Place-Names and Politics in *The Awntyrs off Arthure*

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THE AWNTYRS OFF ARTHURE "The Adventures of Arthur" is a fifteenth-century Northern poem concerned with love (royal affairs of the heart) and death (a visitor from the grave). It is set in Cumberland, and some take its unknown author as a Cumbrian (others think him a Scot). Despite powerful representations of illicit love and the supernatural, the poem was until recent decades something of a Cinderella. Its dialect is unfamilar and its text corrupt, with the four manuscripts containing many obscurities.

This paper has three purposes. Its first part summarizes previous discussion of the poem, particularly on date, but also showing how the poem has undergone critical rehabilitation, so that it can now be recognized as one of Northern England's greatest poems. In the second part we examine the text's allusions (long problematic) to places in Cumbria and beyond. Several can be identified as lordships in fifteenth-century Scotland, Wales, and Ireland, implying that the poet was well-informed and knew people of rank. This brings us to the third section, on the text as a historical source for the Borders and their grandees (above all the Neville family) in 1424 or 1425, when it may have been recited to an élite audience at Carlisle; for it is no dream-work, but (within its frame of entertainment) a political and moral sermon, or Tract for the Times. Besides its historical implications are literary ones. Its author has sometimes been taken as a Scot, but his point of view is consistently English. The action is Anglocentric. When a Scottish knight appears, he is a dispossessed suppliant and outsider, who is worsted in combat. England dominates Scotland, Wales, Ireland, Brittany, France, and even Italy. The poem will be part of English literature, not Scottish. It is not a candidate for *The Oxford Book of Scottish Verse*.

Our analysis begins a century ago in Connecticut, where John Edwin Wells stated that the poem is about Gawain rather than Arthur, the title being a misnomer; dated it to the middle or later fourteenth century; and gave its provenance as probably Carlisle or its region. The four manuscripts are all of the fifteenth century: the Ireland Blackburne Manuscript (now at Princeton, New Jersey); Thornton Manuscript (Lincoln, Chapter Library, MS 91, now deposited in Nottingham University Library); Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Douce 324 (= MS 21898); and London, Lambeth Palace, MS 491. Wells also summarized the plot, which in essence is this.

Arthur leaves Carlisle to go hunting, accompanied by Gawain and Queen Guinevere. While these two are resting under a laurel, a storm breaks out. In the midst of wind and lightning appears a repulsive hag, come back from the dead. She is Guinevere's mother, in torture for a life of sin. She warns of the world's transience, asks for masses to free her soul from Purgatory, and prophesies doom for Arthur and his court, unless they abandon their life of frivolity and social oppression. The skies clear and she vanishes. The hunters rendezvous and go to supper. As they dine, a fair lady enters with Sir Galeron of Galloway, who has come to reclaim lands seized by Arthur. Gawain, to whom Arthur gave those domains, challenges him; on the following day they fight and are wounded. When Gawain is about to overpower his opponent, Guinevere (at the lady's request) induces Arthur to stop the tournament. Galeron yields his rights to Gawain, to whom Arthur grants lordships in Wales, Ireland, and Brittany. Galeron receives back his territory at Gawain's request, marries the lady, and becomes one of Arthur's knights. The poem closes with reference to masses said for the soul of Guinevere's mother. Wells praised the poet's "eye for color and glitter and show" and his vivid imagination, which together prompted early editions by John Pinkerton (1786), David Laing (1822), Sir Frederic Madden (1839), John Robson (1842), and F. J. Armours (1892-97),

as also a Berlin dissertation (1883) by Hermann Lübke on its manuscripts, metre, and author (Wells 61-2, 771).

As an alliterative poem, *The Awntyrs off Arthure* gained attention from J. P. Oakden, who described the Ireland Manuscript as written in Lancashire, where it still was (in private hands) when he wrote, but the Thornton Manuscript (from East Newton, near Ampleforth, Yorkshire) as best representing the original dialect. He dated the work to "the latter part of the fourteenth century" (Oakden, *Alliterative Poetry in Middle English: The Dialectal and Metrical Survey*, 113-14). He thereafter commented on the poem's moral emphasis (condemnation of Guinevere's infidelities and Arthur's greed) and supposed poor construction, the latter yet redeemed by a gift for description. A hunt sets out, a storm breaks, a phantom appears, a banquet is interrupted by a stranger and his lady, knights fight a duel: each is presented "with minute detail and an eye for colour" throughout (Oakden, *Alliterative Poetry in Middle English: A Survey of the Traditions*, 47-8).

In contrast was George Kane. The romance was for him amongst those best "described as curiosities" or "minor developments" which are distinguished "by too much talent and too little art" (Kane 52-3). Kane did not like the poem. John Speirs liked it too much. He praised its "exuberant and often vivid imagery" as with the "dazzling and massive impression of the Pride of Life" in the "glowing hunting-scene" which begins it, paralleling *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* itself. A rare factual comment on "Fraunce haf ye frely with your fight wonnen" (line 274) as a comparison of Arthur with Edward III (perhaps "intended by the poet") shows that he put the work before 1377 (Speirs 252-62).

More moderate than either Kane or Speirs was O'Loughlin. He noted the poet's apparent imitation of *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, which he thought placed him "after 1375" or so; a *terminus ante quem* is provided by the "five [*sic*] manuscripts" of the fifteenth century. O'Loughlin dismissed for linguistic reasons a link with the Clerk of Tranent (in East Lothian, Scotland) whom William Dunbar (d. 1513?) lamented as author of "the anteris of Gawane" (hardly this text), but spoke up for the poet's "vigour and realism" (O'Loughlin 520-7). On borrowings from *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, we may observe that this poem surely postdates 1375 and is perhaps (as pointed out in our conclusion) of the 1390s.

By 1970, *The Awntyrs off Arthure* was still being described as "late fourteenth-early fifteenth century" with the rider that (supposed) influence in the opening hunting scene from *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* is dubious. This passage is taken as perhaps independent. The complete text is however "a genuinely courtly poem" which condemns Arthur as a "covetous" land-grabber. As regards reference to places near Carlisle, these were evidently "familiar to the audience" (Williams 107-58). John Burrow mentioned the romance as amongst writings "which perhaps belong to our period 1370-1400" or the age of Chaucer and Richard II (Burrow 65). But this cannot be right. The fourteenth century is out of the question.

That this is so is thanks mainly to the publication in 1974 of a new edition based on MS Douce 324. It remains essential. Imitation in the poem of the alliterative *Morte Arthure* and (less conclusively) *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* made its editor "very hesitant to claim a date" for it much before 1400; its appearance in the Thornton Manuscript rules out one later than about 1430. The date settled for was therefore "approximately 1400-1430" and "probably" its second decade (Hanna 50-2). Less satisfactory, as we shall see, are editorial attempts to identify toponyms.

The 1970s thus saw increased regard for the poem. Derek Pearsall contrasted its two parts, the second seeming "grafted onto the first" with its language being "less vigorous, more conventional" and its stanza form less effective (Pearsall, *Old English and Middle English Poetry*, 186). There remained disagreement on the poet's nationality. One scholar spoke of this "strange and interesting poem" merely as "a northern work" showing points of contact with *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* and other poetry of the north-west Midlands, but also (in its metre) with later Scottish

poetry (Turville-Petre 35). Another referred to it without qualification as amongst many instances of "alliterative rhymed stanzaic verse" in "Scottish poetry" (Kratzmann 8). Jack Bennett offered a different view again, typifying the romance as "another product of that local North Western culture that flowered in *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*" (associated with Cheshire). He did not relate it to Scotland. On literary qualities, he praised it for its eeriness and implicit questioning of the Arthurian knightly ideal, before observing that the worst thing about it is "its misleading title: nothing whatever happens to Arthur" at Tarn Wadling (J. A. W. Bennett 176-8).

With Rosamund Allen, who edited the text for a 1968 London doctorate, we find serious consideration of the difficulties. She regards the poem as a "satire on the chivalric ethos" and an attack on "aristocratic assumptions of an automatic right" to luxurious living; notes how the phantom speaks up for "the rights of the poor and the conquered" (while warning against "luf peramour"); and makes the arresting claim that the romance is about not Gawain, still less Arthur, but "the role of women in upper-class society" (with "the vanity of human ambition" as its overarching theme). Further comments have similar weight. The dialect of the original (Northern and "probably that of Cumberland") is modified in all four manuscripts. Of these, Thornton predates 1454 and is in Yorkshire dialect; Ireland-Blackburne is of the late fifteenth century and in the Midlands dialect of south Lancashire; Douce, of 1450 x 1475, is also in Midlands dialect, of north-east Derbyshire; and Lambeth (its text discovered in 1890) may be as early as 1425 x 1450, but has been recast in Southern dialect (now known as an Essex one). Further problems for editors are created by lacunae varying from six lines in Douce to over a hundred in Thornton. Even the common origin of all four texts, their stemma represented technically as <Ir[D(TL)]>, was "very corrupt" (because of oral transmission?); there is also conflation in Ireland-Blackburne and possibly Lambeth (Allen, "The Editing of *The Awntyrs off Arthure*").

Nine years later, Ros Allen considered the problems again. She remarked on how "no agreement has yet been reached about the date of composition" and some take parts of the work as "written decades apart" for unlike readerships; she maintained, however, that the poem "can be fairly exactly plotted to match a specific political moment" (perhaps that of a "celebration"). Its words on Arthur's campaigns in France surely denote "English conquests in France from 1415 to 1424" and there are likewise allusions to "the Border politics of northern England" in the first quarter of the fifteenth century, when it was "the northernmost front of the Hundred Years War" (a point worth recalling). She related the joust of Galeron and Gawain to tournaments of English and Scots, some of them at Carlisle. Important too are Ralph Neville, Earl of Westmorland, who married Henry IV's half-sister (and from 1420 "wielded great power on the west march"), and James I of Scotland, who in February 1424 married Joan Beaufort, Henry IV's niece (and so Ralph's kinswoman by marriage). The poem "seems to reflect" territories which James had acquired by 1425, while "Bretayne and Burgoyne is both in your bandoun" (line 276, *bandoun* being "authority, dominion") may locate it after the English regained control of Brittany, and therefore "between spring 1423 and the signing of a treaty between Brittany and the dauphinist forces" in December 1425. The conclusion is of a work alluding to events in 1424-25, and perhaps written "in honour of the Nevilles" by a cleric of St Mary's Priory, Carlisle. It can be understood as a "clever, almost amusing, poem" which yet has a sober message on the vanity of this world, and might be suitable for reciting at festivities (perhaps for a marriage) in 1424 or 1425 (Allen, "*The Awntyrs off Arthure*: Jests and Jousts"). She summarized her views elsewhere, again proposing composition between 1423 and 1426, and links with the Nevilles, connected by marriage with James I, who was both King of Scots and Earl of Carrick (a region mentioned in lines 419 and 679). She thinks it "almost certain" that the poet knew *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* and, after comparison of his work with other verse and prose, visualizes its performance before lords and ladies at Carlisle, the more perceptive of whom might there find "mirrored in the ghost's physical disintegration the

deterioration of the very culture being commodified in the poem" being read to them (Allen, "*The Awntyrs off Arthure*", 150-5).

We have come a long way from the dismissiveness of Kane and enthusiasm of Speirs. Yet older views are still repeated by Thomas Hahn, who took the romance ("with Gawain as the cement for a remarkable literary structure") as of about 1375 (Hahn 218-34). Margaret Robson examines, if without particular conclusions, "why the decomposing corpse of Guinevere's mother should appear to her daughter and Sir Gawain" (Robson 219-36). Quite different is a fourth paper by Rosamund Allen. It deals with place-names, crucial for questions of date and context. Amongst its many points are these.

The toponyms (styled "baffling") are of four kinds: those of Galeron's confiscated estates in Scotland's south-west; those of estates later granted to Gawain; "political" forms from the Continent; and local Cumberland terms. The second of these are taken as "estates of the Duke of York" and, like the others, "link the poem to the political context" of about 1425. Naturally, they perplexed copyists, above all the scribe of the Lambeth Manuscript. (Analysis of his dialect now shows him as from Rayleigh, near Southend in Essex.) After comments on women in the romance (commissioned by Joan, Ralph Neville's countess?), Ros Allen returns to place-names. The three in lines 420 and 681 are "probably Lanark, Lennox, and possibly Lowther" (or else Lothian). *Locher* in 678 could be Lugar (near Ayr) or Lochar (near Dumfries); *Lile* in 681 may be Lady Isle, off Troon. *Criffones* in 667 is certainly Caerphilly, South Wales. *Ulster Hall* in 668 is regarded not as Oysterlow, west of Carmarthen, but related to Ulster. *Wayford* in 669 is emended to "Warkworth" (which is preferred to Wexford, Ireland). *Waterford* in the same line is nevertheless accepted as the Irish city. As for dating, 1424-25 was a significant period of "betrothals, marriages, and consequent land acquisition" for the Neville dynasty. Ros Allen regards it as fixing the poem's first public reading between January 1424, when James I and Joan Beaufort were about to marry, and early 1425, when Richard of York came of age, and certainly before Ralph Neville's death that October (Allen, "Place-Names"). The poem is from the circle of the great. Ralph was brother-in-law of Henry IV; his daughter Cecily was wife to Richard of York and mother to Edward IV and Richard III. No surprise that our author had a sharp eye for the English nobility's ceremonies, clothes, jewels, armour, weapons, horses, lands, and dovecot morals.

Of five subsequent critics, none mentions Rosamund Allen's research on the poem. Tony Spearing instead cites papers by himself on "manifestions or significant displacements of sovereignty" perceived in it (Spearing 201). Rosalind Field, in a remark which perhaps does not help us much, calls it "an original and subversive remaking of Arthurian tradition that requires of its audience the ability to recognize a dense interweaving of reference" (Field 296-331). Douglas Gray comments on how the work possesses "an impressive unity, and shows a thoughtful interest in mutability" and noble lordship, but (despite reference to Hanna, who thinks no such thing) still considers it as possibly "from the end of the fourteenth century" (Gray 386). Siân Echard typifies it as "a sermon dressed up as a romance" which alludes to the power of masses said in intercession for the dead (Echard 160-80). Corinne Saunders well conveys the horror of the ghost's visit. On a fine day, darkness comes without warning (with Gawain first regarding it as an eclipse). Rain and snow begin falling; flames shoot from a nearby tarn; the apparition advances towards Gawain and Guinevere. But her conclusion ("The work provides a chilling reminder that the transformative power of the Christian supernatural may be physically corrosive as well as healing") does not materially advance understanding of the work (Saunders 223).

By now readers will have had enough of literary criticism. Yet it should be clear how *The Awntyrs off Arthure* has been more highly valued since the 1970s than at any time since the fifteenth century. In our second part we turn to names of persons and places in the poem, especially those considered as insoluble, which may yet not be mysterious at all. They are set out in order of

appearance and are quoted from Fichte's recent edition, which uses Hanna's text (Fichte 135-200).

(1) The first form is straightforward (lines 1-2):

> In the tyme of Arthur an aunter bytydde,
> By the Turne Wathelan, as the boke telles.

The place is Tarn Wadling, in Inglewood Forest. Long drained, the lake was in a hollow between fells some nine miles south-south-east of Carlisle and just east (at National Grid Reference NY 4844) of the village of High Hesket. It appears as a place of supernatural encounters in romances of Sir Percival and Sir Gawain also edited by Fichte, but its reputation for the uncanny is older, being mentioned in about 1200 by Gervase of Tilbury (see below).

(2) When Gawain and Guinevere are addressed by her mother, she tells them (lines 144-5):

> "Quene was I somewile, brighter of browes
> Then Beryke or Brangwayn, thes burdes [=ladies] so bolde."

Who was "Beryke"? Hanna (regarding this reading in Thornton as representing "the detritus of some unrecoverable proper name") proposed emendation to "Brysen". She figures in Malory as a sorceress who tricks Lancelot, so that he sleeps with Elaine in the belief that he is with Guinevere. Fichte, misunderstanding Hanna, states "In T[hornton] findet man Brysen, den Namen der Zauberin, die Lancelot dazu verführte, mit Elaine zu schlafen." But "Brysen" is an editorial emendation, not a manuscript reading. As such there are three objections to it. First, if Brysen had been celebrated for beauty, Lancelot might have shown more interest in her. Second, Brangwayn is the confidante of Isolt or Iseut in the legend of Tristan. Her name is Celtic (as are those of Isolt and Tristan); "Beryke" may thus also be Celtic. If so, it could refer to Perwyr, a British princess of filmstar looks (Bromwich 492). She lived in the sixth century and her name confused even Welsh scribes, who often wrote it *Berwevr* (Breeze, "The Lady Beryke"). Third, it is hence easier to read "Beryk" as a corruption of *Berwyr* or even *Beryr,* closer to the manuscript reading than "Brysen" is. It would be amongst the poem's many allusions to Celtic tradition, with its "k" perhaps due to scribal confusion with the name of Berwick-on-Tweed.

(3) The spectre of Guinevere's mother prophesies doom in a battle-charge for Arthur's court, and death for Sir Gawain (lines 293-300).

> "Ther shal the Rounde Table lese the renoune
> Beside Ramsey ful rad [quickly] at a riding;
> In Dorsetshire shal dy the doughtést of alle.
> Gete the, Sir Gawayne,
> The boldest of Bretayne;
> In a slake [=hollow in mudbanks] thou shal be slayne,
> Such ferlyes [marvels] shull falle.

> "Such ferlies shull fal, without eny fable,
> Uppon Cornewayle coost with a knight kene."

This is less difficult than supposed. In discussing sources and analogues, Hanna wavers between Richborough and Romney (both in Kent) and Romsey in Hampshire, opting for the last, which he imagines the poet (with "a northern perspective") mislocated to Dorset. In his note Fichte describes Hanna as conjecturing "dass der Autor Romney mit Romsey in Hampshire verwechselt." We

simplify this. The place is neither Richborough, defunct as a port since ancient times, nor Romsey (six miles from the sea), which was never one. It is Romney, Kent. Old Romney was probably silted up by 1086; its functions passed to New Romney (NGR TR 0624), two miles away, then with an excellent harbour that made it one of the Cinque Ports (Beresford and St Joseph 205-07). That it is Romney is proved by Wace and his English translator, who tell how Arthur, on hearing of treachery, returned to Britain, crossing the Channel from Whitsand or Wissant (west of Calais) to Romerel or Old Romney (Brook 113-14). The usurpers there gave him a warm reception (Allen, *Brut*, 361):

> As the dawn was breaking, they started fighting;
> And went on all that long day: many a man there lay dead.

Amongst the victims was Gawain, who died like a hero. Arthur then moved westwards, besieging Winchester and advancing through Dorset to the last battle in Cornwall. Although the alliterative fourteenth-century *Morte Arthure* makes no mention of Romney, it does describes the later campaign, with the king sorrowful but fearless (Brook 119):

> Thane drawes he to Dorsett, and dreches [delays] no langere,
> Derefulle [full of grief] dredlesse with drowppande teris;
> Kayeris [progresses] in-to Kornewayle with kare at his herte.

So the poet's geography is exact, as proved by the *slake* "mudbank hollow" where Gawain died. There were plenty of these on Romney Marsh, where Arthur began fighting his way from Kent to Cornwall via Dorset: a campaign well understood by the poet, who possessed exceptional knowledge of Insular geography. The "Ramsey" of the text will be an error for "Romney" and cannot derive from 'Richborough'; the poet will have known of Romney after Wace and his English translator.

(4) With a chilling moan, the spirit glides away; sunlight returns; there is a sound of horns, the hunt appears, Lady Guinevere and others go to dine (lines 336-8).

> Dame Gaynour and alle,
> Rayked to Rondolesette Halle
> To the suppere.

This place has caused unnecessary confusion. In 1842, John Robson with reason put it near Plumpton Wall (NY 4937), four miles south of Tarn Wadling (and alluded to in line 475). Armours, however, opted for Randalholm Hall (NY 7048), near Alston, despite logistical difficulties. The spot is fifteen miles as the crow flies from Tarn Wadling and the far side of a 1900-foot pass. Jean Jost cites these suppositions with Walkling's understanding of the place as a *hale* or temporary pavilion, a word of French origin (Jost, 589-606). But *hale* seems otherwise unknown in English toponymy, and does not rhyme with *alle*. Fichte further cites Walkling on the place as Randulph Seat "auf der höchsten Erhebung am Rande des Inglewood Forest" (a notion putting it 900 feet up on moors north of Caldbeck, twelve miles west of Tarn Wadling). This windy height is, however, no place for a banquet. The royal hunt would instead dine at a point on the Roman highway (now the A6 trunk road) from Penrith to Carlisle. Medieval England had few good roads, and this one would be needed to bring furniture, awnings, utensils, food, and drink from Carlisle. *Rondolesette Halle* was surely at a sheltered point on the Carlisle-Penrith road, and probably somewhere on the five miles between High Hesket and Plumpton Wall. That this old military road (running through a forest that

would discourage excursions to right or left) was a natural place for assembly is unexpectedly demonstrated by Hesket's very name. It is from the Norse for "race course, place where horses run in competition" (Watts 299). Rondolesette Halle would be near it.

(5) Galaron and his lady interrupt the feasting. He is a Scotsman with a grievance (lines 417-20).

> "Mi name is Sir Galaron, sans eny gile,
> The grettest of Galwey of greves and gylles [thickets and ravines],
> Of Connok, of Carrak, of Conyngham, of Kyle,
> Of Lonrik, of Lennex, of Loudan Hilles."

"Galwey" is Galloway in south-west Scotland, later Wigtownshire and the Stewartry of Kirkcudbright. "Connok" is Cumnock (NS 5619), a town fifteen miles east of Ayr. Carrick, Cunningham, and Kyle are the ancient southern, northern, and central divisions of Ayrshire (Barrow 59). "Lonrick" is certainly Lanark (NS 8843), south-east of Glasgow; "Lennox" is the region north-west of Glasgow; "Loudan" refers not to Lothian hills but those of Loudoun, near Galston (NS 5036), fourteen miles north-west of Ayr. Galaron's lost domains were all on Scotland's western side. They were correctly identified by Armours as quoted in Hanna's end-notes. Fichte believes that they lay "an der heftig umkämpften Grenze zu England" (but Ayrshire and Lanarkshire do not border England).

(6) Gawain will not renounce his claim, and matters are settled by force. Preparations are made for a tournament nearby (lines 475-6), with a palisade or enclosure "set up where no warrior on earth had fought previously":

> By that on Plumton Land a palais [enclosure] was pight,
> Were never freke opon folde had foughten biforne.

The place is by Plumpton Wall (NY 4937), five miles north of Penrith and on the road to Carlisle. Materials and equipment for the lists (line 477) and a platform for royal spectators (492) hence might readily be brought there.

(7) Arthur orders a noble retainer to attend to Galaros (lines 482-3), so that he can breakfast in his tent on "rich dayntée" and be armed, leaving his lady with Guinevere.

> The king commaunded Krudely, the erlis son of Kent,
> "Curtaysly in this case, take kepe to the knight."

Hanna (remarking that nobody "of this name appears in the Middle English Arthuriana") took him as perhaps Cradoc of Caerleon (which is in Wales, however, not Kent). Allen in 1987 thought the original irretrievable. Yet Kywryd of Kent is known in Welsh tradition as the father of Guinevere (Breeze, "*The Awntyrs off Arthure*, Cywryd of Kent, and Lavery Burn"). Arthur would be speaking to his father-in-law, who (as the poem makes evident) became a widower after a difficult marriage. Fichte now remarks of "Krudely" that "In der Artusliteratur ist dieser Name unbekannt" (before quoting Hanna's conjecture on Cradoc). But it is easier to relate "Krudely of Kent" to Cywryd of Kent. "Krudely" is closer to "Cywryd" than it is to "Cradoc"; Cywryd was related to Arthur by marriage, unlike Cradoc; Cywryd was specifically linked with Kent, Cradoc was not. The implication is of a poet knowing of Cywryd not directly from Wales, but from survivals of British tradition in Cumbria, where Cumbric (a language closely related to Welsh) was spoken until about 1100 (Fraser 124-33).

(8) When the joust ends abruptly, Arthur orders these knights to attend to the combatants (lines 654-5):

> Sir Ewayn Fiz Vrian and Arrak Fiz Lake,
> Marrake and Meneduke, that most wer of might.

The poet took their names from the alliterative *Morte Arthure*. The first is Owain ab Urien, whose father ruled Rheged (on the Upper Eden and beyond) in the late sixth century, and who is the Yvain of Chrétien de Troyes. The second is his contemporary Geraint ab Erbin, ruler of Devon and Cornwall, and hero of Chrétien's *Erec* (Bromwich and Evans, 80-1). Marrake is less familiar, but Hanna cites Malory for him as one of Arthur's commanders. He may represent King Mark (the betrothed of ill-fated Isolt), who is known as a "true pan-Celtic character of folklore" in early Wales, Brittany, and Cornwall (Padel 53-81). If so, his appearance in Middle English may show influence from the Britons of Southern Scotland. As for Meneduk (also mentioned by Malory), he is perhaps Mynyddog, who in the early seventh century ruled the Gododdin of south-east Scotland (Jackson, *Gododdin*, 4, 12-13). He has recently been a focus of interest (Koch 177-204). The knights all seem protagonists of the British Heroic Age, with Marrake and Meneduk of special interest because Malory and others knew them not from French sources, but ultimately (it appears) from Celtic ones that had passed (in Scotland and north-west England?) directly into English.

(9) Honour has been satisfied. Arthur settles the dispute with grants to Sir Gawain (lines 664-71), whom he also creates a duke.

> "Here I gif the Sir Gawayn, with gerson [treasure] and golde,
> Al the Glamergan londe with greves [thickets] so grene,
> The worship of Wales at wil and at wolde,
> With Criffones Castelles curnelled [crenelated] ful clene;
> Eke Ulstur Halle to have and to holde,
> Wayford and Waterforde, walled I wene;
> Two baronrées in Bretayne with burghes so bolde,
> That arn batailed abought and bigged ful bene [built well]."

Hanna declared how on much of this "one can only make guesses" (with "Criffones" as a reference to Crieff in Scotland or Griff Grange in Derbyshire). But Rosamund Allen in her paper of 1996 cited the reading "Cirfre Castell" from Ireland-Blackburne and proposed Caerphilly Castle, one of the biggest in Europe. Her argument was supported by a paper of 1999, citing references to Caerphilly as *Kaerfili* and *kaerffili* (which might give the corrupt reading "Cirfre"), and taking "Ulstur Halle" as the lordship of Oysterlow in West Wales, and "Wayford" as Wexford, Ireland (Breeze, "*The Awntyrs off Arthure*, Caerphilly, Oysterlow, and Wexford"). In her paper of 2004, Dr Allen accepted the first but not the other two, regarding "Ulstur Hall" as to do with Ulster and "Wayworth" as Warkworth Castle, Northumberland. Making no reference to any of this, Professor Fichte echoes Hanna, stating that "Glamorganshire" is a part of South Wales "mit den bedeutenden Städten Cardiff und Swansea"; "Ulstur Halle und Waterforde verweisen auf Territorien in Irland"; and "Criffones Castelles könnte auf Crieff, Perthshire, oder auf Griff Grange in Nord-Derbyshire verweisen" (although neither of these was in Wales or had a famous castle with battlements).

Let us restate the identity of these places. First, Glamorgan. The reference is to the medieval lordship, smaller than the modern county. It extended from Cardiff to Neath, but did not include Swansea, which was in the lordship of Gower, united with Glamorgan to make the modern county only under Henry VIII. In the fifteenth century Glamorgan was a possession of the Nevilles (it also

had connections with Richard of York, who was Ralph Neville's ward) and Gower of the Mowbrays. To the west of them and of Carmarthen was the small (but profitable) lordship of Islwyf or Oysterlow (Rees, plates 28, 36, 41, 43, 49, 56). Oysterlow is known only to specialists; Ulster is known to everybody; despite the dangers of *lectio facilior*, even professional scholars have preferred the latter, although it does not explain the second "u" of "Ulstur" or its "Hall". So let us examine a few sources for Oysterlow, which not only give early spellings of its name, but show it as territory disputed between the Crown and the Earls of Pembroke.

Letters patent in London, British Library, Charter Harley 51 H 10, of 1443, grant to William de la Pole, Earl of Suffolk, the title of Earl of Pembroke, as also lands in South Wales including that of Estrelawe (Owen 543). Sir John Lloyd gave its original centre as at Llanddowror (SN 2514), ten miles west-south-west of Carmarthen, and its name as *Oisterlaph*, a mangling of Welsh *Ysthwyf* or *Ysterhwyf* (Lloyd 266, 542). A letter of 1288 or 1289 shows the uncertainty of its spelling, with William de Valence, Earl of Pembroke, complaining how "the king's men had ejected him from the land of Osterlef" which is also called "Osterlowe" and "Osterloue" in the same document (Edwards 170). Sir Rees Davies spoke of the way that Edward I regularly "exploited any weakness in the title or position of a Marcher lord to turn the screw of royal pressure" and how the "uncertain claim of Valence to the commote of Ystlwyf" was "soon seized upon by Edward's lawyers" to put it under royal administration from Carmarthen (Davies 263). One result of such contentions was the moving of the lordship's caput from Llanddowror to Meidrim (SN 2820), seven miles west of Carmarthen (Anon., "Ystlwyf"). The question was (like much else) resolved by Henry VIII, with Ystlwyf confirmed as in Carmarthenshire and for all time excluded from the County of Pembroke.

Rosamund Allen on "Wayford and Waterforde, walled I wene" makes out the first as Warkworth. This will not do, for four reasons. First, in the context of centuries of Border warfare, it would have been spectacularly tactless for this English stronghold to be given to a Scot. Second, Warkworth was not "walled" but had a castle and fortified bridge only. Pevsner makes this obvious. "To give the bridge a tower was a necessity; for the village lies in a loop of the river and, once an attacker could enter it from the north, he was not separated from the Keep by any curtain wall or any other defence save a moat" (Pevsner 313). A photograph proves the point (Beresford and St Joseph 153). Third, Wexford is recorded in fifteenth-century documents as *Weysford* (Field 187). Warkworth, on the other hand, always appears more or less in this form from its earliest attestation (in about 1050) as *Wercevorthe* (Mills 346). The poem's "Wayford" is an easy misrendering of the first, but not the second. Fourth, a progression Caerphilly-Oysterlow-Wexford-Waterford in Arthur's (or the poet's) mind goes logically from east to west. To bring in Warkworth disrupts its order by a violent shift to the north. The passage has a fundamental implication. Arthur makes free with domains in Wales and Ireland (and Brittany), but does not give away English terrain, even to Sir Gawain.

(10) His dignity acknowledged by lands in three countries, Sir Gawain thereupon restores Galeron's lands to their rightful lord (lines 677-82):

> "Now here I gif Sir Galeron," quod Gawayn, "withouten any gile,
> Al the londes and the lithes [vassals] fro Laver to Ayre,
> Connok and Carrak, Conyngham and Kile
> (Als the chevalrous knyghte hase chalandchede als ayere [claimed as inheritance]),
> The Lother, the Lemmok, the Loynak, the Lile,
> With frethis [woods] and forestes and fosses so faire."

There are variants. For Douce's *Lauer*, Ireland-Blackburne has "Logher". In Thornton, line 681 is "The Lebynge, the Lowpynge, þe Leveastre Iles" (which is obviously corrupt).

Cumnock and the three parts of Ayrshire we have dealt with. As for the rest, Hanna could identify none of them, although he thought "Lemmok" and "Loynak" might both mean Lennox; alternatively, "Lemmok" might be Lemmington, Northumberland. He took "Lebynge" in Thornton as perhaps the River Leven, described as flowing "through Dumbartonshire from Loch Lomond to the Firth of Forth" (where the geography is defective; the Leven enters the Firth of Clyde). In the 1998 paper already cited, the present writer identified Laver as Lavery Burn (NX 2679), south Ayrshire. Rosamund Allen in 2004 regarded Ireland-Blackburne's *Logher* in 678 as referring to Lugar Water (NS 5821) near Cumnock or (after Armours) Lochar Water (NY 0178), east of Dumfries, and *the Lile* in 681 as perhaps Lady Isle, off Troon. Professor Fichte, making no reference to this, now states, "Die hier genannten Namen lassen sich nicht mit Sicherheit identifizieren." He follows Hanna for *the Laver* as Laversdale in Cumbria or one of the villages Lever, Lanes, or Laverton in Yorkshire, and closes "Soll *Lother* auf die Lothian Hills verweisen?"

Let us be exact. "Ayr" will mean not Ayrshire or the borough of Ayr, as Hanna supposes, but the River Ayr, giving its name to the town. "Laver" thus makes sense as another river, Lavery Burn in the far south of Ayrshire, its source less than a mile from the border with Galloway. It is also easier textually to relate Lavery to Douce's "Lauer" than Lugar to Ireland-Blackburne's "Logher". Other toponyms may at once be discarded, because they were not in Ayrshire, and Arthur would scarcely endow a Scotsman with estates in England.

As for line 681, "the" refers to geographical regions, not rivers. The *OED* entry for *the* 3b actually cites "The Lennox" and "The Merse" as designating territory. They resemble "The Garioch" (in Aberdeenshire), "The Stormont" (in Perthshire), and so on (Watson 118, 120). "The Lother" is thus Lauderdale (Berwickshire/Borders), its feudal caput at Lauder (NT 5347) and the form attested as *Louueder* in 1208 (Room 207). It was prominent as soon as Hugh de Morville (d. 1162) became lord of Lauderdale, thus gaining immense power, for he was also lord of Cunningham (Duncan 135-6). The family is best known from Hugh's son, another Hugh, who is notorious as one of Becket's murderers. The Honour of Lauderdale allows us to take "the Lother" as "the Lauder". It is nothing to do with Lothian.

The second term ("the Lemmok") must be the Lennox, as Hanna suggests. Lennox, documented as an earldom from about 1165 onwards, is the area around Loch Lomond. In 1425 it was in the news. That year, according to the Annals of Ulster, "the Earl of Lennox was destroyed through treachery by the King of Scotland": a circumstance which helps date the poem (Jackson, *Gaelic Notes*, 104). Duncan, Eighth Earl of Lennox, was arrested on James I's initiative in late 1424. With others he was eventually tried by his peers, found guilty, and hastened off to execution (Dickinson 215). That was in May 1425. With the Earl of Lennox dead, his lands were free to give to another. It perhaps explains the text's allusion to the Lennox and dates it to between the early summer of 1425 and October, when Ralph Neville died. As for "the Loynak", this will not be Lennox (again) but the lordship of Lanark, in Clydesdale. It has already appeared as "Lonrik" at line 420. It is further evidence for the poet as an Englishman. Lanark Castle was held by the Scottish Crown, and a subject of the King of Scots might hesitate to represent a royal possession as given away. But that would not trouble anyone in England, notwithstanding the marriage of Ralph Neville's niece to James, King of Scots.

As regards "the Lile", this is another Scottish lordship. It cannot be Lady Isle (NS 2729), three miles off Troon. Lady Isle is a "desolate rocky island with a lighthouse" (Anon., "Lady Rock"). Lacking revenues, it had no interest for medieval magnates. Because rhyme and alliteration fix the form, the reference will instead be to the Lyle or Lyell family of Duchal (NS 3567), between Greenock and Paisley. The fifteenth century saw them reach their zenith. In 1444, Robert Lyle of Duchal was claiming lands on Deeside by descent from Isabel, Countess of Mar; in 1452, Alexander, Lord Lyle of Duchal, was rewarded by James II for support against the Earl of Crawford

(McGladdery 22, 79). So "the Lile" apparently signifies estates of a powerful Renfrewshire dynasty.

(11) A line in the final stanza locates its action (709):

This ferely [marvel] bifelle in Engelwode Forest.

Ingelwood Forest, with residual woodlands, is still marked on Ordnance Survey maps. It was a royal domain of varying bounds. In about 1250 it extended from the River Eden west to the Forest of Allerdale, itself reaching to the Cumbrian coast (Poole 28). But Hesket, with Skelton and Hutton-in-the-Forest south of it, was at its core. That the region north of Penrith was once heavily wooded is a reminder of local difficulties in communication. The Roman road to Carlisle was vital in war and peace alike.

Now for our third part and some conclusions. There is no need to restate the implications of the romance's lordships in Scotland, Wales, and Ireland for Ralph Neville (d. 1425), Earl of Westmorland, and his son-in-law Richard (1411-60), Duke of York. They were set out in detail by Rosamund Allen (with her arguments modified in the present writer's 1999 *Arthuriana* paper). Thanks to them, the poem provides focus on the Northern nobility in the middle months of 1425. It was an interesting period. Anglo-Scottish relations were amicable. After years of captivity in England, James I (d. 1437) was released in December 1424. Two months later he married the younger Joan or Jane Beaufort (Joan Neville's niece) in what is now Southwark Cathedral, a memorial of their courtship being *The Kingis Quair*, written by James himself (Norton-Smith xxii). Like *The Awntyrs off Arthure*, it is a poem written in 1424-25 at a period of Anglo-Scottish *rapprochement*.

Coming from a period of *détente* for English relations with France and Scotland, *The Awntyrs off Arthure* also contains a theory of imperialism (as Jean Jost observes in her article of 2012). When Arthur does justice, he does not do so at the expense of English territory, but by disposing freely of lands in Scotland, Wales, Ireland, and Brittany. That is why we can be sure that the poet was an Englishman (if one who desires justice for Scotland). The unknown English poet was, nevertheless, familiar with traditions of British kings and heroes. Cumbria was seemingly rich in legends of them, even after the Cumbric language became extinct in the early twelfth century.

Three final points. The *Awntyrs* poet is thought to have known another Northern romance, *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, which mentions Cheshire places and is perhaps the work of a Cheshire aristocrat who was expert on hunting and armour, but also (it appears) familiar with the sophistication and luxuries of Richard II's court (Breeze, "Sir John Stanley") The poem may be as late as the 1390s, like *Pearl,* attributed to the same author (Breeze, "*Pearl* and the Plague of 1390-1393"). The relationship between the Cheshire poem and the Cumberland one would repay comprehensive analysis, but we can make one point immediately. *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* is in the Midland dialect of south-east Cheshire, differing sharply from that of the *Awntyrs* poet, which is Northern. If he knew the earlier poem so well that he based his own work upon it, the notion of there being "no evidence" for its circulation "outside this dialect area" (of the north-west Midlands) is disproved (Putter and Stokes xi).

As for Tarn Wadling, its links with mystery long predate the fifteenth century. So much is proved by Gervase of Tilbury (active around 1200), who described it thus:

In Great Britain there is a forest, rich in many kinds of game, which looks down on the city of Carlisle. Roughly in the middle of this forest there is a valley surrounded by hills near a public highway. In this valley, I say, every day at seven in the morning a gently-sounding peal of bells is heard; and so the locals have given that lonely place the name of Laikibrais *in idiomate Wallico* or the "Welsh" tongue (Banks and Binns 690-3).

Now, Gervase's editors derive *Laikibrais* from the Old French for "lake that cries". It is hard to see why. Gervase gives the form as Welsh (or, better, Cumbric), not French. The standard reading is also inferior to his variant *Laikibrait*, according with the editors' citation of "in lacu de Terwathelan qui dicitur Laykebrayt" from Pleas of the Forest of Inglewood for 1290-1. It is perhaps explained from the Welsh place-name forms *llech* "rock, slab" and *brad* "treachery" (Thomas 4, 15). Less uncertain are folklore connections. In setting out sources and analogues, Hanna cited Joseph Ritson (1752-1803) for local legends of a castle or city under the lake, relating it "to some Celtic descriptions of the Other World" from which troublesome visitors might come. Early Welsh traditions of drowned cities are on record (Bromwich, "Cantre'r Gwaelod"). So, too, are accounts of Irish lakes as supernatural exits and entrances (Sims-Williams 235, 242). They are hence a further Celtic element in our Northern romance.

Last of all, the question of patronage. Examination of events in 1424 and 1425 might indicate more precisely when, where, and for whom such a poem was recited. In this context two points may be noted. By his two wives Ralph Neville had twenty-three children, twenty of whom survived infancy. Weddings were a frequent occurrence in the Neville household. So, too, were betrothals, including that of Ralph's youngest daughter, Cicely, to Richard of York (1411-60). Ralph was already negotiating for it in 1423 (McFarlane 87). It leaves us with a choice. Rosamund Allen regards the poem as no earlier than the marriage in February 1424 of James I and Joan Beaufort the younger, when good relations between England and Scotland were secured, and no later than Ralph's death in October 1425. If we knew when Richard and Cicely were formally betrothed, this would be a suitable occasion for the poem, which has marriage and faithfulness in marriage amongst its themes. If its allusions to the Lennox were topical, we could restrict it still further, to later than 25 May 1425, when "after a perfunctory trial" the Duke of Albany, two of his sons, and "his father-in-law, the aged Earl of Lennox" were executed at Stirling (Root 13-26).

On the subject of patronage, there is a further point about the Nevilles. Ralph, Earl of Westmorland, was a strenuous builder; Joan, Countess of Westmorland, preferred books. There are links with Chaucer (d. 1400), Hoccleve (d. 1426), Richard Rolle (d. 1349), and Walter Hilton (d. 1396). First, Chaucer. Cambridge, Corpus Christi College, MS 61 contains his *Troilus and Criseyde* and is a *de luxe* edition, with a famous illumination of Chaucer addressing an audience of high-ranking people. Amongst marginalia is the name "Anne neuyll". She has long been identified as a daughter of Ralph (by his second wife), who married Humphrey, Duke of Buckingham (d. 1460). Brusendorff inferred with what he thought "a fair degree of probability" that Anne's mother "had the Corpus manuscript transcribed from a family copy" of Chaucer's poem, "originally executed for her father John of Gaunt" in the 1380s (Brusendorff 21-3). Another writer is still more fanciful, imagining how Anne heard "family accounts of Chaucer reading before the court of Richard II" before "she secured a copy of a family manuscript to preserve in a book of her own" the love-poem by her grandmother's brother-in-law (Giffin 18-19). Others are colder. They merely date the volume to 1400 x 1425 and give its first known owner as John Shirley (d. 1456), London bookdealer and publisher (Marks and Morgan 112-13). Derek Pearsall now regards it as of "about 1420" and supplies bibliography on its origins (Pearsall, *The Life of Geoffrey Chaucer*, 179, 331).

As for Hoccleve, he addressed an envoy or final stanza to Joan Neville. It begins "Go, smal book, to the noble excellence / Of my lady of Westmerland and seye...." The "smal book" (with these lines in Hoccleve's autograph) still exists. It is now Durham, University Library, MS Cosin V.iii.9 (Furnivall and Gollancz 242). Joan Neville was therefore one of Hoccleve's many patrons, who included the Prince of Wales, four dukes, a duchess, and a lord chancellor (H. S. Bennett, 149). Thanks to this, she figures regularly in accounts of medieval literary patronage (Mathew 57). Hoccleve's links with her are even used for speculation on the Corpus manuscript's picture of Chaucer and the one in London, British Library, MS Harley 4866, containing Hoccleve's *De Regimine*

Principum (Mitchell 115). The Cosin manuscript has itself been subject to expert attention (Doyle and Parkes 163-210). Its importance as "written by Hoccleve himself" for presentation to the Countess is obvious (Seymour 135). It is proof of her willingness to finance poets. It has also prompted the remark that England then "was neither a paradise nor a level playing-field for women of letters" (Phillips 45-69). A curious claim, given that Joan possessed royal blood and quasi-regal wealth. The dedication to "my lady of westmerland" comes with material wherein the poet "broods with increasing bitterness upon the wiles of women", stirring another critic to wonder what she made of it (Patterson 115). More to the point is the way that these contacts with London poets show Joan Neville as interested in verse. They strengthen the case for her as patron of *The Awntyrs of Arthure*.

       After poetry, religion. Joan Neville finds herself written into the autobiography of Margery Kempe (d. 1438?), who supposedly tried to persuade Lady Westmorland's daughter to leave her husband, and had to explain herself before the Archbishop of York, who yet treated her mildly (Pantin, *The English Church*, 260). Margery's interview with Joan took place in 1413 at Raby, the Neville's seat, near Durham. More significant is Joan's interest in the English mystics. It was shared by her youngest daughter Cicely (d. 1495), Duchess of York. She had Hilton's writings on Active and Contemplative Life read at her table, in addition to works by Continental female saints in "rather a highbrow collection" (Pantin, "Instructions", 398-422). It includes several texts printed at an early date. Joan herself possessed a copy of Rolle's *Meditations on the Passion*. It is now Cambridge, University Library, MS Additional 3042 and bears the inscription *Johanna unfortunata Westmerlandiae Cowntes*. She also, like her daughter, had special interest in Walter Hilton's *Scale of Perfection* and *Mixed Life* (Hughes 91, 100, 102).

       We may conclude thus. What began as a commentary on place-name cruxes in a Northern poem ends by relating it to the Nevilles and events in England, Scotland, and France during 1424-25. Further research on their literary interests may reinforce those connections. It may even be that investigation of the family's movements in those months, particularly for a festive occurrence in Carlisle (the betrothal of Cecily and Richard of York?), will allow us to suggest the exact day when *The Awntyrs off Arthure* was recited to its first audience.

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