'DIGNIFIED SENSIBILITY & FRIENDLY EXERTION' JOSEPH RITSON AND GEORGE ELLIS'S METRICAL ROMANCE(Ë)S

[ABSTRACT]

The first decade of the nineteenth century saw an unprecedented number of publications of medieval romance in Britain, as a local manifestation of the recovery of vernacular literature taking place across Europe. Setting out to rescue texts from increasingly accessible public libraries, the early nineteenth-century editors struggled to find publishers willing to risk the publication of medieval romance, despite changing tastes. Drawing on contemporary correspondence, this article will use an instance of conflict and ill-humour to explore the mutually supportive collaborative networks that made these publications possible and, briefly, allowed even more ambitious projects to be planned.

· · · · · · · · · ·

KEYWORDS   *Antiquarianism, Romance, Joseph Ritson, George Ellis, Kyng Alisaunder*

GENEVIEVE McNUTT

Introduction

In the early years of the nineteenth century, four works on medieval romance were published in Britain: Joseph Ritson's *Ancient Engleish Metrical Romanceës* (1802), Walter Scott's *Sir Tristrem* (1804), George Ellis's *Specimens of Early English Metrical Romances* (1805), and Henry Weber's *Metrical Romances* (1810).[1] In his examination of the influence of medieval romance on poetic form in the romantic period, Stuart Curran calls attention to this 'deluge' of publications:

These eight years, it is safe to say, are without peer in the history of British literary scholarship; medieval romances may now figure in a relatively minor role, but especially for this time, their initial publication wholly altered the conception of British literature.[2]

Once published, these works had a pervasive influence. This article will explore how they came to be published – what made the 'deluge' possible, and why it suddenly abated.

These works appeared at a crucial moment in the publication and reception of medieval English literature in Britain, and, more broadly, the publication and reception of medieval vernacular literature across Europe. As Joep Leerssen has

shown, 'between 1780 and 1840 a huge rediscovery of the early medieval vernacular roots and rootedness of the various European languages and literatures took place in a process, that reverberated back and forth between the fields of philology, antiquarianism, and imaginative literature'.[3] As a part of this process, many works of medieval literature were identified, edited, and published, allowing the construction of new national literary histories. As outlined by David Matthews in *The Making of Middle English*, the study of Middle English (the varieties of the English language spoken after the Norman Conquest of 1066 until the late fifteenth century) received no official support in Britain during this period, with serious consequences for the publication of metrical romance. This article will use the relationship between two very different works – Ritson's *Ancient Engleish Metrical Romanceës* and Ellis's *Specimens of Early English Metrical Romances* – to explore the ways in which the men responsible for these works saw themselves as part of a 'republic of letters', engaged upon a collaborative project.

Although some of their contemporaries saw Ritson's and Ellis's works as alternative approaches to the same material, in retrospect they belong to different genres. Ritson's *Romanceës* is recognizable today as a scholarly edition. He has twelve carefully edited texts, each taken from an identified manuscript or early print source. Through his copious notes, glossary, and the introductory 'Dissertation on Romance and Minstrelsy', he identifies other versions and analogues, displays his extensive knowledge, and systematically attacks previous scholarship.[4] Ellis's *Romances* is quite different. Rather than complete texts, he provides prose abstracts with illustrative passages and a historical introduction. His witty style allows a refined readership to acquire familiarity with medieval romance and contemporary scholarship without needing to read anything distasteful or difficult, in a manner reminiscent of the comprehensive reviews of the time. Both works are handsome three-volume octavos, sold for one pound and seven shillings.[5]

Comparisons between the Ellis's and Ritson's works began to appear before Ellis's work was published. Ritson's collection begins with an 'Advertisement' consisting of a long quotation by 'a writeër of the highest eminence' arguing that a 'judicious collection' of metrical romances would 'be an important accession to our stock of ancient English literature'.[6] This is taken from Thomas Percy's *Reliques of Ancient English Poetry* (1765) – a pointed joke, as Ritson had, for decades, accused Percy of inaccuracy and dishonesty in his editorial approach. The *British Critic* misidentifies the 'Advertisement' as a borrowing from Ellis, lamenting that:

The only thing to be regretted in the matter is, that Ritson, by undertaking the task, took it out of the hands of a man so much more highly qualified for it. Mr. Ellis, in the eloquent recommendation of the design above-cited, meant, as it seems, to prepare the way for such a publication of his own; but hearing that Ritson had embarked in a similar undertaking, he generously relinquished it, and gave all the assistance in his power to one who, in some respects, but little deserved it.[7]

At this point, both men had established reputations, within the narrow field of research into early periods of English literature, allowing the urbane Ellis to be identified as the obvious alternative to Ritson, an atheist and political radical. Ritson's *Romanceës* are evaluated through a lengthy comparison with the as-yet-hypothetical work by Ellis, and the recently deceased Ritson is condemned for his bad temper, bad manners, and bad taste.

Contemporary rumour linked the production of the two works, claiming that Ellis had facilitated the publication of Ritson's collection, although the details vary, from paying for its publication to delaying his own work to allow Ritson's to be published. The romantic poet Robert Southey advised his fellow poet S. T. Coleridge to 'buy the English metrical romances published by Ritson; it is, indeed, a treasure of true old poetry: the expense of publication is defrayed by Ellis'.[8] A letter from the English antiquary Thomas Park to the Scottish editor and critic Robert Anderson from November of 1801 provides the chief source of this claim, in which Park responds to Anderson's report of the poor behaviour of their mutual acquaintance during his visit to Edinburgh:

I am sorry that he should have given vent to his ill-humour and groundless jealousy on the subject of Alexander, or that he sh[d] have indulged any splenetic feeling against M[r] Ellis, whose conduct in the whole business has been (as I believe it always is) distinguished for liberality and candour, for dignified sensibility & friendly exertion, even toward Ritson himself, whose romances never were likely to see the light, but for his generous interference, nor would have been undertaken by Nicol, but for his immediate application, and all this after he had collected materials himself, at a great expense, for a similar public[n] & had abandoned his design solely with a view of serving ~~Ritson~~ his Calumniator.[9]

This letter was included in Bertrand Bronson's excellent biography of Ritson, and has become commonplace in discussion of Ritson's *Romanceës*.[10] However, the background for this conflict is often overlooked, and offers a more complex and revealing story. Drawing on the correspondence between Ellis and Scott, now held in the National Library of Scotland, I will examine some aspects of the collaborate network which made these publications possible, enriching the accounts provided by Leerssen and Matthews. Ritson suspected, unfairly, that Ellis had misrepresented his intentions regarding the edition of *Kyng Alisaunder* which he and Park were preparing. *Kyng Alisaunder* is an early fourteenth-century romance describing the life of Alexander the Great, surviving in a manuscript held in Lincoln's Inn Library, another held in the Bodleian Library, and a fragment in the Auchinleck manuscript.[11] The poem provides a convenient case study for the preparation of an edition of a medieval text, demonstrating a collaborative process reliant upon the production and circulation of transcripts as an intermediary stage between medieval manuscript and nineteenth-century print. Park's claim that Ellis set aside materials he had already collected is an overstatement, one which masks the ways in which the editing of romance was understood as collaborative undertaking, relying upon an expectation of assistance and accom-

modation. For a brief period, a small group of men in London and Edinburgh were able to produce an unprecedented body of work, only a small fraction of the work that they had hoped to achieve.

'[D]rawn from the dusty and chaotic confusion of public libraries'

Ritson's and Ellis's works were a small facet of a much larger development. In 'Literary Historicism: Romanticism, Philologists, and the Presence of the Past', Joep Leerssen describes the 'rediscovery of the early medieval vernacular roots and rootedness of the various European languages and literatures' which 'revolutionized the European self-image and historical consciousness and led to the national diffraction of the Enlightenment's idea of culture and literature'.[12] Leerssen provides numerous examples of the discovery and publication of medieval texts, and observes that:

The discoveries of old manuscripts almost invariably took place as their repositories were shifted from the private to the public domain. Until the late eighteenth century antiquarianism . . . had been based on the private ownership of old manuscripts or on access to privately owned collections. . . . In contrast, the discoveries of the Romantic period occurred when scholars were sent on officially sanctioned missions to retrieve manuscripts or when archives and libraries were placed under new, public management and their contents professionally reinventoried.[13]

In his *Specimens of the Early English Poets* (1801), Ellis argues that more editions of medieval texts are needed (rather than works, such as his own, that provide descriptions and extracts), engaging directly with the changing circumstances described by Leerssen:

[A] scarce and valuable manuscript cannot possibly be put into general circulation; and many learned men are necessarily debarred, either by distance, or by infirmity, or by the pressure and variety of their occupations, from spending much time in those public repositories of learning, to which the access has indeed been rendered easy, but could not be made convenient, by the liberality of their founders.[14]

Public institutions had made manuscripts accessible in a way they never had been before, and yet a further mediation was necessary, from the unique manuscript to the more widely accessible printed work.

The work of Ritson and Ellis was made possible by the increasing access provided by public institutions, especially the British Museum. Private collections still played a significant if minor role, although it is notable that nearly all the privately owned manuscripts referred to by Ellis and Ritson are now held by either the Bodleian or British Library. Of Ritson's twelve romances, eight used sources held by the British Museum. Six were taken from the founding manu-

script collections (*Ywaine and Gawin*, *Launfal*, *Lybeaus Disconus*, *The Geste of Kyng Horn*, *Emare*, *Sir Orpheo*) one from the Royal Collection presented to the Museum shortly after its foundation (*The Chronicle of Engleland*), and one from an early print copy acquired by the Museum with the Garrick Collection in 1780 (*The Squyer of Lowe Degre*). The English Universities are also represented, with the Bodleian (*The Kyng of Tars and the Soudan of Damas* and *The Knight of Curtesy and the Fair Lady of Faguell)* and Cambridge University Library (*Le Bone Florence of Rome* and *The Erle of Tolous*) each providing two texts.

Like Ritson, Ellis drew on the founding collections for manuscripts (*Morte Arthur, Robert of Cysille, The Lyfe of Ipomydon*) and the Garrick Collection for early printed works (*Sir Triamour*, *Sir Eglamour of Artoys*, *Sir Degoré*), as well as the libraries of the English Universities (*Bevis of Hampton*, *Richard Cœur de Lion*, *Sir Isumbras*) and Lincoln's Inn (*Merlin*). He made greater use of private collections than Ritson, taking *Sir Eger, Sir Grahame, and Sir Gray-Steel*; *Roswal and Lillian*; *Amys and Amylion,* and *Sir Ferumbas* from the collection of the antiquary Francis Douce (later briefly Keeper of Manuscripts in the British Museum), the last from a transcript made by George Steevens from a manuscript owned by Richard Farmer and presented to Douce as a gift.[15]

They did not rely exclusively on English collections. The Auchinleck manuscript played a major role in the study of medieval romance at the beginning of the nineteenth century, as it has done in the centuries since. Compiled in London in the 1330s, the Auchinleck is a remarkable collection of medieval English literature, containing (in its current damaged state), eighteen romances, of which eight are entirely unique.[16] In 1744, the manuscript was presented to the Advocates' Library in Edinburgh by Alexander Boswell, Lord Auchinleck. While the Advocates' Library had been founded by the Faculty of Advocates at the end of the seventeenth century to support the legal instruction of its members, it had gradually acquired a secondary function as the de facto national library of Scotland, the natural repository for documents of historical importance and national pride.[17] The presence of the manuscript in Edinburgh allowed its contents to be claimed for Scotland. When Scott published his edition of *Sir Tristrem*, he identified the Auchinleck as his source on the title page, and provided a description of the manuscript and its contents as an appendix. Ellis was able, through his connection with Scott, to draw heavily on the Auchinleck manuscript, which provided the primary source for seven of his texts (the second part of *Merlin*, *Guy of Warwick*, *Roland and Ferragus*, *Sir Otuel*, *The Seven Wise Masters*, *Florice and Blaunche-flour*, and *Lay le Fraine*), and supplemented several others. Ritson discusses the contents of the Auchinleck extensively in his essay and notes, but does not use it as a source for his edited texts, although he includes *Horne Childe and Maiden Rimnild* in the notes to *Kyng Horn*. The work of Ellis and Ritson (as well as Scott and Weber) was made possible by the trend described by Leerssen, in which national museums and libraries provided access to the resources necessary to construct national literary histories.[18]

However, in Britain at the beginning of the nineteenth century the publication of medieval romance did not receive official sanction and support. As David Matthews outlines in *The Making of Middle English*, before the second half of the century, 'Middle English was almost entirely the preserve of the few, not because of a high cultural valuation . . . but because of its insignificance in the eyes of many'.[19] Those who worked on medieval literary texts were amateurs, operating outside institutional and disciplinary frameworks. Matthews argues that although this might suggest 'apparently utopian possibilities', in practice these scholars had to rely on either patronage or sales.[20] As there was not enough popular support for editions to be viable, after the formation of the Roxburghe Club in 1812 the publication of medieval texts in Britain became the work of private clubs, removing the need to appeal to an audience in favour of a deliberately limited circulation, often resulting in shoddy scholarship.[21] The idea that the accurate publication of medieval texts was of national importance and should be supported (since it could not be accomplished by individuals working for a market) did not reach fruition for several decades, with the development of the Surtees Society, the Camden Society and, ultimately, the Early English Text Society.[22]

When Ellis's *Romances* was published in 1805, Scott seized the opportunity to review both works for the *Edinburgh Review*. Scott contends that Ellis's and Ritson's works serve complementary functions. Ritson has taken on 'the important task of arranging and correcting the text of these poems', bringing to that task 'industry', 'fidelity', 'acute abilities' and 'intimate acquaintance with every collateral source'.[23] Ellis has a different objective: 'Mr Ellis voluntarily resigned the object of Mr Ritson's publication, who gave his romances entire to the world; a mode more acceptable, doubtless to the antiquary, though infinitely less interesting and amusing to the general reader, as well as to the editor'.[24] Although Ellis's work will inevitably prove more popular, it will 'not supersede a complete edition': rather, 'the wit and elegance with which he has abridged and analyzed their contents, will encourage many a gentle reader to attempt the originals'.[25]

Scott's review responds to the situation described by Matthews, expressing both frustration and a cautious optimism. Defending the historical and literary importance of the metrical romances, he declares: 'With such ideas of the importance of these ancient legends of chivalry, we are bound to express our gratitude to those by whose labours they have been drawn from the dusty and chaotic confusion of public libraries, and presented to the public in legible and attainable shape'.[26] This is what Ritson accomplishes, and whatever his faults, Scott argues:

let it be remembered to his honour, that, without the encouragement of private patronage, or of public applause; without hopes of gain, and under the certainty of severe critical censure, he has brought forward such a work on national antiquities, as in other countries has been thought worthy of the labour of universities, and the countenance of princes.[27]

Without patronage or institutional support, potential editors must appeal to public taste, and Ellis's popularizing role becomes essential. Scott is cautiously optimistic:

Notwithstanding this ingenious and lively publication, we still desire even the more to see a genuine edition of these ancient poems. It is painful to reflect, that they, with many unedited chronicles, the materials of our national history, are lying unhonoured and unconsulted amid the rubbish of large libraries. The indifferent sale of Mr Ritson's work may discourage individuals; but surely the object is worth the attention of the English universities. [28]

Unfortunately this attention was not forthcoming, and many romances and chronicles remained in the libraries for some time.

As Leerssen argues, the rediscovery of early vernacular literature reshaped literary history, for although literary histories are usually arranged chronologically, the earliest chapters 'were actually added to our historical purview in the early nineteenth century', requiring the development of a 'hermeneutic literary history . . . of literary memory, of literary anamnesis, of rereading, of how readers' eyes changed as they looked the available inheritance of a literary canon'.[29] One venue for the formation of a national canon was the publication of multi-volume poetry collections, a phenomena in which the Scottish editor Robert Anderson played a major role, becoming 'the first non-bookseller to wield much editorial authority over a multi-volume poetry collection' with *The Works of the British Poets* in 14 volumes.[30] Anderson enlarged the scope of the collection considerably, pushing for the inclusion of more and earlier authors. However, the publishers were sceptical of readers' interest in early literature, and pushed back: despite early plans to include Langland, Gower, and Lydgate, Chaucer was the only medieval poet included.[31] Despite their reservations, it was the early volumes that proved most influential: Anderson's collection introduced Wordsworth to Chaucer, Drayton and the other Elizabethans, causing the poet to express his gratitude to Anderson personally; Coleridge recommended the first four volumes to his son; Southey described Anderson as 'instrumental' in changing poetic tastes.[32] Indeed, Southey was a vocal advocate for increased attention to early literature, arguing that the publication of such texts could change the way in which English poetry was written, as well as read. He engaged extensively with the works on metrical romance in the *Annual Review*, championing Ritson's *Romanceës* as a key work in the recuperation of early English poetry, which could provide new models for poets stultified by Augustan convention, declaring that 'there has rarely, if ever, appeared in this country a publication so valuable to the antiquary, the philologist and the poet'.[33]

Republic of Letters

Although they lacked institutional support, Ellis, Ritson, and Scott participated in, and relied upon, a collaborative network of amateur scholars interested in medieval romance. The surviving letters from Ellis to Scott, now held in the National Library of Scotland, provide a rich source of information about this network and the practice of literary antiquarian research. Brief extracts were included in Scott's *Letters*, as footnotes providing information about the other side of the correspondence.[34] They have been studied, including for information about Ritson. However, the bulk of these letters have not been closely examined, as they are concerned with the minutiae of Ellis and Scott's antiquarian work. The surviving letters begin in April of 1801, the correspondence having begun somewhat earlier. In the early years, the relationship is friendly and informal, but almost entirely confined to their work on medieval romance. Mutual acquaintances are discussed, almost exclusively those antiquaries involved in the same project: John Leyden, Richard Heber, Thomas Park, Francis Douce, and Joseph Ritson. These letters provide a detailed record of the process through which Ellis's *Romances* and Scott's *Sir Tristrem* took shape. Information and discussion, about the texts and the men working on the texts, were constantly relayed between London and Edinburgh.

In her work on eighteenth-century antiquaries, Rosemary Sweet describes the ways in which British antiquaries saw themselves as part of 'a Republic of Letters' which provided 'a sense of identity and belonging which transcended differences of geography and social background and provided a context for their own endeavours, as a contribution to a wider good'.[35] Although the phrase 'Republic of Letters' is most commonly used in an early modern context to describe an international community of scholars, Sweet highlights the relationships within Britain which bridged distinctions of class, religion, and politics.

This was the context which led to Park's letter to Anderson. Ritson, despite his atheism, politics, and abrasive personality, was a member of this network, providing and receiving assistance. In London, he worked closely with Francis Douce and Thomas Park on several projects.[36] Ritson visited Scott and Leyden at Lasswade Cottage in the fall of 1801, briefly staying with Anderson in Edinburgh, and the letters between the other men carry various accounts of this visit. In October, Park reports to Anderson that he has learned from Ellis (who had received a letter from Scott) that Ritson had reached Edinburgh, and asks that Anderson pass on a request for transcripts to Ritson, 'as he is always in the habit of research among the pot-hooks of antiquarianism'.[37] During this visit, Ritson expressed his 'ill-humour and groundless jealousy' towards Ellis to Anderson, who conveyed his remarks to Park, leading to Park's exasperated letter. Earlier in the same letter, Park reports:

Ritson dropped in a few evenings since, & expressed more pleasure, more equable pleasure, than I remember at any time to have heard him express before, with the hospitality & kindness he experienced at Edinb. He was delighted with Dr Anderson, while the wonderful acquirements of Mr Leyden and Mr Scott enforced high commendation. In short, the Scotch as a nation, were men of genius, & whoever would wish to be hospitably received in a land of strangers, must visit Scotland.[38]

Park's letters provide a small glimpse of the social practice of literary antiquarian research. The men involved visit each other, share their plans (and gossip), and provide assistance. Many of Park's letters to Anderson, including this one, were addressed by Ellis, to take advantage of his franking privileges.

As Sweet observed, antiquarian research 'was not class neutral, but it did provide a language within which people from very different backgrounds could communicate and exchange information', and such disparities could 'open up opportunities by which an individual could hope to improve his prospects by forging contacts with those of a higher social status'.[39] Park had been trained as an engraver, turning to literature in his twenties, corresponding with William Cowper and Anna Seward, before turning again to an editorial career.[40] His letters to Anderson contain frequent discussions of the practical work of identifying potential publishers and evaluating the relative risk and potential monetary gain of different projects, and attempts to gain introductions to Anderson's connections (principally Percy).[41] In 1793, when John Leyden was a student at the University of Edinburgh, he was introduced to Anderson, and for many years Leyden was a frequent guest of Anderson, who published many of his early poems.[42] Anderson introduced Leyden to Richard Heber in 1799 (although Constable would later claim to have done so, to Leyden's annoyance), and Heber introduced him to Scott, whom he assisted with the *Border Minstrelsy* and his work on medieval romance.[43] However, for financial reasons, he began to consider travelling to Africa, and the attempts by Scott, Heber, and Ellis to exert influence to secure a post for Leyden, eventually leading to his journey to India, provide a running undercurrent to the letters of this period.

Heber's contributions to the early study of medieval romance illustrate the support offered by the 'republic of letters'. Heber is perhaps best known as a book collector and a founding member of the Roxburghe Club in 1812. In the early years of the nineteenth century, he was a relatively young man, with a quarterly allowance of £100, quarrelling with his father over his purchases at book auctions.[44] After his father's death in 1804 he inherited considerable estates, which he used to amass his legendary collection.[45] Arnold Hunt argues that while Heber was never 'a scholar-collector in the sense of someone who collected books of use in his own scholarly projects' his collecting always served a social function, as 'he sought out the company of scholars and put his books at their disposal'.[46]

The letters between Scott and Ellis demonstrate that Heber played a key role in the study and publication of medieval romance, providing support to those involved – relaying messages, providing introductions, attending auctions, and

arranging subscriptions. He often assisted his friends by carrying or arranging for the transport of books between London and Edinburgh. In one letter, Ellis informs Scott that 'Heber promises to send you my grande opus by a *smack*! . . . as safely as if it were a barrel of herrings'.[47] Discussing a book that he wishes to lend Scott, Ellis adds that Heber has offered to carry it from London to Edinburgh, although 'as the letter will travel faster than he will & will not be delayed by booksellers' shops on the road, I shall still venture to send you my transcript'.[48] Elsewhere, Ellis describes Heber's unsuccessful attempt to convince the Dean of Lincoln Cathedral to lend him the Thornton Manuscript for the use of Scott and Ellis.[49] Heber assisted Ellis as he revised the *Early English Poets*, collating the text with works in his own collection. Hunt argues that Heber's assistance 'transform[ed] a textual shambles into something approaching modern standards of accuracy'.[50] Ellis reports to Scott that Nicol, the publisher of Ritson's *Romanceës*, was so alarmed by the blasphemous passages in Ritson's introductory 'Dissertation' that he engaged Heber to excise the most extreme passages.[51] The study and publication of medieval romance was made possible by a network of scholars providing each other with very practical assistance.

Kyng Alisaunder

The immediate context for Ritson's 'ill-humour and groundless jealousy on the subject of Alexander' was the work of Park, Ellis, and Douce on an edition of the early fourteenth-century romance *Kyng Alisaunder*. Thomas Warton had included extracts from the Bodleian manuscript in his *History of English Poetry* (1774–1781), attributing it to Adam Davie, the author of a religious poem in the same manuscript. Although the early nineteenth-century scholars thought it particularly beautiful, it is rarely studied today.

The correspondence between Ellis and Scott provides sporadic descriptions of their progress. In July of 1801, Ellis wrote to Scott that he and Douce had examined the poem and Park was compiling their notes:

Adam Davie's (If it be Adam Davie's) life of Alexander has passed through my hands & Douce's, and Park is, I believe, now at work on a glossary compiled from our notes. It is really a noble poem. [52]

Scott offered of a transcript of the Auchinleck fragment, which Ellis thought unnecessary, replying 'Our copy is *complete,* and does not I think require an improvement beyond what a collation with the Bodleian MS will furnish'.[53] Ellis underestimated the scope of the project, and the work was delayed. In May of 1802 Ellis wrote to Scott to thank him for the transcripts of *Merlin* and, observing the 'astonishing similarity of style', suggested that *Alisaunder* might be claimed as a Scottish text:

[I]t is well worth claiming, as you would have known long ere this, had it not been discovered by Heber that the Bodleian copy contained about 1500 verses more than that of Lincoln's Inn which Park had transcribed, in consequence of which it will be necessary for him to repair to Oxford, which, being at present hard at work on some other subjects, he cannot conveniently do.[54]

This never was convenient, and the edition was abandoned until 1810, when Henry Weber incorporated it into his collection of *Metrical Romances*, completing the collation and publishing the poem with the notes assembled by Ellis, Douce and Park and the prose chapter headings written by Ellis.[55]

Kyng Alisaunder provides a case study of the process through which an edition of a medieval text was prepared at the beginning of the nineteenth century. The text is identified through Warton's *History of English Poetry*, although much of Warton's description has to be revised, and his attribution of the poem to Adam Davie becomes a running joke. Examination of the manuscripts reveals that, as Ritson had long argued, Warton is unreliable. Most significantly, transcripts provide an intermediary stage between medieval manuscript and nineteenth-century print. Park produced a transcript, which could then circulate within a collaborative network, each member providing a different element of expertise and soliciting more information from their contacts. The logistics of travel between London and Oxford delayed the project, and the transcript and notes, with layers of revision by multiple parties, circulated as a part of nineteenth-century manuscript culture for a decade before reaching print in Edinburgh.

The circulation of transcripts was fundamental to the study and publication of medieval texts in Britain during the nineteenth century. Here, the logistics of publication intersected with the social practice of literary antiquarian research. The production of transcripts was an essential favour that antiquaries could provide for one another, requiring diplomatic expertise and an often considerable expenditure of time and effort. One of the few surviving letters from Ritson to Scott provides an illustration of the importance of the exchange of transcripts. Ritson thanks Scott for the transcript of *Sir Orpheo*, remarking on the difference between the Auchinleck and the Harley copy, on which he based his edition.[56] In turn, Ritson encloses a copy of a 'very ancient poem . . . which I learn from Mr. Ellis, you are desirous to see'.[57] He also includes a transcript of Geoffrey of Monmouth's life of Merlin, requesting that 'you will have the goodness to return me at you leisure, as I have some intention of printing it'.[58] Transcripts could be exchanged, and function as gifts, but had the potential to go astray. Sending Scott a transcript of a work he intended to print was an act of trust on Ritson's part. One reason (among many) for Ritson's hatred of the controversial Scottish antiquary John Pinkerton (an early promoter of Germanic racial supremacy) was Pinkerton's inclusion of the *Awntyrs of Arthure*, under the title of 'Sir Gawan and Sir Galaron of Galloway', in his *Scotish Poems* of 1792. The manuscript of this text was one of the few owned by Ritson, having been left to him by his friend John Baynes. However, after Baynes's death, his executors allowed Douce to make a

transcript before the manuscript was given to Ritson. Douce lent this transcript to Pinkerton, on the condition that it not be published. Pinkerton applied to Ritson for his consent to the publication, but went ahead despite his refusal. This led to an escalation of an already vicious conflict between the two men as Ritson delivered a scathing denunciation of Pinkerton in the *Gentleman's Magazine*.[59]

There are several passing references in Ellis's letters to transcripts acquired from Ritson. In January of 1802, discussing a transcript requested by Scott, Ellis casually mentions a conversation with Ritson:

I am almost certain that the Poem quoted by Warton has been very carefully transcribed by Ritson, & that I have had it in my possession . . . Ritson, I think, added, when he put it into my hand, that the writing was also the most difficult that he had ever encountered. Now if all this be so, as I am sure that Ritson sets very little store by his transcript, I could easily write to him to beg the loan of it, & would undertake to send you a perfectly faithful copy of it, and this would be attended with less difficulty, perhaps, than to procure a copy from the Museum, & to request Douce to collate that copy with the original; a precaution absolutely necessary where Ayscough, or indeed any person except Ritson, undertakes to transcribe a very antique MS.[60]

Despite the 'splenetic feeling' Anderson had reported a few months earlier, Ellis is on good enough terms with Ritson to confidently request a favour. Ellis provides a reminder that the use of transcripts has consequences. Diplomatic skill varied considerably, and to rely on a transcript required trust in its accuracy, or a request for further favours. Ellis proposes two different routes by which Scott could gain access to manuscripts held in London without leaving Edinburgh, both of which required the coordination and cooperation of multiple parties. The production and exchange of transcripts was both a practical necessity of the publication process and a way in which the antiquarian 'republic of letters' was maintained.

'[A]ll that I have hitherto done (which is but little)'

Ritson's 'groundless jealousy' arose from his fear that *Kyng Alisaunder* would pre-empt his own collection, leading to accusations that he had been ill-treated and misled by Park and Ellis, who had assured him it would not. In his letter to Anderson, Park expresses exasperation, having assumed that the matter had been resolved before Ritson's trip to Edinburgh:

The futility of his fears respecting Adam Davie's getting the start of his K. Horn &c. will be sufficiently apparent when I inform you, that his first volume is partly printed, & and that all his copy is prepared, whereas Davie's geste has not yet proceeded to press . . . Besides, was the whole work ready for appearance before the public eye, I do assure you that it sh^d be withheld till he marched forward in the van of Editorship.[61]

Ritson's 'ill-humour' illustrates the social conventions and expectations which governed literary antiquarian work. Ritson expected others to know of his plans and to share their plans honestly with him. Furthermore, Park's claim that Ellis 'had collected materials himself, at a great expense, for a similar public*atio*n & had abandoned his design solely with a view of serving his Calumniator' is not supported by Ellis's description of his progress. At this point, Ellis had rough plans for a collection of prose abstracts of English metrical romance, but had only begun to collect his materials.

Ellis's letters to Scott allow a rough timeline of his progress to be assembled. In April of 1801, Ellis writes to Scott, mentioning that 'My project to which you so kindly offer to contribute your valuable assistance' is still in its infancy, and responding to Scott's offer with several requests:

I am extremely obliged to you for your kind offer respecting the transcription of MSS. If you could find a person willing to copy the romance of Sir Otuel, I should be very happy to give him whatever you may judge a fair remuneration for his trouble. Douce possesses, & I mean to transcribe *a* romance on the subject of Charlemagne, or rather of Fieràbras, but I presume that Sir Otuel must be different from that. Mr Park is now transcribing for me a romance called Merlin which I suspect to be the same with yours, but when it shall be finished I will request you to enable me to supply so much of the story as shall prove to be deficient, the Lincoln's Inn MS. being evidently imperfect.[62]

From this period, transcripts were exchanged frequently between London and Edinburgh: Ellis drew extensively on the Auchinleck manuscript for his *Romances*, without ever examining it personally; Scott likewise relied heavily on the French fragments of *Sir Tristran* in Douce's collection. However, Ellis never mentions remuneration again: these are gifts, and while there is an expectation of reciprocal exchange, this can never be explicitly demanded.

Many of these transcripts still exist. In *Scott, Chaucer, and Medieval Romance*, Jerome Mitchell assembles a comprehensive list of the texts known to Scott, incidentally providing a list of the transcripts provided by Ellis held in Abbotsford today, including *Arthour and Merlin*, *Bevis of Hampton*, *Richard Cœur de Lion*, *Roswall and Lillian*, *Sir Egare*, *Sir Ferumbras*, and *Sir Isumbras*.[63] Scott's knowledge of medieval romance, unrivalled except by Ellis, Ritson, Leyden, Weber, and Douce, was a pervasive influence on his work, as Mitchell painstakingly demonstrates. Scott gained this knowledge through his access to the Auchinleck and his participation in antiquarian manuscript culture.

Ellis provided Scott with frequent reports on the progress of his own and Ritson's collections. Although the transcripts promised by Scott (and prepared by Leyden's younger brother) began to arrive in the summer of 1801, Ellis admitted that 'My grande opus on Romances is not yet begun, having been delayed by my attention to the aforesaid life of Alexander; but I mean to be very busy this autumn'.[64] That autumn saw Ritson's visit to Edinburgh, at which point Park reported to Anderson that '[Ritson] has two Vols of metrical romances proceeding

to press, & Mr. Ellis intents to follow them up with an extended project'.[65] However, both projects would be delayed. In October of 1802, Ellis reported to Scott that 'Ritson has not yet *published* his romances (I beg his pardon Romanceës) because Nicol has very naturally taken the alarm at the enormous portion of blasphemy' in his 'Dissertation', noting that the necessary cancels would destroy any hope of profit.[66] In February of 1803, Ellis used Leyden's visit to London on his way to India as an opportunity have him look over what had been completed:

I have brought up to town & put into the hands of Leyden all that I have hitherto done (which is but little) in the prosecution of my plan . . . But when I shall be able to report progress God knows – for I have a thousand avocations which steal away my time and, which is more fatal to my progress, destroy the frame of mind which is necessary to help one to write quiet nonsense.[67]

Ellis has completed only a small fraction of his intended design, transposing the romances of *Guy of Warwick*, *Richard Cœur de Lion*, *Sir Triamour*, and *Sir Isumbras*. As late as July of 1804, only a fraction of the work was complete, as Ellis responded to an offer of a fresh transcript of *Lay le Fraine* (Longman and Rees having misplaced one sent earlier) with the assurance that 'I am in no *immediate* hurry for it, because, though I have finished my introduction, appendix No 1 and No 2, and the first part of Merlin, I have the second part of Merlin, Morte Arthur, Sir Bevis, Sir Otuel, Feragris and Ferumbras to analyse' before he could turn to the new material.[68]

Between April of 1801, and its publication in 1805, the shape of Ellis's collection changed dramatically, largely in response to the materials that Scott sent from Edinburgh. An important feature of Ellis's work was the identification of classes of romances 'relating to Arthur' (*Merlin* and the stanzaic *Morte Arthur*) and 'relating to Charlemagne' (*Roland and Ferragus; Sir Otuel* and *Sir Ferumbas*). When he first began the project, Park was transcribing *Merlin* from the Lincoln's Inn manuscript, and Ellis hoped that the Auchinleck copy, if it was the same text, could supply deficiencies. Although they do correspond, Lincoln's Inn covers only the first quarter of the text found in the Auchinleck, and over the course of the summer Ellis moved from assuring Scott 'I would not willingly trouble you for any more of that Romance', to the awareness that he absolutely required the continuation, 'as I did not think there existed any *connected metrical* history of King Arthur' and '*Your* Merlin added to the *metrical* Mort Arture . . . will make me very strong on the ground of the round-table knights'.[69] Similarly, Ellis was only able to identify a trio of English romances relating to Charlemagne once he had determined that the texts in the Auchinleck were distinct from the text he meant to transcribe from Douce's collection, the transcript provided by Steevens. Ellis did not consider *The Seven Wise Masters* worth including until he had read Scott's description of it in the appendix to *Sir Tristrem*, and requested a transcript in May of 1804.[70] Ellis's *Romances* could not have taken their final form, and would have been an inferior work, without the transcripts that began to flow from Edin-

burgh in 1801. Despite his frequent delays, an extraordinary amount of work was accomplished in a brief period.

Park's claim that Ellis had collected materials for his own work before resigning the project to Ritson is an overstatement, one which masks a more complex collaborative process. Ellis mentions delaying his work, not for Ritson, but until Scott has published the new edition of the *Minstrelsy* in 1803, and *Sir Tristrem* in 1804, so that he could build upon Scott's historical arguments as the foundation for his introductory essay. Ellis's awareness of Ritson's plans did shape his choices, although not to degree claimed by Park. Describing the 'Gest of King Horn' in *The Early English Poets* (1801), Ellis refers readers to Warton's 'excellent abridgment of it', along with a footnote:

Having procured from the Museum a transcript of this very curious work, I should not have failed to insert it entire, but that I had reason to hope that the task of editing it will fall into much better hands. The reader will certainly learn with pleasure that Mr. Ritson has it in contemplation to publish a series of our old metrical romances, many of which exist only in manuscript. Such a work executed by him, is likely to prove the most valuable repertory of early language and manners that has yet been presented to the public.[71]

If Ritson is planning an edition, it becomes unnecessary to include the entire text in his *Specimens*. Ellis had a keen sense of the ways in which his work would function intertextually, and his decisions about what to include were shaped by his awareness of what had been, or would be, published by others.

'[A] taste (or at least an affectation of taste) for literary antiquity'

When Scott first wrote to Ellis to offer him the contents of the Auchinleck, Ellis replied with an ambitious suggestion: 'I contemplate [my project] with pleasure, & shall prosecute it with much more, if I find that besides your edition of Sir Tristram . . . you can find among your booksellers such a stock of public spirit as shall induce them to undertake the publication of the whole volume, or at least of all the metrical Romances'.[72] Ellis's suggestion corresponded with plans already developing in Edinburgh. In March of 1801, Leyden wrote to Heber, promising him a list of the contents of the Auchinleck manuscript:

It occurred to both Scott and me that in order to have the best editions of these Romances prepared those of which no other copy exists but in our MS as they may certainly be most accurately printed here, should make a series with Tristrem, while those of which you have copies and which you reckon worth the publishing may be improved by adopting the best variae Lectiones from our MS. Therefore if Ritson and Mr Ellis will send us down proof sheets of their publications and extracts, Scott and I will collate them accurately with our MS., and return them as quickly possible. Ritson and Ellis may judge of what advantage they imagine this will be to their Editions . . . P. S. Pray Send me the names of the Ro-

mances which Ritson has undertaken to edit and those which Ellis is to transpose and we will shortly give you a plan of our operations. [73]

At this point, Leyden and Scott are still unsure of which texts are unique copies, and which have counterparts elsewhere. Leyden even suspects that Ritson might have a version of *Sir Tristrem*, and in that case 'there can be no propriety in giving two editions'.[74] Leyden assumes that the men working on medieval romance will pool their resources, adapting their plans as they are informed of the plans of others. A week later, Leyden writes directly to Ellis, offering to collate the proofs of Ritson's romances with the Auchinleck.[75] Leyden proposes an extremely efficient and collaborative system, an ambitious project to be undertaken by half-a-dozen men. He offers a clear vision of the publication of medieval romance as a collaborative project. While the reality was considerably messier, the possibility of collaboration, even uneasy collaboration, between men as dissimilar as Ritson and Ellis testifies to the importance of a 'republic of letters'.

Two manuscripts now held in the National Library of Wales provide striking evidence of the practice of Ritson and Ellis. These manuscripts have been extensively described by Simon Meecham-Jones in his 2001 article '"For Mr. Ritson's Collection" – George Ellis, Joseph Ritson and National Library of Wales MSS 5599, 5600c'. As Meecham-Jones demonstrates, the transcripts were made by Samuel Ayscough and an unnamed 'young man' sometime after 1799 from texts held in the British Museum.[76] There are notes in three other hands, identified by Meecham-Jones as Ritson, Ellis, and Douce. He finds some evidence that Ellis might have used these transcripts while preparing his *Romances*, and some suggestions that Ritson might have used them as the base-text for his edition, as a provisional text revised through collation with the original.[77] As Meecham-Jones argues, the possible use of these transcripts by both men at about the same time suggests a greater degree of mutual assistance than has generally been assumed, and provides evidence of 'how far the editing of medieval romance was achieved by a mutually-supportive small circle of scholars, each 'liberal in his communications', and to some degree dependent on the efforts, insights and encouragement of his fellows'.[78]

Two notes on the first folio of MS 5599c in Ellis's hand provide further evidence of practice of this circle. The recto lists 'Romances intended for Mr. Ritson's collection', the verso 'Romances intended for publication by Scott & Leyden':

Scott –	Sir Tristram, making, with preface & notes, a volume connected with his minstrelsy of the border.	
Leyden –	Otuel Roland & Verrnagus Florice & Blancheflour	Vol 1 – all Charlemagnian
	Orfeo & Heurodis Sir Owain Lay le Frayne	Vol 2
	Clariodus & Meliades	Vol 3 – by G. Douglas / probably
There will remain	Syr Degairee Reinbrun	which will, perhaps, be edited by Leyden

Meecham-Jones interprets the former as a description of the two manuscripts themselves as a commission 'for Mr. Ritson's collection', and the latter as evidence 'of Ellis's close collaboration with what might be named the 'Edinburgh circle' of editors and enthusiasts'.[79]

I would offer a different interpretation of the first note. The list of texts 'intended for Mr. Ritson's collection' is identical to the contents of Ritson's *Romanceës*, and it is unlikely, but not impossible, that the transcripts were commissioned by Ritson.[80] The note is more likely to be a memorandum by Ellis recording his understanding of Ritson's intentions. The second note reflects an ambitious and ultimately unrealized project to publish texts found in the Advocates' Library (*Clariodus*, a sixteenth-century Scottish romance, had been donated by Lord Hailes upon his death in 1792). Notably, there is an attempt to identify a body of romances relating to Charlemagne, and to give it a prominent place in the corpus of English metrical romance, as Ellis would do. Together, these two notes provide a snapshot of the field of romance scholarship in Britain, as understood by Ellis, sometime in 1801 or 1802: many projects are planned and underway, different editors have staked their claims on different texts. Some of these would be finished and published, most would not. Within this collaborative network of scholars, an awareness of the plans of others was necessary to prevent inefficient duplication. Ritson's 'splenetic feeling' was not merely the result of individual ill-humour, but evidence of an expectation of collaboration and accommodation, only visible when Ritson unfairly feared it had been violated.

Despite Anderson's failure to include more medieval writers in *The Works of the British Poets*, Ellis and Scott had reason to hope that booksellers might undertake this project. Ellis had been able to expand his *Specimens of the Early English Poets* to include a discussion of medieval verse with carefully selected examples, with frequent calls for complete editions. Writing to Scott in June of 1801, Ellis thanks him for the news that *The Early English Poets* was well received in Edinburgh, remarking that 'They sell pretty well, as Nicol tells me, which I am glad to hear as it seems to prove that a taste for domestic literature is becoming popular'.[81] By the next month, he could report:

Nicol (my publisher) seems to be much pleased with its sale . . . The work has already done some good in diffusing a taste (or at least an affectation of taste) for literary antiquity, but I would wish to make it a really useful assistant to young Poets by diffusing among them just & rational opinions about the merit of their ancestors'.[82]

Taste, though it can influence poets, is measured in sales, and closely monitored by publishers. In 1803, Southey remarked of his translation of the Iberian romance *Amadis of Gaul* (made possible by Heber, who had lent him his copy), 'I do not expect the book to sell well. . . . Ellis can give a fashion to his own books, but he cannot make his taste general enough to sell this of mine'.[83] Nicol's enthusiasm may account for his willingness to take on Ritson's more risky work, especially if, as Park claimed, Ellis had intervened on his behalf. A change in taste was underway, enough for publishers to risk the publication of Ellis and Ritson's *Romance(ë)s*, but not, ultimately, enough to sustain the larger project. Despite Scott's hopes, even Ellis's popularization failed to create enough of a market to support editions of medieval romance prepared by individual scholars. After Ritson's death, Percy wrote to Park, offering him the use of his manuscripts to continue Ritson's project. Park declined, explaining that 'I think Ritson's plan injudicious, and his execution of it repulsive; whence his book is likely to prove unsaleable'.[84] Ellis, having finally printed his *Romances*, explained to Scott that:

the success of Ritson's work has not been such as to seduce our booksellers; and so few of them are disposed to encourage the prospect of editing *intire* [*sic*] any future tales of the same sort that Park seems to be perfectly cured of the prospect of editing the 'life of Alexander'[85]

Southey, visiting Edinburgh and Scott in 1805, confessed to Wynn that 'Were there any sale for such things I would willingly add three more volumes to Ritsons – but these must be left to be done by future Academies'.[86] Prose romance fared little better, and despite its influence on poets when it was published, a new edition of Malory's *Le Morte Darthur* was difficult to achieve, and both Scott and Southey struggled unsuccessfully for years to find a form acceptable to publishers.[87]

Weber's collection of 1810 was the last attempt to realize the project that had seemed possible in 1801, and was recognized as untenable in 1805. In several cases, Weber relied upon the transcripts made earlier in the decade and provided by Ellis, most notably for *Kyng Alisaunder*, as well as for *Richard Cœur de Lion* and others not specified.[88] Weber positions his collection as the continuation of the work begun by Ritson, reflecting that 'The study of ancient English poetry in general, having very rapidly increased within these few years', 'a second collection of metrical romances' might be welcome, and justifying his editorial practice with an appeal to the precedent set by 'the accurate Ritson'.[89] Five of his ten romances had been transposed by Ellis. However, his collection was, as Matthews argues, 'an ill-fated project from the outset' – subscriptions were not forthcoming, Scott withdrew his support, and Weber struggled to find a publisher for a work of far more limited scope than his initial plans to 'rescue all the ancient English romances . . . from their present precarious existence in manuscript, and difficult accessibility in public libraries'.[90] Despite the extraordinary and influential accomplishments of the period, many texts, including the majority of the romances in the Auchinleck, remained unrescued.

The 'deluge' of works on medieval romance which appeared in Britain in the first decade of the nineteenth century was the product of a collaborative network of scholars, and only a portion of the work that they envisioned. The configuration that made these works possible – Scott, Leyden, Anderson, and the Auchinleck in Edinburgh; Ellis, Ritson, Douce, Park, and the British Museum in London; Heber willing to travel between them, and a few publishers willing to take a risk – existed only briefly. Ritson died in 1803; Leyden travelled to India in the same year, dying there in 1811. Although Ellis continued his correspondence with Scott, he did not produce any new literary antiquarian work before his death in 1815. Scott turned to more profitable work. While Heber, Douce, Anderson, and Park continued to investigate early English literature in their different ways, they too turned away from medieval romance to other projects, rarely venturing further back than the Elizabethan period. However, the works that were produced 'wholly altered the conception of British literature', a testament to what could be accomplished by 'dignified sensibility & friendly exertion'.

Notes

1   Joseph Ritson, *Ancient Engleish Metrical Romanceës, Selected and Publish'd by Joseph Ritson*, 3 vols. (London: G. and W. Nicol, 1802); Walter Scott, *Sir Tristrem: A Metrical Romance of the Thirteenth Century* (Edinburgh: Archibald Constable; London: Longman and Rees, 1804); George Ellis, *Specimens of Early English Metrical Romances*, 3 vols. (London: Longman, Hurst, Rees, and Orme; Edinburgh: A. Constable and Co., 1805); Henry Weber, *Metrical Romances of the Thirteenth, Fourteenth, and Fifteenth Centuries*, 3 vols. (Edinburgh: Archibald Constable, and John Murray; London: Constable, Hunter, Park, and Hunter, 1810).

2   Stuart Curran, *Poetic Form and British Romanticism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986), 129–30.

3   Joep Leerssen, 'Literary Historicism: Romanticism, Philologists, and the Presence of the Past', *Modern Language Quarterly* 65, no. 2 (2004): 221–43, 221. doi:10.1215/00267929-65-2-221.

4   For the theoretical debates on the origins of romance, and Ritson and Ellis's responses to them, see Arthur Johnston, *Enchanted Ground: The Study of Medieval Romance in the Eighteenth Century* (London: Athlone Press, 1964) and Monica Santini, *The Impetus of Amateur Scholarship: Discussing and Editing Medieval Romance in Late-Eighteenth and Nineteenth-Century Britain* (Bern; New York: Peter Lang, 2010).

5   Prices are taken from *The Annual Review*. Reviews of Ritson and Ellis appeared in volumes 2 (1803) and 4 (1805) respectively. Both reviews were written by Robert Southey. Kenneth Curry, 'Southey's Contributions to the *Annual Review*', *Bulletin of Bibliography* 17, no. 10 (1939): 195–6.

6   Ritson, I:i. Ritson advocated for a reformed spelling system on etymological grounds. The passage is taken from the essay 'On the Ancient Metrical Romances', which opens the third volume of Percy's *Reliques*, and is repeated, with no significant changes (although the rest of the essay changed considerably), in the editions of 1767, 1775, and 1794.

7   Review of Joseph Ritson, *Ancient Engleish Metrical Romanceës*, *British Critic* 24 (September 1804): 231–43, 234.

8   Robert Southey to Samuel Taylor Coleridge, 14 March 1803, in *The Collected Letters of Robert Southey, Part Two: 1798-1803*, ed. Ian Packer and Lynda Pratt, *Romantic Circles,* accessed 1 March 2016, https://www.rc.umd.edu/editions/southey_letters.

9   Thomas Park to Robert Anderson, November 1801, MS 22.4.10, National Library of Scotland, 213v.

10   Bertrand Harris Bronson, *Joseph Ritson, Scholar-at-Arms*, 2 vols. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1938), 257.

11   Weber's 1810 edition would not be superseded until the publication of G. V. Smithers, ed*., Kyng Alisaunder*, Early English Text Society Original Series 227, 237 (London: Oxford University Press, 1951, 1957; reprinted 1961, 1969).

12   Leerssen, 'Literary Historicism', 221.

13   Ibid., 227.

14   George Ellis, *Specimens of the Early English Poets*, 2nd ed., 3 vols. (London: G. and W. Nicol, 1801), I:59.

15   Ellis *Romances*, II:356.

16   Derek Pearsall and I. C. Cunningham, eds. *The Auchinleck Manuscript: National Library of Scotland Advocates' MS. 19.2.1* (London: Scholar Press in association with the National Library of Scotland, 1977), vii–viii.

17   Thomas I. Rae, 'The Origins of the Advocates' Library' and Ian Gordon Brown, ' "This Old Magazine of Antiquities" The Advocates' Library as National Museum', in *For The Encouragement of Learning: Scotland's National Library 1689-1989*, ed. Patrick Cadell and Ann Matheson (Edinburgh: Her Majesty's Stationary Office, 1989). The other essays in this collection provide further evidence of how this function influenced acquisitions.

18   The ways in which Scottish, English, and British national literary histories and identities were constructed and negotiated in these works are beyond the scope of this article, although they are of immense importance.

19 David Matthews, *The Making of Middle English, 1765-1910* (Minneapolis; London: University of Minnesota Press, 1999), xxii.

20 Ibid., 9.

21 Ibid., 85–109.

22 Ibid., 113–61.

23 [Walter Scott], review of *Specimens of Early English Metrical Romances,* by George Ellis, and *Ancient Engleish Metrical Romanceës,* by Joseph Ritson, *Edinburgh Review* 7, no. 6 (Jan 1806): 387–413, 390.

24 Ibid., 396.

25 Ibid.

26 Ibid., 388.

27 Ibid., 395.

28 Ibid., 413.

29 Leerssen, 240–41.

30 Thomas F. Bonnell, *The Most Disreputable Trade: Publishing the Classics of English Poetry 1765-1810* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), Oxford Scholarship Online, 2011. doi:10.1093/acprof:oso/9780199532209.001.0001.

31 Ibid., 213.

32 Ibid., 201 and 226.

33 [Robert Southey] review of Joseph Ritson, *Ancient Engleish Metrical Romanceës*, *Annual Review and History of Literature* 2 (1803): 515–533, 533.

34 Walter Scott, *The Letters of Walter Scott, Volume 1, 1787-1807*, ed. H. J. C Grierson (London: Constable & Co, 1932), 110.

35 Rosemary Sweet, *Antiquaries: The Discovery of the Past in Eighteenth-Century Britain* (London: Hambledon and London, 2004), 61.

36 Bronson, *Joseph Ritson*, 245–48.

37 Park to Anderson, 12 October, 1801, MS 22.4.10, National Library of Scotland, 211r.

38 Park to Anderson, November 1801, MS 22.4.10, National Library of Scotland, 213v.

39 Sweet, *Antiquaries*, 60.

40 W. P. Courtney, 'Park, Thomas (1758/9–1834)', rev. by John D. Haigh, in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, ed. H. C. G. Matthew and Brian Harrison (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004); online ed., ed. Lawrence Goldman, May 2006, accessed 1 March 2016, http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/21280.

41 National Library of Scotland, MS 22.4.10.

42 I. M. Brown, 'John Leyden (1775-1811): His Life and Works' (PhD thesis, University of Edinburgh, 1955), 64–65.

43 Ibid., 197 and 199.

44 Arnold Hunt, 'Bibliotheca Heberiana' in *Antiquaries, Book Collectors and the Circles of Learning*, ed. Robin Myers and Michael Harris (Delaware: Oak Knoll Press, 1996), 85–7.

45 Ibid., 87.

46 Ibid., 107 – 8.

47 Ellis to Scott, 1801, MS 873, National Library of Scotland, 5v.

48 Ellis to Scott, 15 June 1801, MS 873, National Library of Scotland, 6v.

49 Ellis to Scott, 11 February, 1802, MS 873, National Library of Scotland, 49r. A history of the study of the Thornton Manuscript, which depended upon the willingness of the Cathedral

hierarchy to lend the manuscript to interested antiquaries, can be found in George R. Keiser's 'The Nineteenth-Century Discovery of the Thornton Manuscript (Lincoln Cathedral Library MS. 91)', The Papers of the Bibliographical Society of America 77, no. 2 (1983): 167–90, doi: 10.1086/pbsa.77.2.24302618.

50 Hunt, 'Bibliotheca Heberiana', 100.

51 12 October 1802, 40r; 11 December 1802, 45r. The passages that Nicol objected to are lost, although Bronson records several cancels.

52 Ellis to Scott, July 1801, MS 873, National Library of Scotland, 11r.

53 Ellis to Scott, 25 August 1801, MS 873, National Library of Scotland, 15v.

54 Ellis to Scott, 29 May 1802, MS 873, National Library of Scotland, 39r.

55 Weber, *Metrical Romances*, I:xxxvii-xxxviii.

56 Joseph Ritson. *The Letters of Joseph Ritson, Esq.,* ed. Joseph Frank, 2 vols. (London: William Pickering, 1833), I:218.

57 Ibid.

58 Ibid., 219.

59 Bronson, *Joseph Ritson*, 189–90. Patrick O'Flaherty provides Pinkerton's perspective in *Scotland's Pariah: The Life and Work of John Pinkerton, 1758-1826* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2015) 71–2.

60 Ellis to Scott, July 1802, MS 873, National Library of Scotland, 34r.

61 Park to Anderson, November 1801, MS 22.4.10, National Library of Scotland, 213v.

62 Ellis to Scott, 2 April 1801, MS 873, National Library of Scotland, 2r.

63 Jerome Mitchell, *Scott, Chaucer, and Medieval Romance*: *A Study in Sir Walter Scott's Indebtedness to the Literature of the Middle Ages* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1987) 12–24.

64 Ellis to Scott, 18 July 1801, National Library of Scotland, 10r–11v.

65 Park to Anderson, n.d., MS 22.4.10, National Library of Scotland, 209v.

66 Ellis to Scott, 12 October 1802, MS 873, National Library of Scotland, 40r–40v.

67 Ellis to Scott, 11 February 1803, MS 873, National Library of Scotland, 47v.

68 Ellis to Scott, July 1804, MS 873, National Library of Scotland, 65r.

69 Ellis to Scott, n.d, 8r; 18 July 1801, 10r; 25 August 1801, National Library of Scotland, 15v.

70 Ellis to Scott, 20 May 1804, National Library of Scotland, 62rv.

71 Ellis, *Early English Poets,* 106.

72 Ellis to Scott, 2 April 1801. MS 873, National Library of Scotland, 1r–1v.

73 Leyden to Heber, 21 March 1801. MS 939, National Library of Scotland, 11–15.

74 Ibid., 12.

75 Ibid., 17.

76 Simon Meecham-Jones ' "For Mr. Ritson's Collection" – George Ellis, Joseph Ritson and National Library of Wales MSS 5599, 5600c.' English Studies (2011): 127 – 45, doi: 10.1076/enst.82.2.127.9594.

77 Ibid., 133–35.

78 Ibid., 145.

79 Ibid., 129 and 139.

80 I have no better suggestion for the origin of these transcripts. However, the timeline of Ritson's research, which can be established with the *Register of Manuscripts Sent to Reading Room of the British Museum*, Add MS 46510-6, makes Meecham-Jones's proposal unlikely.

81   Ellis to Scott, 15 June 1801, MS 873, National Library of Scotland, 7r.

82   Ellis to Scott, 18 July 1801, MS 873, National Library of Scotland, 11v.

83   Southey to Charles Watkin Williams Wynn, 5 May 1803, *Letters*.

84   Bronson, *Joseph Ritson*, 297.

85   Ellis to Scott, 4 June 1805, 74v.

86   Southey to Wynn, 20 October 1805, *Letters*.

87   Barry Gaines, 'The Editions of Malory in the Early Nineteenth Century', *The Papers of the Bibliographical Society of America*, 68 (1974): 1-17, doi: /10.1086/pbsa.68.1.24302417.

88   Weber, *Metrical Romances*, I:lxxi–lxxii.

89   Ibid., ix and lxiv.

90   Matthews, *The Making of Middle English,* 77. Weber, *Metrical Romances*, I:x.