Myths and Memories of the Arthurian Empire in *The Awntyrs off Arthur*

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This article examines how collective memory shapes the perception of the English / Scottish relations in the fourteenth-century poem, The Awntyrs off Arthur. *The poem is composed of two distinct episodes: In the first, Gawain and Guenevere encounter the ghostly apparition of Guenevere's mother who provides a personal lament and warning about the fall of the Arthurian empire, and in the second, Gawain enters a conflict with Galeron of Galloway, a Scottish knight, over a land dispute. The first episode utilizes imperial time as it simultaneously invokes the past, present, and future of the Arthurian empire in the ghost's speech and the physical description of her 'black to the bone' body. The second episode situates Gawain's conflict with Galeron amid the historical political violence of the geographic space of the Anglo-Scots borderland. Juxtaposed, the two episodes explore the personal and political consequences of militarized violence in the Anglo-Scots borderland. Using an ethno-historical lens, I argue that the poem shapes the collective memory of the borderlands through themes of imperial temporality and political instability to promote a model of peaceful subjugation of the Scots.*

History is a cultural construction recounted in texts. Not just texts that purport to be 'historical' but also literary texts, which are shaped by the historical and cultural contexts in which they originate. At the same time, such texts also become part of the popular imagination, crafting for later readers certain perceptions of the historical past. Lee Patterson stresses historicism as 'the various forms of resolution at which

historicist negotiations are governed neither by empirical necessity, nor (at least of all) theoretical correctness, but by values and commitments that are in the last analysis political'.[1] These political values, as Patterson asserts, influence how history is recounted through literature and how historical criticism shapes modern understanding of such texts. This is true for ways that medieval romances construct perceptions of English cultural identity. As Anthony D. Smith argues, 'historical and sociological imagination' is constructed 'through identification with generalized communal heroes set in equally generalized but vividly detailed locations and times'.[2] 'Communal heroes', like King Arthur and Sir Gawain in Middle English romances, provide recognizable characters that are attached to long-standing English traditions, values, and ideas, and in doing so, shape cultural and historical narratives that influence the English understanding of the Middle Ages.

These narratives shape the English collective memory of events and peoples, whether real or imagined. Collective memory is a memory shared by many members of a cultural community, constructed through shared values, ideas, and interpretations of historical events or narratives of ancient origins. As Duncan S. A. Bell explains, the narratives of 'prelapsarian golden ages', such as King Arthur and the Round Table, 'locates collectivity inside a shared history, a history constantly reaffirmed and reproduced through resonant rituals and symbols. This memory acts

[1] Lee Patterson, *Negotiating the Past: The Historical Understanding of Medieval Literature* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1987), p. x.
[2] Anthony D. Smith, *Myths and Memories of the Nation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), p. 44.

as a powerful cohesive force binding disparate members' and 'demarcates the boundary between Them and Us'.[3] English Arthurian narratives, particularly those from the geo-political center, help to establish a collective memory of a shared past – a past in opposition to the 'foreign others' on the British Isles, such as the Welsh and Scots. However, it is important to note that such narratives often take varying perspectives and even at its best, collective memory is often fragmented, incomplete, or at times, can generate conflicts of interpretation.[4]

For those Arthurian romances originating in or near the English border, such as the late fourteenth-century *The Awntyrs off Arthur*, collective memory often conflicts with the image of England as a unified political state. Because the poem was composed in the Northern Midlands, a liminal militarized space, it depicts a complicated relationship between England and neighboring Scotland.[5] *Awntyrs* portrays an Arthurian empire riddled with anxieties of sovereign loss haunted by overreaching imperial ambitions and political violence. The poem begins with Gawain and Guenevere in Inglewood Forest encountering the ghostly apparition and tortured soul of Guenevere's mother, who provides both a personal lament and a warning about

[3] Duncan S. A. Bell, 'Mythscapes: Memory, Mythology, and National Identity', *British Journal of Sociology*, 54 (2003), 63–81 (p. 70).

[4] Anthony D. Smith, *The Nation in History: Historiographical Debates about Ethnicity and Nationalism* (Hanover: University Press of New England, 2000), p. 68.

[5] *Awntyrs* appears in Oxford MS Douce 324 (Bodleian MS 21898) alongside excerpts from other English poets, such as Hoccleve, Gower, Lydgate, and others. Ralph Hanna proposes a Scottish origin for *Awntyrs* based on its knowledge of the geography and politics of southwestern Scotland. However, Thomas Hahn proposes Cumberland as a likely place of origin. Regardless, *Awntyrs* exists as a regional Arthurian poem drawing from both sides of the border. For more on this, see *The Knightly Tale of Gologras and Gawane*, ed. by Ralph Hanna (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2008), pp. xxv–xxvi. *Sir Gawain: Eleven Romances and Tales*, ed. by Thomas Hahn (Kalamazoo: Medieval Institute Publications, 1995), p. 175.

the fall of the Arthurian empire (ll. 1–338). In a seemingly disparate second episode (ll. 339–702), the poem depicts Gawain in conflict with Sir Galeron of Galloway, a Scottish knight, over a land dispute. When considered within the confines of Arthur's imperial conquest, both episodes reveal commentary on the troubled state of late fourteenth-century England and the complex political loyalties of the Anglo-Scottish borderlands. The two-part, or diptych, structure of the poem, as identified by A. C. Spearing, lends itself to a series of juxtapositions.[6] On one hand, the ghost invokes the larger Arthurian mythos in her lament on sovereign loss, and on the other, Gawain and Galeron deal with a local land dispute and the violent realities of the borderland. An analysis of *Awntyrs* reveals a host of binaries: English/Scottish, border/center, myth/reality, sovereign loss/territorial gain, remembering/forgetting. Each episode, at least partially, serves as a thematic mirror and, like the diptych, neither part can be fully understood without the other.

In this article, I explore how these thematic tensions – particularly between Arthurian myth and 'historical' reality – construct collective memory in *Awntyrs*. My work is influenced by postcolonial and gender studies scholars, such as Patricia Clare Ingham and Leah Haught. Ingham examines regional tensions and views *Awntyrs* as connecting militarism to sovereign policies of annexation.[7] Similarly, Haught analyzes the tensions between mother and daughter as their relationship exposes instabilities

[6] A.C. Spearing, '*The Awntyrs off Arthure*', in *The Alliterative Tradition in the Fourteenth Century*, ed. by Bernard S. Levy and Paul E. Szarmach (Kent: Kent State University Press, 1981), pp. 183–202.
[7] Patricia Clare Ingham, *Sovereign Fantasies: Arthurian Romance and the Making of Britain* (Pittsburgh: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2001), p. 180.

related to sovereignty and idyllic historical conceptions. She views the 'frustrating disconnect between the ghost's communication with her daughter and the more traditional romance episode' as commentary on the inevitabilities of Arthur's fall as a 'fact of history' as opposed to the 'direct result of any one person's individual actions'.[8] Perhaps most influentially, I build on the work of Randy Schiff who explores the territorial instability of the Anglo-Scots borderland as it is present in *Awntyrs*. He reads the poem as 'a critique of imperialist expansion' that explores the 'fluid notions of space and territory in pre-national Britain'.[9] In his view, the Anglo-Scots borderland offers a transnational ethnic perspective that destabilizes communities. While I agree that the poem critiques militarized expansionism through a transnational perspective of the borderland, it still privileges an English desire for ethnic homogeneity. As I argue here, the poem shapes the collective memory (or ethno-history) of the borderlands through themes of imperial temporality and political instability to promote a model of peaceful subjugation of the Scots.

MEMORY, ETHNO-HISTORY, AND THE BORDER

Ethnic solidarity, in the way I use it here, acknowledges the historical view that nations emerge from ethnic communities, or *ethnies*. Anthony D. Smith defines ethnies as 'named human populations with a shared ancestry myths, historical memories and

[8] Leah Haught, 'Ghostly Mothers and Fated Fathers: Gender and Genre in *The Awntyrs off Arthure*', *Arthuriana*, 20 (2010), 3–24 (p. 17).
[9] Randy P. Schiff, *Revivalist Fantasy: Alliterative Verse and Nationalist Literary History* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 2011), pp. 105–6.

common cultural traits, associated with a homeland and sense of solidarity, at least among the elites'.[10] An important element of ethnie formation is the desire for territorial control. Ethnies may not have achieved stable control over territory deemed as historic homelands to the same degree as nations, but they at least display a desire for such connections to historic territories. These collective memories of historic territories and the perception of the past constitute what Smith refers to as ethno-history: 'memories and understanding of [the ethnic members'] communal past or pasts, rather than any more objective and dispassionate analysis by professional historians'.[11] Ethno-history is shaped by a communal understanding of the past, or collective memory, often translated through written and oral cultural works. By 'professional historians', Smith refers to modern historians who have developed an ethical responsibility to present history as objectively as possible.

Medieval chronicles, for instance, recount historical events, but they have little regard for maintaining objectivity or untangling fact from legend; since they straddle the line between history and fiction, we can locate in them elements of ethno-history, just as we might any literary text. We might take, for example, Edward I's use of the Arthurian mythos to justify English territorial expansion in his military conquest of Scotland. In 1301, Edward I sent a letter to Pope Boniface VIII to explain his right as 'immediate and proper lord of the realm of Scotland'.[12] The contrived letter included

[10] Smith, *Myths and Memories*, p. 105.
[11] Smith, *Myths and Memories*, p. 16.
[12] R.R. Davies, *The First English Empire: Power and Identities in the British Isles: 1093–1343* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), p. 41.

the pseudo-history of King Arthur as derived from Geoffrey of Monmouth's twelfth-century *Historia*. According to historian R. R. Davies, 'Arthur's role [in the letter] was pivotal: he trounced the Scots, installed his own nominee as king of Scotland, and required him to carry the sword at Arthur's coronation, as a sign of the subjection of Scotland to the kings of Britain'.[13] Conversely, Arthurian romances, like *Awntyrs*, unapologetically draw on ethno-historical narratives.

In the case of *Awntyrs*, this 'historical' right to the British Isles comes into conflict with the historical realities of England's inability to 'reclaim' Scotland. This desire for territorial control is reflected in the historical relations of England and Scotland, especially the Scottish Wars of Independence (1286–1357). The death of the last Scoto-Norman King, Alexander III, in 1286, ushered in a period of crisis and uncertainty for Scotland, one that led to English kings quickly becoming involved in Scottish affairs.[14] In order to prevent civil war, the Scottish lords decided that Edward I of England would be allowed to decide the next successor. Edward I saw his chance to assert English legal control over Scotland, eventually choosing John Balliol, Lord of Galloway, as the successor of the Scottish throne. However, in 1295, Balliol, under the influence of Scottish nobility, signed the Auld Alliance with Philip IV of France to stave off England's influence and numerous incursions. Of course, this decision greatly angered Edward, prompting him to invade Scotland and depose Balliol in

[13] Davies, *The First English Empire*, pp. 41–2.
[14] A.D.M. Barrell, *Medieval Scotland* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), p. 92.

1296.[15] While control over Scotland now seemed assured, English occupation in Scotland quickly faced opposition from rebel leaders, such as William Wallace. By 1305, the English had captured and executed Wallace, only to be followed by the death of Edward I two years later.[16] In the years following Wallace's execution, John Comyn and Robert the Bruce were assigned as joint guardians of the realm and, shortly thereafter, Bruce became the next king of Scotland.

After Robert the Bruce's death in 1329, Edward III, having recently inherited the throne from his father, began further incursions into Scotland – this time to restore Edward Balliol (son of John Balliol who had taken the throne from the Bruce's young son David II) to the Scottish throne. This sparked the Second War of Independence; however, the English were never successful in restoring Edward Balliol to the throne permanently, and they soon turned their attention to France with the outbreak of the Hundred Years' War (1337–1453). In 1341, David II, Robert the Bruce's heir who was exiled in France for his safety, returned to take the Scottish throne. Ultimately, the war between Edward Balliol and the supporters of David II served as a continuation of an internal struggle between two families. According to historian A. D. M. Barrell, 'the wars, however, also had a national dimension, and this is how they are regarded in the popular imagination. Indeed, the very term "Wars of Independence" implies that this was a struggle for liberty, for the right to self-determination'.[17] As much as the

[15] Rosalind Mitchison, *A History of Scotland* (London: Routledge, 2002), pp. 43–4.
[16] Barrell, *Medieval Scotland*, p. 108.
[17] Barrell, *Medieval Scotland*, p. 133.

"Wars of Independence" was a power struggle between England and Scotland, it was also a fight for establishing the imperial right to rule within the popular imagination of the people.

While the popular imagination surrounding the Scottish Wars of Independence would seem to construct a simple 'us vs. them' mentality, the politics of the borderland tell a different story. As cultural groups begin to distinguish themselves in contrast to the cultural 'other', they do so through means of subjugation, appropriation, and erasure. Yet ethnicity is never stable but ever-shifting, continually being re-imagined as new cultural relationships emerge through imperial expansion, conquest, and colonization. While forming ethnic solidarity is never a simple or linear process, within a relatively small geographic space, such as the British mainland, the process becomes even messier. This is even more apparent in contested geographic spaces, such as borderland regions, which become sites of cross-cultural contact. The borderland region serves as 'a distinctive geopolitical entity and a symbolic zone in which identities are compared, configured, contested, and reconfirmed' and plays a crucial role in the 'articulation of national consciousness and cultural identity'.[18] For those living near the border, allegiances were much more fluid as border warlords often shifted loyalties for personal gain.

[18] Mark P. Bruce and Katherine H. Terrell, 'Introduction: Writing Across the Borders', in *The Anglo-Scottish Border and the Shaping of Identity, 1300–1600*, ed. Mark P. Bruce and Katherine H. Terrell (New York: Palgrave, 2012), pp. 1–14 (p. 5).

These border warlords, or Marcher lords, were those nobles who inhabited the Anglo-Scottish border during the late medieval period. During the twelfth and early thirteenth centuries, relations between the English and the Scots were often peaceful. Early peaceful relations were the result of royal marriages and feudal bonds between nobles. Since many barons held lands on both sides of the border, it would have been against their interests to engage in armed conflict in which they would have to forfeit their lands on one side of the border to an opposing faction.[19] However, during the Scottish Wars of Independence, the border was subject to violence and cross-border raids from both sides. Marcher lords vied for power and frequently shifted allegiances based on political opportunism. This tumultuous political and cultural climate between the English and the Scots informs the fragmented collective memory of violence and militarism in *Awntyrs*. *Awntyrs* recognizes the messiness of ethnic consolidation amidst the realities of the borderland in which English and Scottish identities intermingle, blend, and become re-defined.

IMPERIAL TEMPORALITY: MYTHS OF EMPIRE

The *Awntyrs*-poet frames the narrative with what I refer to as 'imperial temporality'. Imperial temporality is the awareness of the past, present, and future consequences of empire. It is based on the Roman notion of *translatio imperii* and medieval historiographic conceptions of time. *Translatio imperii* is the idea of transferring

[19] Barrell, *Medieval Scotland*, pp. 67–8.

imperial power from Greece or Troy to Rome and its European successors. This concept reflects medieval historiographical tendencies to view the past as unbound by time. Patterson asserts that medieval writers viewed the past '…not as a process that has its own temporality but as a storehouse of disconnected and timeless *exempla* that assume authority because they are no longer timebound', but he acknowledges that 'medieval writers also used the past historiographically – sometimes to delineate an instructive chronology of secular empire'.[20] Based on *translatio imperii* and medieval historiographical concepts of time, imperial temporality exists as ahistorical time in which both real and imagined memories of the imperial past are (re)constructed and (re)imagined. Imperial temporality is particularly useful for understanding Arthurian literature within the framework of a cyclical Arthurian mythos – one in which the audience anticipates the inevitable death of Arthur and the fall of the Round Table. For *Awntyrs*, imperial temporality serves as a link between the Arthurian mythos and the perceived historical reality of the late fourteenth century.

Awntyrs presents a concern with imperial temporality through its use of the chronicle tradition and the *Alliterative Morte Arthure* (*AMA*) as source material. As Richard J. Moll and others have discussed, the poet drew from the chronicle traditions of Layamon's *Brut* (c. 1190–1215), and elements of the ghost's prophecy, such as the reference to Frollo (the Roman viceroy to France) and Mordred's heraldic device,

[20] Patterson, *Negotiating the Past*, p. 198.

indicate that the poet borrowed from *AMA*.[21] In fact, one of *Awntyrs* manuscripts, Thorton MS, Lincoln Cathedral Library, MS 91, contains the lone surviving copy of *AMA*. This has led Moll and others to read *Awntyrs* as a precursor to the events in *AMA*, taking place at the apex of Arthur's sovereignty in the nine-year period of peace before the confrontation with Rome.[22] *AMA*, unlike other Arthurian poems that celebrate Arthur's eventual return, depicts a much more pessimistic view of empire. As Alex Mueller notes, the poem depicts Arthur as a 'prideful sovereign' who seeks to 'reverse the track of *translatio imperii* and reclaim his Roman heritage'.[23] While *Awntyrs* is not explicitly concerned with Arthur's Roman lineage, the poem presents a similar mentality in its critique of militarism and sovereignty. *Awntyrs*, like *AMA*, presents an empire that mourns the loss of imperial origins in the same breath that it asserts the inevitability of sovereign rule and the pre-destined outcome of Arthur and his knights.

The setting of the poem establishes it as a northern romance and evokes imperial temporality within the first stanza: 'In the time of Arthur an adventure occurred / By the Tarn Wadling as the book tells, / When that famous conqueror came to Carlisle'.[24] The beginning phrase 'In the time of Arthur' positions this narrative

[21] Richard J. Moll, *Before Malory: Reading Arthur in Later Medieval England* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2003), p. 133. For Frollo, see line 275.
[22] Moll, *Before Malory*, pp. 134–35.
[23] Alex Mueller, 'The Historiography of the Dragon: Heraldic Violence in the *Alliterative Morte Arthure*', *Studies in the Age of Chaucer*, 32 (2010), 295–324 (pp. 296–97).
[24] *The Awntyrs off Arthur*, ll. 1–3: 'In the tyme of Arthur an aunter bytydde, / By the Turne Wathelan, as the boke tells, / What he to Carlele was comen, that conquerour kydde'. All excerpts are taken from 'The Awntyrs off Arthur', in Sir *Gawain: Eleven Romances and Tales*, ed. by Thomas Hahn (Kalamazoo: Medieval Institute Publications, 1995). All translations are my own with the assistance of Hahn's notes.

alongside other similar Gawain narratives such as *The Knightly Tale of Gologras and Gawain*, *The Wedding of Sir Gawain and Dame Ragnelle*, and *Gawain and the Green Knight*, which all make reference to 'Arthur's day' or 'Arthur's time'.[25] While such lines are part of romance convention, they also invoke 'Arthur's time' to establish themselves as cultural-ideological myths. In situating themselves in 'Arthur's time', these texts acknowledge an idealized imperial past. According to Smith, the aim of cultural-ideological myths as created by chroniclers and poets is to 'recreate the heroic spirit (and heroes) that animated "our ancestors" in some past golden age; and descent is traced, not through family pedigrees, but through the persistence of certain kinds of "virtue" or other distinctive cultural qualities, be it of language, customs, religion, institutions, or more general personal attributes'.[26] Implicit in such evocations of a unified golden Arthurian age are the dream of Arthur's return or the return of an Arthur-like figure, which will usher in a new, unified imperial future. In addition, the Arthurian court embodies idealized chivalric virtues and emphasizes human fallibility, making Arthurian themes universal across various historical contexts. These myths of ethnic descent are, as Smith notes, '… vital both for territorial claims and for national solidarity'.[27] However, *Awntyrs* (like *AMA*) deconstructs the notion of an imperial unified future as a desire that is always out of reach – one subject to the cyclical pre-destined rise and fall of empires.

[25] Hahn, *Sir Gawain*, p. 202, n. 1.
[26] Smith, *Myths and Memories*, p. 58.
[27] Smith, *Myths and Memories,* p. 58.

The same opening lines that situate the narrative in 'Arthur's time' connect the Arthurian timeline to the real-world borderland setting of the Turne Wathelan. The poem's border setting and imperial temporality (liminal time) share a concern with liminal space. 'Turne' is a northern Middle English term for a lake, pool, or pond, and 'Turne Wathelan' is a borderland location in Inglewood Forest, itself a historical royal forest located between Carlisle and Penrith.[28] Turne Wathelan, or Tarn Wadling, makes its appearance in *The Marriage of Sir Gawain* and *The Avowing of Arthur*, and it is frequently associated with magical or spectral encounters during the Middle Ages. Historically, it existed as a small legendary lake situated near the village of High Hesket, just off the Roman road from Scotland and was likely used as a place for drovers to rest on the route between England and Scotland. The setting of the appearance of the ghost of Guenevere's mother highlights the poem's concerns with liminality and borders by juxtaposing land (Inglewood Forest) and water (Turne Wathelan).[29] Thus, the setting is a hybrid geographical space, both of land/water and marsh/forest that mirrors the liminal identity of its Marcher inhabitants.

The poem emphasizes themes of sovereign power and territorial acquisition as Arthur enters the scene as English conqueror amongst dukes and other nobility. Arthur and his knights, with Guenevere escorted by Gawain, come to Carlisle to hunt

[28] Middle English Dictionary (MED) s.v. *turne*, also Tarne in names (n.) def. 1.a, 1.b https://quod.lib.umich.edu/m/middle-english-dictionary/dictionary. Accessed 18 December 2023.
[29] Rosamund Allen, 'Place-Names in *The Awntyrs Off Arthure*: Corruption, Conjecture, Coincidence', in *Arthurian Studies in Honour of P.J.C. Field*, ed. by Bonnie Wheeler (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 2004), pp. 181–98 (p. 190); Bruce and Terrell, 'Introduction', p. 1.

in Inglewood Forest 'the herds that long had been hidden' that were 'thriving because of the closed season in the woods and the hills'.[30] Carlisle serves as a temporary seat of governance for Arthur along the Anglo-Scottish border. Like the deer who are thriving after the closed season, Arthur's court is also thriving at the pinnacle of their imperial power during a time of peace before warfare and internal conflict precipitates the fall of the Round Table and Arthur's empire. As the glory of the hunt quickly fades, the poet shifts focus to imperial (and personal) shame. The poem exhibits a darker tone as '[t]he day became as dark / As if it were murky midnight'.[31] Deer are no longer the only ones running for shelter as the party 'ran fast to the rocks' to avoid the severe rainstorm.[32] Staying behind, Gawain and Guenevere encounter a ghastly sight as the ghost of Guenevere's mother rises from the Turne Wathelan:

> There appeared a fire in the lake – not to conceal a word
> in the likeness of Lucifer, most hateful in Hell
> And glides toward Sir Gawain blocking the path
> Howling and wailing, with many loud yells.[33]

Emerging from the flames, the ghost invokes descriptions of Lucifer, hell, and

[30] *The Awntyrs off Arthur,* ll. 5, 8: 'the herdes that longe had ben hydde' that were 'Fayre by the fermesones in frithes and felles'. The closed season (approx. September to June) is when hunting male deer was prohibited. Also see Hahn, Sir Gawain, p. 203, n.8.

[31] *The Awntyrs off Arthur*, ll. 75–6: 'The day wex als dirke / As hit were mydnight myrke'.

[32] *The Awntyrs off Arthur*, l. 81: 'ranne fast to the roches'.

[33] *The Awntyrs off Arthur,* ll. 83–6: 'There come a lowe one the loughe – in londe is not to layne / In the lykes of Lucyfere, laytheste in Helle / And glides to Sir Gawayn the gates to gayne, / Yauland and yomerand, with many loude yelle'.

Christian sin. Turne Wathelan exudes supernatural or otherworldly qualities and functions as a gateway between realms. An 'othered' monstrous figure, the ghost's hybrid body exists between life and death. Rather than being granted absolution in heaven, Guenevere's mother faces eternal damnation and is only granted reprieve to the earthly plane to provide a warning.

A political analysis of the ghost's body opens specific readings of imperial temporality as exhibited through memories of lost political power and land. Patricia Clare Ingham, taking a gender studies approach, has stated that '[i]n its opening adventure this text explicitly pairs representations of land with remorseful female lust and with losses to sovereign power'.[34] Ingham's reading of the ghost's body as a representation of the loss of sovereign power complements my own reading of imperial temporality within the text. Sovereign loss, as expressed through Guenevere's dead mother, brings the Arthurian past to bear on the Arthurian present. The ghost's hybrid body reflects romance liminality as well as the contested political identity of the border's inhabitants. In death, her political status has been changed from a noble woman to a sinful ghost removed of earthly finery and beauty. She exists as neither entirely dead nor alive: 'Bare was the body and black to the bone' and 'clotted with earth foully covered'.[35] The lines here emphasize the lack of material clothing, jewels, and other noble accoutrements – all signs of her nobility. This

[34] Ingham, *Sovereign Fantasies,* p. 180.
[35] *The Awntyrs off Arthur*, ll. 105–6: 'Bare was the body and blak to the bone / biclagged in clay uncomly cladde'.

immediately evokes images of Guenevere's own excessive materialism by providing a stark contrast to the earlier description of Guenevere's finery: 'In a glittering gown that gleamed fully beautiful / With rich strands of material reversed to show their colors, whoever takes proper notice / ornamented with rubies of royal quality'.[36] Viewed together, the ghost's naked body and Guenevere's well-ornamented clothes remind the audience of future events: the eventual loss of Guenevere's own sovereign power as queen and her fall from grace. The ghost's black bones, which she later attributes to 'sexual love', also point the audience's attention to Guenevere's infidelity with Lancelot as a contributing factor to the fall of the Round Table, and thus a further loss of not only Guenevere's sovereign power but also the whole of the Arthurian empire.[37]

Finally, her body covered with clay, a subtle detail in the text, connects the ghost's female body (sovereign power) to the land. Lamenting her own loss in terms of land, she states,

> More (I enjoyed) than Dame Guenevere, of treasure and gold
>
> Of palaces, of enclosures, of ponds, of estates,
>
> Of towns, of strongholds, of treasure untold,
>
> Of castles, of lands, of mountains, of valleys.[38]

[36] *The Awntyrs off Arthur*, ll. 15–7: 'In a gleterand glide that glemed full gay / With riche ribaynes reversset, ho so right redes / Rayled with rybees of riall array'.
[37] *The Awntyrs off Arthur,* ll. 213: 'luf paramour'.
[38] *The Awntyrs off Arthur*, ll. 147–50: 'Gretter then Dame Gaynour, of garson and golde, / Of palaies, of parkes, of pondes, of plowes, / Of townes, of toures, of tresour untolde, / Of castelles, of countreyes, of cragges, of cloes'.

The ghost juxtaposes civilized spaces (palaces, towns, estates, strongholds, castles) with natural spaces (land, mountains, valleys, enclosures, ponds). For Ingham, in this passage, '[l]and signifies both the glorious wealth of aristocratic privilege and the unbelievable breadth of the realm. And the loss of these glories links the apparently sinful and disfigured female body with sovereign loss'.[39] I would add that such sovereign loss is explicitly tied to imperial temporality – the ghost's list of places provides a catalogue for what is at stake for the empire. While the ghost frames this in terms of her own loss, she implicitly invokes the past (lands lost to her in death) to stress the possible outcome of the future (loss of territory and imperial decline).

While the ghost provides a warning of sovereign loss through her speech to Guenevere and Gawain, the ghost's fate also serves as a reflective tool for the audience. An audience familiar with Arthurian mythos already knows the future failings of Guenevere and Arthur's court and the inevitability that they will not heed the ghost's advice. She goes on to plead with Guenevere (and indirectly the audience) to '[m]use on my mirror / For king and emperor / So treated shall you be'.[40] In making the imperative statement to '[m]use on my mirror', the *Awntyrs*-poet evokes the 'mirrors for princes' literary tradition, a form of political writing during the Middle Ages and Renaissance that instructed kings and other noble rulers in aspects of governance and proper behavior. In conjunction with the 'mirrors for princes'

[39] Ingham, *Sovereign Fantasies*, p. 181.
[40] *The Awntyrs off Arthur*, ll. 159–61: 'Muse on my mirrour; / For, king and emperour, / Thus dight shul ye be'.

tradition, we also find Boethian influences. As Anthony Cirilla has carefully noted, whether directly or indirectly, the poet of *Awntyrs* would have been influenced by Boethius's *The Consolation of Philosophy*.[41] The ghost's advice echoes Lady Philosophy's inquiry: 'do you try to satisfy your desires with external goods which are foreign to you because you have no good within you which belongs to you?' This appears in Book II, Prose 4 in which 'Boethius protests the worst sorrow is the remembrance of lost joys'.[42] Within a Boethian framework, this anxiety over 'lost joys' is experienced through memory. While reflecting on the past may serve as an instructive tool, it also can produce anxiety and sorrow in a person remembering what has been lost. The text employs Boethian didacticism in advocating leadership based on lived virtue and morality, rather than on material wealth and power. The ghost's usage of 'king and emperor' asks the audience to reflect on the imagined past of Arthur and his empire, as well as possibly the twelfth- and thirteenth-century Plantagenet kings. We might also consider the advice within the context of contemporary late-fourteenth- and early-fifteenth-century kings, such as Richard II and Henry IV, who faced numerous Scottish border raids during the Hundred Years War. If we consider this tale as a reflective tool for kingship, it functions as a reminder of both real and fictional rulers of the imperial past and present through the adaptable symbols of Arthur and his empire.

[41] Anthony Cirilla, 'Ghostly Consolation: *Awntyrs off Arthure* as Boethian Memorial', *Enarratio*, 19 (2015), 68–103.
[42] Boethius, *The Consolation of Philosophy*, trans. by Richard Green (New York: Macmillan Publishing Company, 1962).

One can also see Boethian influence in the *Awntyrs*-poet's focus on Fortune's Wheel in relation to the fate of Arthur's empire, which comes out in Gawain's discussion with the ghost. After the ghost warns Guenevere against sexual love and material wealth, Gawain asks how knights will fare who fight and 'oppress the folk on diverse kings' lands / over realms without any right / Achieve renown in warfare through prowess of arms'.[43] Gawain shows an awareness of problems of militant chivalry, violence, and warfare invoking concerns over territorial acquisition as it leads to the oppression over the colonial 'Other'. While Gawain's question opens more universal concerns of chivalry and territorial acquisition, the ghost answers by delivering a pointed response about Arthur's kingship and the larger fate of the empire. The ghost asserts, 'Your king is too covetous, I warn you Sir Knight / No man may overthrow him by force while fortune holds him high on her wheel'.[44] As readers of Arthurian literature already know, while Arthur is momentarily on top at this point in the narrative trajectory, he will ultimately meet his fate and will fall from Fortune's wheel. Drawing from the *AMA*, the ghost prophesies his fall over roughly the next sixty lines, referencing such events as warfare with France and the Romans, Mordred's betrayal, Gawain's death, and Arthur's lethal battle wound.[45]

[43] *The Awntyrs off Arthur*, ll. 261–4: 'defoulen the folke on fele kinges londes / over reymes withouten eny right / Wynnen worshipp in were thorgh wightnesse of hondes?'
[44] The Awntyrs off Arthur, ll. 265–6: 'Your King is to covetous, I warne the sir knight, / May no man stry him with strenght while his whele stondes'.
[45] While the specifics of these events as told in the *Alliterative Morte* need not be recounted here, see lines 275–312. Also see Hahn, *Sir Gawain*, p. 210, n. 273.

The ghost alludes to past, present, and future events, thereby creating a temporally cyclical Arthurian mythos that relies on the audience's sense of collective memory. Helen Philips notes that '[w]e see Arthur enthroned in prosperity after hearing of his fall; we heard of Mordred's kingship before the vignette of him as a child today; the ghost's confession of "luf paramour" and broken vow remind readers of Guenevere's future role in the ruin of the Round Table'.[46] Not only does the ghost bring past and future events into the present, but these temporal shifts make 'kingship insubstantial' and 'show earthly glory as doomed in this world and the next'.[47] To make this point, the *Awntyrs*-poet relies on collective memory and ethnic solidarity among the English audience through a shared understanding of the Arthurian tradition. Knowledge of the Arthurian mythos is rendered inaccessible and elusive to the human characters; however, recalling the mythos through the ghost's prophecy reminds the audience of the faults of empire to come.

BORDERLAND SPACES: MEMORIES OF POLITICAL INSTABILITY

Arthur's appearance in the middle of the episode defines the poem geographically and thematically, bringing the two seemingly disparate parts of the narrative together. The first part ends with Guenevere returning to Rondoles Hall where Arthur sits

[46] Helen Phillips, 'The Ghost's Baptism in "The Awntyrs off Arthur"', *Medium Ævum*, 58 (1989), 49–58 (p. 56).
[47] Phillips, 'The Ghost's Baptism', p. 54.

ready for supper. As Allen indicates, Rondoles Hall, like settings of Tarn Wathelan and Inglewood Forest in the first part of the poem, situates the poem in Cumberland, just south of the English-Scottish border.[48] The setting of the poem shifts from the romantic fringes of the wilderness to the courtly political center. The ghost's prophecy soon comes to bear, as the very warnings given to Guenevere and Gawain are reflected in Arthur's flawed sense of justice and imperial expansionism in his dealings with the Scottish knight, Galeron. Arthur's interactions with Galeron reflect the political instability that is characteristic of the Anglo-Scots borderland.

To understand Galeron's identity as tied to political instability, we might turn toward the historical example of Sir James Douglas (c. 1289–1330), a Marcher lord from the prominent Douglas family. The Douglas family's power was a direct result of English and Scottish borderland tensions, and their fortune was made by their support of Robert the Bruce and the passage of the English crown to the Stewarts in 1371.[49] As Schiff notes, if we assume the dating of 1400–1430 for the *Awntyrs* is correct, then the date of composition falls into a period in which the Douglas family's power was threatened as a result of declining border conflict; however, it is positioned before the deterioration of the family's fortunes after 1452.[50] While Sir James Douglas lived nearly one hundred years before the composition of *Awntyrs*, the Douglas family reign of the marches during the period opens the possibility of such events surrounding Sir

[48] Allen, 'Place-Names', p. 190.
[49] Robin Frame, *The Political Development of the British Isles 1100–1400* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995), p. 201.
[50] Schiff, *Revivalist Fantasy*, p. 119.

James Douglas as current in cultural memory and useful for the *Awntyrs*-poet to explore Anglo-Scottish borderland relations.

During Sir James Douglas's lifetime, the English unjustly seized his lands, much like Gawain's unjust seizure of Galeron's territory. Sir James, also known as the Black Douglas, was son to Sir William Douglas, a notable supporter of William Wallace. As a young boy, he left for Paris, France for safety at the beginning of the Scottish Wars of Independence where he met William Lamberton, Bishop of St. Andrews.[51] Lamberton made him a squire and returned with him to Scotland, only to find that his lands had been taken by the English and given to Robert Clifford, an English soldier responsible for defending the border who was made the 1st Lord Warden of the Marches. Following the capture of Stirling Castle in 1304, Lamberton took Douglas to the English court to petition for the return of his land. However, Edward I, upon realizing the Douglas family's history of support for the Scottish rebels, quickly forced him out.[52]

Sir James Douglas' altercation with the English Sir Robert Neville also provides a parallel to the conflict between Galeron and Gawain. In one successful raid in which Douglas reclaimed the castle of Berwick-upon-Tweed from the English, he came face-to-face with Sir Robert Neville, elder son to Ralph Neville, 1st Baron Neville de Raby, whom he killed in single combat.[53] These two events – his lands seized by the English

[51] David R. Ross, *James the Good: The Black Douglas* (Edinburgh: Luath, 2008), p. 8.
[52] Ross, *James the Good*, p. 8.
[53] Sir William Fraser, *The Douglas Book* IV (Edinburgh, 1885), p. 133.

and his martial combat with Sir Robert Neville – create striking parallels between Douglas' own life and the depiction of Galeron. Additional evidence links the Neville family to the poem as well. Rosamund Allen speculates the patron of *Awntyrs* to be Joan Neville, the wife of Ralph Neville, 1st Earl of Westmorland (c. 1364–1425). Allen makes several connections between Joan's eldest son, Richard, and his role as warden of the West March. Richard held 'jurisdiction over Inglewood, including Tarn Wadling [. . .] The warden was based at Carlisle castle, and although Richard was a notorious absentee, there is evidence that he was present at Carlisle in 1424–5'.[54] Allen goes so far as to suggest that Robert, one of the younger sons who was a church educated bishop, may have written part or all of *Awntyrs*, although the evidence remains inconclusive.[55] Regardless, it appears clear that the *Awntyrs*-poet drew on border hostilities between such families as the Douglases and the Nevilles and the personal and political issues that arose from them, such as family rivalries, border raids, and the illicit appropriation of lands.

Like Sir James Douglas, Galeron becomes a victim of border hostilities. Upon entering Rondoles Hall, he exclaims, 'Whether you be emperor or king, here I challenge / you to find an opponent to fight to my satisfaction'.[56] Galeron arrives intending to display his martial prowess to the court and regain the lands unjustly taken by Gawain. As Carl Grey Martin notes, Galeron appears at court to settle a land

[54] Allen, 'Place-Names', p. 192.
[55] Allen, 'Place-Names', p. 198.
[56] *The Awntyrs off Arthur*, ll. 410–11: 'Whether thou be cayser or king, her I the becalle / Fore to find me a freke to fight with my fille'.

dispute, which is 'a direct outcome of Arthur's expansionist militarism … A timely instantiation of the ghost's reference to Arthur's "covetousness," Galeron presents himself as a victim of an aristocracy bent on conquest through voracious and voluntary wars'.[57] In effect, the conflict between Galeron and Arthur's court serves as a microcosm of English and Scottish affairs masked under the guise of interpersonal conflict.

Part of the underlying cultural conflict stems from Galeron's Scottish identity. He tells the court, 'My name is Sir Galeron, without any guile / The greatest (knight) of Galway, of thickets and ravines / Of Connok, Of Cunningham, and also of Kyle'.[58] Sir Galeron's title as the greatest of Galloway positions him as a landholder in southwestern Scotland, just northwest of Carlisle. Galloway's position on the Irish Sea subjected the territory to numerous conquests in the Middle Ages. The Norse dominated the region, supplanting the rule of the Anglo-Saxon kingdom of Bernicia between the ninth and eleventh centuries. In the twelfth century, Galloway existed as an independent territory under the leadership of Fergus of Galloway. His familial reign under his sons, grandsons, and great-grandson shifted Galloway's allegiance between Scottish and English kings. The area remained a central focus for both the English and the Scots during the Scottish Wars of Independence in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, in the sense that one of the Scottish claimants to the throne was

[57] Carl Grey Martin, '*The Awntyrs off Arthure*, an Economy of Pain', *Modern Philology*, 108 (2010), 177–98 (p. 190).
[58] *The Awntyrs off Arthur*, ll. 417–9: 'Mi name is Sir Galaron, withouten eny gile, / The grettest of Galwey of greces and gyllis, / Of Connok, of Conyngham, and also Kyle'.

John Balliol of Galloway.[59] The other place names mentioned in the original manuscript are much harder to directly identify due to scribal issues, but they too are likely placed in Scotland.[60] Landownership serves as a central factor for establishing chivalric identity. Galeron's Scottish lands and the illegitimate seizing of his lands by an English king reflects tension between England and Scotland in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, but it also places Galeron as a knight of contested political identity, often characteristic of Marcher Lords.

What follows in *Awntyrs* is nearly two hundred lines that intensely focus on the combat preparation and fight between Galeron and Gawain. The *Awntyrs*-poet provides a detailed description of Gawain and Galeron's armor as being '[a]ll in glittering gold'.[61] While this is not an uncommon romance motif, it does remind the reader of the ghost's warning against the excessive materialism from the first half of the poem, and the violence that ensues because of it. The combat does not end until both knights are severely wounded. Gawain almost kills Galeron, but Galeron's lady beseeches Guenevere to intervene: 'Then willfully Dame Guenevere went to the King / Who removed her crown and kneeled to him'.[62] In kneeling before Arthur, Guenevere performs a physical expression of humility and serves the role of a queenly intercessor. Guenevere shows concern for the knights who are 'wounded grievously'

[59] Mitchison, *A History of Scotland*, p. 38.
[60] Hahn, *Sir Gawain*, p. 217, n. 419.
[61] *The Awntyrs off Arthur*, l. 496: 'Al in gleterand gold'.
[62] *The Awntyrs off Arthur*, ll. 625–6: 'Than wilfully Dame Waynour to the King went; / Ho caught of her coronall and kneled him tille'.

and states that '[t]he groans of Sir Gawain does torment my heart'.[63] She makes a grand spectacle of begging for Arthur's mercy and even takes her crown off as she kneels before him. She refers to him as 'king majestic, most powerful overlord', appealing to Arthur's status as imperial landholder.[64] The removal of her crown signifies a concession to the masculine sovereign power of her husband, but it also foreshadows the loss of kingship and empire under Arthur's flawed imperial reign.

In considering Guenevere's plea for mercy as a stylized example of queenly intercession, we might refer to the historical example of Queen Philippa of Hainault in Froissart's *Chronicles*. Philippa, the wife of Edward III, frequently travelled with her husband on military campaigns to Scotland and other parts of Europe during the Hundred Years War. Known for her compassion, Philippa is depicted as an intercessor saving the lives of the Burghers of Calais in 1347:

> The Queen of England, whose pregnancy was far advanced, then fell on her knees, and with tears in her eyes implored him: 'Ah! My lord, since I have crossed the sea in great danger, I have never asked you any favour. But now I humbly beg you, for the Son of the Blessed Mary and for the love of me, to have mercy on these six men!' The King looked at her some minutes without speaking, and then said: 'Ah, lady, I wish you were anywhere

[63] *The Awntyrs off Arthur*: ll. 630, 632: 'wonded full ille'; 'The grones of Sir Gawayn does my hert grille'.
[64] *The Awntyrs off Arthur*, l. 627: 'Roye roial, richest of rent'. Hahn translates 'richest of rent' to 'most powerful overlord;' however, for the sake of specificity, 'rent' refers to 'a plot of land yielding revenue.' MED s.v. *rent* (n.) def. 2.a.

> else but here. You have entreated me in such a way that I cannot refuse. Therefore, though I do it with great reluctance, I hand them over to you. Do as you like with them'.[65]

I would like to draw attention to this passage for two reasons. First, Philippa's plea to Edward sheds some light on the larger tradition of queenly intercession. Paul Strohm argues that Philippa's kneeling shows 'the implications of humility and the weakness that attend it' and serves as a display of 'Philippa's sympathetic self-identification with the threatened or oppressed'.[66] If we apply this same symbolic meaning to Guenevere's kneeling before Arthur in *Awntyrs*, then we might view Guenevere as self-identifying with the oppressed Scots. In removing her crown, she presents humility by discarding her symbol of sovereign power and wealth. Second, Philippa's intercession on behalf of the Burghers of Calais provides a historical parallel for Guenevere's actions. Philippa's actions, or other similar historical acts of queenly intercession, would be familiar to the *Awntyrs*' late-fourteenth/early-fifteenth century audience. Thereby, the *Awntyrs*-poet uses the collective memory of queenly intercession as moral instruction in which Philippa and Guenevere become models for good counsel and political reform.

All of this seems to raise the question: Has Guenevere learned anything from her mother's ghost? As Leah Haught astutely notes, '[Guenevere's] intervention also

[65] John Jolliffe, trans, *Froissart's Chronicles* (London: Harvill Press, 1967), p. 157. Also see Hahn, *Sir Gawain*, p. 624, n. 625ff.
[66] Paul Strohm, *Hochon's Arrow: The Social Imagination of Fourteenth-Century Texts* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992), p. 102.

guarantees that [Gawain and Galeron] will both be ready to fight again when the court's next challenger arrives; she has both postponed and prolonged the cycle of conquest to which her mother alluded, and ironically, she can be seen as having done so in the name of mercy'.[67] While Guenevere has followed her mother's advice in employing mercy as a lived virtue, her role of queenly intercessor only functions to allow for a political solution to Gawain and Galeron's conflict, rather than a martial one. In my own view, Guenevere's act of humility serves to precipitate a model of peaceful subjugation of the Scots to serve the political interests of the English.

Arthur exhibits a flawed sense of justice in his redistribution of the contested lands. Upon his submission to Gawain's martial prowess, Galeron relinquishes his territorial claims. He makes a 'release' of Gawain's lands (or as Hahn notes a 'quit-claim') 'before these royal persons'.[68] By releasing his lands in front of a royal audience, Galeron makes an orally binding agreement between himself and Gawain. Arthur then proceeds to give Gawain the 'worship of Wales', in addition to 'Glamergan', 'Ulster Halle', 'Wayford and Waterforde', and 'two baronress in Bretayne', – a seemingly significant portion of Celtic lands.[69] As Hahn notes, many of these locations are difficult to identify. 'Glamergan' (or Glamorgan), a present-day historic county of Wales, takes up the southeast portion of Wales and contained a large concentration of twelfth through fourteenth-century castles. 'Bretayne' may refer to

[67] Haught, 'Ghostly Mothers and Fated Fathers', p. 17.
[68] *The Awntyrs off Arthur*, ll. 640–41: 'releyse'; 'before thiese ryalle'.
[69] *The Awntyrs off Arthur*, ll. 665–70.

Brittany. 'Wayford', 'Waterforde', and 'Ulster Halle' may refer to towns in Wales, England, or possibly even Ireland.[70] Regardless, the gifting of lands demonstrates Arthur's imperial power not only over those who serve him but also over the Celtic fringes of his empire.

Relying on recent collective memory of the late-fourteenth- and early-fifteenth-century audience, 'The worship of Wales' would be an apparent reference to the Principality of Wales – the portion of Wales that was directly controlled by the king or his eldest son and divided into shires.[71] In the fourteenth century under Edward III, the title of Prince of Wales was made to be a dynastic title bestowed upon the king's eldest son to designate royal succession. Hahn goes even as far as to claim that this may hint to the possibility of Gawain, as Arthur's sister's son, as Arthur's intended heir.[72] Arthur's bestowal of 'The worship of Wales' on Gawain would be appropriate, since Arthur has no legitimate heir. Even if this does not designate a direct line of succession, it still indicates Arthur and Gawain as having a close relationship akin to that of father and son. Nevertheless, Arthur's gifting of Celtic lands to Gawain shows his total lack of acknowledgement of the injustices committed against Galeron and the unlawful seizure of his lands. Instead, Gawain himself seems to acknowledge Galeron's claims by giving Galeron '[a]ll the lands and vassals from Lauer to Layre / Connoke and Carlisle, Cunningham and Kyle' with the added condition that Galeron

[70] Hahn, *Sir Gawain*, p. 224, n. 664ff.
[71] Hahn, *Sir Gawain*, p. 224, n. 664ff.
[72] Hahn, *Sir Gawain*, p. 224, n. 664ff.

must join the fellowship of the Round Table.[73] While these lands are largely unidentifiable, Galeron now holds lands in both Scotland and England including Carlisle, the center of border power. This indicates Galeron's new status as a Marcher Lord of the Anglo-Scottish borderland in service of the English. However, there is a notable absence of Galloway (unless this is included in Lauer to Layre), which may mean that Galeron has lost possession of his homeland. The gift to Galeron is not simple generosity. By restoring only portions of Scottish land, Gawain ensures Galeron's allegiance to Arthur's court, while also preserving the popular image of Arthur as a strong, unwavering king and conqueror. Galeron's new landholdings, along with his submission to Arthur, help to solidify the empire's control over the Scottish borderland region.

A PEACEFUL SUBJUGATION MODEL?

Awntyrs promotes a model for subjugation of the Scots within the Anglo-Scottish borderland. The poem condemns violence while privileging peaceful political solutions, as can be seen through Guenevere's queenly intercession of the combat between Gawain and Galeron. However, as an examination of imperial temporality shows us, despite these isolated episodes of peace, the audience is aware that violence will ultimately tear Arthur's empire apart. One cannot help but feel, for instance, that

[73] *The Awntyrs off Arthur*, ll. 678–9: 'Al the londes and the lithes fro Lauer to Layre, / Connoke and Carlele, Conyngham and Kile'.

the resolution in *Awntyrs* comes too easily. Galeron's loyalty appears tenuous at best – at least if we consider the *Awntyrs* in conversation with other Arthurian texts. In Malory's *Morte Darthure*, Galeron of Galloway is among those who follow Mordred to Castle Carlisle to catch the adulterous Guenevere and Lancelot – part of Mordred's plan to destroy Arthur's empire through civil war.[74] By the end of the Arthurian narrative, Carlisle once again becomes a focus of political instability at the border, and ethnic divisions re-draw the lines of political allegiances.

If we return to Smith's understanding of ethno-history as 'shaped by collective memories of an ethnic group's shared past', we find that *Awntyrs* both absorbs and reflects the historical memory of English-Scottish border conflict, and in turn, functions as a social and cultural reflective tool for later readers. However, this memory is anything but linear. For borderland romances such as *Awntyrs*, imperialism can only be understood through a coterminous invocation of the past, future, and present consequences of empire. The poems themselves become conduits for examining the history, laws, and customs of the borderland, such as the Scottish Wars of Independence, March Law, Sir James Douglas's personal duel with Robert Neville, or Philippa's intercession to Edward III. True to the conventions of romance, this tale ends happily with the Scottish 'other' reconciling with Arthur's court. Of course, this is one of the appeals of romance – its ability to reconcile fictitious conflicts amid brutal historical realities. Happy resolutions are supplied for even the most

[74] Thomas Malory, *Complete Works*, ed. by Eugene Vinaver, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1971), p. 675. See also Schiff's commentary on the subject in *Revivalist Fantasy,* p. 199.

morally flawed characters. However, while *Awntyrs* promotes a seemingly peaceful subjugation model as a means of individual redemption, such as in the case of Galeron, the political decisions that result from them cast a dark shadow over the empire of the larger Arthurian mythos.