
were published anonymously, but Baillie’s authorship was revealed in the third edition, which was published in
1800.

7 Robert Jephson (1736-1803). Irish playwright, poet, and politician. His plays include Braganza (1775), The
Law of Lombardy (1779), Conspiracy (1796), and The Count of Narbonne (1780), which is a stage adaptation of
Walpole’s Castle of Otranto. He is also the author of The Confessions of James Baptiste Couteau, a poetic satire
on the French Revolution.

8 Edmund Burke (1729-1797). A Philosophical Enquiry Into The Origin Of Our Ideas Of The Sublime And
Beautiful (1757). See Appendix IV.

9 Seward’s critique of Bannerman’s obscurity anticipates The Poetical Register’s review of Tales of Superstition
and Chivalry in 1802, which also faults Bannerman for obscurity. See Appendix II.
You speak of the wildness of her fancy,—it seems to me elaborate, yet incomprehensible, inflated, yet trite; and, if I know what invention is, that prime essential in poetry, she has absolutely none. Therefore is it, that no time, no instruction, no experience, will make her a poet, though her command of numbers tolerably qualifies her for a translator; not of that class, however, which rise upon their originals.

I will take an early opportunity of shewing you the ground of these my convictions.

Meantime, I remain, &c.

Anna Seward to Thomas Park, Esq. (5 January 1801) ¹

Lichfield, Jan. 5, 1801.

When you recollect what claims I have made for Dr. Darwin,² as the inventor of a new class in poetry; as an exquisite poetic painter, both in imagery and landscape; as investing philosophy and all her sciences, with the brightest irradiations from the Delphic³ shrine; as master of the grandest harmonies of the heroic couplet;—remembering these, my claims for him, you will expect to hear me avow the utmost astonishment, that you should pronounce his great work, “a shewy and short-lived garden,” and Cowper’s Task ⁴ a noble orchard of winter-keeping fruit.

Allowing the last of your decisions, I utter my warm protest against the first. Have I lived to hear a gentleman, whose talents I respect so highly, admire Miss Bannerman’s muse, and despise Dr. Darwin’s? I have no prejudice in favour of him, or against her. All who have known me through life, by conversation, as well as by pen, will testify, that I have been ever ready to acknowledge, and to applaud the talents which adorn my sex; have ever been tenacious of the fame of my accomplished sisters of the lyre, where I thought them well-founded. How must I be

³ Delphic: “Of or relating to Delphi, a town of ancient Greece on the slope of Mount Parnassus, and to the sanctuary and oracle of Apollo there…of the obscure and ambiguous nature of the responses of the Delphic oracle” [OED].
⁴ William Cowper (1731-1800). English poet and an important precursor of Romantic poetry on account of his meditative preoccupations with nature and rural life. The Task was his most popular poem and was first published in 1785.
charged, if, as you say, I have indeed applied the scalping knife, and the tomahawk, on the fair form of real genius!

I disavow all partiality to Darwin. His conduct to me has not been calculated to inspire it. He has taken pleasure, from the time he commenced [as] author himself, to depreciate my writings, which, till then, he had warmly praised. His taking my landscape of the valley he cultivated near Lichfield, written and published in my name, in the Gentleman’s Magazine and Annual Register, before one line of his noble poem was written, and years before it came out; taking it, I say, and publishing it as the exordium of his work, without the least acknowledgement, could have no tendency to produce in me an exaggerating spirit concerning his talents. But treatment, thus unhandsome, shall not induce me to suppress the fervour of my testimony in their favour, when they appear to me unjustly arraigned.

You add the injurious appellation of “frothy trifle” to your prophecy of speedy oblivion for the Botanic Garden, so deeply philosophic!—so extensively scientific!—so beautifully picturesque? You might term the Iliad a frothy trifle upon the same ground you censure Darwin’s poem, viz. as containing little that is important to the interests of true religion or sound morality.

You accuse the Darwinian poetry of possessing no interest for the passions. Such interest had no natural connection with its subject, any more than it had with the Georgics of Virgil, the Metamorphoses of Ovid, or the Midsummer Night’s Dream of Shakespeare; and passages of pathetic power, and of impressive morality, are not fewer in the Botanic Garden than in the other three. They are all distinguished, and all should alike be famous to remotest times, as beautiful creations of poetic fancy. Exquisite imagination has always been allowed the first of the poetic

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5 For a fuller account of Darwin’s plagiarism of Seward’s poem, see her Memoirs of the Life of Dr. Darwin (123-145).

6 In the “Advertisement” at the start of Poems (1800), Bannerman notes unintentional similarities between “The Genii” and Darwin’s earlier poem.

7 The Iliad, an epic poem by Homer (c.7 or 8 BC).

8 Virgil (70 BC-19 BC), Georgics (c.29 BC). Ovid (43 BC-c.17AD), Metamorphoses (c.8 AD). William Shakespeare (c.1564-1616). A Midsummer Night’s Dream (c.1590-96).
merits. Has Ovid lived through so many centuries, and “borne his blushing honours thick about him,” ⁹ and shall our English Ovid, shall Darwin die?

If he is not a decidedly moral bard, his verse has no tendency to corrupt the mind. That is more than can be said for Ovid.

Whatever is highly excellent of its species, will not, cannot be short-lived. Rare as is good taste in that science, yes, more rare than genius, its suffrages will accumulate, however slowly, till they have placed excellence upon a rock of impregnable fame.

It is seldom, and only accidentally, that I see reviews or magazines. Mr. White¹⁰ sent me lately one, of the existence of which I had not previously heard—the Historical Magazine for September last,¹¹ and he sent it for its similarity of opinion to mine about Miss Bannerman’s compositions. I transcribed its strictures on them, and also on Bloomfield; and shall copy them here, as I wish you to see them, without giving you the trouble to search them out.

“The Farmer’s Boy, by R. Bloomfield,”¹² is not without vigorous lines, pleasing images, and natural sentiments. Considered as the production of a self-educated shoemaker’s boy, it may excite surprise, and deserve a share of praise; but as poetry, viewed without regard to extrinsic circumstances, its merits are not high. In a real or affected enthusiasm of false taste, it has been cried up as a divine effusion of transcendent genius; but it is hastening, nevertheless, to take its place in the lumber-room of oblivion, beside those of Stephen Duck, James Wodehouse, and Jones the bricklayer.¹³ It was by praise, such as Capel Loft¹⁴ has bestowed on this piece, that the

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⁹ Seward’s quote comes from Shakespeare’s King Henry VIII (1616): “This is the state of man: to-day he puts forth / The tender leaves of hopes; to-morrow blossoms, / And bears his blushing honours thick upon him;” (III.ii).

¹⁰ Reverend Henry White (d.1836) of Lichfield. Historian and friend of Samuel Johnson.

¹¹ I was unable to locate a review of Bannerman in the Historical Magazine. Seward may have mistaken the magazine for a different publication or perhaps a different date.


¹³ Stephen Duck (1705-1756), author of The Thresher’s Labour (1730). James Woodhouse (1735-1820), known variously as ‘The Poetical Shoemaker’ or ‘The Poetical Cobler.’ The Life and Lucubrations of Crispinus Scriblerus, his pseudo-autobiography in verse, was published posthumously in 1896. Henry Jones (1721-1770), Irish poet and playwright, moved to London after finishing apprenticeship to a bricklayer. Known for the tragedy The Earl of Essex (1752). Like Burns and Hogg, each of these working class poets were self-educated and considered natural geniuses.
friends of Ambrose Philips ruined the character of his Pastorals.\textsuperscript{15} To bestow praise in a manner thus indiscreet and tasteless, is treason to the rights of genius. To teach youth to admire bad models, is to oppose, in a manner the most mischievous, the genuine improvement of the poetic art.

“Of the same class as to merit, and the same fate as to tasteless applause, are the poems of Anne Bannerman. They are laboured imitations of the most vicious productions of the Della Crusca school.\textsuperscript{16} The lines are sounding;—one would almost think, at first sight, that it is meaning which meets the ear, but in vain shall you pause and strive to catch it. You find nothing but trite thoughts, disguised in a multitude of affected words; an ostentation of imagery, without one delicate picture of fresh from nature; an affected cant of poetic feeling; a pretence of elevation and elasticity of fancy, yet nothing of that wild, yet tempered enthusiasm of imagination, which diffuses over true poetry a delicious, inexpressible, and irresistible charm. Shame on those who thus encourage girls to make fools of themselves! Certain critics have exhibited, as proofs of Miss B—‘s excellence in poetry, precisely those pieces which are the most obviously and indisputably nonsense.”\textsuperscript{17}

With this critic I have no affinity respecting the Farmer’s Boy, than that it has been egregiously over-praised by its editor. It is a pleasing, interesting poem. Its author has looked at nature, if not with a rapt, yet with a very discriminating eye, and painted her justly, though in numbers often deficient in sweetness and flow, and with little of what is called the poetic heaven of invention. Yet still, still a work of genius,—the consideration of extrinsic circumstance set aside. Nothing can be more unjust than to rank it with the verses of Stephen Duck, Wodehouse, and Jones, or to predict for it a fate inevitably oblivious; though, I confess, the editor, by preferring for it unfounded claims, has done his utmost to procure that hot-bed reputation with

\begin{footnotes}
\item[14] Capel Lofft (1751-1824). English lawyer and writer. Lofft was a patron to Bloomfield, and aided in the publication of \textit{The Farmer’s Boy}. His enthusiastic preface to Bloomfield’s poem was criticized by the English literati. Lofft was attacked by Lord Byron in \textit{English Bards and Scotch Reviewers} (1809) (see lines 774-776).
\item[16] \textit{Della Crusca}: a group of poets characterized by their overt sentimentality, including Robert Merry, Hannah Cowley, and the earlier work of Mary Robinson. The name is derived from Robert Merry’s pen-name “Della Crusca,” which was adopted for the 1787 poem “Adieu and Recall to Love.”
\item[17] Likely a reference to the favorable review of \textit{Poems} in \textit{The British Critic}, which also reprinted a lengthy passage from “The Genii.” \textit{See Appendix II.}
\end{footnotes}
the review-governed multitude, as always has a tendency to procure, after a short time, dismissal into the land where unfounded pretensions are irrevocably forgotten; and that, by exciting disgust in the minds of the few, whose fiat confers lasting reputation. Such, however, will not, I think, be the fate of the Farmer’s Boy. I trust it has a principle of vitality, which shall resist the disadvantages of being placed in a soil of reputation too luxuriant for its constitution. The lowest, rudest, and commonest objects of nature, painted so faithfully, and interspersed with the natural effusions of a feeling heart, and with some scenes and passages of yet higher poetic claims, will save it from the fate that periodical critic has predicted. Still greater injustice has he committed on the self-educated bard, by ranking his sensible, interesting, and unaffected worth, with the stilted abortions of Miss Bannerman’s volume; upon which I do not think him too severe. But when shall we meet with review-criticism, which does not betray, by its inconsistence, its inability for the task it assumes? This gentleman allows, however grudgingly, that the Farmer’s Boy has vigorous lines, pleasing images, and natural sentiments; but when, at the same time, and with equal truth, he denies everything that is vigorous, perspicuous, and natural, to the ravings of Miss. B, yet places the two compositions on the same class as to merit, he betrays, most grossly, his own want of power, criticism is that worse thing than bad writing, which Pope pronounces it, when he says,

“Of the two, least dangerous the offence,
To tire our patience, than mislead our sense.”

Even in the just condemnation of Miss B—’s talents, there is an apparent want of discrimination. He says, and truly, “that which at first sight looks like meaning, proves incomprehensible on examination;” and then immediately adds, “we find nothing but trite thoughts, disguised in a multitude of affected words.” Now, thoughts which are trite can hardly be unintelligible. He should have said, what he truly might have said, all that is intelligible in Miss B—’s writings, is trite and borrowed. So far from finding nothing but what is trite, the most we find is composed of

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18 Alexander Pope (1688-1744). From the opening lines of *An Essay on Criticism* (1711): “‘Tis hard to say, if greater Want of Skill / Appear in Writing or in Judging ill; / But, of the two, less dang’rous is th’ Offence / To tire our Patience, than mis-lead our Sense” (1-4).
ideas so confused, incongruous, and abortive, that it is impossible to reconcile them to good
sense, under any license that poetry has ever obtained.

The same critic betrays, on the same page, his insensibility to the beauty of Darwin’s muse—
over-ornamented perhaps; but while the decorations are in themselves of high genuine
magnificence, he is a callous censor who will not forgive their profusion.

I am surprised you should quote the British Critic’s eulogium19 of Miss B—‘s writings in
their justification. You, who know my contempt for the poetic decisions of that publication,
grounded upon the ignorance they displayed of English poetry, and its usages; by their censure of
my application of the words thrill, and idol,20 and also by their assertion that Mr Polwheel21 had
coined, and injudiciously coined, the words memorize, slumberous, and moontipt, though the
expressions, so stigmatized by them, both in my writings and Mr P.’s, are illustrated by Johnson
with quotations from our best poets, who have used them in precisely the same sense.22 It is in
character that such a critic should applaud Miss B. He that mistakes sense for nonsense, must be
liable to mistake nonsense for sense. That is no wonder,—the miracle is that you can endure it.

I think Mr Nares23 very pleasant and animated as a companion. I am sure he has wit, and I
presume he is a good scholar, in the common acceptation of the word. I hope, and trust also, that
he is a very worthy man; but he has no prompt perception of genuine excellence in the poetic
science, through the medium of his native language. He praises what has been long praised; but
he has not born to lay the corner-stones of that fame which true genius is destined to acquire.

I received Miss Bannerman’s volume when Mr Nares was here, and asked him if he had seen
it? “No:”—Had he heard of it? “No.” I asked him if he chose to see it. “No,” he replied; “it will
be reviewed in our work by one of my coadjutors.” Meantime, before he leaves Lichfield, or has

19 Eulogium: “a formal expression of praise” [OED]. Eulogy.

20 Seward’s volume Llangollen Vale, with other Poems was reviewed in the April 1796 issue of The British Critic.
Near the end of the review, the author “cannot help remarking that the word thrill seems perpetually present to
the author’s mind, and so familiar to her pen, as not to be introduced with felicity” (407). Rev. White defended
Seward in a letter to the editor of The Gentlemen’s Magazine and Historical Chronicle in the July issue of 1796.

21 Richard Polwhele (1760-1838). Poet, clergyman, and historian. Author of The Unsex’d Females, which
criticizes Mary Wollstonecraft and other radical women writers.

22 Polwhele’s Influence of Local Attachment with respect to Home, a Poem, in Seven Books was reviewed by The
British Critic for the September issue of 1798. The review criticizes Polwhele’s “affection…for strange and
unusual words” and points out the three words Seward mentions (255).

23 Robert Nares (1753-1829), English clergyman, author, and primary editor of The British Critic (1793-1811).
seen a syllable of it, it is reviewed in the British Critic. The circumstance confirms my former belief, that Mr Nares himself has nothing to do with the strictures in the poetic censorship of that publication. Without much confidence in his critical powers, I yet hold him superior to the nonsense of every stricture on English verse which I have seen in the British Critic. To be sure that has been only three or four of the numbers, sufficiently sickened by them of the Gildon Mr Nares employs to decide on the claims of the British poets. I repeated to Mr Nares the passage from Miss B., about a syren-song being soft as the cry of an expiring mariner. He laughed very heartily, and exclaimed, What nonsense! I think he will be a little ashamed of his coadjutor’s puffs of that lady, though, in policy, he will not confess the sensation. When he comes again I shall rally and dose him well from the Genii. I have no doubt you will soon be aware that you have spell-bound upon the subject, as was Mrs Piozzi about the fustian of her friend, Merry, and the rest of the Della Cruscan school.

At length the tales of wonder are before the public, and contains Scott’s Glenfinlas, and the Eve of St John, which I mentioned to you with such warm applause; but I blush for the editor respecting his dishonest imposition on the public. Two volumes, of guinea-price, one of them stuffed with old things from Dryden, Mallet, Parnel, and Percy’s volumes of ancient poetry,

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24 Gildon: Hack writers, in reference to Charles Gildon (1655-1724). Gildon produced numerous Restoration biographies that contain factual errors and embellishments. Gildon was a target of Alexander Pope’s satire in The Dunciad (1728) and The Epistle to Dr. Arbuthnot (1735).

25 Seward is referring to the following passage from “The Mermaid”: “I pour the syren-song of woe; / Like the sad mariner’s expiring cry” (28-29).

26 Hester Lynch Thrale née Salusbury (1741-1821). English author, diarist, and patron of the arts with connections to Robert Merry and Samuel Johnson. Married Gabriel Mario Piozzi in 1784.

27 Tales of Wonder (1801). A collection of predominantly supernatural ballads from Celtic, Germanic, Nordic, and other European traditions. The volume was compiled by Matthew Gregory Lewis (1775-1818), author of The Monk (1796) and the popular drama The Castle Spectre (1797).

28 Scott’s “Glenfinlas, or Lord Ronald’s Coronach” and “The Eve of St. John” both appear in the first volume of Lewis’ collection. Scott’s other contributions to the collection include the original poem “The Fire King,” as well as translations of Gottfried August Bürger’s “The Wild Huntsman” and the anonymous German poem “Frederick And Alice.”

29 Lewis was criticized for republishing so many familiar and accessible poems (most of which were available in Percy’s Reliques). As a result, the second volume was often referred to as “Tales of Plunder” in some circles. While there were many ballad collections in addition to Percy’s Reliques, none were exclusively gothic or supernatural in content.

30 John Dryden (1631-1700). Lewis included “Theodtor and Honoria,” which was originally from Dryden’s Fables Ancient and Modern (1700), as well as the poem “Dreams.”
Hosier’s Ghost,\textsuperscript{33} &c.—and, of the few which have not already repeatedly passed the press, very few, indeed, except the beautiful Cloud-King,\textsuperscript{34} and the humorous ones, can rank high as poetry. His tomb of Angantyr,\textsuperscript{35} as he calls it, is a miserable business. He must be a supreme coxcomb on that single testimony; but Scott’s ballads are gems…

\textsuperscript{31} David Mallet (c.1705-1765). “Margaret’s Ghost.” The poem was first published in issue 36 of The Plain Dealer in 1724, and was also included in the third volume of Percy’s Reliques.

\textsuperscript{32} Thomas Parnell (1679-1718). Irish poet and clergyman. One of the earliest authors to be associated with the “graveyard school” of poetry. Lewis reprinted the poems “The Hermit” and “Edwin of the Green.”

\textsuperscript{33} “Admiral Hosier’s Ghost” (1740) by Richard Glover (1712-1785). The poem was reprinted in the second volume of Percy’s Reliques.

\textsuperscript{34} “The Cloud King” is an original poem by Matthew Lewis in the first volume of Tales of Wonder.

\textsuperscript{35} “The Sword of Argantyr” is Lewis’ translation of a Runic poem. In a head note, Lewis admits to taking “great liberties” with his adaptation, and that “the catastrophe is [his] own invention” (46). Seward published her own adaptation from this epic poem cycle entitled “Herva. At The Tomb of Argantyr. A Runic Dialogue” in Llangollen Vale, with Other Poems in 1796.
Anne Grant to Mrs. Smith (7 September 1824) ¹

Edinburgh. 7th September 1824.

My dear Friend,

All hurried as you were, I think your last letter truly meritorious, and your unceasing attention to me more so. In regard to diminishing the weight of care, I have greatly the advantage of you, for I have Mary, who is everything to me. That is well, for I find that, without such a prop, I should soon grow useless. Of this I had a proof the very last week: Miss Lyman, an American lady who resides with me, had the strongest desire to see Loch Katrine and the Trossachs,² and so had a good friend of ours, Mrs. Millar. But this party could not hold without Mary, who was extremely unwilling to leave me. However, there was a person, of whom you have possibly heard, by the name of Miss Bannerman, who lives now a feeble invalid at Portobello;³ but with all this external decay, her shattered frame is illuminated by a mind bright with genius, and rich in stores of intelligence. This most companionable shadow was left with me till the tourists should return; and while she did stay she was invaluable. Her style of conversation is so pure, her train of thinking so elevated, her piety so scriptural, so supporting: you see her setting in mild brightness, the too fervid energy of her mind now softened down by the sober certainty of her distinct, yet humble views of the futurity which seems glowing before her. But Miss Bannerman, to do her justice, with all her lights and shades (increasing lights and diminishing shades), would require a letter for the sole purpose of giving you some idea of what she is. I shall, therefore, only tell you that her intercourse with me provided by no means a tête-à-tête, for we had many visitors, all, or for the most part, tourists; and your coffee stood me in good stead, and so did sundry boxes of game that followed each other in quick succession.

¹ Reprinted from Memoir and Correspondence of Mrs. Grant of Laggan. Vol. III. (1845). Letter XVII 42-44.

² Loch Katrine: freshwater lake located near Stirling, Scotland. Trossachs: A small wooded area located to the east of Loch Katrine. As the fictional setting of Sir Walter Scott’s Lady of the Lake (1810), Loch Katrine and the Trossachs became popular tourist destinations.

³ Portobello: located three miles east of Edinburgh. During Grant and Bannerman’s lifetime, Portobello was a fashionable bathing resort, and likely explains Bannerman’s decision to convalesce there. Grant’s reference to Bannerman in this letter provides one of the few specific details about her final years.

Anne Macvicar Grant (1755-1838). Scottish poet and author, best known for the long poem, Eighteen Hundred and Thirteen, a critical response to Anna Letitia Barbauld’s Eighteen Hundred and Eleven. Barbauld’s poem criticized Britain’s participation in the Napoleonic Wars and was poorly received, while Grant’s offered a less contentious and optimistic perspective. Grant was also the author of Letters from the Mountains (1806), Memoirs of an American Lady (1808), and Essays on the Superstitions of the Highlanders of Scotland (1811).

The addressee, Mrs. Smith, was a long-time friend of Grant’s who lived near Glasgow.
I was a good deal worn out with all this, and by the excitement attending the final departure from Edinburgh of our friends, Dr. and Mrs. Boott, certainly the most agreeable set of people to be met with in this age of fac-similes. Never were such enthusiasts: what others feign they truly feel. They went some weeks ago on a tour to the Highlands, including the parish of Laggan. Improvement, busy everywhere, has been particularly so there; —

“And still the fresh spring finds
New groves to thicken, and new plants to green.”

You would not know it, if you saw it now, with all its sylvan decorations. Mrs. Boott has made very pretty, and, what is better, very accurate drawings of our church, our family tomb, and its surrounding trees, and of Fort-Augustus, ever dear to memory. It is delightful to meet people not worldly wise or prematurely old; yet the simplicity of their habits, their total indifference about emulating the wealth and finery of others, stands in the place of anxious care and foresight, and prevents their overstepping the limits assigned to them.

I hope Mrs. Maccall’s summer campaign is over; I am sure she must have been worn out with her Gallicized visitors. When I hear of people going abroad to reside, it sounds to me like going into purgatory: to those who prefer a Parisian residence, I think it is fool’s paradise at best. Adieu, dear friend: the current of thought has been turned another way, and I wonder at my own barbarity; so do you, I suppose. No more at present from

ANNE GRANT.

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4 Dr. Francis Boott (1792-1863) and Lucy Boott née Hardcastle. Dr. Boott was an American physician and botanist who earned his degree in Edinburgh in 1824.

5 Parish of Laggan: Grant’s home near the Scottish Highlands from 1779 until 1803, where her husband James Grant (d.1801) was appointed minister.

6 I was unable to trace the origin of this quote. It may very well be an original impromptu couplet from Grant herself.

7 Fort-Augustus: Settlement in the south west of Loch Ness in the Scottish Highlands. The fort was erected by the British General George Wade after the Jacobite Rebellion of 1715. The fort, however, was recaptured from the British in April of 1745.

8 Mrs. Maccall: Likely in reference to Elizabeth Murdoch Maccall (b.1792) wife of the tradesman John Maccall (d.1793) from the town of Largs in North Ayrshire, Scotland.
Anne Grant to Mrs. Smith (17 February 1830) ¹

Edinburgh, 17th February, 1830

My dear Friend,

…Miss Bannerman’s departure was a blow much felt: her integrity and sound principle commanded my esteem, her intelligence amused, and her eloquence delighted me, and her little irritations never disturbed me on her own account. Perhaps from east to west there was not two people who formed a greater contrast than she and my worthy Mrs. Hall²; yet they knew and esteemed each other, as genuine, sterling people always do. Miss B., with all her high intellectual powers, valued, indeed revered, the sterling worth and humble piety of her whose whole life was one continued exercise in patience, forbearance, and charity in its most extensive sense. Mrs. Hall, again, was no enlightened judge of mental qualities, yet had of such a generous admiration, far beyond the scope of ordinary minds, especially when accompanied, as in Miss Bannerman, with stern uprightness and religious principle…

¹ Reprinted from Memoir and Correspondence of Mrs. Grant of Laggan. Vol. III. (1845). Letter LVII 143-44.
² Mrs. Hall: The wife of Reverend Hall, another longtime family friend of Grant’s from Edinburgh.
Anne Grant to Miss Mercer (17 March 1830) ¹

TO MISS MERCER, CLIFTON, BRISTOL.²

Edinburgh, 17th March, 1830

My dear Miss Mercer,

Age, Ossian says, is dark and unlovely. Not always, I hope; but I find one of its most unlovely results is the reluctance one feels to write even to those most loved and esteemed. I could scarcely believe that so kind and satisfactory a letter as your last should remain so long unanswered; but I may say with poor Leyden,—

“My soul is sad, for I have heard
The steps of the departing year.”³

Among others whom I little thought to outlive are General Stewart of Garth,⁴ my worthy and most primitive and original friend, Mrs. Hall, and Miss Bannerman, with all her true piety, strong attachments, pure and fervent eloquence, high talents, and unbending, often unwelcome sincerity. All of these have lately gone. The General I should most likely never have seen again; but of the other long attached and faithful friends I daily want.

² Miss Mercer: unidentified.
³ John Leyden (1775-1811). From “Dirge of the Departed Year” (1806). “His notes are sad, for he has heard / The footsteps of the parting year” (19-20).
⁴ David Stewart (1772-1829). Scottish infantry general and author of Sketches of the Character, Manners, and Present State of the Highlanders of Scotland; with details of the Military Service of the Highland Regiments (1822).
Appendix D.

Contemporary Poetry & Prose


William Collins (1721-1759) was an English poet and contemporary of Thomas Gray. Collins’ is best known for his odes, which share some characteristics and sensibilities with the “graveyard school” of contemplative ecclesiastical poetry, and partially paved the way for the Gothic revival and Romanticism. In this particular poem, Collins tries to convince the Scottish playwright John Home to draw from Scottish history and folklore in his future dramas. Bannerman alludes to Collins’ poem in “The Genii” and “The Mermaid,” but more specifically, she makes the same appeal to Joanna Baillie to remember her Scottish lineage in her poetry and dramas in a poem dedicated to the influential writer.

An Ode on the Popular Superstitions of the Highlands of Scotland, considered as the Subject of Poetry.

I.

H—,² thou return'st from Thames, whose Naiads³ long
Have seen thee ling'ring, with a fond delay,
Mid those soft friends, whose hearts, some future day,
Shall melt, perhaps to hear thy tragic song.
Go, not unmindful of that cordial Youth,⁴

¹ Throughout the late 18th and early 19th century, Collins’ incomplete poem was reprinted with additions written by Henry Mackenzie (1754-1831) and Alexander Carlyle (1722-1805). Collins’ original manuscript was recovered by Claire Lamont and published in the Review of English Studies in 1967. I have reprinted the poem as it first appeared in the Transactions of the Royal Society of Edinburgh in 1788 since that is the version that was reproduced throughout the early nineteenth-century and the version that Bannerman likely read. I have preserved the original editorial footnotes that indicate which passages were not written by Collins. These footnotes are marked by the original symbols used by the editors and presented in brackets.


³ Naiads: water nymphs.

⁴ Youth: John Barrow, a student at Edinburgh and later a member of the Jacobite army with Home, was responsible for introducing Collins to Home.

The National Library of Scotland is in possession of a copy of The Poetical Works of William Collins, published by C. Cooke in 1796, that was formerly owned by Bannerman [NLS AB.1.213.196(1)]. This is the version of the poem that appeared in that specific edition.
Whom, long endear'd, thou leav'st by Lavant's side;
Together let us wish him lasting truth,
And joy untainted with his destin'd bride.
Go! nor regardless, while these Numbers boast
My short-liv'd bliss, forget my social name;
But think far off how, on the southern coast,
I met thy friendship with an equal flame!
Fresh to that soil thou turn'st, whose ev'ry vale
Shall prompt the poet, and his song demand:
To thee thy copious subjects ne'er shall fail;
Thou need'st but take the pencil to thy hand,
And paint what all believe who own thy genial land.

II.
THERE must thou wake perforce thy Doric⁵ quill;
'Tis Fancy's land to which thou sett'st thy Feet;
Where still, 'tis said, the fairy people meet
Beneath each birken shade on mead or hill.
There each trim lass that skims the milky store
To the swart⁶ tribes their creamy bowl allots;
By night they sip it round the cottage-door,
While airy minstrels warble jocund notes.
There ev'ry herd, by sad expedience, knows
How, wing'd with fate, their elf-shot arrows fly;
When the sick ewe her summer food foregoes,
Or, stretch'd on earth the heart-smit heifers lie.
Such airy beings awe th' untutor'd swain:

⁵ Doric: rustic.
⁶ Swart: dark, black. Swarthy.
Nor thou, tho’ learn’d, his homelier thoughts neglect;
Let thy sweet muse the rural faith sustain:
These are the themes of simple, sure effect,
That add new conquests to her boundless reign,
And fill, with double force, her heart-commanding strain.

III.
E’en yet preserv’d, how often may’st thou hear,
Where to the pole the Boreal\textsuperscript{7} mountains run,
Taught by the father to his list’ning son
Strange lays, whose power had charm’d a SPENCER’S ear.
At ev’ry pause, before thy mind possest,
Old Runic\textsuperscript{8} bards shall seem to rise around,
With uncouth lyres, in many-colour’d vest,
Their matted hair with boughs fantastic crown’d:
Whether thou bid’st the well-taught hind repeat\textsuperscript{*}
The choral dirge that mourns some chieftain brave,
When ev’ry shrieking maid her bosom beat,
And strew’d with choicest herbs his scented grave;
Or whether, sitting in the shepherd’s shiel\textsuperscript{†},
Thou hear’st some sounding tale of war’s alarms;
When at the bugle’s call, with fire and steel,
The sturdy clans pour’d forth their bon[n]y swarms,
And hostile brothers met to prove each other’s arms.

\textsuperscript{7} \textit{Boreal}: of the north.
\textsuperscript{8} \textit{Runic}: “Belonging to ancient or medieval Scandinavia or to the ancient North” [OED].
\textsuperscript{*} [First written, \textit{relate}].
\textsuperscript{†} [A kind of hut, built for the summer habitation to the herdsmen, when the cattle are sent to graze in distant pastures].
IV.
‘Tis thine to sing how framing hideous spells
In SKY’S lone Isle the gifted wizzard “sits*,”
“Waiting in” wintry cave “his wayward fits†;”
Or in the depth‡ of Uist’s§ dark forests dwells:
How they, whose sight such dreary dreams engross,
With their own visions oft astonish’d§§ droop,
When o’er the watry strath¶ or quaggy¶¶ moss
They see the gliding ghosts unbodied troop.
Or if in sports, or on the festive green,
Their “piercing‖ glance some fated youth descry,
Who, now perhaps in lusty vigour seen
And rosy health, shall soon lamented die.
For them the viewless forms of air obey
Their bidding heed∗∗, and at their beck repair.
They know what spirit brews at the stormful day,
And heartless, oft like moody madness stare
To see the phantom train their secret work prepare.

* [Collins had written, seer].
† [Collins had written, Lodg’d in the wintry cave with—— and had left the line imperfect: Altered and the chain supplied by Dr Carlyle].
‡ [First written, gloom].
§ Uist: group of islands in the Outer Hebrides of Scotland.
§§ [First written, afflicted].
¶ Strath: large, shallow river valley.
¶¶ Quaggy: soft or yielding.
‖ [A blank in the manuscript. The word piercing supplied by Dr Carlyle].
∗∗ [First written, mark].
V.

†† "Or on some bellying rock that shades the deep,
    "They view the lurid signs that cross the sky,
    "Where, in the west, the brooding tempests lie,
    "And hear their first, faint, rustling pennons sweep.
    "Or in the arched cave, where deep and dark
    "The broad, unbroken billows heave and swell,
    "In horrid musings rapt, they sit to mark
    "The laboring moon; or lift the nightly yell
    "Of that dread spirit, whose gigantic form
    "The seer’s entranced eye can well survey,
    "Through the dim air who guides the driving storm,
    "And points the wretched bark its destin’d prey.
    "Or him who hovers, on his flagging wing,
    "O’er the dire whirlpool, that, in ocean’s waste,
    "Draws instant down whate’er devoted thing
    "The failing breeze within its reach hath plac’d—
    "The distant seaman hears, and flies with trembling haste.

VI.

"Or, if on land the fiend exerts his sway,
    "Silent he broods o’er quicksand, bog, or fen,
    "Far from the shelt’ring roof and haunts of men,
    "When witched darkness shuts the eye of day,
    "And shrouds each star that wont to cheer the night;
    "Or, if the drifted snow perplex the way,
    "With treach’rous gleam he lures the fated wight,
    "And leads him flound’ring on, and quite astray."

What though far off, from some dark dell espied

†† [A leaf of the manuscript, containing the fifth stanza, and one half of the sixth, is here lost. The chain is supplied by Mr MACKENZIE].
His glimm’ring mazes cheer th’ excursive sight,
Yet turn, ye wand’rers, turn your steps aside,
   Nor trust the guidance of that faithless light;
For watchful, lurking ‘mid th’ unrustling reed,
   At those mirk* hours the wily monster lies, 100
And listens oft to hear the passing steed,
   And frequent round him rolls his sullen eyes,
If chance his savage wrath may some weak wretch surprise.

VII.

Ah, luckless swain, o’er all unblest indeed!
   Whom late bewilder’d in the dank, dark fen, 105
Far from his flocks and smoking hamlet then!
   To that sad spot “his wayward fate shall lead *:”
On him enrag’d, the fiend, in angry mood,
   Shall never look with pity’s kind concern,
But instant, furious, raise the whelming flood
   O’er its drown’d bank, forbidding all return.
Or, if he mediate his wish’d escape
   To some dim hill that seems uprising near,
To his faint eye the grim and grisly shape,
   In all its terrors clad, shall wild appear. 115
Meantime, the wat’ry surge shall round him rise,
   Pour’d sudden forth from ev’ry swelling source.
What now remains but tears and hopeless sighs?
   His fear-shook limbs have lost their youthly force,
And down the waves he floats, a pale and breathless corse. 120

12 This line marks the return to Collins’ original verse.

* [First written, sad].

* [A blank in the manuscript. The line filled up by Dr CARLYLE].
VIII.

For him, in vain, his anxious wife shall wait,
    Or wander forth to meet him on his way;
For him, in vain, at to-fall of the day,
    His babes shall linger at th’ unclosing† gate:
Ah, ne’er shall he return! Alone, if night
    Her travell’d limbs in broken slumbers steep,
With dropping willows drest, his mournful sprite
    Shall visit sad, perchance, her silent sleep:
Then he, perhaps, with moist and wat’ry hand,
    Shall fondly seem to press her shudd’ring cheek‡,
And with his blue swoln face before her stand,
    And, shiv’ring cold, these piteous accents speak:
Pursue†, dear wife, thy daily toils pursue
    At dawn or dusk, industrious as before;
Nor e’er of me one hapless thought renew, 135
    While I lie welt’ring on the ozier’d shore,
Drown’d by the KAELPIE’S* wrath, nor e’er shall aid thee more!

IX.

Unbounded is thy range; with varied stile
    Thy muse may, like those feath’ry tribes which spring
From their rude rocks, extend her skirting wing 140
    Round the moist marge13 of each cold Hebrid isle,
To that hoar pile which still its ruin shows †:

† [First written, cottage].
‡ [First written, Shall seem to press her cold and shudd’ring cheek].
† [First written, proceed].
* [A name given in Scotland to a supposed spirit of the waters]. Such beings often have horse hoofs or other equine characteristics.
13 Marge: The edge or border of a body of water. Bannerman alludes to this line in “The Genii” (line 246).
In whose small vaults a pigmy-folk is found,
Whose bones the delver with his spade upthrows,
And culls them, wond’ring, from the hallow’d ground!  145
Or thither where beneath the show’ry west
The mighty kings of three fair realms are laid ‡:
Once foes, perhaps, together now they rest.
No slaves revere them, and no wars invade:
Yet frequent now, at midnight’s solemn hour,
The rifted mounds their yawning cells unfold,
And forth the monarch’s stalk with sov’reign pow’r
In pageant robes, and wreath’d with sheeny gold,
And on their twilight tombs aerial council hold.

X.

BUT O! o’er all, forget not KILDA’S race*,
On whose bleak rocks, which brave the wasting tides,
Fair Nature’s daughter, Virtue, yet abides.

† [On the largest of the Flannan islands (isles of the Hebrides) are the ruins of a chapel dedicated to St FLANNAN. This is reckoned by the inhabitants of the Western Isles a place of uncommon sanctity. One of the Flannan islands is termed the Isle of Pigmies; and MARTIN says, there have been many small bones dug up here, resembling in miniature those of the human body].

St. Flannan (Flannán mac Toirrdelbaig) was Irish saint in the 7th century. Spent a portion of his life preaching in the Hebrides. Pigmies, or pygmies, are a mythical race of very small people. The Isle of Pigmies is located on Lewis island, one of the largest islands in Western Scotland.

Martin Martin (?-1718) - or as he was known in Scottish Gaelic, Màrtainn MacGille Mhàrtainn – was the author of A Description of the Western Islands of Scotland (1703), which is referenced in the subsequent notation. Both Samuel Johnson’s A Journey to the Western Islands of Scotland (1775) and James Boswell’s A Journal of a Tour to the Hebrides (1785) reference Martin and his book.

‡ [The island of Iona or Icolmkill. See MARTIN’S Description of the Western Islands of Scotland. The author informs us, that fort-eight kings of Scotland, four kings of Ireland, and five of Norway, were interred in the Church of St. OURAN in that island. There were two churches and two monasteries founded there by St COLUMBUS about A.D. 565. BED. Hist. Eccl. l.3. COLLINS has taken all his information respecting the Western Isles from MARTIN; from whom he may likewise have derived his knowledge of the popular superstitions of the Highlanders, with which this ode shows so perfect an acquaintance].

* [The character of the inhabitants of St. Kilda, as here described, agrees perfectly with the accounts given by Martin and by Macaulay, of the people of that island. It is the most westerly of all the Hebrides, and is above 130 miles distant from the main land of Scotland].
Go, just, as they, their blameless manner’s trace!
Then to my ear transmit some gentle song
Of those whose lives are yet sincere and plain,
Their bounded walks the rugged cliffs along,
And all their prospect but the wintry main.
With sparing temp’rance, at the needful time,
They drain the sainted spring, or hunger-prest,
Along th’ Atlantic rock undreading climb,
And of its eggs despoil the Solan’s\textsuperscript{14} nest.
Thus blest in primal innocence they live,
Suffic’d and happy with that frugal fare
Which tasteful toil and hourly danger give.
Hard is their shallow soil, and bleak and bare;
Nor ever vernal bee was heard to murmur there!

XI.
NOR need’st thou blush, that such false themes engage
Thy gentle mind, of fairer stores possest;
For not alone they touch the village breast,
But fill’d in elder time th’ historic page.
There SHAKESPEARE’s self, with ev’ry garland crown’d \textsuperscript{†},
In musing hour, his wayward sisters found,
And with their terrors drest the magic scene.
From them he sung, when mid his bold design,
Before the Scot afflicted and aghast,
The shadowy kings of BANQUO’s\textsuperscript{15} fated line,

\textsuperscript{14} Solan’s nest: The solan, or northern gannet, is a seabird native to the North Atlantic.

\textsuperscript{†} [This stanza is more incorrect in its structure than any of the foregoing. There is apparently a line wanting between this and the subsequent one, \textit{In music hour}, &c. The deficient line ought to have rhymed with scene].

\textsuperscript{15} Banquo: A principal character in Shakespeare’s \textit{Macbeth}. The three witches prophesize that Banquo will never be king, but that his heirs will eventually rule. Fearing that he is a threat, Macbeth has him murdered. Banquo’s
Through the dark cave in gleamy pageant past.
Proceed, nor quite the tales which, simply told,
Could once so well my answ’ring bosom pierce;
Proceed, in forceful sounds and colours bold
The native legends of thy land rehearse;
To such adapt thy lyre and suit thy powerful verse.

XII.
In scenes like these, which, daring to depart
From sober truth, are still to nature true,
And call forth fresh delight to fancy’s view,
Th’ heroic muse employed her TASSO’S\(^{16}\) art!
How have I trembled, when at TANCREDS\(^{17}\) stroke,
Its gushing blood the gaping cypress pour’d;
When each live plant with mortal accents spoke,
And the wild blast up-heav’d the vanish’d sword*!
How have I sat, when pip’d the pensive wind,
To hear his harp, by British FAIRFAX\(^{18}\) strung.
Prevailing poet, whose undoubting mind
Believ’d the magic wonders which he sung!

ghost – or a subconscious projection of Macbeth’s guilt in the form of his murdered friend – later appears to torment him.

\(^{16}\) Tasso: Torquato Tasso (1544-1595), Italian poet and author of *La Gerusalemme Liberta / Jerusalem Delivered* (1581).

\(^{17}\) Tancred: Christian knight and hero in Tasso’s *Jerusalem Delivered*, based on the medieval Norman crusader and eventual Prince of Galilee (1075-1112).

* \(\text{[These four lines were originally written thus:}\]

* \(\text{How have I trembled, when, at TANCREDS’s side,}\)
  \(\text{Like him I stalk’d, and all his passions felt;}\)
  \(\text{When charm’d by ISMEN, through the forest wide,}\)
  \(\text{Bark’d in each plant a talking spirit dwelt!]}\)

\(^{18}\) Fairfax: Edward Fairfax (c. 1575-1635), English poet and author of *Godfrey of Bulloigne, or the Recovery of Jerusalem* (1600), a translation of Tasso’s *Gerusalemme liberata.*
Hence at each sound imagination glows;
Hence his warm lay with softest sweetness flows;
Melting it flows, pure, num’rous, strong and clear,
And fills th’ impassion’d heart, and wins th’ harmonious ear†.

XIII.

All hail, ye scenes that o’er my soul prevail,
Ye “spacious” friths† and lakes which, far away,
Are by smooth ANNAN 20 fill’d, or past’ral TAY 21,
Or DON’S romantic springs22, at distance, hail!
The time shall come when I, perhaps, may tread
Your lowly glens, o’erhung with spreading broom,
Or o’er your stretching heaths by fancy led:
Then will I dress once more the faded bow’r,
Where JOHNSON sat in DRUMMOND’S† “social‡” shade,
Or crop from Tiviot’s dale23 each “classic flower,”

† [These lines were originally written thus:

Hence, sure to charm, his early numbers flow,
Though strong, yet sweet ————
Though faithful, sweet; though strong, of simple kind.
Hence, with each theme, he bids the bosom glow,
Where his warm lays an easy passage find,
Pour’d through each inmost nerve, and lull th’ harmonious ear].

* [A blank in the manuscript. The word spacious supplied by Dr. Carlyle].

19 Friths: In Old English, a secure or safe place. More generally, a forest or wooded area.

20 Annan: River in the southwest of Scotland.

21 Tay: The longest river in Scotland, which originates in the west and flows through the Highlands and ends south of Dundee.

22 Don’s romantic springs: River in northeast Scotland, which flows through Aberdeen into the North Sea.

† [Ben Johnson undertook a journey to Scotland a-foot in 1619; to visit the poet Drummond, at his seat of Hawthornden, near Edinburgh. DRUMMOND has preserved in his works, some very curious heads of their conversation].

‡ [A blank in the manuscript. Social supplied by Dr Carlyle].
And mourn on Yarrow’s banks “the widow’d maid ¹.”
Meantime, ye Pow’rs, that on the plains which bore
The cordial youth, on Lothian’s plains attend,
Where’er he dwell, on hill, or lowly muir,
To him I lose, your kind protection lend,
And, touch’d with love like mine, preserve my absent friend.

23 Tiviot’s dale: The River Teviot is a river on the Scottish Borders, which eventually flows into the River Tweed, which forms part of the border between Scotland and England.

¹ [Both these lines left imperfect; supplied by Dr Carlyle. This last stanza bears more marks of hastiness of composition than any of the rest. Besides the blanks which are supplied by Dr Carlyle, there is apparently an entire line wanting in the seventh line of the stanza. The deficient line ought to have rhymed with broom].
Edmund Burke, from *A Philosophical Enquiry Into The Origin Of Our Ideas Of The Sublime And Beautiful* (1757).

The aesthetic theories of Edmund Burke (1729-1797) were popular and influential throughout the late eighteenth and early nineteenth-century. Burke distinguishes between the Beautiful (something pleasing to look upon) and the Sublime (that which inspires awe or dread). Burke’s theories concerning the potentially thrilling and exultant powers of terror influenced the Gothic novels of Horace Walpole and Ann Radcliffe, as well as major works of poetry from Wordsworth, Coleridge, and Shelley. In particular, Burke stressed the importance of obscurity in arousing feelings of genuine terror, a concept that Bannerman frequently adheres to throughout her work – so much so that her verse was often criticized for being too obscure. The following short passages from Burke are useful in contextualizing Bannerman’s use of the sublime within the traditions of Romantic poetry and Gothic literature.

To make anything very terrible, obscurity seems in general to be necessary. When we know the full extent of any danger, when we can accustom our eyes to it, a great deal of the apprehension vanishes. Every one will be sensible of this, who considers how greatly night adds to our dread, in all cases of danger, and how much the notions of ghosts and goblins, of which none can form clear ideas, affect minds, which give credit to the popular tales concerning such sorts of beings... (II.iii.54).

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It is one thing to make an idea clear, and another to make it affecting to the imagination. If I make a drawing of a palace, or a temple, or a landscape, I present a very clear idea of these objects; but then (allowing for the effect of imitation which is something) my picture can at most affect only as the palace, temple, or landscape would have affected in the reality. On the other hand, the most lively and spirited verbal description I can give, raises a very obscure and imperfect idea of such objects; but then it is in my power to raise a stronger emotion by the description than I could do by the best painting. This experience constantly evinces. The proper manner of conveying the affections of the mind from one to another, is by words; there is a great insufficiency in all other methods of communication; and so far is a clearness of imagery from being absolutely necessary to an influence upon the passions, that they may be considerably operated upon without presenting any image at all, by certain sounds adapted to that purpose; of which we have a sufficient proof in the acknowledged and powerful effects of instrumental music. In reality a great clearness helps but little toward affecting the passions, as it is in some sort an enemy to all enthusiasms whatsoever. (II. iv. 55-56).
Charlotte Smith, from *Elegiac Sonnets* (1784)

Charlotte Smith (1749-1806) was a successful poet and novelist in the late eighteenth-century. The publication of *Elegiac Sonnets* in 1784 initiated a revival of interest in the sonnet as a poetic form. Smith’s sentimental and often moody poems influenced Bannerman to write a number of her own sonnets in a similarly self-deprecating style. Like Smith, Bannerman also translated and interpreted a handful of sonnets from the Italian of Francesco Petrarch (1304-1374), and she also followed in Smith’s footsteps by composing ten sonnets inspired by *The Sorrows of Young Werther* (1774) by Johann Wolfgang von Goethe (1749-1832). The following selection of poems include Smith’s Petrarch sonnets, as well as her sonnets from the perspective of Goethe, and help to contextualize and evaluate the success of Bannerman’s appropriation of the same materials.

XIII

From Petrarch

Oh! place me where the burning noon*

Forbids the wither’d flower to blow;

Or place me in the frigid zone,

On mountains of eternal snow;

Let me pursue the steps of Fame,           5

Or Poverty’s more tranquil road;

Let youth’s warm tide my veins inflame,

Or sixty winters chill my blood:

Tho’ my fond soul to heaven were flown,

Or tho’ on earth ‘tis doom’d to pine,        10

Prisoner or free—obscure or known,

My heart, O Laura, still is thine.

Whate’er my destiny may be,

That faithful heart still burns for thee!

XIV.
From Petrarch

Loose to the wind her golden tresses stream’d,†
Forming bright waves with amorous Zephyr’s sighs;
And tho’ averted now, her charming eyes
Then with warm love, and melting pity beam’d.
Was I deceived?—Ah! surely, nymph divine!
That fine suffusion on thy cheek was love;
What wonder then those beauteous tints should move,
Should fire this heart, this tender heart of mine!
Thy soft melodious voice, thy air, thy shape,
Were of a goddess—not a mortal maid;
Yet tho’ thy charms, thy heavenly charms should fade,
My heart, my tender heart could not escape;
Nor cure for me in time or change be found:
The shaft extracted does not cure the wound!

XV.
From Petrarch

Where the green leaves exclude the summer beam,*
And softly bend as balmy breezes blow,
And where, with liquid lapse, the lucid stream
Across the fretted rock is heard to flow,
Pensive I lay: when she whom earth conceals,
As if still living to my eyes appears,
And pitying Heaven her angel form reveals,


To say—"Unhappy Petrarch, dry your tears;
Ah! why, sad lover! thus before your time,
In grief and sadness should your life decay,
And like a blighted flower, your manly prime
In vain and hopeless sorrow fade away?
Ah! yield not thus to culpable despair,
But raise thine eyes to Heaven—and think I wait thee there."

XVI.
From Petrarch

Ye vales and woods! fair scenes of happier hours;*
Ye feather’d people, tenants of the grove;
And you, bright stream! befringed with shrubs and flowers;
Behold my grief, ye witnesses of love!

For ye beheld my infant passion rise,
And saw thro’ years unchang’d my faithful flame;
Now cold, in dust, the beauteous object lies,
And you, ye conscious scenes, are still the same!

While busy Memory still delights to dwell
On all the charms these bitter tears deplore,
And with a trembling hand describes too well
The angel form I shall behold no more!
To heaven she’s fled! and nought to me remains
But the pale ashes which her urn contains.

* ["Valle che de lamenti miei se piena." Sonneto 33. Part secondo] Sonnet 301.
XXI.

Supposed to be written by Werter

Go, cruel tyrant of the human breast!

To other hearts thy burning arrows bear;

Go where fond Hope, and fair illusion rest;

Ah! why should Love inhabit with Despair!

Like the poor maniac* I linger here.

Still haunt the scene where all my treasure lies;

Still seek for flowers where only thorns appear.

“And drink delicious poison from her eyes!”†

Towards the deep gulf that opens on my sight

I hurry forward, Passion’s helpless slave!

And scorning Reason’s mild and sober light,

Pursue the path that leads me to the grave!

So round the flame the giddy insect flies,

And courts the fatal fire by which it dies!

* [See the “Story of a Lunatic.” “Is this the destiny of man? Is he only happy before he possesses his reason, or after he has lost it?— Full of hope you go gather flowers in Winter, and are grieved not to find any—and do not know why they cannot be found.” Sorrows of Werter. Volume Second].

† [Alexander Pope]. The lines Smith alludes to appear in “Eloisa to Abelard” (1717): “Still on thy breast enamour’d let me lie, / Still drink delicious poison from thy eye, / Pant on thy lip, and to thy heart be pressed” (121-23).
XXII.

By the same. To solitude

O Solitude! to thy sequester’d vale*

    I come to hide my sorrow and my tears,
And to thy echoes tell the mournful tale

    Which scarce I trust to pitying Friendship’s ears!
Amidst thy wild-woods, and untrodden glades,

    No sounds but those of melancholy move;
And the low winds that die among thy shades,

    Seem like soft Pity’s sighs of hopeless love!
And sure some story of despair and pain,

    In yon deep copse thy murm’ring doves relate;
And, hark, methinks in that long plaintive strain,

    Thine own sweet songstress1 weeps my wayward fate!
Ah! Nymph! that fate assist me to endure,

    And bear awhile—what Death alone can cure!

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* [“I climb steep rocks, I break my way through copses, among thorns and briars which tear me to pieces, and I feel a little relief.” Sorrows of Werter. Volume First].

Bannerman draws from this same passage from Goethe for Sonnet VII.

1 sweet songstress: the nightingale
XXIII.

By the same. To the North Star

To thy bright beams* I turn my swimming eyes,
Fair, fav’rite planet! which in happier days
Saw my young hopes, ah! faithless hopes!—arise,
And on my passion shed propitious rays!
Now nightly wandering ‘mid the tempests drear
That howl the woods and rocky steps among,
I love to see thy sudden light appear
Thro’ the swift clouds—driven by the wind along;
Or in the turbid water, rude and dark,
O’er whose wild stream the gust of Winter raves,
Thy trembling light with pleasure still I mark,
Gleam in faint radiance on the foaming waves!
So o’er my soul short rays of reason fly,
That fade:—and leave me to despair, and die!

* [“The greater Bear, favourite of all the constellations; for when I left you of an evening it used to shine opposite your window.” Sorrows of Werter. Volume Second].
XXIV.
By the same

Make there my tomb, beneath the lime-tree’s shade,*
   Where grass and flowers in wild luxuriance wave;
Let no memorial mark where I am laid,
   Or point to common eyes the lover’s grave!
But oft at twilight morn, or closing day,
   The faithful friend with falt’ring step shall glide,
Tributes of fond regret by stealth to pay,
   And sigh o’er the unhappy suicide!
And sometimes, when the sun with parting rays
   Gilds the long grass that hides my silent bed,
The tears shall tremble in my CHARLOTTE’S eyes;
   Dear, precious drops!—they shall embalm the dead!
Yes—CHARLOTTE o’er the mournful spot shall weep,
Where her poor WERTER—and his sorrows sleep!

* [“At the corner of the church-yard which looks towards the fields, there are two lime trees—it is there I wish to rest.” Sorrows of Werter. Volume Second].
XXV.

By the same. Just before his death

Why should I wish to hold in this low sphere*
   “A frail and feverish being?” Wherefore try
Poorly from day to day to linger here,
   Against the powerful hand of Destiny?
By those who know the force of hopeless care
   On the worn heart—I sure shall be forgiven,
If to elude dark guilt, and dire despair,
   I go uncall’d—to memory and to heaven!†
O thou! to save whose peace I now depart,
   Will thy soft mind thy poor lost friend deplore,
When worms shall feed on his devoted heart,
   Where even thy image shall be found no more?
Yet may thy pity mingle not with pain,
   For then thy hapless lover—dies in vain!

* [“May my death remove every obstacle to your happiness.—Be at peace, I intreat you be at peace.” Sorrows of Werter. Volume Second].

Bannerman draws most explicitly from the second half of this passage for Sonnet X. However, the closing lines of Sonnet IX (“to secure thy peace, I shall not die in vain”) also echo the specific sentiment expressed by Werter in this passage.

† Uncall’d: i.e. to enter heaven prematurely through suicide. Bannerman’s Sonnet VIII also addresses the question of sin and the spiritual consequences of Werter’s suicide.

† [From a line in Rousseau’s Eloisa]. From “Letter CXXII, To Mrs. Orbe” in Eloisa: A Series of Original Letters, the posthumously published sequel to Julie, or the New Heloise (1761) by Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712-1778): “The same image has constant possession of my heart; you know how impossible it is for me ever to efface it; but her dominion over me is more worthy of her, and, if I do not deceive myself, she holds the same empire in my heart as in your own” (30)
Joanna Baillie, from “Introductory Discourse” (1798)

Joanna Baillie (1762-1851) was one of the most popular and successful poets and playwrights of the early nineteenth-century. Her first volume of plays, entitled A SERIES OF PLAYS; IN WHICH IT IS ATTEMPTED TO DELINEATE THE STRONGER PASSIONS OF THE MIND, EACH BEING THE SUBJECT OF A TRAGEDY AND A COMEDY, was published in 1798. As the title of the volume suggests, Baillie used each of her plays to explore how specific emotions operate on the human mind. Bannerman admired Baillie and applied the elder poet’s dramatic theories to her own verse, which resulted in the Werter sonnet cycle in her first volume of poems in 1800. In an explanatory note to these sonnets in POEMS, A NEW EDITION, Bannerman reveals that “an attempt has been made in the ‘Sonnets from Werter,’ to delineate the progress of a passion, and to render each sonnet a distinct picture of a strong situation arising from that which preceded, and preparatory to that which is to succeed” (220). This short excerpt from Baillie’s “Introductory Discourse” illustrate the heart of the author’s design and provide a specific model for Bannerman’s poetic practice.

…I have endeavoured to communicate to my reader, of tragedy, and those principles in the human mind upon which the success of her efforts depends, I have been led to believe, that an attempt to write a series of tragedies, of simpler construction, less embellished with poetical decorations, less constrained by that lofty seriousness which has so generally been considered as necessary for the support of tragick dignity, and in which the chief object should be to delineate the progress of the higher passions in the human breast, each play exhibiting a particular passion, might not be unacceptable to the publick. And I have been the more readily induced to act upon this idea, because I am confident, that tragedy, written upon this plan, is fitted to produce stronger moral effect than upon any other. I have said that tragedy in representing to us great characters struggling with difficulties, and placed in situations of eminence and danger, in which few of us have any chance of being called upon to act, conveys its moral efficacy to our minds by enlarged views which it excites, and not by examples it holds up to our immediate application. But in opening to us the heart of man under the influence of those passions to which all are liable, this is not the case. Those strong passions that, with small assistance from outward circumstances, work their way in the heart, till they become the tyrannical masters of it, carry on a similar operation in the breast of the Monarch, and the man of low degree. It exhibits to us the mind of man in that state when we are most curious to look at it, and is equally interesting to all. Discrimination of character is a turn of mind, tho’ more common than we are aware of, which every body does not possess; but to the expression of passion, particularly strong passion, the dullest mind is awake; and its true unsophisticated language the dullest understanding will not misinterpret. To hold up for our example those peculiarities in disposition, and modes of thinking
which nature has fixed upon us, or which long and early habit has incorporated with our original selves, is almost desiring us to remove the everlasting mountains, to take away the native landmarks of the soul; but representing the passions brings us the operation of a tempest that rages out its time and passes away. We cannot, it is true, amidst its wild uproar, listen to the voice of reason, and save ourselves from destruction; but we can foresee its coming, we can mark its rising signs, we can know the situations that will most expose us to its rage, and we can shelter our heads from the coming blast. To change a certain disposition of mind which makes us view objects in a particular light, and thereby, oftentimes, unknown to ourselves, influences our conduct and manners, is almost impossible; but in checking and subduing those visitations of the soul, whose causes and effects we are aware of, every one may make considerable progress, if he proves not entirely successful. Above all, looking back to the first rise, and tracing the progress of passion, points out to us those stages in the approach of an enemy, when he might have been combated most successfully; and where the suffering him to pass may be considered as occasioning all the misery that ensues.
Samuel Taylor Coleridge, “Introduction to the Tale of the Dark Ladie” (1799)

Samuel Taylor Coleridge (1772-1834). The author of THE RIME OF THE ANCIENT MARINER likely needs no introduction to students of Romanticism, but this lesser-known ballad inspired one of Bannerman’s most exemplary poems. Originally published in the December 1799 edition of the MORNING POST, the “Introduction to the Tale of the Dark Ladie” was subsequently reprinted three months later in the February 1800 issue of the EDINBURGH MAGAZINE. Bannerman published “The Dark Ladie,” her bold sequel to Coleridge’s poem, in the March issue of the same periodical. Coleridge’s poem was significantly revised and retitled “Love,” and first appeared in the 1800 edition of LYRICAL BALLADS. I have reprinted the poem as it was originally published, with its original introductory and concluding stanzas.

O Leave the lily on its stem,
O leave the rose upon the spray;  
O leave the elder bloom, fair maids!
And listen to my lay.

A cypress and a myrtle bough,
This morn around my harp you twin’d,
Because it fashion’d mournfully,
Its murmurs in the wind.

And now a tale of love and woe,
A woeful tale of love I sing;  
Hark, gentle maiden, hark, it sighs,
And trembles on the string.

But most, my own dear Genevieve,
It sighs and trembles most for thee;
O come and hear what cruel wrongs
Befel the dark Ladie.

1 Spray: Small or slender twig.
2 Lay: Song or poem.
Few sorrows hath she of her own,
My life, my joy, my Genevieve,
She loves me best whene’er I sing
The songs that make her grieve.

All thoughts, all passions, all delights,
Whatever stirs the mortal frame;
All are but ministers of love,
And feed his sacred flame.

O ever in my waking dreams,
I dwell upon that happy hour,
When midway on the mount I sat,
Beside the ruin’d tower.

The moonshine stealing o’er the scene,
Had blended with the light of eve,
And she was there, my hope, my joy,
My own dear Genevieve.

She lean’d against the armed man,
The statue of the armed knight;
She stood and listen’d to my harp,
Amid the lingering light.

I play’d a sad and doleful air,
I sang an old and moving story,
An old rude song, that fitted well,
The ruin, wild and hoary.

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3 The first four stanzas (lines 1-16) are omitted and replaced with four different stanzas in “Love,” the revised version of this poem that appears in most editions of Coleridge’s works.
She listened with a flitting blush,
With downcast eyes and modest grace ;
For well she knew I could not choose,
But gaze upon her face

I told her of the knight that wore
Upon his shield a burning brand,
And how for ten long years he woo’d
The Ladie of the land.

I told her how he pin’d ; and ah!
The deep, the low, the pleading tone,
With which I sang another’s love,
Interpreted my own.

She listened with a flitting blush,
With downcast eyes and modest grace ;
And she forgave me that I gaz’d
Too fondly on her face.

But when I told the cruel scorn,
That crazed this bold and lovely knight,
And how he roam’d the mountain woods,
Nor rested day nor night ;

And how he crossed the woodman’s paths,
Through briars, and swampy mosses beat,
How boughs rebending scourg’d his limbs,
And low stubs gor’d his feet.
How sometimes, from the savage den,
And sometimes from the darksome shade,
And sometimes starting up at once,
In green and sunny glade,

There came and look’d him in the face,
An angel beautiful and bright
And how he knew it was a fiend,
This miserable knight;

And how unknowing what he did,
He leapt amid a lawless band,
And sav’d from outrage worse than death,
The Ladie of the land;

And how she wept and clasp’d his knees,
And how she tended him in vain,
And meekly strove to expiate
The scorn that craz’d his brain;

And how she nurs’d him in a cave,
And how his madness went away,
When on the yellow forest leaves,
A dying man he lay.

His dying words but when I reach’d,
That tenderest strain of all the ditty,
My faltering voice and pausing harp
Disturb’d her soul with pity.
All impulses of soul and sense,
Had thrill’d my guiltless Genevieve;
The music and the doleful tale,
The rich and balmy eve.

And hopes and fears that kindle hope,
An undistinguishable throng;
And gentle wishes long subdued,
Subdued and cherish’d long.

She wept with pity and delight,
She blush’d with love, and maiden shame,
And like the murmurs of a dream,
I heard her breathe my name.

I saw her bosom heave and swell,
Heave and swell with inward sighs;
I could not choose but love to see
Her gentle bosom rise.

Her wet cheek glow’d, she stept aside,
As conscious of my look she stept,
Then suddenly with timorous eye,
She flew to me and wept.

She half inclos’d me with her arms,
She press’d me with a meek embrace,
And bending back her head, look’d up,
And gaz’d upon my face.
'Twas partly love and partly fear
And partly 'twas a bashful art,
That I might rather feel than see,
The swelling of her heart.

I calm’d her fears, and she was calm,
And told her love with virgin pride,
And so I won my Genevieve,
My bright and beauteous bride. 4

And now once more a tale of woe,
A woeful tale of love I sing,
For thee my Genevieve it sighs,
And trembles on the string.

When last I sang the cruel scorn,
That craz’d this bold and lovely knight;
And how he roam’d the mountain woods
Nor rested day or night.

I promis’d thee a sister tale,
Of man’s perfidious cruelty;
Come then and hear what cruel wrong,
Befel the dark Ladie.

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4 The revised version of the poem concludes with this line.
Samuel Taylor Coleridge, “The Ballad of the Dark Ladie: A Fragment” (c.1800?)

The following fragmentary poem is the promised “sister tale” that Coleridge alludes to at the end of the “Introduction to the Tale of the Dark Ladie.” It was first published in The Poetical Works of S.T. Coleridge in 1834. A fair copy of the poem held in the British Library verifies the connection to the earlier work. The full title of the fragment is “Introductory Stanzas of the Ballad of the ‘Dark Ladie’, to which the Poem in the Sibyline Leaves entitled, Love, was originally composed as the Preface.’ The fair copy of the poem also includes an annotation from Coleridge himself, noting “This is the first time that these stanzas have been committed to writing.”

Beneath yon birch with silver bark,
And boughs so pendulous¹ and fair,
The brook falls scatter’d down the rock:
    And all is mossy there!

And there upon the moss she sits,
The Dark Ladie in silent pain;
The heavy tear is in her eye,
    And drops and swells again.

Three times she sends her little page
Up the castled mountains breast,
If he might find the Knight that wears
    The Griffin for his crest.

The sun was sloping down the sky,
And she had lingered there all day,
Counting moments, dreaming fears –
    O wherefore can he stay?

She hears a rustling o’er the brook,
She sees far off a swinging bough!

¹ Pendulous: Hanging or suspended in the air.
‘Tis He! ’Tis my betrothed Knight!
  Lord Falkland, it is Thou!’

She springs, she clasps him round the neck,
She sobs a thousand hopes and fears,
Her kisses glowing on his cheeks
  She quenches with her tears.

*   *   *

‘My friends with rude ungentle words
They scoff and bid me fly to thee!
O give me shelter in thy breast!
  O shield and shelter me!

‘My Henry, I have given thee much,
I gave what I can ne’er recall,
I gave my heart, I gave my peace,
  O Heaven! I gave thee all.’

The Knight made answer to the Maid,
While to his heart he held her hand,
‘Nine castles hath my noble sire,
  None statelier in the land.

‘The fairest one shall be my love’s,
The fairest castle of the nine!
Wait only till the stars peep out,
  The fairest shall be thine:
'Wait only till the hand of eve
Hath wholly closed yon western bars,
And through the dark we two shall steal
   Beneath the twinkling stars!'–

The dark? the dark? No! not the dark?
The twinkling stars? How, Henry? How?
O God! 'twas in the eye of noon
   He pledged his sacred vow!

‘And in the eye of noon, my love,
Shall lead me from my mother’s door,
Sweet boys and girls all clothed in white
   Strewing flow’rs before:

‘But first the nodding minstrels go
With music meet for lordly bow’rs,
The children next in snow-white vests,
   Strewing buds and flow’rs!

‘And then my love and I shall pace,
My jet black hair in pearly braids,
Between our comely bachelors
   And blushing bridal maids.’

*   *   *

*   *   *
Matthew Gregory Lewis, “Alonzo the Brave and Fair Imogene” (1796)

Matthew Lewis (1770-1818) was an English writer, poet, and playwright best known for the sensational Gothic novel THE MONK (1796) and the spectacular drama THE CASTLE SPECTRE (1797). Lewis also produced TALES OF WONDER (1801), a collection of supernatural ballads that included contributions from Walter Scott, Robert Southey, and John Leyden. Lewis’ book was published the year between Bannerman’s debut collection and TALES OF SUPERSTITION AND CHIVALRY. Critics frequently compared her ballads to Lewis’s poems – an association that appears to have damaged her reputation among more conservative literary critics. The following poem revolves around the motif of a specter bridegroom – first popularized in earlier ballads such as “Sweet William’s Ghost” and Gottfried August Bürger’s “Lenore” – where a young woman is pursued or abducted by a deceased lover that has returned from the grave. Lewis’s ballad seems to have been a model for Bannerman’s poem “The Murcian Cavalier,” which utilizes the same motif of a woman pledged to an undead lover to criticize the chivalric code and medieval marriage practices.

A warrior so bold, and a virgin so bright,
   Conversed, as they sat on the green;
They gazed on each other with tender delight:
Alonzo the Brave was the name of the knight, —
   The maid’s was the Fair Imogene.                  5

— “And, oh!” said the youth, “since to-morrow I go
   To fight in a far distant land,
Your tears for my absence soon ceasing to flow,
Some other will court you, and you will bestow
   On a wealthier suitor your hand!”                    10

— “O, hush these suspicions,” Fair Imogene said,
   “Offensive to love and to me!
For, if you be living, or if you be dead,
I swear by the Virgin, that none in your stead
   Shall husband of Imogene be.                     15
“And if e’er for another my heart should decide,
Forgetting Alonzo the Brave,
God grant, that, to punish my falsehood and pride,
Your ghost at the marriage may sit by my side,
May tax me with perjury, claim me as bride,
And bear me away to the grave!” — 

To Palestine hastened the hero so bold;
His love she lamented him sore:
But scarce had a twelvemonth elapsed, when behold!
A Baron, all covered with jewels and gold,
Arrived at Fair Imogene’s door.

His treasures, his presents, his spacious domain,
Soon made her untrue to her vows:
He dazzled her eyes; he bewildered her brain;
He caught her affections, so light and so vain,
And carried her home as his spouse.

And now had the marriage been blest by the priest;
The revelry now was begun:
The tables they groaned with the weight of the feast,
Nor yet had the laughter and merriment ceased,
When the bell of the castle toll’d—“one!”

Then first with amazement Fair Imogene found
That a stranger was placed by her side:
His air was terrific; he uttered no sound;
He spoke not, he moved not, he looked not around,
But earnestly gazed on the bride.
His vizor was closed, and gigantic his height;
    His armour was sable to view;
All pleasure and laughter were hushed at his sight;
The dogs, as they eyed him, drew back in affright;
    The lights in the chamber burnt blue!

His presence all bosoms appeared to dismay;
    The guests sat in silence and fear;
At length spoke the bride, while she trembled,—“I pray,
Sir Knight, that your helmet aside you would lay,  50
    And deign to partake of our cheer.” —

The lady is silent: the stranger complies,
    His vizor he slowly unclosed;
Oh! then what a sight met Fair Imogene’s eyes!
What words can express her dismay and surprise,
    When a skeleton’s head was exposed!

All present then uttered a terrified shout;
    All turned with disgust from the scene.
The worms they crept in, and the worms they crept out,
And sported his eyes and his temples about,
    While the spectre addressed Imogene:

“Behold me, thou false one! behold me!” he cried;
    “Remember Alonzo the Brave!
God grants, that, to punish thy falsehood and pride,
My ghost at thy marriage should sit by thy side,  65
    Should tax thee with perjury, claim thee as bride,
And bear thee away to the grave!”
Thus saying, his arms round the lady he wound,
   While loudly she shrieked in dismay;
Then sank with his prey through the wide-yawning ground:
Nor ever again was Fair Imogene found,
   Or the spectre that bore her away.

Not long lived the Baron; and none, since that time,
   To inhabit the castle presume;
For chronicles tell, that, by order sublime,
There Imogene suffers the pain of her crime,
   And mourns her deplorable doom.

At midnight four times in each year does her sprite,
   When mortals in slumber are bound,
Arrayed in her bridal apparel of white,
Appear in the hall with the skeleton-knight,
   And shriek as he whirls her around!

While they drink out of skulls newly torn from the grave,
   Dancing round them the spectres are seen;
Their liquor is blood, and this horrible stave
They howl: “To the health of Alonzo the Brave,
   And his consort, the Fair Imogene!”
AN EPISTLE TO ROBERT ANDERSON, M.D.

On receiving from him a Present of various Poetical Works.

BY WILLIAM PRESTON, ESQ.

WHAT light ethereal plays around my bower,
To chase the sadness of the studious hour!
What strains of various melody succeed,
The lyre, the shepherd’s song, the Doric\(^1\) reed!
While oft, at pauses, melting on my ear,
In liquid notes, a female voice I hear!\(^1\)
‘Tis He, the lover of the tuneful art,
With head unclouded, and with glowing heart,
‘Tis He, whose cares departed genius guard,
Whose ardent friendship soothes the living bard;
Who boasts, in solid structure, to combine
The scatter’d gems that round Parnassus\(^2\) shine.\(^2\)

\(^*\) [Some of these Poems, by Mr. Macneill and Mr. Nicol, are in the Scottish dialect]. Hector MacNeill (1746-1818), author of *Scotland’s Skaith, or, The History of Will and Jean* (1795). Rev. James Nicol (1769-1819), poet and Church of Scotland minister, author of *Poems, Chiefly in the Scottish Dialect* (1805).

\(^1\) Doric: rustic.

\(^\dagger\) [Poems by Miss Bannerman]. Preston alludes to poems found in Bannerman’s first 1800 volume, as well as *Tales of Superstition and Chivalry* (1802).
From healthful Scotia,\textsuperscript{3} brac’d by winnowing winds,
Land of heroic and of tuneful minds,
Whose hills sublime with plaintive music sound,
Whose daring sons in every clime are found;
From wood-crown’d Tweed,\textsuperscript{4} from Clyde,\textsuperscript{5} and wand’ring Quair,\textsuperscript{6}
And Roslin’s ancient towers,\textsuperscript{7} the train repair!
Welcome, ye sons of song! to this green isle,
Where mountains tow’r, and fertile valleys smile,
Where fountains gush, and streams of crystal rove,
And beauteous scenes dispose the heart to love.
Bide, gentle guests! within my peaceful bowers,
Become companions of my lonely hours;
Nor cares, nor sorrows, nor the frost of age,
Can chill my bosom of poetic rage.
Yes, when the crowding past my bosom wounds,
I find a balm in concord of sweet sounds;
I feel the charm that rising hopes impart,
Again, their blandishments possess my heart:
And while I think, that, in this vale of care,
My fairest hopes have faded to despair,
A moment cheers me with illusions bright,

\textsuperscript{2} \textit{Parnassus}: Mountain in central Greece. In Greek mythology, the mountain is sacred to Dionysus and revered as the birth of poetry and philosophy.

\textsuperscript{1} [Edition of the Works of the British Poets, with Prefaces, biographical and critical]. Anderson had edited this fourteen volume publication from 1792-1807.

\textsuperscript{3} \textit{Scotia}: Scotland.

\textsuperscript{4} \textit{Tweed}: River in the south of Scotland, which forms part of the border with England.

\textsuperscript{5} \textit{Clyde}: Large river which flows through Glasgow, Scotland.

\textsuperscript{6} \textit{Quair}: Tributary of the River Tweed, near the village of Traquair.

\textsuperscript{7} \textit{Roslin’s ancient towers}: Roslin Castle, or possibly Rosslyn Chapel, both of which are located in the village of Roslin in Midlothian, Scotland.
For years abandon’d in the unvaried night;
My tender olives, rising fair, I see,
And feel that Hope has pleasure yet for me.*

I hail the happy race, the cultur’d plain,
Where fair Refinement spreads her golden reign;
And mind pursue, through many a rolling age,
From the rude hunter to the patriot sage.†

Again, I see the forms august ascend,
In visions bright, that Poesy attend!
With gay caparisons, and prancing steeds,
And shields of quaint device, a band proceeds,
Appalling flashes from their burnish’d mail,
Like meteors, bid the oppressor’s courage fail;
Along the margent,8 Thames, sedate they wind
The human tiger shrinks, and is in chains confin’d.*
And now the mind, with hurried flight, I save
From hated Melancholy’s witching cave:—†
Oh dread enchantress! well I know thy seat,
Thy snares entangled oft my wand’ring feet.

But now, appall’d, I see the War-Fiend lead
The blood-stain’d conqueror’s foot thro’ paths of dread:

* [Alluding to the Pleasures of Hope, by Mr. Campbell]. The Pleasures of Hope by Thomas Campbell (1777-1844) was published by Mundell and Son in 1799.

† [The Progress of Refinement, by the Rev. William Gillespie]. The Progress of Refinement, An Allegorical Poem by Reverend William Gillespie (1726-1825) was published in 1805. Gillespie’s poem shares its title with a poem by Henry James Pye (1745-1813), which was published in 1783.

8 Margent: Riverbank.

* [Alludes to Runny Mead,—Professor Richardson’s Poems and Plays]. William Richardson (1743-1814), Scottish scholar, writer, and professor of humanities at the University of Glasgow. The poem “Runny Mead” appeared in the first volume of Richardson’s Poems and Plays published by Mundell and Sons in 1805.

† [The Progress of Melancholy]. “The Progress of Melancholy” is a posthumously published poem by Mary Robinson (1757-1800), English actress, poet, novelist, playwright and all around literary celebrity. Author of the Romantic ballad collection Lyrical Tales (1800).
He sinks, he sinks, to find his just reward,—
Not such the glories of the immortal Bard.

I hear a poet tell, in varied song,
The fates and duties of the tuneful throng;
Now sportive, light, he comes with airy tread,
Now grave and moral, as the prospects lead;
And calls the bards, from every age and clime,
To mix in social converse through the rhyme.

The tuneful maid I hail from winding Forth,9
Who female sweetness joins to manly worth,
And, while her muse the guilty laurel sings,
By blood-stain’d myriads wreath’d for frantic kings,
Humanely wise, beholds the temperate ray,
The dazzling things that lead the crowd astray.‖
Undaunted, now, she roams the wizard cave,10
She scales the crag where deafening billows rave,11
Or hears, at midnight hour, the mutter’d spell
Convoking the shrouded dead, and forms of hell. ¶

If Heav’n will grant an idle poet’s prayer,

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† [The War-Fiend, and Bard,—Dr. Thomas Brown’s Poems]. Thomas Brown (1778-1820), Scottish poet and philosopher. A two-volume collection of his poems, including “The War-fiend” and “The Bard,” was published by Mundell and Son in 1804.

§ [Alludes to Pictures of Poetry, by Alexander Thomson, Esq. intended as part of a View of the Progress of Polite Literature]. Alexander Thomson (1763-1803) was another Scottish poet and close friend of Anderson. The Pictures of Poetry was published by Mundell and Son in 1799. Thomson was working on a history of Scottish poetry at the time of his unexpected death.

9 Forth: River that flows from central Scotland, northeast of Edinburgh. Preston suggests that Bannerman’s home was near or along the Forth river.

‖ [Alludes to Poems by Miss Bannerman, particularly a poem on an illumination for a naval victory, admirable for the justness of thought and goodness of heart that run through it].

10 An allusion to “The Prophetess of the Oracle of Seam.”

11 An allusion to “The Mermaid”

¶ [Tales of Superstition and Chivalry]. This line is possibly an allusion to “The Perjured Nun.”
May Sorrow shun the gentle, good, and fair,
The web of Poetry be round thee cast, 75
To shield thee from Misfortune’s bitter blast.

That chord is silent,—and, in lively strain,
A bard with fancy frolics o’er the plain;
With artless grace he tunes the native song,
To joys and pastimes of the rustic throng.*

And now from pity genius learns the strain
Of moral warning to the simple swain;
And while it seems to flow devoid of art, 80
I hail the effusion of a patriot’s heart;
The scath12 of Erin13 and of Scotia mourn,
And sigh that Will and Jeannie14 sink forlorn;
Then drop a tear for those that wander far,
Thro’ scenes of blood, and all the woes of war.†

Soft sounds the lyre, the tender notes I hear, 90
Domestic virtues lean a grateful ear, And parted angels, from their spheres, approve
The verse to friendship given, and wedded love.‡

To thee, my friend, be granted length of days

* [Alluding to Poems, chiefly in the Scottish dialect; by the Rev. James Nicol, particularly the Kirn Supper, &c.]. See the first editorial note above for publication and biographical dates for Rev. James Nicol.

12 *Scaith*: something that causes harm, a curse.

13 *Erin*: Ireland

14 *Will and Jeannie*: Willie Gairlace and Jeanie Miller, the main characters of Hector MacNeill’s two long poems Scotland’s Scath; or, the History of Will and Jean and The Waes of War: Or, The Upshot of the History of Will and Jean. Both poems appear in the second volume of MacNeill’s collection that was published by Mundell and Son in 1806. The poems were originally published in 1795 and 1796.

‡ [Alluding to the beautiful Poems, Scotland’s Scath, and the Waes of War,—Poetical Works of Hector Macneill, Esq.].

‡ [Verses, Social and Domestic, by Geo. Hay Drummond, A.M.]. George Hay Drummond’s Verses, Social and Domestic was published by Mundell and Son in 1802.
In social converse, and Pierian\textsuperscript{15} praise;
With serious elegance, or polish’d mirth,
The smiling circle, the domestic hearth.
Howe’er, at first, the embodied mental band
Flash into being from their Maker’s hand,
Ere yet confin’d within this earthly frame,
Some spirits are allied in kindred frame,
Some spark congenial, some fraternal tie,
Attends the circumstance of birth on high;
Tho’ cloth’d in mortal weeds they wander wide,
Tho’ fortune sep’rates, and tho’ seas divide,
Still the primordial traces they retain,
The loves, the likeness, of a kindred train;
And when they meet, a moment will appear
Like the long intercourse of many a year.
By such alliance, I thy friendship claim;
I trace the pedigree of kindred aim;
And, when I seek the undiscover’d bourn,
Around my bier when weeping children mourn,
Shouldst thou survive, thou wilt not then refuse
Thy friendship to the children of my muse;
Thy care, a pledge of kindred, I demand,
And may they grow mature beneath thy hand.

Yet, what are rhymes? and wherefore should they share
An anxious moment, in a world of care?
Borne in the current of a mighty flood,
That wafts alike the vicious and the good,
Why should we catch at straws and leaves that flow
Along the surface, while we sink below?

\textbf{GLOUCESTER STREET, DUBLIN, August 8, 1806.}

\textsuperscript{15} \textit{Pierian}: Of or relating to Pieria, the home of the muses in Greek mythology.
Sir Walter Scott, *from* “Essays on Imitations of the Ancient Ballads” (1830)\(^1\)

The following excerpt from an essay by Sir Walter Scott (1771-1832) first appeared in the fourth edition of *Minstrelsy of the Scottish Border* and traces the history and accomplishments of Scottish poets and balladeers in the eighteenth and early nineteenth-centuries. Scott praises Bannerman near the end of this excerpt, ranking her work alongside her more well-known peers and precursors. Scott’s endorsement of Bannerman and her contributions to this genre of poetry reinforces her place within the ballad tradition and the history of Scottish literature as a whole.

…Leaving this branch of the subject, in which the difficulty of passing off what is modern for what is ancient cannot be a matter of regret, we may bestow with advantage some brief consideration on the fair trade of manufacturing modern antiques; not for the purpose of passing them as contraband goods on the skilful antiquary, but in order to obtain the credit due to authors as successful imitators of the ancient simplicity, while their system admits of a considerable infusion of modern refinement. Two classes of imitation may be referred to as belonging to this species of composition. When they approach each other, there may be some difficulty in assigning to individual poems their peculiar character, but in general, the difference is distinctly marked. The distinction lies betwixt the authors of ballads or legendary poems, who have attempted to imitate the language, the manners, and the sentiments of the ancient poems which were their prototypes; and those, on the contrary, who, without endeavouring to do so, have struck out a particular path for themselves, which cannot with strict propriety be termed either ancient or modern.

In the actual imitation of the ancient ballad, Dr. Percy,\(^2\) whose researches made him well acquainted with that department of poetry, was peculiarly successful. The ‘Hermit of Warkworth,’ the ‘Child of Elle,’\(^3\) and other minstrel tales of his composition, must always be remembered with fondness by those who have perused them in that period of life when the feelings are strong, and the taste for poetry, especially of this simple nature, is keen and poignant. This learned and amiable prelate was also remarkable for his power of restoring the

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\(^1\) I am indebted to Douglass H. Thomson’s annotations and e-text of Scott’s essay, which is available on the Walter Scott Digital Archive published by the Edinburgh University Library.


ancient ballad, by throwing in touches of poetry, so adapted to its tone and tenor, as to assimilate with its original structure, and impress every one who considered the subject as being coeval with the rest of the piece. It must be owned that such freedoms, when assumed by a professed antiquary, addressing himself to antiquaries, and for the sake of illustrating literary antiquities, are subject to great and licentious abuse; and herein the severity of Ritson was to a certain extent justified. But when the licence is avowed, and practised without the intention to deceive, it cannot be objected to but by scrupulous pedantry.

The poet, perhaps, most capable, by verses, lines, even single words, to relieve and heighten the character of ancient poetry, was the Scottish bard Robert Burns. We are not here speaking of the avowed lyrical poems of his own composition, which he communicated to Mr. George Thomson, but of the manner in which he recomposed and repaired the old songs and fragments, for the collection of Johnson and others, when, if his memory supplied the theme, or general subject of the song, such as it existed in Scottish lore, his genius contributed that part which was to give life and immortality to the whole. If this praise should be thought extravagant, the reader may compare his splendid lyric, ‘My Heart’s in the Highlands,’ with the tame and scarcely half-intelligible remains of that song as preserved by Peter Buchan. Or, what is perhaps a still more magnificent example of what we mean: ‘Macpherson’s Farewell,’ with all its spirit and grandeur, as repaired by Burns, may be collated with the original poem called ‘Macpherson’s Lament,’ or sometimes the ‘Ruffian’s Rant.’ In Burns’s brilliant rifacimento, the same strain of wild ideas

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4 Joseph Ritson (1752-1803). Editor of Ancient Songs and Ballads: From the Time of King Henry the Second to the Revolution (1792). Ritson took Thomas Percy’s embellishments to task in the preface of his collection.

5 Robert Burns (1759-1796).


7 James Johnson (c.1753-1811). Scottish engraver and publisher of The Scots Musical Museum (1793).

8 Peter Buchan (1790-1850). Scottish editor, publisher, and ballad collector. Published Ancient Ballads and Songs of the North of Scotland in 1828.

9 James “Jamie” Macpherson (1675-1700) was a Scottish outlaw. Macpherson allegedly wrote a “lament” or “rant” in prison on the eve of his execution. Burns’ rendition of the poem first appeared in volume two of The Scots Musical Museum (1788), which was prepared and edited by James Johnson (1753-1807) between 1787 and 1803.

10 Rifacimento: A recasting or adaptation of a literary work.
is expressed as we find in the original; but with an infusion of the savage and impassioned spirit of Highland chivalry, which gives a splendor to the composition, of which we find not a trace in the rudeness of the ancient ditty. I can bear witness to the older verses having been current while I was a child, but I never knew a line of the inspired edition of the Ayrshire bard until the appearance of Johnson’s *Museum*.

Besides Percy, Burns, and others, we must not omit to mention Mr. Finlay, whose beautiful song,

‘There came a knight from the field of the slain,’

is so happily descriptive of antique manners; or Mickle, whose accurate and interesting imitations of the ancient ballad we have already mentioned with approbation in the former Essay on Ballad Composition. These, with others of modern date, at the head of whom we must place Thomas Moore, have aimed at striking the ancient harp with the same bold and rough note to which it was awakened by the ancient minstrels. Southey, Wordsworth, and other distinguished names of the present century, have, in repeated instances, dignified this branch of literature; but no one more than Coleridge, in the wild and imaginative tale of the ‘Ancient Mariner,’ which displays so much beauty with such eccentricity. We should act most unjustly in this department of Scottish ballad poetry, not to mention the names of Leyden, Hogg, and Allan Cunningham. They have all three honoured their country, by arriving at distinction from a humble origin, and there is none of them under whose hand the ancient Scottish harp has not sounded a bold and distinguished tone. Miss Anne Bannerman likewise should not be forgotten, whose *Tales of Superstition and Chivalry* appeared about 1802. They were perhaps too mystical.

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11 John Finlay (1782-1810). Scott misquotes from the opening line of “Dirge,” which appears in *Wallace; or, the Vale of Ellerslie, with Other Poems* (1802). The actual line reads, “A knight there came from the field of slain” (1).

12 William Julius Mickle (1734-1788). Author of the ballad *Cumnor Hall* (1784), and translator of Luis de Camões’s epic Portuguese poem *Luciad* (1777).


14 John Leyden (1775-1811), author of *Scottish Descriptive Poems* (1803) and contributor to Lewis’ *Tales of Wonder* (1801).

15 James Hogg (1770-1835). Author of the Gothic novel *The Private Memoirs and Confessions of A Justified Sinner* (1824), but known primarily for his poetry during his lifetime. He was often referred to as the “Ettrick Shepherd” on account of his humble upbringing as a farmhand.

16 Allan Cunningham (1784-1842). Poet and collector of Scottish songs and ballads.
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.

As we have already hinted, a numerous class of the authors (some of them of the very first class) who condescended to imitate the simplicity of ancient poetry, gave themselves no trouble to observe the costume, style, or manner, either of the old minstrel or ballad-singer, but assumed a structure of a separate and peculiar kind, which could not be properly termed either ancient or modern, although made the vehicle of beauties which were common to both.
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