Beatrice, Guinevere, Joan and Nicolette: a cross-section of Britain's perception of womanhood in the long nineteenth century and its convergence with medievalism.

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Abstract

Medievalism – manifestations of the Middle Ages in the post-medieval world – intersected with both ‘progressive’ and ‘conservative’ discourses of gender in the long nineteenth century in Britain. Nineteenth-century medievalism has been studied extensively, but the detailed interplay between this phenomenon and gender politics, particularly the representation of ‘womanhood’, is a rich area that will profit from more extensive and nuanced analysis this thesis offers. The thesis analyses four medieval female figures, distinct in their connection to diverse aspects of debates on womanhood, in order to develop a comprehensive and nuanced understanding of the phenomenon of nineteenth-century British medievalism and its inextricable interconnectedness with gendered discourses of the time.

Statement of Originality

This work has not previously been submitted for a degree or diploma in any university. To the best of my knowledge and belief, the thesis contains no material previously published or written by another person except where due reference is made in the thesis itself.

(Signed)_____ Date: 30/10/17
Ellie Crookes

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This thesis is dedicated, ever-lovingly, to my Mammas

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Introduction

This thesis examines the many ways in which medievalism – manifestations of the Middle Ages in the post-medieval world – intersected with both 'progressive' and 'conservative' discourses of gender in the long nineteenth century in Britain. Issues such as feminism, race, sexuality, nationhood, empire, politics, dress and religion are investigated in order to build up a complex picture of medievalist practice throughout this period. Nineteenth-century medievalism has been studied extensively, but the detailed interplay between this phenomenon and gender politics, particularly the representation of 'womanhood'[1], is a rich area that would benefit from more extensive, nuanced and comprehensive analysis. It is this gap in the scholarship that my thesis seeks to fill.

A comprehensive coverage of this subject would be a vast project beyond the scope of a single doctoral thesis. What this thesis aims to capture, then, is a cross-section, a wide-ranging snapshot of certain important aspects, through a series of case studies. To create this cross-section, I have performed in-depth analyses of four key female medieval figures that were taken up across the nineteenth century in Britain, examining how and why artists, through the use of diverse media, appropriated these women and brought them into contact with the political and social beliefs and values of their time. The four figures chosen are Dante Alighieri's late thirteenth to early fourteenth-century Italian donna *Beatrice*, the Celtic queen of Arthurian legend *Guinevere*, the French soldier and martyr of the 100 Years War *Joan of Arc,* and the

[1] The concept of 'womanhood,' mentioned here and examined throughout this thesis, pertains to the concept of femininity as a social and cultural construct.

thirteenth-century French Muslim character *Nicolette.* These four figures have been selected for their widespread and varied use in Britain in the nineteenth century and for their individualised engagement with the concept of womanhood.

Although a medievalist pedigree and an engagement with gendered discourses intrinsically link all four women, they each stand for very different aspects of Britain's perception and treatment of womanhood. Dante's Beatrice functioned as an exemplification of idealised femininity. She was held up as a medievalist model of womanly excellence, as an enduring figure to be revered and emulated. Guinevere, infamous for her adulterous betrayal of King Arthur, operated as the antithesis of Beatrice. Hers was a cautionary tale, used as a warning against the supposedly inherent dangers associated with female sexuality and autonomy. Joan of Arc's incongruous character, as both a pious woman and a soldier, lent her perfectly to debates on the 'Woman Question' and led to her being used as a means to comment on agitations for, and changes to, the roles, place and rights of women in nineteenth-century Britain. The figure of Nicolette, an archetypal example of a popular French medieval trope of Muslim womanhood, is distinct for her ability to amalgamate questions about womanhood with the concepts of medievalism and orientalism. An examination of the interplay of these factors in the figure of Nicolette illuminates an under-studied facet of Britain's perception of womanhood: namely, how the orientalised feminine 'other', at a time when European colonialist expansion was at its peak, was understood – both as a reflection of, and yet innately different from, British womanhood.

These four women shape the structure of this thesis by forming the basis of each of the four chapters. Each chapter focuses on one woman and investigates how and why she was employed in nineteenth-century British culture. The chapters then interrogate the implications of utilising these medieval women to comment on contemporary society, examining how they reflect a nineteenth-century belief in immutable femininity and an immutable past. This interrogation into the utilisation of the medieval is, however, tempered by my assertion that though these women were from different medieval epochs their potential for transferability to the modern context mattered more to nineteenth-century adopters than their specific medievalness. As such, I assert, specific medieval difference had little impact on the treatment of these figures in the nineteenth century. The lack of strong distinctions between the specific medievalness of these characters is central to this thesis, as it speaks to a central tenet of nineteenth-century medievalism, which was less concerned with representing authentic medieval pasts than it was with commenting on the present.

This dissertation aims to make a distinctive and original contribution to existing scholarship in several ways. The most overarching of these is by offering a clear and thorough linkage of discourses of gender with medievalism. This intersection has been examined by scholars before me, most notably by Julia Straub in her book *A Victorian Muse* (2009); Judith M. Bennet in her article 'Medievalism and Feminism' (1993); and Clare Broome-Saunders in her book *Women Writers and Nineteenth-Century Medievalism* (2009) and her article 'Judge no more what ladies do': Elizabeth Barrett Browning's Active Medievalism, the Female Troubadour, and Joan

of Arc' (2006). These works focus, wholly legitimately, on providing broadly defined connections between medieval figures and gender. Building on these authors' important and groundbreaking works, I seek to develop a more complex picture of nineteenth-century medievalism and its interaction with perceptions of womanhood, aiming to add additional ideological nuance and detail to current understandings of the uptake of medieval figures in works of the nineteenth century.

This nuance will be teased out in a number of ways. One way is through developing an under-examined topic area in medievalism studies: the study of female medievalists. Women medievalists of the nineteenth century have, for decades, often been mentioned only briefly, or else have been overlooked completely in studies on nineteenth-century medievalism. As a result, many of their works have been lost or have gone out of circulation, but this is gradually changing. This change, though not specific to medievalist texts, began in the 1970s with the development of feminist criticism. Feminist criticism encouraged a focus on the recovery and definition of literature by women[2], and I aim to contribute meaningfully to this ongoing scholarly endeavour by aiding in the recovery of medievalist works by female authors. Furthermore, although a number of works by female medievalists have been 'recovered' since the 1970s, many have not been critically analysed, especially in regard to discourses of gender and/or medievalism. Drawing on recent critical work, most notably the scholarship of Clare Broome-Saunders, I seek to rectify this issue by contributing more analytical detail, through a combination of

[2] Examined in detail later on in the introduction.

comprehensive historical background research, individual biographies of artists, and thematically rich close readings, to the examination of these texts.

Alongside bringing to light overlooked works by women, this thesis seeks to focus on the examination of Victorian popular culture alongside well-known and prestigious foundational texts of the time. Both high art and 'low culture' (burlesques, children's books, satirical cartoons) will be studied side by side to gain a comprehensive view of the phenomenon of medievalism, in all its manifestations, in British culture. Similarly, my work aims to offer a thick account of the intersection of gender and the medieval by examining literary works alongside a cultural cross-section of other representational modes, such as visual artworks, photographs, cartoons, theatre, and legal documents. Appendices of the visual artworks examined are included at the end of each chapter. Luckily, medievalism studies is a field where there is great scope for this. Indeed, as E.L. Risden says: 'if we do "medieval studies" [or in my case medieval*ism* studies] rather than "English," we feel freer to incorporate bits of history, literature, linguistics, religion and aesthetics' (Risden, 2009 p.44). This comparative, cumulative approach offers a unique way of addressing the key theme of this thesis, contributing an innovative and original perspective on this phenomenon.

The way that I approach the topic of medievalism is also noteworthy when compared with the existing scholarship, as I place greater emphasis on the question of *why* medievalist modes were taken up at this time in British history. In much of the scholarship on nineteenth-century medievalism and its intersection with gender,

the medieval is utilised as a unifying theme, without the ideological implications of the use of the medieval past being interrogated. I instead aim to contribute a more rigorous investigation of the intended ideological outcomes of utilising medieval characters and themes in these works. I have created a medievalist classification to do this work, which will be examined in detail below. Moreover, by focusing on four medieval women to investigate the phenomenon of the intersection of medievalism and gender, this thesis builds upon the scholarship of Broome-Saunders in *Women Writers and Nineteenth-Century Medievalism* (2009), which undertakes the activity of examining individual medieval women and their specific connections to British gendered culture of the nineteenth century. I extend upon this project by more overtly and deliberately engaging with this character based structure through placing individual archetypes of womanhood side by side, and through utilising this structural decision as a means to highlight the breadth and variety of the interaction of medievalism and gender.

A robust frame of linked concepts fortifies my thesis's scholarly contribution. My thesis centres on five key concepts. Medievalism is the fundamental conceptual underpinning of this project, forming the centre around which all other theoretical concepts revolve. Medievalism is defined by Tom Shippey as 'any post-medieval attempt to re-imagine the Middle Ages, or aspect of the Middle Ages for the modern world, in any of many different media' (2012, 45). I engage with this definition by focusing specifically on the manifestations of medievalism in the nineteenth century. Medievalism is an active process, engaged with recreating, refashioning and reimagining the Middle Ages to suit modern needs, and it demonstrates that our

understanding of the past is influenced by interpretation and appropriation rather than simply a response to a 'concrete' past (a concept that has been studied by Morgan 2009, Risden 2009, and Pugh and Weisel 2013). The academic field of medievalism studies, which has developed into a subdivision of medieval studies, involves systematic investigation of the *concepts and practices* of medievalism and the interplay between medieval themes, characters, and stories with postmedieval cultures.

Medieval studies, as a professional discipline separate from the non-academic practices of medievalism, arose in the late nineteenth century in Europe and Great Britain and, as an intellectual field supported by the Academy, was consolidated in the 1950s and 1960s in Great Britain and the USA[3]. The first journal to focus on this area of scholarship was *Studies in Medievalism*, founded in 1979 by Leslie J. Workman, who also organised the first conference sections on the topic in 1971 at the International Conference on Medieval Studies at Western Michigan University (as outlined extensivly in Utz, Fugelso et al. 2005). Prior to this, the phenomenon of nineteenth-century medievalism was studied only briefly in scholarship within Victorian studies. Engagement with medievalism studies is rapidly growing and, according to Ute Berns and Andrew James Johnston, it 'is increasingly becoming a

[3] The discipline was influenced significantly by the formation at this time of a number of literary societies and literary journals that concentrated on the scholarship of the Middle Ages, including the Chaucer Society, the Pearl-Poet Society, *The Yearbook of Langland Studies,* The John Gower Society, *The Chaucer Review*, *Exemplaria*, the Lollard Society, and the Early Book Society. This increase in interest fostered new and innovative ways of studying medieval literature, which opened up the field to further growth. It was out of this expansion and increased interest in medieval studies that the field of medievalism studies emerged during the mid to late 1970s.

central element of medieval studies' (2011, 97), as an interest in reception and self-reflection becomes more respected by the Academy.

Medievalism as a methodology is, of course, integral to this thesis. My approach to analysing medievalisms is informed by seminal works in the field, particularly those that focus on the topic of medievalist taxonomies. Umberto Eco's hugely influential section on 'ten little Middle Ages' from his essay 'Dreaming of the Middle Ages' in *Faith and Fakes: Travels in Hyperreality* (1973, 61-72) was the first to call for the epistemological categorisation of medievalisms,[4] claiming this work was necessary to better understand and define the impetuses behind medievalist activity. Scholarship continues to successfully extend the work of Eco and his call for categorisation, including the introduction to the *Cambridge Companion to Medievalism* (2016)[5], edited by Louise D'Arcens; Stephanie Trigg's article 'Once and Future Medievalisms' (2005)[6]; Tison Pugh and Angela Jane Weisel's *Medievalisms: Making the Past in the Present* (2013)[7]; Richard Utz's *Coming to Terms with Medievalism* (2011)[8]; and David Matthews' *Medievalism: A Critical History* (2015), which provides a comprehensive examination of the trend of medievalist taxonomies, drawing on past scholarship and forming its own classifications. Existing categorisations of medievalist modes are helpful in managing the scale and scope of medievalist efforts, but they are not ubiquitous. As such, I have chosen to develop my own classification, one that is pertinent to this particular study.

[4] This work by Eco, as its subtitle suggests, separates medievalist activity into ten categories.
[5] This work by D'Arcens distinguishes between 'made' and 'found' medievalisms
[6] Trigg's work separates medievalism into four epistemological categories
[7] Pugh and Weisel separate medievalisms into 'scholarship' and 'recreations'
[8] Utz's work seeks to separate medievalisms into 'pastist' and 'presentist'

Matthews' taxonomy has deeply influenced my own conception of medievalist modes, and it is from his classification system that I borrow a term to refer to the overall medievalist impulse of the works that I examine in my thesis: 'political-ideological medievalism' (2015, 36). I have then separated this mode into three types, based on the method/means by which they are produced: recovery (translations, historical biographies, edited editions), reconstruction (direct retellings and reworking of old texts or legends), and construction (works that use or reference the medieval past but only engage gesturally with specific stories and/or histories). My argument is that these three types utilise degrees of medievalism to add historical legitimacy, medievalist prestige and/or universality (by mapping ideas back to a shared distant past) to certain political and ideological viewpoints. This medievalist taxonomy is mapped across all four chapters to interrogate when, where and how medievalism is used, and the effect of this on individual works and on the phenomenon of nineteenth-century medievalism as a whole.

Medievalism studies – effectively the academic study of the concept and practices of medievalism – have focused not on the historical Middle Ages but on the phenomenon of their use and reception in post-medieval contexts. For this reason, this area of study intimately connects with critical examinations of *temporality*, which espouse the notion that the present carries with it the influence of the past, as well as with *reception theory*, which argues that a text's cultural value is not simply shaped by its context of production but is also affected by its uptake, utilisation and adaption in later contexts. Medievalism studies also engage with a

critique of *periodization*, which is the problematic categorising of history into epochs such as ancient, modern, early modern and so on, for at its very core this field surveys the interplay between the past and the present. I will also examine the engagement of medievalism studies with *feminism* and with the concept of *Britishness*. All five of these concepts underpin the theoretical framework of my thesis.

The concept of *Britishness* is rather knotty but I will attempt to disentangle it, in an attempt to outline how it is utilised in this thesis and how it connects to the concepts of medievalism and womanhood. Britishness is defined by particular characteristics assigned to the sovereign state of Britain and its people,[9] and is integral to the political, cultural and social psyche of those who identify with the supposed 'collective' culture of England, Ireland, Wales and Scotland. In the nineteenth century 'British' qualities, according to Richard Utz (2011) and Michael Kenny (2014), consisted of a veneration of liberty, moderation, stoicism, and tradition, as well as a belief in the 'unique continuity' of these ideals, which were understood, as examined by Utz (2016), to be directly traceable to Britain's medieval past[10]. Britain celebrated its Middle Ages, particularly the late medieval, as a golden age that had fundamentally shaped the political, cultural, and social structures of modern Britain. As argued by Utz (2011, 2016), Kenny (2014) and Kathy Lavezzo (2004) Britain's romanticised, presentist connection to its medieval roots was quite unique. As such,

[9] During the long nineteenth century, Britain included the entirety of Ireland. Due to this fact, works by those residing in, or who identified with, what is now the Republic of Ireland have been included in this study.

[10] Utz has examined the interconnectedness of British nationalism and medievalism in his book chapter 'Academic Medievalism and Nationalism' (2016), where he traced the etymological roots of 'medievalism' to England in the nineteenth century.

though academic, artistic and political medievalisms were popular nationalistic endeavours in wider Europe from the late eighteenth century onwards (as examined by Shippey 2012, Ferré 2014, and Emery and Utz 2014), British medievalism, rather singularly, maintained that there was an entrenchment of national medieval heritage in the present.

In Britain, as was the case for many European countries at the time, nationhood was intrinsically connected to womanhood and expressed via idealised images of feminine identity. It was during the late eighteenth into the nineteenth century, according to Arianne Chernock (2013), that Britain formulated and widely disseminated an image of distinctly British womanhood, personified by a focus on virginal purity, motherhood, subservience, goodness, passivity, and (white) beauty (this archytype has been examined by Welter 1966, Hamlett and Wiggins 2009). Of course, some of these ideals (if not all of them) were shared by other European nations (and indeed, non-European nations too) but in Britain they were perceived to be unique to British women. Furthermore, this alleged singularity was utilised as a means to uphold the idea of British exceptionalism.

Although three of the four figures on whom this thesis focuses are not British, all were taken up in the nineteenth century to disseminate certain ideas about British womanhood, either as comparative models or as adopted idealised figures. In other words, artists and audiences adopted, and in some instances transformed, the four medieval women examined in this thesis to reflect what were perceived to be distinctly British ideals, anxieties, and desires. The nuances, complexities and

contradictions of the practices of transformation and adoption will be examined in the individual chapters, but it is perhaps pertinent to make mention of the significant connection between British identity and orientalism, as this is pertinent to the final chapter in this thesis.

Nineteenth-century Britain's reverence for its medieval past was, as argued by Lavezzo (2004) and Krishan Kumar (2000) deeply entrenched in imperialist, enlightenment sensibilities, which sought to position Britain as exceptional in relation to Europe as a whole, but particularly in comparison to its colonial subjects. This sense of British cultural, racial and social superiority formed its perception of the orient and the orientalised woman, and this fact influenced British reception and recreation of the character of Nicolette and her descendants in the nineteenth century. The nuances of orientalised medievalism are taken up in chapter four. The intersection of nationalism, medievalism, and gender discourses (a phenomenon outlined in the work of Utz, Lavezzo, Shippey and Kenny) informs the overall structure of the thesis.

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Another feature of my theoretical framework is *periodisation*. Periodisation refers to the traditionally Western theoretical concept of classifying history into epochs and works by reducing the complexities of cultural development into manageable divisions using the markers of 'ancient', 'medieval', 'renaissance', 'reformation', 'early modern', 'modern', 'Victorian' and so on (as examined in Shepard and Walker 2008, Matthews 2013). According to David Matthews, those scholars adhering to periodisation believe that 'without borders marking off points of temporal difference, it would be impossible to conceive or express historical change' (2013, 253). A major shortcoming of periodization as an organising principle, however, is that, according to Margreta de Grazia, it potentially 'works less as a historical marker than a massive value judgment' (de Grazia 2007, 453). By this, de Grazia means that periodisation is not a neutral form of categorising but is highly ideologically invested, often either favouring the modern over the pre-modern past or nostalgically attempting to make a comment on the present that portrays it as an epoch of decline. Another significant flaw of periodisation, as stated by Ian Buchanan, is that it 'assumes that there is something that gives a particular segment of time a certain kind of unity' (2010, 364). This concept is problematic in that, by seeking to demonstrate the unity of a period, it generalises it, characterising it only by its dominant discourses – typically those produced by middle-class white males. This

results in the neglect of the history of those outside of this group. For a project like mine, this is especially problematic, as my thesis aims to investigate diverse gender discourses associated with women and 'femininity' within the larger discourses of the nineteenth century, when the period as a whole is often viewed as a time of patriarchal stability. Therefore, although I will be using the phrase 'the long nineteenth century', I will be drawing out the complexity of the social and cultural context of the time. Periodisation is used in my thesis, then, as a heuristic device, a descriptor that is important but always partial. It is helpful for the organisation of the concepts of time and space, used specifically in my thesis to differentiate and assess the time periods of the nineteenth century and the Middle Ages, but these categories are put under critical pressure. Although periodisation encourages the assignment of a homogenous identity to a period, it is only through outlining the dominant culture that the 'extraordinary' and 'nuanced' can be properly assessed and understood. Indeed, the work that I am undertaking on nineteenth-century medievalism and gender would make little sense without the contextualisation of the dominant discourses that it was working against. Thus, I am involved in a critical approach to periodisation, using it as structuring tool but simultaneously questioning its verity and validity as a categorising device. Furthermore, in accordance with my rather flexible use of periodisation, I offer the argument that texts steeped in the influence of the 'nineteenth century' did not cease to be produced in 1899; rather, many works produced in the fifteen years after the turn of the century still undeniably carried with them the weight of nineteenth-century culture. Therefore, I have extended my analysis of texts to those that were published up to the year 1915, just after the commencement of the First World War.

Directly connected with the concept of periodisation is the theoretical concept of *temporality*. These concepts are linked by a shared questioning of the traditional view of time as an expression of progress and regression. The study of temporality is an analysis of how we understand time and its passing, and is founded on the concept that any particular period in time mobilises and includes elements of the past. As Carolyn Dinshaw puts it: 'the present moment of *now* is full and attached rather than empty and free-floating' (Dinshaw 2012, 5); that is, the present is 'full' and 'attached' to what has come before and, as such, the past is always present. An examination of temporality speaks to the idea that the past is not a monolithic, discrete entity but something that is constantly changing. David Matthews explains the nucleus of this concept best, stating that 'periods in the past do actually alter: their boundaries move around […] and the way in which we think about a given period might change considerably' (2013, 254). Ultimately, this critical conceptualisation of temporality argues that the past takes its shape from its interpretation in a succession of subsequent presents. Medievalism is inextricably linked with this concept of temporality. As E.L. Risden states, when one engages with medievalism, one is 'dealing with joint sensibilities: something nominally from a time past that we see through a modern or contemporary lens' (Risden 2009, 46). What my thesis seeks to examine is the manifestations of the 'medieval' in the nineteenth century and how these manifestations engaged with political, social and cultural issues in relation to gender politics at the time. In this respect, my thesis is an exercise in temporal study.

Reception theory is another key critical underpinning of this thesis and, as delineated by Ika Willis, it is a concept that is complicated by the fact that it has 'both a broad and a narrow application' (2018, 2). A 'narrow' conception of the term refers to the work of formative scholars in the field, namely Wolfgang Iser and Hans Robert Jauss of the Constance (or Konstanz) School. The crux of the theory of reception (*Wirkungstheorie*) as set out by German literary theorist Wolfgang Iser for his philosophy of the 'reader's construction' of a literary text (Iser 1978) is that, although the words in a book and the lines in a film are fixed and unchangeable, the way in which a book is read or a film is watched is constantly changing, with different values, life experiences and time periods coming to bear on the individual's understanding and relationship to that text (a concept that has been examined by Iser 1978, Machor and Goldstein 2001, Summit 2007, Buchanan 2010, Willis 2018). This type of reception is ultimately the examination of the changing understanding of a text, achieved, according to Janet Staiger, 'by identifying the codes and interpretive assumptions that give them meaning for different audiences at different periods' (Staiger 2005, 2). Jauss, a medievalist, literary theorist and the other leader in the field of reception, built upon Iser's theory in a series of essays, translated from the original German and published in their entirety for the first time in 1982 in *Towards an Aesthetic Reception.* Jauss's scholarship established the theory of 'reception aesthetics' (*Rezeptionsasthetik*), which placed emphasis on how literature is read across historical periods. Unlike Iser, Jauss focused explicitly on the historicity of literary reception, rather than on the study of individual texts. Both theories are relevant to this study, but Jauss's focus on how a text is reconstructed by a reader's historical 'horizons of expectation' (*Horizonterwartung*), and his assertion that

literature be used as a barometer to measure shifting perceptions and values, is especially pertinent to this study.

The scholarship of Jauss and Iser is essential for understanding the origins and fundamentals of reception theory; however, what Willis (2018) has named 'broader' forms of reception are undeniably more germane to this study. A broader application of reception, as outlined by Willis, allows for "theoretical, critical, and historical work on texts, readers and audiences, in a number of disciplines" (2018, 3) by a wider array scholars to come to the fore. This broadening of the field, according to Willis, has encouraged scholars to examine how society and culture as a whole, not just literary texts, are created and shaped by the past. Ultimately, an adoption of a broader methodology of reception enables analysis not just of the reception of *literary texts* of the past, but of the *past itself* and its use in the present.

In alignment with this broader view of reception, this thesis examines examples other than literature, such as theatre, visual art, biography, political papers, and fashion in the nineteenth century to investigate how reception of the medieval past was often manifested in the production of new cultural artefacts. These 'products' of nineteenth-century medievalism that this thesis inspects are interpretable through the lens of reception theory in that they directly employ a variety of texts, ideas, and characters from the Middle Ages but affix to them values and ideals of their time.

A number of medievalist scholars have examined the connection between reception theory (though the theory is often not explicitly named) and medievalism. Tison

Pugh and Angela Jane Weisel provide a particularly salient description of this intersection, stating that when one performs medievalism, one builds a picture of oneself (or one's time) '…through a relationship with history that is simultaneously the past and the medieval past that we wish it might have been' and that 'in making the past, we make the present, and this remakes the meanings of both" (2013, 10). This notion of meaning and history being 'remade' closely corresponds to two other methodological underpinnings of this thesis: Britishness and womanhood. As outlined previously, in the nineteenth century, aspects of the (medieval) past were often called upon to testify to Britain's immutable national character, though in fact the concept of Britishness was fundamentally and irrevocably shaped by preoccupations specific to nineteenth-century Britain. Similarly, the concept of womanhood (in regard to British womanhood and othered womanhood) in the long nineteenth century was shaped by contemporary concerns, values, and anxieties about female sexuality and gender, though the depiction of British womanhood was often presented, as is the case in many for the works examined in this thesis, as traceable to the medieval past. In this study, Medievalism, Britishness and womanhood are inextricably linked by the theory of reception, and a combination of these three discursive formations forms the very crux of the thesis– that is, the examination how the medieval past was utilised as a means to comment on the nineteenth-century present.

Theories of reception correspond to the concept of temporality examined above in that both seek to understand how the past is made active in the present. My examination of the medievalist works of nineteenth-century Britain is thus not about

the Middle Ages at all, but its reception and construction in a later time, seeking to understand how medieval texts are made new and relevant by later audiences.

Feminist criticism is also central to my methodological basis. The study of women's history emerged in the 1960s and 1970s and was inspired significantly by second wave feminism and the labour movement (as examined in Shepard and Walker 2008). In the 1960s, the study of Women's literary History was characterised by its focus on women as the consumers of texts produced by men; the sexual codes and stereotypes in texts produced by men in these texts; misogyny in literary practice; the exclusion of women from literary history; and its belief that separating female artists from mainstream historical development was prejudiced (as examined in Moi 1985, Showalter 1986, Showalter 1988). Elaine Showalter later named this type of scholarship 'Feminist Criticism'. A focus on the sexual codes and stereotypes of texts produced by men is something that I study in-depth in my thesis as a means of comparing feminist literature that has been long neglected. The focus of classic feminist criticism on the exclusion of women from literary history is also a central point of my thesis, which speaks to my engagement with this theory.

In the 1970s, a subfield of feminist criticism was developed which came to be known as Gynocriticism, the three key studies of which are: Ellen Moers' *Literary Women* (1976), Elaine Showalter's *A Literature of their Own* (1977) and Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar's *The Madwoman in the Attic* (1979). This new feminist scholarship supported the necessity of viewing women as a distinctive group, shaped by the values, ideas and structures imposed upon only women, and asserted that, as stated

by Toril Moi, 'the common patriarchal strategy of subsuming women under the general patriarchal category of "man"' (Moi 1985, 53) silenced the individualised voices of women, and so needed to be challenged. This feminist scholarship focuses on research into the psychodynamics of female creativity and female literary careers; the rediscovery of female artists whose work has been obscured by time; and researches into women's literary history as a continuous and coherent trajectory.

Not withstanding the importance of these works and the impact that they have had on this thesis, I also draw upon the scholarship of literary feminist researchers that came after and who at times criticised and/or re-examined the validity and effectiveness of earlier methods. Feminist literary criticisms that followed on from the foundational works of Moers, Showalter, Gubar and Moi called for the study of non-canonical female writers (such as Leighton 1995, Wu 1997, Thompson 1999, Armstrong 2002); advocated for more ideological nuance, such as allowing for contradictions to emerge within and between women writers of the same period (Leighton 1995, Thompson 1999, Armstrong 2002); and called for a less racially and culturally hegemonic and essentialist view of women writers[11] (Leighton 1995, Armstrong 2000, Thompson 2002). This newer scholarship, with its focus on nuance and contradiction, is integral to the theoretical framework of this thesis, with its focus on the innate multiplicity of nineteenth-century gendered medievalisms.

[11] This specific movement was influenced by intersectional feminism, an integral part of the framework for the last chapter in this thesis, and examined later on in this introduction

Analogous to the work performed in literary studies in the 1960s and 1970s was a movement of feminist critique in art history, beginning in the 1970s and led by Linda Nochlin in her foundational essay 'Why have there been no great women artists?' (1971). Nochlin's paper criticised the discipline of art history and shone a light on the structural and institutional factors responsible for the absence of female artists from the Academy and from art history books[12]. Rozsiska Parker and Griselda Pollock took up Nochlin's call for the development of feminist art history in *Old Mistresses: Women, Art and Ideology* (1981), by investigating under-examined and forgotten female artists, and the social and cultural structures that functioned to keep female artists out of the field of 'fine art' and out of art history. Soon after, Norma Broude and Mary D. Garrard in *Feminism and Art History* (1982) and Whitney Chadwick in *Women, Art and Society* (1990) undertook projects examining female artists and the representation of women in art from the ancient to the modern, with Chadwick importantly including a decidedly intersectional framework, with the inclusion of race and class. In 1988, Pollock broadened the scope of feminist critique of art history in her book *Vision and Difference* by performing feminist rereadings of key modernist works by men to examine sexual politics and its impact on dominant, masculinist culture and art. The validity of feminist practice within art history is evidenced by the fact that work on feminist art criticism continued into the twenty-first century, most importantly with Kristen Frederickson and Sarah E. Webb's examination of feminist art historians and history in *Singular Women: Writing the Artist* (2003), and Pollock's retrospective on feminist art history in her book *Women, Art, and Art History: Gender and Feminist Analyses* (2017). These works of feminist

[12] Nochlin published a series of important essays on this topic, many of which were included in her retrospective *Women, Art and Power* (1989)

art history, like their counterparts in literary studies, called for a revival of forgotten female artists and an investigation into the social, political and cultural structures that had worked to exclude women from art and art history. This work of feminist art criticism has, understandably, greatly influenced my own approach to the study of art history in this thesis.

The early feminist studies that I engage with in my thesis, such as Feminist Criticism and Gynocriticism of the 1960s and 1970s and feminist art criticism of the 1970s and 1980s, could seem out-dated, but I believe it is appropriate to use these earlier 'classic' methods of feminist criticism because a number of texts which I examine have been overlooked or long forgotten, which means they lend themselves to the focus on recovery that characterised these early manifestations of feminist study. This practice, far from being old-fashioned, remains fundamental to the recovery work that continues: the excavation of women's neglected literary legacy. My research is inextricably linked with these facets of Gynocriticism, namely through my focus on the rediscovery and analysis of female texts that have been long forgotten. It is ultimately through its engagement with classic feminist theory that my thesis maps out a part of female literary and artistic history that has been long neglected. Building on this work of recovery, in the vein of later works of the 1990s and into the twenty-first century, I also add greater analytical depth to 'rediscovered' works by women, and by other neglected authors and artists, in the hope of creating a more comprehensive picture of medievalism and gender in Britain at the time.

The gynocritical impulse behind this 'recovery' project is refined by being brought into dialogue with a more sophisticated feminist understanding of how gender intersects with other conceptions of oppression and disadvantage. This more complex structure is *Intersectional Feminism,* a modern feminist framework that encourages gendered discourses to be studied in a more inclusive way. The term *Intersectionality* was coined in 1989 by law professor, civil rights advocate and leading scholar of critical race theory Kimberlé Williams Crenshaw in her work 'Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex: A Black Feminist Critique of Antidiscrimination Doctrine, Feminist Theory and Antiracist Politics'. Intersectionality, as delineated by Crenshaw (1989, 1991) and extrapolated on by a number of scholars (Dill 1983, Carbado, Crenshaw et al. 2013, Smith 2013, Hancock 2014, Walsh 2015), is based on the belief that gender bias and discrimination are often shaped by other dimensions of identity, such as race and class, but that within feminist discourses these distinctions are often relegated to the margins, if not entirely absent, from feminist movements and discourses. This in turn, according to the theory, leads to distortion and simplification of our understanding of the oppression of and discrimination against women, as it only focuses on those with the most privileged.

According to Crenshaw, this type of feminist activity 'reflects an uncritical and disturbing acceptance of dominant ways of thinking about discrimination' (1989, 150) and, therefore, in many ways enacts discriminatory processes that feminism has claimed to fight against. Intersectionality, when employed as 'a method and a disposition, a heuristic and analytic tool' (Carbado, Crenshaw et al. 2013, 303), has

the potential to allow for a more inclusive and exhaustive understanding of feminism and gender discourses. I have employed intersectional feminism as a part of the theoretical framework that underpins the entirety of this thesis – specifically in regard to class and religion – in an attempt to provide a more complex representation of gender and its intersection with medievalism in nineteenth-century Britain. My intersectional feminist intentions, however, really come to the fore in the last chapter of this thesis, in the examination of the medieval Muslim woman trope of the 'Belle Sarrasine' and her uptake in Britain in the nineteenth century. This chapter complicates and challenges the notion that white, Christian, middle class women were the only archetypes of womanhood present in nineteenth-century Britain, and delves deeply into the interaction of gendered discourses with theories around race and religion and the contextual issues of orientalism and imperialism. As such, chapter four relies heavily on the work on John Ganim (2002, 2008, 2009), Bruce Holsinger (2007) and, of course, Edward W. Said (2003) to scrutinise the idea of orientalism, its place in the nineteenth century, and its intersection with medievalism.

The nature of my project, as an analysis of a large compilation of works on similar themes, topics, stories and characters, sometimes led to overlap, which at times created repetitiveness. Literary scholars, most notably Franco Moretti, have argued for the importance of understanding the scale of a literary phenomenon rather than only focusing on its best known or most accomplished examples. In his work on the concept of 'distant reading,' most notably 'Conjectures on World Literature' (2000), *Graphs, Maps and Tress: Abstract models for a Literary Theory* (2005), and *Distant*

Reading (2013), Moretti calls for the adoption of a quantitative approach to literary theory, which he asserts is a useful method for coping with the ever-expanding corpus of literature. Critical studies of medievalism can tend to focus closely on 'high-yield' texts rather than aiming to demonstrate the breadth of medievalist practice. A study such as the current one that also aims to focus on breadth must, sometimes at the risk of repetition, necessarily encompass texts with overlapping content, as well as texts that are conventional and even derivative. As such, repetition is necessary to show a sense of discursive consensus between works, as well as the tenacity of certain themes and conventions, and the fact that paradigm-setting Ur-texts texts – such as the Arthurian works of Alfred, Lord Tennyson; Robert Southey's poem 'Joan of Arc'; the Pre-Raphaelite artworks on Dante's Beatrice; and Walter Scott's Ivanhoe – worked in an almost 'viral' way, encouraging the creation of other similar works. I have aimed to balance this methodological implication by ensuring that the focus on breadth, repetition and accumulation is ameliorated by close analyses that draw out the various facets of individual works. Furthermore, the cumulative nature of this study is in itself original to the examination of nineteenth-century medievalism and its intersection with gendered discourses, and is important for its potential to demonstrate the reach and recurrence of the art of the time.

Of all the available definitions of the concept of medievalism, Tom Shippey's characterisation of it as post-medieval re-imaginings of the Middle Ages is the most encompassing for understanding the essential concept of medievalism. The type of medievalism with which I am most concerned, however, is that which uses the Middle Ages, as Clare Broom-Saunders puts it, as an 'ideological space' (2006): that

is, a space where the issues, values and ideas of the present are projected on to the past so as to critique or celebrate them. It is this manifestation of medievalism with which my thesis engages, through my own medievalist taxonomy that characterises medievalist practices under the subheading of political/ideological medievalism.

According to Alice Chandler in her foundational study, at the height of the medieval revival in nineteenth-century Britain, 'scarcely an aspect of life remained untouched by medievalist influence' (Chandler 1971, 1). This phenomenon was influenced most significantly by the recovery of, and the resulting surge of interest in, antiquarian, textual, and archaeological artefacts from the Middle Ages (as examined in Frew 1980, Morris 1984, Alexander 2007). Indeed, the real or imagined 'medieval' was all-pervasive in Britain's nineteenth century. Nevertheless, much mid- to late-twentieth-century scholarship on nineteenth-century medievalism focuses on the more 'traditional' and socially conservative manifestations of it, examining the medievalism of 'popular' and mostly male authors: namely Tennyson, Thackeray and Scott. These figures and their 'conservative' brothers often reanimated medieval artefacts to support and propagate socially accepted attitudes and values such as chivalry, 'traditional' religiosity, social and political order, and imperialism (as examined in Chandler 1971, Chandler 1975, Kenney and Workman 1975, Chandler 1980, Girouard 1981, Dellheim 1982, Harrison 1992, Johnston 2006, Santini 2009, Pugh and Weisel 2013). Even in scholarship where 'progressive' or 'reformist' nineteenth-century medievalism is inspected more frequently – and indeed this is a gradually increasing field of study – there has always been a swing towards the study of male artists such as Morris and Ruskin, and male-led groups and movements such

as the Pre-Raphaelites and the Arts and Crafts Movement (see Harvey and Press 1995, Mancoff 1995, Lupack and Lupack 1999)[13]. This scholarship focuses on 'progressive' issues such as human labour laws, the alienation and ugliness of industrialised cities, critique of industrial capitalism, and political radicalism in the work of nineteenth-century medievalists (for example: Chandler 1965, Chandler 1971, Stock 1974, Dellheim 1982, Evans 1988, Baer 1992, Dellheim 1992, Harvey and Press 1995, Simmons 2009). The intersection of medievalism with progressive gender discourses, however, especially the Woman Question and feminism as key expressions of social reform and 'progressiveness' in nineteenth-century Britain, have until quite recently been largely neglected.

In 2006, Clare Broome-Saunders rightly complained that 'the whole question of female-authored medievalism has received scant discussion' (2006, 585), to which I would add that the whole question of women and their engagement with any kind of medievalism, not just literary medievalism, has received little attention. Given the prevalence of dialogue on gender in nineteenth-century Britain and the concurrent popularity of medievalism, it would make sense that the two would in some ways intersect, or at least communicate with one another. The work that has begun to emerge recently suggests that time has now arrived for this rich intersection to be better understood.

[13] One important exception is the work of Jane chance in her edited book *Women Medievalists and the Academy* (2005), which consists of a collection of biographical essays and memoirs that trace the history of female academic medievalists and how they helped build the field of medievalist studies.

Examination of the literature on women and medievalism reveals that there has been *some* engagement with the topic of nineteenth-century medievalism and gender, and that this discussion has, at times, been somewhat fraught. Dorothy Mermin (1989) has discussed the nineteenth-century woman's relationship with medievalism but came to the conclusion that women who engaged with medievalism in this period did so in vain, as this was a male-constructed movement that was linked inextricably with patriarchal ideology, and so any engagement with it was regressive to the female plight – a point which, respectfully, my thesis disputes. Alternatively, Broome-Saunders (2006, 2009) put forward a far more positive view on the intersection of womanhood and medievalism in British literature of the nineteenth century. Her work provides thorough and invaluable analyses into the impetus behind, and outcomes of, women engaging in medievalism at this time. As such, Broome-Saunders pioneered important and influential arguments on the topic, such as the notion that British women in the nineteenth century engaged with medievalist discourses because it was a safe means of expressing social critique, and because it allowed for a lively discussion on the fundamental nature of womanhood. I aim to further the innovative scholarship of Broome-Saunders by contributing historicity and ideological detail to my analysis of works by women. Furthermore, the inclusion of works of visual art and literature in this study has allowed for a more comprehensive snapshot of the phenomenon of medievalism and its intersection of gender to emerge, than has ever been attempted before. My research, then, involves delving into scholarly gaps.

Researching a number of key British medievalists of the nineteenth century, I have uncovered examples of 'progressive' and 'conservative' thought on issues of gender. Some of these authors and artists, while not completely unknown, have so far only been footnotes in the studies of others; here I give them fuller attention, while other artists/authors have been totally ignored or forgotten. My research has been greatly aided by the development of online resources, namely 'The Camelot Project' (Lupack and Lupack 2014) and 'Project Gutenberg' (Hart 1971), which provide access to free e-books, including rarer and more obscure examples. These sites are especially helpful in producing examples of this activity by women, which, due to the lack of interest for so long, had proven hard to find. I have built up a substantial library of nineteenth-century medievalist texts, including a number of neglected examples of works by women, which will be analysed, in a number of cases for the first time, in this dissertation.

Combined, the various elements outlined in this introduction – namely, the connection of medievalism with gender ideologies; a focus on the impact and effect of utilising medievalist modes; the analysis of both conservative and progressive texts; the examination of a variety of texts; the study of works of popular culture and of epoch-making texts; the recovery of unexamined works, particularly by women; and the employment of a quantitative evaluation strategy, combined with close analysis – have the potential to significantly contribute to the knowledge base of Medievalismist studies. This contribution is based on delving into areas that have not been interrogated before, or else have only be brushed over, and through drawing all of these elements together to create a comprehensive and multifaceted study.

The desired outcome of this project is to add to our collective understanding of nineteenth-century British cultural history and its interplay with medievalism and to contribute a valuable chapter to women's political and social history.

Chapter one

'La donna idealizzata': Dante's Beatrice as an archetype of feminine perfection

'A perfect woman, whose influence refined and ennobled the poet's heart, filling it with those yearnings after that ideal of beauty and goodness which is the peculiar office of woman to inspire'.

(Martin 1862, vii-viii).

The ethereal 'Beatrice', who sweetly haunts Dante Alighieri's great Italian work *La Divina Commedia* (1308-1320)[1] and his slightly lesser known *La Vita Nuova* (1295)[2], was widely represented in the British cultural landscape of the long nineteenth century. Beatrice's prevalence arguably arose from the cultural and political exchanges taking place between Italy and Britain at the time, which were spurred on, according to Maura O'Connor (1998), by Britain's keen interest in the burgeoning push for Italy's unification. The first English translation of *La Commedia,* a critical edition by Irish Reverend Henry Boyd (as examined in Tinkler-Villani 1989), was published in 1802, and within two decades the *Commedia* became a central part of the English literary canon. The uptake of Dante soon became so pervasive that, according to Diego Saglia (2012), a kind of 'Dante-mania' saturated British culture by

[1] A long narrative poem in three parts (*Inferno, Purgatorio* and *Paradiso*), written in the Tuscan dialect. It provides a vision of the Christian afterlife with an angelic Beatrice acting as a literal and metaphorical guide for a fictional Dante on his journey from hell, through purgatory, to heaven.
[2] An example of 'prosimetrum' – a work of both prose and verse – written in the Tuscan vernacular, which consists of a collection of semiautobiographical musings on courtly love with Beatrice at the centre.

the 1820s. By the middle of the century, however, this haphazard 'mania' became more discriminating, refined into what Steve Ellis (1983) has called the 'Vita-Nuovization' of Britain's fascination with Dante. Ellis's term refers to the shift in focus from Dante and his works as a whole to the character of Beatrice, who is central to *La Vita Nuova*, specifically. This shift was, I contend, steered by the fact that *La Vita Nuova*, which had previously been published only in small fragments (as argued by Watson 1986), was for the first time translated in full, by Joseph Garrow in 1846.

As has been studied extensively in Victorian medievalist studies, a vast array of figures from medieval legend, history and literature thrived in British culture of the nineteenth century. Like Guinevere, Joan of Arc and Nicolette, however, Beatrice stands out for her potential to amalgamate two preoccupations of the time: medievalism and the Woman Question. Moreover, Beatrice is singularly significant for her relationship with, and her exemplification of, a very specific aspect of the gender debate, functioning as a widespread and durable model of a British 'donna idealizzata', an idealised woman. This Italian term, which clearly signifies Beatrice's idealised status, was popularly taken up in reference to her in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries in Italy and can be traced to an 1884 article by the Italian professor A. Bartoli entitled 'Della Vita di Dante Alighieri', from Volume 5 of *Storia Della Litteratura Italiana*. In nineteenth-century Britain the concept of idealised womanhood and its connection with the Beatrice figure was also prevalent, offering a complex touchstone for understanding society and culture of the time overall.

With respect to this, my overall argument in this chapter hinges on the assertion, in deferential disagreement with Alison Milbank (1998), that although visual artists and writers were undoubtedly attentive to debates around the historical origins of Beatrice[3], it was Dante's fictionalised rendering of her and her resulting allegorical potential that were of central interest in British culture of the nineteenth century. The allegorical potential of Beatrice was then, unquestionably, wrapped up in her ability to function as a model of ideologically 'British' womanhood, which speaks to scholarship by Utz 2011, Shippey 2012 and Kenny 2014 on the intersection of medievalism and nationalism and its powerful impact on eighteenth-century culture. This fascination with Beatrice's fictional rendering allowed her to be employed abstractly, as a symbolic rather than historical figure, which in turn allowed her to be depicted more fluidly by nineteenth-century writers and artists. As a result, literature and visual art of the period are saturated with renderings of an idealised Beatrice, in alignment with what I posit are three key aspects of the British 'donna idealizzata': a figure of *feminine perfection*, a *romanticised spiritual and moral guide*, and *the poet's muse*. Furthermore, these three facets of Beatrice's idealisation existed concurrently, often in harmony but at times in conflict with one another. This fact is a testament to the malleability of the Beatrice character, as a figure that functioned as an idealised virginal angel while simultaneously being taken up as an archetype of the eroticised muse.

[3] Particularly in regard to her being based on the Florentine woman Beatrice Portinari.

Connected closely with this, I argue in this chapter for a distinct and diverse medievalist impulse behind the cultural status of Beatrice in Britain in the nineteenth century, contending that she was fundamentally shaped by a desire to legitimise and/or challenge modern British conceptions of idealised womanhood through harking back to the medieval period. This medievalist mode, as outlined in the introduction to this thesis, is what I cam calling ideological/political medievalism, and it is clear from a survey of nineteenth-century British art and literature featuring Beatrice that this activity was highly valued and implemented at the time. The medievalist mode called for visual artists and writers to strike a balance between crafting Beatrice figures so as to make them applicable to British womanhood (by anglicising and/or universalising and/or modernising her and/or Victorianising her[4]) whilst still retaining her 'medievalness,' which manifested itself openly in very few works, merely aesthetically in others, and only through the innate historical and literary association of Beatrice with the Middle Ages in quite a number of others. Indeed, most relied on the medievalness of the Beatrice character as a means to add medieval cachet and/or historical authenticity, or else to universalise their patently nineteenth-century ideological assertions. Thus, when Beatrice's medievalness is probed in regard to her role as a 'donna idealizzata' the overwhelming motive behind featuring it seems to be to add validity to modern arguments around womanhood.

Two crucial scholarly works, both by Julia Straub, have been published on Beatrice's popularity in the nineteenth century: first, the ground-breaking book *A Victorian*

[4] This particular distinction, of course, relies upon a very specific time frame.

Muse: The Afterlife of Dante's Beatrice in Nineteenth-Century Literature (2009) and, three years later, a chapter entitled *Dante's Beatrice and Victorian Gender Ideology* (Straub 2012), published in *Dante in the Long Nineteenth Century: Nationality, Identity, and Appropriation*, edited by Aida Audeh and Nick Harvey. Straub's book maps the history of Beatrice's representation in art and literature of the Victorian period and is an invaluable guide to the uptake of Beatrice in the nineteenth century. The book, however, is focused more on the important objective of producing an overview of this phenomenon than on exhaustively examining Beatrice's interaction with debates on gender. In this way, Straub's book regularly and legitimately overlooks the separate facets of Beatrice's intersection with gender discourses. Alternatively, Straub's chapter, as its title suggests, focuses more directly on, and provides important analysis of, this intersection. Perhaps in part due to length constraints, however, it does not examine the topic to its full potential, focusing primarily on the works of Walter Pater, Christina Rossetti and Dante Gabriel Rossetti. Moreover, though a number of the texts that I study in this chapter are included in one or both of Straub's works, a vast number of these are mentioned only briefly, with Straub instead focusing on a few of the 'highest ranking' and most 'influential voices' of the time. I am not so discriminating, as I am interested in the use of Beatrice in both high art and in more populist cultural works, which I believe allows for a comprehensive account to emerge. Furthermore, neither of these works by Straub investigates the motivation for and impact of Beatrice's medievalness, which I believe is an important and revealing aspect of her intersection with gender debates. This chapter uses the invaluable scholarship of Straub as a foundation, but adds to the list of literary and visual works that she has studied, going into greater

analytical depth for each work and adding detail to the study of Beatrice's embodiment of gender ideals. The aim of this chapter is to examine how and why, as a muse, moral guide and figure of feminine perfection, Beatrice functioned in art and literature as a symbol of contemporary debates on femininity and womanhood whilst being simultaneously associated with the medieval past.

Beatrice as a figure of feminine perfection

As I will discuss throughout this chapter and this dissertation, nineteenth-century Britain was a patriarchal society, reflected in its politics, laws and culture, which were founded on strict ideas about the dichotomous differences in gender and sexuality between men and women. Unlike their male contemporaries, whose interests were served by this strictly gendered world, women were constrained and subjugated by it, leaving them legally, socially and culturally disenfranchised. This ideology was also bound up with assumptions around social class, with bourgeois and upper class women the only ones with the economic freedom to realistically attain ideal womanhood.

Concurrently, medievalism was employed by many to celebrate a vision of the medieval past as a place of romanticised social harmony and order (as examined by Chandler 1971, Stock 1974, Dellheim 1982, Harrison 1992), which some used to impart validity to conservative views on gender and sexuality. Beatrice was often rendered in such a way as to uphold ideas around acceptable and 'natural' womanhood. For many, Dante's saintly Beatrice mirrored their conception of ideal

femininity effortlessly and, as similarly argued by Ellis (1983), it was because of this easy affiliation of Beatrice with nineteenth-century ideal femininity that she became such a popular figure. As a result, and buttressed by the weight of her historicity and the gravitas of her medievalist roots, Beatrice came to be a potent tool for the proliferation of traditional, patriarchal values. Despite this medieval prestige, many of the works on Beatrice from this time, especially those that focus on rendering her as a figure of feminine perfection, exclude clear references to medieval elements of her story. In these instances the credibility and renown of her character through her association with the medieval past is only implied and instead her political and/or ideological affiliation with the nineteenth-century present comes to the fore.

Not withstanding this, there were also a number of writers and visual artists from the period who utilised Beatrice as a means to undercut or at least complicate popular gender discourses, and these too will be outlined and examined. The presence of dissident works in the culture of the period in many ways challenges the common understanding of this time in British history as homogenous and of medievalism as fundamentally conservative. Texts and images from the period reveal, instead, a more layered conception of gender and medievalism than has, in many cases, been argued – in regard to Beatrice specifically, and beyond.

One of the ways that gender binaries were upheld in nineteenth-century Britain was through the controlling mechanism of female idealisation, sometimes called the 'cult of true womanhood' (Welter 1966, Hamlett and Wiggins 2009). This vision of womanly perfection encompassed a number of qualities: selflessness, morality,

subservience, passivity, (white) beauty, sexual purity and motherhood, which were shaped and enforced to celebrate women while simultaneously subduing them. Debra N. Mancoff expressed this point brilliantly, stating that at this time in British history, visions of feminine perfection 'restrained women under the guise of reverence' (1995, 74). Such a practice has been called 'pedestal' or 'pinnacle' theory (examined in depth by Fernando 1977, Mancoff 1995).

Beatrice became synonymous with these gendered ideologies of female perfection through the development of what Straub (2009) has called the 'ultra-Beatrice' trend, which sought to attribute exaggerated traits of idealised womanhood to the figure of Beatrice – most notably, sexual purity, virtue, beauty and passivity.

Visual art reified Beatrice's position as a model of womanly perfection, situating her within an exceedingly popular Victorian pictorial tradition, examined comprehensively by Susan P. Casteras (1982), which encouraged the production of visual works, particularly portraits, which centered on feminine youth and beauty. All visual depictions of Beatrice from the period, without exception, render her in this vein but the most arresting and visible examples are by Pre-Raphaelites – namely, four works by Dante Gabriel Rossetti 'Beatrice, a Portrait of Jane Morris'[5] (1879); 'The Salutation of Beatrice'[6] (1869); 'The Salutation of Beatrice' (1880-1882)[7]; and one of his most famous works, 'Beata Beatrix'[8] (1864-1870) - and a work by Sir

[5] Plate 1
[6] Plate 2
[7] Plate 3
[8] Plate 4

Edward Burne-Jones entitled 'Beatrice'[9] (1879). These images depict, at their core, an unreservedly sentimentalised, hyperbolically beautiful Beatrice. A similar rendering of Beatrice's feminine perfection was produced some years earlier by William Dyce[10] in a work entitled 'Beatrice'[11] (1859), commissioned by the future Prime Minister William Gladstone. As in Rossetti's and Burne-Jones's works, the central effect of the piece is an emphasis on the youthful beauty of the figure. Decades later, as a testament to the longevity of this depiction of Beatrice, Marie Spartali Stillman[12] produced three comparable depictions of Beatrice: 'A Florentine Lily'[13] (1885-90) and 'Beatrice'[14] (1895), both of which have received some scholarly attention, and 'Beatrice'[15] (1898), which has not been previously studied. All three works align with their pre-Raphaelite predecessors and the work of Dyce by focusing on the depiction of a superbly beautiful woman, positioned in the foreground so as to focalise the intent of the work around the aesthetic allure of their subject.

Of course, portraits of beautiful, youthful women are hardly unusual or ground-breaking, but the way Beatrice's beauty is expressed in these works and in many more from the period exhibits an adherence not just to aesthetic standards but to a specifically British artistic tradition of the nineteenth century, foregrounding the trope of the beautiful *virtuous* woman, or what Susan Casteras calls the 'model

[9] Plate 5
[10] Dyce was not unfamiliar with medieval subject matter, having a few years earlier completed frescoes depicting the legends of King Arthur for Queen Victoria's robing room at Westminster.
[11] Plate 6
[12] Daughter of a wealthy Anglo-Greek family who patronised the Pre-Raphaelites, and a lesser-known member of the pre-Raphaelite sisterhood herself.
[13] Plate 7
[14] Plate 8
[15] Plate 9

Victorian lady[16]' (1982). With the exception of two of Rossetti's works, 'Beata Beatrix' (1864-1870) and 'The Salutation of Beatrice' (1880-1882), which assign a morbid sexual allure to Beatrice and will be discussed later and which are arguably the exceptions that prove the rule, almost all of the visual renderings of Beatrice from the long nineteenth century depict Beatrice modestly, in dress and in actions, and in this way she is presented not as a sexually alluring siren but as an embodiment of modesty, morality and aesthetic beauty. Thus, Beatrice overwhelmingly functioned as a figure for women to aspire to, not just for men to ogle.

Beatrice's adherence to the 'model Victorian lady' trope is, however, complicated by the fact that she is not, of course, a Victorian lady but rather a medieval donna. This fact is further complicated by the as yet unexamined fact that Beatrice openly carried with her the baggage of her medieval past in the artworks of the period. A number of works draw upon medieval Italian aesthetics through costuming,[17] displaying figures in loose gowns and flowing kirtles, and/or architecture[18], with the inclusion of gothic stone buildings or sumptuous medievalised interiors as a backdrop, while others merely rely on the implicit medievalness of her story. Nevertheless, and significantly, Beatrice's medievalness does not detract from her role as model of feminine perfection for nineteenth-century British women. This fact makes Beatrice rather singular within both the wider pictorial tradition of beautiful,

[16] A trope that, I assert, transcends this narrowly defined periodisation to became a broader nineteenth-century convention.
[17] Plate 5, 7, 8, 10, 11, 12, 13, 15, 16, 17, 18, 22
[18] Plate 4, 5, 7, 11, 13, 15, 16, 17, 18

youthful women and the trope of the 'model Victorian lady' in that she was able to function as both an historical figure and a contemporary archetype.

Complementing this overwhelmingly nineteenth-century and yet medievalist rendering of Beatrice is the symbolism that is woven throughout the visual depictions of her, most of which alludes to her moral and sexual virtuousness. Symbols that have long represented virginal purity and spiritual piety, such as lilies, pearls and doves, often appear in the works depicting Beatrice. The lily was certainly the most popular of these motifs, contained in a total of nine images. Nineteenth-Century Britain was fascinated by what was commonly called 'the language of flowers', and a number of books on the symbolism of flowers and plants were published during the period. Many of these works examine the lily as a symbol of humility, chastity and sexual purity (such as Kent 1823, Philips 1825, Tyas 1842, Ingram 1869, Greenway 1901) and as a symbol that was deeply connected with the figure of the Virgin Mary (as studied in Ingram 1869, Seaton 1995, Meagher 2000), thereby connecting Beatrice with the Virgin. Catholic artists like Dante Gabriel Rossetti and Marie Spartali Stillman were not the only ones to draw on Marian worship, with Anglican artists such as Kate Elizabeth Bunce and William Dyce also using the lily in their depictions of Beatrice. The interdenominational use of Marianism is not particularly surprising as, as outlined by Lynda Nead (1988), John Singleton (1992) and Geoffrey Rowell (1983), a number of British Anglicans had begun to openly embrace the Virgin Mary by the middle of the century. This connection of Beatrice to the Virgin undoubtedly raised her to new heights of allegorical perfection.

Images of Beatrice that contain lilies include Dante Gabriel Rossetti's 'Beatrice Meeting Dante at a Marriage Feast, Denies him her Salutation'[19] (Rossetti 1852); his 1880-1882 'The Salutation of Beatrice' [20]; and another work also entitled 'The Salutation of Beatrice'[21] (1859-1863). Others are William Dyce's 'Beatrice'[22] (1859) and Stillman's 'A Florentine Lily'[23] (1885-90) and 'Beatrice'[24] (1895), all of which have received some scholarly attention, but none in regard to their use of the lily. There are also a number of completely unstudied works that depict Beatrice with lilies – namely, Stillman's later 'Beatrice'[25] (1898); 'The Chance Meeting' by the poet, painter and member of the Arts and Crafts Movement, Kate Elizabeth Bunce[26] (1858-1927); and an untitled work[27] by the illustrator W. Matthews (1913) for W.E. Sparkes's book on Dante's *Vita Nuova*. A number of these images depict Beatrice wearing lilies in her hair[28] or carrying them in her hand[29], which draws the eye immediately to this potent symbol of sexual and moral purity, and puts this aspect of Beatrice's characterisation at the forefront. Less obvious use of the lily appears in W. Mathews' work[30], where the flowers are placed in a small vase in the foreground of the image, directly beneath the blue-robed, Madonna-like figure of Beatrice, again subtly uniting her with the Virgin. Also, in two works by Dante Gabriel

[19] Plate 10
[20] Plate 3
[21] Plate 11
[22] Plate 6
[23] Plate 7
[24] Plate 8
[25] Plate 9
[26] Plate 12
[27] Plate 13
[28] Plate 6, 8, 10
[29] Plate 9, panel one in plate 10, 11
[30] Plate 13

Rossetti, 'The Salutation of Beatrice'[31] (1880-1882) and panel two of 'The Salutation of Beatrice'[32] (1859-1863), lilies appear in bushels placed behind the Beatrice figures.

Use of the visual symbol of the lily in connection with Beatrice began in the 1850s and was sustained until the early twentieth century. This trope was arguably influenced by the first English translation of *La Vita Nuova* by Joseph Garrow a few years earlier, in 1846, which contains musings on lilies and on Florence, a city that adopted the lily (giglio) as part of its coat of arms almost a thousand years earlier (Hall 1974, Tobey 2005, Artusi 2006). The lily bears strong medievalist connotations, then, through its direct connection with Dante's life and work and when this is considered alongside the flower's link to feminine virtue, the use of the lily works to confer historic eminence to nineteenth-century concepts of 'natural' femininity.

The 'language of flowers' is also visible in images of Beatrice through the symbol of the rose. In Rossetti's 'The Salutation of Beatrice'[33] (1880-1882) and panel two of 'The Salutation of Beatrice'[34] (1859-1863), a lily bush is placed on the opposite side of the image to a thicket of roses. The rose is undeniably a powerful symbol of love and, like the lily, was commonly included in Victorian anthologies of flower symbolism (Kent 1823, Tyas 1842, Ingram 1869, Greenway 1901), with one writer, John H. Ingram, in his *Flora Symbolica: The Language and Sentiment of Flowers*, stating: 'all the world knows that the beautiful rose is the emblem of love' (1869, 45). The use of floral symbolism in these images by Rossetti, I suggest, evokes

[31] Plate 3
[32] Plate 11
[33] Plate 3
[34] Plate 11

interplay between the notion of Beatrice's purity and spirituality as signified by the lily, and her romantic role as depicted by the image of the rose. Bunce, too, took this trope up in her unstudied work 'The Chance Meeting'[35] (1858-1927). Bunce's painting depicts Beatrice walking through a market with a stall of roses to one side of her, in front of which Dante stands, and a woman holding out a lily for a young girl to smell on the other, where Beatrice is positioned. Here, Bunce renders the tension between Beatrice as a romantic love interest and a symbol of chastity. This tension was also rendered in Spartali Stillman's work 'Beatrice'[36] (1898), where Beatrice is depicted as holding in one hand a stalk of lilies and in the other a bowl of roses, figuratively weighing up her options of passion and love or spiritual/sexual purity. This tension between sexual purity and romantic love in some ways demonstrates a complication to Beatrice as an idealised figure of virginal purity, but only insofar as it creates a tension between two separate but nevertheless positive and idealised facets of femininity. The use of the language of flowers, so much a part of nineteenth-century culture, also speaks to the 'Victorianisation' of the Beatrice figure.

The pearl, another image long understood as a sign of virginal purity, also appears in visual renderings of Beatrice from the period, most notably in D.G. Rossetti's 'Beatrice, a Portrait of Jane Morris'[37] (1879). This is Rossetti's most simplified image of Beatrice, depicting only her head with a pearl brooch adorning her hair. The pearl is the only clear symbol in the piece, which is rare when observed alongside the

[35] Plate 12
[36] Plate 9
[37] Plate 1

symbol-laden nature of his usual works, and thus emphasis is placed on what it represents – sexual purity and piety. There are also a number of curious photographs of the Countess of Marr, so far undiscussed by modern scholars, which depict her draped in pearls, dressed as Beatrice at a fancy dress ball in 1897.[38] One image[39] shows a demure Marr crowned with a pearl diadem, pearls springing from her head like a halo, directly linking the pearl with her saintly nature. This was produced some sixteen years after Rossetti's 'Beatrice, a Portrait of Jane Morris'[40] (1879) and so speaks to the durability of this symbol and its association with Beatrice.

In addition to its association with piety and sexual purity, the pearl carries with it the implication of affluence, which I believe speaks to the popularity of the idealised figure of Beatrice being bound up with her bourgeois roots, as an Italian donna. Throughout visual representations, Beatrice is represented as a woman of the middle or upper class – in her elegant costume, her surrounds and her ability to read.[41]

As a marker of virtue, the dove – though far less prominent than the lily and subtler than the pearl, wrapped up as it is in allusions to the Holy Spirit – also appears in a number of visual representations of Beatrice from the period. According to Casteras (1982), women who embodied the values of idealised womanhood in Britain just prior to and during the nineteenth century were frequently referred to in literature and everyday parlance as 'doves'. This theme extended into visual art, where the

[38] Hosted by the Duchess of Devonshire for Queen Victoria's Diamond Jubilee
[39] Plate 14
[40] Plate 1
[41] This point will developed further, later in the chapter

presence of a dove was frequently used to symbolise typically feminine ideals, such as virginal purity, goodness and submissiveness. This convention was manifested in the use of doves in a number of works on Beatrice, including a work by the Pre-Raphaelite Henry Holiday, a meticulously architectural work entitled 'Dante Meets Beatrice at Ponte Santa Trinita'[42] (1883); the illustrator W. Matthews' 'Image five'[43] (1913) for W.E. Sparkes's book *Dante and Beatrice and Aucassin and Nicolette* (1913); D.G. Rossetti's seminal work 'Beata Beatrix' (1864-1870); and his second panel for 'The Salutation of Beatrice'[44] (1859-1863). All of these works contain an image of a dove as either a central element or a subtle inclusion, and so associate Beatrice with religious and cultural symbols of idealised nineteenth-century womanhood. Moreover, the image of the dove is important because it bridges a gap between the earthly and ethereal aspects of Beatrice's character.

The dove, the pearl, the lily and the beautiful youthful woman worked together to create a popular image of Beatrice in visual art of the time as an archetype of feminine perfection that Victorianised her whilst strongly retaining the aura of her medievalness. Visual art was not, however, the only creative medium that popularly sought to represent Beatrice's idealised status. Several literary works, including prose, poetry, essay and lecture, worked to cement this depiction of Beatrice as figure of womanly perfection in the cultural imagination. Nevertheless, as will be seen, other writers engaged with Beatrice to question and even undermine the practice of 'woman worship'.

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[42] Plate 15
[43] Plate 16
[44] Plate 11

The most unambiguous example of the idealisation of Beatrice in literary art is from a lecture by the famed fiction writer, essayist and critic Walter Pater, entitled 'Diaphaneitè', written in 1864 but not published until 1895, which exemplifies Straub's (2009) notion of the 'ultra-Beatrice' entirely.[45] The title of Pater's lecture, the linguistically ambiguous term 'Diaphaneitè'[46], mirrors the English 'diaphanous', meaning luminous, translucent and weightless (its etymology has been studied by Monsman 1971, Østermark-Johansen 2014). Pater invokes this term to describe a particular state of human perfection that is bound up in a number of traits: purity, goodness, morality and beauty; traits which directly mirror those associated with conceptions of perfect womanhood. Pater presents Beatrice as a prime example of this faultless state, perhaps swayed to do so by her status as a medieval woman and her potential to evoke universality. He writes that beyond the realms of the earthly, flawed human soul:

> There is another type of character, which is not broad and general, rare, precious above all to the artist, a character which seems to have been the supreme moral charm in the Beatrice of the Commedia. It does not take the eye by breadth of colour; rather it is that fine edge of light, where the elements of our moral nature refine themselves to the burning point. It

[45] Funnily enough, Straub does not subscribe to the argument that Pater's work engaged with the ultra-Beatrice trend and focuses instead on examining the connection of Pater's Beatrice with masculinity and male artistic creation.
[46] Monsman (1971) and Østermark-Johansen (2014) agree that the term is classical Greek in origin but that Pater never intended for it to be subjected to close linguistic scrutiny, which is why the spelling and accents are strange.

> crosses rather than follows the main current of the world's life (Pater 1900, 247-248).

Importantly, Pater argues that this state of being is 'beyond ideal', that it is so perfect it is almost impossible to replicate. Thus, like the 'imitatio Christi' (Pater 1900), most can only strive for this state of perfection. Such a view is rather anomalous considering that an amalgam of these values was openly advocated as a legitimate state of being for women to strive toward. I would argue, however, that far from an example of Pater undermining established gender discourse by highlighting its impracticality, this work instead expresses the belief in the flawed nature of woman, who is, by her very temperament, unable to abide by the expected traits assigned to her gender. Like the Virgin Mary, she is the exception that proves the rule of feminine imperfection.

The way Pater's idealised figure is said to wield this perfection also echoes nineteenth-century arguments about woman's contradictory position in society, as subservient to men but also having the power to influence them spiritually and morally. Adherence to this ideology is made plain by Pater when he says that the diaphanous figure is filled with 'a kind of impotence […] yet with a divine beauty and significance of its own' (Pater 1900, 220). In other words, though the idealised figure may be inactive and essentially powerless, it is permeated with transcendent beauty and importance that are ultimately more divinely significant.

Frank association of Beatrice with concepts of idealised womanhood also appears in an introductory note to Arabella Shore's book *Dante for Beginners* (1886) but, unlike Pater, Shore does not subject feminine perfection to scrutiny. Instead, she celebrates it. Though Shore's work has received scant attention and is mentioned only briefly by Straub (2009, 2012) in relation to the readership of Dante's works in the nineteenth century, it offers unusual insight into the reception and understanding of Beatrice as a conservative, idealised figure of the time. It is, however, somewhat puzzling that Shore used Beatrice for such traditionalist means, as she is predominantly known by the few who have studied her (namely, Sherrard 1966, Rendall 1994, Crawford 2002), as an active first-wave feminist.[47] This said, like many first-wave feminists, though she was in many ways radical in her political views, some characteristics of her moral outlook were decidedly conservative. Such an assertion is certainly true of Shore's treatment of Beatrice in *Dante for Beginners* (1886), where she positions Beatrice as a model for women, using the language and values of conformist gender ideology to do so, speaking mostly of her goodness and spiritual devotedness. She asserts that these themes supersede historical relevance and are instead ubiquitous ideals: 'his [Dante's] theme flows out till it fills creation: it is no longer only his city, not even his own country, but the world […] the human race, past, present and future to come' (Shore 1886, 14). The implication seems to be that Shore believed that the medievalness of Beatrice needed to be removed in order to make her universally applicable, which directly defies the utilisation of her medievalness in many artworks and literary works of the time.

[47] Shore drafted petitions for women's suffrage and gave lectures on women's education, their social condition and their right to vote; she wrote two books arguing for women's suffrage; and she was a member of a number of women's suffrage societies from the 1880s onwards (Crawford 2002).

An inkling of Shore's analytical mind does, however, come through in the fact that her exploration of the perfect woman is bound up in a broader and more academic discussion of the historical veracity of Dante's Beatrice. In the work, Shore comes to the conclusion that Beatrice must have truly existed because Dante's representation of her is 'too beautifully portrayed not to be at least the glorified idealisation of some woman known and loved by the poet in his youth' (Shore 1886, 1). An almost 'crypto-feminist' stance on the idealisation of Beatrice could be ascertained here, reflecting what Cynthia Harrison describes as the 'strain between the customary expectations and the changing circumstances' (1989, 172) of women. Shore acknowledges that Beatrice was in fact a real woman, one who inspired Dante, while also arguing that she is too perfect not to have been shaped by the poet's imagination in some way. Thus, Shore presents a distinction between the historical Beatrice and the ideal that she represented, saying that Dante raised Beatrice from mortal woman to an 'immortal monument' of idealised perfection. Nevertheless, although Shore highlights the differences between real and idealised woman she still holds up the idealised Beatrice as a model for nineteenth-century women to follow.

Christina Rossetti also examined the connection between Beatrice and nineteenth-century ideals of womanhood too, but she, unlike Shore, at times directly undermined this idealisation. As has been pointed out by Mary Arseneau (1999), all of the Rossetti siblings worked with the figure or works of Dante Alighieri – whether through translating his works, providing commentary or producing visual art – with Dante Gabriel being the most renowned. Christina was the last of the Rossetti

siblings to provide an exegesis on Dante, which she, in the typical style of many female authors of the time, self-deprecatingly called her 'little say on the Man and on the Poem' (Rossetti 1884, 566). This 'little say' came in the form of an essay for *The Century Magazine* entitled 'Dante: the Poet Illustrated Out of the Poem' (1884)[48], which has been studied sparingly by only a small number of modern scholars (notably, Arseneau 1999, Hassett 2005). The essay begins with a discussion of the life of Dante and concludes with an examination of Beatrice in *La Vita Nuova*. The figure of Beatrice that Christina outlines uses certain coded values assigned to idealised womanhood of the nineteenth century, celebrating her as beautiful, gracious, replete with virtue, courteous, and humble' (Rossetti 1884, 571) – in other words, fulfilling her role as model of womanhood.

On the other hand, I hold that Rossetti includes a subtle subversion of this ideology, through undermining the story of Beatrice's virginal status. Virginity was, of course, an important part of nineteenth-century ideal womanhood, and motherhood and wifehood were the only acceptable alternatives. Beatrice was repeatedly praised for her virginity, as shown in the artworks of the time, but the historical fact of the matter was that Beatrice Portinari was married and so was Dante, and they were not married to each other. Artists and writers of the British nineteenth century almost entirely ignore this fact, with Christina Rossetti being only one of three who acknowledge it, stating that 'at the age of twenty, Beatrice Portinari became the wife of Simon de' Bardi' (571). Silence on the part of others in regard to this matter was

[48] Christina Rossetti also published an essay titled 'Dante, an English Classic' in the *Churchman's Shilling Magazine and Family Treasury* in 1867, but this work makes no significant mention of Beatrice and so has been excluded from analysis here.

arguably due to the fact that Beatrice as married woman weakens one of the main pivots that inspires and justifies Beatrice's idealisation: her sexual purity. Christina Rossetti, however, chose to tackle this issue head-on, examining the practical effects that Beatrice and Dante's extra-marital relationship would have had on their actual marital partners. Christina chastises Dante for neglecting his wife, Gemma Donati, who was forced to live a life in the shadow of the effusively angelic Beatrice, stating that Gemma was 'truly to be pitied in her comparatively thankless and loveless lot' (Rossetti 1884, 571). Constance Hassett (2005), is the only modern scholar who has investigated this aspect of Christina's work and states that it was an clear example of Christina railing against a misogynistic tradition, traceable back to Boccaccio, that blamed Dante's wife for his unhappiness in marriage and for his needing to look further afield for creative and romantic inspiration. Instead, according to Hassett (2005, 158), Christina Rossetti's work defends Gemma Donati as the mother of Dante's children and protector of his manuscripts.

Rossetti's work could be read as a subtle recrimination against idealised womanhood, as an argument about its damaging effect on real women who simply cannot live up to such impossible ideals. Nevertheless, the defence of the non-beatified figure of Gemma Donati, as protector of Dante's manuscripts, is depicted alongside what is a celebration of the idealised figure of Beatrice. Thus an argument that Christina advocates for the total censure of the 'ultra-Beatrice' figure seems a step too far. Instead, I submit that Christina's work sought to argue for the veneration of different types of women, from the humble and helpful wife to the glorious muse figure. Again, Beatrice's medievalness imbues modern conceptions of

idealised womanhood with historical depth and prestige but, importantly, it also highlights the inequitable position of women throughout the centuries.

Decades earlier, Walter Savage Landor went even further than Christina in his critique of the use of Beatrice for 'woman worship', using her to uphold popular gender discourses while questioning the impulse behind them. Landor, an English writer and poet, is most famous for his collection in five volumes called *Imaginary Conversations* (1824-1846), which consists of fictional dialogues between famous contemporaries of the classical world through to conversations between figures from his present day. Contained within these works are three 'conversations' on the figure of Beatrice, all of which take place between two historical characters: 'The Pentameron' (between Petrarca and Boccaccio), 'Dante and Beatrice', and 'Dante and Gemma Donati'.

Straub (2009, 2012) and Hilary Fraser (1992) have both analysed Landor's 'Dante and Beatrice' and 'Dante and Gemma Donati' and come to the conclusion that the fundamental aim of these works is to uphold Victorian patriarchal gender values. Both texts undeniably focus on nineteenth-century, middle-class codes of behaviour, but I wish to suggest that they are more nuanced than Straub's or Fraser's assessments allow. In the piece titled 'Dante and Beatrice', one example of this detail comes in the form of the implicit allusion to Beatrice's married status:

> Beatrice. Ah no! It is sad to be an outcast at fifteen
>
> Dante. An outcast?

Beatrice. Forced to leave home (Landor 1848, 161).

It is clear that, though it is developed no further than this, Beatrice being 'forced to leave home' refers to her being married and this, as oblique as it is, mitigates Beatrice's typical idealisation as virginal maiden. A similar objective is clear in another line on the duality of the figure of Beatrice, where immediately after she mentions her status as a married woman she states that, even though she is bound by other earthly commitments, 'In the purity of your [Dante's] soul shall Bice live' (Landor 1848, 162). The work splits her character into two – historical married woman on the one hand and pure, angelic figure of Dante's fictional works on the other. When surveyed alongside the long history of entirely allegorised Beatrices, this inclusion is unusual and serves to question the reality of the idealised Beatrice. Alternatively, this inclusion could be read as Landor seeking to redeem Beatrice through her status as Dante's muse, which infuses the work with a contradictory realist-redemptive logic. Furthermore, the fact that it is Beatrice herself who enunciates this duality gives her a degree of autonomy. No longer is she a figure passively used and shaped by Dante; instead she is positioned as giving permission to Dante to allegorise her. The nature of this interaction suggests a disconnection between the historical Beatrice and the idealised Beatrice, which exposes the unrealistic idealism underlying 'woman worship'.

In regard to Landor's 'Dante and Gemma Donati' (1848), the very fact of its existence, as a discussion between Dante Alighieri and his wife, implicitly unsettles the sanctified relationship between Dante and his muse. Landor's work, some

decades earlier than Christina Rossetti's essay, is more conspicuous in its treatment of the issue. Nevertheless, perhaps to ensure that the piece was not too scathing of Dante's idealised love, his wife is presented as being relatively accepting of Beatrice throughout. Gemma states that she loves Beatrice and, over the head of her sleeping newborn, says that she will call her new daughter Beatrice after her husband's spiritual saviour and muse. It is worth noting that Gemma and Dante did not call any of their children Beatrice (though their daughter Antonia adopted the name Beatrice when she became a nun), so this overly sentimentalised example of wifely acceptance perhaps expresses the striving on Landor's part to retain some of Beatrice's idealised standing. On the other hand, the piece at times disturbs Beatrice's sanctified position, with one section suggesting a tension between Gemma and Beatrice. This tension is made clear in one instance where Dante avoids questions from Gemma about his love for Beatrice, for which she playfully calls him a 'sly evader' (Landor 1848, 233).

Like Rossetti, Landor also undercuts the notion that the ethereal Beatrice is superior to Gemma, shown in a line where Gemma states: 'I am happier than poetry, with all its praise and all its fiction, could render me: let another be glorious, I have been blessed' (Landor 1848, 233). The poetic realm, where Beatrice resides, is described as unhappy, false and hollow in its glory, whereas Gemma sees herself as blessed, in her motherhood and wifehood. In other words, Landor seems to be suggesting that idealised womanhood is somewhat wanting when compared to real womanhood. Though Gemma's preferred state of being still connects with traditional gender discourse, this assertion is an astute destabilisation of the cult of idealised

womanhood on Landor's part. Of course, such an arrangement is very much of a man's making, pitting two women against each other in competition over the love of a man.

Unlike these two works, Landor's 'The Pentameron' has been almost totally ignored, including in the analyses of Victorian Beatrices by Straub and Fraser. The time is right, then, to restore it, as I would argue that this depiction of Beatrice is Landor's most telling in relation to his deployment of Beatrice to critique the 'woman worship' associated with her. The work consists of an imaginary conversation between the famous sonneteer Francesco Petrarca (Petrarch) and the Italian humanist and author of the *Decameron*, Giovanni Boccaccio. It begins with an impassioned speech by Petrarca about the purity and sanctity of Beatrice, which is then challenged by a rather unimpressed Boccaccio, who states: 'I think her in general more of the seraphic doctor than of the seraph. It is well she retained her beauty where she was, or she would scarcely be tolerable now and then' (Landor 1889, 82). Here, Boccaccio suggests that Beatrice's angelic status is overstated, saying that she is more like a teacher of god's word (a seraphic doctor) than one of his angels (a seraph), essentially challenging the popular representation of her as figure of faultless, angelic womanhood. Furthermore, he suggests that it is her beauty that makes her attractive to writers and that without it there would be little else to write about – this from a period when visual images of a beautiful Beatrice, bound up with idealised traits of womanhood, were ubiquitous. The suggestion that she was little more than a pretty face disrupts the whole notion of her importance and her faultlessness, which in turn weakens a popular understanding of Beatrice as

influential avatar of nineteenth-century feminine perfection. Landor's Boccaccio, however, offers an addendum, saying that in other parts of Dante's work one cannot help but 'feel our bosoms refresh by the perfect presence of the youthful and innocent Bice' (Landor 1889, 82). In other words, though Beatrice is not a perfect specimen of womanhood and spirituality, as had been argued by others, one can still revel in the sweetness of her youth and innocence. Though undeniably problematic in its treatment of women, Landor's work does, importantly, have the potential to disrupt the trend of 'woman worship' more broadly. Furthermore, the poem's conspicuous embedding of Beatrice in medieval literary history drives home the author's intent to add weight to his arguments on womanhood by imbuing it with historicity and medieval authority.

The English essayist, critic and poet James Henry Leigh Hunt (Leigh Hunt) built upon the practice of using overlooked elements of Beatrice's history to disrupt notions of feminine idealisation. Unlike Christina Rossetti and Landor, however, Hunt's essay 'Critical Notice of Dante's Life and Genius' from his book *Stories from the Italian Poets with Lives of the Writers* (1846), is undisguised in its disdain for Beatrice and her idolised status. Hunt is one of the few people from the period, along with Christina Rossetti and Landor, who mentions that Beatrice was married to another man. Hunt takes great pride in his iconoclasm, emphasising his break with tradition and criticising Dante's other biographers for adding to what he calls the 'conspiracy' of Beatrice as 'goddess' (Hunt 1846, 3). Like the work of Christina Rossetti and Landor, this assertion disrupts the notion of Beatrice as an icon of feminine perfection, as her marriage challenges her role as virginal maiden. Additionally, by

focusing on the exaggerated adoration for Beatrice that occurs in *La Vita Nuova*, Hunt suggested that it was Dante's romantic nature as a poet and the naivety of youth that led to an unrealistic rendering of Beatrice, saying:

> The natural tendencies of a poetical temperament […] not only made the boy-poet fall in love, in the truly Elysian state of the heart at that innocent and adoring time of life, but made him fancy he had discovered a goddess in the object of his love (Hunt 1846, 3).

Here, Hunt expresses the idea that Beatrice was only 'perfect' in the clouded and flawed judgment of Dante's mind, not in reality. Hunt further discredits the notion of the idealised Beatrice through his reading of a small section of *La Vita Nuova* where Beatrice is said to laugh and scorn Dante for his adoration of her, stating that in making her a 'paragon of perfection' he 'enabled her, by doing so, to shew that she was none' (Hunt 1846, 3). In other words, Beatrice scorned Dante for his adoration of her, and her scorn shows that she was not worthy of his adoration in the first place. This section of *La Vita Nuova* is overwhelmingly ignored in most works of the nineteenth century, or else excuses are provided for her actions[49], but Hunt applies it as an example of Beatrice's imperfection, undermining the popular perception of her as a humble and gracious lady. I do not believe Hunt undertook such a critique of Beatrice to challenge the oppressive idealised womanhood of his era but rather as a way to contribute to a discussion on the invalidity of the concept of perfect

[49] Such as in Emily Underdown's *Dante and Beatrice: A Play Founded on Incidents in Dante's Vita Nuova* (1903) and W.E. Sparkes's 'Dante and Beatrice and Aucassin and Nicolette, Retold from the Old Chronicles' (1913).

womanhood as a whole. Nevertheless, by denigrating women with the argument that they are not worth idealising, he inadvertently acts to query the oppressive structures that sought to constrain woman through worshipping her.

Some twenty years later the revered writer and critic Matthew Arnold published his essay 'Dante and Beatrice' (1865) and advanced a similar argument to Hunt's around the idealisation of Beatrice, discussing what he believed was the severely mismanaged depiction of her by contemporary scholars, but with a decidedly misogynistic bent. This fact is hardly surprising when one considers the fact, as examined by Antony H. Harrison (2009), that Arnold was a 'notorious misogynist', made most plain in his since collated and published private correspondences (published by Russell 1895, Lowry 1932). In regard to Beatrice, Arnold argued that there were two predominant camps of thought on the topic of her character: those 'who allegorise' and 'who exaggerate' her and so 'reduce to nothing the sensible and human element' (Arnold 1865, 445) and those who manipulate her story in order to force it into alignment with contemporary thought on domestic life and love. Both, Arnold argued, ignore the creative genius of Dante and divert focus from the great artistic merit of his works. Actively distancing himself from these interpretations, Arnold stated that these writers were 'misled by imagining this "worship for woman", as they call it' (Arnold 1865, 447), and that they should instead focus on the artistic merits of Dante's work, on the artistic genius of man, not the idealised woman. Arnold, I contend, believed that modern scholars were focusing too much on applying Dante's works to their own time and not enough on the medieval genius of his works.

One could easily argue that Arnold's disdain for 'woman worship' was based on misogynistic impulses and that his contempt for the idealised Beatrice was simply a product of that misogyny. The fact that Arnold formally discredited the deeply conformist activity of 'woman worship' in itself, however, and that he took up the figure of Beatrice to do this, tells of a thorough understanding of subversive ideas about gender discourse. Undoubtedly Arnold's aim was not to help women break free of the shackles of their idealisation, but, like Hunt, Christina Rossetti and Landor, his refusal to acquiesce to total idealisation reveals the complex conversations about the dominant representation of Beatrice and her link to gender discourses that were occurring at the time.

Like these works of literature, visual art was not black and white in its treatment of the idealised Beatrice, with some works containing elements that mitigate the popular hyperbolic vita-Nuovization of her. Most images from the period depict Beatrice as meek and passive[50], frequently rendering her as a beautiful, submissive figure gazing into the corner of the scene or out from the canvas, oftentimes demurely avoiding the eye of the viewer. In such works we are positioned to sympathise with Dante's objectification of her, and this ultimately encourages a one-sided, dominant interaction on the part of the viewer with the Beatrice figure. On the other hand, there are a few images that challenge this passive depiction, most notably three works by Marie Spartali Stillman: 'A Florentine Lily'[51] (1885-90), and

[50] Key examples: Plate 1, 2, 3, 5, 6, 9, 11, 14, 15
[51] Plate 7

'Beatrice'[52] (1895), both examined previously, and another image by Stillman titled 'Dante and Beatrice'[53] (1880). 'A Florentine Lily' (1885-90) disrupts the trope of Beatrice's passivity through the gaze of the figure, which stares ahead proudly, meeting the eye of the viewer with steady appraisal. The posture of the image conveys a rare sense of assertiveness: with her head held high and back straight, she exudes pride and confidence. Spartali Stillman's 'Beatrice' (1895) is more understated in challenging the popular visual trope of passive idealisation, depicting Beatrice staring abstractedly ahead like many other images of her from the period, but in a way (depicting her as holding a book) that suggests that she is in deep thought rather than simply gazing serenely out of the picture. Spartali Stillman's 'Dante and Beatrice'[54] (1880) is also noteworthy, depicting Beatrice engaging in a scene by physically consoling Dante, thereby making her an active character in the narrative rather than a purely aesthetic figure. In a similar vein to Spartali Stillman's 'A Florentine Lily' (1885-90), Dante Gabriel Rossetti also depicts a curiously assertive Beatrice in 'The Salutation of Beatrice' (1880-1882)[55], who stares out of the picture almost alluringly, again undermining the meek and passive image of Beatrice that had pervaded so much of the visual art of the period.

The presence of a number of images depicting Beatrice with a book also demonstrates a fascinating yet subtle disconnection from traditional, idealistic depictions of her. Four images from the period depict Beatrice with a book, three of

[52] Plate 8
[53] Plate 17
[54] Plate 17
[55] Plate 3

which have just been mentioned: Spartali Stillman's 'A Florentine Lily'[56] (1885-90) and 'Beatrice'[57] (1895), D.G. Rossetti's 'The Salutation of Beatrice' (1880-1882) [58], and an as-yet unstudied illustration by Eleanor Fortescue Brickdale[59], which was produced for a section on Beatrice and Dante in her *Golden Book of Famous Women*[60] (1919). It is true that only a small number of these works exist; nevertheless, to depict Beatrice with a book, an item that is deeply symbolically laden with implications of intellect, knowledge and scholarship, would certainly seem to represent a shift in her representation. In many ways, this trend shows a direct movement away from the traditionally idealistic representations of Beatrice in art, which focused on her as beautiful, pure and good but ultimately devoid of substance. Additionally, the costume worn by the Countess of Marr in 1897, discussed earlier in the chapter, also included the prop of a book, an arresting addition to a costume that is highly focused on sexual and spiritual purity. It is telling that these four works and the photograph of the Countess of Marr came towards the end of the nineteenth and beginning of the twentieth century (1880-1882, 1885-90, 1895, 1897, 1919) and suggest a shift, arguably due to the rise in feminist activism and/or the growing focus on the need for better education of women. Prior to this time, there was a surge in groups organising for education reform for girls in the 1850s (as studied by Richardson and Willis 2002), culminating in a growing number of girls' schools in the 1860s (Banks 1986) and the gradual opening up of the university system to women in the 1870s (Banks 1986, Moruzi 2009). Societal change

[56] Plate 7
[57] Plate 8
[58] Plate 3
[59] An artist heavily influenced by the Pre-Raphaelites and sadly understudied by modern scholars.
[60] Plate 18

is reflected in this representation of Beatrice – away from a one-dimensional rendering of her to one that saw her as a wise, learned woman, not just the idealised muse of a wise man.

There is arguably also a medievalist impulse behind the representation of Beatrice with a book. The image of a woman with a book can be mapped back to Marian worship of the Middle Ages in Europe, where the Virgin Mary was often depicted as holding books or scrolls (as examined by Rowell 1983, Ready 2008), intended to symbolise Mary's Annunciation and her devotion to the scriptures. Thus, perhaps the depiction of Beatrice with a book is not as progressive and modern as it first appears, but is rather a way to further link her with an emblem of virginity and morality through the figure of the Virgin Mary. Moreover, it could be another way of bonding Beatrice with the medieval past, through using a well-known pictorial tradition from the Middle Ages.

The diverse interpretative possibilities associated with the image of Beatrice with a book offer an exemplar for the way that she functioned as an idealised woman as a whole, working between and even within individual works as both a symbol of the traditional and a means to break from tradition, as a medieval prototype and nineteenth-century archetype. Moreover, multifaceted use of the Beatrice figure was not only associated with her role as figure of feminine perfection but also coloured renderings of her as a moral and spiritual guide.

Beatrice as moral and spiritual guide

In *La Vita Nuova* (chapters II, VIII and XXVI), the *Commedia* (*Inferno* canto II, *Purgatorio* Canto XXX, and throughout *Paradiso*, culminating in her ascent into heaven in Canto XXI), Beatrice is hyperbolically idealised as an angelic figure that acts as a spiritual and moral guide for the fictional Dante. This role is central to her characterisation and results in her connection with Christ, made obvious when one looks at her role as proselytiser, especially in the *Commedia*, where she literally guides Dante through the Christian afterlife with words of wisdom and religious inspiration. Indeed, throughout the *Commedia*, Virgil (Dante's main guide) continually concedes to the wisdom of Beatrice, deferring to her on topics of faith (*Paradiso* VII 25-120), theology (*Purgatorio* VI, XV, XVIII) and philosophy (*Paradiso* II, IV, VII, XXVII) and positioning her as an omnipotent, almost deified figure:

> When at last you stand in the glow of her sweet ray,
> The one whose splendid eyes see everything,
> From her you will learn your life's itinerary (Inferno X 130-132)

This personalisation of faith, and the linkage of an historical woman with the figure of Jesus Christ, is arguably quite a sacrilegious undertaking (as argued by Bloom 1995, Obermeier 1999, Fumagalli 2001, Rudd 2009). Indeed, Harold Bloom has stated: 'Nothing else in Western literature, in the long span from Yahwist and Homer through to Joyce and Beckett, is as sublimely outrageous as Dante's exultation of Beatrice' (Bloom 1995, 247). In the context of nineteenth-century gender discourse,

however, the rendering of Beatrice as interdenominational moral exemplar was, I submit, not only understood as theologically sound but as a compelling way to uphold dominant values associated with womanhood – namely, the belief that a good woman was the determiner of moral goodness in society.

During the mid-1800s, the notion of 'separate spheres' gained momentum (as argued by Levine 1987, Nead 1988, Parker 1995, DuBois 1998, Sanders 2001, Caine 2006, Yildirim 2012). This ideology argued that that a woman's place was in the home while a man's was in the outside world of economics and politics. Within this ideology, while women were seen as subordinate to men, they were also, in what Barbara Caine calls an 'important contradiction' (2006), positioned as men's leaders when it came to morality and religiosity. The home itself was bound up with these values, in direct opposition to the quickly changing economically driven world outside, which was seen as harsh, competitive and immoral. Of course, with the growing impetus behind laissez-faire capitalism and industrialisation, men's role in the 'immoral' world of business and economics was seen as a necessary evil and a god-given right, as observed by G.R. Searle (2011). Women, as the head of the home, were imbued the values that it epitomised. Ultimately, however, this ideology served as an extension of 'pedestal theory', which sought to subjugate women through celebrating them, as it sought to ensure that women were excluded from politics and the workforce. The ideology was also infused with definitively classist undertones, with women of the middle and upper classes the only ones financially able to strive for the ideal.

It is, however, pertinent to note that the legitimacy of separate spheres ideology is disputed. The validity of the ideology has been contested by many scholars, including Diana Cordea in her article 'Two approaches on the philosophy of separate spheres in mid-Victorian England: John Ruskin and John Stuart Mill' (2013), which calls upon a number of historical case studies to argue that there was "no clear demarcation between the male/public realm and female/private realm" (2013, 1); and Louise Lamphere in her book chapter 'The Domestic Sphere of Women and the public World of Men: The Strengths and Limitations of an Anthropological Dichotomy' (1993), which contends that the binary distinction does not historically hold. Cordea and Lamphere's works criticise those who maintain that separate spheres between men and women were historically put into practice. This is a valid critique but I must stress that my uptake of the concept of the separate spheres ideology is as a purely *prescriptive* not *descriptive* phenomenon, and that I make no claims about practice but rather about idealised fantasy. Monika Elbert (2000) subscribes to an analogous understanding of the ideology, stating that though it is to be queried as an actual historical fact, the ideology of separate spheres still accurately applies to our understanding of nineteenth-century literature (and I would add, to nineteenth-century culture more broadly) of Britain in the nineteenth century. It is this view of the ideology, as an ideal rather than a practice, that is taken up in this thesis.

Key nineteenth-century texts that espouse separate sphere ideology have been thoroughly examined by other scholars, so going into great depth here would be unnecessary. Of the myriad essays, prose and poems written on the topic of

woman's true role and place and the notion of womanly morality, however, none are perhaps as important as Coventry Patmore's poem *The Angel in the House*, first published in 1854 and continuously extended until 1862. The poem, which famously espouses the ideal of the deferential wife and mother who serves as the moral guide for her family was hugely influential, published widely and quoted extensively. As is well known, Patmore's term 'the angel in the house' came to be a signifier in and of itself for the nineteenth-century feminine ideal, and as a concept and a phrase it connects quite seamlessly with popular representations of Beatrice from the time.

A number of literary works from the period upheld the belief in woman as man's conscience directly through the figure of Beatrice. Perhaps the most obvious example of this linkage is John Ruskin's essay 'Of Queen's Gardens', from his essay collection *Sesame and Lilies* (1865). Much like Patmore's 'Angel in the House', 'Of Queen's Gardens' is well known for its alliance with patriarchal ideology, particularly the belief in woman as man's moral compass. Unlike Patmore, however, Ruskin utilised the figure of Beatrice to support these beliefs. The central aim of the essay is to distinguish between the intrinsic, natural strengths (what he calls the 'powers') of men and women. For Ruskin, 'Man's power is active, progressive, defensive' (1865, 90), making him successful in exploration, war and creative pursuits, whereas woman's 'power' is more 'benign', as protector of man against moral danger and temptation. Ruskin takes up the figure of Beatrice, alongside a number of other female literary figures, as an exemplar of a woman who expertly wielded this natural 'power'. He does so by positioning her as spiritual saviour: 'she yet saves him from destruction – saves him from hell' (Ruskin 1865, 84), and as moral guide:

> He is going eternally astray in despair; she comes down from heaven to his help. And throughout the ascents of paradise is his teacher, interpreting for him the most difficult truths, divine and human (Ruskin 1865, 84).

Ultimately, Ruskin's work acknowledges and validates, through Beatrice, the separation of gender roles and the belief in the 'benign', 'guiding power' of women. Furthermore, I do not believe that it was a mere coincidence that Ruskin extends this representation of womanhood back to the medieval, through Beatrice. I maintain rather that this was his way of 'naturalising' nineteenth-century gender roles by suggesting that these values and ideals were reflected and accepted throughout history.

Some twenty years later, in 1862, Scottish poet, writer and translator Theodore Martin published a translation of *La Vita Nuova* that uses Beatrice in a conspicuously similar way. The translation is accompanied by an introduction that discusses the connection of Beatrice with nineteenth-century values, specifically as a moral and spiritual guide to men. According to Straub (2009, 2012) and Hilary Fraser (1992), Martin's connection with Beatrice was shaped solely by a desire to rather abstractly 'domesticate' and 'Victorianise' her, with an aim of reducing her to the realms of the everyday and modern. Martin does indeed associate Beatrice with the modern 'housewife', this is true, most plainly through his association of her with his own wife. I argue, however, not only that the work renders Beatrice as a vaguely 'domestic', 'Victorianised' figure but that it does so to allow her to engage with a

very specific nineteenth-century trope, as theological and moral guide for man. Beatrice's role as guide is outlined in Martin's introductory notes, where he calls Beatrice Dante's 'guiding star' (Martin 1862, viii) and says that she was:

> A perfect woman, whose influence refined and ennobled the poet's heart, filling it with those yearnings after that ideal of beauty and goodness which is the peculiar office of woman to inspire (Martin 1862, vii-viii).

The language employed here mirrors that which was previously used by Patmore and would be used by Ruskin seven years later to investigate the 'peculiar office' of woman, specifically as an authority on morality and spirituality, and her place in the domestic sphere. Such a depiction directly corresponds to the nineteenth-century ideal of woman as moral influencer, an argument that is absent from Straub's and Fraser's scholarship. This qualification is important in that it suggests that Martin's engagement with Beatrice was more informed and strategic than has been previously argued, in that he saw potential in the medieval Beatrice as a means to impart validity to certain conservative values of his time.

Beatrice as spiritual guide to Dante was taken up repeatedly in works of the period, sometimes in the realm of the everyday as an enforcer of nineteenth-century domestic codes of conduct but at times beyond this, working as a non-sectarian purveyor of Christian theological truths and as a Christ-like saviour of immortal souls. Both types are present in Walter Savage Landor's 'Imaginary Conversations' (1824-1846), in his 'Dante and Beatrice' and 'The Pentameron' consecutively. Straub (2009,

2012) and Fraser (1992) have both studied Landor's 'Dante and Beatrice' and, in a similar fashion to their analyses of Martin's *La Vita Nuova* translation, come to the shared conclusion that the work is a Victorianised rendering of domestic conversations and a veneration of strict nineteenth-century middle-class codes of conduct. This assertion is somewhat true, as the work mainly consists of discussions between Beatrice and Dante on appropriate codes of conduct between a married woman and another man. Be that as it may, Landor's work shows a deeper commitment to unpacking nineteenth-century gender discourse than has been previously recognised, specifically in relation to positing woman as Christian guide in these interactions. Thus, during what Fraser and Straub have legitimately described as a Victorianised conversation, it is Beatrice who leads Dante away from lustful temptation and inappropriate conduct, informing him on Christian truths, not just nineteenth-century morality. When he asks to kiss her she replies:

> Dante! Dante! They [kisses] make the heart sad after: do not wish it. But prayers […] O, how much better are they! How much quieter and lighter they render it! They carry it up to heaven with them (Landor 1848, 166).

This section could, as Straub and Fraser have argued, simply be read as a Victorianised reworking of Dante, transplanting the medieval lovers into a Victorian scene of courtship. The work, however, also positions Beatrice as purveyor of Christian truth to the wayward Dante.

A similar outcome, centring on notions of the moral role of Beatrice, occurs in Landor's 'The Pentameron'. In the work, Boccaccio and Petrarca are set in direct opposition to one another in their views on Beatrice. According to Boccaccio, Beatrice's saintliness is entirely overstated, but Petrarca – unquestionably chosen to argue this side because of his direct inheritance of Dante's use of Beatrice with his own muse, Laura – effusively celebrates her as angelic guide. Petrarca states at one point that 'if Dante enthroned his Beatrice in the highest heaven, it was Beatrice who conducted him thither' (Landor 1888, 96), thereby submitting that it was the moral influence of Beatrice that led Dante to his spiritual salvation. This statement exemplifies exaggerated nineteenth-century gender roles and reaches beyond the domestic, grounded in a quest to understand the true nature and role of women.

In keeping with my examination of men of the period who used this ideological discourse, I take up here an image by the venerated Scottish artist William Dyce, one of very few pictorial examples from the period created by a male artist to depict Beatrice as Dante's angelic guide. There are, of course, a number of works that connect Beatrice with the spiritual realm[62], which utilise symbolism of angels, halos and celestial light to highlight the religious, spiritual elements of Beatrice's story. But the visual depiction of Beatrice as guide, which was an important part of Dante's works and of Beatrice's connection with contemporary idealised womanhood, was quite rare. The rarity of this subject matter for artworks of the time is fairly surprising when one considers the centrality of this mode of Beatrice's characterisation in literature. But indeed, as has been examined earlier in the chapter, most artists were interested in her as a figure of aesthetic beauty and

[62] Plate 3, 4, 13, 21, 22, 23, 23, 27

idealised womanhood, which was extraneous to her role as moral and spiritual guide. Such a depiction provides a fascinating perspective on what was popular in visual art as opposed to literature from the time.

Incomplete and undated, a work titled 'Dante and Beatrice'[63] (1806-1864) by Dyce, who also painted 'Beatrice'[64] (1859), examined previously, depicts Beatrice in her role as Dante's guide. In the work, an angelic Beatrice leads Dante by the hand, her other arm outstretched and eyes staring upwards as they ascend through clouds. Dyce's image is a manifest rendering of Beatrice as angelic guide for Dante and links her perfectly with established views on the role of women in society as authorities of goodness. The image is arresting, even in its incomplete form, and the effectiveness of the artistic subject matter makes it strange that this was so underexplored in the art of the time. The fusing of the medieval and the classical was not uncommon in works by pre-Raphaelites, and the almost classical style of dress worn by Beatrice, in comparison to the medievalist robes of Dante, suggests that Dyce was seeking to universalise Beatrice's role in Dante's spiritual enlightenment, removing her even from her medievalist roots to make her representative of 'natural,' normalised femininity.

Following on from this examination of male artists and writers of the period, there were also a number of women who actively connected Beatrice with the contemporary conception of the 'moral woman' in their work, demonstrating the acceptance and veneration of this ideology by women as well as men of the era.

[63] Plate 19
[64] Plate 6

However, these women widened the scope of the trope of Beatrice as guide and of her connection with the contemporary mode of woman as expert on morality/spirituality. They did this by striving beyond the domestic. In other words, female authors seemed to take what Ruskin deemed the 'benign' 'guiding power' afforded them by the strict gendered discourses of the time and stretched it into a more active and powerful role.

The best known of these women is Christina Rossetti, whose essay 'Dante the Poet Illustrated out of the Poem' (1884), presents instances of conforming to this gendered ideology while simultaneously testing its limits. A deeply religious Roman Catholic, Rossetti wrote several widely read books of religious commentary, including works published by the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, such as: *The Face of the Deep* (1893); *Seek and Find: A Double Series of Short Studies of the Benedicite* (1879); *Called to be Saints: The Minor Festivals Devotionally Studied* (1881); *Time Flies: A Reading Diary* (1902); and many others based on theological exegesis. According to Harrison (1990), a number of these works functioned as celebrations of woman's role as moral guide, and her essay on Dante is no exception. The essay's analysis of Beatrice begins with a discussion of her allegorical and historical nature and concludes that she was unquestionably a historical figure and not simply an invention by Dante. Additionally, and as has similarly been argued by Mary Arseneau (1999), Christina Rossetti was willing to accept some of the symbolic function of the figure of Beatrice too, specifically when it came to understanding her as a 'shaping influence' for Dante. As such, her discussion of Beatrice as Dante's guide reads thus:

> Either she literally, or else that occult something which her name was employed at once to express and to veil, must apparently have gone far to mould her lover; to make him what he was, to withhold him from becoming such as he became not (Rossetti 1884, 571).

Christina Rossetti goes on to discuss 'the ennobling influence of her presence' (Rossetti 1884, 571) over Dante. This goes beyond the popular use of this trope and instead positions Beatrice as a powerful factor in his art and his salvation, breaking free from what was, in many ways, the constraining affiliation of women with the home, to something much broader and more impressive. For Christina Rossetti, Beatrice was connected as much with Christ and his redemptive and saving powers as with the benign power of woman.

A similar argument is made by Maria Rossetti, little-known writer and older sister to Christina and Dante Gabriel, who also published a work on Dante, an essay entitled 'A Shadow of Dante, Being an Essay towards Studying Himself, his World and his Pilgrimage', in 1871. The essay is profoundly religious, a direct reflection of the nature of the author herself, who like her sister was a devout Roman Catholic. It focuses predominantly on the theological value of Dante's works. Overall, there is scant mention of Beatrice but what little is said about her centres on the moral and spiritual role that she played. Maria calls Beatrice an 'embodiment of Divine Science' (Rossetti 1871, 42) and advocate of god. She also, singularly, assigns her the powerful role of 'suggester of the whole threefold pilgrimage' (Rossetti 1871, 42),

positioning her, like none of her contemporaries, as the impetus behind Dante's spiritual journey in the *Commedia.*

In an intriguing exchange between advocates of Beatrice as spiritual guide, John Ruskin wrote a critique of Maria Rossetti's essay. He was scathingly dismissive of the work, calling it 'evangelical nonsense' in a letter written to a friend in 1877, transcribed in part by Alison Milbank (1998). Straub has argued that this disparagement of Rossetti's work is based solely on Ruskin's belief that 'as a "girl" she was not equipped to write about Dante' (2009, 51). This is certainly a plausible reading and it far outweighs an argument for his criticism being based on sectarian differences, as at this time in Ruskin's life (in the 1870s) he had been living in Italy and had become more sympathetic to Catholicism, having renounced his Calvinist Evangelical upbringing (as examined by Wheeler 1999, Birch 2006). Thus, this assertion seems to be a demonstration of Ruskin's and many other conservatives' contempt for female critics in the public sphere. I wish, however, to extend upon Straub's assertion and observe that it is telling that Ruskin, as a man who venerated woman as the arbiter of moral and spiritual goodness, disparaged a woman for following exactly that script by writing a religious book. This disparity reveals the limitations of Ruskin's arguments on womanhood, and perhaps even the limitations of the established gender ideologies of the time, which at once positioned woman as moral guide but vilified her for being involved in this role from an intellectual standpoint. This work serves is a prime example of the intent to constrain women through female veneration, and shows the delicate line that existed between adhering to the discourse and being seen as undermining it.

In the marginalia of copies of Maria Rossetti's essay on Dante, Straub found another interplay between authors who studied Beatrice. In both her own presentation copy and her mother's, Christina Rossetti annotated and drew images to accompany her sister's words. Both sets of marginal commentary, now in the possession of a descendant of the Rossettis, contain, according to Straub, 'close textual readings and a Christian and biblical emphasis' (Straub 2009, 31). In Christina Rossetti's presentation copy, there is a sketch[65] by Christina that sits next to the introduction to chapter three, depicting Dante in black garb, being led by the hand by a white-robed Beatrice as she ascends into heaven, surrounded by a shaded orb symbolising celestial light. The image is very similar in composition to William Dyce's work[66], and is a pictorial depiction of both Christina's and Maria's understandings of Beatrice as spiritual guide to Dante. It displays the association between that belief and the popular view held at the time about the powerful, spiritual responsibility of women.

Oscillating between representing the domestic 'benign' influence of women and Beatrice's powerful role as Christian guide are two works by Emily Underdown (1863–1947). Underdown was a writer, novelist, illustrator and poet, best known for her works of medievalism for children, which focused on King Arthur and Chaucer. She published several works on Dante under the pseudonym Norley Chester, none of which have received significant scholarly attention. Two of these, her children's book titled *Stories from Dante* (1898) and her book of poetry *Dante's Vignettes* (1895), contain representations of Beatrice as Dante's guide. In *Stories from Dante*,

[65] Plate 20
[66] Plate 19

Underdown indicates at the outset that her re-working of Dante is undertaken to draw out 'those spiritual truths underlying Dante's great poem' (Chester 1898, i) in ways that can be easily understood by children. Thus, at the outset, her book is positioned as a medievalist instrument for modern moral instruction, set firmly within the accepted realm of feminine influence over children. A significant aim of the book's moral exegesis is to focus on Beatrice as an authority on goodness and morality, as expressed in the line: 'She became the ruling influence of his life; and it was for her sake that he strove to be good and noble, and to do great things' (Chester 1898, 7). By calling attention to Beatrice as a 'ruling influence' in regard to nobility, goodness and greatness, this line connects the figure of Beatrice to the values espoused in the nineteenth-century ideal of guiding femininity. In another instance, which seems to directly reference Theodore Martin's description thirty years earlier in which he called Beatrice a 'guiding star', Underdown calls Beatrice Dante's 'guiding star from heaven' (Chester 1898, 57), providing a succinct and compelling linkage of Beatrice with the role of religious guide.

There is, additionally, an illustration accompanying Underdown's musings on Beatrice that highlights this focus on Beatrice as Dante's religious escort. I would suggest that this illustration was also the work of the author, even though it and the other illustrations from the book are not credited, as she is known to have illustrated several of her books. The illustration[67] shows Dante looking upwards, hands clenched in awe and supplication, into the clouds. In the clouds, a haloed Beatrice stands serenely, just outside the orbit of heavenly beings, spatially linking Dante to

[67] Plate 21

the realm of god. The work displays a central feature of Underdown's text as a whole – Beatrice's benign, guiding religious power over Dante. Underdown's own stated intent as set out in her introduction – to provide 'spiritual truths' from Dante to young readers– adds a certain historical weight to her correlation of Beatrice with these values for women.

Conversely, Underdown's poem entitled 'Beatrice's Love', from *Dante's Vignettes*, presents an understanding of Beatrice as guide that is not as obviously linked to contemporary, domestic views on women and is far more interested in emphasising the powerful theological spirit of Beatrice. The piece, perhaps predominantly due to its mode as poem rather than prose, is more coded in its message than *Stories from Dante* and the works of other prose writers of the time. It situates Beatrice as metaphorical guiding light to Dante as he wanders through the dim and frightening expanse of 'hell':

> Oh! Happy he, for whom in his distress,
> When lights burn low, and paths all lead astray,
> One pitying heart with tears his lot will bless,
> One angel presence for his guidance pray;
> Who in life's darkest hour shall yet possess
> One watchful love his downward course to stay (Chester 1895, 6).

Like Dante's *Commedia,* the spatialised journey through hell that Underdown relays in her poem is representative of an allegorical journey from sin to spiritual

enlightenment. The positioning of Beatrice as guiding light through hell is thus Underdown's way of venerating her spiritual force. Furthermore, the abstract language used in the poem universalises the plight of Dante and conveys the ubiquity of the poem's message: that it is only through the guidance of a woman that man is able to survive spiritually. While the poem isn't 'Victorianised' or as explicitly linked to nineteenth-century gender discourse as other works of the period, the outcome, of making the medieval Beatrice a conformist, aspirational symbol of womanhood for modern women, remains the same, though much more overstated in its power than was usually allowed.

Extending upon this vision of Beatrice as an autonomous figure is the poem 'Beatrice to Dante' by Dinah Mulock-Craik, from her collection *Mulock's Poems New and Old* (1883), which eclipses the coy representations of woman's moral and spiritual influence over men, adopting instead a more unambiguous, active rendering.

Though relatively little-known today and completely unexamined in relation to her treatment of Beatrice, Mulock-Craik was a popular and prolific writer of the mid-nineteenth century in Britain, publishing more than forty works over a forty-year span, including non-fiction writing for women, poetry and children's literature (Showalter 1975, Mitchell 1983, Moore 2013). A broad examination of Mulock-Craik's works reveals decidedly conservative rhetoric, with one of her essays 'Women's Thoughts about Women' (1858) arguing that 'equality of the sexes is not in the nature of things. Man and woman were made for, and not like one another' (Craik 1858, 6), and that 'woman's proper place is home' (Craik 1858, 221). In many

ways, the conservatism of her works led to her neglect by the feminist scholars who worked to recover nineteenth-century women's writing in the late twentieth century.[68] None the less, Mulock-Craik's works do display some intersections with progressive debates on issues of gender equality, though in a very circumspect way. Indeed, throughout her essays and fiction works she advocated for women to be, to a certain degree, financially independent, and stressed the positive influence of work on women (when in 'appropriate' employment as children's teachers, painters, writers or musicians). Thus, like many other female writers of nineteenth-century Britain, Mulock-Craik did not engage with the Woman Question in an 'all or nothing' way; instead, her arguments display gradations of views and at times even contradiction.

It is unsurprising that her poem 'Beatrice to Dante' contains some instances that connect perfectly with the image of the domesticated, passive woman as moral guide to man. In it Beatrice calls herself 'thine angel, who forgets her crown star-woven/To come to thee with folded woman hands' (Craik 1883, 79), leading Dante to heaven. Yet, it simultaneously challenges this benign discourse; this is shown most conspicuously in the way the poem is written from the perspective of Beatrice, an incredibly rare structural decision, which gives autonomy and depth to a character that was consistently silent in the literature of the time. Furthermore, the poem starts with an invocation spoken by Beatrice to Dante: 'Guardami ben. Ben son, ben

[68] Elaine Showlater's 1975 article 'Dinah Mulock Craik and the Tactics of Sentiment: A Case Study in Victorian Female Authorship' and Sally Mitchell's 1983 book *Dinah Mulock Craik* are the only in-depth studies on Mulock-Craik until a slight surge in interest from 2011 onwards.

son' (Craik 1883, 79).[69] This is a misquotation from Canto XXX of *Purgatorio*, which reads 'Guardaci ben! Ben son, ben son Beatrice' (XXX 73) and which translates as 'Look here! For I am Beatrice, I am' (Mandelbaum and Alighieri 1982, 268) or 'Look well, I am indeed Beatrice' (Singleton and Alighieri 1977, 745). The commandment to Dante to 'Regard me well' or 'Look at me' (Craik 1883, 79) is repeated throughout the poem and interspersed with Beatrice speaking of her role as spiritual compass for Dante, as his 'eternal dove' sent to 'flutter back and point thee to thy rest' (Craik 1883, 79). This depiction drives home Beatrice's moral superiority and authority over Dante.

Together, these factors unite to create a poem that upholds dominant and traditional views on appropriate womanly roles, while at the same time affording women more sovereignty within the confines of those roles by giving them an authoritative voice. In many ways, Mulock-Craik's poem, which comes towards the end of the nineteenth century, displays a natural progression in the view of woman as guiding figure, showing a woman working within the confines of her assigned role but taking it to its ultimate conclusion. The poem rather radically postulates that woman's power over man's moral and spiritual wellbeing need not be tentative or reserved, but rather active and assertive.

The works of visual art and literature that focus on Beatrice as guide run the gamut from unreservedly conservative to somewhat progressive in their engagement with the guiding role of women, and together they provide a cross-section of the

[69] Which in a footnote Mulock-Craik states she has borrowed from a motto attached to a statue of Beatrice.

interplay of medievalism and this important aspect of the gender debate. These visual and literary texts utilise the medievalism of Beatrice so as to bestow authenticity, prestige and ubiquity to the concept of woman's benign power over men. Despite this fact, many of these works focus on the *presentism* of the Beatrice character over her medievalism. Such a choice, though, is understandable when one considers the fact that the representation of women as moral and spiritual guide to men is irrevocably of the nineteenth century.

Beatrice as muse

Closely connected with this depiction of Beatrice as guide to Dante was her role as Dante's muse. Centrally, the roles of guide and muse widely and inextricably link Beatrice with British gendered ideas of the nineteenth century, and both position her as having benign influence over men.

The concept of the muse dates back to classical Greek and Roman mythology, in which muses were essentially the goddesses of man's creativity and inspiration. That being said, in Western art and literature over time the muse became a more secular figure, a beloved woman or a personification of femininity that served as the catalyst for creative innovation or inspiration in man (as studied by Heninger 1989, Miller 1989, Carroll 2014). The postclassical notion of the muse positions the focalised female as a passive object to be used as a conduit for man's artistic genius, concentrating on male advancement at the cost of female erasure. Beatrice is a key

example of this kind of muse in the Western canon, conduit as she was for Dante Alighieri's poetic pursuits.

This focus on Beatrice as muse was, I assert, represented in the visual art of the period in a rather discreet way through the common depiction of laurel and/or bay leaves – traditionally conflated in art and literature and so symbolically bound together. As stated previously, the Victorians were fascinated with what was commonly called 'the language of flowers' and in many books this fascination extended to the symbolism of the laurel and bay (as in Kent 1823, Tyas 1842, Shoberl 1848, Ingram 1869, Greenway 1901). In these books, laurel and bay leaves are placed in a long historical context, from the Classical to the contemporary, and are said to be associated with divine and creative inspiration, with poetic and artistic fame, and with the ancient muses.

The second panel of Dante Gabriel Rossetti's 'The Salutation of Beatrice'[70] (1859-1863) and two duplications of this panel completed by Rossetti titled 'The Salutation of Beatrice' [71] (1864) and 'The Meeting of Dante and Beatrice in Paradise'[72] (1853-1854), plus two works by William Dyce, 'Beatrice'[73] (1859) and 'Dante and Beatrice'[74] (1806-1864), depict Beatrice as crowned with laurel/bay leaves. Burne-Jones's 'Beatrice'[75] (1879) depicts her holding a laurel/bay branch in her hand, while Dante

[70] Plate 11
[71] Plate 22
[72] Plate 23
[73] Plate 6
[74] Plate 19
[75] Plate 5

Gabriel Rossetti's 'The Salutation of Beatrice'[76] (1869) sets her against the backdrop of a laurel tree. These images add up to a popular, if rather subtle, pictorial rendering of Beatrice as muse. Importantly, this rendering reaches from the classical through the medieval to the contemporary and so it connects Beatrice with both old conceptions of the muse and new, allowing for her to be filled with historical weight.

In comparison to the rather understated representation of Beatrice as muse in the visual arts, literature of the period portrays Beatrice in this role more explicitly. Alongside his depiction of Beatrice as Dante's guide, Martin outlined Beatrice's role as muse in his translation of *La Vita Nuova* (1862). According to Martin, it was Beatrice who had the power of 'kindling and sustaining within him [Dante] that ambition to consecrate his genius to her honour' (Martin 1862, viii). Martin further suggests that her role as muse incited Dante not only to become a poet but to become one of great skill and renown, stating 'through her he was incited to rise above the common herd' (Martin 1862, viii). Thus, the 'power' of Beatrice, despite her being effectively silent and inactive, is perceived by Martin to be a defining factor in the creative genius of Dante.

A similar argument is present in W.E. Sparkes's *Vita Nuova* in *Dante and Beatrice and Aucassin and Nicolette: Retold from the Old Chronicles* (1913), which, like Martin, positions Beatrice as a mystical object of creative influence but adds a strange, almost contradictory twist by ensuring that the reader knows that Beatrice was in fact an historical woman. In the introductory notes, Sparkes states: 'Beatrice comes

[76] Plate 2

into Dante's life almost as a vision giving rise to dreams' (Sparkes 1913, i), thereby assigning an otherworldly quality to her. This depiction silences and confines Beatrice to the status of object, existing only to serve the artistic and creative needs of Dante. Despite this, Sparkes also submits that he, unlike some of his contemporaries and predecessors, did not believe that Beatrice was 'merely a symbol of the Divine Wisdom' but rather that Dante's *La Vita Nuova* 'deals with a real, living woman' (Sparkes 1913, i). Thus, there is an inherent conflict in Sparkes's work, which at once sees Beatrice as supernatural figure of divine creative inspiration and as an historical figure who actually interacted with Dante. Though complicated by this paradox, the work, in the introduction and throughout, presents Beatrice in the same vein as Martin, as above all a figure of creative inspiration. Similarly, Emily Underdown's children's book *Stories from Dante* (1898) assigns to Beatrice the role of Dante's muse, using simplistic language, reflecting its intended junior audience, to state that 'it was through her that he became a poet' (1898, 8). The simplicity and resoluteness of this statement serves to position Beatrice's role as muse as centrally important, relegating her historicity and idealisation to the background while promoting to the fore her worth as inspiration to man.

Furthermore, the simultaneous examination in both Martin's and Underdown's work of Beatrice as muse and as guide suggests a correlation between the two for nineteenth-century writers. It implies a connection in the belief that woman's true role was as silent and passive yet influencing figures for men and as objects to be used by men for creative and spiritual gain.

Quite unlike her *Stories from Dante* and entirely unstudied in modern scholarship, Underdown's play *Dante and Beatrice: A Play Founded on Incidents in Dante's Vita Nuova* (1903), a work published under her own name, goes into greater depth and analysis about the nature of the muse and the role of Beatrice in the artistic development of Dante. Unlike most works of the period, the costumes and settings in Underdown's play are decidedly medievalised and the language is archaised (use of 'thy', 'thee,' 'thou' and 'wilt' abound), thus she uses the aesthetically medieval as a means to add historical authenticity and, as such, credibility to the arguments she advances.

The central focus of the work is the tension between love and creative genius, and Beatrice as Dante's lover and his muse is positioned at the epicentre of this tension. The play suggests that creative genius is fed by love but that it must be an unrequited love or else the (implicitly male) genius is compromised. The play centres on the characters of Dante, Beatrice and a number of Beatrice's friends, but it also includes the allegorical figure of 'love', described in the Dramatis Personae as 'a symbolical figure who appears to Dante in visions' (Underdown 1903, vii). Love insists that Dante must remain unrequited in his love for Beatrice, claiming that it is only through loving her from afar that he will be rewarded with greater gifts, most significantly that of creative genius:

> Love: […] [Holds out laurel wreath to Dante, who sinks on his knees] The poet's laurel, Dante, is for thee if thou wilt follow where I lead before, *speak what I breathe and what I bid set down, the sweet new style* is thine, oh

> favoured son! And genius beckons thee whom Love awaits. For thee it is decreed to mount the stars, for thee by paths of bitter pain and woe to reach those heights undreamt by ecstasy, and taste the banquet of thy soul's desire (Underdown 1903, 4-5).

Dante accepts Love's command and Love's symbolic offering of laurel leaves and goes on to write works of great genius. Beatrice readily accepts her role as Dante's muse and proclaims her pleasure and honour in being 'used to such a great result' (Underdown 1903, 32), willingly reifying herself as something to be 'used' by male artists for the sake of their creative enhancement. Beatrice even goes so far as to state that she would gladly die if her role as deceased woman would assist in Dante's creative endeavours:

> […] gladly I too would die. Perchance on earth his love might sink to earth, while veiled by death I still could be a star to guide his spirit upward through the night, the while my soul freed from these earthly bonds might whisper to him from that world above of which we dream how vaguely here below. Then welcome, death, gladly, and bear me to that sphere where I may guard untarnished his ideal, and love and wait and watch, until he come (Underdown 1903, 32-33).

Beatrice's extreme self-sacrifice for the sake of male creativity is the consummate example of pedestal theory in practice. Furthermore, it reinforces and celebrates,

the idea that women should be valued as 'objects' and artistic 'subjects' and that such a role should be aspirational for women.

This aspect of Underdown's play, with its musings on death, brings us neatly to another aspect of 'the muse' in the nineteenth century, and particularly of Beatrice as muse: the notion of the 'morbid muse'. According to Elizabeth Bronfen (1990, 1992), one of the 'central motors' of Western literature is a fascination with a deceased or 'absent' female beloved and this fascination, according to Bronfen, is based on three factors: 'The absence of a natural body as prerequisite for its symbolic representation, the privileging of the mitigated and vicarious over the direct and immediate, and the preference for the presentation of a rhetorical figure over the presence of a natural body' (Bronfen 1990, 256). This concept would seem to extend readily to the interaction between artist and muse – the passive and detached woman who, through her very passivity, is easily *used* and *shaped* by a male artist for his creative gain. In nineteenth-century Britain, as has been touched upon by Julia Straub (2009), the association of Beatrice with the role of 'morbid muse' became prevalent and showed an intertwining of the popularity of Beatrice with a broader contemporary fascination with dead, passive women[77].

The best-known nineteenth-century figure to work with this discourse is indisputably Dante Gabriel Rossetti, a fact that has been observed by a number of literary and art historians (specifically Cherry and Pollock 1984, Marsh 1987, Bronfen 1992, Straub

[77] As a side note, the popular visual association of Beatrice with the lily (present in plates 3, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, and 11), though not linked to her role as muse, played into the depiction of her as a morbid figure, as the flower was often associated with death and mourning in books on the symbolism of flowers.

2009, Straub 2012), particularly in relation to Rossetti's linkage of Beatrice with his own wife and muse, Elizabeth Siddal. Although Siddal is now increasingly recognised as a poet and painter in her own right, she is still best known for her work as a model for Rossetti and his fellow Pre-Raphaelites. As such, the co-opted figure of Siddal, the silent and beautiful figure of pre-Raphaelite art, became what Cherry and Pollock call 'a cipher for masculine creativity' (Cherry and Pollock 1984, 207).

Siddal's 'morbidity' as Rossetti's muse was heavily influenced by Siddal's own character. She was, for many years, physically and emotionally fragile, culminating in her committing suicide in 1862 at the age of thirty-three. Rossetti romanticised the delicate and melancholic nature of Siddal, emphasising these characteristics to the point that in his works she became the epitome of what Bronfen calls the 'beautiful figure of *melancholia*, of feminine beauty signed by death, in the liminality between life and death' (1992, 170). There has been a tendency in scholarship old and new and in the biographical anecdotes of the time to position Siddal as a reincarnation of Dante Alighieri's deceased love and to emphasise the similarities in the artistic, romantic and morbid realities of both. The most commonly discussed example of Rossetti's tendency to create parallels between Siddal and Beatrice is his painting 'Beata Beatrix'[78] (1864-1870), which has been studied by a number of modern scholars (namely, Cherry and Pollock 1984, Marsh 1987, Cherry 1993, Straub 2009) and by Dante Gabriel's Rossetti's own brother William Michael Rossetti in his biographical work 'Dante Gabriel Rossetti: His Family-Letters with a Memoir' (1895).

[78] Plate 4

‘Beata Beatrix’ is inextricably connected with the morbid figure of Beatrice. It portrays Beatrice within the liminal space between life and death, head thrown back, eyes closed and hands clasped in spiritual ecstasy. The work includes a number of visual symbols of morbidity, examined in depth by Jan Marsh (1987), such as the symbolic messenger of death in the form of a bird; the poppy as a potent symbol of mourning; the lady who holds a flickering flame of life in her hands; and the sundial which points at Beatrice as if declaring that her time is running out. Alongside this representation of the morbid subject matter of Beatrice’s death, the image also implicitly alludes to Rossetti’s muse, Siddal. It was discovered by Straub that the painting mirrors, quite strikingly, one of the only photographs of Siddal in existence, an image titled ‘Elizabeth Siddal’[79] (Rossetti 1860), which Rossetti drew over in ink. That Rossetti created ‘Beata Beatrix’ in 1864-1870 (after his wife’s death in 1862) and that the work borrows so heavily from a photograph of Siddall from 1860 indicates a link for Rossetti between his own dead muse and Dante’s.

Although most scholars claim that ‘Beata Beatrix’ is the only example of Rossetti’s fascination with Dante’s morbid muse and his own. I wish to argue that there are other instances in Rossetti’s oeuvre that have not received attention. These works are ‘Dante Drawing an Angel’[80] (1853) and ‘The First Anniversary of the Death of Beatrice’[81] (1849). Both works show Dante in mourning, being soothed by his friends as he works at his desk and stares at an image of Beatrice as an angel. The most fascinating and telling aspect of these images, as expressions of the notion of the

[79] Plate 24
[80] Plate 25
[81] Plate 26

morbid muse, is that they show Dante in the creative process of rendering Beatrice but neither image contains any visual representation of her. These are telling examples of the muse/genius interaction, whereby Rossetti and Dante (as the artists of, and within, the pieces) are the focus, while the inspiration for that genius is absent. This rendering epitomises the notion of the morbid muse: the dead woman a virtual presence only, and her absence advancing male creativity.

Despite the critical tendency to treat the 'morbid Beatrice' as a theme specific to Rossetti, there is evidence that it was also taken up by others. Returning to Emily Underdown and her play *Dante and Beatrice* (1903), there are a number of instances in the work that display a fascination with Beatrice as dead muse. The play in fact ends with Dante's exultation of Beatrice as angelic muse, saying:

> I see her spirit in a mystic Rose far off, far off amid the heavenly spheres. She beckons me. She bids me still pursue. Now help me, Heaven, to my holy task. I see and hear beyond this mortal screen; a voice there is which bids me write of her such things as ne'er of one were penned before (Underdown 1903, 41).

This soliloquy is followed by a tableau, which is said to represent 'Dante's vision of the glorified Beatrice' (Underdown 1903), portraying the nature of her role as muse: silent, passive and remote. The play also includes a tableau of a recently deceased

Beatrice in her deathbed which mirrors exactly Dante Gabriel Rossetti's 'Dante's Dream'[82] (1880). In the scene, the directions state:

> Beatrice lies on a couch […] her hands are crossed on her breast and her hair flowing [sic] loosely around her. Two ladies, one at the head of the couch and one at the foot, hold between them a white veil filled with hawthorn blossom, which they are about the place over her (Underdown 1903, 34).

'Love' is also directed to hold an apple blossom, like the angelic figure of Rossetti's work, and poppies are strewn on the stage. Such an inclusion is almost certainly a direct reference to Rossetti's work and displays the lines of influence between artists who focused on Beatrice as a morbid figure and muse.

Furthermore, in his translation of *La Vita Nuova* (1862), Theodore Martin also alludes, if only briefly, to Beatrice's role as morbid muse, stating that 'the love of Dante's is calm, resigned submission; death sanctifies it instead of converting it to remorse' (Martin 1862, li). In other words, Martin believed that Dante's outpourings of love for Beatrice were elevated to the realm of genius by the consecration of her death. Again, the notion of the artistic need for unrequited love and death's agency in bringing this state about are celebrated here, alongside the veneration of the silent passive female figure who is the impetus for artistic genius.

[82] Plate 27

Matthew Arnold also briefly examines Beatrice as morbid muse in his essay 'Dante and Beatrice' (1865). Here, speaking of both Dante's separation from Beatrice in her life and in her death, Arnold claims: 'Art requires a basis of fact, but it also desires to treat this basis of fact with the utmost freedom; and this desire for the freest handling of its object is even thwarted when its object is too near, and too real' (Arnold 1865, 447). Thus, he argues that it is through a silencing separation from reality, in Beatrice's case brought about by her early death, that a woman best functions as a conduit for masculine creativity. Again, this assigns worth to the notion of silence and passivity in women.

In direct opposition to these popular depictions of Beatrice that sought to celebrate her role as muse (morbid or otherwise), there are two works, both by women, which disrupt this notion. The first is Christina Rossetti's sonnet sequence *Monna Innominata*. Whereas Christina Rossetti's other depictions of Beatrice rest, as we have seen, on established and traditional gender assumptions, in *Monna Innominata*, first published in 1881, she examines Beatrice in a decidedly unconventional way. In the introductory notes to the sonnet sequence, Christina challenges the poetic tradition that merges woman with the role of muse, which had been exalted by so many who took up the figure of Beatrice. Focusing specifically on the figure of Beatrice, as well as Petrarch's Laura, Christina Rossetti states the poets' muses have 'paid the exceptional penalty of exceptional honour, and have come down to us resplendent with charms, but (at least, to my apprehension) scant of attractiveness' (Rossetti, 227). In other words, Rossetti argues that throughout art history women have been consistently shaped and moulded by male artists into

figures of fancy, resulting in a surplus of charming women in art but a lack of 'attractive' women – that is, women who are tangible, real and interesting. The choice to mention two medieval female figures is not, I believe, accidental and could be read as Rossetti's critique of the overreliance of her male contemporaries on the Middle Ages and their overidentification with medieval laureates. Interestingly, she had taken up a similar argument some years earlier in her poem 'In an Artist's Studio', published posthumously but written in 1856, which depicts the artist as vampiric devourer of his female muse, saying 'He feeds upon her face by day and night' (Rossetti, 71) and stating repeatedly that he depicts her not as she is, but as he wants her to be.

In *Monna Innominata*, Christina Rossetti goes on to suggest that perhaps, if given the chance, these women could have produced works of art that were, if not equal, then at least complementary to the work of their male counterparts, with the potential to fill a void left in the literature: 'Had such a lady spoken for herself, the portrait left us might have appeared more tender, if less dignified, than any drawn even by a devoted friend' (Rossetti, 227). Thus, Christina Rossetti suggests that the muse/artist dichotomy is not only a burden to women's creative pursuits but also a hindrance to the creative potential of humanity. Following her introduction to the text there are fourteen sonnets, all on the theme of equality between lovers and all beginning with an epigraph with lines taken from Dante or Petrarch. Rossetti's evocation of Beatrice here, reinforced by the message of equality in the sonnets, suggests that she was working to challenge the dominant masculinist medievalism associated with Beatrice as a muse.

In a similar though less critical and much subtler way than Christina Rossetti's *Monna Innominata*, Dinah Mulock-Craik's poem 'Dante to Beatrice' (1883) (a response poem to her poem 'Beatrice to Dante') (1883) challenges a number of popular conceptions of Beatrice as muse. The poem begins by situating Beatrice as morbid muse: Dante cries, 'Oh Beatrice, cypresses enlace/My laurels' (Craik 1883, 80), enshrining Beatrice's death within his artistic endeavours by entwining the cypress, as a symbol of mourning, with his artist's laurels. Although this image appears to adhere to popular depictions of Beatrice, the overall intent is subtly shifted away, presenting a more cognizant look at the interaction between muse and artist. Instead of positioning Beatrice as a passive, inactive symbol of Dante's genius, Mulock-Craik has Dante thank Beatrice and devote to her the trappings of his glory: 'Take it! At thy dear feet I lay my all/What men my honours, virtues, glories, call' (Craik 1883, 80). By sharing in the fruits born of their love-story, Beatrice becomes Dante's partner and collaborator, not just a passive stimulus that feeds his genius. Additionally, the poem shifts the nexus of creative power, positioning Beatrice not simply as a catalyst for his work but as its intended audience and critic: 'I lived, loved, suffered, sung – for thy sole praise' (Craik 1883, 80). In other words, he created his works about Beatrice not to garner praise from other men but from her, which challenges her popular role as passive, silent figure.

These poems by Mulock-Craik and Christina Rossetti function, importantly, to challenge the status quo in regard to Beatrice as a symbol of masculinist values, in relation to both gender and creativity. Read alongside other visual and literary

explorations of this facet of Beatrice's characterisation, these poems speak not just to the complexity of debates on gender at this time in British history, but also to the way in which the Middle Ages were instrumentalised to buttress varying positions within these debates.

Concluding thoughts

The intent of this chapter is to show how deeply ingrained Dante Alighieri's Beatrice truly was in the cultural imagination of nineteenth-century Britain and how her portrayals were popularly utilised within that culture in relation to conformist, traditionalist conceptions of gender. As muse, moral guide and idealised figure, the medieval Beatrice overwhelmingly functioned in art and literature of the nineteenth century as a symbol of popular contemporary notions of femininity, as a 'donna idealizzata' for British women. Indeed, even when artists and writers took up Beatrice for decidedly liberal or reformist purposes, it was always in reaction to this affiliation of her with popular, traditional gender discourses. The sustained uptake of Beatrice at this time supports the notion of the widespread and inextricable influence of the 'medieval' on nineteenth-century Britain, especially in regard to discourses of gender, and demonstrates the malleability of her image in undermining and reifying the dominant ideals of womanhood. The often subtle way that Beatrice's medievalness was used is also revealing of the weight and power of medievalism, which was able to function as a potent tool even when used indirectly.

The next chapter in this thesis studies a medieval woman who was prevalent in the British cultural landscape of the nineteenth century for reasons directly antithetical to the treatment and reception of Beatrice. She is Guinevere, the adulterous queen of Arthurian legend.

Image appendix: chapter one

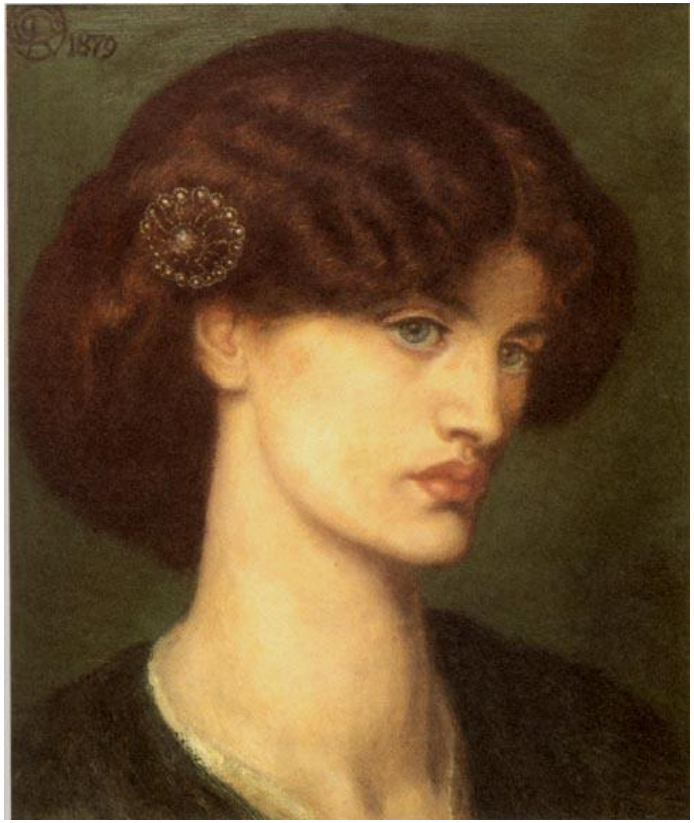

Plate 1: Dante Gabriel Rossetti, 'A portrait of Jane Morris' (1879)

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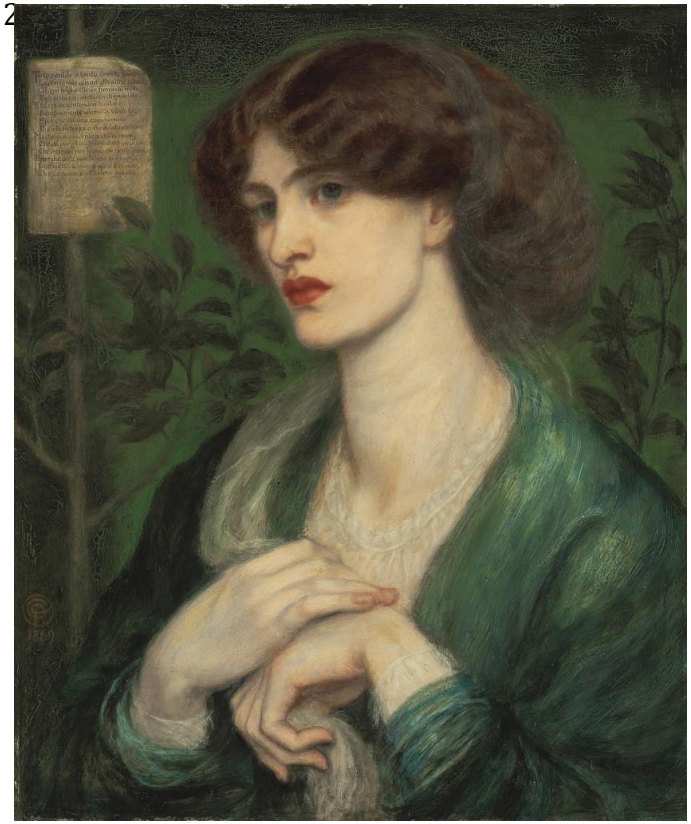

Plate 2: Dante Gabriel Rossetti, 'The Salutation of Beatrice' (1869)

Plate 3: Dante Gabriel Rossetti, 'The Salutation of Beatrice' (1880-1882)

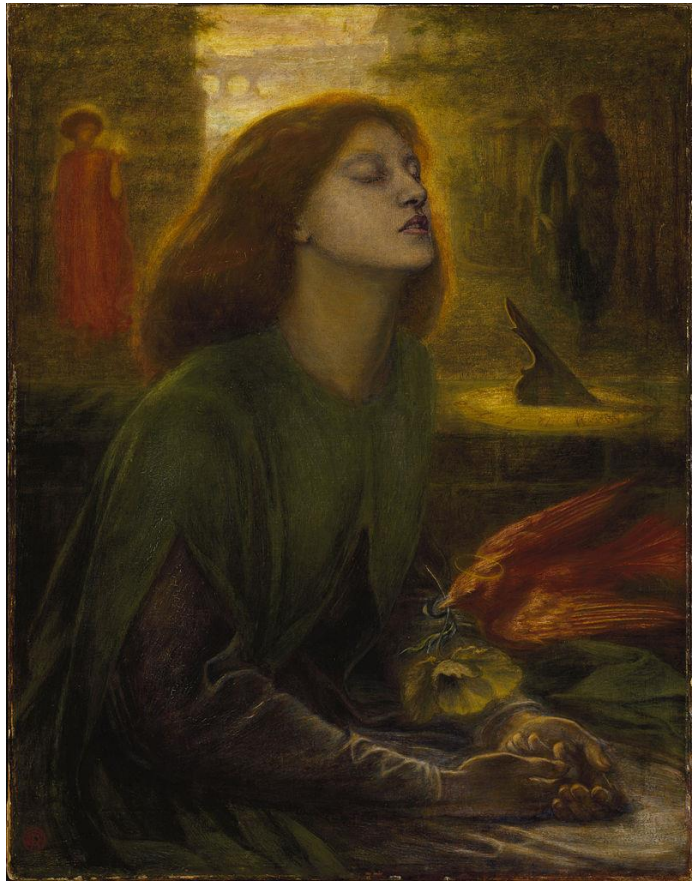

Plate 4: Dante Gabriel Rossetti, 'Beata Beatrix' (1864-1870)

Plate 5: Edward Burne Jones, 'Beatrice' (18579)

Plate 6: William Dyce, 'Beatrice' (1859)

Plate 7: Marie Spartali Stillman, 'A Florentine Lily' (1885-1890)

Plate 8: Marie Spartali Stillman, 'Beatrice' (1895)

Plate 9: Marie Spartali Stillman, ‘Beatrice’ (1898)

Plate 10: Dante Gabriel Rossetti, ‘Beatrice meeting Dante at a marriage Feast, denied him her salutation’ (1852)

Plate 11: Dante Gabriel Rossetti, 'The Salutation of Beatrice' (1859-1863)

Plate 12: Kate Elizabeth Bunt, ‘The Chance Meeting’ (1858-1927)

Plate 13: W. Matthews, ‘Untitled’ (1913)

Plate 14: Unknown, 'The Countess of Mar as Beatrice Portinari' (1897)

Plate 15: Henry Holiday, 'Dante Meets Beatrice at Ponte Santa Trinita' (1883)

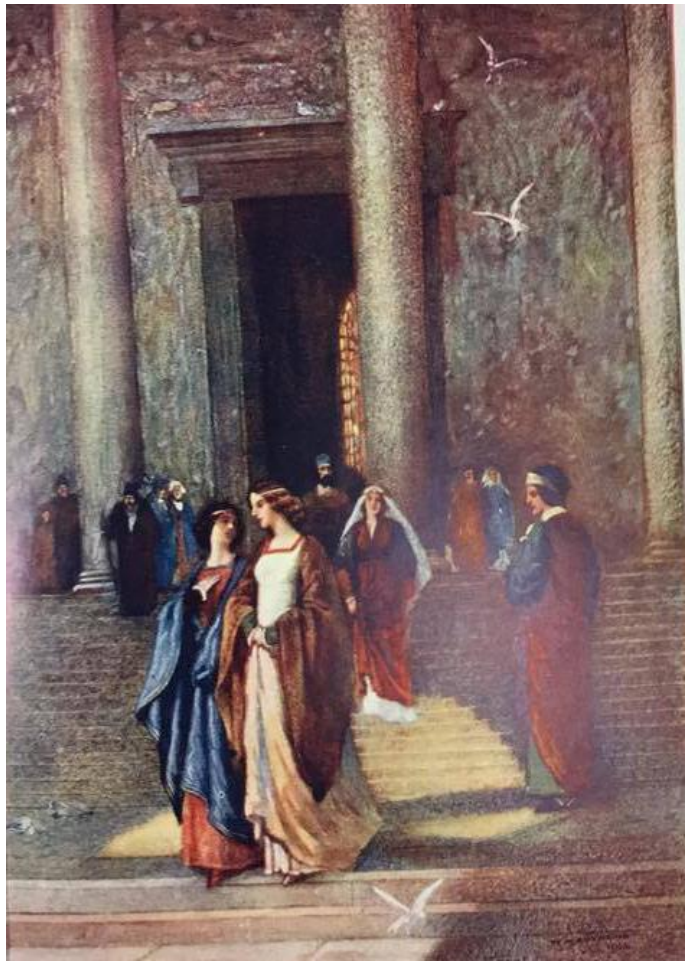

Plate 16: W. Matthews, ‘untitled (1913)

Plate 17: Marie Spartali Stillman, ‘Dante and Beatrice’ (1880)

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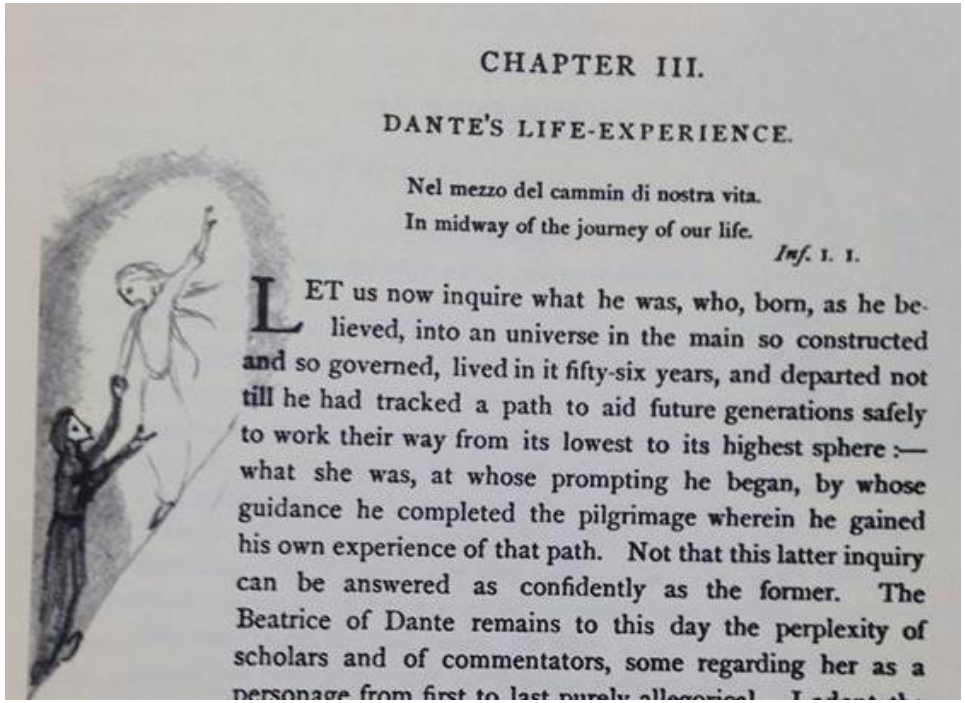
Plate 18: Eleanor Fortescue Brickdale, ‘Untitled’ (1919)

Plate 19: William Dyce, ‘Dante and Beatrice’ (1806-1864)



CHAPTER III.

DANTE'S LIFE-EXPERIENCE.

Nel mezzo del cammin di nostra vita.
In midway of the journey of our life.
Inf. I. 1.

LET us now inquire what he was, who, born, as he believed, into an universe in the main so constructed and so governed, lived in it fifty-six years, and departed not till he had tracked a path to aid future generations safely to work their way from its lowest to its highest sphere:—what she was, at whose prompting he began, by whose guidance he completed the pilgrimage wherein he gained his own experience of that path. Not that this latter inquiry can be answered as confidently as the former. The Beatrice of Dante remains to this day the perplexity of scholars and of commentators, some regarding her as a

Plate 20: Christina Rossetti, 'Marginalia sketch' (c.1871)

Plate 21: Emily Underdown, 'Untitled' (1898)

Plate 22: Dante Gabriel Rossetti, 'The Salutation of Beatrice' (replica) (1864)

Plate 23: Dante Gabriel Rossetti, 'The Meeting of Dante and Beatrice in Paradise (1853-1854)

Plate 24: Dante Gabriel Rossetti, ‘Elizabeth Siddal’ (1860)

Plate 25: Dante Gabriel Rossetti, ‘Dante Drawing an Angel’ (1853)

Plate 26: Dante Gabriel Rossetti, 'The First Anniversary of the Death of Beatrice' (1849)

Plate 27: Dante Gabriel Rossetti, 'Dante's Dream' (1880)

Chapter two

An adulterous Queen: Guinevere as a complex model of demonised womanhood

'The false queen Guinever – more cursed in her love than in her hate' (Craik 1853, 130)

Comparable in prevalence to Dante's Beatrice in the art and literature of nineteenth-century Britain was another medieval figure, Guinevere[1], the queen of Arthurian legend. Guinevere reigned within the cultural landscape of nineteenth-century Britain, commonly depicted as the adulterous wife of King Arthur and a pivotal figure in the downfall of the kingdom of Camelot. Like Beatrice, Guinevere was adopted from the medieval past and brought into contact with the values, ideals and – especially for Guinevere – anxieties of the present. As such, visual and written texts on the character of Guinevere from the nineteenth century overwhelmingly engage with what I am calling ideological/ political medievalism.

Guinevere engaged with similar concepts of womanhood as examined in regard to Beatrice, but she overwhelmingly operated as the antithesis of what Beatrice represented, as a warning against the intrinsic dangers of female sexuality, feminine autonomy and unconstrained womanhood. Her uptake and reception reveal another side to the intersection of medievalism and gender discourses in nineteenth-century

[1] The default spelling used throughout is 'Guinevere', but variations of this spelling will be used when discussing works that spell the name differently.

Britain and demonstrate the varied and widespread use of medieval women to support diverse conceptions of womanhood. More specifically, however, Guinevere – steeped in the historical weight and status of the medieval past – functioned as a powerful cautionary tale, warning women against transgressing social and cultural barriers.

The dangers that were associated with Guinevere mirrored dominant scientific theories and cultural beliefs of the nineteenth century, as well as a number of laws that were entrenched or introduced at the time. One cultural belief was the 'separate spheres' ideology, surveyed in depth in the previous chapter on Beatrice, which joined national stability and morality with domestic unity and the cloistering of women within the home. Studies into the science of sexuality also became common, most controversially with William Acton and his book *The Functions and Disorders of the Reproductive Organs* (1857), which propagated the belief that, for physically and mentally healthy women, sexual passion was non-existent[2]. A number of laws of the time also represented views on the nature of womanhood: namely, the Contagious Diseases Acts of the 1860s, which sought to control and punish female bodies to counter the spread of sexual diseases; the Common Law Marriage Act, which subsumed women into the legal entity of their male family members; and the Divorce Act of 1857, which positioned the adulterous actions of wives as legally

[2] Of course, Acton is an extreme case and, as argued by Fern Riddell (2014), Lesley A. Hall (2004), and Thomas Laqueur (2012), sexual attitudes were more nuanced and varied than has been commonly argued (with the radical works of Richard Carlile, especially his *What is Love* (1826), often used as a key case study). This said, acceptable female sexuality was, nevertheless, heavily socially and culturally regulated and inextricably linked with marriage, monogamy and procreation.

more heinous than the infidelity of their husbands[3]. In law and popular discourse, women walked a fine line between protector and destroyer of social stability.

The nineteenth century and the medieval mutually transformed one another within the figure of Guinevere, legitimising the control and subjugation of women by using the historicity and status of the past and the new science, mores and laws of the present. Contemporary conceptions of womanhood and their interaction with Arthurian women were compounded by the fact that men were becoming increasingly concerned about their own supposedly shrinking power in society.[4] Men found a way of counteracting the perceived threat of female empowerment by denigrating women, a practice that occurred throughout the nineteenth century in both political and cultural forums. This trend extended into Arthurian works of the period, centrally through condemnation of the figure of Guinevere. The dominant narrative associated with the Arthurian queen was that she was a woman of transgressive sexuality, which led to her committing an act of adultery against the King, which in turn instigated the wholesale destruction of society.

The intersection of the figure of Guinevere with nineteenth-century sexual and social mores is widely acknowledged and has received some in-depth scholarly attention, most notably by Debra N. Mancoff in her books *The Arthurian Revival in Victorian Art* (1990), *The Return of King Arthur: The Legend through Victorian Eyes* (1995), and *The Arthurian Revival: Essays on Form, Tradition, and Transformation* (1992), as well as in

[3] It must, however, be conceded that although the Act unfairly favoured husbands, the fact that women could divorce their husbands was an important legal development.
[4] A fear that will be examined in the next chapter on Joan of Arc.

Stephanie L. Barczewski's book *Myth and National Identity in Nineteenth-Century Britain: The Legends of King Arthur and Robin Hood* (2000). These works are vital and groundbreaking for their important work of rediscovery, collation and analysis and in their examination of the interaction of Arthuriana with broad conceptions of nineteenth-century gender discourses. Barczewski and Mancoff shape their research predominantly around visual and literary Ur-texts of the period, focusing primarily and understandably on seminal works of high culture and centring their analysis on a number of well-known Arthurian works, most of which were authored or created by men. This justifiably limits the scope of Barczewski's and Mancoff's analyses and leaves space for their important work to be built upon.

The addition of a number of artistic and literary works by women is key to my supplementation of Barczewski's and Mancoff's important scholarship. The aim of this endeavour is to support and further these scholars' arguments about Guinevere and gender discourse but also to present the phenomenon on a wider scale. Vitally, Clare Broome-Saunders (2009) and Alan Lupack and Barbara Tepa Lupack (1999, 2008) have attempted to rectify the unequal focus on male-authored Arthuriana by collating and analysing a number of works by women on the figure of Guinevere. This chapter adds to these important works by extending the canon and contributing more in-depth analysis of Guinevere in regard to gender debates and medievalism.

A number of the works that were excluded by Barczewski and Mancoff have been examined elsewhere in modern scholarship, though not necessarily in relation to their depiction of Guinevere and never as part of a broad study. Inclusion of these

oft-ignored works extends our understanding of the multifaceted nature of this phenomenon and allows for a truly in-depth examination of the intersection of Guinevere and gender discourse in nineteenth-century Britain. This broader method has revealed that Guinevere was seen as far more than just an adulterous wife, and that beyond even the depiction of her by William Morris in his well-known poem *The Defence of Guinevere* (1858)[5] she was for some, a redeemed moral figure.

This chapter is structured to draw out the multivariate details of Guinevere's use in gender discourses in the nineteenth century, with both established and underdeveloped aspects of the representation of Guinevere as organising themes. To do this work, the chapter is separated into four topics, concentrating on Guinevere as *adulterous queen*, *seductress, fallen woman,* and *redeemed figure.* But firstly, to illustrate how artists and writers of this time came to use Guinevere in the first place, I will map the development of the Arthurian legend and how it fed directly into the perception and utilisation of Guinevere at this time in British history.

The exact origins of the Arthurian legend have been lost to history. Therefore, mapping the legend from its beginnings, a popular scholarly pursuit that picked up steam in the 1980s and continues today, is, as argued by Graham Anderson (2004), ultimately guesswork. Indeed, it is only through the piecing together of scattered sources that scholars have been able to create a somewhat coherent picture of the development and adoption of the legends in medieval Britain, as investigated in studies by Richard Barber (2004), Anderson (2004) and James Douglas Merriman

[5] Which is often employed as the only positive example of her from Victorian Britain.

(1973). These scholars and many more have advanced various theories about dates and sources, but all attest that at some point in the early middle ages the legends travelled to Ireland and Wales, where new stories were created and older stories meshed with local folklore and myth, and were then adopted and adapted in other parts of Britain.

In medieval British chronicles, it was common practice to include Arthurian tales in accounts of the development of Britain. Geoffrey of Monmouth was the first British historian to significantly examine the Arthurian legend in his *Historia Regum Britanniae* in c.1136 (as studied by Northup and Parry 1944, Brown 1950, Merriman 1973). Most of the underlying motifs of Geoffrey's work were part of the core legend examined by other writers, but he added a number of new facets to the corpus, most significantly – to this thesis and to the development of the legend as a whole – the marriage of Arthur to Gunhumara (Guinevere). Other works, such as the Norman *Roman de Brut* (1150-1155) by Wace, and the Middle English version of this by Layamon, *Brut* (c.1190-1215), borrowed from Geoffrey and included the character of Guinevere. She is absent in earlier histories, such as Nennius's *Historia Britonum* (c.800), Bede's *Historia Ecclesiastica Gentis Anglorum* (c.751) and Gildas's *De Excidio Britanniae* (c.510-530).

Importantly, as argued by Ruth Harwood Cline (1990), it was not until the French poet Chrétien de Troyes's romance *Lancelot, le Chevalier de la Charrette* (c.1177-1181) that the love affair between Guinevere and Sir Lancelot was introduced into the canon. The next significant version of the tale, overall and regarding Guinevere

specifically, was by the English writer Sir Thomas Malory, with his *Le Morte Darthur,* which first appeared in 1485. This work afforded a lot of space to the character of Guinevere, and to Arthurian women in general. It was Malory's work, influenced by Chrétien, that brought to the fore the 'guilty love' of Sir Lancelot and Queen Guinevere, which has since become the lynchpin of Guinevere's characterisation and of Arthurian romance overall.

In these medieval Arthurian works female figures are, on the whole, decidedly vague. Women are depicted as valuable only as the counterpoints to male characters, and this was certainly true of the medieval Guinevere. In Chrétien, Wace, Layamon, Malory and Geoffrey, the figure of Guinevere overwhelmingly functions as the incentive to action and as a reward for heroism. Furthermore, female Arthurian figures often operated on a sliding scale of morality, where at one end a woman was defined as sexually pure and good and at the other as sexually impure and sinful. In many ways, in these works female figures merely acted as symbols of 'good' and 'evil' femininity, essentially positioning female characters, as argued by Stephen Ahern, as 'emblem and not as individual' (2004, 96).

Antiquarian and archaeological research flourished during the eighteenth century in Britain (as examined by Frew 1980, Morris 1984), with one powerful impetus being a surge in British nationalism. In Britain, the study of medieval objects of British, and especially English, origin became popular, driven by a nationalistic impulse to unearth and preserve Britain's cultural, social and linguistic origins, which were believed to date back to the medieval period, broadly conceived. A central aim of

this undertaking was to unite Britain under a set of unifying ideals and values, which in turn served to nourish a sense of superiority over other nations, giving 'credibility' to imperial expansion and colonisation. This movement ultimately resulted in a surge in the production of books on British history.

Initially, because of a perceived lack of source material on the topic, Arthurian legend was relegated to the place of myth and fable and consequently, as argued by Roger Simpson (1990) and in keeping with my own reading of histories from the time, it was generally ignored in eighteenth-century histories of Britain.[6] That being said, though mostly absent from the history books, Arthurian legend, according to Alan Lupack (2009) was kept alive through other cultural modes, such as romances, prophecies, plays, poems, ballads, almanacs and satires. During the early nineteenth century, however, historians started discussing Arthur as an historical figure, borrowing from the medieval works of Gildas, Nennius and Geoffrey of Monmouth to examine the legends in relation to historical battles, treaties and political alliances. Many works produced early in the century include exegeses on Arthur, including John Lingard's *The History of England* (1819); Algernon Herbert's *Britannia After the Romans; Being an Attempt to Illustrate the Religious and Political Revolutions of that Province in the Fifth and Succeeding Centuries* (1836); Edward Davies' *The Mythology and the Rites of British Druids* (1809); John Daniels' *Ecclesiastical History of the Britons and Saxons* (1815); J.M. Lappenberg's *History of England under Anglo-Saxon Kings* (1845); and Thomas Miller's *History of the Anglo-Saxons* (1848) (as studied by Simpson 1990, Mancoff 1994). The number of historical

[6] Bishop Thomas Percy's *Reliques of Ancient English Poetry* (1765) is one rare exception.

texts on or including the figure of Arthur only continued to increase as the century continued.

According to Simpson (1990), this growth of interest in what he calls an 'historical Arthur' had a significant effect on the creative landscape of the nineteenth century, resulting in a major increase in poetry, art and fiction centred on Arthurian legend. This mid- to late-nineteenth-century phenomenon is often called the 'Arthurian Revival'. Undoubtedly, by the mid-nineteenth century, Arthurian legend was well and truly embedded in Britain's cultural psyche. A major factor behind the sustained interest and subsequent 'revival' of the Arthurian subject was the figure of Arthur himself, as the Christian warrior king lent himself directly to the cause of inciting patriotic sentiment. His discursive flexibility, too, was a key influence, as demonstrated by his malleability as a political symbol, which, according to Roger Simpson, allowed him to 'appeal to both royalist sentiment and also, by means of the distinctive institution of the Round Table, achieve a measure of egalitarian fraternity' (Simpson 1990, 220).

Due to the Celtic roots of the tales, the Celtic Revival almost certainly had an impact on the flourishing popularity of the tales in the nineteenth century. The Celtic Revival is somewhat hard to elucidate, as it encompasses both the popular (and often problematic) adoption of Celtic cultures by non-Celtic peoples (particularly the French and English) in the mid-eighteenth to nineteenth centuries, as well as a resurgence in Irish, Scottish and Welsh nationalism, through a revival of interest in Celtic myth, tradition, visual art and literature (as examined by Jackson 1922, Brown

1996, Williams 2016) that also occurred at this time in British history. The Arthurian legends' mythic Celticism, which was in vogue at this time in British culture, made it easy for the tales to be co-opted by the Welsh, Scottish, Irish and English simultaneously, allowing for much wider, unimpeded acceptance of Arthur as an abstract symbol.

Nevertheless, a chief aspect behind the powerful revival of Arthurian legend in the nineteenth century was arguably the reprinting of Sir Thomas Malory's *Morte Darthur* in 1816 – its first reprint in nearly two hundred years[8] (Goodman 1988, Mancoff 1994). The reprint led to a surge of interest in Malory's representation of Arthurian legends, particularly the adulterous love affair of Lancelot and Guinevere. As the nineteenth century progressed, Malory's work increased in popularity to become the central text of Arthurian legend. According to Mancoff, because of the nature of Malory's work, which moved away from focusing purely on politics and warfare, 'the emphasis switched from the battlefield to the court of love' (1995, 16). As a result, formerly minor characters, particularly women, received more attention. These more secular, romantic aspects of the legends suited the Victorian palate; thus, fragments and comparatively minor storylines that centralised female Arthurian characters were extended and became the bulk of newly produced texts, and the ill-fated romance of Guinevere and Lancelot became one of the favoured sections of the legend to take up.

[8] Joseph Haslewood 1816; Alexander Chalmers 1816; William Upcott 1817.

Due to the influence of the republishing of Malory, Guinevere was predominantly identified throughout the nineteenth century as an adulterous wife. This was not new, as of course her adultery had been part of the legend since the Middle Ages, but this facet of Guinevere's character took on more prominence and attracted more open condemnation in the nineteenth century. Arguably, this fact came about because the sanctified, unifying nature of marriage had increasingly become a weighty instrument of social stability.

Guinevere as adulterous queen

I wish to engage in separate analyses of the representations of Guinevere as adulteress (examined here) and seductress (examined later in the chapter) because although these two aspects of Guinevere's characterisation undoubtedly fed into one another, they also diverge rather noticeably. This distinctness is based on the fact that representations of Guinevere's adultery were centred more on the breaking of strict codes of social conduct and on anxieties about marital instability than on the nature of female sexuality. Thus, these aspects have been disentangled in an attempt to enhance our understanding of the different facets of Guinevere's reception.

There are direct links between the treatment of Guinevere's adultery and nineteenth-century conventions about marriage and female infidelity and this link was reflected in the established mores and laws of the time. One such more,

assessed extensively in the previous chapter on Beatrice, was the ideology of 'separate spheres' or 'domestic theory'. Britain had become increasingly industrialised and the home a symbol of purity, stability and morality (as argued by Levine 1987, Nead 1988, Parker 1995, DuBois 1998, Sanders 2001, Caine 2006, Yildirim 2012). At the same time, as examined by these scholars, it came to be widely believed that national prosperity and harmony were directly influenced by domestic unity and, because women were affiliated with the home, they themselves became symbols of national security and order. Through the celebration of figures like Beatrice, women were often seen as embodying this role. Of course, it was tacitly understood that idealised women were aristocratic or bourgeois, and as such only women of certain social station could even attempt to attain the ideal. In yet another instance of patriarchal contradiction, however, women of all classes were also perceived as being vulnerable to certain vices, such as jealousy, vanity, ambition, spitefulness (as examined by Parker 1995) and romantic infatuation, all of which were thought to undermine their ability to properly perform this role. Women who possessed these traits were believed to have gone against their moral nature and were seen as agents of corruption and societal decay. Fears around the potential for feminine corruption necessitated continued support for, and the introduction of, a number of laws. For example, the structure of Common Law Marriage imposed the edict that any property owned by a woman belonged to her husband after marriage, trapping women in economic dependence. Common Law also included marital coverture, which legally made a married woman 'feme covert', meaning that she did not have a separate legal identity from her husband (as studied in Bodichon 1869, Beer 1986, Morris and Nott 1995, Warren 2005, Caine 2006, Griffin 2012, Yildirim

2012). Furthermore, because the primary role of the female body was seen as reproductive, female adultery and issues of legitimacy of children also influenced the writing of laws. As a result, adulterous husbands were not exposed to the same level of censure as adulterous wives. This double standard was embodied in the Divorce Act of 1857, which, according to Lesley Hall, made:

> […] a single act of adultery by the wife sufficient grounds for dissolving the marriage, while the husband's adultery was so minor a peccadillo that it had to be combined with cruelty, desertion or some other matrimonial offence to provide grounds for the wife to obtain a decree (Hall 2004, 39).

The Arthurian revival was not immune to these issues circulating and shaping the cultural landscape of the time. Nineteenth-century Arthurian texts repeatedly interacted with nineteenth-century discussion on marriage and adultery, and Guinevere sat at the very centre of this debate. As with Beatrice, the medieval was taken up in these works, at times overtly (in themes, aesthetics and mores) and in other instances merely through Guinevere's implicit medievalness. Either way, the effect of this was that it lent legitimacy to modern arguments, and in this case, anxieties.

No wide-ranging examination of Guinevere in the nineteenth century, let alone a discussion on Victorian Arthuriana or nineteenth-century medievalism, is complete without Alfred, Lord Tennyson. Indeed, Tennyson's works have received an overwhelming amount of scholarly attention, including exhaustive examination of

his portrayal of Guinevere. Nevertheless, Tennyson's effect on the Arthurian revival and on the reception and use of Guinevere in the nineteenth century necessitates some appraisal of his contribution. Therefore, I will seek to highlight the central tenets of Tennyson's portrayal of the adulterous queen effectively but succinctly.

Mancoff (1994) argues that Tennyson's centrality within the Arthurian Revival was based on the fact that he dispelled the confusion engendered by the variability of the Arthurian legend by creating a cohesive canon. Tennyson's linking of the medieval tales directly with contemporary mores also, I suggest, added to his status and subsequent impact on the revival. The two works by Tennyson that centre on Guinevere are his poems 'Sir Launcelot and Queen Guinevere', first published in 1830[9], and his series of long narrative poems, *The Idylls of the King* (1859). Tennyson's Arthurian poems, particularly his *Idylls,* focus mainly on the tales as told by Malory (Simpson 1990, Fries 1991). In many ways, however, as argued by Simpson (1990), he added as much as he adopted, and a significant number of his additions involve severe admonishment of Guinevere's adulterous behaviour. The first four *Idylls* are in many ways a collection of stories about the moral integrity of key Arthurian women and engage with contemporaneous discussions about the fear of unrestrained female sexuality. Tennyson established within the *Idylls* a 'hierarchy of women', presenting seven women who were, according to Rebecca Cochran, 'assessed by the degree to which their moral conduct aid[ed] or hinder[ed] Arthur's case' (1992, 82). This facet of his work is indicative of the lengths to which Tennyson went to transform the medieval legend to suit nineteenth-century sensibilities.

[9] Which will be examined later in the section on Guinevere as seductress.

Of the twelve narrative poems of the *Idylls*, four focus on the figure of Guinevere substantially. These are 'The Coming of the King'; 'Launcelot and Elaine'; 'The Last Tournament'; and 'Guinevere'. 'Guinevere', unsurprisingly, offers the most comprehensive examination of Arthur's queen and openly engages with the representation of her as an adulteress. The most powerful example of this depiction takes place in a scene, absent from the *Morte Darthur* and all other medieval sources, which describes the final meeting between Guinevere and Arthur. The scene occurs at the nunnery in Almesbury, where Guinevere had fled during the skirmish between Arthur and Lancelot. This section concentrates conspicuously on the goodness of Arthur and the sinfulness of Guinevere. As Arthur stands above a prostrate Guinevere, he says: 'thou hast spoilt the purpose of my life' (Tennyson 1896, 137), suggesting that it was the adulterous actions of Guinevere that ended the glory of Arthur's reign.

Furthermore, unlike in Malory's *Morte Darthur*, where the incestuous birth of Mordred, the failure of the grail quest and increasing clan feuds are imbricated with the kingdom's demise, in Tennyson's *Idylls* the responsibility falls squarely on Guinevere's shoulders. Ultimately, the fall of Camelot is attributed to the moral unfitness of Guinevere, and her actions come to symbolise the destructive nature of 'bad' women (as examined by Eggers 1971, Cochran 1992). This notion is highlighted when Arthur says to Guinevere: 'Well is it that no child is born of thee./ The children born of thee are sword and fire,/ Red ruin, and the breaking up of laws' (Tennyson 1896, 133). Through the metaphor of Guinevere as a mother giving birth to the ruin

and collapse of Camelot, Tennyson unambiguously displays his views on woman's innate destructive potential. In no uncertain terms, Tennyson connects the marital infidelity of Guinevere with an apocalyptical end to society.

Far less known, relatively under-examined (studied most significantly by Kate Lister in 2013) and yet pre-dating Tennyson's *Idylls* is a novel by Dinah Mulock-Craik entitled *Avillion; or, The Happy Isles: A Fireside Fancy* (Craik 1853), which also connects 'Guinever's' adultery with societal destruction, though in a far more direct and unforgiving way than even Tennyson. Mulock-Craik, whom I inspected previously in relation to her work on Beatrice, endorsed established and ubiquitous discourses on gender, and *Avillion* is no exception. The novel is a testament to conservative ideas about the link between familial unity and feminine subservience, and the state of society.

Mulock-Craik's *Avillion*, free of the weight of canonicity that came with the *Idylls,* is very different from the typical Arthurian story and has received little attention in modern scholarship. The novel is, on the surface, a fanciful story about the journey of a dying man called Wilfred to a magical island, but beneath that it is a celebration of conservative mores using key characters from the Western literary canon, including some from Arthurian legend. In the novel, a German doctor, Herr Foerster, tells Wilfred of a magical utopian island in the sea where no one dies. The doctor drugs the ill Wilfred, under the pretence of easing his pain, and makes it seem as if Wilfred is dead, after which he throws Wilfred into the ocean so that he may follow his body to the island. Wilfred wakes on the Happy Isles, where after a brief

encounter with Ulysses, he walks to Avillion, the land of King Arthur. Arthur, inspired by the presence of Wilfred, decides to check on the land of Britain, visiting the 'lake of shadows' to speak to the dead. Those who reside in the lake do so as punishment for their deeds on earth, and one of these souls is a perpetually wailing Guinever, punished for her sin of adultery. Arthur approaches Guinever, specifying scornfully that he seeks her help 'not as the wife of Arthur, but the Queen of Britain' (Craik 1853, 133). Guinever is described solely in relation to her actions as an adulteress, as 'the false queen Guinever – more cursed in her love than in her hate' (Craik 1853, 130); 'that revengeful woman-fiend!' (Craik 1853, 131); and 'False queen, false woman' (Craik 1853, 133). Guinever shows Arthur a vision of modern Britain, which he discovers has been ruined by the industrial revolution:

> I behold a plain, intersected far and near with iron net-work; over it speed, thundering and howling, breathing smoke and flame […] this generation has created subject-demons from the dull dead metals that lie enwombed there' (Craik 1853, 124).

Britain is described as an apocalyptic wasteland, inhabited by demons and consumed by 'smoke and flame'. The industrialised decay of the modern world is allied with Guinever's adulterous actions in the image of 'the polluted throne' (Craik 1853), combining the metaphorical contamination of the throne by Guinever's adultery and the literal pollution of Britain, which is supposedly a result of the dissolution of Arthur's kingdom. A suggestion is put forth here, that there is a direct link between the actions of a medieval woman and the state of the modern world. Such an

assertion of the interconnectedness of the past and the present upholds, even more than Tennyson's poem, the idea that female immorality and its potential for societal destruction are universal. Ultimately, Mulock-Craik presents a rather arresting misogynistic example of the use of medievalism.

Furthermore, when Lancelot's spirit is called upon, he is described far more forgivingly, in one instance as 'Guinever's lover – faithful in sin, but yet most faithful – the bravest champion of the Round Table' (Craik 1853, 134). It is clear that though punished for eternity, like Guinevere, to walk between life and death, Lancelot is not afforded the same level of culpability and this reflects the double standard, perpetuated throughout nineteenth-century Britain, which saw the adulterous actions of wives as worse than the infidelity of husbands and saw a direct correlation between the actions and morality of women and the state of society.

In *Avillion,* the last place that Wilfred visits is an absurdly idealistic Christian island called 'Eden-land', which stands in stark contrast to the hellish world of modern England. The women of Eden-land are contrasted with the figure of the false, wailing Guinevere by being described as blissfully happy and 'perpetually fair' (Craik 1853, 147). The reasoning for the eternal happiness of these women is steeped in ultra-conservative views on female gender roles. The narrative voice states, without irony:

> No woman was ever truly happy, unless she could look up to man in some relation of life – either father, brother, husband, or friend, and say, humbly and lovingly, "I will obey thee, for thou art greater than I" (Craik 1853, 147).

The message here seems to be that women like Guinever who betray the 'greater sex' do so in direct violation of nature, leaving themselves and society open to threats of immorality and unhappiness. Fundamentally, the book is a love song to traditional gender values, demonising an adulterous medieval woman so as to reinforce and add weight to the sexual double standards of the nineteenth century.

Mulock-Craik some years later published a travel book titled *An Unsentimental Journey through Cornwall* (1884), which, in a small throwaway line, provides evidence of her continued belief in the destructive nature of Guinevere's adultery. In one section, borrowing heavily from Malory, she describes her trip to Tintagel castle, including a line about the 'lonely quiet country roads and woods' of Cornwall, saying that they are 'almost as green as when Queen Guinevere rode through them, "a maying," before the dark days of her sin and King Arthur's death' (Craik 1884, 129). Here, Mulock-Craik, like Malory, links a romanticised image of Guinevere riding through the lush green landscape in spring during Arthur's reign with the 'darkness' that came as a result of Guinevere's 'sin'. Conspicuously, no mention is made of the actions of Lancelot and so, as in Mulock-Craik's *Avillion* and Tennyson's *Idylls,* accountability for the downfall of Arthur's utopian kingdom rests squarely with Guinevere.

The architect, editor and writer Sir James Knowles tendered a similar argument in his novel for children, *The Story of King Arthur and His Knights,* first published in 1862, and then renamed and republished in paperback in 1868 as *The Legend of King*

Arthur, presumably due to its popularity. Knowles's work is absent in most modern scholarship on Victorian Arthuriana, perhaps due in part to scholarly bias against children's books. The novel is based on Malory's *Morte Darthur* and was significantly influenced by Tennyson (specifically his *Idylls*), who was a friend and architectural client of Knowles's (Metcalf 1980). Unsurprisingly, considering he was so intimately involved with and influenced by Tennyson, Knowles's version of the tales parallels Tennyson's, including his connection of the adultery of Guinevere with the ruination of Camelot.

Because Knowles's work is directed at children, the story is sanitised to a certain degree, and therefore the adulterous relationship between Guinevere and Lancelot is not made explicit, though it is certainly alluded to.[10] A scene is set up between Guinevere and Lancelot where he comes to her chamber while Arthur is away hunting. They are found together in this compromising situation and the well-known turmoil ensues, resulting in Guinevere fleeing to the nunnery at Almesbury. According to Knowles she lived the rest of her days 'sorely repenting and mourning for her sin, and for the ruin she had brought on all the realm' (Knowles and Speed 1862). As in Mulock-Craik's *Avillion* and *An Unsentimental Journey* and Tennyson's *Idylls,* the work shields Lancelot from condemnation, deeming Guinevere the sole instigator of Camelot's downfall.

[10] It is, however, made explicit in an accompanying illustration by Lancelot Speed (examined later in relation to Guinevere as a 'fallen woman'), which depicts Lancelot escaping from Guinevere's bedchamber.

The much-admired Victorian epic poem *King Arthur* (1849), by the poet, playwright, novelist and politician Sir Edward Bulwer-Lytton (pseudonym Owen Meredith)[11], also examines the connection between female adultery and social destruction but in a rather unusual way. The poem preceded Tennyson's *Idylls* and so, like Mulock-Craik's *Avillion,* it avoids what became a more canonical handling of the tales. Therefore, it bears little resemblance to other Arthurian works. One of Bulwer-Lytton's most arresting alterations to the legend is his evasion on the issue of adultery (as studied by Goodman 1988, Mancoff 1992). He achieved this omission through the creation of two Guinevere figures, 'Genevieve' and 'Genevra', who serve as the separate love interests of Arthur and Lancelot. My understanding of this decision aligns with that of Mancoff (1992), who has argued that the absence of the adultery plot in the story is directly linked with the exclusion of Camelot's destruction. At the end of the poem, after the battle has been won against the Saxons, Bulwer-Lytton presents a hyperbolic picture of the peaceful kingdom of Carudel (Camelot):

> What gallant deeds in gentle lists were done,
>
> What lutes made Joyaunce sweet in jasmine bowers,
>
> Let others tell: - slow sets the summer sun;
>
> Slow fall the gloaming dies the vesper bell, -
>
> And dream-land sleeps round golden Carudel (Bulwer-Lytton 1851, 236).

The absence of the adultery plot and of the resulting fall of Camelot, when viewed alongside the growing influence of Malory's work at this time, could not have gone

[11] Bulwer-Lytton's other Arthurian works 'The Queen Guinevere' (1855) and 'The Parting of Launcelot and Guinevere: A Fragment' (1855) will be examined later in the chapter.

unnoticed. Therefore, it is not implausible to suggest that these two deviations would have been linked in the minds of readers. Thus, in a rather circuitous way, the medievalised poem fundamentally supports common nineteenth-century ideals about the place of women in society, the importance of marital unity and the need for female sexuality to be regulated, by implicitly suggesting that without the existence of Guinevere's adultery Camelot would have remained peaceful and prosperous.

Similar assessments of Guinevere's role in the downfall of Camelot appear in the visual art of the period. Indeed, although Mancoff (1990) has argued that Guinevere was overwhelmingly neglected in visual arts, I have compiled a large number of artistic representations of Guinevere from the nineteenth century and early twentieth century that suggest, in fact, a continued preoccupation with Arthur's queen. Four of these works can be seen to patently condemn Guinevere's destructive adultery.

One of these is a painting by Dante Gabriel Rossetti entitled 'King Arthur's Tomb'[12] (1854-1855). Rossetti produced a number of works on the figure of Guinevere, and 'King Arthur's Tomb' was his first Arthurian work, depicting a scene, loosely based on Malory, of the last meeting between Guinevere and Lancelot. The composition is set in a graveyard, with the figures bent over an effigy of Arthur, Guinevere avoiding Lancelot's advances. Though Guinevere is portrayed in the work as rejecting Launcelot's kiss, the fact that they lean over the dead body of Arthur, and the

[12] Plate 1

uncomfortable way that she avoids his kiss, eyes guiltily looking away at the ground, accentuate her past betrayal and her guilt. Moreover, as Mancoff says, 'Behind her, on the face of the tomb, a relief recalls the splendour of Arthur's hall in Camelot' (Mancoff 1990, 147), which highlights the effect that their betrayal has had on the greater society of Camelot. The serpent in the foreground of the image, when combined with the tomb's illustration of the past perfect society, links the actions of the lovers with that of Adam and Eve, destroyers of paradise.

A lesser-known and little studied work, but with a comparable emphasis on wifely adultery and societal devastation, is a silver urn by sculptor and designer Henry Hugh Armstead titled the 'Tennyson Vase' (1867).[13] The vase was exhibited in Paris at the World's Fair of 1867 and at the 1873 Vienna World's Fair before being chosen as the Ascot horse racing cup for the Diamond Jubilee of Queen Victoria in 1897 (see Poulson 1989). The subject matter of the cup seems a strange choice for a horse-racing prize. On the cup's two handles sit etchings of Merlin and Guinevere, each placed above a scene from Tennyson. On one side, Merlin looks down upon a frieze displaying Arthur and the three queens that guide his funeral byre. On the reverse side, Guinevere looks down on a tableau of a battle: weapons, horses and soldiers packed together to show the perilous milieu. Merlin's place above the funeral scene seems to be representative of his prophetic wisdom and forewarnings; however, Guinevere's connection with her scene is more direct and less flattering. She covers her face in shame and guilt, perhaps alluding to her role as instigator of the scene below. The odd choice of subject matter for the piece was perhaps out of deference

[13] Plate 2

to the prestige and prevalence of the Arthurian legend at the time, or it could be understood as a means to emphasise the virtue of Victoria by way of contrasting her with the medieval queen. If the latter is true, the piece utilises the medieval past both to validate abstract conceptions of gender and to add stature to the reign of a virtuous serving monarch. This action speaks to the vital impact that the medieval, especially Arthurian legend, had at this time in Britain, even at the very top of its social structures.

Another visual rendering of the connection between Guinevere and the devastation of Camelot is from an illustrated edition of Tennyson's *Idylls* by Eleanor F. Brickdale. The work is dated 1911, some years later than Rossetti's and Armstead's works, which is a testament to the durability of this interpretation of Guinevere. The image, titled 'Before the Coming of the Sinful Queen' (Brickdale 1911)[14], actually omits the figure of Guinevere completely. The only human figures in the image are tiny fairies, dancing in a lush arrangement of flowers and leaves. The accompanying script, 'Before the Coming of the Sinful Queen', suggests that this type of magical scene was a reality before the sins of the queen infected the kingdom. There is a definite link here between the Garden of Eden and the kingdom of Camelot whereby, because of the actions of sinful women, mankind is expelled from a miraculous and beautiful haven. Tellingly, the other illustrations by Brickdale for this edition of the *Idylls* are overwhelmingly sympathetic towards Guinevere, depicting her in one instance as a repentant nun and in another as a sweet and beautiful young lover. This sympathy may reveal tension between the subject matter of Tennyson's poems and the

[14] Plate 3

sympathies of the artist, who might have been more compassionate to the plight of the queen. However, in this image specifically, the message is clear: Guinevere's sinful actions led to the demise of the mystical kingdom of Camelot, which ultimately links the infidelity of a medieval woman with modern perceptions about social destruction.

The Scottish painter James Archer, in one of his many paintings with Arthurian subjects, produced a work, 'Queen Guinevere' (1860)[15], which is less direct in its condemnation of Guinevere than these other works but which nevertheless connects her with Camelot's ruin. Archer's image portrays the queen standing with her back to retreating warships, her face turned to look over her shoulder as she watches them leave. Her hesitant stance and downcast eyes allude to her feelings of guilt and shame as she views the ships leaving, perhaps on their way to fight against her lover, Lancelot. I believe the image, though enigmatic, illustrates the launching of a war, instigated by the actions of the guilty queen. Arguably, the setting also links her with the classical figure of Helen of Troy, whose beauty and illicit love caused destruction and launched 'a thousand ships' to war.

Running parallel to these decidedly unflattering portrayals of Guinevere are a number of works of art and literature that contradictorily undercut this interpretation of her. William Morris's poem *The Defence of Guenevere* (1858) is by far the best known example of this more positive treatment of the queen, and indeed has at times been positioned as the only one of its kind (as in Knutson 1982,

[15] Plate 4

Barczewski 2000). A widening of the scope of texts examined, however, reveals that there is a larger body of literary works from the long nineteenth century that offer a more liberal treatment of Guinevere as adulterous queen. In these works the medieval past is still utilised as a means to legitimise ideological arguments, but in this case that past is employed to support forward-thinking, progressive ideologies, which is quite arresting. Furthermore, and also rather extraordinarily, all of these works are by men.

As is the case with Tennyson, there is a great deal of scholarship on William Morris and his 'rare' portrayal of Guenevere in his *Defence*, so to go into too much detail would be unnecessary. That being said, like Tennyson, Morris merits inclusion here as he is an important touchstone in the depiction of Guenevere in the nineteenth century. Furthermore, I believe his work influenced a number of other writers of the time.

William Morris was a social activist, a towering figure in the British Arts and Crafts Movement, a driving force behind the British Socialist movement, a poet, a medievalist, a globally renowned designer, a novelist and a translator. His poem *The Defence of Guenevere* was first published in 1858, a year before the first of Tennyson's *Idylls,* and is a key example of Morris simultaneously working with medievalism and contemporary social commentary. Morris would perhaps not be called a feminist, but he certainly had pro-feminist leanings. Notably, during his time working as a leading lecturer and propagandist for the Socialist League (studied comprehensivly by Marsh 1990), Morris published the novel *News from Nowhere*

(1890) and the poem 'The Pilgrims of Hope' (1885), both in serial form in the Commonweal Journal, the Socialist League's newspaper. Both of these include elements of what has been described by many scholars, most notably Florence S. Boos and William Boos (1990), as 'Socialist Feminism'. Morris's *Defence* reflects this social activism in its treatment of Guinevere's adultery.

It has been suggested by Laurence Perrine (1960), and I whole heartedly agree, that *The Defence* is not Morris's defence of Guenevere but rather Guenevere's defence of herself. Guenevere stands before a court of her accusers, Knights of the Round Table, acting as her own counsel against accusations of murder and adultery. At this time in British history, married women were *femes coverts*: they were not legally defined as individuals and so were not allowed to represent themselves in court, instead needing a male guardian to speak on their behalf. That Morris wrote a poem that depicts a woman representing herself eloquently and passionately in front of a court of men suggests that Morris may have been engaging in a critique of the legal system of his time. Furthermore, it could be argued that Morris's use of a medieval woman to make this point intended to imply a lack of historicity and longevity in the modern laws that sought to legally silence women.

I ally myself with those scholars (Barczewski, Perrine and Mancoff, to name a few) who contend that *The Defence of Guenevere* is a vindication of the adulterous actions of the queen. One of the major arguments posed by these scholars, expertly put by Barczewski, is that, though Guenevere's infidelity is not avoided, Morris contends that 'more important social and moral issues override any questions about

her transgression of arbitrary sexual codes' (2000, 188). This assertion especially relates to questions of loyalty and true love. Within Morris's *Defence*, Guenevere's adulterous actions are excused, using arguments about the force of love and passion.[16] Throughout, adulterous acts are shown to be uncontrollable and unconscious, such as in the lines: 'When both our mouths went wandering in one way,/ And aching sorely, met among the leaves;/ Our hands being left far behind strained away' (Morris 1921, 9), where action is instinctual and involuntary. This representation serves to make Guenevere's actions altogether justifiable, diminishing her agency and instead suggesting that her behaviour was compulsive rather than cognitive.

Also tendered as an excuse for Guenevere's actions is the nature of human imperfection, illustrated potently in the tale of the blue and red cloths. Here, Guenevere offers a hypothetical conundrum to her accusers, giving them a choice between two cloths, one blue and the other red, one of which allows entry into heaven and the other into hell. However, she instructs: 'which they will be,/ I will not tell you, you must somehow tell/ Of your own strength and mightiness' (Morris 1921, 2). Guenevere states that when she was offered the same cloths she chose the blue cloth, based on the belief that it was the colour of heaven. Because of her human limitations, and in spite of the fact that she endeavoured to choose the right cloth, she is said to have picked the wrong one. The primary message of the tale is

[16] This argument was made in a number of works of visual art and literature of the period, but these have been excluded from the study because they do not explicitly engage with debates on gender discourse.

that right and wrong can be difficult to distinguish and that, for Guenevere, the right choice, between true love and marital fidelity, was just as difficult to discern.

Ultimately, Morris, relegates the adultery of Guenevere to the realm of excusable human error[17] and therefore lessens any liability that connects her with the kingdom's demise. It is unsurprising then, given the rather progressive views espoused by Morris in relation to Guenevere and her infidelity, that the work was met with harsh critical condemnation in its time (as examined by Mancoff, 1995). Nevertheless, Morris paved the way for others to question the rampant condemnation of Guinevere.

Long forgotten and absent from all wide-scale analysis of the Arthurian revival is the work of William Fulford, who was rediscovered in the early 1990s by Roger Simpson but has since scarcely been examined and who, like Morris, presented an alternative and more forgiving depiction of the adulterous queen. Fulford was a poet, editor, curate and schoolmaster who published four volumes of poetry between 1859 and 1865, a substantial amount of which centres on Arthurian legend. Fulford's links to key figures of Victorian Arthuriana are impressive. He was, for a time, a friend of William Morris and other Pre-Raphaelites and came into direct contact with Tennyson as a result of publishing a number of flattering articles on his early works in The Oxford and Cambridge Magazine, which led to an exchange of correspondence (examined in Simpson 1991, Simpson 1993, Fleming 2012). A poem entitled 'The Last Meeting of Lancelot and Guinevere' (1862) provides Fulford's most

[17] A similar depiction of Guinevere's sin, as contributable to human error, is included in Malory's *Morte,* but Morris extends upon this theme and lets Guinevere make this argument in her own voice.

comprehensive examination of the Guinevere character and defies representation of her as the sole cause of the downfall of Camelot. Arguably, this empathetic rendering of Guinevere was rooted in what Simpson (1991, 1993) has argued were Fulford's sympathetic leanings regarding female emancipation and education, as well as his reverence for Morris and *The Defence of Guenevere*.

Fulford's poem is set at the nunnery at Almesbury after Arthur's death and comprises a discussion between Lancelot and Guinevere. It depicts a repentant queen, who says to Lancelot, 'For we brought this woe and shame/ On Arthur and his realm' (Fulford 1862, 180). Here, Guinevere acknowledges her role in the kingdom's downfall but, importantly, she shares this blame with Lancelot. Compellingly, Guinevere assigns some culpability to Arthur, suggesting that his cold, loveless nature contributed to the terrible state of personal and national affairs by pushing her into the arms of another. She muses on the nature of their guilty love, asking Lancelot:

> Was he [Arthur], so cold,
> Although so pure, who gave me half his love,
> Nobler than thou, who gav'st me all thy heart
> And service,--truest service, faithful heart,
> Though given to one who should have wholly been
> Another's? If my love was due to him,--
> As due it was,--why cared he not to win it
> By equal love? Or understand, at least,

A woman's love must ever so be won,

Or cannot be entirely given? Not bought

By rank, nor forced by duty,--won by love,

Love only (Fulford 1862, 181).

Fulford's use of first person from the perspective of Guinevere is, I suggest, calculated and aims to make the reader more readily sympathetic to her plight. Furthermore, the reproach of Arthur by Guinevere makes Fulford's poem rare in its denial of Guinevere as solely culpable and in its undermining of the typically unblemished character of King Arthur. The poem adds depth to a story that was often held up as an authoritative medievalist example of the strict binary of good and bad womanhood, suggesting that the actions of other people came into play to muddy these distinctions.

Though little known and much less studied[18], a play entitled *Launcelot of the Lake: A Tragedy in Five Acts* (1848), by novelist, dramatist and political writer Christopher James Riethmuller, is culturally revealing for its similarly forgiving attitude towards the adultery of Guinevere. There is little information on C.J. Riethmuller, as he was not particularly well known even in his time, but it is known that he published a number of works, including plays, poems and general writing, between the years of 1843 and 1883 (Reilly 2000, Lacy, Ashe et al. 2008), including his only medievalist work, *Launcelot of the Lake*, published though unperformed, in 1843.

[18] It was examined in Simpson's *Camelot Regained* (1990), but mostly in regard to its depiction of Arthur.

The play refrains from assigning culpability to Guinevere alone. In one instance, Dragonet, a fool, comments on the age difference between Guinevere and Arthur. Their incompatible ages are held up as a reason for Guinevere's betrayal of her husband, and Arthur becomes the epitome of an archetypal cuckold when Dragonet states: 'what a mooncalf's man! Here's an old king, who weds a maid just fitted for his daughter, wondering, that she should go the way of her sex' (Riethmuller 1843). Here, Dragonet provides a strange and contradictory argument about who is to blame, both condemning Guinevere (and women) for being naturally promiscuous, while simultaneously suggesting that the bad match made by Arthur also played a part. This depiction shifts the responsibility solely away from Guinevere, suggesting that Arthur played a role in her adulterous actions and the subsequent decay of the kingdom.

As with Fulford and Riethmuller, little has been said about Sir Charles Bruce in modern scholarship, particularly regarding his medievalist and literary accomplishments. Indeed, in Barczewski's (2000) seminal work on Victorian Arthuriana, she mentions Bruce only in passing, speaking simply of the 'tacit sympathy' that he shows for Guinevere in his poem 'Queen Guinevere and Sir Lancelot of the Lake' (Bruce 1865). Bruce's poem, I contend, deserves to be more than an addendum to discussions on other works, as it provides a singular portrayal in defence of Guinevere as adulterous queen.

Bruce's education and work life provide some insight into his interest in the medieval. He studied philology in Germany and worked as assistant librarian at the

British Museum in 1863 (Reilly 2000). That he was educated in Germany perhaps sheds light on why his poem 'Queen Guinevere and Sir Lancelot' was based on a German text, *Lancelot und Ginerva* (1860), by Wilhelm Hertz. Furthermore, although he was educated as a philology scholar, Bruce's primary occupation was that of colonial administrator in Africa and India. Upon returning to Britain in his retirement, according to Katherine W. Reilly (2000), Bruce worked for the betterment of the condition of Indian immigrants in the Crown Colonies. This contextual information is revealing of Bruce's political and social beliefs and might have mirrored his opinions on the inequitable status of women in his society and, by extension, his portrayal of Guinevere.

In Bruce's poem, the adulterous romance between Guinevere and Lancelot is acknowledged but essentially pardoned. As in Riethmuller's play, absolution comes out in the poem's focus on the incompatibility of Guinevere and Arthur. Bruce cites their difference in age as one of these irreconcilable differences, saying: 'A weary old man she had wed/ A green graft on a tree long dead' (Bruce 1865, 6). Furthermore, Guinevere's lust and passion for life, joined to her youthfulness, are presented as creating a divide between her and Arthur.

Later in the poem, in a scene reminiscent of Morris's *The Defence of Guenevere,* the queen is brought before a court of knights to face charges of adultery. As she stands before her hostile accusers, Guinevere's defence is that she has broken the laws of man, not the laws of god, in loving Lancelot. Calling upon contemporary arguments about the law unfairly benefitting men, she states: 'I broke the book-laws that ye

plan/ So wisely for the guild of man' (Bruce 1865, 33-34). This section openly critiques gendered legal bias but also perhaps pertains to broader patriarchal structures and mores employed to subjugate women. The progressive treatment of gender discourse in this poem is irrefutable and, I believe, rivals that of Morris's *The Defence of Guenevere*.

Thirty years later, in 1895, the critic and playwright Joseph Williams Comyns Carr premiered his play *King Arthur: A Drama in a Prologue and Four Acts* at the Lyceum theatre (Ward 1887, Haught 2014). Though it is in many ways vastly different from Bruce's poem, Carr's play nevertheless poses similar arguments about the shared liability over the demise of Cameliard (Camelot). Carr's work, decades later, demonstrates not only the recurrence of compassionate portrayals of the adulterous queen in the nineteenth century but also the longevity of this practice.

Carr's *King Arthur* has received little scholarly attention[19], perhaps due in part to the ephemeral nature of theatre, which sometimes makes sourcing plays difficult. At the time of its release, however, Carr's play was well liked and well known. It toured England, America and Canada, famously accompanied by music composed by Arthur Sullivan and costumes and backdrops designed by Pre-Raphaelite artist Edward Burne-Jones (Goodman 1984, Poulson 1986, Haught 2014). Commissioned by the actor Henry Irving, Carr's play was initially intended as a theatrical interpretation of Tennyson's *Idylls*; however, Carr decided to deviate from Tennyson, claiming to have

[19] The play was substantially analysed for the first time in 2014 by Leah Haught, in her study on nostalgia and medievalism.

found inspiration from Malory instead (Haught 2014). In fact, the play bears little resemblance to either work.

Leah Haught (2014) has argued that Carr's play concentrates culpability on the figure of Guinevere, and indeed the play does begin with a prophetic vision by Merlin that warns Arthur against marrying Guinevere, accompanied by a repeated refrain from the chorus of 'Love and beauty, hope and fear,/ Wait for thee in Guinevere' (Carr 1895). The play, however, goes on to present a number of other factors as contributors to the dismantling of Camelot, such as the jealousy of other knights and the machinations of Mordred and Morgan le Fay. Arthur, too, receives his fair share of the blame. He is directly credited with thwarting Guinevere and Lancelot's attempt to distance themselves from one another to avoid temptation. Upon confessing their love for one another, Lancelot and Guinevere agree that Lancelot must leave the kingdom, but Arthur, confused and upset at Lancelot leaving, forces Guinevere's hand and makes her order Lancelot to stay, telling her: 'Nay, I command thee – speak as I would speak!' (Carr 1895). Lancelot and Guinevere's resulting transgressions are somewhat mitigated as a result of this addition by Carr, as the lovers are shown as having tried to selflessly remedy the problem. Further, Arthur bears some of the blame for forcing the two of them together against their will.

Arthur's guilt is further stressed, in a similar way to Bruce's poem (1865), through the description of him as a cold, reserved and neglectful husband. A scene between Guinevere and Arthur has her appeal to him about the sad state of their marriage, which he dismisses as an unavoidable casualty of his reign:

> GUINEVERE: Then thou art sure. Thou art all happy?
>
> ARTHUR: Nay, how canst thou ask?
>
> GUINEVERE. A little field-flower, lighted by a star, stands but a tiny speck beneath that lamp which shines o'er half the world: yet once it dreamed that this great beacon light was all its own. 'Tis long since thou hast spoken of thy love, dost know how long?
>
> ARTHUR: That is the fate of kings, whose lives are as a picture for the world, not for their own content. When we were wed, I dreamed of many an hour when we would sit, thy hand in mine, recalling that sweet day when, like a flash of sunlight through the trees, I saw thy face at Cameliard; but now the busy hours slip by, each new day brings its burden of new duty, and our loves are too long silent (Carr 1895).

Arthur and his duties as king are presented as the source of marital discord in a vein that is similar to a Victorian domestic scene. Thus, in a way it is Arthur's failings as a husband, not Guinevere's as a wife, that are seen as weakening the shaky foundations of their marriage and, by extension, the kingdom of Cameliard. When understood within the longer tradition of portraying Guinevere as the sole source of societal destruction, this is a truly significant alteration.

Published over fifteen years later, Henry Gilbert's retelling of Malory's *Morte Darthur* for children, *King Arthur's Knights: The Tales Retold for Boys and Girls* (1911), takes the act of blaming Arthur a step further than even Carr and Bruce.

Gilbert was undoubtedly swayed by the need to cater to a young audience; nevertheless, the book mentions 'rumours' associated with Guinevere and Lancelot (and Gawain), which are, furthermore, staunchly denied. In Gilbert's retelling, Arthur, who at first disbelieves the gossip about Guinevere's infidelity with Lancelot, is later convinced of their wrongdoing by fabricated evidence brought to him by Mordred. The typical deceptions, battles and rescues ensue, until Arthur comes to the realisation, on his deathbed at the hands of Mordred, that he has been deceived about his wife and Lancelot. Arthur shows remorse for the 'wicked war' (Gilbert and Malory 1911) wrought by his misplaced suspicion, saying, 'my evil deeds have sprung up as armed men against me' (Gilbert and Malory 1911, 351). Arthur's feelings of regret are directed solely at Lancelot, suggesting that his remorse stems from breaking homosocial pacts rather than marital bonds, and this serves to position the unjust treatment of Guinevere as inconsequential. Though undeniably masculinist in this way, Gilbert's retelling nevertheless displays its progressive underpinnings by actively undermining the practice of assigning sole culpability to Guinevere and having Arthur openly acknowledge his part in the demise of his kingdom.

The act of destabilising the discourse of Guinevere as destructive adulteress is present in only one example of visual art of the period, William Dyce's 'Mercy, Sir Gawaine Swearing to Be Merciful and Never Be Against Ladis' (1849).[20] Not only does this work not abide by the trope of Guinevere as destructive force, but it in fact portrays her as a positive force of social harmony and order.

[20] Plate 5

In 1834 the Palace of Westminster was completely destroyed by fire, and in 1840 work started on its complete reconstruction. In 1847 the Fine Arts Commission, a board headed by Prince Albert, was in charge of overseeing the decoration of the new palace (Boase 1954, Simpson 1990, Mancoff 1994). The board believed that the building should reflect a sense of British pride and prestige[21], and this resulted in the production of a series of Arthurian frescoes, which still adorn the Queen's Robing Room.

Dyce, a revered Irish painter and director of the New Government School of Design at Somerset House, was assigned the prestigious commission of decorating the processional route from the Robing Room to the House of Lords (as studied by Boase 1954, Mancoff 1994). In discussion with Prince Albert, he came to the conclusion that the Arthurian legends, in particular Malory's *Morte Darthur,* should be the subject of the commissioned work. This decision was based on the great contemporary interest the tales had generated, their antiquity and their 'national chivalrous character'. Dyce, however, had not read the tales prior to his taking up the commission, and a quick reading revealed to him that certain aspects hardly lent themselves to use in the Queen's Robing Room. As a result, Dyce felt compelled to heavily edit the legends, censoring them and expelling from his version anything that could be seen as offensive or inappropriate. He achieved this objective by executing the legend as a series of allegorical messages.

[21] A perfect example of British nationalistic medievalism in the nineteenth century and its push to romanticise (at whatever cost) Britain's medieval past

A number of Dyce's frescoes include the figure of Guinevere, but the most arresting representation of her is in 'Mercy' (1849). The piece associates Guinevere with religious iconography, paralleling medieval and Renaissance images of what Gertrud Schiller (1971) calls the 'divinely merciful' Jesus by depicting her standing in front of a throne, proffering a hand of clemency. The scene is taken directly from book three of Malory's *Morte* and displays clemency being shown by Guinevere to the kneeling figure of Sir Gawaine, forgiving him his evil deeds towards women and imposing upon him a new role as protector of ladies. Fundamentally, the image is one in which Guinevere enforces law and order in the kingdom. The image sits in stark contrast to the representation of Guinevere as destroyer of social cohesion that, through the work of Tennyson, would later become intrinsic to her characterisation.

Though often understood as overwhelmingly homogenous[22] in its use and understanding of Guinevere, British art and literature of the nineteenth century actually display a varied uptake of the Arthurian queen. Her adultery, which even now is seen as an irrevocable part of Guinevere's story, was also shaped by this multifaceted approach to the legends, reflecting and assigning layers of subtlety to debates around marriage, female sexuality and women that were taking place at the time. The medievalness of Guinevere in these works in many ways took a back seat to her presentism and/or universalisation in regard to modern debates on gender discourses. Authors and visual artists, however, undeniably understood and carried with them the historical weight of the Guinevere character, using her historicity as a

[22] With the exception of Morris, of course.

medieval figure to lend authenticity to both conservative and progressive ideas around female sexual and social mores.

Guinevere as seductress

Debates in art and literature around Guinevere's role as destructive adulterer ran parallel to discussions about her role as a dangerous seductress. Though afforded less attention than her characterisation as adulteress, in a number of artistic and literary works of the period Guinevere was isolated from her role as sinful queen and wife, becoming instead a more abstracted symbol of the innate dangers posed by female sexuality. In these instances, the medieval Guinevere functioned as a warning against uncontrolled feminine sexuality for modern women, in a way that had less to do with larger structural concerns about societal unity and more to do with notions of feminine desire as abnormal, sinister and threatening to the morality of men.

These sexualised representations of Guinevere abound in the art and literature of the period and echo key aspects of nineteenth-century gender mores and laws. At this time, prevailing discourse argued that male and female sexuality were fundamentally different and that, unlike men, 'good' women were free from sexual desire. This belief was supported in a vast number of scientific studies of the time, by anatomists, biologists, gynaecologists and psychologists (as examined by Matus 1995). A key work in support of gendered sexual difference and the notion of dormant female sexuality was *The Functions and Disorders of the Reproductive Organs* (1857) by William Acton. Acton's book, though of course countered by the

opinions of other medical professionals, affirmed a number of already entrenched views on the nature of female sexual desire, especially the notion that healthy women were essentially sexless.

The Contagious Diseases Acts (CDAs) of 1864, 1866 and 1869 (Hall 2004, Hayden 2013) are a key example of the way the law reflected concerns about the sexuality of women. The CDAs, which arose out of an effort to counteract the high rates of venereal disease in the British army (as argued by Hayden 2013), called for the regulation of prostitution as a solution to this problem. Under these acts, according to Ben Griffin, 'any woman merely suspected of being a prostitute could be subjected to forcible medical examination and confined in a hospital for treatment against her will' (2012, 5). Underpinning the CDAs was prejudice against women who engaged in sexual activities outside the accepted confines of marriage, positing that sexualised women were deviant and sick and that they did not deserve the same rights afforded the rest of society.

The central motivating factor behind the systematic denigration of the sexualised woman, and the concurrent celebration of the chaste woman, according to Rosamund Billington (1982) and Jill L. Matus (1995), was the fear of legally and socially unregulated female bodies. The female body, unlike the male body, was characterised by its constantly changing nature (menstruation, pregnancy and menopause) and so it was believed that it needed more stringent regulation. Further, the primary role of the female body was seen to be reproductive, and so

fears about adultery and the potential of illegitimacy of children influenced this need for control.

Such an interpretation of feminine sexuality and its link with the figure of Guinevere first appears in Tennyson's early Arthurian composition 'Sir Launcelot and Queen Guenevere', published in his 1830 collection *Poems, Chiefly Lyrical.* In contrast to Mancoff's statement that this work 'displays none of the condemnation of the lovers found in the later *Idylls*' (Mancoff 1992, 91), I hold that the poem displays outright censure of the figure of Guinevere, specifically in regard to her sexuality. The poem centres principally on descriptive passages about a beautiful forest coming to life in the springtime. The depiction of the forest in spring mirrors the awakening desires of Guinevere and Lancelot, who ride through the landscape. The natural world coming into bloom is directly linked with the figure of Guinevere, who it is said 'seem'd a part of joyous spring' (Tennyson 2012, 7). This image refers to her blossoming beauty but could also pertain to her burgeoning sexuality.

The description of the romanticised forest and the lovers is disrupted at the poem's end by the outright condemnation of this awakening desire in Guinevere. The concluding line represents Guinevere as the corrupter of Lancelot, saying that he: 'had given all other bliss,/ And all his worldly worth for this,/ To waste his whole heart in one kiss/ Upon her perfect lips' (Tennyson 2012, 7). Launcelot is portrayed as 'wasting' his heart on Guinevere and giving up all his 'worldly worth' in loving her, and the beautiful Guinevere is presented as the impetus for the degradation of Lancelot's moral and social standing. This portrayal of Guinevere's dangerous

sensuality invites comparison with a long tradition, finding its origins in the Genesis story of Adam and Eve, through to Edmund Spenser's 'Bower of Bliss' in *The Faerie Queen* (1590) and John Keats' 'La Belle Dame Sans Merci' (1819), wherein a mystical lady of the forest uses her sexuality and beauty to entice and entrap wandering knights. Like these fairy creatures, Tennyson's Guinevere seduces Sir Lancelot among the flowers and trees and traps him with her feminine wiles.

Published under the name of Owen Meredith in 1855, Edward Bulwer-Lytton's poem 'Queen Guinevere' is directly comparable to Tennyson's 'Sir Launcelot and Queen Guenevere' in its treatment of female sexuality and its aim to universalise this treatment through the medievalness of the Arthurian legend. Both Tennyson's and Meredith/Bulwer-Lytton's poems are set in beautiful landscapes; both connect Guinevere with nature; and, most significantly, both describe Guinevere's womanly beauty and sexuality as a snare for men. The poem reads like a dream vision, where the persona, compelled by 'A strange desire that drew me like a hand' (Meredith 1882, 383), comes upon Queen Guinevere in a forest. The beautiful queen sits upon a bejewelled throne, clad in a green kirtle to match the 'sea-green' grass at her feet. Upon her face is an expression of knowing sensuality, described as 'a pause of slumberous beauty, o'er the light/ Of some delicious thought new-risen above/ The deeps of passion' (Meredith 1882, 383). The sexualised Guinevere is presented as drawing men to her in a way that is both mysterious and inescapable, like men drawn to adventures by 'strange legends and the light of the stars' (Meredith 1882, 383). I concur with Barczewski (2000) that the poem works to pardon Lancelot for his

role in the adulterous betrayal of Arthur, presenting the sexual allure of Guinevere as something against which man is essentially powerless.

Dramatically similar to Tennyson and Bulwer-Lytton's poems in its depiction of the dangerous sexuality of Guinevere is an 1899 poem by Elinor Sweetman, published in her collection *Pastorals and Other Poems*, entitled 'The Pastoral of Lancelot'. Sweetman, Irish-born and educated in Belgium and England (Murphy 1997), was a poet and musician who was widely published in the nineteenth century but has since been all but forgotten. Indeed, little information is available on her other than infrequent mention of her in studies of her better-known sister, the novelist Mary Sweetman (aka M. E. Francis). Nevertheless, inclusion of Sweetman's 'The Pastoral of Lancelot' in examinations of Guinevere in the nineteenth century is vital because it links to an under-examined trend that analysed Guinevere beyond the role of adulterous wife and queen.

As in the comparable works of Tennyson and Bulwer-Lytton, Sweetman's poem is set in an intricately and sumptuously described forest. Nature is symbolised throughout the piece as a fawn. The creature is described as 'a soulless fawn' and, in reference to the grail quest unfolding before the creature, the persona asks:

> What should he [the fawn] know of doleful Calvary?
> Of Jewish spear, or of the Riven Side
> That fills the chalice of the Crucified? (Sweetman 1899, 43-53).

In effect, nature is presented as the antithesis of religious enlightenment. Furthermore, the natural world is depicted as a baleful force with the potential to overpower and ensnare men. A pivotal example of this is when the forest lulls Lancelot into forgetting his religious mission of finding the Sangreal:

> "O Lancelot," sighed the branches overhead,
> "Come rest awhile: the Grail is not in sight."
> "O Lancelot," lisped the grasses, "make thy bed
> Here on the kindly earth; forget renown
> And thy sick soul of all but dream discrown" (Sweetman 1899, 43-53).

Description of the voices using sibilant words like 'lisping' and 'sighing' heightens the ominous and sinister atmosphere of the poem. Lancelot, drawn by the voices of nature, falls asleep in the grass, forgetting his religious quest, dreaming instead of Guinevere:

> Sir Lancelot lieth in the lone green-wood,
> Sir Lancelot wrestleth in the tall grass-spears:
> Fain would he think upon the Holy Rood,
> And Christ's red cup, and sweet Saint Mary's tears;
> But then come memories of the balmy lips
> And the soft eyelids that are Guinevere's--
> He dreams, and as he dreams, wild apple dips

Her brooding boughs, and flowers of milk and blood

Between his strong convulsèd heart and God (Sweetman 1899, 43-53).

The description of Guinevere is charged with eroticism and, through the interweaving of this depiction of her with the natural world, she is united with what has been set up as a sinister force, lacking in religiosity. Moreover, the image of the apple, a symbol of sin borrowed from biblical tradition, is mentioned twice, heightening the notion of Guinevere as a wicked influence of a kind that can be charted throughout history. The first instance of this motif is an image of an apple tree, personified in female gender-specific pronouns, which physically blocks Lancelot from god by dipping 'Her brooding boughs, and flowers of milk and blood/ Between his strong convulsèd heart and God' (Sweetman 1899, 43-53). In another example, the poem uses the apple as a symbol of temptation: 'Since love's sweet apple hangs so low,/ Shall I not strongly grasp and count it gain?' (Sweetman 1899, 43-53). In both instances, the apple is mentioned when speaking of the effect of Guinevere on Lancelot, connecting Guinevere with original sin and the fall of man.

The poem culminates in Galahad finding the grail and receiving religious enlightenment, while Lancelot sleeps, dreaming of Guinevere. Because of the trap set by nature, which is inextricably linked with the figure of Guinevere, Lancelot does not reach spiritual enlightenment. Thus, the crux of the poem is a message – permeated with both biblical and medievalist influences – about the ubiquitous godlessness and dangers of the sexualised woman.

Knowles's children's book *The Story of King Arthur* (1862) was published decades earlier than Sweetman's but, as in Sweetman's poem, Knowles presents Guinevere as the cause of Lancelot's spiritual failings. Knowles's retelling of Lancelot's quest for the Sangreal ends with Lancelot finding the grail but being unworthy of it. Weeping, Lancelot confesses his sins to a hermit, admitting that he 'had for fourteen years served but Queen Guinevere only, and forgotten God, and done great deeds of arms for her, and not for Heaven' (Knowles and Speed 1862). Knowles positions Guinevere as a false idol and an obstacle to Lancelot's religiosity, suggesting that their adulterous relationship directly controverted god's will. That Knowles portrays Lancelot as remorseful, and that he later heaps liability solely onto Guinevere for the downfall of Camelot (as examined previously), suggests that he saw Guinevere as the instigator of the sinful actions of the lovers. In this way, Guinevere's sexuality is presented as a destructive force in regard to the morality and spirituality of Lancelot and the kingdom of Camelot as a whole. Again, I believe this theme was taken up in regard to the medieval Guinevere purposely, as a means to chart through history, and so legitimise, modern anxieties around unrestrained female sexuality.

Visual art of the nineteenth century also engaged, though only rarely, in discussions on the notion of Guinevere, and women as a whole, as sinister sexual beings. Dante Gabriel Rossetti took up the topic in two works. One of these, an Oxford Union Mural entitled 'Lancelot's Vision of the Sangreal' (1857)[23], illustrates the scene where Lancelot is denied the grail. Though faded, the painting is still visible on the walls of the Oxford University debating hall. The work, like James Knowles's *The*

[23] Plate 6

Legend of King Arthur, uses the tale of Lancelot's failed quest for the Sangreal to examine the poisonous power of the sexualised woman. The figure of Guinevere dominates the composition, arms outstretched, physically separating Lancelot from religious fulfilment, symbolised by a richly decorated cluster of angels that fill the left side of the work. Guinevere drapes her arms in the boughs of an apple tree, which associates the painting with the biblical temptation story and Guinevere with the figure of Eve. The image of a serpent on Launcelot's coat of arms emphasises this allusion.

Rossetti took up the subject of Guinevere's dangerous sexuality again in 1857, in 'Lancelot in the Queen's Chamber'[24], a pen and ink drawing of a design that was intended to adorn another wall in the debating hall at Oxford. As in 'Lancelot's Vision', Guinevere is the central and dominating figure in the image, but she, at first glance, appears to be far more sympathetically portrayed. The image depicts the episode when Lancelot and Guinevere's adultery is exposed in Guinevere's bedchamber. Guinevere is beautifully rendered, clutching her breast in fear as her maids cower behind her and Launcelot prepares for battle against Arthur's coming army. Guinevere, beautiful even in her fear, incites compassion in the viewer. Any sympathy afforded her, however, is mitigated by the fact that the work was meant to decorate the same walls as Rossetti's 'Lancelot's Vision', an image that portrays Guinevere in a blatantly negative light. Furthermore, the inclusion of the motif of an apple tree, bizarrely transplanted into the bedroom between Launcelot and the oncoming army, suggests that inciting compassion was not Rossetti's objective. The

[24] Plate 7

apple tree that separates Lancelot from his fellow knights works to symbolise the distance between the men wrought by the acts of adultery against the king. That Rossetti's other mural, 'Lancelot's Vision', connects Guinevere so directly with the apple tree and its symbolism of sinful temptation suggests that the tree is used in both pieces as an emblem of the dangerous and destructive sexuality of Guinevere.

In reaction to these literary and artistic representations of Guinevere as dangerous seductress, a number of works were produced that defy this portrayal of her. These works instead depicted the sexuality of Guinevere as something admirable and natural, or else worked to challenge the negative trope by instead critiquing masculine sexuality. This facet of Guinevere's representation has been almost totally ignored in the scholarship, to the detriment of our understanding of the truly varied nature of Guinevere's reception and representation in the nineteenth century.

Three years after Tennyson's 'Sir Lancelot and Queen Guinevere' was written (in 1830), the poem 'A Legend of Tintagel Castle' (1833), by Letitia Elizabeth Landon, was published. The poem eerily mirrors Tennyson's work, though she almost certainly wouldn't have read the poem, as it wasn't published until 1842. Unlike Tennyson's poem, Landon's works as an indictment of the destructive nature of men, not women.

Landon, who often wrote under the pseudonym of L.E.L., was a much-admired poet in the nineteenth century. Though widely read and known in the 1800s, however, her work came to be regarded as overly sentimental and simplistic in the twentieth century, resulting in her falling into relative obscurity. The opinion, common for

much of the twentieth century, was that Landon's work was naïve, uncritical and of little scholarly interest. Landon's 'A Legend of Tintagel'[25] is a prime example of how this opinion is unfounded. Indeed, despite its relative obscurity, Landon's 'Legend of Tintagel' is important for its contrast to the character of Guinevere as propagated later by Tennyson. The poem follows a similar thematic structure as the works of Tennyson, Bulwer-Lytton and Sweetman, concentrating on a beautiful, natural setting and its connection to a female figure. Landon, however, differs in presenting Lancelot, not Guinevere, as the central antagonist of the piece, positioning him, and essentially all men, as the blight of women.

The poem opens on the figure of Lancelot riding his horse through an enchanted forest, where he comes upon a beautiful nymph. The wood-nymph, contrary to the received literary tradition, falls in love and is ensnared by Lancelot. When Lancelot leaves, lured away by trumpets calling men to arms, the nymph is left alone to mourn and await his return, which never comes. Landon universalises this image of the nymph waiting for Lancelot, saying: 'And the wood-nymph was left as aye woman will be,/ Who trusts her whole being, oh, false love, to thee' (Landon 1833, 9). This line perhaps works a comment on the entrenched passivity of women enforced by social, cultural and legal structures, from the medieval to the modern. It could also be read as Landon's rebuttal of negative portrayals of female sexuality, instead highlighting what she understood as problems of masculine sexuality: namely, men's propensity for infidelity and fickle affection.

[25] Examined for the first time by Roger Simpson (1990), but not in regard to gender discourse, and otherwise ignored in scholarship on Victorian Arthuriana.

As the nymph awaits Lancelot's return, she is unaware of the love that Lancelot has now bestowed on a new lady, Genevra (Guinevere). Genevra is not described as 'the other woman' or as the adulterous queen (in fact, Arthur is not mentioned in the poem) but is instead linked with the nymph in womanly solidarity. Both women are portrayed as not knowing about the other and therefore any criticism is removed from Genevra and laid squarely at Lancelot's feet. The presence of yet another betrayed woman, the poor maid of Astolat, drives home the poem's condemnation of Lancelot. The maid sails down the stream on her deathly bier, landing on a riverbed at the feet of Genevra:

> There was many a fair dame, and many a knight,
> Made the banks of the river like fairy-land bright;
> And among those whose shadow was cast on the tide,
> Was Lancelot kneeling near Genevra's side
> With purple sails heavily drooping around,
> The mast, and the prow, with the vale lily bound;
> And towed by two swans, a small vessel drew near,
> But high on the deck was a pall-covered bier (Landon 1833, 9).

All three women are linked in this scene through the image of the river, the nymph having met Lancelot at the water's edge, and Guinevere standing there as the lily maid floats towards her. The water works as a metaphor, symbolising their shared experience of being betrayed by Lancelot.

Not wanting her poem to serve simply as a story about these three women and their betrayal, Landon sought to use the medieval tale to discuss what she saw as the collectively cruel nature of men. Imagery throughout the poem associates women with the delicate flowers that litter the forest floor, which are then destroyed by Lancelot: 'the flowers of the forest were many and sweet,/ […] crushed at each step by his proud courser's feet' (Landon 1833, 8). This image succinctly symbolises Landon's view on man's cruelly indifferent treatment of women.

Extending the metaphor of women as flowers, Landon suggests that it is the natural character of men, not women, that leads to problems in society, stating that the women of her tale:

> Might have been happy, if love could but learn
> A lesson from some flowers, and like their leaves turn
> Round their own inward world, their own lone fragrant nest,
> Content with its sweetness, content with its rest (Landon 1833, 8).

The poem here seems to argue that men should follow women's lead, in loyalty and contentment, when it comes to matters of love. Landon's work performs a subversion of the Arthurian story, where Lancelot's sexual shortcomings are presented as problematic, not Guinevere's.

While not as openly critical as Landon, there are a small number of works, both literary and artistic, that challenge the notion of Guinevere's destructive feminine

desire by portraying her sexuality positively. This is certainly so of the forgotten poem 'Queen Guennivar's Round', first published in 1841 in the magazine *All the Year Round*, by the antiquarian, poet and Anglican priest Robert Stephen Hawker. Though Guinevere is absent within the poem, the fact that the work is named after her suggests that she is the archetype for the kinds of women venerated in the piece. The poem celebrates Cornwall's 'bounding daughters' (Hawker 1899, 102) with their 'fair forms and thrilling voices' (Hawker 1899, 102), calling them Britain's version of the 'naiad' and the 'nymph'. Although these creatures are traditionally associated with sinister sensuality, they are not depicted by Hawker as dangerous sirens but rather are employed to praise Cornwall's women for their mystical beauty. Instead of corruption and moral degeneracy, the women of the piece are said to inspire joy and pride:

> The wild wind proudly gathers
> Round the ladies of the land;
> And the blue wave of their fathers
> Is joyful where they stand (Hawker 1899, 102).

Hawker's celebration of the women of Cornwall was undoubtedly influenced by the fact that he was born and lived there for most of his life. His use of Guinevere as archetype for local woman, which was undoubtedly shaped by a growth in tourism and claims of ownership around the Arthurian legend that flourished in the area at this time (as examined by Barczewski 2000, Batey 2010), suggests that he saw

Guinevere as an appropriate figure to represent the best of his region, questioning the usual censure of her.

Decades later, in 1914, Wilfrid Wilson Gibson, known for his work as a poet of the First World War, published his poem 'The Queen's Crags' in a collection entitled *Borderlands and Thoroughfares*, which concedes the sexuality of Guinevere but posits it, like Hawker, as something admirable, not sinister. Gibson's poem, unexamined before now, reads as a dialogue between two young men, George and Michael, as they sit atop a rock formation in the English Lake District, known as 'the Queen's Crags'. The poem imagines that Michael has seen queen Guinevere on the crags and consists of him retelling his story to a disbelieving George.

Michael says that he first saw Guinevere when he was a boy on Midsummer Eve, a time of year connected with nature, magic and sexual freedom. He describes a scene where, while he was playing on the crags, a vicious storm came over, forcing him to hide in a cave. Within the cave he is said to have come across queen Guinevere, dressed in rich furs and spinning wool by a fire. Years later, on another trip to the crags on Midsummer, Michael says that he came across the queen again:

> She sat upon a little hill and sang
> And combed her long red hair beside the lough –
> Just sitting like a leveret in the sun
> To sleek its fur –
> And all about her grey snipe darted drumming.

She combed her long red hair

That tumbled down her shoulders,

Her long hair red as bracken,

As bracken in October,

And with a gleam of wind in it,

A light of running water (Gibson 1914).

The queen's sensual beauty is described in images relating to nature: bracken, wind, leveret (hare), fur, and water, mirroring Tennyson's, Bulwer-Lytton's, Sweetman's and Rossetti's portrayals of her. She is eroticised, combing her long hair like a siren on the rocks. Unlike the others, however, Gibson portrays her as a serene figure, removed from sinister connotations and notions of moral decay. Guinevere's sensuality, consumed by the voyeuristic Michael, is portrayed as benign, inciting awe and admiration, not censure. The removal of Guinevere from a medieval Arthurian setting is also interesting, and it speaks to the universalisation of her character, beyond the medieval.

Gibson's portrayal of Guinevere echoes a painting entitled 'Guinevere'[26] (1910) by Henry Justice Ford. Ford was a prolific artist and illustrator, his career spanning from the 1880s to the 1920s. Ford's 'Guinevere' was painted in 1910 and has been excluded from all examinations of artistic renderings of Guinevere. The work, despite being neglected in the scholarship, is significant in its rather rare, positive portrayal of Guinevere's sexuality.

[26] Plate 8

Ford's 'Guinevere' depicts the beautiful queen washing in a stream, her hands raised to arrange her red hair beneath her crown. Standing in a pool of water, surrounded before an almost surrealist background of swirling rocks and torrents of water, the figure could easily be interpreted as a sensual water nymph. The image is unreservedly sexual, the draping of Guinevere's gown drawing the eye to the curves of her body and her raised arms framing her exposed décolletage. The subject of the work, Guinevere bathing, accentuates the eroticism of the image but, as in Hawker's and Gilbert's portrayals, Guinevere's sensuality is celebrated, not condemned. The viewer is positioned to appreciate the feminine form, not fear it. Furthermore, in Ford's image, Guinevere is afforded more autonomy than in Gilbert's and Hawker's works, meeting the eye of the viewer and tacitly acknowledging her sensuality. The image thus reads as an unapologetic acknowledgement of Guinevere as a sexual being.

Moving away from this association of Guinevere with fairies and nymphs but still employing the natural world to celebrate her sensuality is John Collier's painting 'Queen Guinevere's Maying' (1897).[27] Collier was a renowned English artist and art critic of the nineteenth century and his works, influenced greatly by John Everett Millais (as examined by Pollock 1914, Ashton 2007-2015), have a style reminiscent of the Pre-Raphaelites, which would explain his interest in medieval subjects. Though he explored a number of medieval scenes, stories and images, Collier took up an

[27] Plate 9

Arthurian subject only once, adapting the well-known episode from book nineteen of Malory's *Morte*, where Guinevere rides out to celebrate May Day.

Though Collier was not conspicuously engaged in political and social debates on female sex and gender, his painting 'Queen Guinevere's Maying' (1897) is a sound example of a positive representation of Guinevere and female sexuality. The image shows Guinevere riding through a copse of trees in springtime, which, as discussed earlier, arouses ideas around fertility and sexuality. None the less, the painting's depiction of Guinevere, wearing white and sitting atop a white horse surrounded by white flowers, screams of symbolic purity and chastity. Furthermore, the arresting and almost challenging look that Guinevere wears adds another layer to this representation of female sexuality. Her level gaze, rendered in a similar vein to Ford's 'Guinevere', unashamedly positions her as an autonomous figure of feminine desire.

A similar and also overlooked image was included in an illustrated edition of Malory's *Morte Darthur* by the Scottish painter William Russell Flint. Flint's illustration, entitled 'So the Queen had Mayed and all her Knights were Bedashed with Herbs' (1910)[28], quoting from book nineteen of Malory's *Morte*, portrays the beautiful queen covered in wildflowers as she sits talking to one of her ladies. The painting portrays Guinevere 'maying' in spring and so, as in Collier's work, the piece is woven with connotations of fertility and sensuality. The image shows Guinevere innocently conversing while white flowers adorn her head and body, imparting an air

[28] Plate 10

of purity and whimsy to the work. Thus, the representation of Guinevere's sensuality in the piece is coloured by undertones of purity and sentimentality, challenging works that sought to render her sexuality as dangerous and sinful. Aubrey Beardsley also included a rendering of this scene in his illustrations for the J.M Dent edition of the *Morte* (1893)[29]. In his version, Guinevere and her companions, dressed all in white and riding white horses across a field of white flowers, stand in stark contrast to the black backdrop, again placing emphasis on symbols of purity.

Morris's *The Defence of Guenevere* defies this sentimental rendering of Guinevere's sexuality in association with nature, but in a way that nonetheless seeks to represent female sensuality positively. As Guenevere presents her defence before her accusers, she is described in uncompromisingly erotic language, most clearly in the description of her 'full lips' (Morris 1921, 4), which drink her tears, and the 'passionate twisting of her body' (Morris 1921, 4). The sensual femininity of Guenevere, however, is not described as negative or base but as appealing, making her even more sympathetic in her arresting beauty and femininity.

Jessie M. King, a Scottish artist in the Art Nouveau style, influenced greatly by the works of Aubrey Beardsley and best known for her illustrations of children's stories and historical legends, illustrated Morris's *The Defence of Guenevere* in 1904. Her portrayals of Guenevere share the same empathetic eroticism of Morris's work. King's image entitled 'She Threw Her Wet Hair Back'[30] (Morris and King 1904) is a prime example of King's eroticisation of Guenevere. The image portrays Guenevere

[29] Plate 11
[30] Plate 12

with her hair loose, wavy and wet, invoking a long and well-examined history of loose-haired woman being emblematic of madness and sexual promiscuity (as has been studied by Chesler 1972, Gitter 1984, Steele 1985, Showalter 1987, Kromm 1994, Matus 1995, Kiefer 2002). Indeed, one could easily read the image as fully observing this symbolic censure of the sexualised Guenevere. The men in the background of the image, however, are depicted as looking away from the queen, which I suggest undercuts the notion of her sexuality acting as sinister trap for men. She is, in other words, an unconsciously beautiful figure, not a woman using her wiles to ensnare men. Thus, I contend that the image portrays an eroticised but not demonised Guenevere.

This delicate distinction, of Guinevere as eroticised but not demonised, is key to understanding the subtlety and variety of British characterisation of Guinevere in the nineteenth century. Furthermore, a more inclusive approach to examining the source material reveals this more balanced reception of Guinevere at the time.

Guinevere as a fallen woman

The representation of Guinevere as 'fallen woman' deserves examination separately from these other gendered aspects of her characterisation, as it has less to do with probing the question of 'bad' womanhood and more to do with punishing and shaming women for their putative 'badness'. In Western culture the concept of the fallen woman has it origins in the biblical story of the fall of Eve and her expulsion

from the Garden of Eden. Against this background, though at times fallenness was used as a religious category, according to Amanda Anderson in the nineteenth century it was also 'rearticulated to secular and scientific paradigms' (1993, 3) and came to be applied to any woman who had undertaken sexual activity outside of wedlock. It has been argued by Linda Nochlin (1978) that, by the middle of the nineteenth century, the idea of the fallen woman held a peculiar fascination, appearing widely in visual art, literature and critical works. These texts pivoted on the shame wrought by unacceptable feminine sexuality, and contemptuously, sometimes even gleefully, depicted the resulting disgrace and devastation.

Widely known and controversial in its day was Augustus Leopold Egg's untitled triptych on the fallen woman, exhibited at the Royal Academy in 1858. The work illustrates the discovery and subsequent ruin of an adulterous wife. One of the images in the triptych, since given the title of 'Misfortune'[31], shows the wife lying prostrate at the feet of her husband as he clutches a letter containing evidence of her betrayal. According to Nina Auerbach (1980, 1982), the prone form of the wife in Egg's painting became a pervasive image of the time, which was then taken up in the Arthurian Revival, firstly through the work of Tennyson and his *Idylls of the King.* I would add that Guinevere was prevalently and intentionally depicted in this way, directly inviting comparison with Egg's scathing series and lending historical authority to the popular nineteenth-century ideological impulse of shaming and denigrating the sexualised woman.

[31] Plate 13

A year after Egg's triptych first appeared at the Royal Academy, the first of Tennyson's *Idylls* (1859) was published. Within the *Idyll* of 'Guinevere', in an entirely original addition to the Arthurian canon, Tennyson has Arthur come to the nunnery to confront Guinevere. In the scene, Tennyson portrays the queen prostrate at Arthur's feet:

> […] prone from off her seat she fell,
> And grovelled with her face against the floor:
> There with her milkwhite arms and shadowy hair
> She made her face a darkness from the King (Tennyson 1896, 133).

The image evoked by this description echoes unmistakably the composition of Egg's rendering of the fallen woman in 'Misfortune' and revels in its total debasement of the regal queen, describing her as pathetically grovelling on the ground at his feet. Arthur admonishes Guinevere[32], telling her, 'I leave thee, woman, to thy shame' (Tennyson 1896, 135), punishing her with dishonour and humiliation. Despite this, Arthur is represented as a merciful Christ-like figure, saying, 'I forgive thee, as Eternal God forgives!' (Tennyson 1896, 136), highlighting the comparative immorality of Guinevere.

This image of Guinevere prostrate at Arthur's feet was repeated time and again in the nineteenth century in the visual arts, always in works illustrating this scene from Tennyson's *Idylls*. The first of these images is by James Archer, a painting entitled

[32] Examined in detail in the section on Guinevere as destructive adulteress.

'The Parting of Arthur and Guinevere' (1865)[33], now lost but preserved in an oil sketch. The image portrays the imposing Arthur, crowned, mailed and carrying a sword, standing above the prone body of Guinevere with a look of composed disapproval. Guinevere's loose and dishevelled clothing and body contrast starkly with the tranquil stance and regal attire of Arthur, portraying her as a pitiful, desperate figure. Furthermore, her hair is wild and loose, calling upon the tradition of loose-haired women as sexually deviant (a tradition that has been examined by Gitter 1984, Steele 1985, Matus 1995). Guinevere is both a reviled figure and an eroticised one, which reveals the sinister, misogynistic intent of the image – to revel in the humiliation of the fallen woman. Mancoff (1990) has studied Archer's painting as the sole artistic portrayal of this scene from Tennyson, but as can be seen from my discussion here of a number of other works, including neglected works, versions of this scene were more widespread than Mancoff has claimed.

Ten years after Archer's work, sculptor James Sherwood Westmacott produced 'Arthur and Guinevere' (1875)[34], a marble tableau of Tennyson's version of Guinevere and Arthur's parting. The work has received no scholarly attention but merits recognition as it mirrors exactly Archer's and Tennyson's depictions of her as a fallen woman. Arthur, garbed in flowing robes and an intricate crown, extends both hands over the cowering figure of Guinevere, who turns her head in shame. The robes worn by Arthur look classical, indeed biblical, and his outstretched hands echo medieval and renaissance images of Christ as absolver of sins and of the angel Gabriel in scenes of the Virgin's annunciation (a tradition that has been examined by

[33] Plate 14
[34] Plate 15

Schiller 1971). This image directly borrows from Tennyson's description of Arthur as a saintly, even Christ-like figure, and stresses Guinevere's disgrace and sinfulness.

Herbert Bone, tapestry designer and weaver (studied by Cullingham 1979), also produced an arrestingly similar rendering of this scene in a piece from his tapestry series illustrating Tennyson's *Idylls*, which were produced for a private collector in the 1870s and 80s. The work is entitled 'Guinevere' or 'Arthur Forgives Guinevere' (c.1881)[35] and again depicts Guinevere at the feet of her husband, her face hidden from view. Arthur, dressed in armour, stands above her, his outstretched hands mirroring those of Westmacott's sculpture. Arthur's Christ-like gestures against the background of a chapel, and the accompanying script from Tennyson, which reads, 'Lo, I forgive thee, as eternal God Forgives. Farewell,' accentuate Arthur's moral superiority and further debase the figure of Guinevere. Furthermore, Guinevere's unbound hair is sensually rendered. As in Archer's painting, it works as an image of eroticised female shame.

As a testament to the tenacity and popularity of this scene in Victorian Arthuriana, George Wolliscroft Rhead and his brother Louis Rhead, in their illustrated edition of the *Idylls* published in 1898[36], included a similar image. The Rhead edition is notable for including not one but two illustrations of Tennyson's description of the last meeting between Arthur and Guinevere. The first, an image entitled 'There with Her Milk White Arms and Shadowy Hair, She Made Her Face a Darkness from the King'

[35] Plate 16

[36] Published in New York and London as *Idylls of the King by Alfred Tennyson, Decorated and Illuminated by the Brothers Rhead*.

(1898)[37], portrays an ironclad Arthur standing with his hand on the hilt of his sword as Guinevere cowers on the floor at his feet. The image shows Arthur to be remote and unmoved by the pitiful figure of Guinevere. Her flowing hair and voluptuous figure are sensually depicted, as she makes herself submissive to the king, again emphasising the eroticism of feminine shame. The second illustration of the same scene by the Rhead brothers is titled 'I Did Not Come to Curse Thee, Guinevere' (1898)[38] and shows Arthur kneeling down to Guinevere as she clutches at his feet. This image celebrates the humanity and mercy of Arthur, while further highlighting the wretchedness of Guinevere. That the Rhead brothers took up this scene twice in one work testifies to the deep fascination with this scene of Guinevere's shame and humiliation in the nineteenth century in Britain.

Moreover, the longevity of this scene in visual art is evident in the fact that it continued into the early twentieth century, appearing in an illustration by Florence Harrison for her illustrated edition of *Tennyson's Guinevere and Other Poems* in 1912. The image, entitled 'She Made Her Face a Darkness from the King' (Harrison 1912)[39], again evokes eroticism through the sprawling sumptuous red tresses of Guinevere, spread about the floor beneath Arthur. Arthur stands above her, arms outstretched, directly mirroring the crucifix behind the prostrate Guinevere, underlining her sinfulness and his comparative holiness as well as the divine forgiveness he dispenses.

[37] Plate 17
[38] Plate 18
[39] Plate 19

Jessie M. King, examined above for her sympathetic portrayal of Guinevere in her illustrations for Morris's *The Defence of Guinevere*, included a version of this scene in her illustrated edition of Tennyson's *Idylls* (1903). Although the work of King, including her illustrations for Tennyson's *Idylls,* has been studied before, most notably by Mancoff, King's illustration is especially interesting and important for its subtly sympathetic portrayal of this scene in comparison to those of the other artists discussed so far. The illustration in question is inscribed 'O Golden Hair With Which I Used To Play' (1903)[40], and shows a meek and humbled Guinevere kneeling below Arthur, in a position of contrition. That Guinevere kneels instead of lying prostrate on the ground, and the association of her with the religious iconography that abounds in the piece, such as crucifixes and Madonna and child statues[41], makes the work far more compassionate. Guinevere is undoubtedly a figure of dishonour, but she is not so basely rendered as in other similar images; she is instead graceful and even prayerful in her shame. Furthermore, her disgrace is not sexualised like in the other images, avoiding the problematic practice of eroticising female humiliation.

There are, however, a number of other literary depictions of Guinevere as a fallen woman that move away from the composition influenced by Egg's 'Misfortune' and Tennyson's *Idylls,* but which similarly render the sin and disgrace of Guinevere and revel in her debasement and punishment, again, I believe, relying on the medievalness of the Arthurian legend to grant authority to their arguments.

[40] Plate 20
[41] Which will be examined later in detail in regard to Guinevere as a figure of redemption.

One work that does so to a sinister extreme is a play by John Frederick Pennie entitled *The Dragon King: a Tragedy* (1832). Pennie wrote a handful of dramatic works, none of which attained substantial success in his time (as examined by Paston 1895) and which have received even less critical attention since. Nevertheless, his Arthurian play *The Dragon King* is an important early example of Guinevere being shamed as a fallen woman and speaks to the pervasiveness of this representation of her. *The Dragon King* was first published in 1832, two years after Tennyson's 'Sir Launcelot and Queen Guinevere', but almost three decades before the first *Idylls* in 1859. The play's place in the Arthurian Revival is clear: the impact of the reprinting of Malory's *Morte Darthur* is evident in its absorbed fascination with love triangles and female characters, while its less canonistic interpretation of Arthurian legend reflects the fact that it was published before the *Idylls*.

The main action of the plot centres on Arthur as Christian King of Cymry (Wales), as he fends off a clan of pagan Saxon invaders. An English knight named Mouric[42], a substitute for Lancelot, betrays the king and steals away with Gwenyfar while the kingdom is under siege from the Saxons. Gwenyfar, though at first reluctant to leave with Mouric for fear of shame and damnation, is presented as an active figure in the adultery and the escape. In answer to her reticence, Mouric asks her: 'Is thy love to me grown on the sudden cold? -Ah, Gwenyfar, I thought thy passion ardent as my own' (Pennie 1832, 413). Her reticence, however, comes out of fear, not a lack of desire for Mouric, and this notion of her 'ardent passion' equalling a man's adds to the representation of her as an immoral woman.

[42] A name that I cannot trace to any other source

Arthur is alternatively the epitome of the ideal man, an embodiment of bravery, morality and strength. He is described by Gwenyfar as 'that brave prince, the pillar of Cymry, on which leans, its sole support, the empire of the Britons' (Pennie 1832, 432). As in Tennyson's *Idyll* of 'Guinevere', this work juxtaposes the goodness of Arthur against the sinfulness of Guinevere, further amplifying the condemnation of her. Upon discovering her betrayal, Arthur scorns the queen's actions, using language that was especially significant in the nineteenth century in that it expressly names her a fallen woman:

> ARTHUR: Can I my gentle Gwenyfar forget? Forget her love, her innocence, and beauty? […] But she hath fallen! – The tempter hath betrayed her! – Fallen for ever! (Pennie 1832, 451-452).

Gwenyfar, like the popular image of the fallen woman of nineteenth-century England, is presented as ruined, irreversibly damaged by her actions. Arthur's punishment of Gwenyfar is to send her into the enemy Saxon camps:

> ARTHUR: Guards! Lead her hence, into the camp of yonder Saxon host, and leave her to their mercy! (Pennie 1832, 417).

The suggestion here – that she is sent to the non-Christian 'savages' effectively to be raped and killed – reflects, to drastic degree, nineteenth-century views on the seriousness of female infidelity and adultery, and the eroticisation of female shame.

A decade later, but still prior to the publication of Tennyson's *Idylls,* C.J. Riethmuller published his play *Lancelot of the Lake* (1843), which I examined earlier in this chapter for its comparatively sympathetic portrayal of Guinevere's adultery. Unlike the works discussed immediately above, Riethmuller's play critiques the inequity of the concept of the fallen woman and the double standards associated with male and female sexuality.

As in many works of the nineteenth century, Riethmuller's work includes the ubiquitous scene where the trysting Lancelot and Gwenever are trapped in her bedchamber. Reithmuller uses this scene as a way of exposing their infidelity, this time through the plotting of Morgan le Fey. What follows, however, is totally original to the canon and consists of a discussion between King Arthur and Morgan le Fey, his trusted confidante, about how Gwenever should be punished. King Arthur asserts that Gwenever must die for her actions, but Morgan actively questions this indictment. It is outlined at the beginning of the play that Morgan had previously given birth to Arthur's illegitimate child and that it was Arthur's refusal to marry her that has left her bitter and angry, setting in motion her plotting against Arthur and his queen. This backstory reverberates throughout her discussion with the king about the punishment of Guinevere. She speaks of Arthur's double standards in calling for the harsh punishment of Guinevere:

> Custom has decreed that once to fall – but *once* – is for a woman to be lost beyond all reach of hope, beyond redemption, like the rebellious angels […]

> But man, my lord, is not so strictly bound. He may sin often, boldly -- take his fill of lawless love -- trample on broken vows, and broken hearts -- yet bear his head as high as though he were a God. They taught me this, when I was young (Riethmuller 1843).

This section stringently criticises the inequity and hypocrisy of sexual mores in the long nineteenth century, specifically the concept of the fallen woman, where one indiscretion brands an adulterous woman, but not a man, as irredeemable.

The scene where Guinevere and Lancelot are trapped in the queen's bedchamber was often taken up in the visual art of the period, in order to depict Guinevere as a fallen woman. Two works that centre on the fallenness of Guinevere are D.G. Rossetti's 'Sir Lancelot in the Queen's Chamber' (1857)[43] and a watercolour entitled 'Sir Launcelot Entrapped in the Queen's Chamber' (c.1901)[44] by little known Scottish artist Philip Spence. Both Rossetti and Spence portray Guinevere as a fallen woman by depicting the bedroom scene from within, ensuring that a bed, as a metonym for Guinevere and Lancelot's adultery, is present in the composition and clearly showing shame and guilt on the face of the queen. Both images focus on the disgrace wrought by female adultery, depicting the beautiful figure as trapped in her humiliation.

A comprehensive examination of the representation of Guinevere as a fallen woman in the nineteenth century highlights an overwhelmingly negative, misogynistic

[43] Plate 7, examined previously in the section on Guinevere as seductress.
[44] Plate 21

impulse that pervaded the period's Arthuriana, which utilised a medieval woman to support modern conceptions of female shame and punishment. Simultaneously, however, Guinevere was also more positively portrayed as a figure of redemption, as will be examined in the next section.

Guinevere as a redeemed figure

Despite the presence of a substantial number of works that sought to mitigate the condemnation of Guinevere as an adulteress, seductress and fallen woman, she was overwhelmingly understood, and continues to be understood, as an archetype of 'bad' womanhood. This portrayal of her was largely bound up in the popular nineteenth-century belief that a woman, once 'fallen', was irredeemable. Representation of Guinevere in this way, however, does not take into account a key part of the legend, which saw the queen become a nun at the end of the narrative. That Guinevere took holy orders at the end of her life, according to Virginia Blanton (2010), is well established within the Arthurian canon, though the manner and reason for her taking the veil varies from source to source. In Malory's *Le Morte Darthur*, more so than in any other medieval work, this aspect of Guinevere's character arc makes her an entirely redeemed figure:

> […] and so she wente to Amysbyry. And there she lete make herself a nunne, and wered whyght clothys and blak, and grete penaunce she toke uppon her, as ever ded synfull woman in thys londe. And never creature coude make her

> myry, but ever she lyved in fastynge, prayers, and almes-dedis, that all maner of people mervayled how vertuously she was chaunged (Malory and Waite 2007, 152).

Malory portrays the queen as a pious and virtuous figure, utterly changed by her new, self-directed religious purpose. Perhaps because Malory was the main medieval source of Anglophone Arthuriana in the nineteenth century, a vast number of works took up this rather optimistic ending to Guinevere's life. This trend even extended to Tennyson's *Idylls*, which included Guinevere fleeing from Mordred to the convent at Almesbury, and eventually becoming an Abbess:

> […] [S]he, for her good deeds and her pure life,
> And for the power of ministration in her,
> And likewise for the high rank she had borne,
> Was chosen Abbess, there, an Abbess, lived
> For three brief years, and there, an Abbess, passed
> To where beyond these voices there is peace (Tennyson 1896, 141).

The piety and goodness of Guinevere at the end of her life, according to Tennyson, grant her entry into heaven, making her a fully redeemed figure. Nineteenth-century illustrations of Tennyson's *Idylls* and Malory's *Morte Darthur* often included visual renderings of Guinevere as a nun, a fact that has been considered by Clare Broome-Saunders (2009), Barbara Tepa Lupack and Alan Lupack (2008), and Jan Marsh and Pamela Gerrish Nunn (1989) in regard to a small number of illustrative works. None

the less, nineteenth-century depictions of Guinevere as a nun extend far beyond retellings and illustrations of Malory and Tennyson to original literary re-workings of the tales and stand-alone works of visual art as well. This fact has only briefly been examined, and only in regard to visual art, by Christine Poulson (1999). Furthermore, the prevalence and importance of the representation of Guinevere as a nun, and how this fundamentally portrays Guinevere as a redeemed woman, have received little attention. This omission from the literature muddies our understanding of the Arthurian queen in the nineteenth century, as it overlooks an important strain of depiction that mitigates her representation as an entirely 'bad' woman. An examination of studied and unstudied illustrations, stand-alone artwork and literary works will aid in a more comprehensive view of this trend.

According to Lupack and Lupack (2008), Nunn and Marsh (1989) and Poulson (1999), the nun was a stock figure in nineteenth-century British art, particularly during and after the 1840s, influenced by the rise of Tractarianism (also known as the Oxford Movement). Calling for the revival of older, typically Catholic traditions in the Church of England, this movement led to the founding of the first Anglican monasteries in Britain since the Reformation, with the first convent being opened in 1845 in the Parish of Christ Church, London. Furthermore, at this time, according to Susan Mumm (1996), Anglican parishes in Britain founded a significant number of 'penitentiaries' for fallen women, often run by nuns. These penitentiaries were not gaols but rather what today might be called women's shelters, with a focus on the

care, rehabilitation and repentance of prostitutes, single mothers and other female social outcasts[45].

Simultaneously, and as a result of this, the nun became a topical figure of discussion, controversial in her embodiment of the revival of Catholic-style worship in the Anglican Church and of the perceived freedom afforded nuns, as they lived outside the confines of marriage. This was at a time in British history, particularly English history, when Catholicism was held in contempt by many (Rowell, 1983) and so the adoption of certain Catholic traditions, namely convents and nuns, was met with great scepticism and resistance. Nevertheless, nuns were undoubtedly seen as embodiments of religious piety and, above all, chastity. Thus, rendering Guinevere in nun's robes linked her with these positive traits of womanhood. Moreover, the connection of the nun with the Anglican penitential system, which was focused on the rehabilitation of fallen women, undoubtedly infused this depiction of Guinevere with the concept of her redemption. Furthermore, because convents and nuns were popularly understood in nineteenth-century Britain to be relics of Britain's medieval Catholic past, the widespread depiction of Guinevere as a nun was fundamentally suffused with medievalness. It is important that all of the works that depict Guinevere as a nun position her as a sympathetic figure, as this suggests that the connection of the redeemed Guinevere to the illustrious medieval past could have

[45] These protestant penitentiaries of the 1850s should not be confused with the Magdalen Laundries/Asylums (established from the 1700s to 1830s), which were rehabilitation facilities for 'fallen' or outcast women, run by Catholic nuns or protestant lay people in England and Ireland. Magdalen faculties, studied by James M. Smith (2007) and Frances Finnegan (2004) forced women to work as indentured servants in laundries and housed women in atrocious conditions.

functioned as a means to confer authenticity to modern, specifically Anglican, beliefs around the potential redemption of fallen women.

A number of illustrated works for Arthurian books render Guinevere simply as a nun, removing all aspects of her past indiscretions from the composition and instead positioning her as a religious, pious figure. Most are from the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. One of these is a previously overlooked illustration by the Rhead brothers, entitled 'Pray and Be Prayed for, Lie before your Shrines, Do Each Low Office of Your Holy House' (1898)[46], for their illustrated edition of Tennyson's *Idylls.* The work portrays Guinevere as a nun in prayer, kneeling before a shrine, her eyes raised to a statuette of the crucifixion. The submissive figure, swathed in humble nun's robes, sits in stark contrast to most of the Rhead brothers' other illustrations of Guinevere, which often showed her as a sumptuously dressed, regal and commanding figure. The juxtaposition serves to accentuate Guinevere's transformation from wicked wife and queen to bride of Christ.

William Henry Margetson, artist and prolific illustrator, produced a similar image of 'Guinever' in an as yet overlooked illustration entitled 'Queen Guinever Went to Almesbury and There She Made Herself a Nun' (1914)[47] for Janet MacDonald Clark's modernisation of Malory. The image shows Guinever in a nun's habit, kneeling in prayer. Unlike the lavish chapel of the Rhead illustration, however, Margetson's image places Guinever in a simple, austere space, which further emphasises the religious transformation of the queen and her active atonement for her sins. As in

[46] Plate 22
[47] Plate 23

the work by the Rhead brothers, Margetson's image contrasts directly with the regal, proud queen of his other illustrations, and so represents her as a changed and redeemed figure.

Lupack and Lupack have called Aubrey Beardsley's artistic interpretation of Guinevere as a nun 'vulture-like'. The image in question is an illustration entitled 'How Queen Gwenever Made Herself a Nun'(1893)[48] from Beardsley's illustrated edition of *Morte Darthur*, commissioned by J.M Dent and published in twelve monthly instalments. According to Lupack and Lupack, this image shies away from open veneration of the redeemed queen by making her look decidedly sinister. I assert, however, that the image, which portrays Guinevere hunched over a bible, shows her as a penitent figure, bent in self-recrimination. I believe that Beardsley's work depicts Guinevere's redemption and that it is an image of a transformed Guinevere shedding her beauty for a life of salvation.

Eleanor Brickdale also rendered Guinevere as a nun, in an image entitled 'Guinevere at Almesbury' (1911)[49] for her illustrations of Tennyson's *Idylls.* The illustration portrays Guinevere as an active member of her abbey, carrying a large basket of bread (an image laden with religious connotations of the Eucharist) through the idyllic convent courtyard. Lupack and Lupack have stated that the image grants Guinevere a kind of 'tragic dignity and a sense of purpose' (2008, 136), painting her as rehabilitated woman and an asset to her religious community. Again, Guinevere is presented as a redeemed figure, separated from her past as a 'wicked queen'.

[48] Plate 24
[49] Plate 25

Furthermore, a number of visual artworks of the period show Guinevere as a nun but celebrate her redemption through referencing her rejection of her sinful past within the composition. One of these is a stand-alone work by William Reynolds-Stephens, who, though not widely known today, was a renowned sculptor of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Reynolds-Stephens' sculpture, wrought in bronze, ivory and mother of pearl, is entitled 'Guinevere's Redeeming' (c.1897)[50], depicting Guinevere in nun's robes, her hands clasped in prayer. Beneath the large figure are a number of small sculptural friezes, each depicting aspects of Guinevere's past life, such as 'as lover' and 'as queen'. Atop this sits the repentant queen, a large crucifix hanging from her neck. The large sculpture of Guinevere thus symbolises her penance for these past acts, as a figure of quiet piety and meek religiosity. The austerity of the figure contrasts directly with the rather opulent materials used to make the sculpture. This, I submit, represents the sculptor's intent to celebrate the redeemed queen by using valuable materials to elevate and venerate the humility of the figure.

An illustration entitled 'Then Sir Launcelot Saw Her Visage, But He Wept Not Greatly, But Sighed' (1910)[51], by Sir William Russell Flint for his illustrations of Malory's *Morte Darthur*, bears a similar message in its composition. The work shows an aged Lancelot at the deathbed of a pale Guinevere. A large cross lies upon the queen's chest, while her crown is relegated to the space at her feet. This composition portrays her as a changed woman of religious, not royal, purpose. Furthermore, the

[50] Plate 26
[51] Plate 27

boldly Christian nature of her death suggests that she has received religious salvation. Lancelot stands aloof, arms folded across his chest, at a distance from the dead queen, while the nuns, one of whom lies at her feet, openly mourn her death. This visual configuration distances the past improprieties of the queen and Launcelot, allying Guinevere with the nuns, not with her past lover, thereby accentuating her status as redeemed woman. Flint's image does not work as a depiction of the sorrowful death of Launcelot's lover but rather as a poignant celebration of a pious life come to an end.

The painting 'King Arthur's Tomb' (1854-1855)[52], by D.G. Rossetti, has been examined previously in this chapter, and by other scholars, for its subtle engagement with the notion of Guinevere as adulterous and destructive queen. In spite of this, though the image certainly includes indirect recriminations of Guinevere in its use of symbolism – such as the apple tree and the serpent – I argue that it is also a portrayal of Guinevere's spiritual and moral transformation. The work illustrates a scene, loosely based on Malory, of the last meeting between Guinevere and Lancelot. In Rossetti's work, the interaction takes place in a graveyard, with the figures bent over an effigy of Arthur. Their guilty love, represented by the callousness of them leaning over Arthur's dead body, is unquestionably a part of the image and is clearly condemned. Guinevere, however, is shown as avoiding Lancelot's advances, and this, combined with her modest nun's garb, operates as a marker of her changed morality.

[52] Plate 1

Florence Harrison copied the basic composition of Rossetti's work in 'Guenevere, Guenevere, Do You Not Know Me?' (1914)[53], an image from her illustrated edition of Morris's poems. The work illustrates Morris's poem 'King Arthur's Tomb', which itself was a poetic rendering based on Rossetti's image.[54] The illustration portrays Guinevere, again clad in nun's robes, rejecting Lancelot's kiss, thus presenting her as renouncing her past mistakes. Jessie M. King included a similar image in her illustrated edition of Morris's poems for the work 'King Arthur's Tomb'. The image is titled 'He Did Not Hear Her Coming as He Lay' (1904)[55] and portrays Guinevere, wearing dark robes, standing above the figure of Lancelot and reaching out a hand to offer him comfort. The image superimposes a thorny cross behind the figure of Guinevere, connecting her with the figure of Christ and referencing her newfound life of redemption and religiosity.

Another scene, taken up in number of works of visual art of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries and borrowed from Tennyson's *Idylls,* is one in which a young novice at Almesbury unwittingly torments the disguised Guinevere by condemning the actions of the 'wicked queen'. One such artist was Julia Margaret Cameron, the renowned photographer (examined by Lukitsh 1996), who was a neighbour and friend to Alfred Tennyson. Though she is perhaps most recognised today for her portraits of famous figures of the nineteenth century, she was also involved in illustrating historical and literary legends. The most important example of her illustrative labour is her work *Illustrations by Julia Cameron of Alfred Tennyson's*

[53] Plate 28
[54] Discussed below
[55] Plate 29

Idylls of the King and Other Poems (1875), which she began work on in 1874 after Alfred Tennyson personally requested her to do so (Marsh and Nunn 1989, Lukitsh 1996). A photograph from this collection displays a scene between Guinevere and the novice, entitled 'The Song of the Little Novice' (1875).[56] The accompanying text from Tennyson for this scene dramatises the growing discomfort of the queen and encourages the reader to revel in her secret shame and embarrassment. Alternatively, Cameron's treatment of the section is rather sympathetic, casting Guinevere, in her sombre nun's habit, as beautiful and regal, though repentant – her eyes avoiding those of the small child accompanying her. She is a figure of melancholic redemption.

This scene between the queen and the novice is included in Jessie M. King's illustration of Tennyson's *Idylls*, in the image entitled 'None With Her Save A Little Maid, A Novice!' (1903).[57] In a departure from Cameron's rendering of the scene, Guinevere is not clothed in a nun's robes, and her shame is more acutely represented as she bows her head, holding it in her hands. The inclusion, however, of a streak of white stars, flowing away from her bowed head, could plausibly be interpreted as the repentant Guinevere being absolved of her sins by God. The motif of stars, combined with an image of the crucified Jesus behind the two figures – an obvious symbol of salvation and atonement – suggests that the image is one of spiritual redemption, not recrimination.

[56] Plate 30
[57] Plate 31

The medievalness of the nun figure in the British psyche of the nineteenth century, alongside the development of Anglican ideas around feminine redemption and the charitable works of nuns, undoubtedly strengthened and legitimised this depiction of Guinevere as a figure of spiritual and moral restoration. Nevertheless, there are a small number of works from the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries that portray Guinevere as redeemed figure without representing her as a nun. These works rely on the medievalness of the Guinevere character to lend historicity to the contention, in conflict with popular ideas around the fallen woman, that women had the potential to receive spiritual absolution after a 'fall'.

Throughout King's illustrations of the poems of Morris[58] and of Tennyson's *Idylls*[59], images of angels, crosses, crucifixes and halos abound in reference to Guinevere, highlighting her religiosity without having to make her a penitent nun figure. She is instead presented wearing swathes of richly decorated fabric, suggesting that she need not reject her secular femininity and beauty to receive absolution. Similarly, in John Atkinson Grimshaw's under-studied painting 'Guinevere' (c.1870s)[60], the queen is not portrayed in nun's clothes but rather in a sumptuous and richly coloured gown. The beautiful queen is shown on her knees, praying, in a sparsely furnished room. She is undoubtedly a figure of piety and redemption. Grimshaw's work is important in that it is a rare example, alongside King's works, of nineteenth-century visual art showing Guinevere as both beautiful secular queen and redeemed figure. The only other example of this is an illustration by the Rhead brothers entitled 'Yea Little

[58] Plate 29, 32, 33, 34, 35
[59] Plate 20, 31
[60] Plate 36

Maid, Am I Not Forgiven?' (1898)[61], from their illustrations of Tennyson's *Idylls.* This image similarly depicts Guinevere as a richly adorned queen but portrays her with bowed head and doleful eyes, surrounded by a group of nuns, which alludes to her piety and religious transformation. Again, these works seem to suggest that Guinevere need not have gone to the extreme of becoming a nun to receive moral and spiritual absolution.

There are a number of literary works from the mid-nineteenth to early twentieth century in Britain that also concentrate on the moral redemption and religiosity of Guinevere. Most of these works include the depiction of Guinevere as a nun, and as such, like their visual counterparts, add medieval cachet to the notion of the fallen woman's potential for absolution. The exclusion of this trend from studies of British Arthuriana in the long nineteenth century is perhaps due to the fact that a number of these works were not hugely popular in their time and so have not been seen as significant. Nonetheless, these works are important for revealing a trope that challenges common notions of the way Guinevere has been, and continues to be, understood.

The poem 'King Arthur's Tomb' (1858) by William Morris is the only literary work that presents Guinevere as a redeemed woman that has been examined in any significant way by modern scholars. Undoubtedly, this fact is due to the popularity of Morris in accounts of nineteenth-century Arthuriana. The poem is striking in that halfway through the work it shifts from the love story of Launcelot and Guenevere to

[61] Plate 37

focusing on the pious new life of the repentant queen. Extending upon Malory, and mirroring Rossetti's painting of the same name, the crux of the work is a meeting between Guenevere and Launcelot at the grave of Arthur. Guenevere is said to be dressed, as she is in Rossetti's painting, in nun's clothing: 'all her robes were black,/ With a long white veil only' (Morris 1921, 12), and her penitent new life is observed in detail. She is described as fervently praying to God, asking him for guidance and forgiveness, repenting her adulterous actions and pleading for absolution.

At this point in the poem, the narrative has moved away from dwelling on romantic, sexual love, as established by Lancelot in the beginning of the poem, to instead focus on Guenevere's love of God. The overflow of her passionate feeling makes up a large portion of the section, but this is directed at heaven, not Launcelot. At one point, whilst in prayer, the queen asks: 'Why did I forget you [god],/ you were so beautiful. And good, and true,/ That you loved me so[?]' (Morris 1921, 14-29). This shift in focus from Guenevere as figure of romantic love to religious love challenges notions of the godless queen that pervaded the landscape.

Launcelot's reaction to the newly pious queen, when she refuses to embrace him at the graveside, is to conclude that she has been overtaken with the madness of religious fervour: 'Yea, she is mad: thy heavy law, O Lord,/ Is very tight about her now, and grips/ Her poor heart' (Morris 1921, 14-29). If there were any question as to who Morris's poem holds responsible for the sinful relationship in the tale, this stanza makes it clear. In a truly fascinating role reversal, Launcelot, not Guenevere, becomes the seducer, cajoling Guenevere into godlessness. The queen remains

steadfast in her newfound spiritual and moral transformation and convinces Launcelot of the sinfulness of their actions. The poem ends with the ringing of a bell, a symbol of religious conversion, which perhaps suggests that the lovers have both received forgiveness from God for their earthly sins (as argued by Stillman 1975). Morris's poem is, therefore, overall a positive portrayal of a repentant queen, absolved of her sins through her acceptance of a religious life.

William Fulford's unexamined poem 'The Last Meeting of Lancelot and Guinevere' (1862), examined previously in this chapter for its defence of the adulterous queen, is similar to Morris's in that it focuses on the penance of Guinevere and her resulting spiritual redemption as a nun. The work builds upon and extends the parting scene from Malory's *Morte* between Guinevere and Lancelot at the nunnery, concentrating entirely on the moral absolution of the queen. The fact that it focuses on this one small part of the tale's plot makes the poem important as it focuses unusual attention on this one aspect of the Guinevere figure. The poem consists of a discussion between Lancelot and Guinevere at Almesbury, after the fall of Camelot and the death of Arthur. Lancelot has come to the convent to take Guinevere away to his home in France, where he intends to make her his wife, but Guinevere rejects his offer, scorning their past actions and refusing his advances:

> […] and he sprang unto her,
> Stretching his arms to clasp her as of old:
> But she withdrew a space, and fix'd her eyes
> Upon him with a mournful look, which told

That all love's dalliance now was past for them (Fulford 1862, 181).

As in Morris's poem, Fulford depicts the queen as a transformed figure, as a voice of moral fortitude against the sinful lust of Lancelot. Her transformation into moral being is further emphasised by her wearing of 'convent weeds' (Fulford 1862), also reminiscent of mourning clothes. This choice of clothing, as a symbol of her modesty, piety and morality, is said to make her even lovelier. The poem states that for Lancelot, in regard to the queen's beauty, 'awe and sorrow now were mix'd with love,/ And made it greater and a holier thing' (Fulford 1862, 181). In other words, Guinevere's newfound religiosity is said to sanctify her beauty, purifying it so that it no longer incites lust, but awe.

An overlooked and as yet unperformed play entitled 'The Farewell of Lancelot and Guinevere' (1908), by the largely unknown W.E.B. Henderson, also includes the scene where Lancelot comes to Almesbury to marry Guinevere. That the play was published some forty years after Fulford's work reflects the durability of the portrayal of Guinevere as a redeemed figure. As in Fulford's poem, the play is an extrapolation of a small section from Malory, placing emphasis solely on the moral redemption of Guinevere and her life as a nun. In the play, Guinevere rejects a persistent Lancelot, begging him to leave her to her life of penance. Guinevere is portrayed as the voice of moral fortitude, telling Lancelot that their 'hour is past forever. I am now a bride of the Holy Church' (Henderson 1908). She then speaks of how she will, for the rest of her life, strive to be absolved of her sins, saying: 'I with tears, with fastings, and with prayer/ Must purge away those years of sin with thee'

(Henderson 1908). Henderson's play is essentially a celebration of a morally and spiritually transformed woman. All censure melts away because the fallen woman is totally redeemed.

Unlike the works of Morris, Henderson and Fulford, Beatrice Clay's relatively unknown *Stories from King Arthur and his Round Table* (1913), a rewriting of Malory for children, represents a total departure from the adultery story. Peculiarly, Clay nonetheless has Guinevere flee to a nunnery at the end of her book. Clay states that 'for the holiness of her life, [Guinevere] was made abbess' (Clay 1913, 126). The line bears the suggestion that it wasn't just the actions at the end of her life that made Guinevere perfect for the role of abbess, but the nature of her entire life. This depiction underlines the goodness of Guinevere without the qualifying notion of her having to become redeemed for her past actions. Thus, Clay's Guinevere is surprisingly presented as an untainted figure of moral rectitude.

The adultery plot is similarly ignored in an anonymously written book *Six Ballads About King Arthur* (1881), dedicated to 'my dear children' from a 'loving Granny'. The work has received no scholarly attention, perhaps because of its truncated and juvenile treatment of the Arthurian legend. Its juvenility also undoubtedly affected the author's choice to erase 'Guinever's' adultery from the story. In the work, Lancelot is instead married off to the 'sweet Elaine', and the infidelity between him and Guinever is totally omitted. Later in the book, however, in a ballad entitled 'The Marriage of King Arthur', Merlin warns Arthur that 'grief and sorrow would ensue/ If he the maid [Guinever] should wed' (1881), but this seems to be presented as a

vague prophetic warning about bad omens and fate, not about the actual behaviour of Guinever.

As in Clay's version of the tales, Guinever is still portrayed in the anonymous ballads as becoming a nun. The final ballad, 'The Death of King Arthur', centres on Mordred's betrayal of Arthur and the subsequent destruction of the kingdom. Mordred, after lying about the king's death, tries to marry Guinever, but the queen, affectionately called 'poor Guinever', uses her 'subtle woman's wit/ Born of […] woman's fears' (1881) and escapes, fleeing to the convent at Almesbury as in Malory. There, she is said to take on a nun's habit, '[s]pending her days in deeds of love/ And acts of charity' (1881). Her acts of charity and love are not presented as redemptive, because she is not said to have committed any sins against the king and thus she is shown as a wholly positive figure of moral goodness.

Charles Bruce's poem 'Queen Guinevere and Sir Lancelot of the Lake' (Bruce 1865) is the only literary work that portrays Guinevere as a redeemed figure without mentioning her becoming a nun or undergoing any real spiritual or moral transformation. As stated previously, the significance of Bruce's poem as a challenge to mysogynistic treatment of Guinevere has been largely ignored. This extends to his rather singular representation of the queen as redeemed woman. In the poem, after Guinevere is tried for adultery and eventually acquitted, the usurper, Mordred, murders her. Guinevere is then said to be accepted into heaven: 'She feels Heaven's mercy drawn again,/ Forgiving sin and quenching pain' (Bruce 1865, 164). This representation is a significant departure from the Arthurian tradition, where

Guinevere's redemption is usually bought only through her penance as a nun. Furthermore, Lancelot, who has died trying to protect Arthur against Mordred, is laid to rest beside the queen, in consecrated ground: 'In consecrated union rest/ Those pallid sleepers, breast to breast' (Bruce 1865, 165). Thus, the lovers, contrary to tradition, are buried together, which positions them as being simultaneously forgiven by god and by the kingdom of Camelot. Bruce's wholesale absolution of Guinevere, attained even without active penance for her misdeeds, suggests that Bruce believed that Guinevere did not need to strive for forgiveness, that she need not take on the robes of a nun to receive salvation, that even as an adulteress she was a 'good' woman.

Such works of visual and literary art are pivotal to gleaning a comprehensive view of Britain's reception of Queen Guinevere in the long nineteenth century. An examination of them offers a corrective to popular understandings of the depiction of the Arthurian queen, and also to the discourses of gender with which she engaged. Indeed, it is irrefutable that Guinevere stood in as a popular medievalist prototype for nineteenth-century fears around the dangers of adulterous women and uncontrolled female sexuality, but she also, fascinatingly, reveals nineteenth-century society's more sympathetic, forgiving side in regard to the fallen woman.

Concluding thoughts

To conclude, then, the substantial and expanded body of texts I have presented here shows that nineteenth-century British representation of the queen of Arthurian

legend was far more varied and complex than has been previously argued. Furthermore, the fact that these works engaged with such a wide range of gendered discourses speaks to Guinevere's astonishing semiotic and ideological variability. Scholars have examined Guinevere's importance to nineteenth-century medievalism for decades, but I maintain that there is room to build upon these important works. One of the main points of this chapter is that although it is true that she was often positioned as antithetical to the saintly Beatrice, sometimes this negative portrayal of Guinevere was undermined, and at times she was even openly celebrated. Arguably, this intrinsic malleability of the medieval was central to the attraction of Guinevere in art at the time, but often Guinevere left behind the overt connection to the Middle Ages and instead functioned as universalised symbol of female sinfulness.

This sense of malleability could certainly also be said to apply to nineteenth-century use and understanding of Joan of Arc: warrior and saint, feminist idol and misogynistic caricature. Unlike the representation of Beatrice and Guinevere, however, the medievalism of Joan was specifically taken up as a means to bestow eminence and esteem to shifting debates around the changing rights and role of women. This and more will be discussed in the next chapter.

Image appendix: chapter two

Plate 1: Dante Gabriel Rossetti, 'King Arthur's Tomb' (1854-1855)

Plate 2: Henry Hugh Armstead, 'Tennyson Vase' (1867)

Plate 3: Eleanor Fortescue Brickdale,
'Before the Coming of the Queen' (1911)

Plate 4: James Archer, 'Queen Guinevere'
(1860)

Plate 5: William Dyce, ‘Mercy’ (1849)

Plate 6: Dante Gabriel Rossetti, ‘Lancelot’s Vision of the Sangreal’ (1857)

Plate 7: Dante Gabriel Rossetti, 'Lancelot in the Queen's Chamber' (1857)

Plate 8: Henry Justice Ford, 'Guinevere' (1910)

Plate 9: John Collier, ‘Queen Guinevere’s Maying’ (1897)

Plate 10: William Russell Flint, ‘So the Queen Mayed…’ (1910)

Plate 11: Aubrey Beardsley, ‘How Queen Guenever Rode on Maying’ (1893)

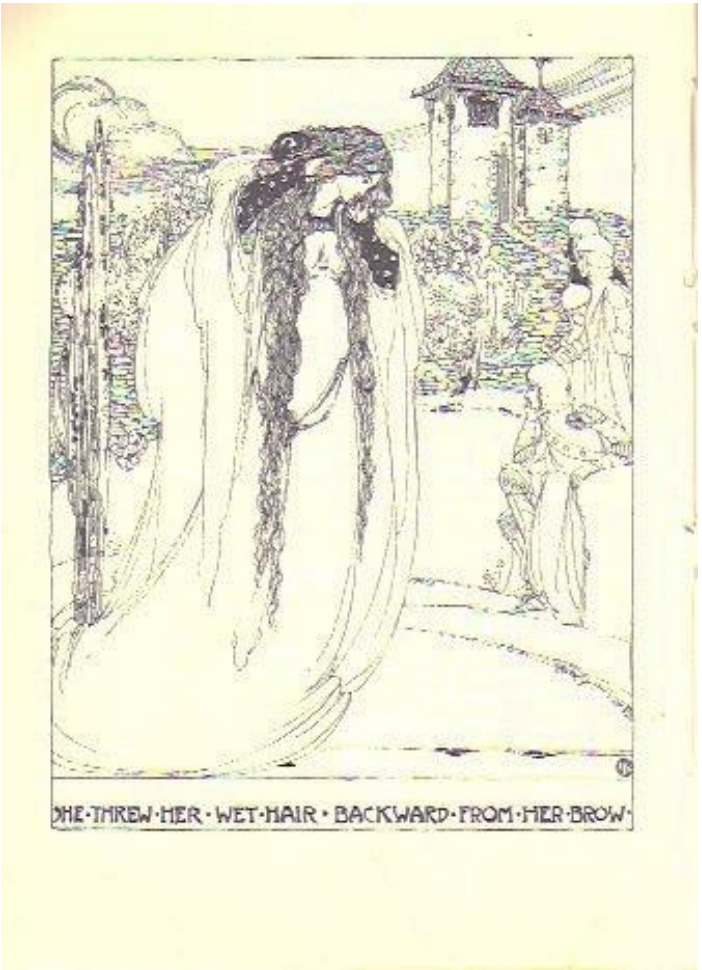


Plate 12: Jessie M. King, ‘She Threw her Wet hair Back’ (1904)

Plate 13: Leopold Egg, ‘Misfortune’ (1858)

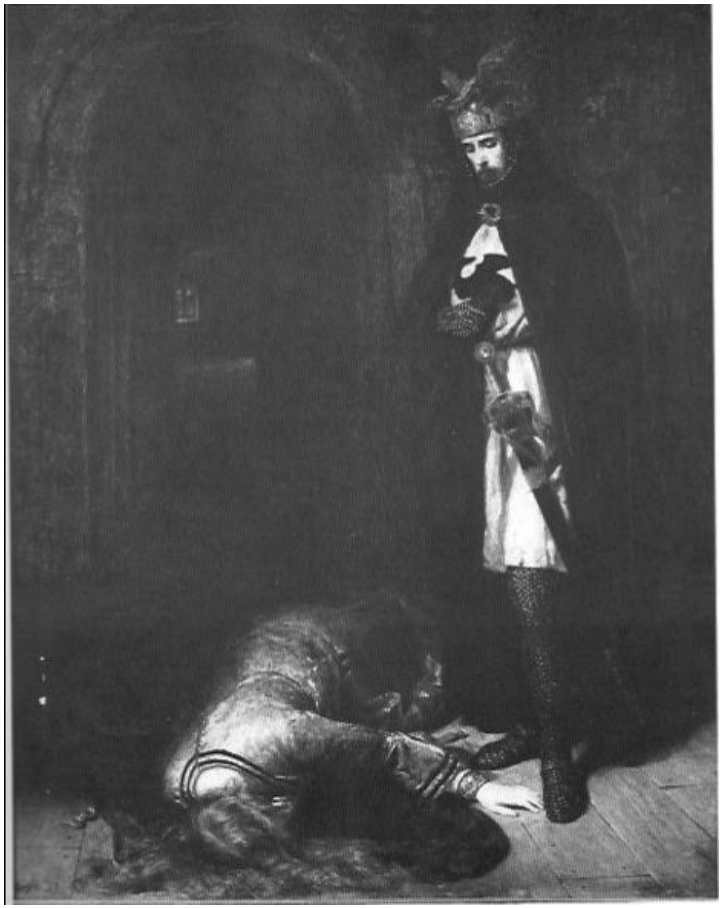


Plate 14: James Archer, ‘The Parting of Arthur and Guinevere’ (1865)

Plate 15: James Sherwood Westmacott, 'Arthur and Guinevere' (1875)

Plate 16: Herbert Bone, 'Guinevere' or 'Arthur Forgives Guinevere' (c.1881)

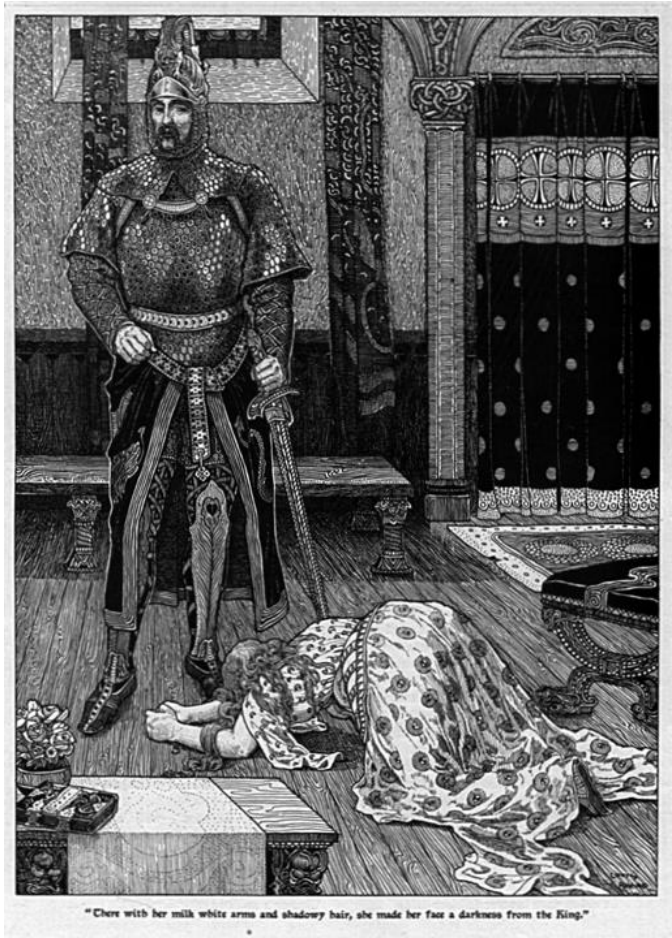


Plate 17: George Rhead and Louis Rhead, 'There with her milk white arms…' (1898)

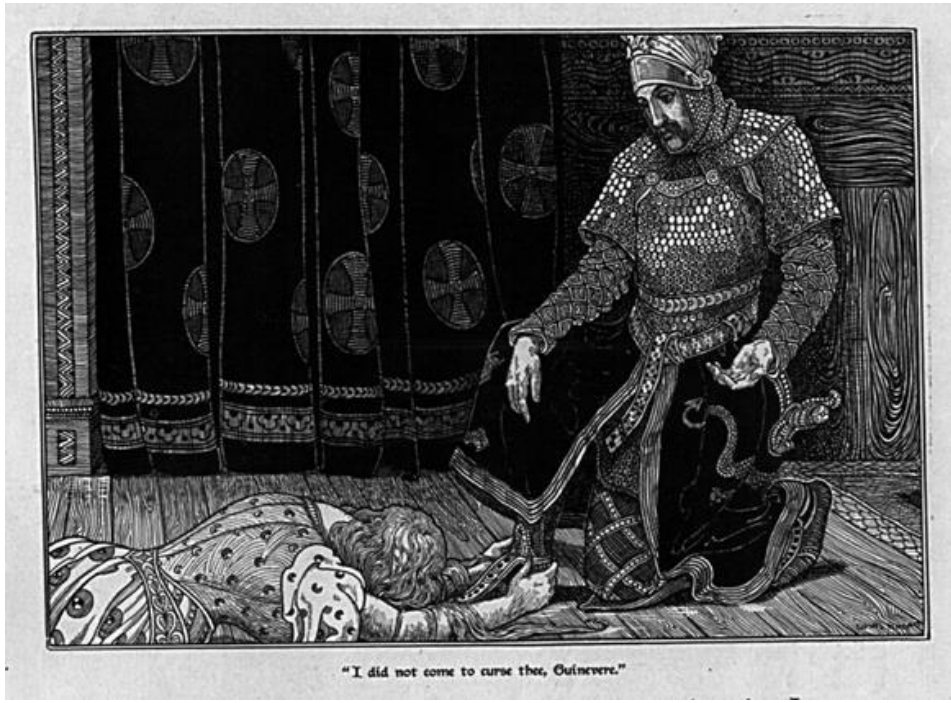


Plate 18: George Rhead and Louis Rhead, 'I did not come here to curse thee, Guinevere' (1898)

Plate 19: Florence Harrison, ‘She made her face
A darkness from the King’ (1912)

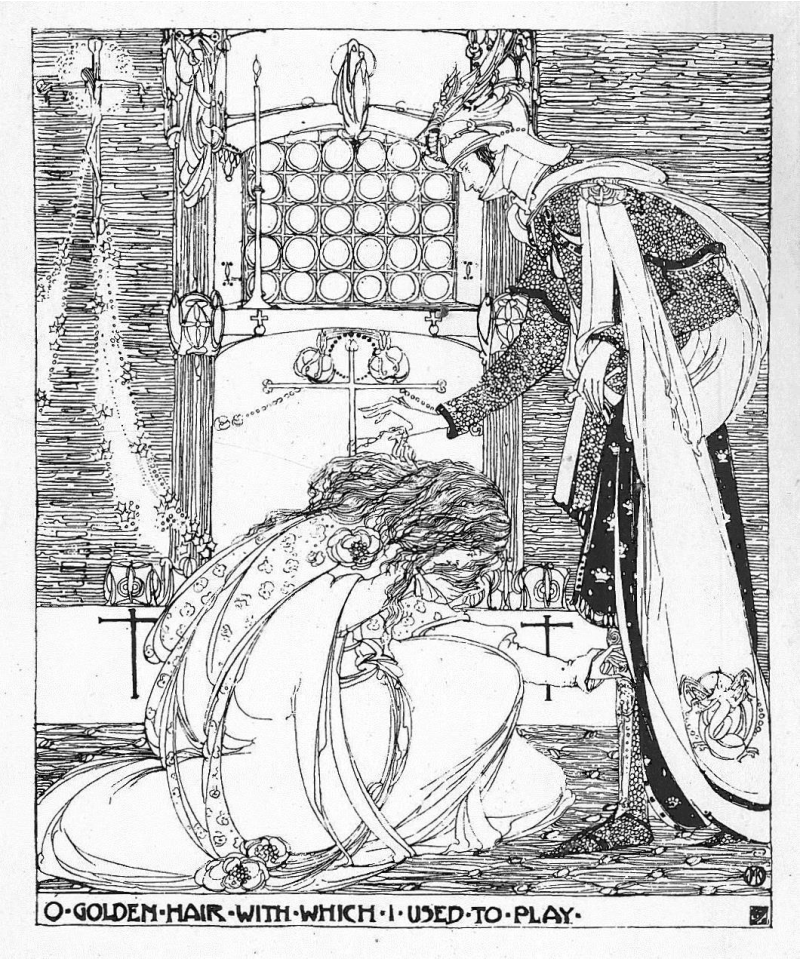


Plate 20: Jessie M. King, ‘O golden hair with which I used to play’
(1903)

Plate 21: Philip Spence, ‘Sir Launcelot entrapped in the Queen’s Chamber’ (c.1901)

Plate 22: Rhead Brothers, ‘Pray and be prayed for’ (1898)

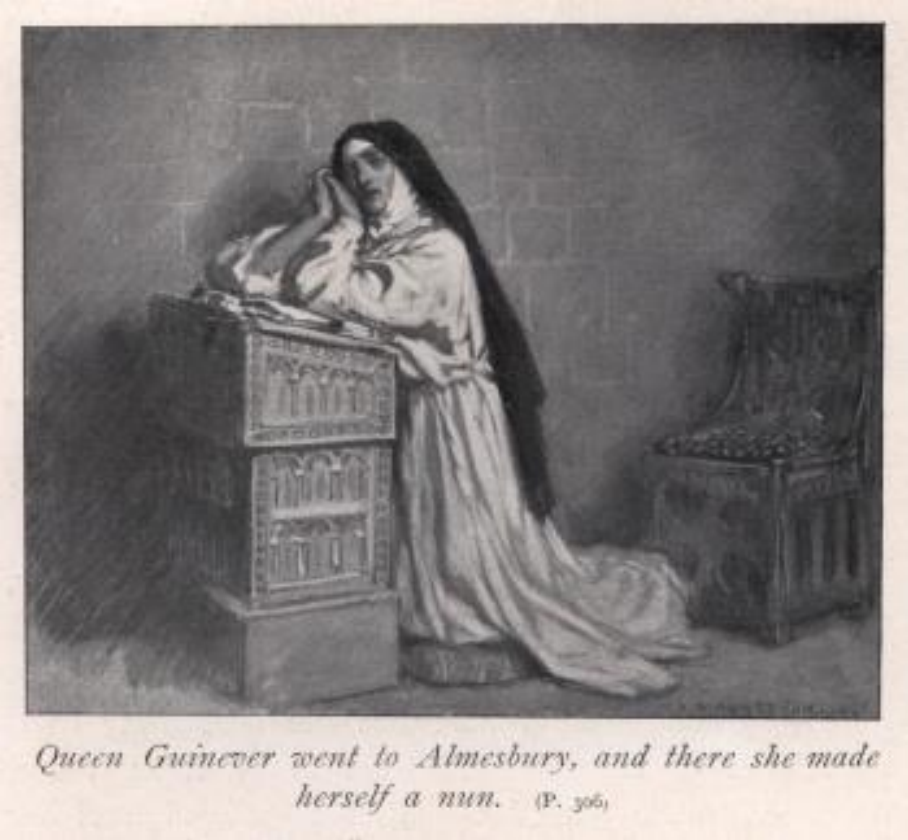


Plate 23: William Henry Margetson, 'Queen Guinever went To Almsbury' (1914)

Plate 24: Aubrey Beardsley, 'How Queen Gwenever made herself a nun' (1893)

Plate 25: Eleanor Fortescue Brickdale, 'Guinevere at Almsbury' (1911)

Plate 26: William Reynolds-Stephens 'Guinevere's Redeeming' (c.1897)

Plate 27: William Russell Flint, ‘Then Sir Launcelot saw her visage’ (1910)

Plate 28: Florence Harrison, ‘Guenever, Guenever, do you not know me? (1914)

Plate 29: Jessie M. King, 'He did not hear her coming as he lay' (1904)

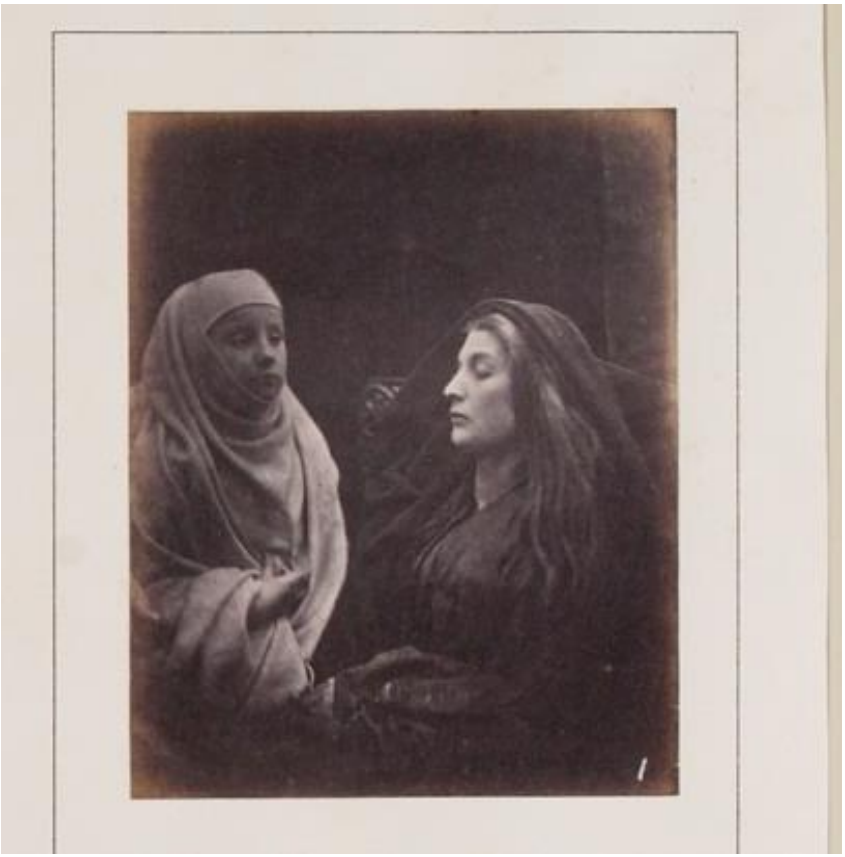


Plate 30: Julia Margaret Cameron, 'The Song of the Little Novice' (1875)

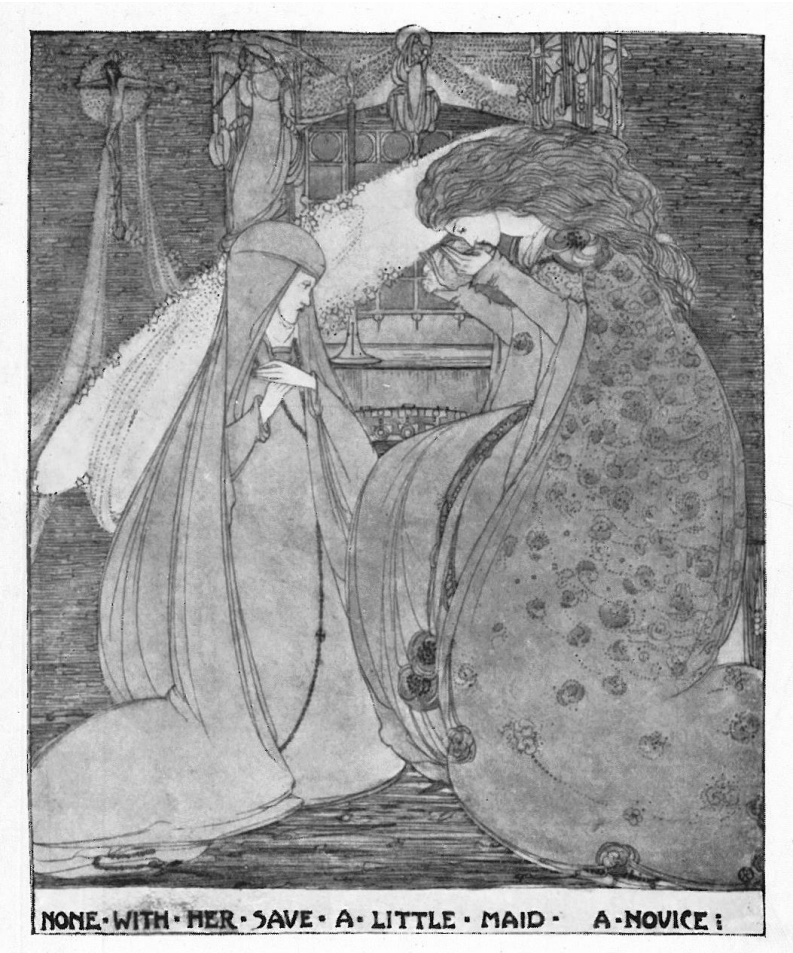


Plate 31: Jessie M. King, 'None with her Save the Little Novice' (1903)

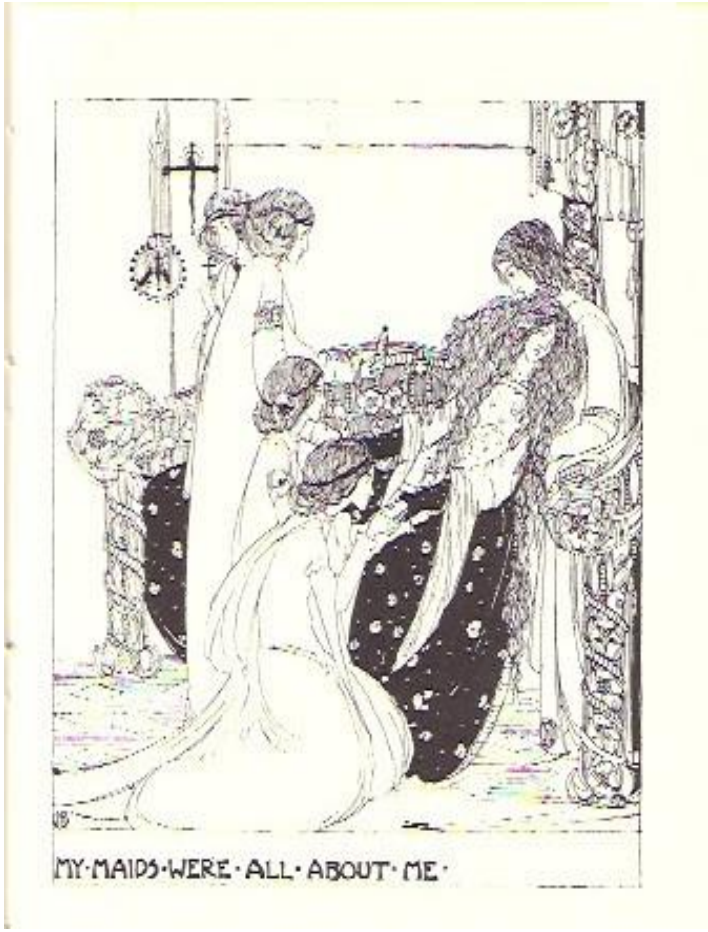


Plate 32: Jessie M. King, 'My Maids here all about me' (1903)

Plate 33: Jessie M. King, 'Nor any brings me the sweet Flowers that lie so thick in the gardens' (1903)

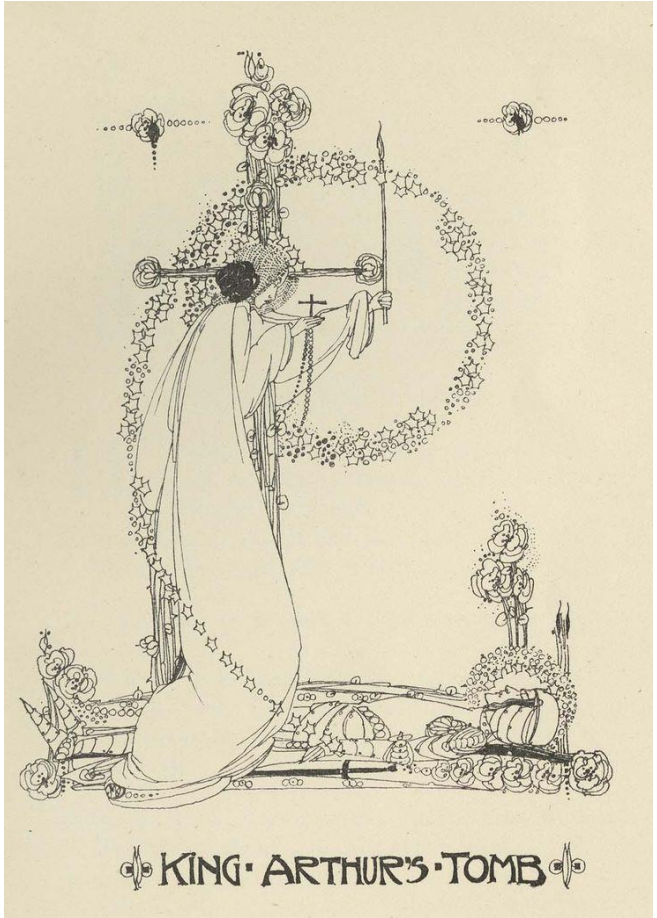


Plate 34: Jessie M. King, 'King Arthur's Tomb' (1904)

Plate 35: Jessie M. King, 'For Launcelot's red golden hair would play instead of sunlight on the painted wall' (1903)

Plate 36: john Atkinson Grimshaw, 'Guinevere' (c.1870)

Plate 37: Rhead Brothers, 'Yea, little maid, for am *I* not forgiven?' (1898)

Chapter three

The Soldier and the saint: Joan of Arc as an embodiment of the 'New Woman'

> *'The soldier's courage, the patriot's devotion, the purity of a saint, and the constancy of a martyr, were all, in her, blended with and glorified by the very truest womanliness' (Tuckey 1890, 5).*

Contemporaneous to the widespread depictions of Beatrice and Guinevere in British art and literature of the nineteenth century, representations of Joan of Arc[1] (also popularly referred to at the time as Jeanne D'Arc) were ubiquitous, and like these other medieval figures she came into direct contact with debates on gender. What made Joan unique from her medieval counterparts, however, was that she did not become a model for naturalised conceptions of good or bad womanhood but instead reflected the fervour and fear that arose around the changing understandings of femininity that permeated Britain in the long nineteenth century. It was ultimately Joan's incongruity, as a pious woman but also as a soldier, that influenced authors' and artists' use of her to comment on agitations for, and changes to, the roles, place and rights of women. Unlike Guinevere and Beatrice, who were largely deployed as a means to confer authenticity to 'natural', 'universal' conceptions of womanhood, Joan became a potent symbol of the innate malleability of these ideas. As such, the

[1] Examination of the correct form and etymology of her name is a fascinating topic, but it will not be the focus of this chapter. 'Joan' or 'Joan of Arc', unless otherwise named in a text, will be used throughout.

medievalised Joan functioned as a means to directly comment on modern changes to notions of femininity.

As was the case with Beatrice and Guinevere, the uptake of Joan engaged directly with political/ideological medievalism, utilising the past to both universalise and legitimise modern ideologies and to imbue these ideas with a sense of prestige by connecting them with a sentimentalised view of the medieval past. Nevertheless, unlike Beatrice and Guinevere, Joan did not always function as a model of womanhood for women to aspire to or eschew; instead she was often presented as exceptional, as a singular woman in history. Arianne Chernock (2013), Mary D. Sheriff (1996, 2003) and Jane Tolmie (2006) have examined the matter of female exceptionality in detail, in both visual art and in literature, and assert that though idealised women were often used as inspirational models, they were also utilised as a means to make a mockery of the majority of women who did not transcend the limitations of their gender or their circumstances. The upshot of this, as argued by Sheriff, was that the celebration of 'exceptional' women ultimately resulted in the "strengthening of the laws that regulated other women" (2013, 49). This sense of Joan's exceptionality undermined the concept of the immutability of womanhood, traceable to the medieval past, and was exploited as a means to destabilise both progressive and conservative views on woman's proper place in society and the supposed innateness of their nature. In these instances, the medieval became a distancing tool rather than an instrument of continuity.

The gendered debates surrounding Joan varied quite noticeably from those about the figures of Guinevere and Beatrice, centring instead on questions of change and difference: around *social activism, the myth of the woman warrior, politics of dress, idealised womanhood* and *feminine fame.* These five facets of her characterisation will form the structural basis of this chapter, with the aim of drawing out an intricate and comprehensive examination of the intersection of Joan of Arc with rapidly shifting conceptions of femininity in nineteenth-century Britain.

Important scholarship has been undertaken on the use of Joan in nineteenth-century Britain and on how her use coincided with concepts of gender. The work of Debra Mancoff is significant, especially *The Return of King Arthur: The Legend through Victorian Eyes* (1995), which includes a concise overview of Joan's use in the nineteenth century. Not withstanding this, although Mancoff provides an invaluable outline of the trend, she does not include individual examples. The work of Clare Broome-Saunders (2006, 2009) is the most comprehensive and as such the most immediately pertinent to this chapter. Her work examines the use of Joan of Arc in the nineteenth century generally, and specifically the use of Joan by a number of mostly unexamined female writers. Broome-Saunders' scholarship provides a valuable springboard for my account and is chiefly focused on the vital task of retrieving and reclaiming forgotten works by women. Because of the deliberately restricted scope of her nominated source material (women's writing), there is room for a more comprehensive examination of the intersection of Joan and gender, using close analysis and a wider span of sources.

Building on the scholarship of Broome-Saunders, I aim to map the far-reaching and varied use of Joan of Arc in nineteenth-century Britain, in particular how and why she was employed across a wide range of creative genres – prose, poetry, visual art, political writing, historical research and theatre – by those who sought to use her for both conservative and progressive ends. This activity will build up a broad account of her significance, and add to the knowledge base of Victorian medievalist studies and Victorian women's studies, by uncovering a medievalist influence in debates around the shifting roles and rights of women.

It is pertinent to begin with some background on the historiography of Joan and how this fed into nineteenth-century Britain's fascination with her. The historical Joan was born circa 1412 on the border of eastern France in the village of Domremy, in what is now Lorraine province. A major figure of the Hundred Years War (1337-1453), she fought against Plantagenet England for Valois France. Claiming to be directed by God through the voices of saints, Joan donned soldier's garb and led a series of successful battles on behalf of Charles VII and the Valois, which led to Charles VII's coronation in Rheims in 1429 (as examined by Dinshaw and Wallace 2006, Gaunt and Kay 2008). In 1430, Joan was captured by the pro-English Burgundians and transferred to the English. After a trial led by French clergyman Pierre Cauchon, on the grounds of twelve articles of misconduct associated with heresy, witchcraft and indecency, she was burnt at the stake in 1431.

The major source of historical information on Joan's military career and prosecution is the transcript of her Condemnation Trial. Five official copies were made, transcribed by chief notary Guillaume Manchon, but only three have survived, all housed at the Bibliothèque de l'Assemblée Nationale (ms. 1119; ms. lat. 5965; and ms. lat. 5966). Another primary text is the 1429 poem 'Le Ditié de Jeanne D'Arc', by the French court writer Christine de Pizan. The poem makes biblical allusions (to Moses and Joshua) and classical references (to Hector and Achilles) to honour Joan as a saviour of the people and praises her for bringing spring – rebirth, warmth, hope – to France after a long winter. Speaking directly to Joan, in arresting second person, Christine's poem states: 'you untied the rope which held France so tightly bound […]/ Could one ever praise you enough for having bestowed peace on this land humiliated by war?' (1977, xxi). Christine's poem is famous for being the only extant literary work produced about Joan while she was still alive.

Further historical documentation about Joan, though not strictly concurrent with her life, is the transcript from her Rehabilitation Trial. Occurring some years after Joan's death (1452-1456), the trial was authorised by Pope Callixtus III and resulted in Joan being posthumously pardoned. The trial manuscript includes the testimony of a number of witnesses, including Joan's mother, who gave statements emphasising the morality, piety and bravery of Joan and speaking of the injustices of her trial and execution. Three manuscripts from the Rehabilitation Trial still exist: ms. lat. 17013 (anc. Notre-Dame 138); ms. lat. 5970, both of which are housed in Paris; and Stowe ms. 84, in the British Library.

Centuries later, Joan of Arc was taken up time and again in artistic and cultural works of nineteenth-century Britain. Joan's popularity, which was far-reaching across the political, social and cultural arenas of the day, can be attributed to a number of factors. One influence, which applies to all the female figures in this study, was the surge in antiquarian and archaeological research in the nineteenth century and the subsequent popularisation of the Middle Ages. A more specific explanation for Joan's popularity, however, was the lengthy campaign for her canonisation by the Catholic Church, which took place in May of 1920 (as studied by Freedman 2008). Central to the push for Joan's canonisation was the Bishop of Orléans, Félix Antoine Philibert Dupanloup, who, as examined by Bonnie Wheeler and Charles T. Wood (1996) and Marina Warner (1981), gave forceful panegyrics calling for her beatification in 1849, 1855 and 1869, attracting attention not just in France but in Britain. Furthermore, arguably having an influence on Dupanloup, two important scholarly works on Joan were published prior to his campaign: namely, Jules Michelet's 1841 biography 'Vie de Jeanne d'Arc' in volume 5 of his *Histoire de France*, and the first scholarly publication between 1841 and 1849 of Joan's condemnation and rehabilitation trial by Jules Quicherat, an abridgment of which he translated into English in 1869. These elevated and widened the popularity of Joan's story, which in turn stimulated the push for her canonisation[2].

Robert Southey is an important precursory figure to note when considering Joan's cultural legacy in nineteenth-century Britain. An English Romantic and 'Lake poet',

[2] Christine de Pizan's poem on Joan was almost entirely neglected in the nineteenth century, in both Britain and in France (as examined by Laidlaw 1983), with a lone monograph on her political impact published in 1838 by Raimond Thomassy.

Southey wrote the epic poem 'Joan of Arc' in 1796, which in many ways marked the beginning of Britain's overwhelming fascination with Joan in the nineteenth century. Southey's poem comes well before the historical scholarship on Joan by Quicherat and Michelet, and was concurrent with the French revolutionary wars (1792-1802) and England's declaration of war against France, which makes his choice of Joan as subject matter and his treatment of her quite controversial, though not surprising given the Romantics' pro-revolutionary politics. His poem is utterly sympathetic, admiring Joan's fruitful military career and concluding the tale at the height of her success (at the crowning of King Charles VII at Rheims), which, as Catherine Addison argues, 'leaves the Maid transcendent in power and fully endorsed in her moral position' (2004, 18). It is interesting to note that Christine de Pizan's poem finishes at this same point, but there is no evidence to indicate whether Southey read the medieval poem. The poem unapologetically celebrates a French, anti-English military figure during a time when England and France were at war. Unsurprisingly, it was met with intense criticism in England. An example of this denunciation appeared in the *Critical Review*, where an anonymous reviewer stated:

> When the character of the Maid of Orléans, and the part taken by her against the English, are considered, together with the manner in which the history has been treated by other writers, some suspicion may at first arise, that Mr. Southey has chosen a subject scarcely suited to the dignity of epic poetry. His prudence at least may be called into question. How can he expect to interest the English nation in the fortunes of a heroine who was an active champion against his own countrymen, or be foolhardy enough to felicitate those successes that involved

> the English in disgrace? Many of his readers will undoubtedly ask these questions [… and] will not be over forward to compliment his patriotism (quoted in Baldwin 1796, 183).

It is not surprising that Southey's treatment of Joan was regarded as unpatriotic, but his poem was widely read and republished and helped to pave the way for Joan's later popularity.

These factors explain superficially the ubiquity of Joan. What they do not account for, however, is the fact that she was popular despite her incompatibility with the dominant discourses of the nineteenth century. Despite being a French soldier who fought a campaign against the English, she was widely adopted in Britain, not only by anti-English or anti-royalist factions (which would be expected) but, as will be examined in this chapter, by political and social conservatives as well. Furthermore, Joan was largely characterised then, as she is today, as a cross-dressing, sword-wielding military leader, who had the power and authority to speak both to God and to a ruling king, and the skill to lead an army to victory. This depiction of her may have been suitable for progressive commentators, but it hardly fitted the prevailing understanding of womanhood. According to Mancoff (1995), these problems were navigated by Joan's status as an icon. By operating as a symbol removed from her historical narrative, she transcended the limitations of her story. This use of symbolism meant, Mancoff argues, that Joan could be easily employed by those who upheld traditional gender ideologies, while being simultaneously utilised within the work and discourse of progressive circles.

Moreover, the supernatural elements of Joan's story, inspected comprehensively in the Rehabilitation Trial documents (a Latin transcript and English translation of which was included in Bennett 1932), such as the notion that God spoke directly to her (as attested by Father Jean Pasquerel, maître Jean Barbin, a burgher by the name of Jean Luillier, and the Count de Dunais) and that her heart remained intact and continued to beat after her body was burnt (as attested by Brother Ysambard de la Pierre and maître Nicolas de Houppeville), have meant that despite being a historical person, she has been filtered through a lens of myth and fantasy. This fact perhaps encouraged artists to be freer with other portions of her story. Furthermore, historical documents on Joan are limited and come predominantly in the form of legal transcripts, which has meant that there are a number of holes in the documentation of her life. This fact provided leeway for people to fill these gaps with details and ideas promoting their own agenda.

On the other hand, however, Joan's historicity was at times actively and intentionally deployed. In these instances, the historic credibility of Joan was undoubtedly called upon to lend a level of authority, unattainable to a fictional woman, to certain political or cultural activities. As I will go on to discuss, the best-known political and social agenda that Joan was linked to in the nineteenth century was, undoubtedly, progressive activism.

Joan of Arc and social activism

Joan of Arc is popularly associated with the movements and ideologies of social activism, particularly feminism, of nineteenth- and early twentieth-century Britain. The inclusion of works from the early nineteenth century in this thesis is, thus, especially important to the study of Joan of Arc, as it enables the inclusion of vital activities of first wave feminism, which spanned the late nineteenth century to early twentieth century. This understanding of Joan, however, is rather inaccurate when one considers that the number of artists who used her for conservative, traditionalist purposes far outweighed those who depicted her as a figure of social change or activism. The dominance of this understanding of Joan as a figure of 'progressive' thought, contrary to the amount of creative work on the topic in the nineteenth century, I contend, was due to the public's fascination with scandal and intrigue, and Joan's connection with the radical ideology of feminism was undoubtedly scandalous.

Closely related to the image of Joan as progressive icon was her connection with the rise of the figure of the 'New Woman', defined by Enes Kavak (2016) as 'a radical figure' that was shaped in opposition to Victorian gender inequality. In 1894, according to Sally Ledger (1995) the Irish feminist writer Sarah Grand coined the term 'New Woman', but this type of woman had been around, unnamed, since the 1880s and even earlier. The phenomenon of the 'New Woman' is in many ways difficult to pin down, but it is characterised by a focus on the social and legal inequities of women in marriage, labour, fashion, lifestyle and sexuality (Fernando

1977, Ledger 1995, Hughes 2007, Crozier-De Rosa 2009, Simpson 2010). The 'New Woman' was widely denigrated, most famously by the weekly satirical magazine *Punch,* which fabricated a stereotypical delineation, portraying her as uncouth in her pastimes of smoking, cycling and attending women's clubs, and as ridiculous in her attempts to 'ape' men's mannerisms and dress. The figure of Joan, clad in armour, wielding a sword and leading an army of men, coincided perfectly with the model of New Womanhood, and there is evidence that Joan at times bore the brunt of the backlash against changing conceptions of femininity.

Closely associated with the New Woman was the Suffragette movement. Commencing with the founding of the first women's suffrage committee in England in 1856 (as examined by Caine 2006), the Suffragettes focused on the political emancipation of women through the courts and parliament. Association of Joan with the movement became especially evident during the late 1890s and 1900s with the advent of the militant Suffragettes (as outlined by Billington 1982), led by Emmeline Pankhurst and her daughters Christabel and Sylvia. It was at this time that Joan was adopted as a mascot for the movement (Colette 2008, Nelson 2010). Feminist sentiment had been building since the 1890s but in 1903 Emmeline founded the Women's Social and Political Union (WSPU), openly calling for the struggle for women's voting rights to include 'Deeds not Words'. She and her followers argued that the fight for suffrage needed to be moved from the courtroom to the streets and, if need be, to the gaols. The image of the fighting woman had obvious parallels with the figure of Joan of Arc. Furthermore, a key factor behind the adoption of Joan as an icon of the movement, clearly articulated by Susan Clayton, was that: 'by

choosing a patron saint from history rather than literature the WSPU surely aimed at more convincing credentials for the movement' (Clayton 2010, 331). By selecting a woman who had historically 'done it all before' instead of a fictitious heroine, they lent their movement legitimacy. Nevertheless, contrary to Clayton's contention, Joan was not yet canonised at the founding of the WSPU[3], but her historical authenticity, even discounting her lack of sainthood, certainly still played a part in the Suffragettes' uptake of her.

Emmeline Pankhurst often asserted a spiritual kinship between Joan and the Suffragettes, highlighting their interrelation in a number of political essays and books. This connection was included a 1913 article, published in the journal *Suffragette,* entitled 'Joan of Arc', which named Joan as the hero of the movement and dubbed her the 'perfect woman', and a retrospective book about the Suffragettes, *Unshackled: The Story of How We Won the Vote*, which likened the Suffragettes to the fortitude and resilience of Joan, stating that the Suffragettes could 'no more be negotiated into surrender and compromise than would she [Joan]' (Pankhurst 1959, 282). This alliance with Joan also gained physical expression: in April of 1909 the WSPU member Elsie Howey[4] dressed as Joan by donning silver armour and riding a white horse through London in a Suffragette protest march, an act repeated in June of 1911 by Marjorie Annan Bryce[5], who dressed in chain mail and led one of the largest WSPU demonstrations through London. Furthermore, the

[3] Joan was canonised in 1920, 17 years after the founding of the WSPU in 1903.
[4] Plate 1
[5] Plate 2

most famous poster of the Suffragette Movement[6], created by Hilda Dallas (1912), depicts Joan of Arc, in armour, clasping a sword and holding a WSPU banner.

Joan of Arc is in many ways indivisibly linked with the Suffragette movement, and the Suffragettes' use of Joan is certainly one of the best-known uptakes of her for progressive political and social purposes from the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. None the less, there were also a number of works produced at the time that connected Joan with other forms of social activism.

The most famous of these is Sir George Bernard Shaw's play *Saint Joan: A Chronicle Play in Six Scenes*, first performed in 1923, and his essay 'Saint Joan: an Epilogue', published in 1924. Though these texts postdate even the advent of the militant Suffragettes, and my cut off date for texts examined in this thesis, they merit mention in this chapter because Shaw, born in the 1850s, was by his own admission intellectually and ideologically steeped in the Victorian era. This fact is made clear by Shaw himself in his speech 'Woman-Man in Petticoats', first published in 1927, where he addresses the audience from the position of 'the character of a curious old relic of the Victorian Age' (Shaw 1962, 172), stating of his intellectual position: 'I go back to the nineteenth century, and I have an earlier outlook than many of you' (Shaw 1962, 172). Thus, though Shaw wrote about Joan in the 1920s, his treatment of her was engaged with nineteenth-century debates on ideologies of gender.

[6] Plate 3

While he did not himself identify as a feminist, Shaw had pro-feminist leanings. He was a supporter of John Stuart Mill, Mary Wollstonecraft and the Rational Dress Movement, and a number of his works show obvious links to feminist ideology. One example is his speech 'The Menace of the Leisured Woman'[7], first published in 1927, which argued that, contrary to popular discourse, women are multifaceted creatures who should not be defined solely by the roles of wife and mother. Moreover, his speech 'Woman-Man in Petticoats' actively critiqued the Victorian ideal of the Angel in the House and expressed support for the Rational Dress Movement[8] by criticising the 'upholstered' (1962, 173) style of dress that women in the nineteenth century were forced to adopt.

Shaw's pro-feminist inclinations found their way into his work on Joan of Arc, and his treatment of her expresses a desire to challenge traditional nineteenth-century conceptions of womanhood. Throughout his essay on Joan, Shaw studies the widespread intolerances of the nineteenth century, stating that Joan's 'ideal biographer must be free from nineteenth-century prejudices and biases' (Shaw 1962, 11). Shaw, who had lived through the nineteenth century and had come out the other end, argued that he was himself ideally suited for the job. Shaw positioned Joan, overtly in his essay and emblematically in his play, as an embodiment of subversive womanhood, celebrating her military prowess by calling her 'the first French practitioner of Napoleonic realism in warfare' (Shaw 1962, 7) and suggesting that she was 'the pioneer of rational dressing for women' (Shaw 1962, 7). This positive characterisation of Joan is set against the backdrop of her persecution, a

[7] Which is far more sympathetic to the rights of women than the title suggests.
[8] Examined in detail later in the chapter.

tension that is delineated by Karma Waltonen, who states that Shaw's aim was to 'showcase a picture of the modern woman caught in a patriarchal society—a woman labelled a witch because she violated the rules of an oppressive sex-gender system' (Waltonen 2004, 196). Ultimately, Shaw sought to render Joan as a 'modern' woman, a figure of reform within a comparatively antiquated world. He sought to modernise Joan, I suggest, to link her 'backwards' medieval era with his own understanding of nineteenth-century views of womanhood.

Although not as well known as Shaw or his play on Joan, Countess Constance Georgine Markievicz (1868-1927) [9] also allied herself with Joan of Arc while engaging with political debates in late-nineteenth century and early twentieth-century Britain, specifically Ireland. It is worth noting that although Shaw was an Irish national too, he spent most of his life in England, whereas Markievicz[10] was indivisibly linked with the political and social movements of Ireland. Thus, in acknowledgment of the social and political variances between England and Ireland, I will provide a brief overview of pertinent Irish feminist and nationalist milestones.

Feminism and nationalism were intricately interconnected in Ireland from the mid-nineteenth to the early twentieth century. The push for an independent Ireland picked up steam in the 1820s, most famously with the political agitations of Daniel O'Connell and the Catholic Association, who in 1829 pushed for and won the 'Catholic Relief Act', which allowed Catholics to sit in the British Parliament for the

[9] A figure who has been examined by Anne Haverty (1988), Karen Steele (2007), and Louise Ryan and Margaret Ward (2004).
[10] Though her name might appear to belie this, she was English, born to Irish parents.

first time since 1672 (Owens 1984, Fletcher 2000, Crawford 2006). After this victory, O'Connell set about repealing the Act of the Union, an Act that positioned Ireland as a British colonial territory, and he advocated for Home Rule in Ireland. The debate around how Ireland should be governed raged for the rest of the nineteenth century and into the twentieth century, while feminist movements, especially movements for women's suffrage, also picked up momentum.

Pro-feminist movements, particularly around the education and employment of women, began in Ireland in the 1840s, but according to Elizabeth Crawford (2006) it was not until 1866, when a British Suffragette petition was signed by women from both the north and south of the country, that the suffrage movement began in Ireland. The petition connected the Irish and English Suffragette movements directly and this caused conflict with those who were sympathetic to the nationalist cause. As a result, the suffrage movement in Ireland was far less centralised than it was in the rest of Britain, with individual committees shaping their advocacy around different, sometimes directly conflicting, ideologies. Thus, according to Crawford, a huge variety of suffrage committees were formed, each reflecting the range of opinions that were held in regard to 'the suffrage campaign (militant/constitutional), Irish politics (nationalist/unionist), national politics (Conservative/Unionist/Liberal/ Labour) and, later, war (militant/pacifist)' (Crawford 2006, 263. Sectarian affiliations also hugely contibuted to the variation in committees. For many, the struggles for Irish nationalist rights and women's rights were intertwined and this tension was expressed by Markevitz herself, who at a meeting of the Irish Women's Franchise

League in 1913, declared that both movements were 'fighting the same fight, for the extension of human liberty' (quoted in Cullen Owens, 1984, 74).

Markievicz was an active participant in Irish politics and is still known for her wide-ranging militant political activism, working in the areas of Irish nationalism, socialism and feminism. Among other works of social and political activism, Markievicz had a hand in creating a women's suffrage committee in Ireland in 1896 (Haverty 1988); served as a member of the Women's Franchise League (Steele 2007); took up arms as an active member of the Irish Citizens Army (Steele 2007); served as a member of Sinn Féin (Steele 2007); fought in the 1916 Easter Rising, for which she received a death sentence, later commuted to life imprisonment and then dropped (Ryan and Ward 2004); and was elected as the first woman to the British Parliament, in 1918 (Ryan and Ward 2004).

Markievicz's politics were linked directly with the figure of Joan in one other instance in the early twentieth century. Markevitz, who in her early life was involved in the theatre, fused her youthful interest in the arts with her later political activism in a well-documented performance in the role of Joan of Arc in a Suffragist play. The play was performed at the Irish Women's Franchise League 'Daffodil Fete', held in March of 1914 (Ryan and Ward 2004, Steele 2007). A number of photographs from this event have survived (produced in McMahon 1914) [11], one of which portrays Markievicz clad in armour in the role of Joan, addressing the actress Kathleen

[11] Plate 4

Houston, who played an Irish political prisoner[12]. The play dramatised the battles and martyrdom of Joan, which it then combined with musings on modern Irish politics; according to Steele, it 'impressed upon the audience a highly valiant image of militant nationalist femininity' (2007, 183). The play, with Markievicz at its helm, affiliated itself with the English Suffragist cause by calling upon the medieval figure of Joan to legitimise a militant fight for woman's rights, but, in divergence from the English suffragettes, it simultaneously called for Irish freedom from British rule.

Contemporaneous to this depiction of Joan of Arc in the social activism of Ireland was the pervasive characterisation of Markievicz's contemporary and close ally Maud Gonne as 'Ireland's Joan of Arc' or 'Ireland's Jeanne D'Arc'. As rich in ideological implications as this is, it has not been taken up in the scholarship on either Joan or Gonne before. Even the book *Maud Gonne: Ireland's Joan of Arc* by Margaret Ward (1990), despite being a sound exploration of Gonne's political work, does not analyse the significance of the name from which it takes its title, let alone the medievalist discourse with which it engages. Ward instead uses the name to allude to Gonne's political militancy and, ultimately, as an arresting title.

The lack of scholarship on this topic is perhaps due to the fact that Gonne is chiefly known as the muse, friend and unrequited love interest of the poet William Butler Yeats. Maud Gonne was, however, a far more fascinating figure in her own right than she was as Yeats's muse, especially as her public career intersected with political or ideological medievalism. As Ward and others have discussed, Gonne was a staunch

[12] Only reports and photographs of the play remain.

political activist and though Gonne was never explicitly allied with the Suffragettes or other Irish feminist movements, her Nationalist politics were always coloured by a push for more centralised and active roles for women in politics and public life.

Throughout her life, Gonne also nurtured a fascination with Celtic legend and Irish history, in 1900 founding what Margaret Ward (2001) describes as a 'nationalist-feminist group' called *Inghinidhe na hÉireann* (Daughters of Erin)[13], a Celtic historical society for women. One particular Celtic legend that Gonne clung to was a prophecy about the coming of a woman who would have the power to free Ireland from English oppression. This myth and its connection to Gonne were mentioned in passing by Ward (1990) and were clearly taken up by Gonne in her autobiography. In her memoirs, Gonne argues that the legend started in famine-stricken Donegal and that she was made aware of it by a Father McFadden, who informed her that 'they [the villagers of Donegal] will do anything for Maud Gonne […] They are saying you are a woman of the Sidhe who rode into Donegal on a white horse surrounded by birds to bring victory' (Macbride, Jeffares et al. 1994, 134). The specifics of the myth are unclear but it seems to be a combination of the Welsh *Mabinogion* legend of queen Rhiannon (Rigatona), who famously rode a white horse while surrounded by birds (Monaghan 2004), and a well-known Irish prophesy of the seventeenth century made by Brian Ruadh (Bhriain Ruaidh), also mentioned by Gonne in her memoirs, which predicted the coming of a woman in green to rescue Ireland from famine (as transcribed in Cronin 2000). Gonne took on this role of female saviour, combining

[13] Markievicz is said to have filled in as president when Gonne was absent.

these Celtic legends with an historical tale that echoed them – the story of Joan of Arc.

It was, however, through a French source that the Joan of Arc title emerged. Indeed, it was Lucien Millevoye, the French journalist and politician and a lover of Gonne's prior to her marriage who, according to Gonne, bestowed upon her the title of 'the Irish Joan of Arc'. Gonne reports on this detail in her autobiography, *A Servant of the Queen*, which recounts a conversation that she supposedly had with Millevoye in the 1890s that led to her adoption of this title. According to Gonne, Millevoye said to her:

> Why don't you free Ireland as Joan of Arc freed France? You don't understand your own power […]. Free your own country, free Ireland (Macbride, Jeffares et al. 1994, 64-65).

The name 'Ireland's Joan of Arc' was taken up time and again in regard to Gonne during the late nineteenth to mid-twentieth centuries. One example is from 1898, when Gonne's co-editor of the Irish Nationalist paper *L'Irlande Libre*[14], M. Barry Delaney, penned a poem that unequivocally compared Gonne to Joan. It appeared in the nationalist magazine *The Shan Van Vocht*, published in Belfast on 7 February, and in part reads:

> Along our Maid of Erin pleads, as once the Orleans Maid

[14] Published in France by Gonne, during her time there in political exile from Ireland.

> Before whose mystic banner fled the Saxon host afraid
>
> As now when, by a maiden's words, are Erin's foes dismayed!
>
> Oh, fairest flower of womanhood, her weakness is her strength;
>
> Proud hearts unto passionate pleas a willing ear have lent,
>
> And kneels to her, the Uncrowned, bowed, that ne'er before had bent!
>
> Not nobler the soldier who his sword in combat draws.
>
> Or patriot who frames at home his country's code of laws.
>
> Than she who pleads in stranger tongue her island's sacred cause (Delaney 1898, 33).

The poem proclaims that, like Joan in France and in accordance with Celtic legend, Gonne will lead Ireland to victory and freedom. This idea was also taken up in the revolutionist play *Cathleen Ni Houlihan*, written by Yeats and Lady Augusta Gregory. The play, first performed with Gonne in the title role in 1902[15], does not directly link the main character 'Cathleen ni Houlihan' with Joan, but like the tale of Joan of Arc it presents a woman who has the power to inspire men to fight for their country against the English. The play was in fact gifted to Gonne by Yeats to use as anti-English propaganda, on the one condition that she performed in the title role. Yeats obviously saw strong parallels between Gonne and the figure of Cathleen, and because Gonne was so often connected with the figure of Joan the choice to cast her added an implicit but undeniable mythic layer to the play. Moreover, this choice by Yeats served to further accentuate Gonne's role within the revival of a tradition of great, female military leaders. Thus, the medievalist mode utilised by Gonne and her

[15] Plate 5, Gonne is on the far right.

supporters in regard to Joan was, I believe, driven by the objective of lending her political and ideological aims historical weight and elevated status by harking back to the medieval. Interestingly, according to Ward and Louise Ryan (2004), Marcevitcz saw the play with Gonne in the lead role in 1902 and afterwards 'she is said to have remarked that it became "a kind of gospel" to her' (2004, 71). This comment by Marcevitcz is a testament to the success of the play, which was arguably aided by the casting of Gonne as a woman who was deeply connected with the figure of Joan.

Nonetheless, the Joan of Arc persona that Gonne and her supporters so emphatically embraced was also employed by her detractors to discredit her. Evidence of detractions comes in the form of political cartoons. Two such images are reproduced in Karen Steele's *Maud Gonne's Irish Nationalist Writings: 1895-1946* (2004), but she does not examine them with regard to how they engaged with medievalist modes to support modern ideas. One cartoon[16] from 1901 states:

> Maud Gonne, the so-called "Irish Joan of Arc", as she appeared in Dublin to help the Boers in South Africa, at the opening of the war 1899. In the light of cold hard facts, this <u>self-constituted</u> and <u>would-be heroine</u> never reached, nor even started for South Africa! There was <u>metal</u> more attractive in the United States ... Maud is still passing the hat in New York at this date, Feb 1901. She is not a beauty but oh! Gosh!! (Steele 2004).

[16] Plate 6

Textually, the caption speaks for itself in its disdain for and condescension towards Gonne, but the obviously unflattering visual depiction of Gonne, referencing Joan's infamous propensity for wearing men's clothing, is a more subtle way of discrediting Gonne through undermining her femininity. The image mirrors the way that cartoons critiqued the New Woman in magazines like *Punch*, rendering her as a stout figure, with unattractive features, in ridiculously large bloomers, a straw hat and a necktie. In this way, the image functions as a great example of the perceived interconnectedness of Irish nationalism and feminism at the time. The image also includes a subtle nod to Joan's militarism through the depiction of Gonne carrying a spear and sword and donning a girdle, fashioned to look like armour, and the ambiguity of the underlined word 'metal', which could mean either money or armour. Another cartoon,[17] this one undated but certainly produced around the same time as the other cartoon, presents Gonne/Joan looking dazed, again dressed in bloomers and armour. She plays the harp, a symbol of Ireland, adorned with the words 'factionalism', 'love of notoriety' and 'intolerance', which is obviously a critique of Gonne 'playing Ireland like a harp' for her own political purposes. Beside her is a dog tied to a post, wearing an oversized medieval-style helmet that falls over its eyes, with a speech bubble that reads: 'Bow-wow, I must fight Redmond' (Steele 2004), in reference to the nationalist politician John Redmond, with whom Gonne once had an altercation, and 'Mrs. Joan of Arc MacBride' (Steele 2004), referring to Gonne's married name. This imagery is a comment on the blind canine-like obedience of Gonne's followers and on what her detractors saw as her exploitation of the medieval past to support her dangerous new ideologies.

[17] Plate 7

There is another comic text, also of little renown, that participates in a critique of Joan as a symbol of progressive activism, the comic play *Joan of Arc! A New and Historical Theatrical Burlesque* by William Brough. Brough was a prolific writer of stage plays, mostly working within the genres of farce and burlesque. Like many of his once popular contemporaries, he has been all but forgotten, only recently being examined in-depth by Louise D'Arcens (2014). Brough's play was first performed in 1869 at the Royal Strand Theatre and is an unusual example of the use of Joan within theatrical mass culture of the nineteenth century. It is also an example of a nineteenth-century text employing a self-reflexive critique of her use in contemporary progressive activism.

Brough's play provides an unabashed appraisal of Joan of Arc as a symbol of feminism, using the medieval figure to lampoon the push for women's rights that pervaded the mid to late nineteenth century, focusing particularly on women's suffrage.

Brough was unquestionably influenced by the publication the previous year of Eliza Linton's scathing *Saturday Review* article 'The Girl of the Period'. The essay contrasted the idealised 'fair young English girl' (Linton 1883) of the past with the undesirable girl of the present, who had supposedly turned her back on propriety and femininity for the sake of independence. Evidence of Brough's direct engagement with Linton's essay is apparent in his dramatis personae, which describes Joan's character as 'The Maid of Orléans, a Girl of the Period, a strong-

minded woman, who ignores Matrimony to save King Charles's Patrimony' (Brough 1869, 1). Linton's essay was exceedingly well known at the time and so this turn of phrase would not have gone unnoticed. Furthermore, the fact that the phrase 'Girl of the Period' is capitalised suggests that he was referring to this work directly. Another of Brough's undisguised critiques of nineteenth-century feminism, discussed by D'Arcens (2014), is a reference to the fruitless effort of MP John Stuart Mill in 1867 to have the wording of the Representation of the People Bill changed from 'man' to 'person' in an attempt to acquire the vote for women. In Brough's play, in a scene where the English King and Joan's father discuss the wayward Joan becoming a soldier of 'women's wrongs and women's rights' (Brough 1869, 7), the King states:

> KING: Turned soldier, eh? One comfort then we note,
> A military "person" cannot vote. (Brough 1869, 7)

The use of quotation marks around 'person' encourages the word be spoken as a jibe, tauntingly drawing attention to the failed attempt by Mills to use the word to gain women's suffrage.

The play serves to comment on what Brough suggests is the ridiculous nature of women's rights activism and functions as a cautionary tale for women agitating for women's rights by arguing that such actions will have severe consequences (in this case, with the audience being asked to vote on whether she should be burnt at the stake or not). Use of Joan to communicate this viewpoint is further intensified by the fact that she was intrinsically linked with the feminist movement and liberal activism.

Unlike the Suffragettes, Shaw, Markievicz and Gonne (and her detractors), all of whom openly utilised the medievalism of Joan to add weight to their political or ideological views, Brough use of the medieval past is complicated and contradictory. By describing the Joan character as a 'Girl of the Period', Brough positions her as fundamentally dissimilar to the idealised woman of the past. This assertion, however, totally disregards the historical and mythic elements of Joan of Arc as a woman from the medieval past. Rather curiously, Brough does not use the medievalness of the Joan character to support progressive or traditionalist views on womanhood, but to make fun of them. Furthermore, Brough's Joan's active and martial actions and beliefs, though mirroring to some extent the historical story of Joan of Arc, are represented as symptoms of modern problems around shifting debates on the rights and roles of women.

it is clear that political and social activists and commentators utilised the character of Joan of Arc to justify their ideological outlooks – in some cases, to lend historicity and prestige to their arguments but in others merely as a pretext for exploring modern concerns. As a symbol of socially progressive movements, particularly feminism, Joan was pervasive in the cultural landscape of nineteenth-century Britain. This association of her with social progress infused another aspect of her portrayal: the representation of her as a 'warrior woman'.

The woman warrior

Most of the written and visual artworks from the long nineteenth century portray Joan as a soldier or military leader. Many merely mention, or vaguely allude to,

Joan's martial exploits as an unavoidable part of her story, but there are a number that manifestly praise this aspect of her character and these works appealed to somewhat radical ideas about the acceptable place and roles of women. Ann Heilmann claims that these kinds of texts often capitalised on the 'myth of the woman warrior' (2010), which she defines as the celebration of historical women as the forebears of contemporary female activism and empowerment, or as figures who challenge patriarchal notions of biological gender difference. Though not openly linked to social or political activism (unlike the works examined previously), these texts reveal a decidedly liberal bent to their depictions of Joan as a soldier and display a reliance on the medieval past to legitimise changing views on femininity.

Charles Duke Yonge, prolific classicist, antiquarian and historian (Jupp 2004), created one of the most overt examples of Joan as a 'warrior woman' from the nineteenth century. His book of biographies, *The Seven Heroines of Christendom* (1878), has been overlooked by modern scholars[18] but it presents a conspicuously progressive interpretation of the martial sections of Joan's story. Yonge's biography goes into great detail about the battles fought by Joan and openly admires her resoluteness and fierceness in combat, describing her in one instance as 'a lioness' (Yonge 1878, 42). Alongside this veneration of the military character of Joan, Yonge emphasised Joan's historical authenticity, situating her within a tradition of female heroism and in doing so challenging contemporary notions of naturalised gendered differences:

[18] This is perhaps due in part to the fact that Yonge was discredited later in his career by major historians for writing biased 'Whig history' and for his outmoded style of research.

> Women are often spoken of as if timidity were […] completely a part of their nature […] but such a notion not only shows a failure to appreciate a very beautiful part of the female character, but is also so utterly at variance with general experience and many well-established facts of history, that there is scarcely a nation which does not preserve among its most cherished traditions memorials of female heroism displayed under great variety of circumstances (Yonge 1878, 1).

Yonge celebrated Joan as a *female* hero within a history of *heroines* and proclaimed that female bravery and martial skill were natural and historically verified.

A number of written works of the period pushed the notion of natural womanly heroism a step further than Yonge by combining 'feminine' and 'masculine' traits within the figure of Joan. These texts positioned Joan's androgyny as a feature of her elevated humanity. This characterisation of Joan is evident in Janet Tuckey's[19] biography *Joan of Arc 'The Maid'* (1890), where Joan is venerated as the embodiment of a 'rare union' of disparate qualities, namely:

> The soldier's courage, the patriot's devotion, the purity of a saint, and the constancy of a martyr […] blended with and glorified by the very truest womanliness. (Tuckey 1890, 5)

[19] Little examined in modern scholarship.

Tuckey praises Joan's prowess as a soldier and depicts it as intrinsically bound up with her femininity. Thus, in Tuckey's description of Joan, even more unreservedly than in Yonge's biography, Joan's 'womanliness' is positioned as a key aspect of her magnificence. Furthermore, like Yonge, Tuckey locates Joan 'among heroines of history' (Tuckey 1890, 5) and therefore downplays the exceptionality of female heroism, and thus undermines the problematic push to render Joan as a singular woman.

A similar argument was posed by the little-studied English essayist, writer and playwright Emma Robinson in her biography *The Maid of Orleans: A Romantic Chronicle* (1850). Even though Broome-Saunders has argued that Robinson 'feminised' Joan by 'putting her back in her acceptable female sphere' (2009, 95)[20], I maintain that there are characteristics of Robinson's portrayal that challenge this understanding of her work as traditionalist. Robinson's progressive treatment of Joan also closely aligns with her other texts. In 1857 she critiqued the Marital Causes Bill in her published but unperformed play *Maulever's Divorce*, while in 1867 she criticised the marriage market in her essay 'The Matrimonial Vanity Fair'.

Throughout her biography, Robinson portrays Joan as a fierce and passionate leader and idolises her androgyny, calling her 'womanly though warlike' (1850, 63). As in both Yonge's and Tuckey's biographies, Robinson situates Joan within a long lineage of heroes, though this time not specifically female:

[20] Examined later in the chapter.

> A marvel and a wonder to all time it were, that a woman should save a royal knight, - a peasant redeem a king and a mighty realm! Yet women and shepherds have ever been chosen to work the marvels of God! Was it not David, the Shepherd, that slew the giant? Our Blessed Mother, was she not herself a woman? (Robinson 1850, 9).

Though this attributes the power of these figures largely to the will of God, it nevertheless legitimates Joan's heroism as part of a longer history, granting biblical and historical validity to the argument for broadening conceptions of acceptable womanhood. Little is known of Robinson's life and even less of her faith, but the reference to 'our Blessed Mother' and her subtle venerations of the Catholic Church throughout her biography on Joan, suggest that she was a Catholic and that she perhaps saw Joan as something of a continuation of the Catholic Marian tradition. Robinson also linked Joan's femaleness with her role as a shepherd, an occupation of the peasant class, and in this way seems to extend the notion of feminine power beyond class divides.

Unlike Robinson, Tuckey and Yonge, Elizabeth Rundle Charles, in her as yet unexamined but culturally revealing novel *Joan the Maid: Deliverer of England and France* (1892)[21], does not depict Joan as one of a long line of heroes, but nevertheless celebrates her androgyny and martial expertise. Charles was a deeply devoted Anglican, a member of the Christian Social Union and writer of a number of works of Christian history, including *Tales and Sketches of Christian Life in Different*

[21] She also wrote a short biography on Joan in her book *Sketches of the Women of Christendom* (1880) but the work contains very little that would be of academic interest.

Lands and Ages (1850) and *Wanderings over Bible Lands and Seas* (1861) (Jay 2004). Though Charles was Anglican, the powerful religiosity of Joan's story superseded sectarian and nationalistic differences and functioned as the driving force behind the novel's sympathetic portrayal of her, as well as its comparatively negative portrayal of the English army.

Charles's novel *Joan the Maid* is told from the perspective of three English Christians, who are fictitious contemporaries of Joan. One of the 'English Christians' is Percival, a green young man who joins the English army against the French. Percival is soon disillusioned by the horrors of war and the immorality of invading a foreign nation, and becomes a deserter. Charles depicts Percival's desertion as driven by moral and religious objections, not by cowardice or a lack of patriotism. The final impetus behind Percival leaving the English army is an encounter with Joan, whom he acknowledges as a powerful religious figure. Percival is in awe of the maid, describing her as an amalgam of delicate 'femininity' and 'masculine' might: 'A young girl, little more than sixteen […] I cannot explain the strange sense of strength and majesty that surrounded her' (Charles 1892, 100). Percival venerates Joan's androgyny as a source of her power in his description of her voice, calling it 'deep and penetrating, but soft and feminine' (Charles 1892, 101). The suggestion is that this combination lends Joan her power to incite men to arms, and thus Joan's femininity is presented as just as fundamental as her masculinity to her military power.

Amabel Kerr made this connection between femininity and military power clear in her 1903 biography *Jeanne D'Arc Glorifée par une Anglaise*. Kerr converted to Roman Catholicism in 1872 (as discussed in the Newspaper Times 1927) and published a number of now forgotten works on Christian theology and history, including *The Life of the Blessed Sebastian Valfré of the Turin Oratory* (1896) and *A Bible Picture Book for Catholic Children* (1898). Thus, it is not surprising that she took up the figure of Joan and that she heaped praise on the Catholic martyr. Kerr positioned Joan's femininity as central to her success. In one instance, Kerr states:

> As skilful as she was in strategy, and fearless in battle, it was not because of either her skill or valour that she changed the fate of nations, and held the hearts of men, but because, in spite of her life in camp and battlefield, and in spite of her male attire, she was the most womanly of women who ever breathed (Kerr 1903, 32).

Kerr's clear suggestion that Joan's 'womanliness' made her great positions femininity as something powerful and important, greater than even the 'masculine' features that Joan was compelled to adopt.

The military aptitude and the masculine and feminine traits that aided in Joan's success were also celebrated in Andrew Lang's *The Maid of France* (1909). Lang's work on Joan of Arc has received little attention,[22] but Lang took up the subject of

[22] This is perhaps due to the sheer amount of writing by Lang, with his work on Joan simply fading into obscurity against the backdrop of hundreds of other texts. Further, the fact that Lang is best known

Joan four times during his prolific writing career. Lang's proud Scottish nationality and deeply anti-English sensibilities played a part in his interest in Joan and allowed him, as argued by Eleanor De Selms Langstaff (1978), to circumvent certain problems faced by English authors in regard to nationalism. Lang did not just manoeuvre around the nationality of Joan but instead emphasised it, using Joan's story to critique English colonialism and celebrate the fact that the Scottish contingents supported Joan in her victory against England.

Lang's examination of Joan in *The Maid of France* goes into great depth about Joan's military exploits, singing her praises as a soldier:

> She solved the problem; she assumed the manners; she faced the rain of arrows and bullets […] she animated the soldiery in Napoleon's way; she spoke and acted like a captain (Lang, 5).

Ignoring the strange anachronism of the mention of bullets, Lang's work is fascinating in its discussion of Joan's magnificence as deriving from her androgyny, calling her a 'consummation and ideal of two noble human efforts towards perfection' (Lang, 1). She combines the ideals of womanhood – youthfulness, gentleness, kindness, religiosity and filial obedience; and of masculinity – chivalry, bravery and loyalty. Thus, Lang argues that Joan was masterful in her military might, not in spite of her femininity but as a result of it. The overall medievalist message

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for his children's stories and anthologies of fairy tales possibly led to his works being seen as of little scholarly value.

that these biographies present is that feminine heroism is natural and historical, that it is a trait of womanhood that dates back to the Middle Ages.

There are, however, a number of works by Lang and other writers and visual artists of the long nineteenth century that do not seek to situate Joan within a history of heroines or to emphasise the feminine features of her martial power, but which nevertheless celebrate her as a military leader. These works abandon the need to qualify Joan's gender and instead function to venerate her as a hero, unbounded by the constrictions of her femininity. In some ways, this creates an even more progressive depiction of Joan, as a figure who transcends her exceptionality as a female soldier. In this way, the medieval historicity of Joan is utilised to support a more radical view of the natural potential of women.

Another example of this type radicalism is present in a work by Lang, an essay entitled 'The Voices of Jeanne D'Arc', first published in 1895. The essay, as the title suggests, interrogates the nature of Joan's visions. Contrary to popular contemporary views on Joan's apparitions, it argues that Joan's hallucinations were not sent by God, nor were they a result of madness, but were manifestations of her higher genius. Lang called the visions 'part of the mechanism of a certain class of mind' (Lang 1903), associating her with the likes of Goethe, Shelley and Socrates. Moreover, Lang states that to consider Joan's visions as anything other than symbolic of her genius would be to discredit the magnificence of her story and weaken arguments for the individual greatness and brilliance of Joan as warrior and

leader. Lang provides an individualistic view of Joan, positioning her as a force all her own, rather than situating her as a conduit of God's will.

Some years later, in 1903, Lang published *The Story of Joan of Arc*, a children's book illustrated by J. Jellicoe, which also venerated Joan's military skill. Lang wrote a huge number of books for children and compiled numerous anthologies of fairy tales, so it is unsurprising that he chose to examine Joan in this genre. Lang's *The Story of Joan of Arc* sets itself up as a children's book from the outset, with gloriously hyperbolic praise of Joan, mirroring the style of fairy tale introductions: 'Joan of Arc was perhaps the most wonderful person who ever lived in the world' (1906, 1). A central objective of fairy tales and children's literature is, of course, the moral and social education of children (as studied by Warner 1995) and Lang's book is no different, largely examining more conservative values and ideals.[23] Nevertheless, throughout the book Lang does not shy away from depicting Joan as a wise, brave and impressive military leader, most conspicuously in the following lines:

> She was so wise that many learned men could not puzzle her by questions: she was one of the best riders in France; one of the most skilled in aiming cannons, and so great a general that she defeated the English again and again, and her army was never beaten till her King deserted her. She was so brave that severe wounds could not stop her from leading on her soldiers (Lang and Jellicoe 1906, 1).

[23] This part of the book will be examined later in the section on ideal womanhood.

The martial element of Joan's characterisation, an aspect of her story that posed some ideological concerns for nineteenth-century sensibilities, is normalised in Lang. This normalisation is made even more striking by the fact that it was in a text written for children. For Lang, Joan became a historical figure of unqualified bravery and skill and a figure who exceeded the constrictions of appropriate gender roles. The outcome of this, rather strikingly, is that Lang held up a medieval woman as a role model for contemporary children.

The image of Joan as unqualified hero abounds in written works of the nineteenth century. Almost a century earlier than Lang, Thomas Dibdin, the popular and prolific writer and playwright of the early 1800s, wrote the poem 'Joan of Arc: A Tragedye Fulle of Merrie Conceites', published in his anthology *A Metrical History of England* (1813). The poem, which has been overlooked by modern scholarship, displays a similar veneration of Joan's military career to Lang's, speaking of Joan's 'uncommon skill, and most consummate art' (1813, 286) and venerating her as a great soldier among men, without unduly emphasising her gender.

Maria Jane Jewsbury, a writer and critic who was not picked up by feminist literary scholars until the 1980s (as examined in Wilkes 2004), also venerates Joan's military career in a poem from her book *Phantasmagoria; or, Sketches of Life and Literature* (1825). The poem meticulously focuses on Joan's battles, venerating her prowess and courage. At one point she describes her, in alliterative terms, as entering the battle 'with brow and breast in mail –/ Like one to battles bred' (Jewsbury 1825, 129). Thus, she depicts Joan as a natural fighter, a skilled commander and, above all,

a soldier equal to her comrades. Harriet Parr's biography *The Life and Death of Jeanne D'Arc* provides a similarly progressive characterisation of Joan's role as soldier. Indeed, though Broome-Saunders has argued that Parr's[24] depiction of Joan centres on the domestic, feminine and religious[25], I assert that her mention of Joan's 'swift-eye glance of military genius' (1866, 94) complicates this claim and mirrors other writers of the time by celebrating the inherent bravery of the maid.

These works by Parr, Jewsbury, Lang and Dibdin still promoted a narrative that was sympathetic to female heroism – though not as openly as the biographers who sought to universalise and grant historicity to the model of womanly heroism that Joan embodied – and the implicit medievalism of these works does, in a sense, function to legitimise modern arguments about the true nature of women.

The portrayal of Joan as an active, military figure was also popular in the visual art of the period, and artworks also served to confer authority to those who sought to challenge notions of natural feminine passivity. This depiction was especially arresting because, as I have discussed in my chapter on Beatrice, renderings of womanhood from this time were mostly preoccupied with feminine beauty and sensuality, where the individual woman was depicted as a passive figure for the admiration of the male gaze. A number of visual representations of Joan from the period challenged this trend. The trope of depicting Joan in the thick of battle, surrounded by the chaos of soldiers, arrows and swords, became popular. The trope was taken up by the illustrator Selwyn Image in one of his engraved illustrations for

[24] A prolific mid to late Victorian English author, who used the pseudonym of Holme Lee.
[25] As examined later in the chapter.

Andrew Lang's novel *Monk of Fife* (1896).[26] The artwork shows Joan, surrounded by broken swords, shields and falling arrows, being dragged away by her enemies. Very similar images were produced by J. Jellicoe in an illustration for Lang's children's book *The Story of Joan of Arc* (1906)[27] and by Chas A. Buchel for E.M. Wilmot-Buxton's *Jeanne D'Arc* (1914).[28]

William Etty's painting 'Jeanne d'Arc sort des portes d'Orléans et repousse les ennemis de la France'(1846-1847)[29] offers an even more militaristically active rendering of Joan, portraying her riding over the corpses of her enemies, a serene smile on her face as she wields her sword, primed to smite. Comparably, Frank Craig's 'The Maid' (1907)[30] portrays a frenzied battle scene with Joan at its centre, spikes and swords piercing the air around her as she leans back in the saddle of her white courser, trampling men under foot. Buchel produced a similar illustration entitled 'In God's name, Forward!'(1914)[31] for Wilmot-Buxton's book, and Jellicoe included a sanitised version of the scene in his illustrations for Lang's *The Story of Joan of Arc* (1906).[32]

Aside from these visual examples, which explicitly rendered Joan as an active figure, a number of more subtle renderings of Joan were also produced. These works do not depict her as an obviously 'active' figure – riding, fighting and charging into battle –

[26] Plate 8
[27] Plate 9
[28] Plate 10
[29] Plate 11
[30] Plate 12
[31] Plate 13
[32] Plate 14

but subtly indicate her position as a powerful figure in other ways. This is the case with both of John Gilbert's renderings of Joan. His watercolour titled 'Joan of Arc' (1817-97)[33] displays an innate sense of motion by portraying Joan mid-gesture, which, combined with her military garb, symbolises her martial might. In his lithograph, also titled 'Joan of Arc' (1890)[34], Gilbert proffers a Joan who is still and stoic but who raises her sword, symbolically leading her men into battle. The most potent example of the stoically powerful Joan, however, is in George William Joy's painting 'The Maid of Orléans' (1880).[35] At first glance, the image could be seen as a typically passive nineteenth-century artistic representation of womanhood. The image portrays Joan as a beautiful figure with downcast eyes, standing against the backdrop of an intricately adorned tent, pointing to God to symbolise 'His' divine power. Closer analysis, however, reveals Joan's more assertive role. Behind her stand a number of armour-clad men who gaze intently at her, and this, along with the tent, becomes symbolic of her position as the captain of an army.

The overall effect of the depiction of Joan of Arc in these artworks is that she was, at this time in British history, visually identifiable as a revered figure of courage, might and militancy. The combination of this radical image of womanhood with the presence of manifestly medievalist imagery and aesthetics throughout all of these works (medieval clothing, armour, castles and banners) puts forth a strong case for both the radical and the medieval to have been seen as interchangeable and

[33] Plate 15
[34] Plate 16
[35] Plate 17

mutually implicated within the figure of Joan. This fact undoubtedly influenced, and in turn was influenced by, the use of Joan for progressive debates on womanhood.

Against the backdrop of the large number of sympathetic depictions of Joan as a military leader in visual art and written works, one also comes across a small number of works that denigrate this feature of Joan's characterisation. One example of this depiction is from a section on Joan in Mary Hays' unexamined *Female Biography; or Memoirs of Illustrious and Celebrated Women* (1803). Perhaps it is because she was writing at a time when France and England were at war that Hays, an English woman, felt the need to disparage Joan. One of the major ways that she did this was by suggesting that Joan was not seventeen but twenty-seven, an undeniably ageist method of destabilising the sympathetic renderings of her by undermining the image of Joan as an innocent, young maiden who could be forgiven for her flights of fancy. Indeed, at the age of twenty-seven, according to studies by Kay Heath (2009) and Michael Anderson (1984) on nineteenth-century views on women and ageing, Joan would have been considered a few years shy of middle age, a designation based on feminine reproductive potential, spurred on by the growing science of gynaecology. Furthermore, because Joan was unmarried, she would have been allotted the title of 'old maid', a figure who was openly denigrated in the culture of the time.

In her work Hays also underplays the exceptionality of Joan's military expertise, and her skill as a rider and fighter is explained away using an apocryphal story about Joan working as a groom at a public house. Hays denigrates Joan in this masculine role, saying that at the public house she 'employed herself in exertions and fatigues

rather suited to a groom than to her sex and station; in attending the horses of the guests, and in riding them to the water place' (Hays 1803, 78). Moreover, Hays suggests that it was as a result of these unwomanly exercises that she 'acquired an active temper and a robust and hardy frame' (Hays 1803, 78) and that 'without displaying any superiority of talent or character, she preserved in circumstances thus exposed' (Hays 1803, 78). The work also suggests that it was 'the effects of surprise, of incredulity, and ignorance' (Hays 1803, 81) that led to Joan's military victories, not her military skill or even divine influence, which she totally dismisses.

Markedly comparable arguments about the nature of Joan were offered a year later by Mary Pilkington, in a section from her unstudied book *Memoirs of Celebrated Female Characters* (1804). Again, Joan's age is inflated (this time to 30) and the same apocryphal story of her working at an inn is included. This time, Joan is said to have worked as both a waiting-maid and a groom, but, according to Pilkington (in phrasing that suggests she has read Hays) her 'active temper and robust frame' (Pilkington 1804, 25) made her more suited to the role of groom. Joan is depicted as nosily listening in on customers' conversations about the war, and this, alongside the superstitious milieu of the Middle Ages and Joan's predisposition for delusion, is said to have made her believe God called her to arms. Moreover, Pilkington argues that it was a combination of 'the beauty of her person, the enthusiasm of her language' (Pilkington 1804, 26) and her skill with horses as a groom that made people believe that she was a soldier of God. Her military expertise is tellingly omitted from Pilkington's description, and her exceptionality is explained away.

By far the most compelling text to undercut Joan's martial skill and military exploits is Brough's play *Joan of Arc* (1869), surveyed above for its anti-feminist treatment of Joan. The play returns often to the notion of the innate differences between men and women. Throughout, Brough seems to suggest that women are naturally unable to adopt and retain traits and roles that are inherently 'male', such as steadfastness to a cause, emotional stability, and the strength and fortitude of a soldier. The popular nineteenth-century binary of masculinity and femininity is constantly in conflict within the character of Joan in the play, and this internal conflict instigates much of the plot. The best example of this conflict comes about in the denouement, where Joan is captured and sentenced to death. Contrary to historical documents, Joan's seizure is brought about not through betrayal or military failure but by Joan's lapse into her true feminine nature. Specifically, as emotionally vulnerable women are wont to do, she falls in love at first sight with an English soldier named Lionel and, without argument, allows him to arrest her:

> JOAN: With those odds my friends—
>
> My dream now ends. A case of odds and ends,
>
> Upset completely; fight no more I can,
>
> (aside) I ne'er e'en dreamt of such a nice young man!
>
> LIONEL: You won't fight! Then a pris'ner you'll be carried,
>
> To Talbot's camp
>
> JOAN: One question: you're not married? (1880).

This section undeniably serves as a comment on the unsuitability of women to enter the domains of war and politics. Overall, the play functions as a cautionary tale for women, suggesting that attempting to cross the barriers of 'natural' gender roles ultimately leads to one's downfall – in this case, being burnt at the stake. Ultimately, this message can also be applied to both Pilkington's and Hay's works, as all three texts function as a warning for women against overstepping the bounds of feminine propriety.

Joan's characterisation as a 'warrior woman' was fundamental to her story, and this was of great interest to nineteenth-century writers and artists. The fact that this part of her persona could simultaneously be taken up as something positive, neutral, and highly problematic is a great case study in the disunity of nineteenth-century discourse of medievalism and femininity. It is also a testament to how far artists and writers were willing to shape and stretch Joan's story to fit their own political agenda.

The politics of dress

Closely linked with Joan's role as 'warrior woman' is her wearing of armour. This feature of her story is upheld in all medieval documents, in both the Condemnation and Rehabilitation trial transcripts and in Christine de Pizan's poem. Joan's choice of dress inflamed the imaginations of nineteenth-century visual artists and writers, who provided disparate reasonings for, and views on, her cross-dressing. Some saw it as a manifestation of her feminine modesty and others her religious fervour, while a number saw it as a practical decision. Still others used this part of Joan's

characterisation as a way to lampoon her and the debates around womanhood with which she was associated.

Focus on Joan's choice of dress united perfectly with broader British concerns and interests of the nineteenth century as, according to Vern L. Bullough and Bonnie Bullough (1993) and Julie Wheelwright (1989), stories of women disguising themselves as men captured the cultural imagination of the time. Cases of women dressing as men to gain access to male professions, particularly the army, were popular fodder.[36] Indeed, according to Bullough and Bullough (1993), over a hundred ballads survive from the period between 1650 and 1850 that deal with women cross-dressers. The general public pitied these 'women'[37], perceiving them as desperate and even mentally ill. It was in this environment that Joan became popular, and this undoubtedly played some part in people's perceptions of the medieval story.

Moreover, both the negative and positive portrayals of Joan's infamous dress, I argue, often connected with debates around the Rational Dress Movement (also known as Victorian Dress Reform), which swept through the mid to late nineteenth century. Dress reform grew alongside the feminist movement and was, as Kathleen M. Torrens puts it, not simply a call for changes in fashion but 'an organized social movement that attacked one of the fundamental structures of society, that of

[36] As examined by Wheelwright (1989) and Bullough and Bullough (1993), this included the case of James Barry, a medical doctor who served as a high ranking officer in the British Army but who was 'discovered' to be a 'woman' at her death in 1865; a Mary Walker, who worked as a stoker, porter and barkeeper until being 'discovered' in 1867; Hannah Snell, who disguised herself as James Gray and served as a British soldier and sailor in the mid-1700s; and Mary Anne Talbot, who served as a British soldier in the late eighteenth century.

[37] I use quotation marks here because it is not certain whether these individuals identified as men or if they dressed in men's clothing as a means to get ahead in patriarchal British society.

clothing as a key indicator of both gender and social position' (1997, 190). Dress reformers saw popular clothing for women as symbolic of female subjugation, believing (rightly) that the tight and voluminous style caused complications for health and freedom of movement (Riegel 1963, Torrens 1997, Jungnickel 2013). As an alternative to the popular style, dress reformers sought to promote 'rational dress', which, according to Katrina Jungnickel, meant fewer layers, lighter fabric, and:

> Comprised a range of styles but was ostensibly recognised as a bifurcated garment such as bloomers (short full trousers or knicker-bockers), looser corsets (or no corset at all) and shorter (or no) skirts (2013, 362).

Essentially, reformers called for what was perceived to be a more 'masculine' style of dress for women, which, though not exactly the armour that Joan was said to have worn, was nevertheless coded as 'male' and was celebrated for similar reasons, particularly for practicality.

Aesthetic dress, which was a subset of the Rational Dress Movement, simultaneously arose and was especially popular in the 1870s and 1880s. Aesthetic dress, which was linked with the Aesthetic Movement and the Pre-Raphaelites, called for a return to classical and medieval styles of dress, which were perceived to be characterised by looseness, lack of corsetry and natural feminine forms (Wahl 2004, Mitchell 2010), in defiance of the constrictive styles of the time. Mary Eliza Haweis was at the forefront of the movement and published a number of works on the topic, the most

comprehensive of which was a book entitled *The Art of Dress* (1879). The fact that Haweis, a major proponent of the movement, was simultaneously engaged in medievalism through her scholarship on Chaucer (examined by Mary Flowers Braswell 2016) points to a definitive link between dress reform and medievalism. Thus, it is unsurprising that Joan of Arc, as a figure who was both medieval and notorious for her choice of 'masculine' dress, was taken up by both sides of the argument around Rational Dress. This fact is, of course, complicated by the fact that Joan's masculine dress was a rejection of medieval women's clothes, but nevertheless her medievalness and her individualistic choice of dress carried weight with proponents of the Rational Dress Movement of the time.

As mentioned earlier in the chapter, George Bernard Shaw was a vocal supporter of Rational Dress, as reflected in his speech 'Woman-Man in Petticoats', which actively critiqued the 'upholstered' (1962, 173) style of nineteenth-century women's dress. This support extended into his description of Joan in the prologue essay for his play *Saint Joan: a Chronicle Play*, where he celebrates Joan as 'the pioneer of rational dressing for women' (Shaw 1962, 7). Shaw suggests that Joan's reason for wearing masculine dress was that 'she refused to accept the specific woman's lot, and dressed and fought and lived as men did' (Shaw 1962, 7). His argument seems to be that women's dress was restricting, not physically (as modern woman's was) but socially. According to Shaw, by cross-dressing, Joan was able to rise above her subjugated position as a woman to fight and live on equal terms with men; thus, this decision is presented as a political one that could and should be taken up by the women of his age.

Elizabeth Barrett Browning provided a similar argument in her unpublished poem 'The Princess Marie' (1844), using Joan's clothing choices as a symbol for women throwing off the shackles of female subjugation. In a letter dated 1841, Browning spoke of composing a poem about Joan, but this poem, as far as most modern literary scholarship is concerned, never came to fruition. In total agreement with Broome-Saunders (2006), however, I maintain that Browning did indeed take up the figure of Joan, in the poem 'The Princess Marie'.

The Browning Armstrong Library at Baylor University, USA, houses the only known copy of the unfinished and unpublished 'Princess Marie'. It is contained in the *Wimpole Street Notebook*, sometimes referred to as the *Sonnets Notebook*, which consists of notes and drafts of poems produced by Browning between 1839 and 1846. The poem has been transcribed twice, first in 1984 by Philip David Sharpe in his thesis 'Poetry in Process: Elizabeth Barrett Browning and the Sonnets Notebook' (1985), and then by Sandra Donaldson et al. (2010) in a more scholarly and thorough transcription which includes contextual notes and suggestions of alternative spelling and grammar. Aside from these two works, Clare Broome-Saunders (2006, 2009) has been the only other scholar to examine the poem.

'The Princess Marie' centres on an historical figure contemporary to Browning, the Duchess of Wurttemberg and Orléans, Marie Christine Caroline Adélaïde Françoise Léopoldine (1813-39), who was the daughter of King Louis Phillippe of France (Sharpe 1985, Browning, Donaldson et al. 2010). Marie was a sculptor, and her most

renowned works use Joan as their subject.[38] In 'The Princess Marie', Browning makes the parallel between Marie and Joan apparent by portraying Marie at work on one of her famous Joan of Arc sculptures: 'Jeanne d'Arc's brave name the statue bore' (Browning, Donaldson et al. 2010, 621). More subtle in its connection of Joan and Marie, however, is the fact that the poem parallels Joan's casting off of women's clothes for soldiers' garb with Marie throwing off her feminine and royal dress for sculptors' clothes:

> She loosed the silken string
>
> That bound her purple vest
>
> And from her hand she took the ring
>
> And the gold chain from her breast
>
> […]
>
> She put aside her purple weeds,
>
> She donned her sculptor's gown (2010, 619).

I wish to suggest that Browning sets up Marie's choice of clothes, like Joan's, as symbolic of her rejection of traditional women's roles and the restrictions imposed upon women socially, intellectually and artistically. Moreover, the ring that Marie removes from her finger is then sunk into the clay, which is symbolic of Marie being married to her art and, by extension, rejecting traditional marital bonds that subjugate women. The historical Princess Marie did in fact marry, so perhaps this was Browning's way of positioning Marie's dedication to her art as transcending her

[38] These are 'Joan of Arc at Prayer', installed at the palace of Versailles on 1837, and a bronze titled 'Joan of Arc on horseback crying at the sight of wounded Englishmen'.

earthly marriage. Ultimately, the poem calls up the spectre of Joan as a means to universalise and comment on the restrictions placed on women and the renunciations (of class and femininity) that women must make to break through these barriers.

Alongside these openly non-traditional representations of Joan and her penchant for cross-dressing, which connected her with modern questions around womanhood, there were a number of works that examined this part of Joan's story to celebrate her as a medieval model of powerful military might. In his poem 'Joan of Arc: A Tragedye Fulle of Merrie Conceites' (1813), Dibdin defends Joan's cross-dressing, positioning it as a manifestation of her military genius and asserting that any criticism she faced for donning armour was out of spite and jealousy over her superior skill. Dibdin's poem came much earlier than the rise of the Rational Dress Movement, but it nevertheless shows an engagement with non-traditional ideas around women in 'masculine' clothing. Dibdin situates Joan within a long line of valiant cross-dressing heroines, arguing that she performed wonders and feats of heroism 'As ladies will who wear the breeches' (Dibdin 1813, 286). At the poem's conclusion, Dibdin woefully recalls the capture of Joan by the Burgundians, during which they made sure to catch her 'while putting on, poor girl, a suit of armour' (Dibdin 1813, 286). Dibdin then suggests that the capture and execution of Joan was based on disdain for her cross-dressing and envy at her military dominance:

> And this most unmanly action done
> Merely for putting martial harness on?
> No, 'twas mere spite, one sees it in a minute,

Because she had most soundly thrash'd 'em in it' (Dibdin 1813, 286).

Dibdin emasculates the Burgundian soldiers, suggesting that Joan generated feelings of inadequacy in them. This could be read as Dibdin's critique of men who fear powerful women and who mock women who strive and succeed in spheres typically for men. Joan's dress thus becomes a symbol of woman's powerful potential and man's fear.

Francis Kirkall Conington also positioned Joan's wearing of armour as a symbol of her military superiority through depicting her armour as an artefact of war. Connington worked as a chemist and scholar of chemistry, producing a *Handbook of Chemical Analysis* in 1868, but he also published a poem entitled 'Joan of Arc; A Prize Poem Recited in Rugby School' (1846).[39] The nature of the poem is a veneration of the martial success of Joan and the French over England, to be performed by English schoolboys. The poem opens, like a dream or vision, with Joan lying by a stream. Clouds gather and thunder rolls overhead, and this awakens the slumbering figure, transforming her into a warrior goddess: 'The maid uprose amid the stormy strife,/ With hands upraised triumphantly she stood,/ Like some old goddess sprung again to life' (Conington 1846, 5). The poem details the might and skill of Joan in battle and then shifts to the scene of Charles VII's coronation. As Joan stands beside the king, her physical form is described, with Connington accentuating her heavy battle-worn armour as a manifestation of her physical might and martial success:

[39] Conington and his brother both attended Rugby School as boys.

And by his side I marked the warrior maid,

She stood, as in the forest, calm and pale;

But in her hand she bore the conquering blade,

And heaved her breast beneath the battered mail,

Freed from the helmet's weight her head was bare,

And o'er her shoulders streamed her darkly waving hair (Conington 1846, 7).

Joan's armour is not decorative; it bears the unmistakable marks of warfare. Thus, she is portrayed not as an abstract symbol of French victory but rather as an actual soldier. Moreover, the arresting description of Joan's long hair, which flows down onto the weighty metal of her armour, feminises her, suggesting that she did not lose her femininity through performing 'masculine' deeds. This depiction could be seen to be Conington commenting on women's potential to broaden their social horizons without having to sacrifice their femininity.

A number of works of visual art performed the same function as written portrayals that cast Joan's armour as a symbol of her military might. As mentioned previously, almost all images of Joan of Arc from the long nineteenth century portray her in armour; but a significant number of these seem particularly intent on using this aspect of her characterisation to positively render her masculinised role as soldier. These portray her in 'masculine' armour, with bifurcated legs and/or unexaggerated breastplate. These include: Gilbert's 'Joan of Arc' (datable only as 1817-97)[40] and 'Joan of Arc' (1890)[41]; Buchel's four illustrations for Wilmot-Buxton's biography

[40] Plate 15
[41] Plate 16

Jeanne D'Arc, 'On the Road to Margny' (1914)[42]; 'Jeanne Wounded Before Paris' (1914)[43]; 'In God's Name Forward!' (1914)[44] and 'Before the Altar' (1914)[45]*;* an illustration by Jellicoe for Lang's *The Story of Joan of Arc* entitled 'Joan Riding into Orleans under Torchlight' (1906)[46]; an untitled illustration[47] by Selwyn Image for Lang's *Monk of Fife;* Harold H. Piffard's 'Joan of Arc' (1895-1899)[48]; Annie Louisa Robinson Swynnerton's 'Joan of Arc' (1905)[49]; George William Joy's 'Joan of Arc, Guarded in her Sleep by an Angel' (1895)[50]; Robert Alexander Hillingford's 'Joan of Arc' (1825-1904)[51]; Thomas Hales Lacy's costume design[52] for Joan in his *Female Costumes, Historical and National, and Dramatic in 200 Plates* (1865); and William Blake Richmond's 'Joan of Arc' (1885-1909).[53] Like the literary works of Dibdin and Conington, these artworks celebrate the militaristic sections of Joan's characterisation through the depiction of her as a noble warrior figure, clad in armour.

Many images emphasised the masculinity of Joan by showing her in her armour whilst astride her horse (in the style of a soldier, not a lady), such as Gilbert's 'Joan of Arc' (1890)[54]; Etty's 'Jeanne d'Arc sort des portes d'Orléans et repousse les ennemis de la France' (1846-1847)[55]; Craig's 'The Maid' (1907)[56]; Buchel's illustrations 'On the

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[42] Plate 18
[43] Plate 10
[44] Plate 13
[45] Plate 19
[46] Plate 20
[47] Plate 21
[48] Plate 22
[49] Plate 23
[50] Plate 24
[51] Plate 25
[52] Plate 26
[53] Plate 27
[54] Plate 16
[55] Plate 11

Road to Margny' (1914)[57] and 'In God's Name Forward' (1914)[58]; Jellicoe's 'Joan Riding into Orleans Under Torchlight' (1906)[59] and 'Joan Taken at Compiegne' (1906)[60]; another untitled illustration[61] by Selwyn Image; and William Blake Richmond's 'Joan of Arc' (Richmond 1885-1909).[62] These texts do not seek to disparage the 'masculinised' Joan and thus support the contention that, even though Joan crossed boundaries of gender, she was still a figure to be venerated.

There are also numerous images, all of which are illustrations from books, which depict Joan in 'page boy' clothes, portraying her as cross-dressing without representing her as a soldier. These include three illustrations by Buchel for Wilmot Buxton's biography on Joan, entitled 'Jeanne and the Dauphin' (Buchel 1914)[63]; 'Jeanne's Attempt to Escape from Beauvoir' (Buchel 1914)[64]; and 'The Trial' (Buchel 1914)[65]; another untitled illustration[66] by Image; and Jellicoe's 'Joan Facing her Judges' (Lang and Jellicoe 1906)[67]; 'Joan Kneeling to the King at Chignon' (Lang and Jellicoe 1906)[68] and 'Joan on the Roof-Leads of Beauvoir Castle' (Lang and Jellicoe 1906).[69] These works (excluding 'Jeanne's Attempt to Escape from Beauvoir' (Buchel 1914) portray Joan as an active, autonomous figure, speaking to the royal court, God, Charles and her accusers. Thus, they present a woman not just wearing 'men's

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[56] Plate 12
[57] Plate 18
[58] Plate 12
[59] Plate 20
[60] Plate 14
[61] Plate 21
[62] Plate 27
[63] Plate 28
[64] Plate 29
[65] Plate 30
[66] Plate 31
[67] Plate 32
[68] Plate 33
[69] Plate 34

clothes' but also performing active 'masculine' roles in society. I assert that the outcome of these sympathetic portrayals of Joan in both armour and page clothes, and the medievalness of these outfits, is that gender-defiant women of the nineteenth century are legitimated.

Conversely, there were visual and written works produced at this time that pushed back against the depiction of Joan in masculine clothing. This trend was undoubtedly influenced by an escalation in social anxieties around mental illness and homosexuality in the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries in Britain, which, as examined by Isabella Bertoletti (1997), led to cross-dressing being seen as a type of pathology. Consequently, numerous works of visual art feminise Joan's armour, perhaps with the aim of softening the harshness and strangeness of depicting a woman in the clothes of a man. A number of these add a kirtle or some form of skirt under Joan's armour, such as in three of Image's illustrations 'La Pucelle' (1896)[70], La Pucelle Blessée (1896)[71] and another untitled work (1896)[72]; Theodore Blake Wirgman's 'Joan of Arc' (c.1890)[73]; John Everett Millais' 'Joan of Arc' (1865)[74]; Joy's 'The Maid of Orléans' (1895)[75]; and Etty's 'Jeanne d'Arc' (1846-1847).[76] Some add a dress over the armour, as in Jellicoe's 'Joan Fallen Wounded under the Walls of Paris' (1906)[77] and 'Joan Taken at Compiegne' (1906)[78]; Craig's 'The Maid' (1907)[79]; and

[70] Plate 35
[71] Plate 36
[72] Plate 8
[73] Plate 37
[74] Plate 38
[75] Plate 17
[76] Plate 11
[77] Plate 9
[78] Plate 14
[79] Plate 12

Frank Dicksee's 'Joan of Arc' (1918).[80] Other visual representations feminise the armour itself, such as in William Henry Motes' 'Joan of Arc' (1858)[81], where the bottom of Joan's armour balloons out as if to fit over a crinoline. A similar image was produced anonymously for Parr's *The Life and Death of Jeanne D'Arc* (1866).[82] Richmond's 'Joan of Arc' (1842-1902)[83] 'feminises' Joan's armour by rendering her in an intricately wrought, winged helmet that looks more like a beautiful prop than a form of protection. This softening of Joan's armour reflects a desire to make her masculine militancy more socially acceptable. That said, apart from Millais' depiction of Joan (1865)[84], which portrays her in over-large armour to represent her unsuitability as a soldier, none of these 'feminisations' truly detract from the notion of Joan's militaristic power and prowess, as they still render her as a functioning, active soldier.

Alternatively, a number of artworks omit the portrayal of Joan cross-dressing altogether and in doing so deny the martial aspects of her character. These instead render Joan in feminine clothes, stressing the (largely invented) domestic and bucolic features of her childhood.[85] These are Eleanor Fortescue Brickdale's 'Joan of Arc' (1872-1900)[86]; Harry Mileham's 'Jeanne D'Arc of Domremy' (1901)[87]; Buchel's 'The Call' (1914)[88]; and Jellicoe's 'Joan Hanging Garlands' (1906)[89] and 'Joan Winning

[80] Plate 39
[81] Plate 40
[82] Plate 41
[83] Plate 42
[84] Plate 38
[85] Examined in detail later in the section on idealised womanhood.
[86] Plate 43
[87] Plate 44
[88] Plate 45
[89] Plate 46

a Footrace' (1906).[90] The images by Mileham and Brickdale provide the richest examples of the sentimentalising of Joan's childhood, as they provide little context for her future military exploits (unlike Buchel's and Jellicoe's illustrations that sit within larger biographical works). Brickdale does include a tiny snippet of Joan's future soldierly deeds in a small window underneath the main image, but ultimately the focus of the painting is the beauty, piety and innocence of the child Joan. These images of Joan in women's peasant clothing function indirectly to undercut or at least mitigate the notion of the mighty martial Joan that pervaded the written and artistic works of the long nineteenth century. These texts also suggest a resolve by artists to situate Joan within more socially intelligible and acceptable realms of femininity.

The domestication and infantilisation of Joan were, I argue, closely related to a trend in the literature that sought to render Joan's cross-dressing as a symbol of her feminine modesty. Like the feminised, domestic images of Joan, these works strove to render her in connection with more conservative conceptions of womanhood. This tendency is visible in a number of female-authored biographies on Joan, including *Jeanne d'Arc: Her Life and Death* (1896) by Margaret Oliphant. Mrs Oliphant was one of the best-known and best-paid female writers of her time, with a prolific writing career that spanned half a century and produced, according to Elisabeth Jay, 'ninety-eight novels, fifty or more short stories, twenty-five works of non-fiction, and over three hundred reviews and essays' (2009, 50). As with many other women writers of her era, however, a number of whom are examined in this

[90] Plate 47

chapter, throughout most of the twentieth century she was all but forgotten. The main reason behind this lack of scholarly interest in Oliphant is that she was overwhelmingly perceived in Gynocriticism and feminist scholarship of the late twentieth century to be a writer of overly conservative, female-centred texts that were of little importance.

Oliphant's biography of Joan is a consummate example of a work which stresses elements of Joan's story that lend themselves more easily to conservative ideology, while downplaying, refuting or ignoring those parts that challenge or undermine conventional ideas and values. An aspect of Joan's story that obviously posed a problem for Oliphant was her cross-dressing. Oliphant was fascinated with clothes and fashion, having previously written a book on the history of women's clothing entitled 'Dress, By Mrs Oliphant' (1879), issuing a number of rules of thumb for the well-dressed woman. In her book and in other works, Oliphant was a vocal supporter of more sensible, moveable styles for women, calling modern dresses no better than 'swaddling clothes' (70). Oliphant's overall recommendation, however, was for women to wear slightly shorter and wider cut styles of dresses, never for them to take up more controversial fashions like bloomers.

A distaste for masculine styles of dress for women was mirrored in Oliphant's depiction of Joan's cross-dressing. In her biography on the maid, Oliphant allied herself with the outraged 'good mother', who could not condone Joan's choice of dress and so, justifiably, '[…] shook [her] head at Jeanne's costume' (Oliphant 1896, 60). Oliphant goes on to provide conservative reasons for Joan's choice of dress, at first speaking of function but ultimately stating that 'in her strange circumstances,

constrained as she was to live among men, she considered it safest for herself' (Oliphant 1896, 60). This section alludes to sexual safety and thus serves to solve the problem of Joan's choice of dress by underlining the excusable reason of protecting feminine modesty and sexual purity.

A comparable argument on the motive behind Joan's cross-dressing was provided by the lesser-known writer (in her day and today) Anna Eliza Kempe Stothard Bray, in her biography *Joan of Arc, and the Times of Charles the Seventh* (1874). Bray states that Joan was 'given man's clothes' as if the decision was not of her own choosing, arguing that the armour was worn because it was most 'appropriate to encounter the dangers to which she must be exposed' (Bray 1874, 102-103). The nonspecific dangers Bray refers to undoubtedly extended beyond those posed by war to include threats to Joan's chastity.

Joan's virginity is reiterated throughout Janet Tuckey's[91] biography *Joan of Arc 'The Maid'* (1890), which describes her as having the 'purity of a saint' (1890, 5) and vowing 'her virginity to heaven' (1890, 27). As in Bray's biography, Tuckey suggests that Joan was given the clothes of a soldier: 'they gave her a horse, and the dress and equipment of a soldier' (1890, 32), and she states that because Joan 'was to travel with men, she wisely chose to wear men's attire' (1890, 32), thus placing emphasis on modesty. Comparably, in the anonymously written *Joan of Arc; or, The Story of a Noble Life Written for Girls* (1871), it is suggested that Joan wore 'men's clothes' so as to 'protect herself from insult and injury of the basest kind' (1871, 93), referring to sexual assault.

[91] Little examined in modern scholarship.

Allusions to Joan's modesty as the reason for her cross-dressing extended to works by men too. Lord Ronald Gower, Scottish liberal politician, artist and writer, in his biography *Joan of Arc* (1893), used the same excuse for Joan's strange attire. Like many of his female contemporaries but with greater directness, Gower argued that Joan donned masculine attire because 'she was not safe from wanton insult at the hands of the rough soldiery placed about her person' (Gower 1893, 136). Gower further dismisses any criticism of Joan wearing men's clothes by saying that 'this was the principal indictment made against her by her executioners' (Gower 1893, 136), thus associating those who discredit her for her choice of attire with those who unjustly executed her.

Published in the same year as Oliphant's *Jeanne d'Arc*, Andrew Lang's forgotten novel *A Monk of Fife* (1896) took up the same argument. When the central protagonist, Norman Leslie, a young Scottish soldier in Joan's army, comes across Joan for the first time, he is surprised by her attire, but the narrator explains that 'the Maid went in men's attire (as needs she must, for modesty's sake, who was about men's business, in men's company)' (Lang and Image 1896, 83-84). Again, conservative motivations are used to excuse this problematic portion of her story.

Religious piety was also offered as an excuse for Joan's cross-dressing. In Lang's 1909 biography *The Maid of France*, Joan's choice of dress is depicted as a symbol of her commitment to her religious cause. Lang claims that at the end of her life, as she languished in prison, attendant ladies were anxious for Joan to lay aside her armour, but she would not obey this request. Lang asserts here that her clothes were a manifestation of her 'resolute adherence to her mission' (Lang, 43). Wilmot-Buxton

uses the same phrasing in her biography *Jeanne D'Arc* (1914), arguing that though women who came across Joan pleaded with her to dress in women's clothes, she refused, saying they were 'a symbol of her resolute adherence to her mission' (1914, 137). In both instances, this certainly referred to her mission to save France under the instruction of God.

Concentrating directly on the condemnation trial of Joan and the accusations brought against her, particularly due to her choice of clothing, is Emma Robinson's biography *The Maid of Orleans: A Romantic Chronicle* (1850). Like Lang and Wilmot-Buxton, Robinson suggests that it was adherence to a higher power that made Joan wear men's clothes. When the judge Cauchon asks Joan, 'dost thou deem it lawful to assume this dress, prohibited to thy sex by the decrees of scripture and of councils[?]' (Robinson 1850, 156), she answers, 'if He who made all things commands, may we disobey?' (Robinson 1850, 156). This exact case is also made by Joan against her accusers in Parr's biography *The Life and Death of Jeanne D'Arc* (1866) and in Rundle Charles's novel *Joan the Maid: Deliverer of England and France* (1892), in which Joan refuses to remove her soldier's garb because she was directed by God to wear it.

Although positive (or else neutral) portrayals of Joan's cross-dressing outweigh the negative, there is evidence that this part of Joan's story was at times taken up negatively, by critics expressing the dominant views on cross-dressing in the nineteenth century. Examples of this are the satirical cartoons from conservative

magazines that lampooned the figure of Maud Gonne[92], as examined previously in my discussion on Joan and social activism. These images took up Joan's notorious penchant for wearing men's clothes to discredit the political figure of Gonne by negatively depicting her as unattractive and 'mannish'.

Unconcealed in its criticism of this feature of Joan's characterisation is Brough's *Joan of Arc: A New and Original Historical Burlesque* (1869). Brough's play damns the Rational Dress Movement and the supposedly ridiculous 'mannishness' of the women who followed its tenets. This is certainly shown in the casting of the play. A Mr Thomas Thorne is named as the original player of Joan of Arc in the first published edition of the production. Cross-dressing was popular in nineteenth-century burlesque and pantomime (Davis 2010, Davis 2014), but in this case it serves to add to the supposed absurdity of the spectacle of Joan as a woman soldier. Throughout the play this theme is mockingly accentuated. A crucial example of this occurs during Joan's first appearance, where, accompanied by her troupe of Amazonian warriors, she sings about their physical and intellectual fight for women's rights. The song is performed to the tune of 'The Monkey's Wedding', a widely known comic song from the 1830s about a wedding between a monkey and a baboon. In the original song, the major comedic element comes from the fact that the animal guests are dressed as humans. The fact that Joan's suffragette song is accompanied by this music carries the implied message that Joan's dressing as a man and acting out male gendered performances as a soldier are ridiculous. By the logic

[92] Plate 6 and 7

of equivalence between the song and its intertext, she as a cross-dressing woman becomes the monkey dressed in human clothing.

It is not surprising, when one considers the debates around feminine dress in the nineteenth century, that Joan's cross-dressing was a contested subject. Artists and writers sought to utilise this part of her story to advance their own agenda in arguments around women's dress, which, though easily brushed off as a trivial topic, is actually indicative of wider concerns about the appropriate place of women in society at large.

Joan of Arc and idealised womanhood

Though Joan is often perceived to be a personification of radical womanhood from the nineteenth century – exemplified through her association with subversive femininity, cross-dressing and the Suffragette movement – she also often embodied conservative notions of ideal womanhood. In visual art and written works, Joan often became linked with conventional conceptions of beauty, femininity, morality and religiosity. Furthermore, some artists and writers took her up to challenge these traditionalist idealisations by undermining the 'cult of true womanhood'. This fact, I argue, suggests that there was far more complex interplay between Joan and discourses of womanhood than has previously been examined in the scholarship. Furthermore the flexibility of the Joan of Arc character lends credence to my argument about the interpretive malleability of medieval female figures and to my belief in their diverse and at times contradictory use in nineteenth-century culture.

Fundamental to this traditionalist idealisation of Joan was a fascination with her beauty. This connection is especially revealing, as there is no historical record to support the notion of Joan's physical attractiveness. Nineteenth-century biographies on Joan abound with descriptions of her physical form, calling her 'lovely', 'handsome', 'comely', 'sweet', 'pleasant' and 'beautiful', such as in the anonymously written book *Joan of Arc; An Historical Tale by a Young Lady* (1844); the anonymous *Joan of Arc; or, The Story of a Noble Life Written for Girls* (1871); Parr's *The Life and Death of Jeanne D'Arc* (1866); Pilkington's section on Joan in *Memoirs of Celebrated Female Characters* (1804); Anne Manning's *A Noble Purpose Nobly Won; An Old, Old Story* (1862); Mary Monica Maxwell-Scott's[93] *Joan of Arc* (1905); Philip Stanley Stanhope's[94] *Joan of Arc* (1853); *Lingard's*[95] *History of Britain* (1875); and Robinson's *The Maid of Orleans: A Romantic Chronicle* (1850). Lang's novel *The Monk of Fife* (1896) mentions the 'slender' and 'grey eyed' beauty of Joan, but it is in his children's book *The Story of Joan of Arc* (1906) that he reveals the fundamental motivation behind his fixation with Joan's beauty. In this book, Lang affirms that Joan's 'attractiveness' was a defining feature behind her military power, stating: 'Young men do not say so much about a girl who is not beautiful, and, indeed, armies do not rush together to follow a maiden with no good looks' (1906, 9). The suggestion that Joan's beauty played an integral role in her ability to lead a victorious army, openly observable in Lang's children's book and hinted at in many other works, reveals a conservative understanding of the power of Joan and of women as a whole. It positions women's beauty as a defining characteristic of their

[93] A little-known English writer of the mid-nineteenth to early twentieth centuries.
[94] An English aristocrat, politician and writer of the late eighteenth to mid-nineteenth century.
[95] A celebrated English historian.

power and influence and therefore reinforces a long history of relegating women to the sphere of object, not subject, and of placing undue importance on their appearance. It is clear that, in regard to Joan's physical appearance, historical accuracy took a back seat to the nineteenth-century preoccupation with feminine beauty.

Artistic renderings of Joan that celebrate her physical beauty also proliferated in the nineteenth century. Certainly, none of the artworks on Joan from this time, except a small number of caricatures using Joan to critique female activists, portray Joan as 'unattractive' in the conventional sense. There are a number of works, however, all by men, which position her physical attractiveness at the forefront of their depiction. The most famous of these is Everett Millais' 'Joan of Arc' (1865).[96] The renown of this image is due to the fame of Millais himself, as a noted co-founder of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood and much-celebrated artist. Given his Pre-Raphaelitism, it is unsurprising that his rendering of Joan places importance on her feminine beauty, as this was a distinguishing characteristic of the movement. In Millais' piece, there is softness, a vulnerability that radiates, achieved through the rendering of Joan's ethereally beautiful face, illuminated almost from within. This fragile beauty is then juxtaposed against the darkness of the background and the deep reds and burnished silvers of her armour. This juxtaposition serves to make Joan's face the focal point and conveys the message of Millais' piece as a whole, which is a celebration of Joan's femininity and beauty rather than her military prowess.

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A number of lesser-known artistic works comparably centre on Joan's beauty, including Piffard's 'Joan of Arc' (1865)[97], which, much like Millais' artwork, downplays the martial parts of Joan's story by illuminating her beautiful face. Mote's 'Joan of Arc' (1895-1899)[98] again renders an armoured Joan but portrays her as feminine and meek, with downcast eyes and flowing hair, and a similar image was produced some years earlier by an anonymous illustrator for Parr's *The Life and Death of Jeanne D'Arc* (1866).[99] Moreover, Richmond's 'St Joan of Arc' (1858)[100] portrays a soft pastel version of Joan in profile, nymph-like and beautiful.

In addition to this fascination with the beauty of Joan, there were also a small number of written works that sought to refute this ahistorical representation of her. In the prologue to his *Saint Joan: A Chronicle Play* (1924), Shaw formally discredited this portrayal of Joan, saying that 'any book about Joan which begins by describing her as a beauty may be at once classed as a romance' (Shaw 1962, 11). Shaw instead argued for a more historically accurate portrayal of Joan, saying that 'not one of Joan's comrades […] ever claimed that she was pretty' (Shaw 1962, 11) and that works that depict her in such a way fail to understand that Joan transcended notions of feminine attractiveness to become a manifestation of heroism, genius and sainthood. Here, perhaps to reinforce his other progressive assertions around the importance of Joan as a medieval model for modern women, Shaw advocates for a depiction of Joan that renders her historically accurately.

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[97] Plate 22
[98] Plate 40
[99] Plate 41
[100] Plate 42

Barrett Browning provided a comparable denunciation of the fascination with Joan's beauty in 'The Princess Marie' (1844) but afforded Joan more autonomy than Shaw. In the poem, Barrett Browning situates the freedom and agency of Marie, Joan's avatar, above the typically feminine ideals of beauty and status: 'I go among you, men of earth,/ To choose my own free place,/ And not for sovereignty nor birth/ Nor beauty in my face' (2010, 619). Marie, like Joan before her, is depicted as having decided to walk among men, this time in the art world rather than the battle field, sacrificing vital aspects of her 'femininity' (including her beauty) for the freedom of self-expression. Ultimately, this rendition challenges the common fascination with the beauty of Joan and simultaneously venerates, and adds historical legitimacy to, alternative forms of feminine power and expression.

Besides the fascination with Joan's beauty, parts of her story that were deemed 'feminine' were highlighted in a number of works. These concentrated on Joan's pre-militaristic girlhood: the idyllic rural setting of her childhood, her life and responsibilities as a peasant girl, and her position within the female-centred sphere of the home and her small community. The most obvious artistic renderings of Joan in this way are Harry Mileham's 'Jeanne D'Arc of Domremy' (1901)[101] and Brickdale's 'Joan of Arc' (1872-1900).[102] Mileham's painting displays a bucolic rendering of Joan, portraying her as a young girl in simple peasant clothing, framed by a canopy of trees, against the backdrop of a church. This choice of composition suggests Mileham's aim was to draw together Joan's religiosity and her untainted, pastoral roots. The image evokes a sense of rural tranquillity: the softness of the painting, as

[101] Plate 44
[102] Plate 43

if rendered in pastel rather than its actual medium of oils, creates a dreamy effect, and the basket situated behind Joan serves as a nod towards her domestic duties. Joan's haunting gaze is the only element of the piece that challenges this sense of the idyllic, hinting at a depth to Joan beyond her rural and domestic setting. Nevertheless, Mileham's Joan is definitely portrayed as fitting into this domestic landscape, melding organically into her tree-lined niche. The resulting message is one that suggests that this traditionally 'female' space of domestic life, of bucolic tranquillity and religious piety, is where Joan truly belonged.

Brickdale's 'Joan of Arc' (1872-1900)[103] tells a similar story. The painting consists of four panels, the largest of which combines symbols of Joan's piety and pastoral roots, rendering her as a halo-encircled shepherdess against a rural backdrop. The other three panels, much smaller in size and rendered in far less detail, illustrate Joan talking with Charles VII, Joan in battle, and Joan (signified by a plume of smoke) being burnt at the stake. The largest image, of the bucolic Joan, is unquestionably the focal point of the piece. Like Mileham's painting, it is a rare example of a pre-militaristic Joan, depicting her dressed in peasant clothes, framed by nature, rendered in a soft, hazy pictorial style. These elements work together, as in Mileham's piece, to romanticise the rural life Joan led before her military career. By contrast, the other three images of the piece illustrate Joan's heroic and illustrious, but ultimately disastrous, future. Thus the piece functions to underscore the notion that Joan's true place is within traditional arenas for women, within the safe haven

[103] Plate 43

of her rural childhood, and to foreshadow the tragedy that followed her departure from this environment.

Other rare artistic examples of the domestic and bucolic Joan include Jellicoe's illustrations for Lang's *The Story of Joan of Arc* (1906). Most of Jellicoe's images for the book illustrate Joan in battle or addressing groups of men, but two images display a very different image of Joan, that of a young, carefree peasant girl. The image titled 'Joan Winning a Foot Race'[104] shows a young Joan, long hair and dress flowing behind her, cheered on by a crowd of mostly children and women. A second image 'Joan Hanging Garlands'[105] portrays the Maid, again with flowing hair and surrounded by children, hanging garlands of flowers from a tree. These two artworks situate Joan firmly within the domestic sphere, dominated by women and children. Thus, Joan is positioned within ideologically female spheres – the domestic and the pastoral. An illustration by Buchel for Wilmot-Buxton's *Jeanne D'Arc* (1906) entitled 'The Call' (1914)[106], is the only other image like this of Joan and depicts her dressed in feminine peasant clothes, in an idyllic rural setting, herding sheep. The romanticism of this setting is emphasised, suggesting that Buchel saw this as a natural space for Joan.

In the literature, domestic and bucolic features of Joan's story were also accentuated. At times, these were employed to show the unsuitability of Joan and, by extension all women, to the public sphere of politics and war. This depiction

[104] Plate 47
[105] Plate 46
[106] Plate 45

accorded with the ideology of 'Separate Spheres'[107] already discussed in previous chapters, wherein woman's role and place in society were ideologically relegated to the purely domestic. This philosophy is central to Felicia Dorothea Hemans' poem 'Joan of Arc in Rheims', published in 1828. Hemans was one of the most popular and prolific poets of the early nineteenth century – so much so that, by the end of the 1820s until her death in 1835, she was the best-selling female poet in England. Hemans' work, however, is widely characterised by its conservatism (as examined by Lootens 1999, Wolfson 1999, Luu 2014) and this has had an adverse effect on her longevity within feminist scholarship. First published in her collected works entitled *Records of Women*, 'Joan of Arc in Rheims' sits alongside a number of Heman's poetic works that centre on female subjects, ranging from a poem on Arabella Stuart to one about a 'Peasant Girl of the Rhone'. Throughout the collection, individual poems overwhelmingly serve to uphold patriarchal values and conservative gender norms.

At the heart of 'Joan of Arc in Rheims' – as argued by Broome-Saunders (2009), Karen E. Laird (2013) and Chad Edgar (2001) – is the tension between Joan as a warrior within the public sphere and Joan as a daughter and sister within the domestic one. The poem centres on actions (fictional and historic) that take place in the church at Rheims during Charles VII's coronation. Joan the soldier, as she is portrayed at the poem's outset, is characterised by her powerful majesty, described as 'glorified', 'solemn' and 'radiant' (Hemans 1828), but she is also imbued with an air of melancholic isolation, being silent, reserved, aloof and solitary: 'Alone/ And

[107] Examined in depth in the chapter on Beatrice.

unapproach'd, beside the altar-stone' (Hemans 1828, 111). In the fifth stanza, Joan hears the voices of her family, who have come to meet her, triggering fond memories of her childhood. Sentimental descriptions of Joan's family, her town and her home follow, ultimately overwhelming her senses until '[s]he saw the pomp no more' (Hemans 1828, 114), only 'her cabin door', the 'Fairy's Fountain in the glade' and her 'hamlet's chapel' (Hemans 1828, 114). The poem culminates in Joan throwing the helmet from her head, laying herself at her at father's feet and pleading with him to let her return home: 'Bless me, my father, bless me! and with thee,/ To the still cabin and the beechen-tree,/ Let me return!' (Hemans 1828, 115). Joan yearns for her home and family and in this way the poem muses on the proper place for Joan and, by extension, the proper place for women. Hemans seems to imply that women are not intended for the public sphere, as it is an alienating space for them. Furthermore, I would argue that this early poem by Hemans was central to the proliferation of other conservatively inflected renderings of Joan that came afterwards, since Hemans showed that Joan could be used to support a conservative agenda, helping to overcome her unsuitability as a topic for women readers and writers. Ironically, Hemans' conservative gender discourse in relation to Joan was what made her approach innovative.

Augusta Webster presented a comparable argument in her poem 'Jeanne D'Arc', published in her collection *Dramatic Studies* (1866). Webster was a dramatist, essayist, translator and poet and, like Hemans, she was for a long time overlooked by modern scholars (Bianchi 2004). Unlike Hemans, however, later in life, Webster became an active advocate for woman's education, but this factors little into her

rather conservative depiction of Joan. Webster's 'Jeanne D'Arc' is written from Joan's first person point of view. After the Burgundians have captured her, Joan muses on the life she has sacrificed, doleful that she will never:

> Cherish thoughts of happy love
> Such as some women know in happy homes,
> Laying their heads upon a husband's breast,
> Or singing, as the merry wheel whirrs round
> Sweet cradle songs to lull their babes to sleep (Webster 1866, 35-36).

Symbols of home, marriage and motherhood are upheld as the pinnacle of feminine happiness. Joan pines for the contentment wrought by this kind of life, the life of 'A simple woman only taking thought/ For the kind drudgery of household cares' (Webster 1866, 36), but she acknowledges that she has had to sacrifice this for the sake of another goal, the emancipation of France.

Joan's pining for the domestic sphere was also taken up in the anonymously written biography *Joan of Arc; or, The Story of a Noble Life Written for Girls* (1871). As in Hemans' and Webster's poems, Joan is presented as longing to 'return home to my father and mother, keep my flocks and herds as before, and do all things as I was wont to do' (1871, 69-70). Moreover, the text states that 'no series of successes, no blaze of renown, could weaken the gentle Maid's domestic affections' (1871, 66). The suggestion is that Joan, at heart, remained entirely 'female', feeling an acute

sense of connection with the domestic, bucolic and traditionally feminine, no matter what masculine roles she was forced to take on.

A number of other biographies highlighted the domestic aspects of Joan's life, inventing sentimental and decidedly presentist (often Victorianised) versions of Joan's childhood. These works often even undermined the arguably feminine bucolic aspects of Joan's childhood, presenting the story of Joan as a shepherd as too masculine to be accurate. Tuckey's biography, *Joan of Arc: 'The Maid'* (1890), goes into great detail about the domesticity of Joan's childhood, asserting that Joan undertook only 'womanly duties' (1890, 25), making specific mention that Joan functioned solely within the home, never outside, spending 'most of her time at her mother's side, doing the work of the house' (1890, 25). In an argument similar to those raised by Hemans and Webster in their poems, Tuckey also contended that Joan desired to 'marry, stay home, and bring up children, like other women' (1890, 29) but that she was forced to sacrifice these natural desires for another cause.

A comparable presentist treatment of the childhood of Joan can be found in Oliphant's biography of Joan. Oliphant made sure to state that Joan and her sisters, unlike the poorer children of the village, were not 'brought up to the rude outdoor labours of the little farm' (1896, 12) but instead had 'a sheltered and safer lot' (1896, 12). Oliphant claimed that Joan worked with her mother indoors and was trained 'in all the labours of housewifery, but also in the delicate art of needlework' (1896, 13). The notion that Joan was a needleworker was of great interest to Oliphant, to the degree that she claimed that it 'seems to have been the chief occupation to which

Jeanne was brought up' (1896, 13). This depiction of Joan as a needleworker was in fact based on historical documentation. In her Rehabilitation Trial, five interviews[108] with townspeople from Domremy, and an interview with Sir Jean De Novelonpont (Quicherat, Manchon et al. 1841) describe her as having 'spun' hemp and wool with her mother. This being said, these accounts consist of small throwaway comments, hardly warranting the weight placed on her needle skills by Oliphant. Thus, this preoccupation seems to have been symptomatic of the presentism of Joan's story.

Though only vaguely referred to in the historical documents, the story of Joan being studiously employed in the highly feminised practice of needlework was taken up again and again in nineteenth-century biographies. Tuckey in *Joan of Arc* (1890) spoke of Joan 'learning to sew and spin' (1890, 25); Bray, in *Joan of Arc, and the Times of Charles the Seventh* (1874), mentioned that 'with the spindle or needle she [Joan] would yield to no woman in the province' (1874, 91); Stanhope stated that though Joan 'was not taught to read and write […] she could spin and sew' (1853, 4); Maxwell Scott in *Joan of Arc* (1905) referred to Joan 'spinning and sewing and looking after the house' (1905, 8); and Parr argued that Joan 'spun diligently, [and] sewed industriously' (1866, 20). This obsession with such unmistakably feminine work is a telling example of the way authors tried to feminise Joan, making her more palatable to nineteenth-century audiences.

Debates around the story of Joan's employment as a shepherd were also taken up in the literature, with some perceiving it to be a sweetly sentimental extension of the

[108] Beatrix, widow of Estellin; Jeanette, widow of Thiesselin of Viteaux; Perrin le Drapier; Isabellette, wife of Gerardin; and Jean Morel of Greux.

rural idyll of her childhood, while others believed it too demeaning a profession for the saintly maid. On one side of the debate was Lord Gower, who in *Joan of Arc* (1893) argued that Joan could not have worked as a shepherdess because, he claimed, totally erroneously[109], Joan's parents were not peasants but 'well-to-do agriculturalists' (1893, 3).[110] This depiction reveals Gower's views on class politics and the acceptable roles of women, which in his view did not extend beyond the home. At the other end of the spectrum was Rundle Charles's novel *Joan the Maid* (1892), which alternatively celebrated Joan's role as shepherdess. In the novel, the debate over Joan's suitability to be a shepherd is taken up between the kind and wise Percival and his cruel and ignorant brother Owen. Owen disparages Joan's past as a shepherdess, but Percival counters 'There is no degradation in keeping sheep' because 'King David began with that' (1892, 142). Thus, the domestic and bucolic become elevated to the biblical, and 'masculine' roles (shepherd, king) become equalised in the face of spiritual mission.

Thomas De Quincey proposed a rather peculiar argument on the topic of Joan as shepherd in his essay 'Joan of Arc' (1847). In the essay, De Quincey undermines arguments against Joan working as a shepherd while simultaneously suggesting that this type of work was indicative of widespread mistreatment of women in France. He engaged directly in the debate over Joan's occupation, railing against those, Michelet specifically, who denied she was a shepherdess, saying: 'I beg his pardon;

[109] There are numerous testimonies in the Rehabilitation trial documents that attest to Joan working as a shepherd.
[110] Gower goes into as much detail as to suggest that they owned a home, as well as 'about twenty acres of land, twelve of which were arable, four meadow land, and four for fuel' (3), and that they had savings of three hundred francs, and a yearly income of the equivalent of two hundred pounds.

she was' (Quincey 1907, 18). De Quincey offered the excuse that the French had supposedly always misused their wives for hard labour, citing a travel book by an M. Simond that had been produced 'about forty years ago' which supposedly spoke of a French peasant harnessing a donkey and his wife to a plough. Moreover, in regard to Joan taking up 'feminine' menial tasks – namely, 'darning the stockings of her horny-hoofed father' (Quincey 1907, 19) – De Quincey saw these as just as inappropriate for Joan as herding sheep. Thus, he seemingly saw Joan's marvellous nature as elevating her above the everyday, suggesting that she exceeded even the acceptable roles of women within the home. It is clear that, for both affirming and discrediting bucolic and domestic aspects of Joan's story, medievalism was utilised to legitimise specifically nineteenth-century values and ideologies, not just about women, but about class, too.

Alongside the conservative focus on Joan's beauty and feminised childhood, her morality was also central to portrayals of her and, like these other features of her characterisation, this linked her with conservative ideas about womanhood. Joan's role as moral guide to her soldiers was elaborated on in a vast number of written texts of the nineteenth century and mirrored the popular understanding of women as guiding figures for men, in association with the ideology of the 'Angel in the House'. The notion that Joan was a moral leader to her soldiers was upheld in her Rehabilitation Trial documents (Quicherat, Manchon et al. 1841), in statements from predominantly male witnesses who had met her or fought with her in Vaucouleurs, Chinon, Poitiers and Orléans. These testimonies speak of Joan's distaste for swearing, blasphemy and prostitution, and her policies against the mistreatment of

prisoners of war and the looting of conquered cities. Nineteenth-century biographers seized on this part of her story, giving it uncommon precedence in their retellings, arguably as a means to highlight the parts of Joan's story that were truer to conventional nineteenth-century female morality.

The portrayal of Joan as 'guiding angel' at times manifested in such behaviours as encouraging her soldiers to attend church or repent their sins, as is outlined in the anonymously written *Joan of Arc; or, The Story of a Noble Life Written for Girls* (1871), in which Joan is said to have insisted men attend church services. Parr's *The Life and Death of Jeanne D'Arc* (1866) similarly claims that Joan 'urged her warriors to confess their sins, and to have confidence in God' (1866, 96). The notion of Joan imposing moral rules in the camps was also taken up in a number of works. A particularly arresting story was that she banned prostitutes from her camps and that in one instance she broke a sword over the back of a prostitute (in some renderings of this tale she attacks the soldiers as well). There is some historical precedence for this story: a witness statement included in the Rehabilitation documents, attributed to the Duke D'Alençon, tells of Joan pursuing a prostitute and breaking a sword in the process. This tiny reference by D'Alençon fired the imaginations of nineteenth-century biographers. A version of it was included in the anonymously written *Joan of Arc; or, The Story of a Noble Life Written for Girls* (1871), which posits that Joan was so annoyed with the licentious behaviour of her soldiers that:

> One day as she met some men-at-arms, who were making merry with a bad woman, she began to smite them with the flat of her sword so hard, that the weapon broke (1871, 72).

Maxwell Scott in *Joan of Arc* (1905) supported this story, as did Bray in *Joan of Arc, and the Times of Charles the Seventh, King of France* (1874) and Stanhope in *Joan of Arc* (1853). Stanhope further claimed that Joan worked on 'Reforming the morals of the camp' (1853, 35), and Maxwell Scott argued that Joan 'would have none to fight with her who did not fulfil their religious duties' and that she 'forbade all swearing' (1905, 33) within her camps. The effect of this characterisation, based in rather obscure historical fact, was to link Joan with the popular, contemporary understanding of women as 'guiding angels'.

Attention was also paid to Joan's status as 'La Pucelle', 'the maiden' or 'the little maid'. This description of Joan, designating her status as virginal woman, can be found in both the medieval documents of Christine de Pizan's poem and the Rehabilitation trial transcripts, and was often taken up, along with the similarly connotative title 'the maid', in the nineteenth century. Joan's sexual purity was crucial to her representation, and biographies brim with descriptions of her virginal state. Oliphant's biography openly names Joan as the 'embodiment of purity' (1896, 32) and, in an example of nationalistic chauvinism, states that Joan's 'spotless virginity' (1896, 32) made her rare and beautiful in France, which was a 'country of light loves and immodest passions' (1896, 32). Comparably, Tuckey, in *Joan of Arc 'The Maid'*, makes mention of Joan having 'the purity of a saint' (1890, 5); Millicent

Garret Fawcett's *Five Famous French Women* (1907) refers to Joan's 'pure white soul' (Fawcett 1907, 3); Bray in *Joan of Arc* (1874) speaks of her 'nun like' vows to God; and Parr, in *The Life and Death of Jeanne D'Arc* (1866), states that Joan took a 'vow of virginity' and that her brothers kept guard over her as she slept. In his poem on Joan from *A Metrical History of England* (1813), Dibdin made sure to include mention of Joan's virginal purity in a footnote, stating that 'French authors say she never slept in camp without two of her brothers to guard her; nor in any town without some female, of exemplary character, to bear her company' (1813, 285). The effect of this inclusion was to absolve her of human sin and to place her above base desires, imaging her as a Marian figure. Furthermore, this focus on Joan's virginity served to remove the stigma often associated with unmarried women[111], which saw them as architects of sexual impropriety and social instability. Focusing on Joan's virginal state made her a tangible symbol of feminine morality.

Closely linked to Joan's moral status was the emphasis placed on her religiosity. As I established in the chapter on Beatrice, religious piety was central to conservative nineteenth- and early twentieth-century conceptions of womanhood, and Joan's story, which was above all a Christian tale about the will of God and religious sacrifice, conformed to this ideology perfectly. A number of visual works participated in the conservative endeavour of emphasising Joan's religiosity over her military prowess. In spite of this, though religiosity was a main feature of idealised femininity, Joan's Catholicism posed an obvious problem for many British artists. As discussed earlier in the chapter on Guinevere in regard to the depiction of her as a

[111] As examined in the chapter on Guinevere.

nun, Catholicism was actively reviled in the nineteenth century in both England and other predominantly Protestant or Anglican parts of the United Kingdom, partly as a backlash against the Catholic Emancipation Act of 1829 (Wolffe 1991, Koller 2011). As a result, I contend, works by non-Catholics ubiquitously ignored sectarian differences, stressing Joan's position as a Christian figure, not a Catholic one. As a result, artworks that engaged with Joan as a religious figure often represented her religious piety through non-denominational symbolism.

An example of this symbolism was the popular trope of portraying Joan in prayer, often with her head tilted back and eyes closed. Examples of this include Hillingford's 'Joan of Arc' (1825-1904)[112]; Swynnerton's 'Joan of Arc' (1905)[113]; Dante Gabriel Rossetti's 'Joan of Arc' (1864)[114]; Jellicoe's 'Joan on the Roof-Leads of Beauvoir Castle' (1906)[115]; Brickdale's 'Joan of Arc' (1872-1900)[116]; Millais' 'Joan of Arc' (1865)[117]; and Piffard's 'Joan of Arc' (1895-1899).[118] Buchel's 'Before the Altar' (1914)[119] similarly depicts Joan in prayer but with her head bowed. The rendering of Joan encircled by a halo was also popular in art of the period and was used by both Protestant and Roman Catholic artists. Examples of the use of this symbolism include Swynnerton's 'Joan of Arc'(1905)[120]; Brickdale's 'Joan of Arc' (1872-1900)[121];

[112] Plate 25
[113] Plate 23
[114] Plate 49
[115] Plate 34
[116] Plate 43
[117] Plate 38
[118] Plate 22
[119] Plate 19
[120] Plate 23
[121] Plate 43

Dicksee's 'Joan of Arc' (1918)[122]; Wirgman's 'Joan of Arc' (c.1890); one of Selwyn Image's illustrations for Lang's *A Monk of Fife* (1896)[123]; and Buchel's 'Before the Altar' (1914)[124] and 'On the Road to Margny' (1914).[125] The representation of the halo differs from one image to the next, but it ultimately serves as a unifying symbol of Joan's Christian piety.

The most conspicuous example of nineteenth-century British art portraying Joan's religiosity is Joy's 'Joan of Arc, Guarded in her Sleep by an Angel' (1895).[126] The image depicts an armoured Joan asleep on a pile of hay (perhaps a biblical allusion to Christ's birthplace) while an angel cradles her feet. The painting is unusual in that it is the only image from this period that shows Joan at rest, and it is also only one of five images that includes a physical manifestation of Joan's religiosity[127] – in this case, an angel. By portraying an armoured Joan at rest, vulnerable, the piece seeks to mitigate Joan's masculinity and her power as a soldier. Joan is instead represented as being protected by God rather than her own sword, which hangs limply at her side.

That Joan was a good Christian woman was assumed almost universally in the literature. That she was directed by voices sent by God was also widely accepted, only rejected in the biographies of Hays (1803), Yonge (1878), Stanhope (1853),

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[122] Plate 39
[123] Plate 48
[124] Plate 19
[125] Plate 18
[126] Plate 24
[127] Wirgman (Plate 37) and Buchel (Plate 28 and Plate 45) use angels/saints, and Swynnerton (Plate 23) includes a rainbow.

Pilkington (1804) and Bray (1874), which presented the voices as a sign of delusion and her overzealous imagination. Aside from these works, biographies saw Joan's dedication to her Christian mission, and her direct connection with God, as worthy of celebration.

Two specific works, both anonymously written biographies, took up Joan's story as a teaching point for contemporary women about religious obedience. In *Joan of Arc; An Historical Tale by a Young Lady* (1844), the writer argues that, while it is unlikely that modern women will be called upon to join the army or die for their country, they can still draw on the influence of Joan when it comes to everyday Christian actions: 'we are daily, hourly called upon to exert our fortitude to meet, with Christian behaviour, "the every-day trials of life"' (1844, iv). The author states that women must follow the lead set down by Joan to '[a]bove all, cultivate an earnest desire after religion' (1844, 204) and to accept their lot in the face of trials and tribulations, saying 'thy will, oh lord, be done!' (1844, 204). The anonymously written *Joan of Arc; or, The Story of a Noble Life Written for Girls* (1871) also portrays Joan's religious fortitude as fundamentally important and connects it directly with modern womanhood. The author states that 'nothing is more remarkable in Jeanne's career than this entire faith in her divinely ordered mission' (1871, 12) and uses this as a moral message for her audience of young girls, stating:

> Oh! My young readers, have faith in God and in yourselves, - in the work which God calls you to do, - and, believe me, your lives will ever be the purer and the happier! (1871, 12).

In these works, Joan becomes a symbol of a traditionalist conception of femininity, whereby obedience to God becomes easily transferable to obedience to the will of men, a lesson that is presented as ubiquitous.

The idealisation of Joan is noteworthy because this activity is in many ways contradictory to the popular understanding of Joan as a figure of radical femininity, as epitomised by her connection with the Suffragettes and other progressive movements. The fact that both traditional and progressive femininity existed simultaneously within the figure of Joan of Arc in the nineteenth century speaks loudly to the malleability of the Joan figure and medieval women overall. not withstanding this, largely because Joan was a symbol of the fluctuating perceptions of womanhood, this malleability was even more pronounced in regard to her than it was in relation to Guinevere and Beatrice. Thus, Joan reflects, even more than her medieval sisters, the ever-shifting tension between acceptable and radical femininity.

Feminine fame

The question around public recognition and veneration of women was another ideological conundrum of the nineteenth century in which Joan was brought to bear, because, as argued by Kate Hamilton (2016), womanly propriety necessitated the disavowal of self-aggrandisement and Joan was, unequivocally, a hugely famous woman. A small but significant group of written works took up the figure of Joan to investigate and lend historical eminence and medievalist cachet to the argument for

the supposed incompatibility of fame and womanhood. This belief fed directly into the idealised domestication of Joan, which depicted her as longing for the cloistered space of the home. Similarly, a number of writers rendered fame as something that Joan railed against, as manifestly unfeminine, unnatural and immoral.

Female fame, alongside a discussion of the appropriate place of women in society, is central to Felicia Dorothea Hemans' poem 'Joan of Arc in Rheims' (1828). The poem takes up the topic at the outset. In the first lines, the poem questions women's suitability for the world of celebrity:

> Thou hast a charmed cup, O Fame!
> A draught that mantles high,
> And seems to lift this earth-born frame
> Above mortality:
> Away! to me–a woman–bring
> Sweet waters from affection's spring (Hemans 1828, 111).

The persona, a woman, rejects the man-made cup of fame, asking instead for the natural draught of affection that better quenches a woman's thirst. The suggestion is that, although fame seems to lead to a kind of immortality and the elevation of one's status, these are patently male ambitions, and that women prefer (or should prefer) the more personal attainment of affection and love. The poem thus situates women's sphere of influence as immediate, perhaps even familial, while men are represented as striving for a wider scope of influence. This argument on the

relationship between women and fame is applied to the figure of Joan throughout the poem, driven home particularly with the impassioned exclamation:

> Too much of fame
> Had shed its radiance on thy peasant name;
> And bought alone by gifts beyond all price,
> The trusting heart's repose, the paradise
> Of home with all its love (Hemans 1828, 115).

Fame and glory are positioned as intrinsically harmful to Joan. They are represented as denying her the priceless gifts of home, love and tranquillity, which reinforces the poem's wider argument about Joan's feelings of alienation outside of the sphere of sentiment and home. It is pertinent to note that Broome-Saunders sees Hemans' poem not as a comment on women needing to remain in their 'natural space' but rather as a critique of this notion. She has argued that Hemans' poem displays outrage with 'the controlling forces of the male dominated court and society, [which] insist that a woman must pay with "gifts beyond all price" for her glory, from daring to break from her set role' (Broome-Saunders 2009, 88). I, however, read the poem's final lines as having a different inflection, following a more conservative vein of reasoning about women – their place, their creativity and their potential for fame – as the poem appears to be saying that fame's price is too high for women as it costs them home and love. I argue that the poem presents a conservative narrative on women's natural place, both physically and intellectually, in society. Furthermore,

I contend that the medievalness of the Joan figure is relied upon to add elevated status to this view of fame and womanhood.

The suggestion that Joan disliked her renown, that she was above such things and that by extension all women should disavow such ambitions was also significantly explored in written works of the time. In the anonymously written *Joan of Arc; An Historical Tale by a Young Lady* (1844), it is stated outright that 'Joan was not ambitious' (1844, 105), as if such a trait would have been distasteful. The writer continues that Joan was the best example of this kind of selflessness, stating that 'perhaps no one in the records of history ever began a life of adventures with so little thought of personal aggrandizement, or caring so little for honours shown to herself' (1844, 105-106). The message is clear: Joan did not seek out glory and fame, which excuses her subsequent attainment of them.

Bray's *Joan of Arc, and the Times of Charles the Seventh, King of France* (1874) also argued that Joan 'had tasted of what is so sweet to most – praise, power, and authority; but she valued none of these, except as a means to enable her to work out the purpose of heaven' (1874, 143). Again, I argue that praise and power are positioned as unsavoury ambitions for a woman, and Joan is excused from the taint of these by disavowing them for the more appropriate objective of working in the name of God. Maxwell Scott in *Joan of Arc* (1905) includes a line about how Joan 'would never allow anyone to pay her honour if she could help it, or to refer to her successes to herself' (1905, 32), again presenting Joan as suitably disowning her fame. Likewise, in his poem *Joan of Arc; A Prize Poem Recited in Rugby School* (1846), Connington states, in second person directed at Joan, that 'Thou lov'st not pomp,

the pride and shame of power' (1846, 8) and asserts that this disdain for self-aggrandisement served to sanctify her, making 'brighter radiance' shine upon her. The argument in these texts seems to be that Joan's inappropriate 'masculinised' fame could only be excused by imputing to her the feminine traits of humility and self-effacement.

Webster's poem 'Jeanne D'Arc' (1866) offers a different interpretation of Joan's fame, positioning her as a cautionary figure for women who strive for fame and lack humility. At the outset, Webster depicts Joan as revelling in her fame, congratulating herself on her gallant and victorious deeds:

> So Orleans fell –
>
> Oh! My brave glory! Yes,
>
> I beat them back,
>
> These Englishmen that were invincible (1866, 33).

Joan's arrogance is palpable here. The Burgundians seize Joan as she is abandoned by her troops, and the suggestion seems to be that Joan was captured because she was too caught up in her own ambition and arrogance. In prison, Webster portrays Joan as having a change of heart, attributing her glory not to personal skill or worth but to the will of God, calling herself 'God's instrument' and acknowledging: 'not mine/ The honour, but the Lord's who sent me forth' (1866, 34). The poem ends with Joan accepting her role as an instrument of God's will and acknowledging her fate, to die at the stake, with dignity and grace: 'since my death was destined with the mission,/ Lord of my life, I thank thee for my death' (1866, 38). Thus, the poem

concludes with a redeemed Joan, as a woman who has thrown off the unwomanly ambitions of fame and pride and instead commends all of her triumphs to a higher power.

The way that Joan was portrayed in regard to fame reveals the tension that artists and writers felt she embodied. In a desperate bid to make her suitable to audiences, her character was moulded to fit more acceptable conceptions of womanhood. The fact that this was, in many cases, so seamlessly achieved shows the pliability of the medieval for modern needs.

Concluding thoughts

Above all, Joan of Arc mirrored the changing and conflicting conceptions of womanhood and femininity that pervaded nineteenth-century Britain. She reveals the multifaceted nature of discourses of gender and, as an essentially contradictory and dichotomous figure, her receptiveness to this kind of work. Joan of Arc is the only truly historical figure examined in this thesis, which makes it rather compelling that she was used in ahistorical ways to impart gravitas to modern debates around femininity.

Unlike Beatrice and Guinevere, who were held up as models of good and bad, moral and immoral womanhood, Joan echoed the enthusiasm and anxiety that developed around the constantly changing perceptions of femininity in Britain in the long nineteenth century. She worked as a cypher for commenting on agitations for, and changes to, the roles, place and rights of women. Unlike Guinevere and Beatrice,

who became archetypes of ‘natural’ conceptions of womanhood, Joan became a symbol of the innate flexibility of these ideas. Rather contradictorily, however, her medievalness was utilised to legitimise, universalise and/or add esteem to certain, sometimes conflicting, ideologies.

Joan of Arc personifies the milieu of debate around the concept of womanhood in nineteenth-century Britain, and an investigation of her alongside the figures of Beatrice and Guinevere reveals much about the nuanced intersection of medievalism and gender discourse at the time. Be that as it may, to suggest that these three figures, all white European Christian women, represented all women in medievalist discourse, let alone broader British culture and society of the time, would be limited and ultimately false. A more intersectional approach, through the examination of the medieval Muslim character of Nicolette and her nineteenth-century descendants, is taken up in the next chapter so as to broaden our views of medievalism’s intersection with gender debates at this time in British history.

Image appendix: chapter three

Plate 1: Unknown, 'British Suffragette Elise Howey as Joan of Arc' (1909)

Plate 2: Unknown, 'The Suffragette Marjorie Anne Bryce, Representing Joan of Arc' (1911)

Plate 3: Hilda Dallas, 'The Suffragette' (1912)

Plate 4: Unknown, 'Constance Markievicz in a pageant as Joan of Arc' (1914)

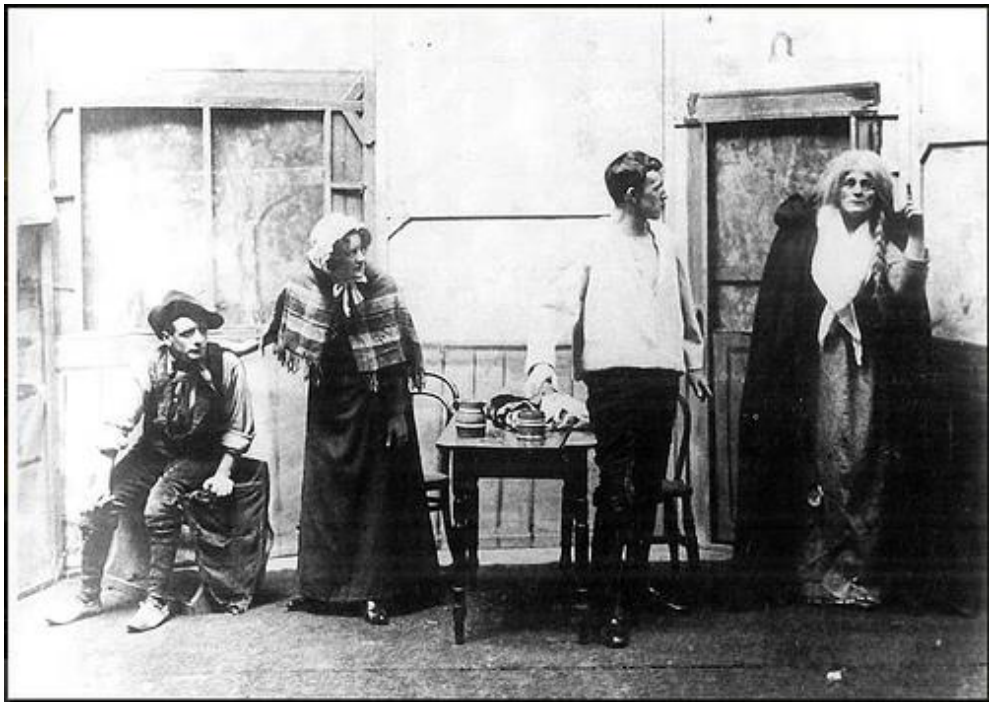

Plate 5: Unknown, ‘Scene from Cathleen Ni Houlihan’ (1902)

Plate 6: Unknown, Maud Gonne, the so-called Irish Joan of Arc’ (1901)

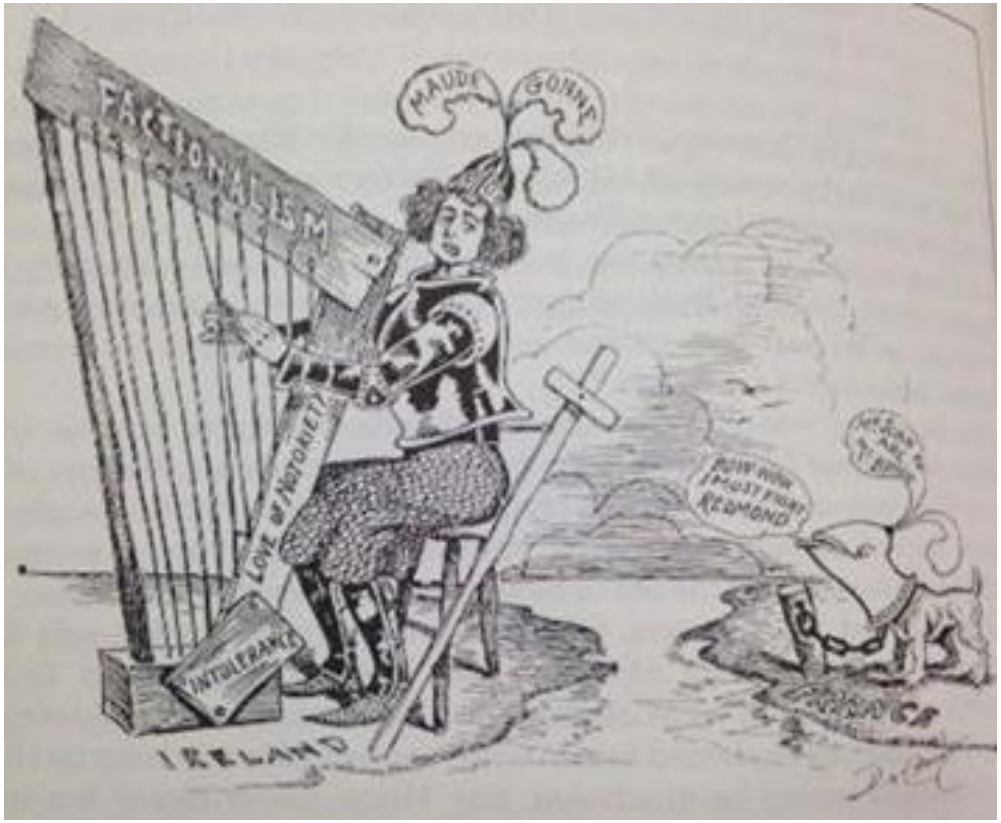

Plate 7: Unknown, ‘Mrs Joan of Arc MacBride’ (c.1900)

Plate 8: Selwyn Image, ‘Untitled’ (1896)

Plate 9: J. Jellicoe, 'Untitled' (1906)

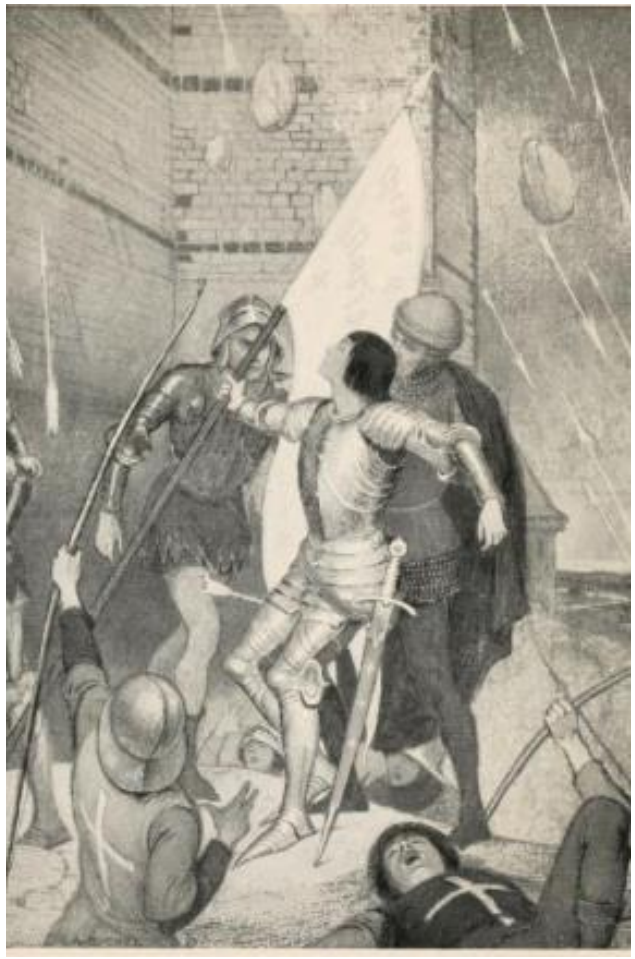

Plate 10: Chas A. Buchel, 'Jeanne Wounded Before Paris' (1914)

Plate 11: William Etty, 'Jeanne d'Arc Sort des Portes d'Orléans et Repusse les Ennemis de la France' (1846-1847)

Plate 12: Frank Craig, 'The Maid' (1907)

Plate 13: Chas A. Buchel, ‘In God’s Name, Forward!’ (1914)

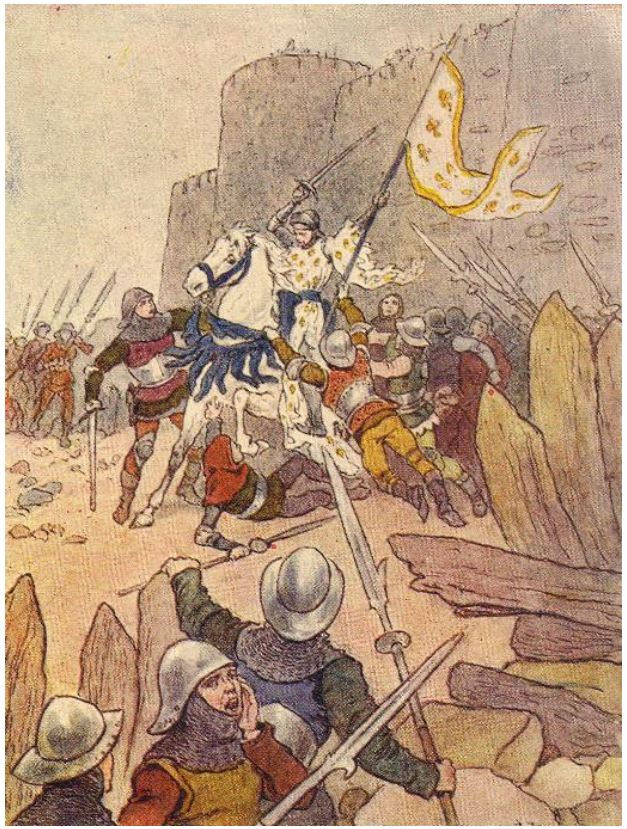

Plate 14: J. Jellicoe, ‘Joan Taken at Compiegne’ (1906)

Plate 15: John Gilbert, ‘Joan of Arc’ (1817-1897)

Plate 16: John Gilbert, ‘Joan of Arc’ (1890)

Plate 17: George William Joy, 'The Maid of Orleans' (1880)

Plate 18: Chas A. Buchel, 'On the Road to Margny' (1914)

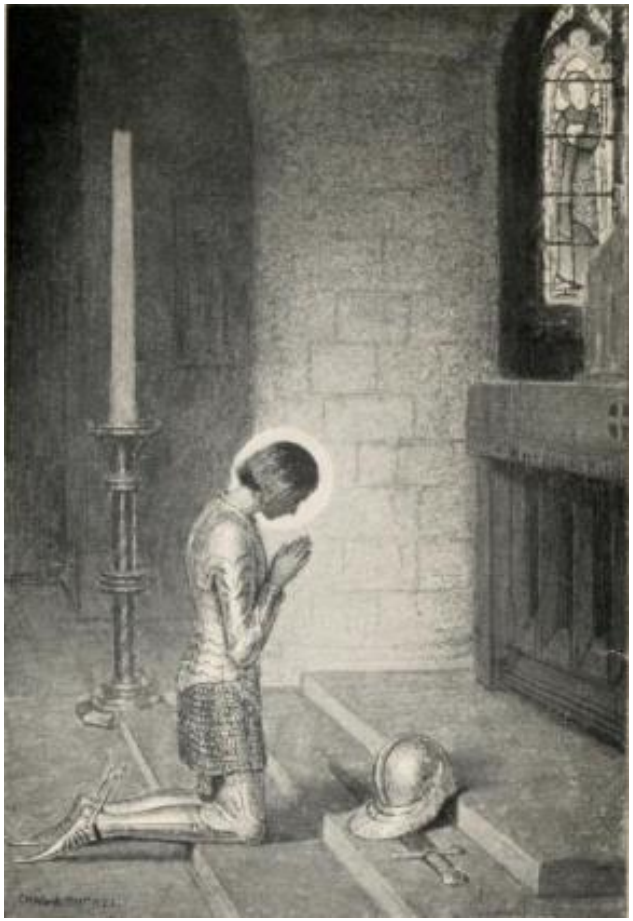

Plate 19: Chas A. Buchel, Before the Altar' (1914)

Plate 20: J. Jellicoe, 'Joan Riding into Orleans Under Torchlight' (1906)

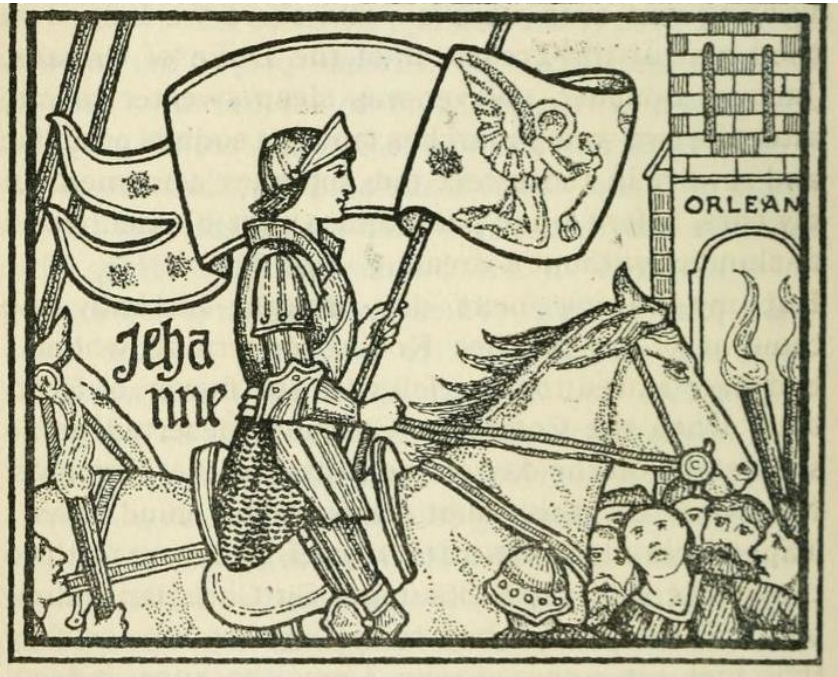

Plate 21: Selwyn Image, 'Untitled' (1896)

Plate 22: Harold H. Piffard, 'Joan of Arc' (1895-1899)

Plate 23: Annie Louisa Robinson Swynnerton, 'Joan of Arc' (1905)

Plate 24: George William Joy, 'Joan of Arc guarded in sleep by an angel' (1895)

Plate 25: Robert Alexander Hillingford, ‘Joan of Arc’ (c.1825-1904)

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Plate 26: Thomas Hailes Lacy, ‘Costume design for Joan of Arc’ (1865)

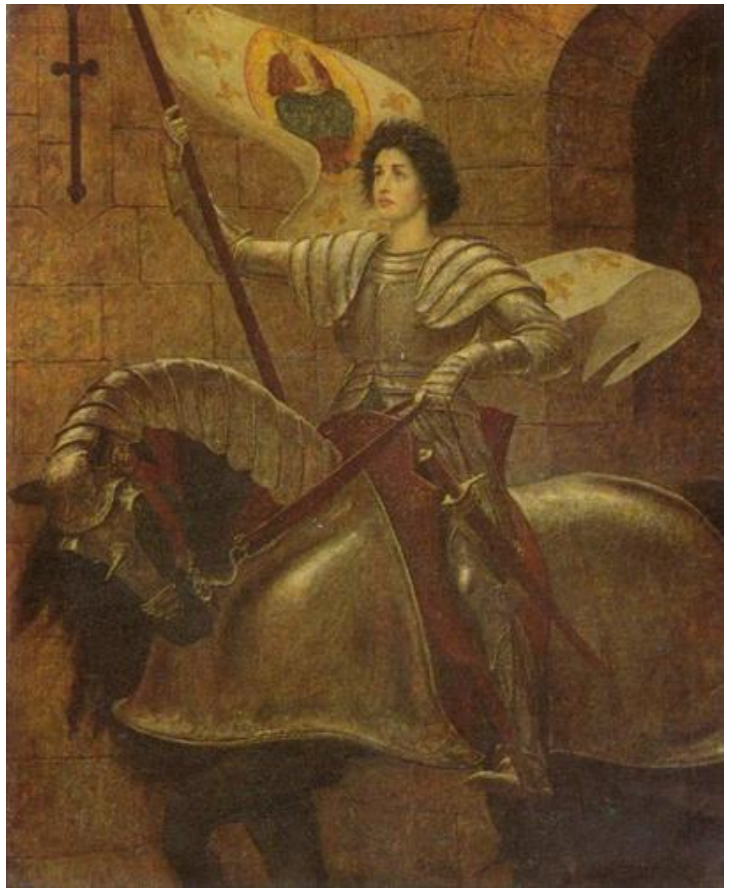

Plate 27: William Blake Richmond, ‘Joan of Arc’ (1855-1909)

Plate 28: Chas A. Buchel, ‘Jeanne and the Dauphin (1914)

Plate 29: Chas A. Buchel, 'Jeanne's Attempt to Escape from Beauvoir' (1914)

Plate 30: Chas A. Buchel, 'The Trial' (1914)

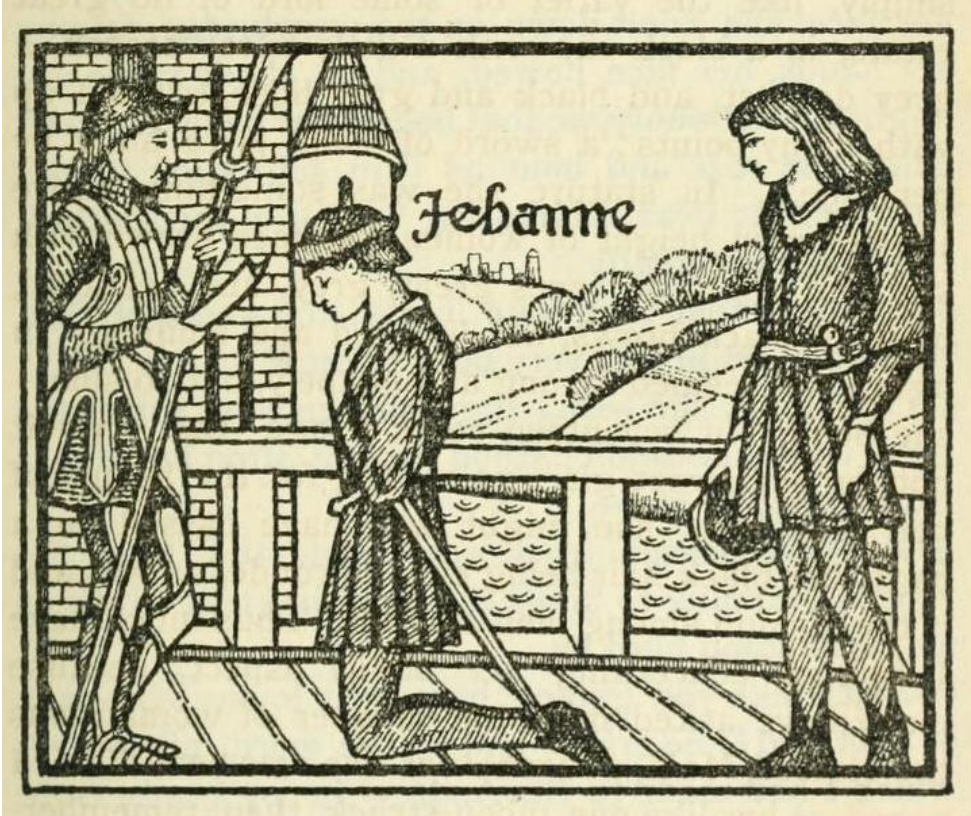

Plate 31: Selwyn Image, ‘Untitled’ (1896)

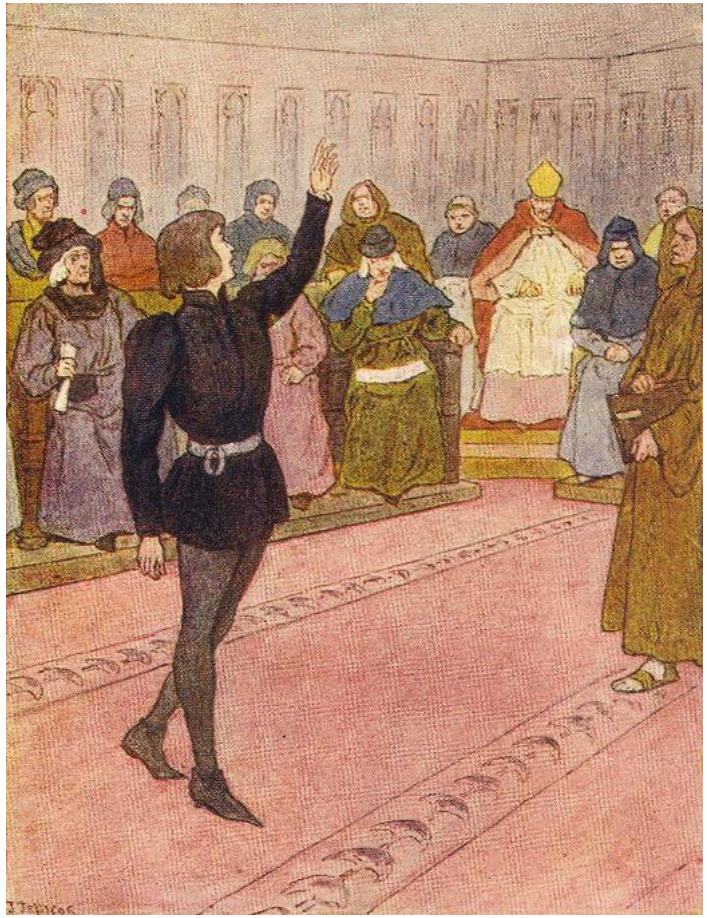

Plate 32: J. Jellicoe, ‘Joan Facing her Judges’ (1906)

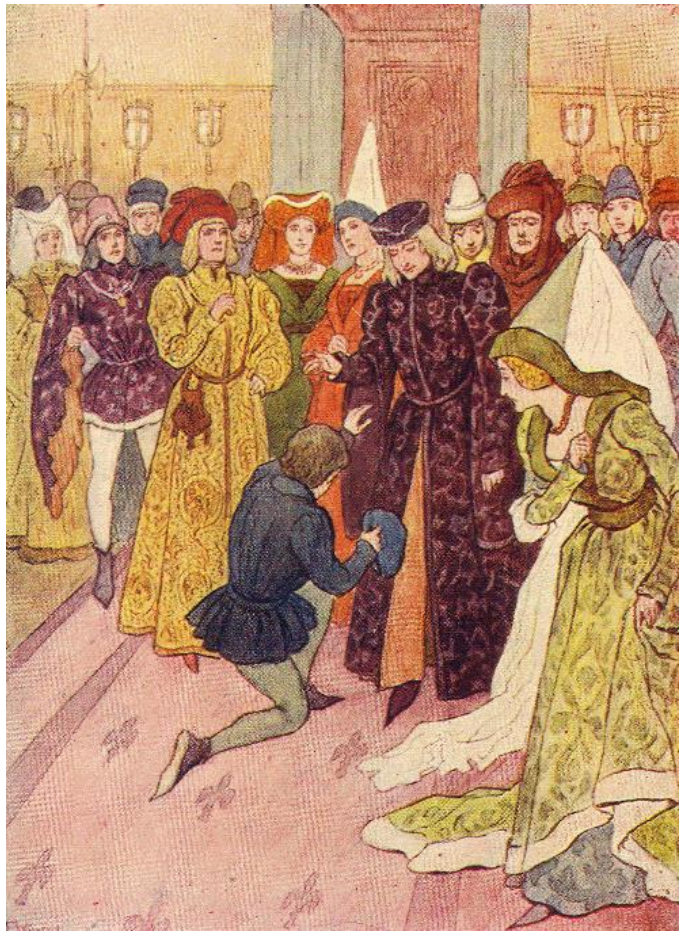

Plate 33: J. Jellicoe, ‘Joan Kneeling before the King at Chignon’ (1906)

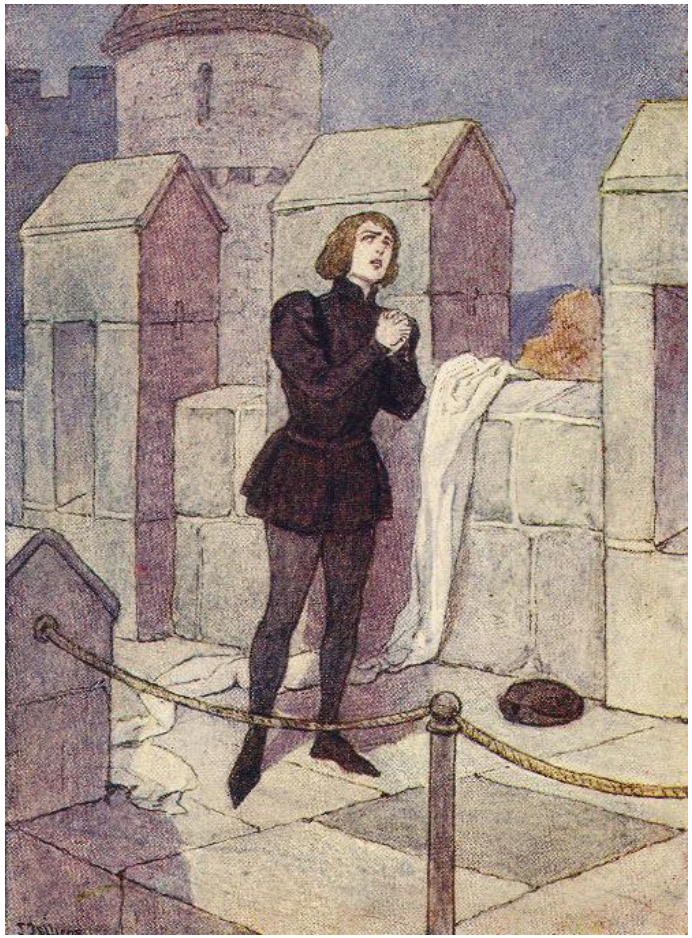

Plate 34: J. Jellicoe, ‘Joan on the roof-leads of Beauvoir castle’ (1906)

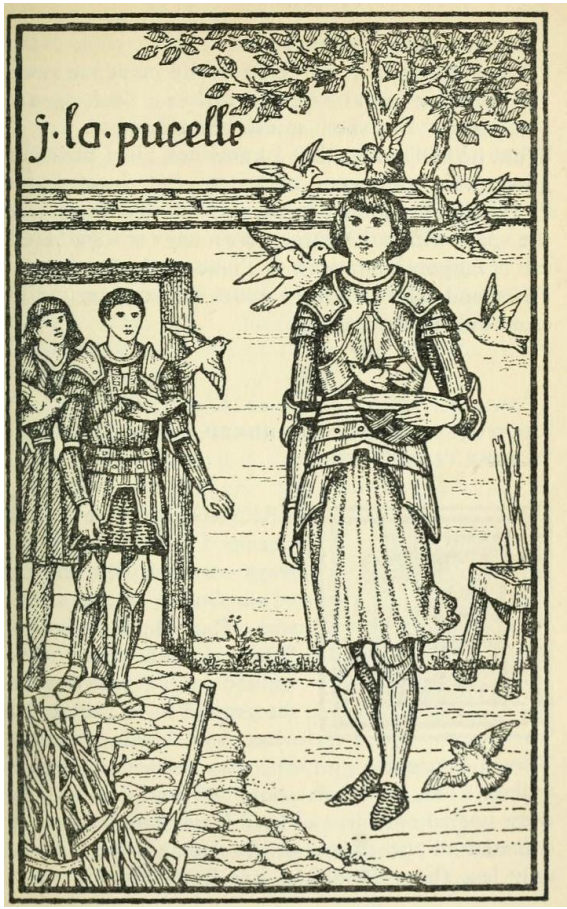

Plate 35: Selwyn Image, 'La Pucelle' (1896)

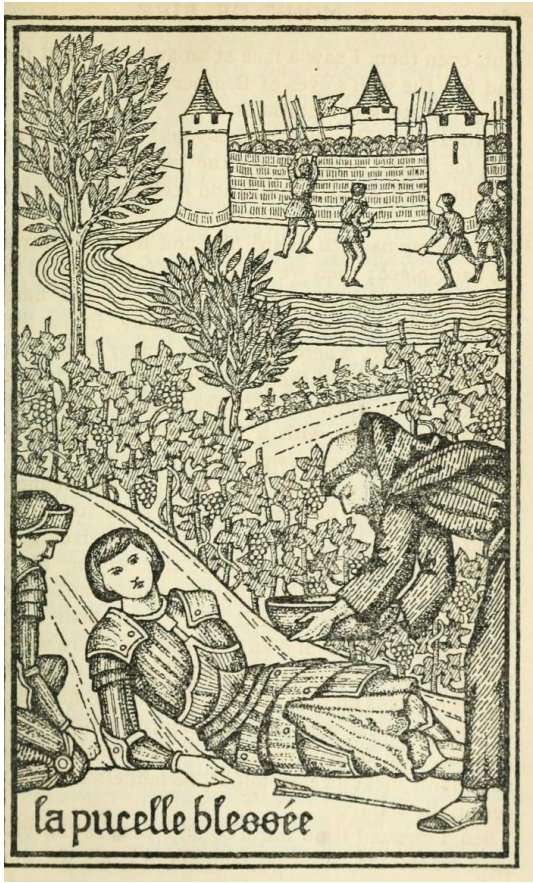

Plate 36: Selwyn Image, 'La Pucelle Blessée' (1896)

Plate 37: Theodore Blake Wirgman, Joan of Arc, (c.1890)

Plate 38: John Everett Millais, 'Joan of Arc' (1865)

Plate 39: Frank Dicksee, ‘Joan of Arc’ (1918)

Plate 40: William Henry Mote, ‘Joan of Arc’ (1858)

Plate 41: Anonymous, ‘Untitled’ (1866)

Plate 42: William Blake Richmond, ‘Joan of Arc’ (c.1842-1902)

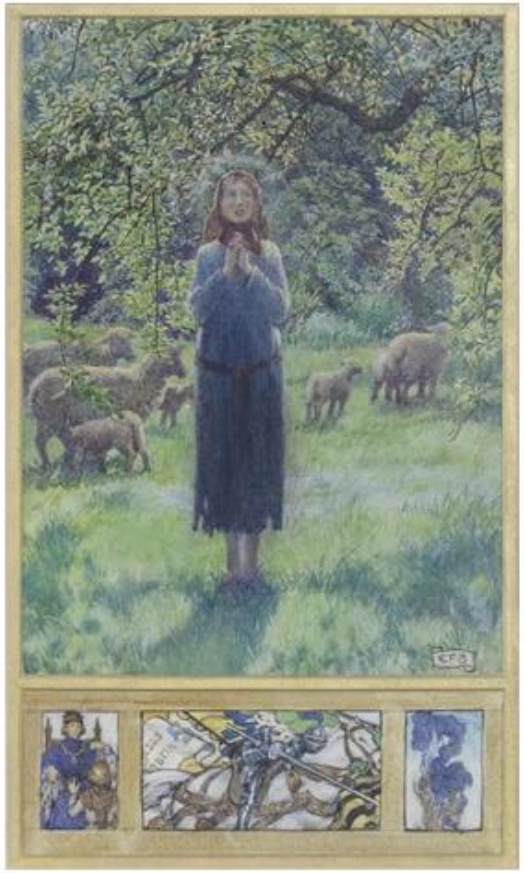

Plate 43: Eleanor Fortescue Brickdale, 'Joan Of Arc' (c.1872-1900)

42.

Plate 44: Harry Mileham, 'Jeanne D'Arc of Domremy' (1901)

Plate 45: Chas A. Buchel, 'The Call' (1914)

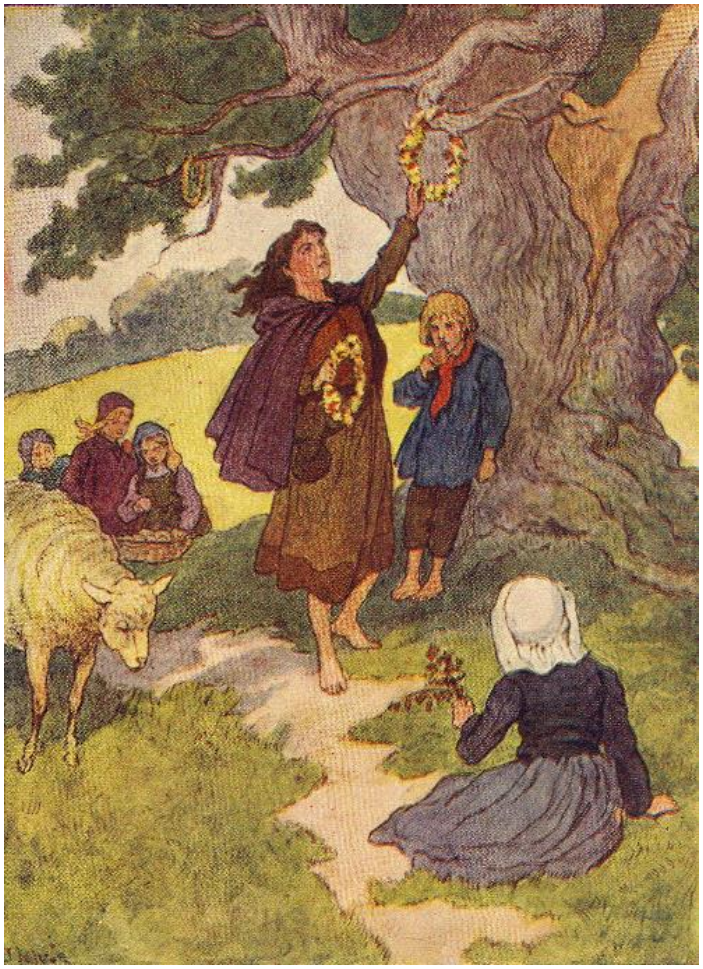

Plate 46: J. Jellicoe, 'Joan Hanging Garlands' (1906)

Plate 47: J. Jellicoe, ‘Joan Winning a Footrace’ (1906)

Plate 48: Selwyn Image, ‘Untitled’ (1896)

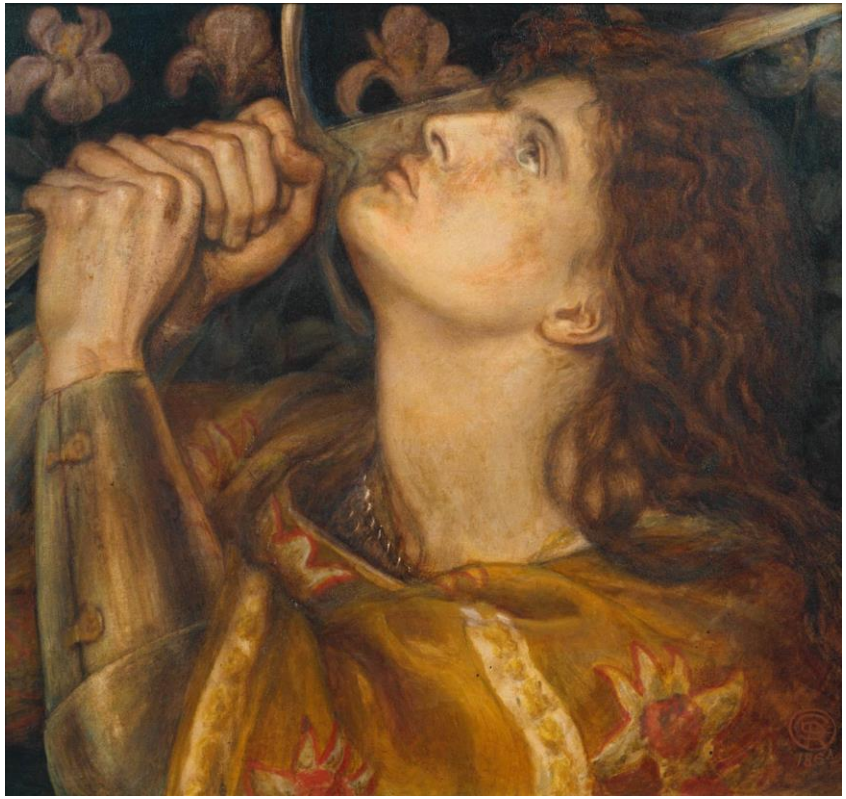

Plate 49: Dante Gabriel Rossetti, 'Joan of Arc' (1864)

Chapter four

Nicolette and her descendants: the medievalised, orientalised woman as both a symbol of feminine 'otherness' and a reflection of British womanhood

What magic halo rings thy head,
Dream maiden of a minstrel dead?
What charms of faerie round thee hovers,
That all who listen are thy lovers?
What power yet makes our pulses thrill [?]
(Bourdillon 1893, 28)

This chapter concentrates not on a specific historical or literary character but on a 'type' of femininity – namely, the orientalised, medievalised woman and how she functioned, unlike Beatrice, Guinevere and Joan, both inside and outside the ambit of European womanhood. This chapter fuses medievalism and orientalism to unpick British cultural encounters with the feminine 'other' and to broaden our scope of understanding about conceptions of femininity in nineteenth-century Britain beyond the narrow sphere of 'white', Christian womanhood. It also speaks to the intersection of two principal preoccupations of the time, antiquarianism and imperialist impulses.

Although they are in many ways fundamentally different, there is an undeniable kinship between nineteenth-century uptakes of the medievalised, orientalised woman and the figures of Beatrice, Guinevere and Joan. Centrally, they were all

employed to confer credibility, through perceived historical gravitas as 'medieval' figures, to contemporary debates on womanhood. In the case of the orientalised, medievalised woman, however, meditations on Anglocentric archetypes of 'good' or 'bad,' 'traditional' or 'progressive' womanhood were infused with the influence of Britain's imperialist agenda. These figures functioned as a symbol of the innate dissimilarity between women from the East and West, but they were also shaped by British values of acceptable, 'natural' femininity[1]. In this way, they catered to British audiences, inciting titillation and wonder at the differences, whilst retaining their acceptability through the dissemination of traditional British values and ideals. The outcome of this activity was that women from the 'racial,'[2] ethnic and/or religious margins of European society were brought to the fore and utilised as a means of showing how the medieval past, and the imperialist present, could shape perceptions of what it means to be 'other' and woman in nineteenth-century Europe. Overall, the orientalised, medievalised woman is significant for her potential to disrupt the narrative of homogeneity that pervades popular understandings of nineteenth-century British medievalism and its intersection with debates on gender.

The orientalised woman, as she was represented in the nineteenth century – through the cloudy lens of European orientalism – has been examined extensively (in Valman 2007, Feldman 2013, Brunotte, Ludewig et al. 2015, Kalmar 2017) and her engagement with medievalist discourse has received some attention. Be that as it may, my assertion – that the orientalised woman was fundamentally shaped by the

[1] This fascinating intersection between orientalism, British nationalism and medievalism in the nineteenth century has been outlined by Kumar (2000) and Lavezzo (2004)
[2] I place this term in inverted commas here in deference to the fact that race is, of course, a highly contested concept

specific medieval trope of 'La Belle Sarrasine' – has never been argued. The figure of the 'Belle Sarrasine', a Muslim woman of great beauty and subjective agency, was widespread in the Chansons de Geste of medieval France from the twelfth century onwards. This chapter will argue that, centuries later in British literature and art of the nineteenth century, she resurfaced, functioning as an embodiment of an intersection of two major nineteenth-century preoccupations, orientalism and medievalism. At this time she became different from, and yet still influenced, other contemporary representations of orientalised femininity. I define the Belle Sarrasine figure based on her meeting three conditions: she must be medievalised, she must be orientalised, and she must embody a significant number of characteristics assigned to the medieval Belle Sarrasine, outlined thoroughly later on in the chapter.

Importantly, in many orientalist texts of the nineteenth century, specifics markers of religion, culture and geographic region became ultimately inconsequential. Instead, the orientalised woman functioned as an amalgamation of different orientalised themes and concepts, which calcified into an imprecise conception of 'otherness'. It seems that, geographically, ethnically and racially the further away a female figure was from white, Christian Britain, the more amorphous she became. Not withstanding this, of course, Britain in the nineteenth century was hardly the racially, culturally and socially homogenous place that many nineteenth-century writers, politicians and artists, as well as historians of the nineteenth century, would suggest (as examined by Wolffe 1991, Fisher 2004, Marsh 2005, Bowen 2010, Steinbach 2012, Feldman 2013, Gilham 2015). Thus, I also assert that the Belle Sarrasine character of the nineteenth century extended beyond Arab Muslim women to

encompass another form of orientalised womanhood – specifically, an idealised vision of the Jewish woman, sometimes referred to as the 'Belle Juive'. This chapter meticulously investigates the Eurocentric concept of generalised feminine 'otherness', examining how and why this portrayal of medieval womanhood varied and how it connected with nineteenth-century understandings of contemporary orientalised womanhood and British womanhood. This work is undertaken with the aim of extending our understanding of how femininity was perceived in Britain in the nineteenth century, beyond white, European women and how the medieval past was relied upon as a means to lend validity to this practice.

Furthermore, and far more than was the case in the use of Beatrice, Guinevere and Joan in written and visual art of nineteenth-century Britain, medieval aesthetics and content were often exceedingly vague in works that included orientalised, medievalised women. References in titles or in the content of these works, to dates and historical events, such as the crusades or historical medieval kingdoms, are often the only means of dating the content of the works to the medieval past, and the women are rarely rendered in an blatantly medievalised way. As I will go on to discuss, this fact was largely influenced by the nineteenth-century trend of blurring the medieval with the oriental, which positioned the Western past and the Eastern present as one and the same, politically, socially, and technologically. Thus, in many the orient stood in for and supplemented what the medieval had performed in other medievalist works of the nineteenth century, as a way of universalising, legitimising, and romanticising the past to support ideas and values of the present. In other words, the supposed 'naivety' and 'backwardness' of the Orient was utilised, much

as the medieval was, as a means to reflect certain perceptions of modern Britain back onto itself. Therefore, and consonant with the deployment of the other women studied in this thesis, this character utilises the mode of political/ideological medievalism to support and denigrate modern conceptions of womanhood.

There are numerous examples of nineteenth-century works of visual art and literature that intersect with the Belle Sarrasine tradition; thus, the absence of analysis of this phenomenon is a surprising oversight in Gender Studies, Orientalist Studies, Medievalist Studies and Victorian Studies. A large number of the primary texts that are examined throughout this chapter have been included in scholarly discussions on individual authors and visual artists and their works, but they have never been drawn together to look at how or why they intersected with the Belle Sarrasine trope. Nor have they been studied in relation to how this trope overlapped with and differed from contemporary orientalism or popular conceptions of womanhood in Britain in the nineteenth century. This chapter will open up new ways of looking at the intersection of medievalism, orientalism and gender discourses in Britain in the long nineteenth century.

To streamline this study and couch it in an analysis of the unmistakably medieval, an archetypal example of the medieval trope has been adopted as a model throughout the chapter. I have chosen Nicolette, from the thirteenth-century French tale *Aucassin et Nicolette,* because she encompasses most aspects of the medieval

archetype[3] and because she was popular in the art and literature of Britain in the nineteenth century.

Although the proliferation of the Belle Sarrasine tradition in the nineteenth century has received no attention, specific scholarship on the popularity and reception of the tale of *Aucassin et Nicolette* in post-medieval Europe has been studied, albeit very sparsely. There are four works that examine the tale's usage, status or reception in a meaningful way. The first of these is Barbara Nelson Sargent-Baur and R.F. Cook's *Aucassin et Nicolete: A Critical Bibliography* (1981), which undertakes the important task of archival recovery, providing an anthology of scholarly texts and translations of the tale, ranging from the medieval manuscript to reworkings of the 1970s. Velma Bourgeois Richmond some years later published the book *Chivalric Stories as Children's Literature: Edwardian Retellings in Words and Pictures* (2008), which includes a chapter on early twentieth-century renderings of the tale. Richmond's analytical framework, thematic analysis and bibliographic details have proven invaluable. Another useful study is Peter Damian-Grint's chapter 'Old French in the Eighteenth Century: Aucassin et Nicolette' (2010), which provides a rigorous examination of the development of the tale and its growth in popularity in Europe, especially France, prior to the nineteenth century. Finally, Jacqueline de Weever's 'Nicolette's "Blackness" – Lost in Translation' (1994), which consists of a comprehensive examination of conceptions of race in both nineteenth- and twentieth-century translations of the tale, has been instrumental to my understanding of the tale's connection with medieval and nineteenth-century race

[3] Delineated in detail on pages 344-345 of this chapter.

theories. These works, though in no way engaged with the figure of the Belle Sarrasine, nor with the topic of how reworkings of the tale were shaped by modern discourses of gender, are fundamental to understanding the development and prevalence of a crucial example of the trope in nineteenth-century Britain, and perform invaluable work of recovery and compilation. In this way, they form a solid basis for analysis of the trope and its significance more widely.

The tradition of the Belle Juive in British literature of the 1800s has received some attention, with four significant articles written on the topic: Florian Krobb's 'La Belle Juive' (1992); Judith Lewin's 'The Sublimity of the Jewish Type: Balzac's Belle Juive as Virgin Magdalene aux Camelias' (2008) and her 'The "Distinction of the Beautiful Jewess": Rebecca of Ivanhoe and Walter Scott's Marking of the Jewish Woman' (2006); and Nadia Valman's 'La Belle Juive' (2007). These articles predominantly and understandably concentrate on the Belle Juive through the character of Rebecca from Walter Scott's *Ivanhoe.* Moreover, they are concerned with the important task of delineating the archetype of the Belle Juive itself rather than her connection with medievalism and/or orientalism, and they do not make the link between the Belle Juive and the Belle Sarrasine archetype. Instead, they form a sound footing of contextual information and analysis for a broader examination of the Belle Juive in nineteenth-century Britain to take place.

Building on this scholarship, this chapter examines the juncture of different types of medievalism and orientalism in a wide array of literary and visual representations of medievalised, orientalised womanhood, employing the three concepts of

o*rientalised 'otherness', female agency,* and *sexuality* to form the analytical scaffold. The content of this chapter will foster a broader and more comprehensive understanding of ideologies of womanhood, medievalism and orientalism in nineteenth-century Britain. I will, however, firstly unpack the origins of the medieval tradition of the Belle Sarrasine and how it led to popularity of Nicolette and her descendants in the nineteenth century.

La Belle Sarrasine médiévale

The etymology of 'Saracen' (in Old French '*Sar(r)azin,-cin*' and modern French 'Sarassine') is contentious but the term has been loosely dated to Greece in late antiquity (as argued by Shahid 1984, Tolan 2002, Fitzpatrick and Walker 2014), where it was synonymous with what would today be called 'Arab' peoples. Scholars have argued that linguistic derivatives of the term were used for centuries throughout Europe, utilised as a portmanteau word with no specific geographic, racial, religious or ethnic significance. Due to growing interactions between Western Europe and the Islamic world, however, by the twelfth century 'Saracen' came to be widely understood as a word for 'Muslim' and was often imbued with derogatory connotations of paganism, violence and barbarism.

As a result, examples of idolatrous, barbarous 'Saracens' abound in medieval manuscripts of Europe, especially in French literature from the early twelfth century onwards. The trope's popularity in France, according to John V. Tolan (2002), was due in part to the historical hostility fostered by the Saracen invasion and occupation

of southern France in the eighth and ninth centuries CE, and was used as a means to justify the crusades in Palestine (from the late eleventh to thirteenth centuries) by making the 'paganism' and 'barbarism' of the Saracens a foil to the religious legitimacy of the crusaders. In these works, the Saracen was affiliated with superabundant wealth, colossal power, and the luxuries and trappings of hedonism, which were employed, as argued by Mohja Kahf (1999) and Jeffrey Jerome Cohen (2001), as a concrete affirmation of the supposed corruption and impiety of 'Eastern peoples'. Another important feature of the representation of medieval Saracens is that they were overwhelmingly described as 'black'. Keeping this in mind, according to Jacqueline de Weever (1998), Geraldine Heng (2003) and Lynn T. Ramey (2014), 'blackness' was not so much implemented as a racial biomarker but rather as a manifest symbol for representing the 'sinful' and 'pagan' in binary opposition to the 'whiteness' and 'purity' of European Christians. As such, the addition of the analysis of race, though it may seem an exercise in presentism, is in fact an informed engagement with structures of binary symbolism that were in place in the medieval world.

A large number of medieval literary examples that depict the 'Saracen Other' fall under the genre of the Chanson de Geste. In these works, with their fascination with romance, war and wicked Saracens, there was also the widespread presence of a particular type of woman, a figure who in modern scholarship has been referred to as 'La Femme Sarrasine' and 'La Princesse Sarrasine,' but who is most widely known as 'La Belle Sarrasine'. The term 'La Belle Sarrasine', 'beautiful Saracen woman', is a modern one that has been employed to analyse this medieval trope. Modern

scholarly understanding of this trope can be traced back a century to the scholarship of F.M. Warren in his *PMLA* article entitled 'The Enamoured Moslem Princess in Orderic Vital and the French Epic' (1914), which describes and analyses the popular medieval archetype.

The figure of the Belle Sarrasine was so dominant in Chansons de Geste in late medieval France that, as stated by de Weever, 'Seventeen of the twenty one princesses who appear in the poems written between 1150 and 1300' (1998, 5) fall under this category. These include the anonymously written and perhaps most famous of its kind, *La Chanson de Roland* (c.1100), as well as the anonymous works of *La Prise de Cordres et de Sebille* (1190–1195); *Anseis de Cartage* (c.1200–1300); *La Prise d'Orange* (1600–1165); *Fierabras* (c.1170); *Aiol* (C.1200); *Le Sige de Barbastre* (c.1170); *Bevon de Conmarchis* (1269–1285); *Eile de Saint Gille* (c.1200); and *Sir Bevis of Hamptoun* (c.1400), as well as the renowned historical chronicles *Historia Ecclesiastica* by Orderic Vital in c.1135. All of these works include characters that modern scholarship has since defined as Belles Sarrasines.

The figure of the medieval Belle Sarrasine is characterised by a series of common features, collated by several scholars who have studied the medieval trope and have built upon the work of Warren. The most pervasive and significant of these traits are: her active, energetic role and sense of personal agency in the plot (Kahf 1999, Zahedi 2005, Jewers 2009, Sturges 2015); her erotic agency (Gilbert 1997, Weever 1998, Zahedi 2005); her cleverness (Gilbert 1997, Zahedi 2005, Jewers 2009); craftiness (Warren 1914, Gilbert 1997, Zahedi 2005); magical abilities, including

clairvoyance and healing (Jewers 2009); her penchant for cross-dressing (Gilbert 1997); her betrayal of her Saracen kin for the sake of her Christian lover (Warren 1914, Kinoshita 1995, Gilbert 1997, Weever 1998, Kahf 1999); and her ultimate, self-directed conversion from Islam to Christianity (Warren 1914, Kinoshita 1995, Weever 1998, Kahf 1999). She was also commonly depicted as 'white', even when her kin were described as 'black' (Weever 1998, Heng 2003, Jewers 2009, Ramey 2014), which perfectly reflects the medieval understanding of 'colour' as symbolic and not racial. Moreover, the whiteness of the Belle Sarrasine is a testament to her position as a literary rather than historical figure, and provides a springboard for how she should be understood – in both her medieval and her nineteenth-century manifestations – as a figure who, far from a true representation of 'Eastern womanhood', embodied the values, desires and fantasies of the West.

Nicolette, the character from the chantefable *Aucassin et Nicolette*, preserved in a single manuscript (BnF, Fonds Français 2168, Paris Bibliothèque Nationale de France), is a chief example of the Belle Sarrasine trope. In the tale, Nicolette, the Saracen princess, is stolen from her kin at a young age and raised as a Christian maiden in Beaucaire, France. Her love affair with a highborn Christian knight forms the basic plot and leads to a series of trials and tribulations, including the capture and escape of Nicolette from her royal kin in Saracen-occupied Carthage.

The tale in many ways heeds the conventions associated with Chansons de Geste and the figure of La Belle Sarrasine, but it also contains features that depart from the genre. According to Kevin Brownlee (1994), this destabilisation of genres is almost to be expected of French literature of the thirteenth century, which was often

characterised by experimentation with generic forms. Thus, though Nicolette mostly complies with the Belle Sarrasine image, there is one key facet of her representation that circumvents convention: namely, her lack of sexual agency. This rather vital difference in the depiction of Nicolette made her, as a 'Belle Sarrasine sans sexualité,' a perfect candidate for use in the nineteenth century at a time when restrained female sexuality and feminine sexual purity, as examined in the first two chapters, were seen as vital to the health of individual women and society at large. This sanitised and moralistic element of *Aucassin et Nicolette*, as opposed to other medieval Belle Sarrasine texts, in many ways accounts for the continued popularity of the tale in Britain in the nineteenth century.

A substantial number of nineteenth-century British works of visual and literary art contain figures that are dramatically similar to the medieval Nicolette. These nineteenth-century descendants intersect simultaneously with both medievalism and orientalism, particularly with the assertion of Western superiority and Eastern 'otherness' and with the Eurocentric preoccupation with the orientalised woman. Furthermore, there is evidence of a number of Nicolette's descendants omitting, undermining and even challenging contemporary traits associated with the orientalised woman of the time. That is not to say, however, that these figures were beacons of rebellion or progressive thought during the period, as indeed in some cases they were the very opposite; but their presence adds more nuance to the perception of womanhood in Britain, especially orientalised womanhood, than the scholarship has thus far argued. Moreover, the fact that the orientalism of these

representations is imbricated with medievalism broadens our understanding of the types of women nineteenth-century British medievalism engaged with.

Orientalised otherness

The concept of 'otherness' is fundamental to understanding nineteenth-century British perceptions of the orient. In an attempt to position itself as the superior cultural and political counterpart to the East, Britain adopted and disseminated a number of markers of oriental difference in regard to race, culture and religion. Nineteenth-century orientalism shaped the way that the medieval figure of Nicolette, as well as other medievalised Belle Sarrasine and Belle Juive figures, was taken up and treated, and medievalism was utilised as a means to add historical weight to these orientalist modes. An examination of the 'otherness' of medievalised, orientalised women in British literature and visual art of the nineteenth century is key to understanding the characterisation and treatment of women on the periphery of nineteenth-century society, and how this complicated and supported conceptions of British womanhood as a whole.

Any discussion of the concept of orientalism is incomplete without the inclusion of the scholarship of Edward W. Said, who reworked the term in his 1978 book, *Orientalism*, and paved the way for modern understandings of Western interactions with the perceived 'Eastern Other'. According to Said, orientalism has had a long history in Britain and France, functioning as 'a way of coming to terms with the Orient that is built on the Orient's special place in European Western experience'

(Said 2003, 1). In other words, the popular Western perception of the orient as a place of 'romance, exotic beings, haunting memories and landscapes' (Said 2003, 1) and of 'power, sex, and religion, lined by violence and tyranny' (Celik 1992, 10) is ultimately a European invention. Said has argued that the West's understanding of the East is shaped by self-reflexive preoccupations that have been implemented and maintained to make the West appear superior.

The orient or 'the East', understood as encompassing Central Asia, South East Asia (and to a lesser extent) the Middle East and India, held a central place in the collective cultural imagination of nineteenth-century Europe. In Britain at this time, according to Bruce Holsinger (2007), orientalism defined the 'East' as a monolithic, unchanging, backwards space – much like its understanding of medieval Europe. As such, both the medieval and oriental held a comparable place in the national consciousness of nineteenth-century Britain. In literature, art and culture of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries the medieval and oriental were often paired and were seen, as delineated by John Ganim (2002, 2008, 2009), as interchangeable or at least connected in their aesthetic styles, linguistic origins and, most importantly, their stages of cultural and social development (decidedly behind 'modern' Europe). It is this interplay between the oriental and medieval that makes Nicolette and her nineteenth-century descendants – who were both orientalised and medievalised – ideal for examination.

While in many ways orientalism is a nebulous term, characterised by a lack of lack of clarity and the conflation of cultures, the concept of the 'Middle East' – Arab nations,

peoples, cultures and the religion of Islam – held a specific fascination for nineteenth-century Britons. Moreover, although it was, according to Ivan Davidson Kalmar (2013), quite well known in Europe in the nineteenth century that Persians and many South and East Asians were Muslim, Islam was widely perceived to be the religion of the Arabs.[4]

According to Srinivas Aravamudan (2012), prior to the abundance of all things Middle Eastern in British culture of the nineteenth century, Britain was predominantly a consumer of literary versions of the Middle East, mainly through translations and original works by French writers[5]. Pivotal to this consumption was the production of the first European encyclopaedia on Islam, *Bibliothèque Orientale*, by French historian and linguist Barthélemy d'Herbelot, which was completed and published by Antoine Galland in 1697. The language barrier did not seem to pose a problem for learned Britons who regularly read, translated and published works based on the encyclopaedia. Evidence of this work of adaptation comes from an anonymously written review from 1835 on 'Literature in Great Britain' for *The Biblical Repository and Quarterly Observer*, which states that d'Herbelot's book had 'long been a desideratum amongst the learned of Europe' (Edwards 1835, 258). Sections of the encyclopaedia were also popularly adapted into English through works such as the bestselling poem 'Lalla Rookh', by the Irish poet Thomas Moore, first published in 1817[6] (Rudd 2008), and William Beckford's Gothic novel *Vathek*

[4] Thus, references to 'Muslims' and the figure of the Belle Sarrasine throughout this chapter focus specifically on Arab peoples.
[5] It is perhaps pertinent to note that Théodore Hersart de la Villemarqué and his *Barzaz-Breiz* (1839), were pivotal to the popularity of French Medievalist works in Britain at this time.
[6] Fifteen editions of the poem were published between 1817 and 1829 alone.

(1782), written in French and then translated into English by Reverend Samuel Henley in 1786 (Al-Alwan 2008). Thus, the encyclopaedia found a broader audience in Britain.

The most important and influential orientalist work, however, was Galland's translation of the Arabic *Alf laylah wa-laylah* into *Les Mille et Une Nuits (The Thousand and One Nights),* from 1704 to 1717. The *Nights* were then translated into English in the anonymously written 'Grub Street' version, published from 1706 to 1721, and then reprinted and retranslated by a steady flow of writers throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Ultimately, *The Thousand and One Nights*, also known as *The Arabian Nights*, became an integral part of British culture.[7]

A vast amount of 'Middle Eastern' themed fiction and non-fiction flooded the market as a result of the popularity and influence of these texts (as argued by Schellinger 1998, Kahf 1999). This was centered on the perception of the orient as a romanticised place characterised by abundance and opulence, best described by an anonymously written article from the French newspaper *Le Figaro,* dated 26 June 1867:

> Now that we are not afraid of Turks, Arabs, and Saracens, the Orient has become for us a sort of hippodrome where grand performances are given […] We take the Orient for theatre (quoted in Celik 1992).

[7] The character of Scheherazade, a narrator in the work, became hugely popular in the nineteenth century. Though Scheherazade is both medievalised and orientalised, she is excluded from this study as she does not meet the requirement of exhibiting key characteristics of the medieval Belle Sarrasine.

It was this notion of 'theatre', 'performance' and 'unreality' in relation to the orient (the Middle East, especially) that centrally informed modern Western orientalism. Though the West saw the East as beautiful, sensual and exotic, it was also understood as lacking in any real political, cultural or social substance. This characterisation of the Middle East was foregrounded, as argued by John Ganim (2002, 2008), by the popular theatrical representations of the orient in World's Fairs and international exhibitions throughout the nineteenth century.

With the growth of the British Empire, architecture increasingly borrowed from the aesthetics of colonised parts of Asia and the Arab world, and this trend became popular in home décor and visual art. One of the most pervasive orientalist traditions in Western visual art, finding its origins in early nineteenth-century France[8], was the popular figure of the 'odalisque', a beautiful Muslim concubine. According to Kahf (1999) and Shahin Kuli Khan Khattak (2014), Britain's perception of the Middle Eastern woman was predominantly filtered through this fantasised image of the pale[9], loose-haired, sensual, beautiful, supine woman. These markers of the odalisque soon extended to textual portrayals of the orientalised woman, where the languid and opulent lives of these women, and their dark and mysterious beauty, were imagined in detail[10]. In many ways, the odalisque informed the West's

[8] Starting with Jean Auguste Dominique Ingres's oil painting 'Une Odalisque' or 'La Grande Odalisque' (1814).
[9] Her whiteness will be examined later in the chapter.
[10] Examples of the textual renderings the odalisque can be found in Annie Brassey's *Sunshine and Storm in the East* (1880), Ellen Chennells's *Recollections of an Egyptian Princess by her English Governess* (1893), Annie Jane Harvey's *Turkish Harems and Circassian Homes* (1893), and Isabella Bird's *Journeys in Persia and Kurdistan* (1891).

perception of the East overall, since, according to Geraldine Heng (2003), Sharon Kinoshita (1995) and Barbara Harlow (1989), orientalised women often stood in for the West's understanding of the collective culture of the East. By extension, the East came to be understood as a beautiful, carnal and feminised place.

Although the romanticised, sensationalised image of the East was widely disseminated – in fantasy stories, World's Fairs, architecture and art – the religion of Islam, a central part of the West's conception of the Middle East, was simultaneously reviled. Indeed, as stated by Khattak (2009), for much of the nineteenth century Britons saw Islam as a rival to Christianity. This view was, of course, prejudiced by the imperial impulses of the British Empire, which sought to 'save' and 'civilise' its colonial subjects, especially those from the areas of South East Asia and India, through religious conversion. According to Martin Thomas and R. Toye (2015), both the conservatives and the liberals justified colonialist intervention in Africa, North America, and Asia (and its financial, geographic and political gains) through the assertion that they were bringing civilisation to these parts of the world. Moreover, on the wave of military and technological advances made in Western Europe during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, a self-imposed authority and superiority coloured the colonialists' perception of Empire, which, according to Jamie Gilham (2013), led Britons to increasingly define themselves against the colonial peoples they conquered.

This perception of Islam as backwards and barbaric extended to beliefs about the lives of women in the East. Piya Pal-Lapinski (2005), Nadia Valman (2007) and Diane

Robinson-Dunn (2006) have examined nineteenth-century Britain's perception of the social, cultural and political status of women in the Middle East, stating that women were widely understood as being oppressed and degraded, forcibly veiled and sequestered in the harem. Travel books on the East[11] and other books comparing the lives of British women to the degraded existences of oriental women[12] were widely produced in Britain in the nineteenth century. These works presented orientalised women as idle, uneducated, and unable to free themselves from the gilded cages that had been built by their husbands and fathers. This depiction was at times utilised by first wave feminists in their arguments against the 'barbaric' and 'backwards' political and social status of women in Britain. These feminists, male and female[13], relied upon Britain's perception of itself as progressive and enlightened (as argued by Robinson 2006), to argue for the adoption of greater legal, political, and social freedoms for women in British society.

On a purely practical note, Eurocentric perceptions of Eastern inferiority and sensationalism were aided by the fact that Islam and 'Arab peoples' were rather abstract concepts in Britain in the nineteenth century. Though Muslims from North Africa, the Middle East and Central Asia had, according to Michael Herbert Fisher (2004), been working and living in London since the sixteenth century, and a

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[11] Some examples include: Annie Brassey's *Sunshine and Storm in the East* (1880), Ellen Chennells's *Recollections of an Egyptian Princess by her English Governess* (1893), Annie Jane Harvey's *Turkish Harems and Circassian Homes* (1893), and Isabella Bird's *Journeys in Persia and Kurdistan* (1891).
[12] Examples of this include: Clara Lucas Balfour's *The Women of Scripture* (1847), Melek Hanum's *Thirty Years in the Harem* (1873), and Robert P. Downes's *Woman: her charm and power* (1900).
[13] The activity of comparing 'backwards' British laws to the 'barbaric' orient was included in John Stuart Mills' 'The Ladies' Petition,' presented to the house of Commons in 1866 in support of women's suffrage; and in an anonymously written poem 'The British Turk,' published in *The Women's Suffrage Journal* in 1878.

significant group of Muslims had migrated to Britain in the eighteenth century[16], Muslim immigration into Britain prior to and during the nineteenth century, especially from the Middle East, was extremely low (Fisher 2004, Bowen 2010, Steinbach 2012, Gilham 2015).[17] The relatively small population of Muslims in nineteenth-century Britain, most of whom were male, Central Asian and sequestered in port towns like Liverpool, allowed for the fantasy of exotic, distant lands filled with languid Arab beauties to proliferate.

Contemporaneous to these cultural and social touchstones, the medieval tale of *Aucassin et Nicolette* became popular in Britain. Unsurprisingly, its popularity can be traced to its country of origin, France. The medieval tale, according to Damian-Grint (2010), had been hugely popular in eighteenth-century France, kept alive and filtered through French culture in the form of fairy tales, narrative poems and operas since its inception. In 1752, the original manuscript was uncovered by medievalist Jean-Baptiste de La Curne de Sainte-Palaye and shortly after was published by him in Old French as *Histoire ou Romance d'Aucassin et de Nicolette*. Due in part to the popularity of the tale in the French collective consciousness even prior to the discovery of the original, *Aucassin et Nicolette* became a common work of translation and adaptation. This popularity soon extended to Britain, and in 1786 the British poet and translator F.W. Bourdillon published the first translation of the tale in modern English in *Tales of the Twelfth and Thirteenth Centuries, in Two Volumes*.

[16] The majority of which were Indian lascars (sailors) working for the British East India Company, and Indian bonded servants.
[17] According to Bowen (2010) and Steinbach (2012), colonisation, especially the opening of the Suez Canal in Egypt in 1869, encouraged a small influx of Muslim immigration, but it was not until after the Second World War that a large Muslim population started to develop in Britain.

After Bourdillon's publication, other modern English translations of the medieval, orientalist tale flourished in Great Britain.

From Bourdillon's translation in 1786 to Dulcie Lawrence Smith's *Aucassin and Nicolette, Translated from the Old French* in 1914, ten translations and three adaptations (not including subsequent editions of the same texts) of *Aucassin et Nicolette* were published in Great Britain[18]. The choices made by the writers and translators to embrace, ignore, manipulate or completely change aspects of the original medieval text provide insights into the mores and ideals of the writers themselves and of the society in which they lived.

In the medieval tale of *Aucassin et Nicolette*, contrary to popular orientalist works of the nineteenth century, markers of orientalised 'otherness' are conspicuously absent. In the work, Middle Eastern aesthetics, architecture, physical characteristics, dress and language are omitted from the portrayal of Nicolette. Almost all the adaptations, examinations and translations of the tale in nineteenth-century Britain sustained this omission of the manifestly oriental. One exception, however, is Walter Pater's chapter 'Aucassin and Nicolette', from *Studies in the History of the Renaissance* (1873)[19], which refers to 'a faint eastern delicacy' (Pater 1873, 11) that permeates the 'scenery of the story' (Pater 1873, 11) and which calls Nicolette a 'beautiful, weird, foreign girl' (Pater 1873, 11). The fact that this depiction is not

[18] Though it could be argued that translations of *Aucassin et Nicolette* were, in the greater scheme of things, infrequent (with ten works published over the span of a around hundred years), I believe that the continued publication of this work actually speaks to its longevity and popularity.
[19] In 1888, Pater extended this essay in a chapter entitled 'Two Early French Stories' for his book *The Renaissance: Studies in Art and Poetry*.

supported by the tale itself serves to highlight the fact that Pater was viewing the old tale through the lens of modern and Western preoccupations.

The absence of oriental 'otherness' extends to the representation of physical complexion in the medieval *Aucassin et Nicolette,* where Nicolette, a Saracen princess, is portrayed as unequivocally white. Although Nicolette's kin are described as 'dark' and 'black', she is, like her Belle Sarrasine sisters, portrayed as blonde, white-skinned and blue-eyed. The notion of medieval conceptions of complexion as symbolic, not racial, is evident here. Nicolette, unlike her pagan kin, had been purified and made 'white' through her innate purity of soul and also perhaps through the process of conversion.

The question of race and 'colour' in the medieval tale of *Aucassin et Nicolette* may have been symbolic, but for nineteenth-century British translators and writers the tale's treatment of 'black' and 'white' acquired new meaning. These writers and visual artists were unquestionably conscious of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century scientific and linguistic theories of racial and ethnic difference[20] (the history of which has been studied by Young 1995, Dyer 2008, Stringer 2011, Khattak 2014, Davidson 2015) and perhaps even the development and subsequent foundation of anthropological societies[21]. Furthermore, partly influenced by these developments and growing concerns over miscegenation, and as an impetus to justify colonial

[20] For example, Charles Darwin's canonical *On the Origin of the Species* (1859) and his lesser-known *Expression of the Emotions of Man and Animals* (1872) were popularly used to justify racial theories of superiority and difference.
[21] Le Société Ethnologique de Paris (1839), The Ethnological Society of London (1837), The Anthropological Society of London (1863).

expansion and imperialism (as examined by Young 1995, Salesa 2011, Stringer 2011, Khattak 2014), systemic racial prejudice became increasingly built into government and social management. This widespread fascination with race at the time – which according to Kalmar (2013) was understood as being comprised of biological, physical markers of ethnic difference, especially 'colour' – makes the unquestioned whiteness of Nicolette in nineteenth-century translations of the tale arresting and problematic.

The original tale and its subsequent translations abound with imagery associated with the whiteness of Nicolette. This whiteness is most unambiguously expressed in a section describing Nicolette's escape from her tower in Beaucaire:

> Et les flors des margerites qu'ele ronpoit as ortex de ses pi'es, qui li gissoient sor le menuisse du pie' par deseure, estoient droites noires avers ses pi'es et ses ganbes, tant par estoit blance la mescinete (Bourdillon 1908, 31)[22]
>
> And the daisy flowers snapped by her toes, and lying on the arch of her foot, were fairly black beside her feet and ankles, so very white the girl was (Bourdillon 1887, 35).

All ten translations of the tale produced by British authors of the period include this section with very little variation: Ethel Wilmot-Buxton's *Stories from Old French Romance* (1910); G.L. Way and M. Le Grand's *Fabilaux or Tales, Abridged from*

[22] Bourdillon is used throughout as the default translator because he was the first translator of the work into English and because he provides the original medieval French.

French Manuscripts of the XIIth and XIIIth Centuries (1815)*;* M.S Henry's *This Is of Aucassin and Nicolette, an Old French Song Tale* (1902); Dulcie Lawrence Smith's *Aucassin and Nicolette, Translated from the Old French* (1914); Laurence Housman's *Of Aucassin and Nicolette, Translation in Prose and Verse from the Old French* (1902); F.W. Bourdillon's *Aucassin et Nicolette, a Love Story: Edited in Old French, and Rendered in Modern English* (1887), first published in 1786; Harold Child's *Aucassin and Nicolete, Translated and Edited with an Introduction by Harold Child* (1911); Andrew Lang's *The Song-Story of Aucassin and Nicolete* (1897); Eugene Mason's *Aucassin and Nicolette and Other Mediaeval Romances and Legends Translated from the French* (1913); W.E. Sparkes's *Dante and Beatrice and Aucassin and Nicolette: Retold from the Old Chronicles* (1913), as well as Rosamund Marriott Watson's poem *The Flight of Nicolete* (1887), which is a retelling of the section above. Importantly, these works not only mention but often reverently focus on Nicolette's whiteness without critically analysing how it could be. There is, however, no discussion of what came to be called the trope of the Belle Sarrasine and her 'symbolic whiteness' from medieval Chansons de Geste tales to excuse or even explain this peculiarity. Instead, Nicolette simply remains white – inexplicably so.

These translators allowed for the enigmatic whiteness of Nicolette to go unchecked and unexplained, I suggest, because the tale involves a romance between a Saracen princess and a Christian, European noble. Thus, questioning Nicolette's strange physical characterisation meant that these authors would have had to acknowledge a romanticised interracial relationship. This would have been deeply problematic at the time, when interracial marriages, though not illegal, were taboo and shrouded in

fear around miscegenation (Salesa 2011). Thus, in the case of these translations, it is easy to understand why writers chose to ignore the problem. It seems that Nicolette's whiteness was a peculiar but welcome part of the original tale for nineteenth-century writers. This editorial decision is an arresting example of omission being utilised as a tool.

The apparently conscious omission, in a vast number of these translations, of the word 'black', or in old French 'noire' is yet another example of the act of translation revealing the prejudices of the translator in relation to race. This omission of 'blackness' has been investigated by de Weever (1994) in relation to a number of *Aucassin et Nicolette* translations of the twentieth century. As de Weever outlines, the old French 'noire' is utilised on three occasions in the original manuscript of *Aucassin et Nicolette.* The first has been described already, when the daisies are said to be black in comparison to Nicolette's white instep. The second is in the description of a woodsman, encountered by Aucassin on his quest to find Nicolette:

> Grans estoit et marvellex et lais et hidex; il avoit une grande hure plus noire[23] qu'une carboucle'e, et avoit plus de planne paume entre. Il ex, et avoit unes grandes joes, et un grandisme ne's plat, et unes grans narines l'ees et unes grosses levres plus rouges d'une carboun'ee, et uns grans dens gaunes et lais; et estoit caucie's d'uns housiax et d'uns sollers du beuf fret'es de tille dusque deseure le genol (Bourdillon 1908, 52)
>
> He was tall of stature and wonderful to see, so ugly and hideous. He has a

[23] Underlined emphases are mine.

> monstrous shock-head black as coal, and there was more than a full palm breadth between his two eyes; and he had great giant cheeks, and an immense flat nose, with great wide nostrils and lips redder than a roast, and great ugly yellow teeth (Bourdillon 1887, 53).

The third and final time 'noire' is applied is when Nicolette disguises herself (in beggars' clothes and with painted face) as a 'minstrel' to escape from Carthage and her Saracen kin: 'Si prist une herbe, si en oinst son cief et son visage, si qu'ele fu tote noire et tainte' (Bourdillon 1908, 75). This translates to: 'she took a herb, and smeared her head and face with it, so that she was all black and stained' (Bourdillon 1887, 71). Unlike Bourdillon's translation, however, many translations of the nineteenth century omit the word 'black' from their description of Nicolette and instead use the word 'dark'[24] (Including: Henry and Thomson 1902, Housman 1902, Wilmot-Buxton 1910, Mason 1913); 'brown' (Including: Lang 1897, Smith 1914); or 'stained' (Sparkes 1913).[25] The exchange of 'black' for 'dark', 'brown' and 'stained,' I believe, speaks of the engagement of these translators with contemporary theories of racial order.

To support colonial interference, the French scientific community had devised a racial hierarchy based on distinctions of 'colour' in the late eighteenth century, and this was soon widely held in Britain as well. On this scale, according to Rozanne

[24] I must note here that though 'dark' is arguably a legitimate translation for the word 'noire,' I assert that in this instance it is intentionally utilised as a means to replace the more racially charged 'black'
[25] There are other examples of translators like Bourdillon who employed the actual word 'black' here: namely, Child (1911) and Le Grand and Way (1815). These examples are ignored in de Weever's study, but arguably it is important to note them here so as not to suggest a false homogeneity to the translations.

Stringer (2011) and Julia O'Connell Davidson (2015), whiteness stood superior to 'black', 'yellow', 'brown' and 'red' and, according to Jeffery Dyer (2008), 'black' peoples, a term which predominantly referred to those of African descent, were seen as inferior to the 'brown' peoples of the Middle East. The deviation from the translation of 'noire' to the supposedly superior 'brown' or 'dark' reveals an reinforcement of this scale. Furthermore, the fact that the heroine making herself seem 'black' merely as a disguise was seen as too problematic speaks to the tenacity and influence of racialised prejudice at this time in British history.

Moreover, the omission of Nicolette's 'blackness' is ultimately telling because in regard to other examples of 'noire' used in the tale – in reference to daisies and the woodsman – 'noire' is translated as 'black'. As such, we are led to understand that these translators agreed that the old French word 'noire' meant black but then ignored this when translating the section about Nicolette in disguise. De Weever's (1994) explanation is that it is a deliberate mistranslation and that this unexplained shift in translation of the word 'noire' is due to the fact that the translators did not want to associate Nicolette with the grotesquely rendered woodsman, who is unequivocally 'black'. I agree with this assertion, but I would also add that these translators might have also chosen to omit the word because they were influenced by contemporary conceptions of race theory. Furthermore, the exclusion of a discussion on Nicolette's peculiar whiteness allowed for these translators to further distance themselves from a discussion or acknowledgment of the problematic concept of miscegenation, a fear that was decidedly part of nineteenth-century British culture. This exclusion further reflects the British origins of these works, as

the depiction of the heroine as white caters specifically to Western audiences and their perception of feminine beauty.

Alongside these literary works on *Aucassin et Nicolette*, there are also several visual artworks from the period, predominantly illustrations contained in the aforementioned translations. Only one stand-alone painting (not including illustrations) of Nicolette survives. The work is by one of the leading artists of nineteenth-century England, the Austrian-English painter Marianne Stokes, and is entitled 'Nicolette and Aucassin' (dated between 1855-1900).[26] It is peculiar that so few paintings were made (or remain) of the tale, especially when one considers its popularity.

Stokes's 'Nicolette and Aucassin' reflects the tensions associated with Nicolette and race perfectly by in essence overlooking racial inconsistencies associated with the tale and its portrayal of Nicolette. Instead, Stokes depicts her as a white figure.

Illustrators also ignored the question of Nicolette's ambiguous racial identity. Images render, in luminous colour, a white-skinned, blonde-haired Nicolette with decidedly European features. These include an illustration by Maxwell Armfield for Eugene Mason's *Aucassin and Nicolette and Other Mediaeval Romances and Legends Translated from the French,* titled 'Nicolette Builded the Lodge. Very Pretty it was, and very dainty' (1910)[27]; five illustrations by Anne Anderson for Harold Child's

[26] Plate 1
[27] Plate 2

Aucassin and Nicolete, Translated and Edited with an Introduction (1911)[28]; Eileen Lawrence Smith's illustrations for her sister Dulcie Lawrence Smith's *Aucassin and Nicolette, Translated from the Old French* (1914)[29]; an untitled illustration by W. Matthews for W.E. Sparkes's *Dante and Beatrice and Aucassin and Nicolette: Retold from the Old Chronicles* (1913)[30]; and another by him titled '"Shepherds,"said she, "God keep thee!"' (1913)[31], which similarly depicts a white Nicolette but with brown/red hair. There are also numerous illustrations in black and white that also portray Nicolette with pale and 'European' features. These are a further six illustrations by Eileen Lawrence Smith (1914)[32]; a frontispiece by Reginald L. Knowles for Eugene Mason's 1913 edition of *Aucassin and Nicolette and Other Mediaeval Romances and Legends Translated from the French*[33]; and Paul Woodroffe's drawings for Lawrence Housman's *Aucassin and Nicolette, Translation in Prose and Verse from the Old French* (1902).[34] Even with the muting influence of monochrome, Nicolette's whiteness is emphasised.

As illustrators for specific literary texts, these artists were denied much leeway for personal interpretation of the tale. It is, however, interesting that none of these illustrators actively questions the strange racial identity of Nicolette, which they could have done by at least diminishing physical identifications of whiteness: light hair, white skin and European features. Instead, these images perform the opposite

[28] Plate 3, 4, 5, 6, 7
[29] Plate 8, 9, 10
[30] Plate 11
[31] Plate 12
[32] Plate 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18
[33] Plate 19
[34] Plate 20, 21

function, representing Nicolette as a patently idealised specimen of white beauty for British audiences.

Aesthetic markers of the orient are also absent from most of the illustrations of Nicolette, which is strange given the popularity of orientalist aesthetics in art, architecture and décor at the time, especially in images of the odalisque. In fact, although a large number of the images depict, in alignment with typical portrayals of orientalised women, an opulently dressed and bejewelled Nicolette[35], she is rendered in a way that was characteristic of portrayals of wealthy medievalised women, not necessarily orientalised women – in richly adorned bliauts and with hairstyles and headpieces typical of nineteenth-century medievalism. Such aesthetic decisions suggest, as in the literature of the time, a conscious effort to minimise Nicolette's roots in the orient and to instead highlight her European medievalness. Furthermore, the inclusion of orientalised aesthetics in the backgrounds of the images is also rare, present in only three examples: two illustrations by Anderson for Harold Child's *Aucassin and Nicolete, Translated and Edited with an Introduction* (1911)[36], and an illustration by Eileen Lawrence Smith (1914)[37]. The absence of hallmarks of the orient suggests that, as in the treatment of race in visual representations, a conscious decision was being made to underplay the 'otherness' of Nicolette, to make her more palatable to British readers.

[35] Plate 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 15
[36] Plate 3 and 4
[37] Plate 13

Markers of the orient, which were absent from medieval Nicolette and her direct literary and artistic descendants, were, conversely, more openly included in works of the nineteenth century that borrowed from the medieval Belle Sarrasine but moved away from the story of *Aucassin et Nicolette* itself.

During the mid 1800s, works with 'Moorish' or Saracen themes were popular in British periodicals, annuals, gift books and books for children (Saglia 2000), and some of these contained medievalised Belle Sarrasine characters. Many of these texts have been examined, but none have been assessed in relation to their compliance with the Belle Sarrasine tradition. These include: Sophia Lee's play *Almeyda, Queen of Granada: A Tragedy, in Five Acts,* first performed at the Royal Theatre in Drury-Lane in 1796; Felicia Hemans' 'The Zegri Maid', published in *Songs of Spain* in 1834; Letitia Landon's epic poem *The Troubadour* (1827) and her lyrical poems 'The Moorish Maiden's Vigil', published in *The New Monthly Magazine* in 1836, and 'The Zegri Lady's Vigil', also published in *The New Monthly Magazine,* in 1838; a verse section titled 'Gilbert Beckett' from Charles Dickens' *A Child's History of Britain,* published in 1851; and Lewis Morris's poem 'Gilbert Beckett and the Fair Saracen', from *Songs of Two Worlds,* first published in 1874 and heavily influenced by Dickens' work.[38] All of these texts include a medievalised, orientalised woman as the protagonist, and focus on her reaction to being left behind by her Christian lover, as per the Belle Sarrasine tradition. These texts run the gamut from employing many Belle Sarrasine characteristics to only a few, but they are so markedly similar to one another that, examined together, they add weight and legitimacy to my assertion of the presence

[38] These texts will be collectively referred to as 'other Belle Sarrasine texts/works' for the sake of ease and clarity.

of the medieval Belle Sarrasine character in the nineteenth century. The nature of these works as original pieces rather than translations or adaptations of medieval texts, suggests that medievalism was seen as a powerful creative practice, useful as a means to grant credibility to modern ideas and values, supporting contemplations around femininity beyond white, Christian womanhood.

Many orientalised and some medievalised settings are present in these works, communicated through images of an oriental past of opulence, hedonism and luxury, associated with both the romanticisation and vilification of the East that stretched from the medieval to the modern. The female protagonist is also orientalised in these texts, though only subtly in most cases, such as in Dickens' section in *A Child's History of Britain,* which mentions the maiden's 'foreign dress' (1905); in Morris's *Gilbert Beckett*, which refers to the maiden's unusual beauty and strange language; Landon's 'Zegri Lady's Vigil', which references the lady's arrestingly 'dark eyes' (Landon 1841); and the costuming for Lee's *Almeyda* (Roberts and Reading 1796), which, though rather Westernised overall, depicts the queen wearing the orientalised symbol of a veil.[39] Landon is more frank in the orientalisation of her female protagonists. In her poem *The Troubadour*, she describes Leila's 'Moorish turban, Moorish vest' (1827, 180), while in 'The Moorish Maiden's Vigil,' a crusader story about a Muslim woman awaiting the return of her 'Spanish knight,' she goes into detail about the physical 'otherness' of the maiden, describing her thus:

[39] Plate 22

Scarlet is the turban folded

Round the long plaits of hair;

And the pliant gold is moulded

Round her arms that are as fair (Landon 1841, 211).

Turbans, plaits, veils, dark complexions and strange languages were utilised as obvious descriptors of orientalised womanhood and were employed to definitively depict the woman as 'other', which sits in stark contrast to the portrayal of Nicolette in the art and literature of the time. This shift was a result of the active detachment of these works from medieval source materials, making it easier for writers and artists to incorporate modern conceptions of the orient, using it as a stand in for, and a supplement of, the backwardness of the medieval past. Moreover, these texts seem to take up the orientalist practise of marking 'othered' bodies, which was in turn influenced by anxiety over miscegenation and the growing fixation on racial and cultural classification in Britain. This fear, reflected in the undisguised orientalisation of these figure, had a direct impact on the narratives of these texts, as resulted in the fact that many of these Belle Sarrasine figures, unlike their medievalist predecessors, remained separated from their Christian lovers at the end of the works, pining for them to return.

This assertion is somewhat complicated by the fact that although these texts were more open in their inclusion of orientalist aesthetics, they often described their female protagonists as physically white, in direct correlation to the medieval Belle Sarrasine tradition. Leila, the Muslim woman in Landon's *The Troubadour* is

described as ‘marble fair’ (1827, 169) and ‘lily pale’ (1827, 180); in ‘The Zegri Lady’s Vigil’ Landon mentions the ‘white feet’ (Landon 1841, 225) of her lady; and in ‘The Moorish Maiden’s Vigil’ she describes her maiden’s arms being ‘as fair/ As the moonlight which they meet’ (Landon 1841, 211). Lee’s play *Almeyda* contains no direct reference in the script to the racial colouring of the Muslim queen, but the costume design for the play shows her to be white in complexion.[40] The choice to undercut both a realistic and significant marker of difference was, as in the case of the *Aucassin et Nicolette* translations and adaptations, a reflection of nineteenth-century disdain for and fear of miscegenation, given that the Muslim maidens were to be the love interests of European, Christian men. This notion seems to be explicitly the case in Dickens’ ‘Gilbert Becket’ and Hemans’ ‘The Zegri Maid’, both of which exclude all mention of racial characteristics of their maidens, arguably to avoid raising the prospect of interracial relationships.

The counter-intuitiveness of this characterisation and its correlation with the medieval Belle Sarrasine suggest a direct engagement, and possibly a call for legitimisation, through a connection with the medieval tradition. Furthermore, the characteristic whiteness of the medieval Belle Sarrasine and her nineteenth-century descendants could foster greater understanding of the whiteness of the odalisque in nineteenth-century Europe, with both the medieval and modern tropes feeding off one another to create an archetypal and historically legitimated image of fantasised Muslim womanhood, worthy of being admired but not married.

[40] Plate 22

In direct contrast with these works, however, Morris's version of 'Gilbert Beckett' breaks with convention and calls attention to the 'brown' face of his lady, speaking in one instance of her 'brown cheek' (Morris 1904, 104). The fact that Morris drew heavily upon Dickens and that Dickens did not apply the same physical characteristic to his lady makes Morris's inclusion intriguing and suggests that it may have been a conscious and purposeful break with common practice. Further, Morris's physical depiction of the lady, 'brown' skin and all, is undeniably flattering, and he continues to place her as the love interest of a white Christian man. Thus, one could argue that Morris was rebelling against the eurocentricity of the medieval and modern Belle Sarrasine in regard to their unquestioned whiteness and the notion of the superiority of whiteness. The Muslim maiden's orientalised 'otherness' is no longer erased or demonised but cautiously celebrated, an example of political/ideological medievalism being used for progressive means.

Nineteenth-century orientalism and its 'othering effect' had an impact on not just Britain's perception of Muslim/Arab peoples but, as argued by Said (2003), Ranen Omar-Sherman (2006), Vicky Morrisroe (2011) and Kalmar (2009, 2017), the perception of Jewish peoples too. Throughout the nineteenth century, Judaism/Jewish peoples and Islam/Arab peoples were linked, for better and for worse, in British understanding of orientalism. Many well known and notable Jews proudly proclaimed this connection, most famously Prime Minister Benjamin Disraeli who commonly linked Jews with Muslims by calling Jews 'mosaic Arabs' (as examined in Prawer 1992, Omar-Sherman 2006, Majid 2009) and suggesting, in his novel *Tancred* (1847), that 'Arabs are only Jews on horseback' (Disraeli, 110). One

could not, however, plausibly argue that it was smooth sailing for Jews in Britain at this time. Indeed, as stated by Shmeul Almog (1990), Brian Cheyette (1995), Cynthia Sheinberg (2002) and David Feldman (1994), xenophobia, which was packaged as nationhood and patriotism, gave way to a new wave of anti-Semitism by the middle of the century. This prejudice was especially apparent in portrayals of Jewish men, who were characterised in art, theatre, politics and literature as physically repugnant creatures of immorality, avarice and usuriousness (as studied by Modder 1961, Spector 2002, Valman 2007). This anti-Semitic sentiment did not obviously extend to the Jewish woman, nevertheless, she was 'othered' in the minds of the British public, particularly through the figure of the Belle Juive.

La Belle Juive, which translates as 'the beautiful Jewess', was a term coined in early nineteenth-century France to characterise a European archetype of Jewish womanhood. The term, though French, took much of its inspiration from the British literary figure of Rebecca from Walter Scott's medievalist novel *Ivanhoe*, which was first published in 1820 and hugely popular throughout the nineteenth century and into the twentieth century (Bitton–Jackson 1982, Witkin 1988, Krobb 1992, Lewin 2002, Guenoun 2015). As stated by Judith Lewin (2002), Livia Bitton–Jackson (1982) and Mildred Witkin (1988), while European representations of Jewish daughters certainly predate Rebecca (such as Christopher Marlowe's 'Abigail' from *The Jew of Malta*, c.1592), Scott's Jewess marked a shift in the centrality and importance of the Jewish woman in British literature and in her role as a figure of romantic interest and sexual fantasy. Furthermore, Rebecca's medievalness was important because it gave an imagined historical credibility to this representation of the Jewish woman type.

The status of *Ivanhoe* throughout Britain, France, Europe and the colonies culminated in the coining of the term 'Walter-Scott-mania' (based on the French term 'Walterscottomanie'), which referred to the pervasiveness of all things 'Ivanhoe'. By the middle of the century, the Belle Juive, riding the wave of Walter-Scott-mania, had become a hugely recognisable literary type in Britain and beyond.

Beyond the established scholarship on Rebecca and her connection with the Belle Juive, I further wish to argue that the character of Rebecca borrowed from the medieval Belle Sarrasine tradition. I base this assertion on the fact that the two types share abundant similarities in characterisation, plot and theme, namely, her 'oriental' heritage, personal agency, active role in the plot, craftiness, cleverness and healing abilities, and her love affair with a European, Christian man. Moreover, though there is no direct link between Scott and the tradition of the Belle Sarrasine, it is highly unlikely that he, an avid medievalist, would have had no knowledge of the burgeoning popularity of the tale of *Aucassin et Nicolette*. Moreover, I argue that it was as a result of Scott's influence and the subsequent popularity of his Rebecca that his vision of the Jewish woman, based on the medieval Belle Sarrasine, became the model for all representations of Jewish women in Britain in the nineteenth century. Thus, I submit that the Belle Juive has unambiguous medievalist roots.

Literature that contains clearly medievalised Belles Juives comprises works which were inspired by or allude to *Ivanhoe*, including Scott's original; Letitia Landon's section on Rebecca in *Life and Literary Remains* (1841); Charles Heath's section on

Rebecca from *The Waverley Gallery of the Principal Female Characters in Sir Walter Scott's Romances* (1828); William Makepeace Thackeray's novel (published in its first edition under the name of M.A. Titmarsh) *Rebecca and Rowena; a Romance upon Romance* (1850); Thomas Dibdin's play *Ivanhoe, or the Jew's Daughter: A Melo Dramatic Romance, in Three Acts* (1820); Julian Sturgis and Arthur Sullivan's opera *Ivanhoe: A Romantic Opera* (1891); and literature that moved away from Scott, such as Grace Aguilar's novel *The Vale of Cedars, or The Martyr* (1851), and her essay *The Women of Israel* (1852); Edward Bulwer-Lytton's novel *Leila, or, The Siege of Granada, and Calderon, the Courtier* (1838); and Thomas Lacy's play *The Jewess, or the Council of Constance, A Romantic Drama in Three Acts* (1835). Alongside these literary works, a large number of visual renderings of medievalised Belle Juive figures were produced, often to illustrate editions of Scott's *Ivanhoe.*

Comparable to nineteenth-century reworkings of the medievalised Belle Sarrasine, the Belle Juive of the nineteenth century was characterised by her 'otherness' and by her precarious and incongruous place within European society. In a way that was directly antithetical to medieval portrayals of the Belle Sarrasine and far more apparent than nineteenth-century medievalised versions of the Muslim woman, the Belle Juive exemplified racial, religious and cultural difference plainly. In this manner, she was far less easily subsumed into the white, European, Christian narrative. Moreover, I submit that the medieval, oriental aspects of the Belle Juive were utilised as a means to impart historical authenticity to notions of natural, fundamental difference between Jewish and European womanhood. Thus, though

not negative in their portrayal of the Jewish woman, these works certainly relied on the medievalist elements of the story to inform a view on racial/religious otherness.

A principal example of this activity is that although Belle Juive texts mirror the medieval Belle Sarrasine tradition by centring on an interracial/interfaith[41] romantic relationship – this time between a Jewish woman and a Christian European knight/nobleman[42] – and the problems that arise as a result, they do not often end in the union of the lovers. This trope is even starker than in the nineteenth-century Belle Sarrasine texts, where the lover simply did not return. Instead, the impetus behind this narrative choice is more fraught and plays out in the text. This decision was due in part to the fact that, unlike the medieval Belle Sarrasine, whose racial or religious alterity was rectified by Christian baptism, the Belle Juive rarely accepted conversion, instead threatening martyrdom (as in Lacy 1835, Aguilar 1851) or walking away from romance with her Christian knights in the name of religious piety (as in Dibdin 1820, Scott 1820, Landon 1841, Sturgis and Sullivan 1891). The fact that 'Jewishness' is passed through women (unlike in Islam, where it is believed to pass through men), undoubtedly also played a part in the widespread decision to leave the Belle Juive unconverted and unmarried.

I assert that political/ideological medievalism was utilised here, and that it relied on, and propped up, nineteenth-century anti-Semitism. The lack of conversions in these

[41] In Europe in the nineteenth century, Jews were perceived to be a race of people, a cultural group and a religion (Cheyette 1995, Sheinberg 2002, Akbari 2009, Kalmar 2013, Kalmar 2017).
[42] This formula is slightly altered by Bulwer-Lytton in *Leila* (1838), which centres on a forbidden romance between a Muslim knight and a Jewish woman. Nevertheless, it echoes that of the Belle Sarrasine in the problems that arise as a result of interfaith/interracial love.

stories was also perhaps influenced by the fact that Jewish peoples were much more commonplace than Arabs/Muslims in nineteenth-century Britain and so were far less easily fantasised about and sentimentalised. Unlike Muslims (particularly Arab Muslims), Jewish peoples had been a part of the fabric of British society for centuries, with the first substantial group, since the 1290 Edict of Expulsion, emigrating to England in the 1750s (Smith 1998), growing to comparatively significant numbers in the nineteenth century.[43] Thus, 'unfavourable' miscegenation was a very real possibility, intensified by a fear that European Jews were 'passing' as gentiles and covertly infiltrating society. This prejudice in turn influenced the representation of Christian/Jewish unions in medievalist texts, which were called upon to provide 'historically legitimate' warnings against 'doomed' and 'incompatible' interfaith/ interracial relationships. However, the fact that conversionist literature about Jewish women on the whole was popular in Britain in the nineteenth century complicates this assertion. Therefore, the refusal of the Belle Juive to convert must have had something to do with her 'medievalness' as well. Perhaps the taint of the grotesque anti-Semitic rumours around Jews in medieval Europe (Hughes 1986, Kalmar 2009, Majid 2009) had had an effect on nineteenth-century views on the suitability of medieval Jewish women for conversion and marriage, no matter how positive the image of the woman was overall. A disdain for Jewish men was certainly present in a number of these medievalised texts on Jewish peoples, ranging from the comparatively benign rendering of the avarice of Isaac of York in Scott's *Ivanhoe*, to the more extreme image of a murderous father, involved in satanic magic, included in Bulwer-Lytton's *Leila* (1838).

[43] There were, according to Steinbach (2012), approximately 20,000 Jews in England in 1860, which grew to 60,000 by 1881.

Excluded, however, from this analysis of the interplay of anti-Semitism and conversion is Grace Aguilar's *The Vale of Cedars* (1851), a romantic novel set in Spain in the fifteenth century. Aguilar was an Anglo-Jewish woman, famous for producing literature that venerated Judaism and attempted to unify English and Jewish communities. In alliance with arguments made by Traci Klass (2005), Michael Galchinsky (1996) and Elizabeth Fay (2002), I argue that Aguilar excluded the conversionist element because she saw it as conveying an inaccurate portrait of Jewish women as weak and malleable and of Judaism as immoral and oppressive. Furthermore, this authorial decision allowed her to claim that the existence of steadfast, non-conformist Jewish women (like herself) could be dated back to the medieval period. Thus, Aguilar relied upon political/ideological medievalism too, but this time to legitimise her positive views on Judaism and Jewish womanhood.

In opposition to these works, both positive and negative, and in direct alliance with the Belle Sarrasine tradition, Bulwer-Lytton's *Leila* (1838) and Thackeray's *Rebecca and Rowena* (1850) – which is essentially an epilogue to Scott's *Ivanhoe,* written to rectify the perceived mistreatment of Rebecca – include the Christian conversion of their protagonists and their marriage to their Christian lovers. In spite of this fact, texts that circumvented the conversion plot far outweighed those that abided by it. This trend suggests that though the medieval Belle Sarrasine tradition was revived through the figure of the Belle Juive, it was far from a static tradition, absorbing the concerns and prejudices of the time.

As in nineteenth-century literature and visual art on the Belle Sarrasine, racial otherness (as indicated through phenotypical markers of difference, especially skin colour) played a significant yet perplexing part in the understanding and depiction of the Belle Juive. On the whole, visual representations of the Belle Juive followed the convention of the white orientalised woman. This fact in many ways links her directly with the medieval Belle Sarrasine and helps bridge the gap between the image of the orientalised woman generally and her whiteness in British art of the nineteenth century. A white Belle Juive is present in Julia Margaret Cameron's photographic piece entitled 'Rebecca' (1866)[44]; Phillip Von Stubenrauch costume design entitled 'Miss Foote as Rebecca' (1824)[45]; the enormously popular and much reproduced design by Thomas Allen for Wedgwood's ceramic 'Ivanhoe Series' (c.1881)[46]; illustrations for editions of *Ivanhoe* such as Richard Westall's 'Rebecca on the Battlements' (1820)[47] and 'Rebecca at the Stake' (1820)[48]; Thomas Stothard's 'The Trial of Rebecca' (1824)[49]; Charles Robert Leslie's 'Rebecca' (1827)[50]; Solomon Alexander Hart's 'Rebecca' (1834)[51] and 'Prince John and Rebecca' (1837)[52]; George Cruikshank's 'One Foot Nearer' (1837)[53]; Albert Henry Payne's 'Rebecca Watching the Tournament' (1841)[54]; Thomas Lupton's 'Rebecca and Ivanhoe' (c.1830)[55]; Louisa

[44] Plate 23
[45] Plate 24
[46] Plate 25 and 26
[47] Plate 27
[48] Plate 28
[49] Plate 29
[50] Plate 30
[51] Plate 31
[52] Plate 32
[53] Plate 33
[54] Plate 34
[55] Plate 35

Sharpe's 'Rebecca' (1833)[56]; Franklin Green's 'Urfried and Rebecca' (1860)[57] and 'The Trial of Rebecca' (1860)[58]; W. Boxall's 'Rebecca and Rowena' (1860)[59]; an anonymous drawing titled 'Rebecca on the Turret' (1871)[60]; Maurice Greiffenhagen's four illustrations for Lewis Hind's *A Souvenir of the One Hundreth Performance of Ivanhoe:* 'If Such my Fate, What Hope for Thee?' (1891)[61], 'O, for the Wings of Which the Psalmist Sings, I Might Fly' (1891)[62], 'I See Them Now; the Dark Wood Moves with Bows' (1891)[63], and 'In Mercy, Save Him! Wilfred! Wilfred!' (1891)[64]; other illustrations, including two by Phillip Stephanoff for Bulwer-Lytton's *Leila* (1838), entitled 'the Admonition' (1857)[65] and 'Muza at the Lattice of Leila' (1857)[66]; and three untitled designs created by the famous illustrative team the Dalziel brothers (1881) for Aguilar's *Vale of Cedars*.[67] Only one image, a photograph by Alexander Percy Guttenberg, which depicts the actors Charles Garry and Dora Barton in the roles of Isaac and Rebecca from a theatrical version of *Ivanhoe* (1909)[68], shows a Belle Juive with darkened skin. This trend, I believe, demonstrates the power of British medievalism in the nineteenth century, through the revival of a specific medievalist mode, that of the white, orientalised woman found in the trope of the Belle Sarrasine. Furthermore, it represents the influence of Britain's perception of

[56] Plate 36
[57] Plate 37
[58] Plate 38
[59] Plate 39
[60] Plate 40
[61] Plate 41
[62] Plate 42
[63] Plate 43
[64] Plate 44
[65] Plate 45
[66] Plate 46
[67] Plate 47, 48, 49
[68] Plate 50

acceptable womanhood on the art world, whereby renderings of orientalised women were only deemed beautiful and acceptable if they were depicted as white.

Intriguingly, although most artworks depicted unequivocally white Belle Juive figures, the literary characters that they represented were not often described as such. In comparison to the vast literature of the nineteenth century that renders the Belle Sarrasine as white, there is only one literary work on the Belle Juive that unequivocally does so: Bulwer-Lytton's *Leila.* In this work, Leila is described as so 'naturally pale' that she 'would have been deemed fair even in the north' (Bulwer-Lytton 1860, 30). Here, as in the medieval tradition, the whiteness is positioned as a marker of her superiority and goodness, and so this choice casts a sharp value judgment. The medieval and oriental elements are at odds with one another here, and it seems that the push to render the Belle Juive as exotic 'other' outweighed both the medieval and medievalist impulse for integration.

A number of works render their maidens with 'dark' features. This is so of the archetypal Rebecca from Scott's *Ivanhoe,* which makes mention of the 'darkness of her complexion' (Scott 1820, 120). Rebecca was analogously represented in a prose section from Heath's *Waverley Gallery* (1828), and in Dibdin's version of *Ivanhoe* there is mention of Rebecca's 'bright eyes, black locks, and skin alike' (Dibdin 1820, 46). Later literary works ignore Rebecca's complexion altogether and this is, I assert, was a telling omission that paved the way for her to be altered so prevalently in visual art. Moreover, the fact that a number of Belle Juive figures, including the archetypical figure of Rebecca, were described in regard to physical 'darkness' as

opposed to the symbolic, whiteness of the medieval Belle Sarrasine might also have played a part in the decision to exclude the conversion/marriage plot in many of these works, so as to make them appropriate for British audiences. Furthermore, the fact that Wilfred of Ivanhoe marries a Saxon woman, instead of Rebecca, reflects the racial endogamy of the time.

Beyond the issue of race, undisguised 'othering' came into play in these Belle Juive works through the prevalence of orientalist themes and aesthetics. Thus, though markers of otherness were lacking in British visual and literary adaptations of *Aucassin et Nicolette* and were rather subtle in texts on her Saracen descendants, there is a clear connection with the orient in almost all medievalised Belle Juive works. A major part of the archetypal Belle Juive, in literature and (especially in France) in art, was the intense focus on markers of exotic difference, often expressed through the rendering of her with dark, curling, long hair. A passage from Scott's *Ivanhoe* has been designated as the foundation for this portrayal of Jewesses in European art and literature:

> "the profusion of her sable tresses, which, each arranged it its own little spiral of twisted curls, fell down upon as much of a lovely neck and bosom as a simarre of the richest Persian silk" (Scott 1820, 120).

The descriptive passage provides the leading example of this fascination with the physicality of the 'otherness' and the sensuality of the Belle Juive. Her dark hair, as symbolic of oriental difference, is present in numerous other works, such as

Thackeray's *Rebecca and Rowena* (1850), where Sir Ivanhoe's secret love for Rebecca is discovered by the type of hair he has in his locket, which, instead of being 'almost as fair as an Albino' (Thackeray 1850, 95) like his wife Rowena's, is 'black' 'as the locks of the Jewish maiden' (Thackeray 1850). Thomas Dibdin, in his theatrical version of *Ivanhoe (1820),* likewise focuses on the 'dark' sensuality of his Belle Juive Rebecca, speaking of her 'Bright eyes, black locks, and skin alike' (1820, 46), and in *Leila* (1860) Bulwer-Lytton refers to the 'dark' and 'luxuriant' hair of Leila. Aguilar's *Vale of Cedars* (1851) frequently emphasises the long, dark hair of the character of Maria. In a section where Maria faces death at the hands of the Spanish inquisition, it is said that 'She took down the beautiful tresses of her long luxuriant hair, and, parting them with bold hands around her delicate throat, stood calmly waiting in Don Luis's movements the signal of her own destruction' (Aguilar 1851, 180). This scene links a moment where Maria openly professes and defends her faith and 'race' with a tangible physical representation of this, her hair.

In visual art too, long, dark, curling hair and dark facial features were part of almost all depictions of the Belle Juive.[69] This section, from the outset, assigns to these figures the role of exotic 'other', including the Belle Juive as a fantasy woman, which is a facet of her characterisation that will be comprehensively examined later in the chapter.

Physical markers of 'otherness' are also rendered in these works through the richness of the clothing and adornments of the Belle Juive. The tradition of the

[69] Plate 23, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31, 32, 33, 34, 35, 36, 37, 38, 39, 40, 41, 42, 43, 44, 45, 46, 50

opulently dressed Jewish woman can be directly mapped to Scott's *Ivanhoe* (1820), which contains a long descriptive section on Rebecca's dress:

> Her form was exquisitely symmetrical, and was shown to advantage by a sort of Eastern dress, which she wore according to the fashion of the females of her nation. Her turban of yellow silk suited well with the darkness of her complexion. The brilliancy of her eyes, the superb arch of her eyebrows, her well-formed aquiline nose, her teeth as white as pearl, and the profusion of her sable tresses, which, each arranged in its own little spiral of twisted curls, fell down upon as much of a lovely neck and bosom as a simarre of the richest Persian silk, exhibiting flowers in their natural colours embossed upon a purple ground, permitted to be visible—all these constituted a combination of loveliness, which yielded not to the most beautiful of the maidens who surrounded her. It is true, that of the golden and pearl-studded clasps, which closed her vest from the throat to the waist, the three uppermost were left unfastened on account of the heat, which something enlarged the prospect to which we allude. A diamond necklace, with pendants of inestimable value, were by this means also made more conspicuous. The feather of an ostrich, fastened in her turban by an agraffe set with brilliants, was another distinction of the beautiful Jewess, scoffed and sneered at by the proud dames who sat above her, but secretly envied by those who affected to deride them (Scott 1820, 120).

Judith Lewin (2006) has spoken about the 'loaded surfaces' in this description of Rebecca, referring to the fact that she is described in materialist language: 'silk, pearl, sable, richest, embossed, purple [royal], golden, pearl, diamond, ostrich, and brilliants' (Lewin 2006, 31), which assigns to her the orientalist stereotype, present in European consciousness since the medieval period, of abundant wealth and opulence. A sumptuously dressed Belle Juive is part of almost all these works of literature. An prime example of this trope comes from the costume notes for Lacy's play *The Jewess* (1835), where the character of Rebecca is to be dressed in one scene in a 'Rich light crimson tunic, white satin trousers, net hanging sleeves, red slippers, jewels' (1835, 5) and in another in 'Rich scarlet satin, richly trimmed with gold, jewellery' (1835, 5), which again emphasises the materialistic aspects of her costume: 'gold', 'jewels', 'jewellery' and 'satin.'

In visual renderings, symbols of orientalised aesthetic dress, such as turbans, veils and headdresses[70], peacock feathers[71] and opulent costuming[72] also abound. Thus, both visual art and literature connected the Belle Juive with a central aspect of orientalist discourse (present from the medieval to the modern), which regarded the East as a place of corruption and impiety. This belief was especially pertinent to anti-Semitic stereotypes, in which the Jewish man had long been associated with avarice and usury. Though this is in opposition to the Belle Juive's positive character, orientalist perceptions of the orient, and Judaism in particular, are unequivocally part of the Belle Juive tradition. This aspect of her characterisation, which is absent

[70] Plate 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 29, 30, 31, 32, 33, 34, 35, 36, 37, 38, 39, 45, 46, 47, 48, 49, 50, 51
[71] Plate 24, 27, 31, 32, 34, 36, 45, 46
[72] Plate 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 30, 31, 32, 33, 34, 35, 36, 39, 40, 45, 46, 50

from the medieval Belle Sarrasine and muted in works on her medievalised descendants, also worked against the Belle Juive in regard to her suitability for marriage and conversion and, therefore, her ability to be assimilated into British womanhood. It seems that in the case of the Belle Juive, unlike her Saracen sisters, orientalist elements were utilised as a means of reifying the innate 'otherness' of the Jewish woman, positioning her as a figure to be revered, but only from afar.

From the medieval Nicolette to her nineteenth-century Muslim and Jewish descendants, it is clear that the medievalised, orientalised woman operated in a space that was both within and without. The orientalised woman in the Western imagination, from the medieval to the medievalist, was consistently imbued with an aura of reverence and fantasy, but, due to the development of ideologies around hierarchies of race and culture, she increasingly became less easily assimilated into the arena of acceptable British womanhood. To circumvent the problems of the fantasy and the lack of assimilation, medievalist or orientalist elements were often relied upon, utilised so as to undercut or emphasise the 'otherness' of the women, which in turn influenced their level of social and cultural suitability.

Feminine agency and the Belle Sarrasine

The medievalised, orientalised woman's sense of feminine agency, like her innate 'otherness', was integral in literature and art of the nineteenth century, and, though it was suffused with contemporary British stereotypes about the lives of Eastern women, it was at times, I believe, also shaped by the medieval Belle Sarrasine legacy. Though often perceived as stagnant and unchanging, the West's understanding of

the rights, roles and position of women in the East has evolved dramatically over time, and this is especially pertinent to an examination of the agency and autonomy afforded the medievalised, orientalised woman and how this was influenced by the practice of political/ideological medievalism. Moreover, the personal agency associated with this orientalised character served as an revealing counter representation of womanhood when compared to the idealised British woman, but interestingly, it did not render orientalised, medievalised femininity as something to be admonished or reviled, but rather as a embodiment of the fantasy of exotic Eastern womanhood.

In medieval Europe, as argued by Kahf (1999), Muslim women were popularly rendered with a level of sexual, physical and social agency that modern Western audiences might not expect. The Muslim woman was represented, especially in medieval France, as a figure to be admired for her independence and autonomy. This fact was especially true of the French Belle Sarrasine, who was lauded for her self-directed conversion from 'pagan' Islam to the 'true religion' of Christianity. The Belle Sarrasine was simultaneously held to be the antithesis of what Jane Gilbert (1997) has called the 'Good Christian Girl' of medieval French literature, who was overwhelmingly passive and often of secondary status in the narrative. This binary, however, posed an interesting conundrum in that both the 'Good Christian Girl' and the Belle Sarrasine were, on the whole, presented approvingly. In this case, the veneration of one type of woman did not necessarily counteract that of the other; instead, they co-existed as separate but equal aspects of good womanhood. This is a rare example of the 'other' woman defying demonisation in the Western literary

canon and suggests that, in medieval France, both Muslim and Christian women were able to function as idealised images of femininity.

By the mid-eighteenth century in Western Europe, however, as argued by Kahf (1999) and Madeleine Dobie (2004), politicians, writers and visual artists had departed from the image of the autonomous and active orientalised Muslim woman. European colonialist expansion had influenced this change, bringing with it, according to Said, the mass production of paintings, travelogues and books on the East by Western authors and visual artists. Crucially, most of the artists and writers of these texts had spent little or no time in the places that they sought to depict, and so their renderings were often fundamentally inaccurate. According to Said, Dobie and Kahf, these texts were underpinned with a conspicuously moralistic and imperialistic agenda, employing the pretext of 'saving' and 'emancipating' colonial subjects from 'oppression' and 'ignorance' to justify aggressive expansion and conquest into areas of India, the Middle East and South East Asia.

This preoccupation encouraged an interest in the mystical 'harem' and the Arab Muslim woman's supposedly submissive yet erotic place within it. Fascination with the sensual, passive Eastern woman of the harem was particularly evident in visual art through the cloistered concubine figure of the odalisque. The inherent message seemed to be that the oriental woman needed to be liberated, morally, spiritually and physically, from the constraints of the East. As a result of this shift in understanding of oriental womanhood, as argued by Kahf, the active and autonomous Muslim woman of earlier literature, particularly in Chansons de Geste,

was driven into dormancy, and by the nineteenth century in Britain a more compliant, silent figure took her place.

Though this figure was popular in British art and literature of the nineteenth century, I would argue that it was not ubiquitous, as a number of independent, autonomous, orientalised female characters were present in both the art and literature of the time. This fact was, I believe, shaped by the uptake of the medieval legacy of the Belle Sarrasine in the nineteenth century and was true of depictions of both Muslim and Jewish women, but this atypical conception of oriental womanhood in nineteenth-century Britain has not been studied by modern scholars. The impetus behind rectifying this is that it provides a more complete understanding of the perception of the orientalised woman, and it reveals a neglected facet of British medievalism: that which used the past to legitimise a different and in some ways more progressive view of orientalised womanhood. Furthermore, it reflects a revival of the medieval trope of positive representations of Christian and Muslim women coexisting.

In the original medieval tale of *Aucassin et Nicolette,* Nicolette follows the lead of her Belle Sarrasine sisters in being characterised by her active, autonomous nature. That being said, *Aucassin et Nicolette*'s connection with this trope is somewhat complicated, as argued by Brownlee (1986), and it has been suggested that it may have been employed satirically. In the tale, Nicolette's active, and therefore 'masculine', role is counterbalanced by Aucassin's often inactive, emotional and thus 'feminine' characterisation. This reversal pushes the notion of the masculinised

woman to its logical conclusion by placing her in binary opposition to an emasculated man, and directly undermines a crucial facet of the Chanson de Geste, with its veneration of masculinity and male heroism. The purposeful flouting of the convention is further emphasised by the employment of an entirely conventional introductory verse, which positions Aucassin as the heroic, active subject and Nicolette as the passive love object:

> Qui Vauroit bons ver o–ir
> Del deport du viel caitiff,
> Deus biax enfand petis,
> Nicholete et Aucassins,
> Des grans paines qu'il soufri,
> Et des proueces qu'il fist
> Por s'amie o le cler vis (Bourdillon 1887, 6)

> Who would list a pleasant lay,
> Pastime of the old and grey?
> Of two lovers, children yet,
> Aucassin and Nicolette;
> Of the sorrows he went through,
> Of the great things he did do,
> All for his bright-favoured may (Bourdillon 1908, 13).

The content of the introduction is challenged by the story itself, which sees Nicolette escape from towers, jump into moats, rush into forests full of beasts, run away from an unwanted marriage, and disguise herself and flee across the sea to find her lover, while Aucassin, despite some acts of bravery, mainly weeps and pines. This destabilisation of convention could easily be understood as the author seeking to undermine the Belle Sarrasine tradition and her potential to weaken masculine hegemony by positioning her as taking over the masculine role in the story, and so forcing the male protagonist to balance the scales by taking on feminine characteristics. I would argue, however, that the tale is far too enamoured of the beautiful and brave Nicolette for that to be the case. Instead, I posit that it is simply a playful examination of gender roles and gender binaries.

The discrepancy between the introduction and the content of the tale remained largely unchanged in nineteenth-century translations, retained in eight of the ten works of translation (namely, Way and LeGrand 1815, Bourdillon 1887, Lang 1897, Henry and Thomson 1902, Housman 1902, Wilmot-Buxton 1910, Child 1911, Mason 1913). The implicit contradiction of the introduction is accepted without explanation in these translations, arguably because to remark on it would be to acknowledge the potentially problematic role of Nicolette, which could have made the tale less palatable to nineteenth-century audiences. The impulse to utilise the medieval to support modern ideals is made clear in this editorial decision.

Similarly, Walter Pater's essay 'Studies in the History of the Renaissance' (1873)[73] excludes any analysis of the reversed gender roles and retains Aucassin as the tale's hero. Pater's essay refers to Aucassin's bravery and fortitude, drawing attention to this through the inclusion of the translated line: 'he rides all day through the forest in search of Nicolette while the thorns tear his flesh' (Pater 1873, 14). Simultaneously, he completely evades any instances of Nicolette's bravery and heroism, focusing instead on her beauty.

In direct divergence from these translations and Pater's essay, the suggestion that Nicolette and Aucassin shared the burden of heroic deeds is included in Dulcie Lawrence Smith's *Aucassin and Nicolette, Translated from the Old French* (1914). Smith's translation of the introductory verse is captivatingly different and reads as follows:

> Who now will listen and hear tell,
> In right good verse and fairly set,
> Of that distress that fell to Aucassin and Nicolette?
> Of their misfortunes and the load
> Of wrong that these two children bear (Smith 1914, 7).

Though the section ends with 'And all the prowess that he showed/ For her whose countenance was fair?' (Smith 1914, 7), the lines that precede it certainly suggest an equal share in hardship. This change in translation implies that Smith understood

[73] And his extended essay 'The Renaissance: Studies in Art and Poetry' (1888).

and wished to rectify the inconsistencies between the content and the introduction. This alteration could have simply been for the purpose of textual integrity and consistency; alternatively, it could be seen as Smith wishing to set the record straight on the very active role of Nicolette.

Still more effusive in its reverence for Nicolette's active role in the tale, due in part to the liberating mode of poetic adaptation, is Marriott Watson's 1887 poem 'The Ballad of the Flight of Nicolette'. The poem, published under the pseudonym of Graham R. Tomson for the introductory section of Andrew Lang's translation of the tale, consists of an adaptation and extension of the scene where Nicolette escapes from her tower to find her lover. Functioning ultimately as a veneration of the bravery and steadfastness of Nicolette, the poem celebrates her exceptionality[74] among women, made plain in the lines:

> Her lover lay in evil plight
>
> (So many lovers yet abide!)
>
> I would my tongue could praise aright
>
> Her name, that should be glorified (Watson 1912).

Linda K. Hughes (2005) has argued that Watson's poem honours women who act on their desires rather than submitting to the constraints of societal pressure, and that this reflected the life of the poet directly. In this instance, Watson could be drawing upon the concept of female exceptionality to encourage women to emulate

[74] A problematic concept, as examined in the chapter on Joan of Arc

Nicolette's actions, or alternatively, to denigrate the 'typical' behaviours and actions of the common woman. Watson often wrote on the topics of captivity and escape, which arguably mirrored her feelings of entrapment in her first marriage, her contentious elopement with another man while still married, and her subsequent divorce, all of which led to her being publically ostracised in middle class circles. Thus, it is not a huge leap to suggest that Nicolette's forthrightness would have held appeal to such a woman as Watson, who felt trapped by society's focus on marriage. I contend, then, that Watson's use of this particular tale to express these issues was intentional, harking back to a medieval example of feminine empowerment and agency to legitimise personal feminine rebellion.

Though Smith's and Watson's portrayals of Nicolette's agency are striking, the most direct treatise on the active, energetic character of Nicolette is Harold Child's introduction to his translation of *Aucassin et Nicolette*. In this work, Child venerates the vigorous, autonomous nature of Nicolette's character, stating:

> She is not made of sugar and spice and all that's nice, as love sick boys like to imagine their mistresses. For all her beauty and her slenderness she is a very capable young woman, with a will of her own and plenty of enterprise and courage (Child 1911, xlii).

Child directly acknowledges the power, agency and courage of Nicolette in a way that is coloured with admiration and reverence. Moreover, and rather humorously, Child argues that this depiction of Nicolette reveals the age of the anonymous medieval writer, stating that 'nothing more clearly declares the author […] to be

middle aged, than the character of Nicolette' (Child 1911, xlii). This strange statement suggests that Child held a rather liberal view of femininity: namely, that 'real' women, not the women of youthful fantasy, were actually active and forthright and brave. It seems rather odd then that Child did not alter his translation of the introductory verse to accommodate this view, but I posit that this was probably out of a commitment to faithfulness in translation, which he seemingly strived to maintain throughout.[75]

The personal agency of Nicolette, as discussed by Child, Watson and Smith, and inherently present in the tale overall, also filtered through into nineteenth-century visual depictions of her. This is certainly the case in illustrations of Nicolette's escape from her prison in Beaucaire, such as Anderson's 'Took her Gown in one hand before and the other behind' (1911)[76] and Lawrence Smith's 'And So She Passed Across the Garden' (1914)[77] and 'Against a Buttress, in the Cloak of its Shade' (1914)[78], which are suffused with movement and the threat of danger. The skill and bravery of her escape are further emphasised in Woodroffe's 'The descent from the tower' (1902)[79] through the rendering of a labyrinthine cityscape unfolding before the fleeing figure of Nicolette. Nicolette's agency also manifests itself in her building a bower in the forest to 'trap' Aucassin, depicted by Armfield in 'Nicolette Builded the Lodge' (1910)[80] and Lawrence Smith in 'Then she took the flowers and the fresh grass and the green leaves, ans tied them upon in…' (1914),[81] and in her escapades as a

[75] Indeed, he is one of only two translators that included the correct translation of 'noire' into 'black'.
[76] Plate 7
[77] Plate 10
[78] Plate 16
[79] Plate 20
[80] Plate 2
[81] Plate 17

travelling minstrel, which were represented by Lawrence Smith in 'Took her Viol and Went a Playing' (1914)[82] and W. Matthews in 'Nicolette Came into the Garden' (1913).[83] Both instances nod to Nicolette's independence, cleverness and skill. The use of active verbs in the titles of these illustrations – 'passed', 'took', 'builded', 'came' – further emphasises the vigorous actions of Nicolette in these scenes and in the tale as a whole. This trend, in both visual art and literature, point to an intent by modern illustrators and writers to emphasise positive renderings of an active woman. In addition to being a concerted attempt to contradict the contemporary trope of the cloistered orientalised woman, this could also be understood as a means to communicate progressive values to the British audience for whom these books were intended, putting forward a case for challenging how 'natural' and 'acceptable' British womanhood was perceived.

Nevertheless, there are examples of visual portrayals of Nicolette from the nineteenth century that conversely render her as demure and inactive, breaking away from the medieval roots of the story and instead relying on modern ideas of the orientalised woman. This is certainly true of Stokes's painting 'Nicolette and Aucassin' (1855-1900)[84], which renders Nicolette as childlike and submissive as she stands in the protection of Aucassin's arms, and Lawrence Smith's 'Aucassin the Brave, the Bold' (1914)[85], which likewise renders Nicolette as an infantilised figure, sheltered by Aucassin. Furthermore, a number of visual artworks render Nicolette as a passive figure by evoking the courtly trope of 'Amor de Lohn'. Examples of this

[82] Plate 51
[83] Plate 52
[84] Plate 1
[85] Plate 8

include Anderson's 'On the window marble-dight leaned the lonely wight' (1911)[86] and Lawrence Smith's '…And she at her small casement saw' (1914)[87], both of which paint Nicolette as a pining figure, standing at a balcony, waiting passively for her lover to come to her. These images of Nicolette as inert and infantile bear little resemblance to her character in the tale itself and so suggest that these could be examples of the illustrators instilling the medieval tale with aspects of contemporary conceptions of orientalised womanhood. This could be understood as the obverse of the positive rendering of Nicolette's active character, as a means to support a romanticised image of a more palatably demure and modest heroine.

Alongside these modern translations and adaptations of the tale of *Aucassin et Nicolette*, a number of other nineteenth-century representations of medievalised Muslim women engaged with debates around female agency. Like the translations and adaptations of *Aucassin et Nicolette*, these shine a light on the interchanges that occurred between medievalism and orientalism, with some representing Muslim women in accordance with nineteenth-century conceptions of orientalised womanhood, while others show a strict adherence to the archetypal Belle Sarrasine and her idiosyncratic autonomy.

An early nineteenth-century revival of the medieval trope of the active Muslim woman is present in Landon's epic poem *The Troubadour* (1827), set in Muslim occupied medieval Spain where Leila, a Muslim maiden, saves Raymond, a French knight, from the dungeon of her cruel uncle. Though in the end Leila dies of a broken

[86] Plate 3
[87] Plate 15

heart, pining away for Raymond, who does not return her love, she is centrally a figure of valour and cleverness, risking her own life to sneak Raymond out of his cell and transport him to safety. The power and agency of Leila was visually rendered by J.M. Wright and J. Mitchell (1827)[88] for the frontispiece of the first edition of the book. The image portrays Leila with an arm outstretched, guiding the boat with her torchlight, while the other arm sits protectively around the shoulders of Raymond. The composition, with Leila standing proudly above the other men, suggests that she is the one in power and the one guiding them to safety.

Similarly, in the play *Almeyda, Queen of Granada* (1796) by Sophia Lee, the Muslim queen Almeyda attempts to rescue her lover Alonzo, the Christian prince of Castile, from execution at the hands of her kin. Almeyda, like the medieval Nicolette, dons a disguise and goes to Alonzo's cell to release him only to find that he has already been freed. Nevertheless, the intent is there; the Muslim woman refuses to stand idly by, and she is active in her reunion with her lover, like the medieval Nicolette.

An active and independent figure in the vein of the medieval Belle Sarrasine was also included by Dickens in his section on 'Gilbert Beckett' from *A Child's History of England*. The work centres on the actions of a Saracen maiden who flees her country to find her lover, a Christian crusader, who has left the East to return home to England. The maiden, very much like the medieval Nicolette, risks her life to travel across the sea to find Gilbert. Further solidifying my assertion of medieval influence, Dickens also incorporates a convention explicitly associated with the Belle Sarrasine,

[88] Plate 53

as employed by the figure of Nicolette, which sees the maiden use a disguise to aid in her escape from her kin.

Published some years later, Morris's 'Gilbert Beckett' provided a similar version of the tale. Exceeding Dickens' poem, however, Morris's work does not just abide by the trope of the active Belle Sarrasine woman, but celebrates her. This celebration is made clear in the lines:

> And so she fled. I see her still
> In fancy, desolate, alone,
> Wander by arid plain and hill,
> Sun-stricken, hungry, thirsty, faint,
> By perilous paths I see her move,
> Clothed round with pureness like a saint,
> And fearless in the might of love (Morris 1904, 105).

Morris's language emphasises the trials and tribulations faced by the lady, and her courage and steadfastness. Moreover, the comparative absence and lack of action on the part of the maiden's lover (like Aucassin) serve to situate her as the sole hero of the poem. This depiction condemns Gilbert as the epitome of the 'careless, changeful hearts of men' (Morris 1904, 104), which sits in direct opposition to the '[t]ender and passionate and true' (Morris 1904, 104) hearts of women. This section in Morris' work provides a rare example of medievalism being used to universalise the medievalised, orientalised woman not just in regard to her feminine otherness,

but to womanhood overall. Morris's poem parallels the tale of *Aucassin et Nicolette* in a number of ways, but no more than in his rendering of a Muslim woman as a figure of action, as the one who sets in motion the reunion of the lovers.

The fact that these works, alongside the Nicolette images and the literature of Smith, Child and Watson, paint a picture of a lively and autonomous medievalised Muslim woman suggests that there was more nuance to nineteenth-century Britain's perception of the Muslim woman than has previously been argued. Moreover, it reveals the rather ironic fact that an amalgamation of two often seemingly conservative concepts, medievalism and orientalism, actually allowed for liberal representations of female power and agency to flourish. In spite of this, the active agency of these orientalised figures is in the service of Christianisation/ Westernisation, which complicates the progressive message of this aspect of the works. This trend abides by a popular British belief of the nineteenth century, which saw feminine agency, as examined in the chapter on Beatrice, as a positive trait only when used in the service of moral or spiritual Christian goals.

Nevertheless, some of the other nineteenth-century works of medievalised Muslim women render their maidens inactive in their quest for reunion with their Christian lovers and, in doing so, present a typical nineteenth-century view of orientalised femininity, and to a large extent, of British femininity. This is certainly the case in two poems by Hemans and another by Landon. Hemans' poem 'The Zegri Maid' creates a mood of inactivity and languor, mirroring the visual image of the odalisque through the imagery of sighing leaves and the low sad sounds that surround the

maiden within her enclosed garden. In the poem, the maid sits in this cloistered space 'daily dying' (Hemans 1860, 539), waiting for her Christian crusader to return. A markedly similar description is included in both of Landon's versions of 'The Zegri Lady's Vigil', where the Zegri lady, also pining for her Christian knight, is described as follows:

> Ever sits the lady weeping —
> Weeping night and day —
> One perpetual vigil keeping,
> Till life pass away (Landon 1841, 225).

Similarly Landon's 'The Moorish Maiden's Vigil' incorporates the refrain:

> Woe for thee, my poor Zorayda,
> By the fountain side;
> Better, than this weary watching,
> Better thou hadst died (Landon 1841, 211).

In these poems Muslim ladies waste away waiting for their lovers to return; an air of impotence and lack of female agency abounds. This depiction is, of course, perfectly in tune with nineteenth-century British views on the subjugated oriental woman, who was believed to be trapped in the harem. Therefore, this trend in all three poems could easily be understood as a nineteenth-century adaptation of the Muslim

Belle Sarrasine character, who, though still the lover of a Christian knight, is not active in their reunion.

While it seems that the passivity of the odalisque shaped some nineteenth-century visions of medievalised Muslim women, the medievalised and orientalised Jewish woman somehow completely avoided this facet of contemporary orientalism. Indeed, the medievalised Belle Juive figure was characterised by female agency, allying her directly with the medieval Belle Sarrasine. The Belle Juive was often portrayed as brave and heroic and as disobeying her male kin, which directly echoes the traditional Belle Sarrasine and disengages from contemporary orientalism of Britain in the nineteenth century. The figure of Rebecca from Scott's *Ivanhoe* certainly abides by these medieval conventions and seems to borrow directly from the medieval Belle Sarrasine archetype, which, I believe, in turn influenced the image of the Belle Juive that came after her.

In Scott's *Ivanhoe* (1820), the figure of Rebecca is characterised throughout as brave and heroic, and with personal agency. She puts herself in danger frequently to save or aid her father or Wilfred of Ivanhoe; she risks being pierced with arrows to help Wilfred escape from his prison; she stands before her Templar accusers and remains stoic; she takes care of Wilfred after the tournament, even though this puts her in danger; and she stands on the battlements of Torquilstone Castle, threatening to jump in reaction to the prospect of forced conversion and marriage. This last instance was rendered by Sturgis and Sullivan in their operatic version of *Ivanhoe* (1891, 158), where Rebecca's impassioned denial of the Templar, with the lone word

‘Never!’, is sung over two bars, as she stands, according to stage directions, about to leap from the stage.

Extrapolating from the bravery of Rebecca, Landon (1833) reverentially refers to Rebecca’s ‘high-mindedness, born of self-reliance’ (Landon 1841, 149), as the only child of a widower. She further states that it was as a result of her upbringing that Rebecca understood and accepted that ‘Danger stood at the threshold, and that Fear was the unbidden guest who peered through their silken hangings’ (Landon 1833, 149), but that she had the mind and spirit to go forth and thrive. Thackeray too, in *Rebecca and Rowena* (1850), emphasises the commendably active and brave nature of Rebecca, stating that she was ‘so admirable, so tender, so heroic, so beautiful’ that it was ridiculous that she was abandoned for the lesser woman Rowena, who, in Thackeray’s ‘humble opinion’, was deemed ‘unworthy of Ivanhoe, and unworthy of her place as heroine’ (Thackeray 1850). It is important to note Thackeray’s use of the term ‘heroine’ here, which directly represents Rebecca not as a romantic object or female protagonist but as an active, heroic character in the story.

Beyond the reworkings of *Ivanhoe*, all other examples of medievalised Belle Juive figures show a noticeable adherence to the concept of the active oriental woman. One of the most compelling – displaying a visibly liberal bent to her medievalist treatment of this aspect of the ‘Woman question’ overall and Jewish femininity more specifically – is the literature of Aguilar.

Aguilar's essay *The Women of Israel* (1852) incorporates a feminist explanation of the nature of Jewish women, which connects directly with notions of the innate agency of the Belle Sarrasine figure. In her book Aguilar claims that, since the days of the Old Testament, the Jewish woman had been characterised not by the contemporarily venerated notions of femininity – such as tenderness, virtue, affection and domestic charms, which she argued were created and propagated by men – but as active, heroic beings, as created by God. Aguilar states that throughout history, 'To attract attention, to win respect, to obtain protection' (1852, 154), the Jewish woman 'was compelled to be more great than good, to leave her natural sphere, and manifest fortitude, bravery, and devotedness' (1852, 154). This understanding of Jewish womanhood emerges in her medievalist novel *The Vale of Cedars* (1851), where the Belle Juive Maria is almost exclusively understood by her heroic and selfless deeds. In a scene where her past love, the English knight Sir Stanley, is erroneously blamed for the death of her (secretly Jewish) husband Don Ferdinand, Maria stands up in court to defend him. She does this even though she knows that in doing so she will have to reveal the secret of her Jewishness – because she cannot swear on a Christian bible – which she knows puts her at risk of imprisonment and death at the hands of the Spanish inquisition. She later saves Stanley again from execution, putting herself and her kin at risk to free him from imprisonment. At this point in the story, the narrator provides the pithy comment that 'she had saved him then – she had saved him now' (Aguilar 1851, 212), professing the heroic nature of Maria but also suggest the inevitability of this as her role, as a typical brave and heroic Jewish woman and as such, universalising this image of the Jewish woman.

Medievalised Belle Juive texts also contain another popular part of Belle Sarrasine convention, again associated with the trope of the active female protagonist – namely, the woman's defiance of her family. This trope served to position the Saracen woman as a figure of personal agency but often functioned to emphasise the notion of the 'barbaric' roots of her kin. In Scott's *Ivanhoe* (1820), Rebecca goes against her father, Isaac of York, on several occasions, usually in an attempt to save Wilfred of Ivanhoe. One instance of her disobedience, which also works as a disavowal of her father's stereotypical miserliness, is in a scene where Wilfred's servant, Gurth, comes to Isaac to return borrowed money to him. Rebecca then gives the money back to Gurth behind her father's back, citing the fact that because of Wilfred of Ivanhoe's protection of her father they owe 'thy master deeper kindness than these arms and steed could pay, were their value tenfold' (Scott 1820, 162). In Thackeray's *Rebecca and Rowena* (1850), Rebecca likewise circumvents the wishes of her father and her extended family, who demand that she marry a Jewish man. In a scene that mirrors Nicolette's fleeing from Carthage to avoid being married to a Saracen king, Thackeray's Rebecca invents 'a thousand excuses for delay' (Thackeray 1850) and ultimately runs away to find her Christian lover, though she is caught on the way and imprisoned by her father in his basement. In Bulwer-Lytton's *Leila* (1838), the Belle Juive also defies her kin, this time in following her personal desire to convert to Christianity and become a nun. In reaction to this choice, Leila's father, in an ugly example of anti-Semitic characterisation, spits on her, denounces her and stabs her in the heart three times. In a way, this functions not just as a

veneration of oriental woman as a self-reliant, powerful figure but also as a value judgment of the orientalised woman's 'barbarous' kin.

Though not strictly part of the medieval Belle Sarrasine tradition, female agency through martyrdom is present in many medievalised Belle Juive texts. Martyrdom, as an act of rebellion, appears in Scott's *Ivanhoe* (1820) where Rebecca responds, though 'meekly', to the offer of an acquittal in her trial for witchcraft if she converts and becomes a nun, with the line: 'I am a maiden, unskilled to dispute for my religion, but I can die for it, if it be God's will' (Scott 1820, 490). This scene is comparably portrayed in Dibdin's theatrical version of *Ivanhoe,* though Rebecca's response is more forceful, simply answering: 'I am unskilled to argue for my faith, but I may die for it' (Dibdin 1820, 64), with no allusion to God's will or suggestion of timidity. In Lacy's *The Jewess* (1835), Rachael refuses to renounce her Jewish faith to save herself from execution, saying to her father, even as he starts to waver in his convictions: 'shall I shrink? No! Let them do their worst, I am armed against it' (Lacy 1835, 30). Rachael is intractable throughout, and so this rebellious, confrontational attitude towards her martyrdom comes as little surprise. There is a comparable scene in Aguilar's *The Vale of Cedars* (1851), where Maria is described as 'the heroic girl' (Aguilar 1851, 180) as she faces torture and death at the hands of the grand Inquisitor Don Luis Garcia, defiantly telling him: 'Thou mayest kill my body, but thou canst not pollute my soul' (Aguilar 1851, 182). The threat of martyrdom (realised or otherwise) in these texts functions to emphasise the bravery, steadfastness and rebellious spirit of these protagonists, which, though associated with the Belle Sarrasine, contradicted popular perceptions of the 'oriental' woman. The fact that

martyrdom is so obviously connected with religiosity, and that a large part of Western perception of 'oriental' religiosity from the time was that it subjugated women, makes this representation of Belle Juive figures as powerful, active agents of religious expression a fascinating, though surprising, inclusion in these works.

Some of these texts communicate the agency and bravery of the Belle Juive character through physical action. One of these is Richard Westall's 'Rebecca on the Battlements' (1820)[89], which illustrates a scene from *Ivanhoe* where Rebecca threatens to throw herself from the battlements of Torquilstone castle to escape a forced marriage from Sir Brian de Bois-Guilbert, rendering her in the act of moving onto the buttress, with her dress and turban flying behind her. A similar scene is played out in an unknown illustration for an 1871 edition of *Ivanhoe: A Romance,* titled 'Rebecca on the Turret' (1871)[90], which displays Rebecca climbing out of her cell onto the castle's turrets to avoid the Templar's advances. Meanwhile George Cruikshank's 'One Foot Nearer' (1837)[91] also shows Rebecca bravely and precariously standing on the battlements, threatening to jump. A comparable choice of active subject appears in Phillip Von Stubenrauch's costume design drawing (1824)[92] for the actor Miss Foote, who was to play the character of Rebecca in a theatrical version of *Ivanhoe.* Though not placed in scenery, the image portrays the figure of Rebecca in action, in a corresponding stance to Westall's rendering of her as she threatens to jump from the castle. This plate could suggest, as a costume design, that Rebecca's clothing needed to be planned to allow for her to be

[89] Plate 27
[90] Plate 40
[91] Plate 33
[92] Plate 24

physically active on stage for scenes such as this, which itself reveals her energetic character.

Another scene of physical action, which also portrays an active Belle Juive figure, is in Thomas Lupton's 'Rebecca and Ivanhoe' (c.1830)[93], where Rebecca, working in her capacity as healer to Ivanhoe in the dungeons of Torquilstone castle, literally runs to his aid. Maurice Greiffenhagen's illustration titled 'I See Them Now; The Dark Wood Moves with Bows' (1891)[94] illustrates a scene where Rebecca, in the act of running over to the window, puts herself in danger of being pierced with an arrow by acting as lookout for the injured Sir Wilfred. The fact that Greiffenhagen paints Wilfred as statically reclined on a lounge, while Rebecca is a blur of activity, represents a role reversal of the sexes, which in turn emphasises the bravery and agency of the Belle Juive figure, who unflinchingly and swiftly steps outside of her assigned gender role. Another image by Greiffenhagen that focuses on an active Rebecca is his illustration 'In Mercy, Save Him! Wilfred! Wilfred!' (1891)[95], where she is portrayed, sword on her hip, fighting passionately to be released from the arms of the enamoured Templar, while simultaneously calling for Ivanhoe to save her father, not her.

Nevertheless, the bravery and agency of the Belle Juive character is communicated not just through physical action in these images but also with the subtle representation of her stoicism in the face of death or danger. This is the case in

[93] Plate 35
[94] Plate 43
[95] Plate 44

several images that show Rebecca at her trial for witchcraft[96] and in Leslie's 'Rebecca' (1827)[97], which depicts Rebecca in her cell at Torquilstone castle, with her stoic gaze levelled at the viewer, rendering her, even in her imprisonment and in her stillness, as a figure of agency and action. As mentioned previously, this facet of her characterisation directly contradicted contemporary understanding of the 'oriental' woman, who was seen as maligned and subjugated, but directly aligned with the Belle Sarrasine convention of the active woman, which I believe provides the strongest case for the Belle Juive as a revival of this medieval tradition. There are, of course, images that position the Belle Juive figure as passive, or as symbolically or literally cloistered[98], but the depictions of her as a brave and active figure far outnumber and outweigh these. Furthermore, the medievalist element of this practice is important because it suggests that these artists used the medieval past as a means to buoy arguments around notions of a universalised nature of orientalised womanhood, which at times had the potential to challenge contemporary arguments about orientalised women and womanhood in general.

The overwhelmingly positive portrayal of the Belle Juive figures in regard to their agency, like the positive depiction of the active Belle Sarrasine, speaks to the progressive nature of this aspect of medievalised, orientalised womanhood, but it is also revealing of a trend by authors who, through the modes of medievalism and orientalism, sought to push for a more liberal interpretation of femininity to be communicated to British audiences.

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[96] Plate 28, 29, 32, 38
[97] Plate 30
[98] Plate 30, 31, 34, 36, 37, 39, 40, 42, 45, 46

The sexuality of the Belle Sarrasine

Closely related to the issues around the representation of the female agency of both the medieval and medievalised Belle Sarrasine is the subject of her sexuality. In keeping with popular Western perceptions of female agency in the East, there was an undeniable discontinuity between nineteenth-century and medieval understanding of the sexuality of the Arab Muslim woman. This difference arose out of the fact that the 'victimised Muslim woman' trope and the location of her within the 'debauched' harem (communicated persistently through the odalisque) did not pervade the Western imagination until the eighteenth century. Thus, the pervasive British archetype of the Arab Muslim woman in the nineteenth century, which saw her as eroticised yet inert, was directly antithetical to the medieval portrayal of the sexually forward Belle Sarrasine of French Chansons de Geste. Furthermore, it was dichotomous to the image of the idealised British woman.

The medieval Chanson de Geste of *Aucassin et Nicolette*, however, instils the character of Nicolette with a definite lack of sexual agency and so is unique in its subversion of this aspect of the genre. This difference, I would argue, is partly due to the unconventional fact that Nicolette is, from the beginning of the narrative, a Christian convert. Thus, from the outset she exists in a liminal space between 'Good Christian girl' and 'Eastern Other' and so could not appropriately play the role of sexually forward Saracen woman. Nicolette's sexual desirability, however, is in no way excluded from the text. Instead, she becomes a figure of 'passive sexual desire',

much in the vein of the later figure of the odalisque, but in keeping with the characterisation of the medieval Nicolette.

This subtle but ultimately vital difference in the portrayal of Nicolette, as a 'Belle Sarrasine sans sexualité', made her attractive to nineteenth-century British audiences, as she could be used as an archetype to bestow 'biological' (as a woman of another race/ religion) and historical longevity and gravitas as a medieval figure to the nineteenth-century belief in the naturally passive, dormant nature of feminine sexuality. Furthermore, it is not totally unreasonable to suggest that the tale of *Aucassin et Nicolette,* which was gaining popularity in Europe at the same time as the odalisque, might have informed wider views on the sexuality of the orientalised woman. Indeed, I maintain that the odalisque and this particular aspect of the Belle Sarrasine tradition were inextricably linked and that, as never argued before, this facet of British orientalism was fundamentally associated with medievalism. In many ways Nicolette and her descendants were the obverse of the odalisque, a figure of purity who contrasted with the sensuality of the odalisque.

In the original *Aucassin et Nicolette*, the most overt example of Nicolette's passive eroticisation is in a verse section spoken by Aucassin from his prison cell, where he comforts himself by expounding on Nicolette's virtues. In this hyperbolic exegesis on his lover, Aucassin suggests that a sick pilgrim was once healed of his illness by catching a glimpse of the 'ganbete' or 'leg' of Nicolette:

> Tu passas devant son lit,
>
> Si soulevas ton train,
>
> Et ton pelicon ermin,

La cemisse de blanc lin,

Tant que ta ganbete vit (Bourdillon 1908, 29).

By his bedside Nicolette

Passing, lifted skirts and let—

'Neath the pretty ermine frock,

'Neath the snowy linen smock—

Just a dainty ankle show. (Bourdillon 1887, 33)

This passage assigns a sense of power to the physicality of Nicolette, but this sexual power is outside of the control of Nicolette herself. All but three nineteenth-century translations (Way and LeGrand 1815, Wilmot-Buxton 1910, Sparkes 1913) retain this plainly eroticised section. Many utilise the word 'leg' or 'limb' (Lang 1897, Child 1911, Mason 1913, Smith 1914), while others are more modest, stating that it is not her leg but her 'dainty ankle' (Bourdillon 1887, Henry and Thomson 1902, Housman 1902) that the pilgrim sees. Whatever the word choice, however, Nicolette remains in the translations a passive erotic subject, viewed solely through the lens of masculine desire.

Another arresting feature of Nicolette's sexuality is its ability to bewitch men. Rather tellingly, however, this aspect of her characterisation does not appear in the original manuscript, only in nineteenth-century translations, when the sexuality of oriental women, according to Kahf (1999), was understood as dangerous to the morality of men. This belief in the erotic dangers of the oriental woman, I believe, led to an

emphasis on the sinister potential of Nicolette's beauty, which is most obviously shown in the words selected for a section of the tale where Nicolette comes across a group of shepherd boys in a forest. In the original text, the shepherd boys, perceiving the otherworldly beauty of Nicolette, call her a 'fée' (Bourdillon 1908, 42), which was translated in the majority of the translations into the relatively benign 'fairy' or 'fay' (Way and LeGrand 1815, Pater 1873, Bourdillon 1887, Pater 1888, Lang 1897, Henry and Thomson 1902, Housman 1902, Wilmot-Buxton 1910, Child 1911, Sparkes 1913). This is the accepted translation today; however, two translators took up the more negatively inflected words of 'enchantress' (Mason 1913) and 'witch' (Smith 1914), suggesting a more sinister element to Nicolette's beauty. Potentially this was not simply an error in translation but rather a conscious decision on the part of Dulcie Lawrence Smith and Eugene Mason to represent the figure of Nicolette in adherence to modern perceptions about the sinister sexuality of the oriental woman.

Nicolette as 'enchantress' was also taken up by Ethel Wilmot-Buxton in *Stories from Old French Romance* (1910), which contains a section where Count Garin, Aucassin's father, heatedly suggests that Nicolette has 'bewitched' Aucassin into obstinacy and disloyalty. Though seemingly rather benign, this line is noteworthy for its peculiar and seemingly unwarranted divergence from the original tale. Thus, it suggests that the work was directly influenced by nineteenth-century conceptions of orientalised sexuality.

The notion of Nicolette as sexual enchantress is brought to the fore in Bourdillon's poem 'Aucassin and Nicolette: An Introduction' (1893). The poetic voice asks, in a

one-sided conversation with a silent Nicolette, what it is that makes her so bewitching: 'What charm of faerie round thee hovers,/ That all who listen are thy lovers?/ What power yet makes our pulses thrill?' (Bourdillon 1893, 28). Nicolette's allure is represented as something beyond her control and as something uncompromisingly sexual. Later in the poem, in two rather revealing lines, the persona offers an apology to Nicolette for dragging her into the modern consciousness and, therefore, for encouraging more men to fall in love or lust with her: 'Forgive the hand that here is baring/ Your old loves for new lovers staring!' (Bourdillon 1893, 29). The poem seems to suggest that Nicolette's sexuality is utterly out of her control and that she is embarrassed by her sexual allure. Furthermore, because sexual allure was inextricably bound up with orientalism she, by extension, could be interpreted as being embarrassed by a specifically orientalised feature of her character. The medievalism of the poem, though overall downplayed, instils this sexualised image of the medievalised, orientalised woman with an aura of ubiquity and authenticity. The representation of orientalised, medievalised femininity as a powerful force, but a force that is outside of the woman's control, is very different from the representation of sexuality in regard to traditional British womanhood. Popular British perceptions of feminine sexuality at this time, as personified by the figures of Guinevere and Beatrice, either saw women as active in the moral degradation of men, or else as benevolent and passive in their sexual allure. The Belle Sarrasine combined these two traits, as a sensual but sexually inert figure, and in doing so formed a conception of womanhood for British audiences, allowing for women to be seen as sexual beings without bearing the stain of impropriety or immorality.

This representation of orientalised womanhood, as sexually passive but viewed through a male-centred lens of voyeuristic fetishisation, was taken up in many illustrations of the medieval tale. Though Nicolette is not explicitly eroticised – she is often dressed in the flowing, chaste garb associated with medievalised women – many visual renderings represent her as a beautiful yet submissive figure, demure in her avoidance of the eye of the viewer but still sexually alluring.[99] This representation sits in contrast to the artistic portrayals of Beatrice which, though similarly intent on rendering a beautiful and submissive figure, exclude an aura of sexual allure, with emphasis instead being placed on the figure's potential to function as a moral and social role model for women rather than her ability to incite lust in the viewer.

There are, however, a few works of visual art that, unlike these images and the literary translations, provide a more active representation of Nicolette's sexuality. The most overt example of this depiction is Lawrence Smith's 'And So She Passed Out Across the Garden' (1914)[100], which portrays Nicolette levelling her gaze at the viewer. In the image, Nicolette is shown walking beyond a thicket lined with lilies (as a symbol of purity) into a bower of roses (as a symbol of love/lust). This composition, I suggest, functions as an unsubtle pictorial allusion to Nicolette leaving her virginity and purity behind for the pursuit of love. This image is compositionally comparable to a Dante Gabriel Rossetti painting, examined previously in the chapter on Beatrice, entitled 'The Salutation of Beatrice' (1880-1882)[101], which portrays an alluring

[99] Plate 1, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 9, 15, 17, 18
[100] Plate 10
[101] In the appendix for chapter one, plate 3

Beatrice figure, surrounded by lilies and roses, meeting the eye of the viewer. Perhaps this is no coincidence and Lawrence Smith took up this famous image by Rossetti as inspiration for her work. I argue that the tone of Rossetti's painting, which emphasises the active allure of his figure, can be transferred to our understanding of Lawrence Smith's painting. Smith's image diverges from the rest of the artworks of the period, with the popular orientalist perception of the feminine 'other' instead communicating medievalist conceptions of the sexuality of medievalised, orientalised women.

The sensual yet passive beauty of the orientalised Muslim woman was also central to nineteenth-century works on the Muslim Belle Sarrasine that moved away from the translation and adaptation of *Aucassin et Nicolette*. This fact is clearly expressed in Landon's 'The Moorish Maiden's Vigil', which renders the maiden as silent throughout, while the persona discusses the lady's 'Large, dark eyes' (Landon 1841, 211), her gleaming 'long lashes' (Landon 1841, 211) and her 'arms that are as fair/ As the moonlight which they meet' (Landon 1841, 211). Similarly, in Landon's *The Troubadour* the persona concentrates reverently on maiden Leila's lips, which are said to be 'red as the earliest rose/ that opens for the bee's repose' (169). In the poem Landon also popularly refers to the maiden's 'dark eyes' (169) and to her 'marble fair' (169) and 'lily pale' (180) skin. The maiden is, undoubtedly, a figure of passive eroticism.

Comparably, Landon's 'The Zegri Lady's Vigil' muses on the maiden's desirability, but also focuses on the fading of her beauty due to the absence of her Christian lover:

Her dark eyes are forsaken

By their former light;

Heavy is their settled gloom.

And her wan cheek beareth token

Of young life's decline;

You may see the heart is broken

By each outward sign" (Landon 1841, 225).

Although the poem concentrates on beauty in decline, it still centres on the physical appearance and desirability of a silent female figure. Furthermore, the fact that the maiden's beauty is described as withering through inattention from what is essentially the male gaze is revealing of the orientalised woman's (and, perhaps, all women's) worth and position in the eyes of British audiences at this time.

The association of these silent ladies with voyeuristic contemplations of their sexual desirability is made yet more observable through the inclusion of similes and metaphors of fruits and flowers, which are popularly associated with sexuality, beauty and virility. 'The Zegri Maid' by Hemans, for example, shows the lady waiting for the return of her lover within the shade of an olive tree (a symbol of fertility) as her 'flower of young life' (Hemans 1860, 539) withers away. Likewise, Landon's 'The Moorish Maiden's Vigil' is dense with botanical allusions, describing the central female figure as a 'rose' and a 'blossom' and comparing the cheeks of her maiden to 'the buds of the pomegranate' (Landon 1841, 211). The pomegranate is a particularly

rich metaphor, which, according to Béatrice Laurent (2016) and Liz Bellamy (2015), has long been associated with sexual desire and fertility in both the East and West, and is a potent symbol of the Muslim Spanish city of Granada.

The infantilisation of orientalised womanhood is another important aspect of her sexuality, appearing in both Morris's and Dickens' versions of 'Gilbert Beckett'. As in Stokes's painting 'Nicolette and Aucassin' (1855-1900)[102] and Lawrence Smith's illustration 'Aucassin the Brave, the Bold' (1914)[103], Morris and Dickens emphasise the childlike qualities of their Saracen maidens, with Morris speaking of her 'childish form' (Morris 1904, 105). These two poems play into the problematic fetishism of the childlike orientalised woman, bringing the concept of the passively sexualised Muslim woman to an uncomfortable place.

Compared to both the medieval and medievalist Nicolette and her Muslim Belle Sarrasine descendants, the Belle Juive was also exclusively situated as a sexual object and not a sexually desiring subject in herself, making her palatable to British audiences. Almost all medievalised Belle Juive works include sections that focus in detail on the erotic physicality of the Jewish female protagonist. Like the medieval and medievalised Belle Sarrasine, however, the Belle Juive was afforded a virtuousness through the unconsciousness of her eroticism.

The long descriptive passages about the archetypal Belle Juive Rebecca's physical appearance in *Ivanhoe* position the reader as voyeur to a silent, passive, yet erotically rendered figure. Her eroticism is expressed most openly in a line, cited

[102] Plate 1
[103] Plate 8

earlier, that alludes to the top buttons of her vest, which are described as being left unfastened on account of the heat, 'enlarging the prospect to which we allude' (Scott 1820, 120) – namely, her breasts. There are similarly circuitous and erotically charged descriptions of silent Belle Juive figures elsewhere: in Dibdin's theatrical rendering of *Ivanhoe* (1820); Lacy's *The Jewess* (1835); Bulwer-Lytton's *Leila* (1838); Thackeray's *Rebecca and Rowena* (1850); and Sturgis and Sullivan's operatic *Ivanhoe* (1891). It even emerges in Aguilar's *Vale of Cedars* (1851), where the Belle Juive figure of Maria, otherwise a figure of action, is portrayed in eroticised detail in regard to her 'luxuriant hair', 'delicate throat' and 'beautifully shaped foot' (1851), while she remains silent. The fact that Aguilar, who otherwise portrays an autonomous and spirited Belle Juive, engaged with this orientalist tradition of including swathes of eroticised description about a silent and inactive female figure attests to the all-consuming nature of this aspect of British orientalism.

This voyeuristic treatment of the orientalised Belle Juive was translated into visual art through the portrayal of her as a stunningly beautiful woman who avoids the eye of the viewer. This portrayal creates an uneven exchange between her and the viewer, situating her eroticised body as a passive, sexual object to be consumed. This exact trope is incorporated in seventeen of the twenty-four British Belle Juive artworks[104], in which the viewer is encouraged to admire the exotic beauty of the female figure but the figure itself is not an active participant in that exchange. Five of these[105] are portraits and provide the most explicit and arresting examples of passive sexuality, as the beauty and sensuality of the figures and their averted eyes are the

[104] Plate 23, 24, 35, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31, 32, 33, 34, 35, 36, 37, 38, 39, 40, 43, 45, 46, 47, 48, 49, 50
[105] Plate 23, 31, 34, 36, 40

focus, making the uneven exchange between viewer and subject central to the narrative. This aversion of gaze also made these figures very different from the popular images of the odalisque, who often held the eye of the viewer.

A total contradiction of the rule appears in Charles Leslie's illustration 'Rebecca' (1827)[106], which displays Rebecca in her prison cell at Torquilstone castle, a beam of light coming through her barred window to illuminate her beautiful face as she stares directly at the viewer. This artwork diverges from the popular image of the Belle Juive with her coyly averted eyes, shy to the lustful gaze of the viewer, and assigns to her some control and agency over her beauty and sensuality, undercutting orientalist notions of the sexuality of the oriental woman.

The notion of the Belle Juive as 'desirable but not desiring' also appears in the choice of costuming in the visual renderings of her, where, contrary to the opulence and colour of 'orientalist' discourse, she wears white clothing, an undeniable symbol of purity and chastity.[107] This choice of clothing, when combined with the outright sensuality of the figure of Rebecca in both the British consciousness and in these images, supports the notion of her as chaste but erotic. Furthermore, in almost all of the images of Rebecca in white[108], the scene being illustrated is her witchcraft trial, where she says she will martyr herself for her faith. Thus, she is associated with purity and piety while she is simultaneously eroticised.

Alongside the image by Leslie of an impassive Rebecca, there are a few literary texts

[106] Plate 30
[107] Plate 27, 28, 29, 32, 45, 46
[108] Plate 28, 29, 32, 38

that represent Belle Juive figures with sexual autonomy. In these instances, however, the powerful eroticism of the figures is understood as having agency outside of the control of the women – positioning their sexuality as a kind of mystical force beyond themselves that ensnares men. Although Thackeray's *Rebecca and Rowena* includes voyeuristic passages dedicated to representing the sexuality of a silent Rebecca, it also encompasses an 'active' depiction of the sexuality of its Belle Juive. Her active sexuality is included in a line discussing the differences between Rebecca and Rowena and is part of Thackeray's introduction to the piece, in which he muses on Ivanhoe's choice of partner. Here, Thackeray asks how it was possible that Ivanhoe, 'whose blood has been fired by the suns of Palestine, and whose heart has been warmed in the company of the tender and beautiful Rebecca', could then be 'contented for life by the side of such a frigid piece of propriety as that icy, faultless, prim, niminy-piminy Rowena?' (Thackeray 1850, page?). The 'frigid' Rowena is placed in opposition to the 'warming sun' of Rebecca, a metaphor undeniably interlaced with connotations of lust and sensuality. Moreover, Thackeray seems to represent Rebecca's sexuality as something powerful and mystical and yet outside of herself.

In Sturgis and Sullivan's opera *Ivanhoe* (1891) too there is a suggestion of Rebecca's sexuality working as an active, mystical force beyond her control. This suggestion is made obvious in a line in which Sir Maurice De Bracy refers to Rebecca as a 'Syrian moon' that 'draws the full tide of my rebellious blood' (Sturgis and Sullivan 1891, 136). The comparative sexuality of Rebecca and Rowena is represented in similar language to Thackeray's in Sturgis and Sullivan's opera, most clearly when De Bracy

says to another Templar, of Rowena, that he can 'Woo thou thy snowflake till she melt for thee' and that 'another and a wilder bliss be mine! My lovely Jewess' (Sturgis and Sullivan 1891, 135–136). Again, the work aims to depict the sexuality of Rebecca, a Jewish woman, as more active and energetic than that of the cold Saxon 'snowflake' Rowena. Studied together with the passive eroticism of the many descriptive passages in these works about the Belle Juive, this functions to associate her with the 'orientalist' culture but also suggests some influence of the medieval Belle Sarrasine.

In these works, I see a link directly with nineteenth-century views on orientalised feminine sexuality, which accords with translations of *Aucassin et Nicolette* from the time, and so suggests a direct correlation between the two and a growing impetus to combine medievalism and orientalism to understand the sexuality of the 'othered' woman. The use of the medieval past in these works was undoubtedly a calculated decision, intended to infuse this image of the sexuality of the orientalised woman with historicity and ubiquity, and as a means to subsume her into the a category that ensures the nationalistic, imperialistic and paternalistic superiority of the West over the East, by rendering her, even more than her British counterparts, as a passive aesthetic object to be admired from afar.

Concluding thoughts

This study on the medievalised, orientalised woman complicates a widely held belief about the homogeneity of British womanhood in the nineteenth century and allows for a more complex view of femininity to emerge. Such an examination also makes

clear that medievalism was a lynchpin that held so many of the debates on gender together, not just in regard to broad Anglocentric views of conventional womanhood, but also in relation to how women regarded as being on the periphery of, or external to, British society were represented, and how those representations engaged with and diverged from these ideals.

Nicolette and her descendants are unique as amalgamations of three popular nineteenth-century preoccupations: medievalism, orientalism, and questions of gender, and analysing them is important for broadening our understanding of the individual nature and the intersection all three areas. They reveal British perceptions of the innate 'otherness' of orientalised womanhood, but also they also highlight, simultaneously, imperialistic British self-reflexivity by shaping the feminine 'other' in accordance with distinctly Western ideals. Ultimately, the orientalised, medievalised woman stands in as a model for the 'other' in British society of this time, as both within and without of society at large.

Image appendix: chapter four

Plate 1: Marianne Stokes, 'Nicolette and Aucassin (1855-1900

Plate 2: Maxwell Armfield, 'Nicolette builded her lodge. Very pretty it was and very dainty' (1910)

Plate 3: Anne Anderson, ‘On the window marble-dight leaned the little lonely wight’ (1911)

Plate 4: Anne Anderson, ‘To the chamber then went they’ (1911)

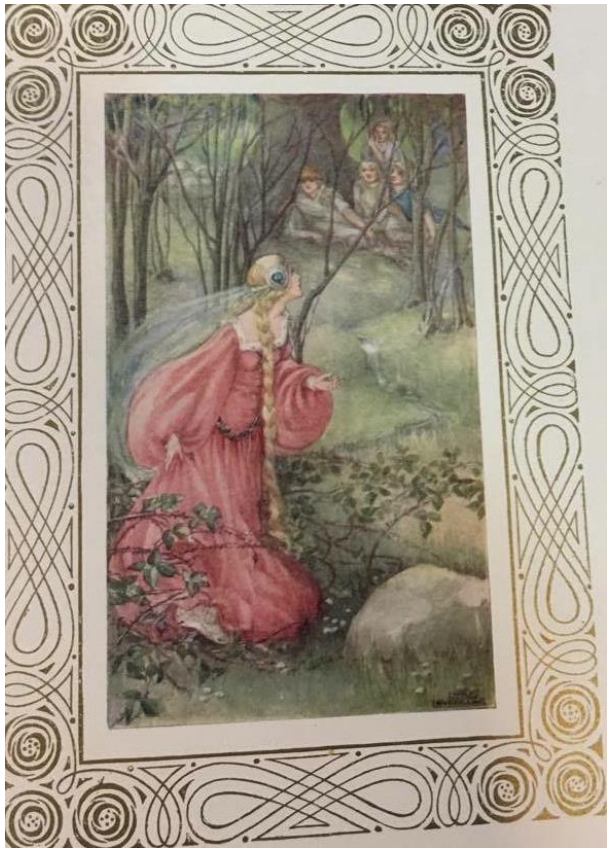

Plate 5: Anne Anderson, '"Fair children," said she, "do you know Aucassin the son of the Count Garin of Biaucaire?" (1911)

Plate 6: Anne Anderson, 'Aucassins was in the castle of Torelore greatly at his ease' (1911)

Plate 7: Anne Anderson, 'Took her gown in one hand before and the other hand behind' (1911)

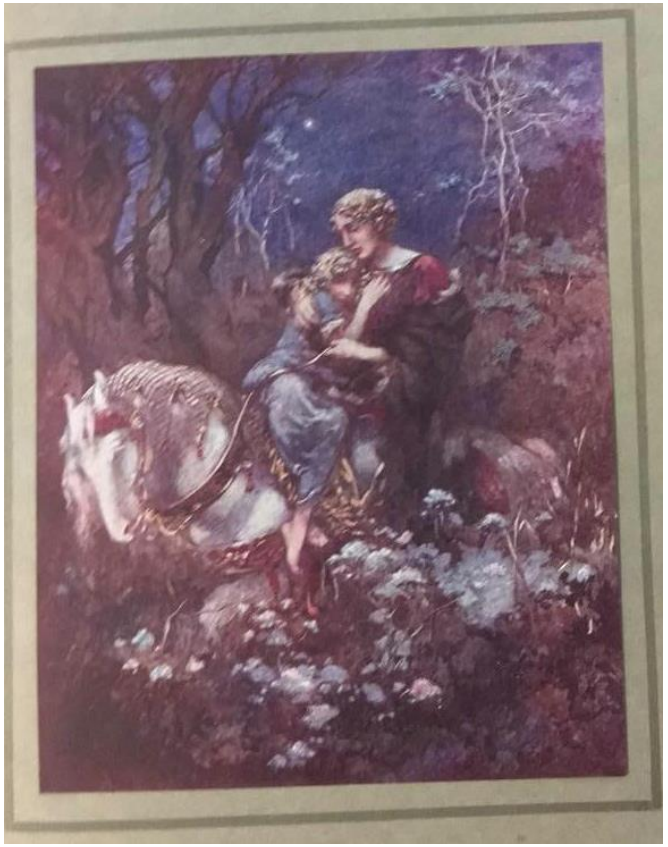

Plate 8: Eileen Lawrence Smith, ' Aucassin the brave, the bold' (1914)

Plate 9: 'Eileen Lawrence Smith, '…and sleep did not so overtake her' (1914)

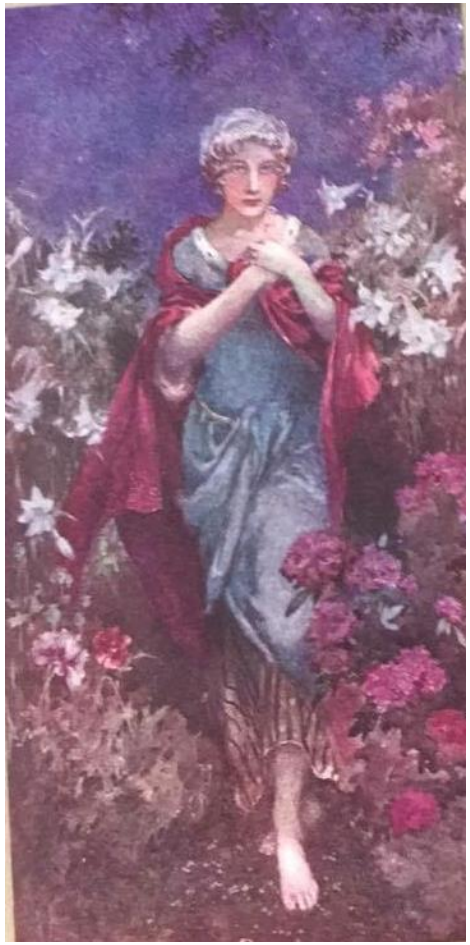

Plate 10: Eileen Lawrence Smith, 'And so she passed out across the garden' (1914)

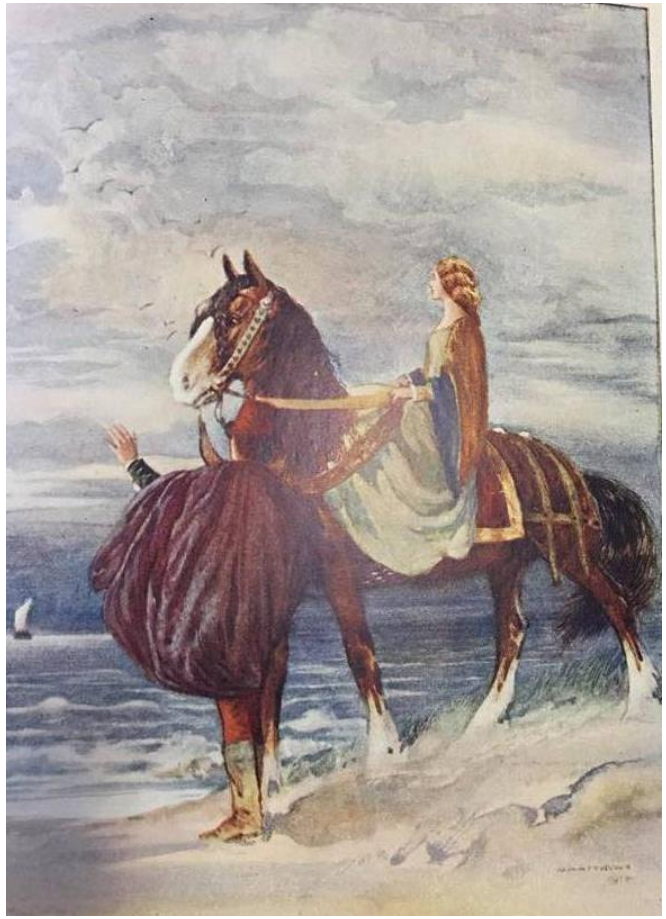

Plate 11: W. Matthews, 'Untitled' (1913)

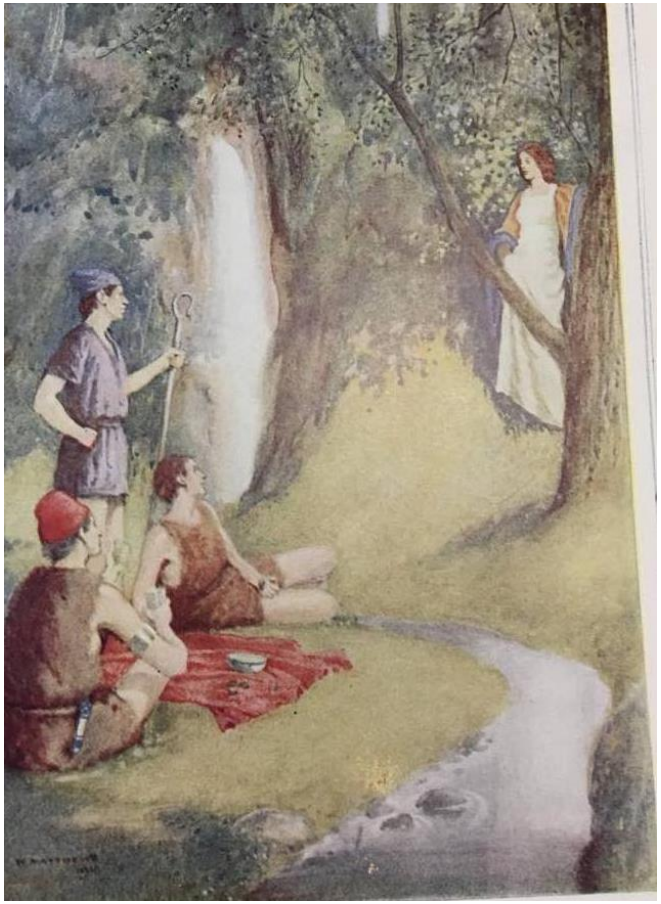

Plate 12: W. Matthews '"Shepherds," said she, "God keep thee!"' (1913)

Plate 13: Eileen Lawrence Smith, '"Fair, sweet friend," Said he, "tell me who thou art" (1914)

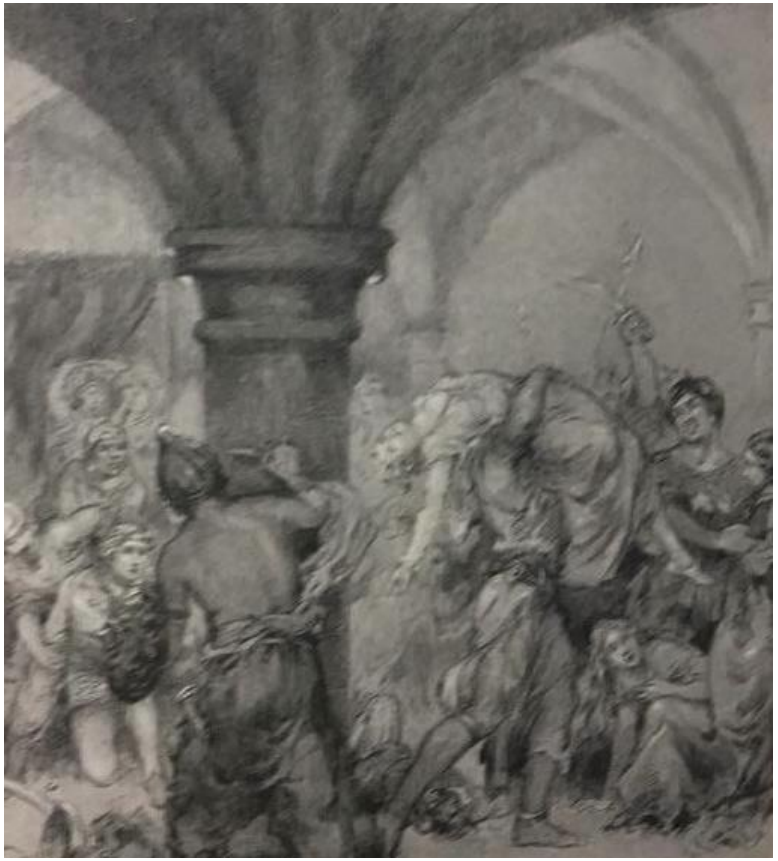

Plate 14: Eileen Lawrence Smith, ' There came a fleet of Saracens by sea' (1914)

Plate 15: Eileen Lawrence Smith, '…And she at her small casement saw over the garden and beyond (1914)

Plate 16: Eileen Lawrence Smith 'Against a buttress, in its cloak of shade' (1914)

Plate 17: Eileen Lawrence smith, 'Then she took the flowers and the fresh grass and green leaves, and tied them upon it…' (1914)

Plate 18: Eileen Lawrence Smith, '…Heard the nightingale sing in the garden' (1914)

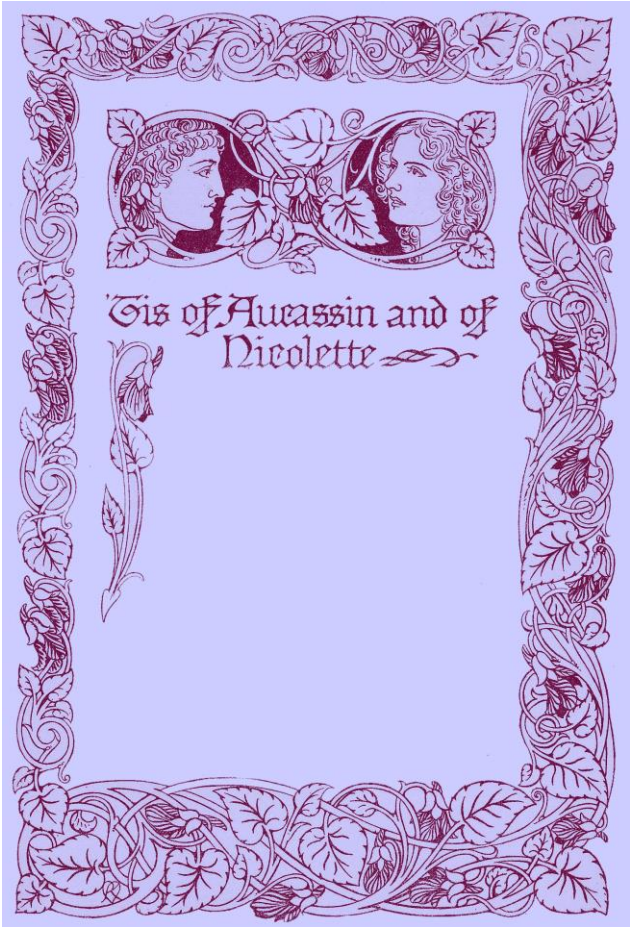

Plate 19: Reginald Knowles, 'Frontispiece' (1913)

Plate 20: Paul Woodroffe 'The descent from the tower' (1902)

Plate 21: Paul Woodroffe, 'Untitled' (1902)

Plate 22: J. Roberts and B. Reading, 'Mrs Hartley in the character of Almeyda' (1796)

Plate 23: Julia Margaret Cameron, 'Rebecca' (1866)

Plate 24: Phillip Von Stubenrauch, 'Miss Foote as Rebecca' (1824)

Plate 25: Thomas Allen, 'Rowena Granting Safe Escort to Rebecca and her Father' (c.1881)

Plate 26: Thomas Allen, 'Rebecca repelling the Templar' (c.1881)

Plate 27: Richard Westall, 'Rebecca on the Battlements (1820)

Plate 28: Westall, 'Rebecca at the Stake' (1820)

Plate 29: Thomas Stothard, ‘ The Trial of Rebecca’ (1824)

Plate 30: Charles Robert Leslie, ‘ Rebecca’ (1827)

Plate 31: Solomon Alexander Hart, 'Rebecca' (1827)

Plate 32: Solomon Alexander Hart, 'Prince John and Rebecca' (1837)

Plate 33: George Cruikshank, 'One Foot Nearer' (1837)

Plate 34: Albert Henry Payne, 'Rebecca Watching the Tournament (1841)

Plate 35: Thomas Lupton: Rebecca and Ivanhoe (c.1830)

Plate 36: Louisa Sharpe, 'Rebecca' (1833)

Plate 37: Franklin Green, 'Urfried and Rebecca' (1860)

Plate 38: Franklin Green, 'The Trial of Rebecca' (1860)

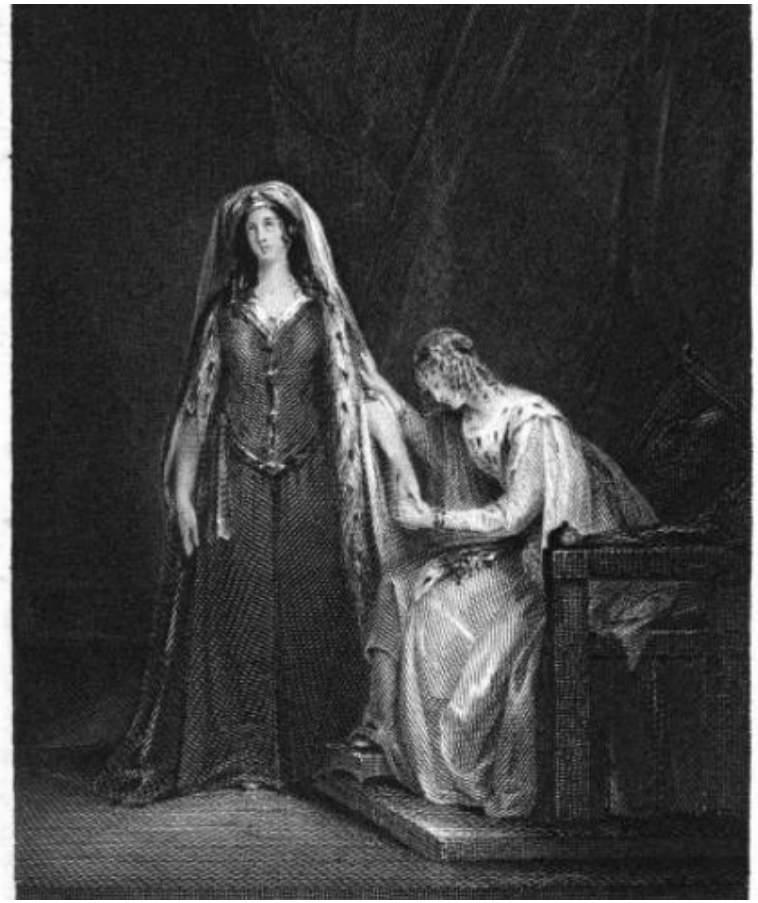

Plate 39: W. Boxall, 'Rebecca and Rowena' (1860)

Plate 40: Anonymous, 'Rebecca at the Turret' (1871)

Plate 41: Maurice Greiffenhagen, 'if such my fate, what hope for thee?' (1891)

Plate 42: Maurice Greiffenhagen, 'O, for the wings of which the psalmist sings, I might fly' (1891)

Plate 43: Maurice Greiffenhagen, 'I see them now; the dark wood moves with bows' (1891)

Plate 44: Maurice Greiffenhagen, 'In mercy, save him! Wilfred! Wilfred!' (1891)

Plate 45: Phillip Stephanoff, 'The Admonition' (1857)

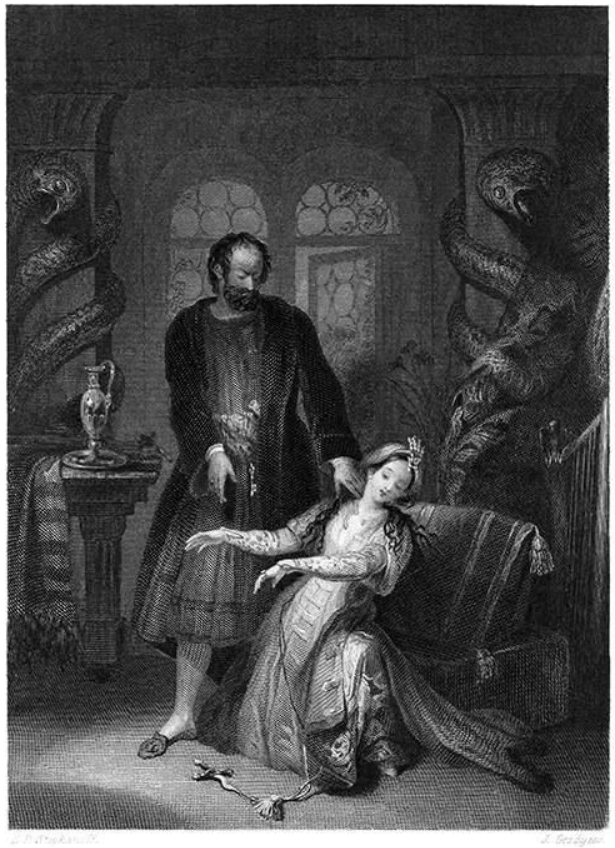

Plate 46: Phillip Stephanoff, 'Muza at the lattice of Leila' (1857)

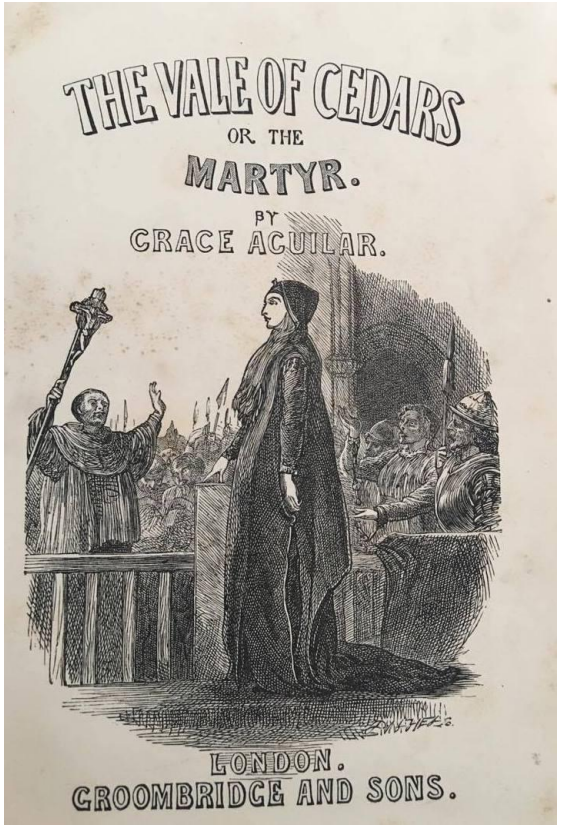

Plate 47: Dalziel Brothers, 'Untitled' (1881)

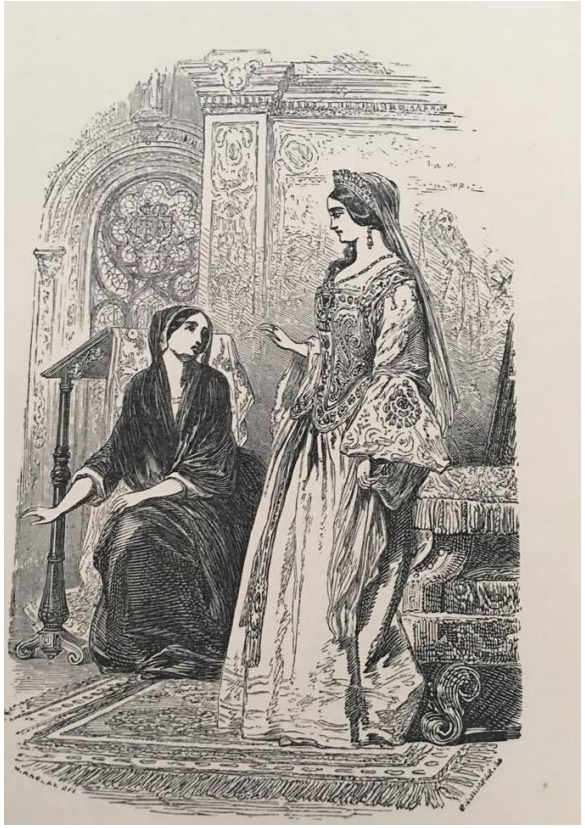

Plate 48: Dalziel Brothers, 'Untitled' (1881)

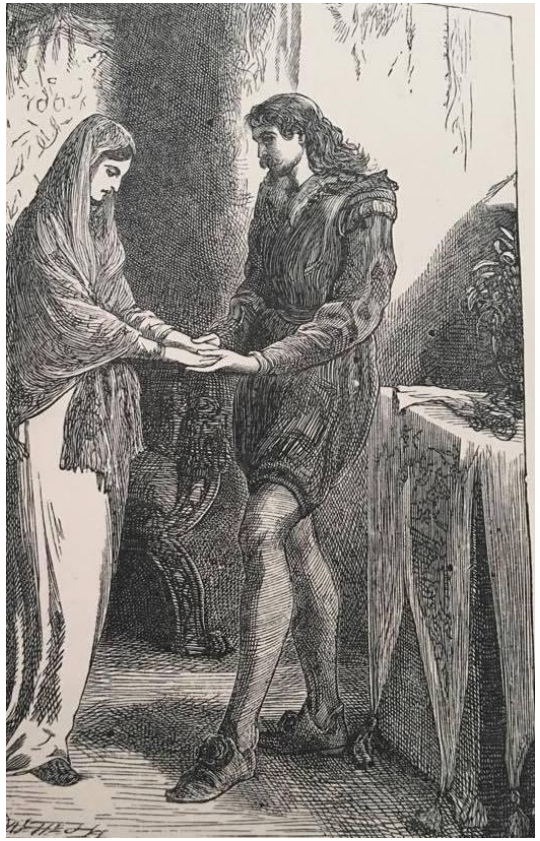

Plate 49: Dalziel Brothers, 'Untitled' (1881)

Plate 50: Alexander Percy Guttenberg, 'Mr Charles Garry and miss Dora Barton in 'Ivanhoe' (1909)

Plate 51: Eileen Lawrence Smith, 'Took her viol and Went a playing' (1914)

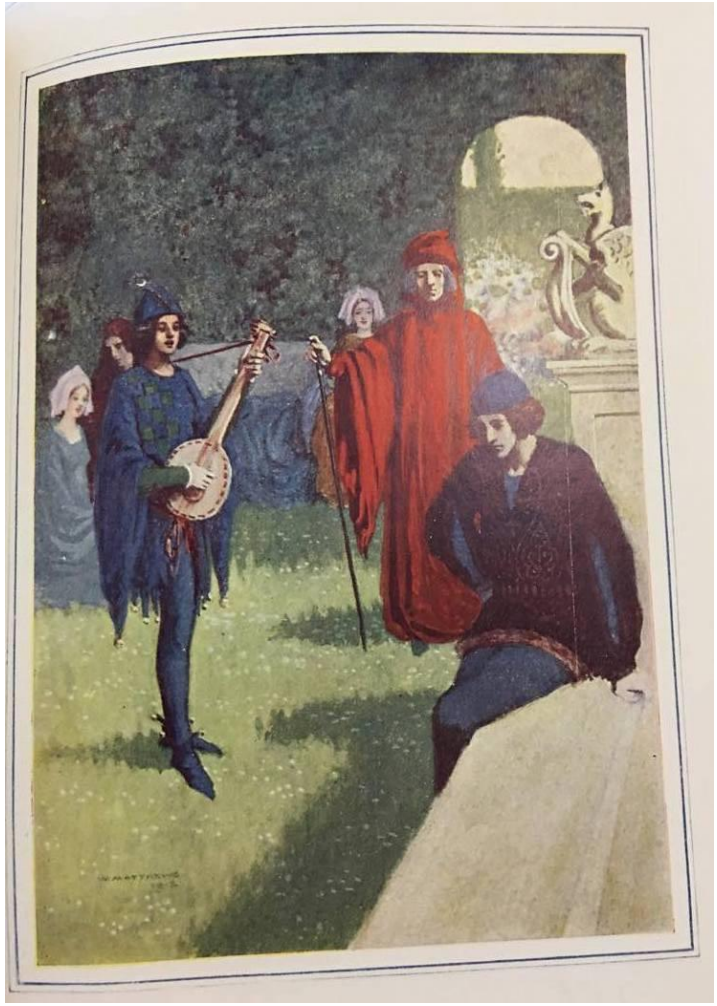

Plate 52: W. Matthews, 'Nicolette Came into the Garden' (1913)

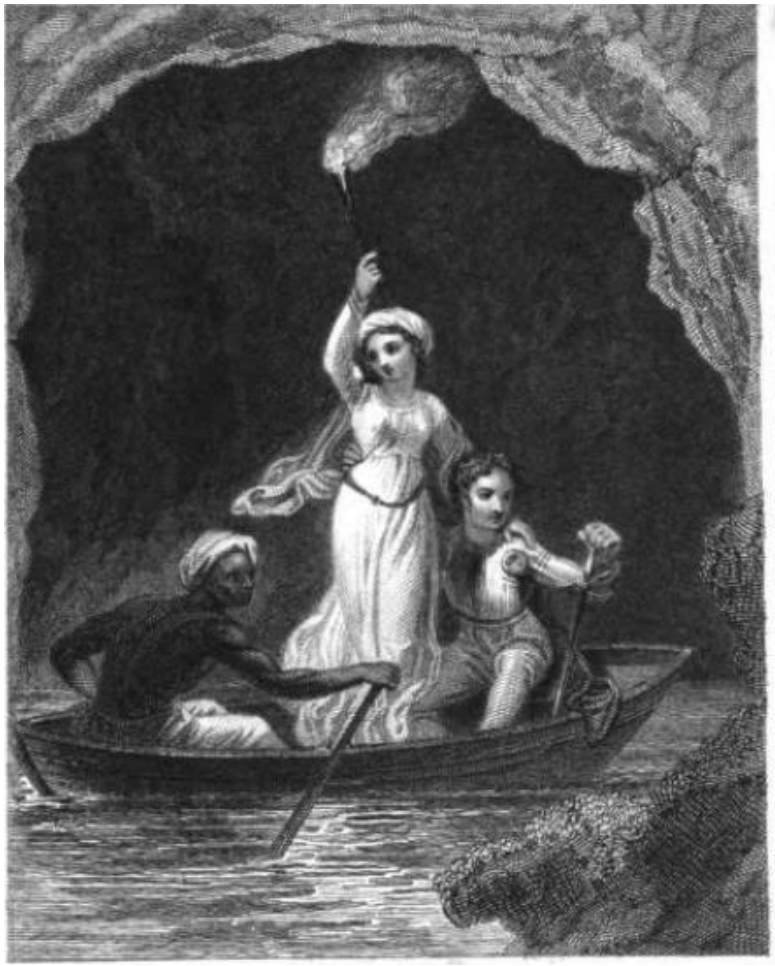

Plate 53: J.M Wright and J. Mitchell, 'Untitled' (1827)

Conclusion

It is truly fascinating that four women from different parts of European medieval history were simultaneously taken up so avidly and purposefully in the culture of the long nineteenth century in Britain, and that, despite their differences, they all performed versions of the same task, that of reception: making the medieval past present. In other words, though filled with the historical weight and cachet of the European Middle Ages and with the concerns, values and beliefs of another time, these women were made newly meaningful again in the nineteenth century, specifically with regard to debates on womanhood. This juncture between medievalism and reception allowed for British archetypes of womanhood to emerge and to flourish, be they idealised, demonised, exceptionalised, radicalised, or othered depictions of womanhood. Dante's Beatrice became an archetype of idealised womanhood, embodying and vindicating distinctly nineteenth-century mores and values on the rightful place and role of women in society. Guinevere was taken up as the obverse of this, functioning as a means of commenting on the supposed interconnectedness of sinfulness, corruption and womanhood, but also on woman's potential for redemption from these ills. The innate dichotomy of Joan of Arc, as both a saint and a soldier, made her ideal for commenting on debates around the 'Woman Question,' resulting in her use by both traditional and progressive movements. And finally, Nicolette and her descendants reveal an overlooked aspect of British orientalism and its intersection with both medievalism and discourses of

gender, providing a view of 'othered' femininity that was both separate from, and yet reflective of, nineteenth-century British culture.

This sense of the past in the present, as personified by these four medieval women, is important for what it reveals about the interconnectedness of British culture in the nineteenth century, where popular preoccupations like antiquarianism, nationalism and debates on gender fed into one another, reshaping and reforming each other in the process.

The widespread uptake of the four medieval women of Beatrice, Guinevere, Joan and Nicolette in Britain in the long nineteenth century was no coincidence, nor was it merely a reflection of a putatively whimsical fascination with the medieval past at the time. Instead, the prevalence of these figures reflects the profound power and influence of the Middle Ages as a discursive tool for ideological/political purposes in this time in British history. Furthermore, the popularity of these women in Britain in the nineteenth century also reflects the malleability of the medieval past, which easily lends itself to recovery, reconstruction and construction.

The overall aim of this thesis has been to create a new and comprehensive cross-section of the phenomenon of medievalised gender discourses of nineteenth-century British culture, particularly in regard to Britain's perception of womanhood. The examination of forgotten or under-studied writers and visual artists (especially women), the inclusion of works of both high art and popular entertainment, and the examination of works from a varied array of artistic modes – buttressed by the

theories of periodisation and temporality (though at times queried), reception, feminism, and the concept of Britishness – has enabled this vital and significant medievalismist cross-section to emerge. The way that this thesis has approached the topic of medievalism is also singular in that its use of my own medievalist classification has allowed for the question of *why* medievalist modes were adopted to be brought to the fore, which in turn has brought depth to the study of women as a focal point of nineteenth-century medievalism. Last but not least, the fact that this thesis examines four medieval women side by side, as a means to investigate this phenomenon, is important for its potential to reveal the breadth, variety and nuance of this interaction.

Ultimately these elements have come together to form a thesis that contributes significantly to the knowledge base of medievalismist studies and women's political and social history, specifically in regard to our collective understanding of the intricacies of nineteenth-century British gendered history and its extensive, fruitful, and culturally revealing intersections with medievalism.

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