Memorializing Women:

Imagining the Sapphic Monument in British Romantic Poetry

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"If not, let me remind you

… the lovely times we shared."

−Sappho, Fragment 94

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Abstract

In contrast to the ruins that often haunt masculine Romantic poems and focus on solitary mourning and concerns about legacy, this thesis examines elegies featuring natural monuments that preserve love between women and resist the rapidly transforming landscapes of an increasingly industrial British culture. This master's thesis combines current critical work on queer Romanticisms and ecologies to trace a tradition of the "Sapphic pastoral elegy" defined by alternative memorial practices. Each chapter will discuss different poetic examples of the affective power of "Sapphic monuments" on the characters and aesthetics of each work. By comparing earlier and later examples of poems on similar topics, I trace poets' sustained reliance on imaginative natural monuments as vehicles for mourning.

My first chapter examines several friendship poems from the Romantic period, featuring works by Eliza Cobbe, Anna Seward, and Dorothy Wordsworth. My second chapter studies Percy Bysshe Shelley's "Rosalind and Helen" and its relationship to his future *Adonais*, another queer pastoral elegy. My third chapter focuses on the Ladies of Llangollen, whose marriage-like exile in Wales inspired poems imagining their timelessness by Matilda Betham, Anna Seward, and William Wordsworth. My final chapter turns to elegies written by women poets for other women poets wherein the speakers wish for memorialization more fitting to the artists' lives.

Poetic representations of mourning in the Romantic period are famously centered on the self and on solitude, as Peter Sacks and Eric Smith have documented, but this thesis envisions different approaches to mourning and commemoration that do not depart from the period's major themes. Taken together, these Sapphic monuments appropriate the famous consolatory power of the elegy in order to imagine new possibilities for queer women in ostensibly erased pasts and uncertain futures.

Résumé

Contrairement aux ruines qui hantent souvent les poèmes par les romantiques masculins et qui se concentrent sur le deuil solitaire et les préoccupations par l'héritage, cette thèse examine les élégies qui figurent les monuments naturels où est centré l'amour entre les femmes et qui résistent les paysages qui se transforment rapidement dans la culture britannique de plus en plus industrielle. Cette thèse de maitrise combine la critique actuelle sur les romantismes et écologies queer dans le but de retrouver une tradition de « l'élégie pastorale saphique » définie par les pratiques mémorielles alternatives. Chaque chapitre discutera différents exemples poétiques du pouvoir affectif des « monuments saphiques » sur les personnages et esthétiques de chaque œuvre. En comparent les exemples antérieurs et postérieurs de poèmes sur des sujets semblables, je retracerai la dépendance soutenue des poètes sur les monuments naturels et imaginatifs qui sont des véhicules pour le deuil.

Mon premier chapitre examine plusieurs poèmes sur l'amitié datant de l'époque romantique qui incluent des œuvres par Eliza Cobbe, Anna Seward et Dorothy Wordsworth. Mon deuxième chapitre étudie « Rosalind and Helen » par Percy Bysshe Shelley et la relation du poème au futur « Adonais », une autre élégie pastorale queer par Shelley. Mon troisième chapitre se concentre sur les Ladies of Llangollen, pour lesquelles leur exil comme un mariage dans le pays des Galles a inspiré des poèmes qui imaginaient leur intemporalité par Matilda Betham, Anna Seward et William Wordsworth. Mon dernier chapitre tourne vers les élégies écrites par des poètes femmes pour d'autres poètes femmes dans lesquelles les locutrices souhaitent une commémoration plus convenable aux vies de ces artistes.

Les représentations poétiques du deuil dans l'époque romantique sont communément centrées sur la soi et la solitude, comme ont démontré Peter Sacks et Eric Smith, mais cette thèse

imagine des approches différentes au deuil et à la commémoration qui ne partent pas des thèmes majeurs de l'époque. Pris ensemble, ces monuments saphiques approprient le pouvoir consolant célèbre de l'élégie dans le but d'imaginer des nouvelles possibilités pour les femmes queer dans les passés ostensiblement effacés et des futurs incertains.

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Introduction

Thomas Gray's "Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard" (1751), the predecessor of Romantic elegies, depicts the simultaneous fragility and importance of commemorative monuments that are imagined within poems, regardless of the identity of the mourned:

> Yet ev'n these bones from insult to protect,
> Some frail memorial still erected nigh,
> With uncouth rhymes and shapeless sculpture deck'd,
> Implores the passing tribute of a sigh. (lines 77–80)

Speakers of elegiac poems, specifically of pastoral elegies, locate grief in material objects or places; they portray monuments, whether existing or imaginary, for the elegy's departed subject. Poems that depict specific places, moreover, are common in the Romantic period, such as John Clare's "Helpstone" (1820), Felicia Hemans's "The Homes of England" (1827), and Charlotte Smith's *Beachy Head* (1807). Increased attention to nature in the era of rising industrialism, fascination with ruins and the endurance of memory, and interest in classical influences contribute to the importance of pastoral settings in British Romanticism. English pastoral elegies, which include Edmund Spenser's "Astrophel" (1595) and John Milton's "Lycidas" (1638), evoke a shared space between their speaker and subject: "For we were nurs'd upon the self-same hill, / Fed the same flock, by fountain, shade, and rill" (Milton, "Lycidas" lines 23–24). Scholars such as George Haggerty and Timothy Morton have read the pastoral elegy for its link between homosocial relationships and depictions of idealized nature. My thesis adapts this methodology to reveal examples of the pastoral elegy that feature queer women during the Romantic period who find sanctuary together in resistance to the permanence of death.

I will refer to the relationships between women that I am investigating as Sapphic relationships, invoking the name of the Ancient Greek poet Sappho. The adjective "Sapphic" can also refer to the stanza form named after Sappho (Prins 63), but unless otherwise specified, I use it in this thesis to organize shared themes of lyricism and mourning in Romantic poems, themes that are crucial to Sappho's body of work. The sapphic stanza was not frequently employed in English-language poetry during the Romantic period; Anna Seward explicitly disliked the sapphic meter that Poet Laureate Robert Southey used (Moore, *Seward* xxxi). In addition to her recognition as an important woman poet, Sappho was partly known in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries for the same-sex desire between women that is legible in poems such as in fragment 94.[1] Hester Thrale Piozzi, for example, famously accuses the Ladies of Llangollen, Marie Antoinette, and Anne Damer of same-sex desire by calling them "Sapphists" (Rupp 132). Even so, Sappho's name was primarily used positively, with famous Romantic poets referred to as "Sapphos," including Felicia Hemans, Letitia Elizabeth Landon, and Mary Robinson.

Sappho's fragment 94, as translated by Diane Rayor, features a speaker, Sappho, in dialogue with a woman who is leaving her. In her parting words to the woman, she says "Go happily / and remember me" (lines 6–7) and recounts "the lovely times we shared" (10). These memories are an enumeration of natural objects, "Many crowns of violets, / roses, and crocuses together / … you put on by my side" (11–13), rooted in a specific interior locale: "on soft beds / … delicate … / you quenched your desire" (21–23). The speaker, however, goes on to claim that

> Not any …
> no holy site …

[1] Sappho's poetry remains only in references from her contemporaries in Ancient Greece and in fragments that began to be rediscovered during the Renaissance and continue to be unearthed (Obbink 14). During the eighteenth century, British readers would have had access to fragments 1 and 31 as well as the mythologies about Sappho as a figure of lyric desire and mourning (M. Reynolds 8–10). The ellipses in quotes from Sappho indicate where lines are missing or indecipherable in the available manuscripts. The association of Sappho with fragments has led to "the idealization of Sappho herself as the perfect fragment," lending power to her name alone as poets and critics construct a variety of meanings from her remaining traces (Prins 3).

we left uncovered,

no grove … dance
… sound. (24–28)

The speaker shifts from addressing secular nature and objects to the religious "holy site." Where earlier the flowers that adorned the subject were the sources of the speaker's admiration, now the speaker's memories of their shared time are rooted in actions such as "dance" which brought them through spaces, the "holy site" and "grove." This fragment is not overtly an elegy, because the subject is still depicted as alive and because an unknown number of lines are missing. Even so, the mournful tone that prompts a series of recollections aligns with the tradition of the elegy and "makes acute the awareness of what is gone, thereby heightening the sense of desire for the absent beloved" (Snyder 45). When the speaker associates her memories of the woman who has left her with images of specific enclosed locations, she establishes the importance of place in the poetic commemoration of their love.

Reading queerness, especially Sapphic desire, in Romantic poetry is not an easy task. Before the advent of sexology, same-sex desire was recognized as an action rather than an identity, and this action was criminalized, therefore restricting the clarity and number of records that are available to us now (Faderman 172). Women's same-sex desire was frequently interpreted as close friendship or sisterhood, resulting in fewer convicted cases than men's same-sex desire during the time when homosexuality was criminalized in Britain.[2] Fictional and poetic representations of women's same-sex desire provide more insight into how it was viewed. Emma Donoghue chronicles the history of "passions between women" in Britain prior to the late-

[2] Examples of the criminalization of same-sex desire between women during the later eighteenth century include Mary Hamilton's prosecution in England for fraud related to her being a "female husband," 1790s trials of Dutch women, and the murder of the Princesse de Lamballe because of her rumoured sexual relationship with Marie Antoinette (Lanser, "Befriending the Body" 184).

nineteenth-century identity of the lesbian and finds several examples during the long eighteenth century that characterize women's same-sex desire as erotic and scandalous (*Passions Between Women* 4–7). Lillian Faderman, Eve Sedgwick, and Martha Vicinus have long debated the parameters of queer readings of women during this period.[3] My position remains closest to Sharon Marcus's in *Between Women* (2007), wherein she bridges the binary between lesbian and heterosexual interpretations of women's love "to conceptualize friendships between women who embodied feminine norms; to see the differences between female friendship, female marriage, and unrequited love between women; and to understand how friendship extended well beyond an isolated 'female world'" (Marcus 12). Turning to "Sapphic" to specify the importance of women's lyricism and mourning embraces the ambiguity of the relationships that I study.

Anne Lister, a nineteenth-century aristocrat who displayed her romantic relationships with women in encoded diaries, is one of few examples during the Romantic period of a woman who expressed sexual attraction for women: "I love, & only love, the fairer sex & thus beloved by them in turn, my heart revolts from any other love than theirs" (Lister 145). Apart from such rare examples of coded same-sex desire between women, queer readings of Romantic women are uncertain. Richard Sha, however, has noted that "a notion of Romantic transcendence, along with Foucauldian sexual chronologies, have also tended to erase sexuality from Romanticist scholarship" (Sha). Sapphic readings do not definitively attribute sexual orientations to the characters or poets involved but seek instead to explain, according to Carla Freccero, "a certain unsettling in relation to heteronormativity" (485). By looking specifically for material

[3] Lillian Faderman defines "romantic friendships" as "love relationships in every sense except perhaps the genital" (16); Eve Sedgwick's "Closeted-ness . . . is a performance initiated as such by the speech act of a silence" into which we can read queerness (3); Martha Vicinus contrasts "sensual romantic friendship and sexual Sapphism" that grew more divided between classes following Marie Antoinette's death (xvii–xviii). These theorizations of women's love during the long nineteenth century are more nuanced than this summary of their core concepts, but my approach is closest to Sharon Marcus's ambiguous readings of women's love in literature.

manifestations of same-sex affection and desire in a pastoral elegy, my research further investigates these queer moments according to José Muñoz's "trace": "the remains, the things that are left, hanging in the air like a rumor" (65). Indeed, elegiac monuments crafted in Sapphic nature are such traces, both in material monuments constructed within the poems and in the textual trace of the written poem itself.

The poems that I study in this thesis feature what I have termed the "Sapphic monument," a material object or site rooted in nature that is the source of recalled memories shared between women in elegiac poems of the Romantic period.[4] Expanding on the *OED*'s definitions of monument as "something that by its survival commemorates and distinguishes a person, action, period, event, etc." (sense 4a), the Sapphic monument can be several different types of natural objects: a garden, a willow tree, or a pyramid of ice. When speakers attribute the commemorative qualities of monuments to natural landmarks or entire landscapes, they draw on the cyclicality of seasons to grant permanence to these monuments. Other works of the Romantic period that include Sapphic or lesbian relationships that do not figure into this project include Samuel Taylor Coleridge's non-elegiac poem "Christabel" (1816), in which the deceptive relationship between Christabel and Geraldine does not receive a monument, and the novels *A Description of Millenium Hall and the Country Adjacent* by Sarah Scott (1762) and Eliza Fenwick's *Secresy; or, the Ruin on the Rock* (1795)—I limit my explorations of the pastoral elegy to poetic forms.

The representative role of ruins for many Romantic men depicts the ongoing and premature failure of these monuments to preserve the memory of what they commemorated. For example, the speaker of Byron's *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage* (1812–1818) turns to Roman ruins

[4] Sylvia Molloy has used the term "sapphic monument" in a chapter of *Sex and Sexuality in Latin America: An Interdisciplinary Reader* (1997) but does not contextualize it as a term of its own; the monument that she refers to is a tribute to Sappho as a figure representing same-sex desire and women's writing in Alejandra Pizarnik's *La bucanera de Pernambuco, o Hilda la polígrafa* (Molloy 250).

to express solitary mourning and to lament the fall of the empire as he "meditate[s] amongst decay, and stand[s] / A ruin amidst ruins" (lines 218–219). Childe Harold's concern toward his personal legacy originates from the increased industrialization of labour wherein creative individuality has begun to become suppressed as formal artistic patronage was less frequently practiced (Moore, *Sister Arts* 11). Additionally, the stone of the architectural ruins in John Keats's "On Seeing the Elgin Marbles" (1817) and Percy Bysshe Shelley's "Ozymandias" (1818) is traditionally associated with allegedly masculine strength whereas nature is frequently feminized in Romantic poetry. In contrast to these ruins, what I term the era's "Sapphic pastoral elegies" feature natural monuments which preserve love between women and resist the rapidly transforming landscapes of an increasingly industrial and imperial British culture.

Women writing death in the Romantic period grapple with issues of remembrance for women whose lives are at risk of being forgotten by history. Charlotte Smith's elegiac sonnets, which were foundational to the melancholy turn of the sonnet during the Romantic period (Knowles and Horrocks 18), depict instances of death and failure that are remedied by the comfort of nature's sublimity. For example, the character in "Sonnet LXIV" "feels returning health and hope again" where "romantic rocks that boldly swell, / Fringed with green woods, or stain'd with veins of ore, / Call'd native Genius forth," but the magnificent landscapes still fail to provide adequate healing for the mourner even though they are inspiring (lines 3, 5–7). Smith's speakers do not fit the model of joint mourning that I examine but they still offer alternative histories and landscapes that resist patriarchal aspects of the Romantic period in favour of a feminist world. Similarly, Lucy Aikin and Felicia Hemans, in *Epistles on Women* (1810) and *Records of Woman* (1828), develop entire collections of poetry dedicated to commemorating women throughout history. Anne Lister writes in her diary that she is "resolved not to let my life

pass without some private memorial that I may hereafter read, perhaps with a smile, when Time has frozen up the channel of those sentiments which flow so freshly now" (80). These women writers, while they understand the precarity of their legacies, are dissatisfied with allowing women's histories to pass into oblivion and turn to the permanence of nature for this refuge.

In the Sapphic elegies that I discuss, the natural monument expands beyond a specific memorial site or object to form a queer ecology in the surrounding landscape. In these queer ecologies, the affect of these memorials extends to the wider setting, such as a forest, a mountainous landscape, or a valley. Within these poems, passing tourists or returning witnesses to Sapphic monuments encounter the broader world of nature and, through nature, memory. In William Wordsworth's "Lines Composed a Few Miles Above Tintern Abbey" (1798), the object that the speaker longs for is his own memory of the landscape before he turns to his sister; Dorothy Wordsworth focuses instead on shared memory from the beginning of her poem "Irregular Verses" (1827), which I study in my first chapter. Elizabeth Freeman gestures toward the elegiac characteristics of queer theory when she describes "queer melancholia theory" and the "queer becoming-collective-across-time" that the traumas of historical and political erasure have caused (11). The elegy involves sharing profound grief due to loss or absence, and Romantic Sapphic women find adequate consolation in nature. The extended ecologies of these Sapphic elegies also become metatextual, wherein the poem itself acts as a memorial to the elegized subject, whether fictional or not. Sapphic elegies are grounded in the reality of real rather than classical representations of women, but they are also overtly idealistic by way of their frequent pastoral settings and optimistic projections of the endurance of women's legacies. The poems then act as a supplement to the Sapphic monument, as they aspire to the same task of elevating women's shared times and spaces to endurance in communal memory.

This thesis asks the following questions: How do Romantic women commemorate each other through poetry? With these poems, can we envision a new canon of queer pastoral elegies between women? What power does nature offer the Sapphic monument that is at the core of these elegies? I engage with critical works on women's literary relationships in the long eighteenth century by Paula Backscheider, Susan Lanser, Lisa Moore, and Laura L. Runge and Jessica Cook to answer these questions. Each of the poems that I examine was composed or published during the temporal scope of the British Romantic period, wherein poets were notably fascinated with geology, weather, and the materiality of nature (Harley 19). Anna Seward, who primarily composed her poems prior to the 1790s, and Letitia Elizabeth Landon, who wrote during the 1820s and 1830s, demonstrate the distribution of these themes across different phases of British history during the Romantic period, such as the French Revolution, the Year Without a Summer, the Industrial Revolution, and the Napoleonic Wars, which together contribute to anxieties about major changes to nature, urban life, and national identity (Murphy 2; Dale 76–77). Furthermore, this thesis includes poets who are men and women, poets who are part of major literary circles and who are not, and subjects who are fictional and real. This variety compares disparate poems to evaluate whether the Sapphic pastoral elegy has continuity throughout the Romantic period. Rather than studying poems in chronological order, I have separated the Sapphic elegies into different thematic categories to examine specific motifs across time.

My first chapter will compare Romantic elegiac poems by women whose speakers project their love for other women onto natural monuments. I focus most extensively on Anna Seward's series of poems to Honora Sneyd and on Dorothy Wordsworth's "Irregular Verses." Seward's "Honora, An Elegy" (1769; 1810)—one of many elegiac tributes to her living friend Honora

Sneyd—features a speaker, Anna, who seeks the travelling Honora in nature. The memories prompted by nature bring Anna relief in her friend's absence throughout her series of poems to Honora, many of which depict her as dead before she dies. Similarly, the speaker of Wordsworth's "Irregular Verses" mourns her friend, hoping that the ecology in her poem will preserve their shared memories. Ultimately, she locates their love in a natural sanctuary where they can never return now that they are older. Wordsworth's poem, like Seward's elegies to Sneyd, demonstrates the embodiment of Sapphic love in nature as well as in the lyric monument of the poem.

Having established a range of Sapphic monuments in friendship poems, my second chapter will focus primarily on a single poem that is an unusual yet explicit example of Sapphic pastoral elegy. Percy Bysshe Shelley's "Rosalind and Helen" (1819) concludes with a permanent monument commemorating the love shared between two exiled Englishwomen in Italy. Participating in the pastoral elegy's tradition of representing a procession of mourners, the pilgrimages that Helen and Rosalind's children make to Rosalind's tomb of "lasting ice" reframe death as permitting enduring freedom that expresses the Sapphic love circumscribed by their exile (line 1299). Shelley's successful pastoral elegy, *Adonais* (1821), similarly concludes at a site of queer mourning. Following my comparison of the two poems, "Rosalind and Helen" grounds the Sapphic monument in an experimental approach to the pastoral elegy.

My third chapter will study elegiac poems depicting pilgrimages to the vale where Eleanor Butler and Sarah Ponsonby, the Ladies of Llangollen, resided for fifty years (Brideoake, *The Ladies of Llangollen* xvi). In the tradition of Charlotte Smith, some of these poems to the Ladies of Llangollen are in the form of elegiac sonnets. Matilda Betham's "To a Llangollen Rose, The Day After It Had Been Given by Miss Ponsonby" (1799) depicts the end of the

speaker's pilgrimage to Llangollen Vale, an Edenic site from which even a flower mourns to depart. William Wordsworth's "To the Lady Eleanor Butler and the Hon. Miss Ponsonby" (1824) renames the Ladies' home "the Vale of Friendship" (line 11). Anna Seward's many poems about the Ladies of Llangollen attempt to preserve Butler and Ponsonby's legacy in ways that the speakers struggle to accomplish with words. The Ladies of Llangollen fascinate their visitors who want to preserve their affective legacy during and after the Romantic period.

My fourth chapter will examine imaginative rather than material Sapphic monuments addressed by Romantic women poets to other women writers. Charlotte Dacre's elegy "To the Shade of Mary Robinson" (1805) mourns Robinson and resents her manmade tomb. The elegy's consolation is that Robinson's artistry will live on despite her adversaries; moreover, the poet will one day accompany the speaker to God. Letitia Elizabeth Landon's "Stanzas on the Death of Mrs. Hemans" (1824) similarly depicts the insufficiency of memorial activities, whether laying flowers, carving stone, or singing, to appreciate the deceased poet Felicia Hemans. The pastoral in Dacre's and Hemans's poems celebrates Sapphic love by locating the endurance of mourning in the natural afterlife rather than in a material monument within the poem.

The 1990s feminist recovery of women's literary significance resurrected the remarkable works of poets, including Anna Seward, Dorothy Wordsworth, and Charlotte Dacre, whose concerns with loss and legacy mirror the disappearance of their works from the Romantic canon during most of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries (Prins 175). I also examine the exceptional endurance and cultural permanence of the Ladies of Llangollen, figures whose histories and afterlives notably circumvent the erasure of queer historical voices that Heather Love's "archive of feeling" seeks to recover (4). This project embraces these recovered and sustained legacies to identify a queer poetic tradition which uses the Sapphic monument as a motif. These elegies

employ consolatory and idealistic themes in order to imagine new possibilities for queer women in ostensibly erased pasts and uncertain futures. Preserved by nature's projected permanence, the Sapphic elegy bridges the gap between these precarious temporalities.

Chapter One

"Nor wish for aught beyond the dell": Sapphic Monuments in Friendship Poems

Speakers of Sapphic elegies frame landscapes as monuments to memorialize their transient friendship. This chapter will address a variety of works by women poets directed toward their friends of the same gender, notably poems that depict the speaker's mourning about a friend's absence through marriage or travel instead of death. While eighteenth-century women's poetry included tributes between women in the form of artistic or otherwise material objects (King 180), poetic representations of nature as monuments in friendship poems use nature and landscape to commemorate past, unrequited, or fractured desire between women. Paula Backscheider notes that the platonic vocabulary of friendship, while it denotes asexual relationships, could have been used specifically to avoid interpretations of same-sex desire between women: "It is only the blink of an eye that separates friendship as foil to marriage from the conservatives' image of a threatening lesbian desire" (188). Susan Lanser extends Backscheider's study to incorporate the tradition of representing these relationships within pastoral frames, noting that, in addition to circumventing presumptions about their sexuality, "intimacies between women were more often idealized into sisterly, pastoral, and transcendent bonds" ("Befriending the Body" 193). By reimagining natural sites as sanctuaries that exist outside the constraints of temporal and social realities, Sapphic elegies resist the typical circumstances of the elegiac mode and perform alternative methods of memorialization to preserve Sapphic love.

Prior to the Romantic period, friendship poems were also popular during the English Renaissance and Restoration among well-known women poets.[5] From the late-seventeenth-

[5] Kenneth Borris's sourcebook for homoerotic poetry during the Renaissance includes poems demonstrating the "Sapphic elegy" by Pierre de Ronsard, but there are few records of poems from this period depicting friendship between women by a woman poet that were defined as Sapphic (Borris vii).

century Katherine Philips to the mid-eighteenth-century Elizabeth Carter, women composed poems expressing same-sex love during a time when the rhetoric of friendship portrays a deep attachment between two individuals: “Perfect friends were like the same string on two different instruments, perfectly tuned, vibrating in absolute harmony. Because such love was inseparable from the music of the spheres, it was therefore mystical” (Backscheider 178). This idealization of women’s friendships leads to the creation of networks of poetic tributes that mythologize friendship between women: “eulogies provide a way of thinking about the legacy of women’s artistic production, not just the legacy of the woman being commemorated, but also that of the woman writing the tribute, who establishes herself as the next link in a rich history of women’s cultural contributions” (Runge and Cook 5). Moreover, prior to the Romantic period in Britain, friendship is typically addressed according to hierarchical relations rather than to shared political and social interests: “Notions of honor and the related concept of friendship were under revision in the Enlightenment for both men and women. Social and political historians have long seen the eighteenth century as a time when vertical ties of kinship were challenged by the horizontal political ties of party and commerce” (Runge and Cook 5). Transformations to the relationships between men and women as well as amongst men or women in the eighteenth century generate networks of poetry shared between friends that address such social changes with the seemingly apolitical form of tributes to individual friends.

Studies of women’s friendship in the eighteenth century, notably those by Paula Backscheider and Laura L. Runge and Jessica Cook, depict the impact of the shifting social roles of women in their poems to each other, manifesting frequently in pastoral and elegiac forms moving into the Romantic period. In tandem with the rise of the novel as a genre that women often published, women poets “portrayed for one another their separate sphere. The friendship

poem offered a safe space, for it was a form that critics and moralists largely ignored" (Backscheider 194). By imagining physical sanctuaries, friendship poems themselves become sanctuaries with the potential for queer shelter. Mary Robinson's "Stanzas to a Friend" (1791) depicts a speaker who is tired of "Life's delusive joys" (line 1) and is only comforted by a friend:

> With thee I'll hail the morn's returning ray,
>
> Or climb the dewy mountain bleak and cold;
>
> Or on the smooth lake observe the sun-beams play,
>
> Or mark the infant flow'rs their buds unfold. (13–16)

The speaker envisions sunrise, mountains, lakes, and flowers as the material manifestation of friendship that is the only form of resistance against the rapid passing of time, wherein "blissful hours decay / Like fleeting shadows; –NEVER to return" (23–24). Friendship is also the only relief beyond the grave, as the speaker predicts her own death: "may kind FRIENDSHIP catch my parting sigh, / And cheer with HOPE the terrors of the TOMB" (43–44). As the separation between gendered public and private spheres grows, women poets increasingly depict friendship as a specific place. Frequent use of the pastoral in these poems demonstrates women poets using a traditionally masculine poetic form to carve their own space within the transforming social and urban landscapes of pre-industrial Britain. As a result, introspection and self-fashioning lend themselves to the imaginative space of the pastoral, in which poets can construct an idealized relationship and temporality as well as physical sites of commemoration.

The pastoral form, which many early Romantic poems use, is historically dialogic. For example, Elizabeth Hands writes "Love and Friendship: A Pastoral" (1789), a singing contest between two nymphs that adopts the form of classical pastoral dialogues but confronts eighteenth-century issues of marriage and its impact on friendship between women. "Love and

Friendship" features a debate between the nymphs Celia and Sylvia about the merits of their male lovers, which concludes with the human Daphne claiming that "At once a friend sincere, and lover kind; / My Thyrsis is my friend," positing that a male lover can also be a friend (lines 50–51). Friendships that embody nature and their frequent use of names from classical mythology belong to, as Lanser describes, an "idealizing strategy that associates female friendship with classical nobility and separates it both from individual biography and from contemporary, urban seats of power" ("Befriending the Body" 193). Hands also uses the traditional pastoral in a poem that depicts Sapphic longing without the dialogic format, "An Epistle" (1789). In this poem, the speaker, Belinda, reflects on her "long absent friend" Maria, whose "friendship's more to me than love" (lines 1, 6). Belinda describes the natural landscape that she walks through while imagining Maria by her side. The poem concludes with Belinda's insistence that they reunite in this pastoral bower:

> Come to my groves; command the birds to sing,
> And o'er the meadows bid fresh daisies spring:
> No! rather come and chase my gloom away,
> That I may sing like birds, and look like daisies gay. (41–44)

"An Epistle" turns to the elegiac, relinquishing the dialogic format due to Maria's absence, to mourn their friendship by creating a natural monument for their past and future time together.

Janet Little's series of pastoral epistles to and from a woman named Nell constitute an alternative dialogue when read in sequence. Jenny, the speaker of "Epistle to Nell, Wrote from Loudoun Castle" (1792), boasts of the rural sanctuary of Loudoun Castle, which hosts "A garden large, and hedges high" wherein "Each beauteous arbour forms a shade, / As if for contemplation made" (lines 17, 25–26). "Nell's Answer" primarily expresses awe at imagining the grandeur

and wealth of the castle, then concludes that "With you, dear Jenny, I would pass some hours, / Amongst its shady walks and fragrant bow'rs" (lines 25–26). Jenny, in "Another Epistle to Nell," is relieved that Nell remembers her and imagines their reunion in which they will write poetry together while they "please [themselves] with one another's praise" (line 32). Little's sequence models the eighteenth-century tradition of "sister arts"[6] that poets frequently combined with debates regarding friendship: "eighteenth-century poets imagined poetry and painting as 'sisters' and often staged friendly contests between the arts through the amicable genre of the verse epistle" (Tallon 104). Hands's heterosexual dialogic pastoral and her non-dialogic Sapphic pastoral contrast with Little's dialogic exchange to reimagine nature's role in pastoral poetry and transform it into an idealized shelter for both women to resist the pressures of the outside world.

Throughout many poems about women's friendship in the Romantic period, the physical absence of one of the women is akin to their death, prompting an elegiac turn of the Sapphic pastoral that I have previously outlined. For example, Eliza Cobbe's "To a Friend, Fearful of being Forgotten in Absence" (1796) depicts the speaker's love for a friend who will benefit from the passing of time even though she may forget her friend:

> Time, while it Beauty's pow'r impairs,
>
> Will only add to thine;
>
> The di'mond, as its surface wears,
>
> Does but the brighter shine.
>
> Nor think regard, by Worth inspir'd,
>
> E'en absence can subdue;

[6] Jean Hagstrum publishes *The Sister Arts* in 1958 about pictorialism in English poetry, and Lisa Moore's 2011 *Sister Arts* expands on Hagstrum's project to focus specifically on women's role in bridging multiple art forms, notably "visual, literary, and landscape art" (Moore 9).

The sun, howe'er so long retir'd,

Still finds the dial true.

Cobbe's short poem, quoted here in its entirety, demonstrates concerns with futurity that permeate the poems that share these themes of mourning and absence. Increased travel for women and the replacement of women's friends with their husbands provoke these poetic retreats into natural landscapes. In nature, Romantic women poets find the refuge and permanence that they seek to preserve fond memories of important friendships.

Many of these poems rework the traditional pastoral elegy to depict women's mourning for friends who are still alive. The affection imparted by women speakers to these living friends demonstrates that "elegies are always as much about love as they are about death—poems of memory and empty arms," a poetic practice that Backscheider attributes to women poets specifically (312). Anne Mellor describes the woman-authored Romantic elegy as "a poetry of grief, a grief that cannot be cured, perhaps should not be overcome. But it is a grief inflected, in its poetic expression, by historical circumstances and changing modes of mourning" (459). For elegies to be effective, the speaker's grief frequently involves universalized or communal forms of mourning, such as the elevation of the dead to classical allusions.[7] While some women poets followed this universalizing model, some remained with the personal, further distancing their grief for a specific person from general readership. Women poets frequently turn to idealized realities and landscapes that appeal to the escapist desires of the pastoral mode. Despite these differences between the traditional masculine pastoral elegy and my proposed Sapphic pastoral

[7] The frequent escapes to different time periods in Romantic elegies articulate tension "between a desire for possessing—if only in the belated expressive ritual of 'mourning'—a once authentic past, and an encroaching recognition that such longing for a return qua memory can only unfold in aesthetic forms bound to expose the purely retroactive and illusory hope for a retreat from the flat-line temporal condition of modernity" (Pfau 562). The anachronistic elegies prompted by these desires for the classical heroic model continue in women's elegies of the period, projecting mourned women into the idealized past as a temporal shelter rather than with the nostalgic intents of male poets.

elegy, they bear major common traits that unite the two forms, such as dialogic formats, idyllic settings, the steps of celebration, grief, and consolation, or the procession of mourners.

Anna Seward's Honora Poems

As I noted in my introduction, Anna Seward's poetry includes several instances of the Sapphic monument; Seward's Sapphic monuments appear to take place exclusively in poems about Honora Sneyd or the Ladies of Llangollen. Her series of poems in honour of Honora Sneyd, her childhood friend and adopted sister, is largely elegiac despite encompassing periods during and after Sneyd's life. Lisa Moore in *Sister Arts* dedicates a chapter to Seward's lesbian landscapes, especially her poetry about Sneyd, which "expresses Seward's understanding of the 'sisterhood' of all the arts, of the interconnection between sense experiences produced by different physiological systems and artistic genres" (Moore 105). Seward's attention to art, architecture, and poetry informs her memorialization of Sneyd in natural monuments throughout her poetry. Seward's poems for Sneyd frequently display the Sapphic monument in material forms, building the abstraction of the woman friend illustrated in other contemporary poems into a muse figure. Sneyd's death in 1780 does not enhance nor limit her deserving of monuments but instead demonstrates Seward's elevation of her to a transcendent figure whose mortality does not impact her worthiness of commemoration.

Seward's poetry about Sneyd begins with "Honora, an Elegy." The poem emblematizes the tendency of the friendship poem between women of the eighteenth century to mourn a friend who is merely absent. The speaker, Anna, seeks the travelling Honora in "the floral wreath, / That tower, that lake,—yon willow's ample shade" (lines 7–8). The memories prompted by nature bring Anna relief in her friend's absence:

HONORA fled, I seek her favourite scene
With hasty step, as I should meet her there;
The hasty step and the disorder'd mien
Fond expectation's anxious semblance wear. (1–4)

Seward's personal records additionally demonstrate a yearning to commemorate Sneyd by a monument in order to imagine an embodied record of her absent friend. Seward frequently reflected on Sneyd in her journals in addition to the poems that she dedicated to Sneyd: "Honora then led me to the window, and made me observe how beautifully the setting sun had gilded those spires, whose illumination our departed friend used to contemplate with delight" ("Letter Twenty-Four: Lichfield, Aug. 1764" 98; Backscheider 298). Seward's Sapphic monuments that commemorate Sneyd differentiate her epistolary recollections of Sneyd and her poetic elegies.

Seward's darker "Elegy Written at the Sea-Side, and Addressed to Miss Honora Sneyd" (ca. 1775; 1810), written during Sneyd's life, involves a speaker whose mournful demands to the violent ocean go unheard, and her attempts to write Honora's name in the sand are erased by "The envious waves [that] forbid the trace to stay" (line 2). This poem lacks the pastoral idealism of many of the Honora poems and unusually depicts a nature that does not accord with the speaker's attempts to memorialize Honora in the landscape.[8] Moore interprets this as Seward's envisioning that "only by continuing to grieve can the beloved's name be written and rewritten in defiance of time and mortality" (Moore, *Sister Arts* 109). The more frequent use of the pastoral in Seward's elegiac poetry finds more generative defiance in natural monuments than the "lasting tablets" that the speaker of "Elegy Written at the Sea-Side" promises (line 16).

[8] Moore calls moments such as these Seward's "lesbian death wish," echoing theories about the melancholy of failed queer love such as Edelman's *No Future* and Halberstam's *The Queer Art of Failure* (Moore, *Sister Arts* 116).

Seward benefits from the imaginative capabilities of the elegy form to embody loss through nature rather than architecture. In "Sonnet VI," "Love and Memory cling / To their known scene" (lines 5–6), lines that demonstrate Seward's theorization of time and space in relation to Sneyd. Backscheider explains that "Seward often associated Honora with the most personally meaningful settings in her life," in both poetic and epistolary forms (298). Seward imagines Sneyd occupying the place where she wrote her poetry:

> I sit writing upon this dear green terrace, feeding, at intervals, my little golden-breasted songsters. The embosomed vale of Stow, which you know it overlooks, glows sunny through the Claud-Lorain-tint, which is spread over the scene, like the blue over a plumb. How often has our lost Honora hung over the wall of this terrace, enamoured of its scenic graces! Never more will such *bright* glances discriminate and admire them ("Letter I: Miss Powys. Lichfield, Oct. 23, 1784" 6)

After Sneyd's death, even Seward's epistolary representations of Sneyd construct natural monuments that honour her significant role in Seward's memory. By claiming that only Sneyd can "discriminate and admire" the landscape, Seward positions the time in which she was present in nature as a closed and lasting monument to Sneyd. Following Seward's use of Sneyd as a "known scene" in "Sonnet VI" and as an admirer of "scenic graces" in her letter to Miss Powys, Seward uses the Sapphic monument to preserve temporal moments in a specific location as well as material sites. "Sonnet X" (1773) portrays Sneyd as a Sapphic monument of her own, the sun—as Moore explains, the absence of the sun and Honora occur simultaneously, "[leaving] the landscape cold and cheerless" (Moore, *Sister Arts* 103). Seward's locating of Sneyd's embodied memory in an isolated, enduring nature allows her memory of their love to remain in the poet's experience and not lost to passing time.

Occupying the bridge between eighteenth- and nineteenth-century women's poetry, Seward's elegies to Sneyd depart from the traditional pastoral elegy in scope. The abstractions of pastoral elegies such as Spenser's "Astrophel" and Milton's "Lycidas" are replaced by Seward's personal and private mourning for specific memories she shared with the explicitly named Honora. The Honora poems remain, however, part of Seward's pastoral elegy tradition by way of the appropriation of nature's permanence over architecture. Turning to nature rather than the abstraction of emotions such as love and mourning, Seward fashions the Sapphic monument in the landscape to commemorate her love for Sneyd in the absence of their physical interactions.

Seward's poems to Sneyd continue after her death. Like the friendship poems that Backscheider and Runge and Cook document, Seward's loss corresponds to her inability to love Sneyd fully. Composition dates are not available for all of Seward's poems; when the composition dates exist, they reveal only slight differences between Sneyd's impact on Seward's poetry in the monuments that she inspires. In "Sonnet XLIV," composed after Sneyd's death, Seward's speaker asks the abstract Contemplation to restore Honora in a natural sanctuary:

> Rapt CONTEMPLATION, bring thy waking dreams
> To this umbrageous vale at noon-tide hour,
> While full of thee seems every bending flower,
> Whose petals tremble o'er the shadow'd streams!
> . . . . . .
> Here shall no empty, vain Intruder chase,
> With idle converse, thy enchantment warm,
> That brings, in all its interest, all its grace,
> The dear, persuasive, visionary Form.

Can real Life a rival blessing boast

When thou canst thus restore HONORA early lost? (lines 1–4, 9–14)

The "umbrageous vale," a bower that generates and protects Honora's memory, effectively demonstrates the Sapphic monument in an elegy for a woman who has died. Seward's poetic monuments to her friend, before and after Sneyd's death, reimagine embodiments of loss to challenge the boundary between private and public representations of mourning. She utilizes the expectations of women's poetry to yearn for her friend: "When the 'two souls' who love are women, . . . befriending the body appears to be 'what women ought to do'" (Lanser, "Befriending the Body" 183). Despite the eroticism of the mournful pastoral, because such relationships between women were illegible in a period wherein same-sex desire was persecuted and women were not understood to be sexual agents, such erotic poetry is made platonic. The Sapphic monument for Seward, therefore, embodies the grief of her multiple losses of Honora Sneyd most effectively.

Dorothy Wordsworth's "Irregular Verses"

In 1827, Dorothy Wordsworth composed "Irregular Verses," a poem that I deem a Sapphic pastoral elegy due to its representation of the Sapphic monument: the "verdant dell" where the speaker's and her friend's love was situated (line 21). After her friend marries a man and moves away, the speaker recalls her memories of their time together to a witness, a young woman named Julia. "Irregular Verses" follows Mellor's study of woman-authored Romantic elegies, wherein "Romantic-era female poets do not mourn the loss of a personal family member or friend; instead they construct the fiction of such a loss" (452). Mellor employs Charlotte Smith's "Elegy" (1795) as an example, a poem that features a woman whose lover was not granted a

tomb, which leads her to ask the sea to destroy his father's tomb and protect her lover's memory as a consolatory act (lines 65–68). The speaker of "Irregular Verses" also asks nature to adopt the role of elegiac monument, but here the death is imaginary. In contrast to Smith's ocean, which is violent and vengeful, Wordsworth's dell is a peaceful sanctuary that effectively shelters memory. Where poetic imagination may be an opportunity to unite the otherwise disparate architectural ruins and fragmented histories that populate Romantic thought (McFarland 45–46), imagination for the creators of Sapphic monuments unites fragmented ecologies.

The dell, the Sapphic monument in this poem, is a pastoral sanctuary depicted much like the traditional pastoral, an ostensibly idyllic landscape that is associated with sexual imagery throughout the poem. Peter Sacks details the sexual implications of the elegy, wherein "our consoling images are most often figures for an immortal but metaphorized sexual force" (7). The fertility of nature is inaccessible to the mourner and the mourned, and the mourner adopts the erotic regenerative powers of nature as metaphor to compensate for their loss (Sacks 27). Lanser notes Wordsworth's comparison between the "phallic heights" of Samuel Taylor Coleridge's "Kubla Khan" (1816) and "the shelter of our rustic Cot / Receives us, & we envy not / The palace or the stately dome" (Lanser, *The Sexuality of History* 235). Unlike Coleridge's "phallic heights," the celebratory "tower / Of bliss more exquisite and pure / Bliss that (so deemed we) should endure" that the speaker imagined for her and her friend's future during their childhood is an architecture stripped of manmade decorations, and its natural surroundings constitute a monument to their love (D. Wordsworth lines 14–16). The cottage imagined as a tower at the centre of a natural sanctuary, "A garden stored with fruit and flowers / And sunny seats and shady bowers" (D. Wordsworth 24–25) is inflected by the speaker with the erotic imagery of the traditional pastoral (Lanser, *The Sexuality of History* 235).

Although the women's shelter itself is a cottage, the speaker describes at length the landscape surrounding it rather than the architectural interior:

> A cottage in a verdant dell,
>
> A foaming stream, a crystall Well,
>
> A garden stored with fruit and flowers
>
> And sunny seats and shady bowers,
>
> A file of hives for humming bees
>
> Under a row of stately trees
>
> And, sheltering all this faery ground,
>
> A belt of hills must wrap it round. (21–29)

The idyllic flora and fauna that surround the cottage transform the otherwise architectural monument of the love between the speaker and her friend into one that follows the pastoral tradition of projecting memory onto an idealized time and space. Moreover, the Sapphic monument as natural site includes not only the "verdant dell" that contains the cottage but expands to include the "belt of hills" that shelters the former residence of the two friends on "faery ground." The landscape's immersive environment creates a queer version of the biblical Eden, wherein the idyllic garden and its surroundings map a space that protects queer love. The pastoral "could simultaneously reveal and conceal homosocial desire, it served not only as a 'green cabinet' in Spenser's phrase, but as a green closet in which repression becomes sublimation" (Watterson 143). Sheltered by natural borders, the dell thrives, hidden from outside influences that ultimately corrupt the speaker's friendship.

The pastoral dell of "Irregular Verses" recalls one of Wordsworth's journal entries that she wrote following a visit to Crookham in 1798: "Quaint waterfalls about, about which Nature

was successfully striving to make beautiful what art had deformed—ruins, hermitages, etc. etc. In spite of all these things, the dell romantic and beautiful, though everywhere planted with unnaturalised trees. Happily we cannot shape the huge hills, or carve out the valleys according to our fancy" (D. Wordsworth, "The Alfoxden Journal" 13). Wordsworth's resentment of artificial human impact on nature and appreciation of the enclosed natural site of the dell resonate with the speaker's conscious designation of the Sapphic monument in "Irregular Verses":

> Such was the spot I fondly framed
> When life was new, and hope untamed:
> There with my one dear Friend would dwell,
> Nor wish for aught beyond the dell. (35–38)

The speaker returns to the monument that she and her friend constructed when they were young: the dell inside which resided their picturesque cottage. Even though the two friends have parted, the speaker, through the poem's words, returns to the imaginative monument that does not intrude on nature in the way that Wordsworth disliked in Crookham. The speaker emphasizes the dell's continued wildness despite its inhabitation by humans. These two couplets rhyme vocabularies of enclosure, "framed" and "dwell," with closures that evoke the continued freedom of the landscape, "untamed" and "dell." By revisiting the space where her fond memories for her friend are contained, the speaker imagines and benefits from her own "green closet" (Watterson 143) that encompasses the landscape surrounding the cottage.

The speaker and subject of "Irregular Verses" echo Wordsworth's real relationship with Jane Pollard. Like the speaker's friend within the poem, Pollard married a man, after which she and Wordsworth had more limited interactions (Levin 148). Julia, the witness in the poem, is the name of Jane Pollard's daughter (Levin 147); the speaker ostensibly retains a connection to her

friend but is only able to sustain their friendship by transmitting it to a future generation. Wordsworth's poetic expression of mourning upon her friend's marriage and departure from their shared space prompts her use of the pastoral elegy. Here again is an instance of the contrast between men's and women's pastoral elegies: "For eighteenth-century queer subjects, the anticipation of the loss and failure of a relationship that had little social space or visibility to countenance it might be worked into the fabric of same-sex desire itself. For eighteenth-century women, marriage was all but inevitable, if not for oneself then for one's friend" (Moore, *Sister Arts* 107). Even the idealized, desexualized friendship between women could not advocate for a reality where the living party or parties would not marry, even though this was certainly possible for men's pastoral elegies. Subjects for masculine pastoral poems range from "poems which blazon forth female beauty and/or lament unrequited love in Petrarchan fashion" to the "mourning elegy" which idealizes intellectual relationships between men (Watterson 144). Wordsworth's poem feminizes the pastoral to elegize a woman for whom the speaker experiences unrequited love, equating marriage to the death of friendship.

Although many women's poems, such as Hands's and Wordsworth's, feature marriage as a central theme, its centrality does not diminish the themes at the core of many friendship poems. In "Letter to Miss E.B. on Marriage" by Mary Savage (1777), the speaker warns her friend about the dangers of marriage, conceding that even if she must marry, "friendship's pow'r, / Will rise and bless each future hour" (lines 113–114). The speaker's resigned advice to her friend who is leaving her to be married makes way for the true theme of the poem, friendship. Likewise, Wordsworth's speaker consoles her witness that her friend's marriage and subsequent departure were beneficial, as "joys of youth remembered when our youth is past / Are joys that to the end of life will last" (94–95). The final lines, however, announce an alternative consolation:

> Thou dost not ask, thou dost not need
> A verse from me; nor wilt thou heed
> A greeting masked in laboured rhyme
> From one whose heart has still kept time
> With every pulse of thine. (103–107)

Addressing herself to her absent friend, the speaker ends her tale to Julia and concludes the poem with a poetic monument, a "poor memorial strain" (96) separate from the natural monument within the poem. The turn in the speaker's story away from the witness's ears illustrates the eighteenth-century tendency in women's poetry to portray "the institution of marriage . . . in need of some reform and hold up women's friendships as a devastating foil" (Backscheider 188). The linguistic monument of the poem, despite not being a material object within the poem in the same way as the dell, reflects the social desires represented in women's poetry in the decades preceding Wordsworth's poem.

The turn in these final lines also engages Wordsworth's poem with its wider poetic contexts. The irregularity cited in Wordsworth's title recalls the fragmented state in which nineteenth-century readers encountered Sappho's poetry; fragments were also a key motif in Romantic poetry such as Coleridge's "Kubla Khan." Like "Kubla Khan," "Irregular Verses" is an intentional fragment. The speaker follows her own moralization, "—The happiest heart is given to sadness; / The saddest heart feels deepest gladness" by an interruption to her previous narrative: "Thou dost not ask, thou dost not need / A verse from me" (101–104). Wordsworth employs the Romantic fragment to express deeper mourning for her friend who has left her. "Irregular Verses," moreover, shares a similar narrative structure to Sappho's fragment 94. As in Wordsworth, the speaker's interlocutor leaves her but does not die, and the speaker wishes her to

"Go happily / and remember me—" (6–7). Her recounting of "the lovely times we shared" tells the women's shared history through natural objects (10). The later part of the poem is more severely fragmented than the early part, but the similarities remain: When the speakers of these two elegiac poems reflect on the natural embodiments of their departed friends, their grief is additionally conveyed through poetic fragmentation. Wordsworth's use of fragmentation is in dialogue with both Sappho's discovered fragments and the intentional Romantic fragment.

While it appears, before the final lines, that the speaker nostalgically mourns her childhood to Julia, she voices the enduring power of the cottage as a memory—regardless of their separation, the speaker's "heart has still kept time / With every pulse of thine" (106–107). Wordsworth's "Irregular Verses" demonstrates the Sapphic monument in two forms—material and poetic. The material monument remains a poetic monument due to its existence within a poem, involving various forms of memorialization to imagine a sanctuary protected by multiple frames: Her love for her friend is preserved despite the passing of time and her marriage to a man, sheltered within the cottage at the center of the Edenic dell, and embodied in a "memorial strain" that is told by a speaker to a witness. By inserting a recipient of the story, a child who can benefit from the partial lesson that the speaker tells before the final lines, Wordsworth further constructs a protective space that transcends generations. The elegiac pastoral laments the absence of the speaker's friend and the memory and space associated with her, preserving them only in poetry, wherein still lies the hope of an embodied memory of her friend's heartbeat.

Romantic-period friendship poems between women frequently elegize separation caused by travel or marriage. These displays of loss caused by gendered social expectations take place as poetic monuments to the speakers' mourned friends and as material monuments within the

poems that demonstrate the natural forms attributed to Sapphic monuments. Backscheider's study of women's elegies observes friendships whose "relationships survive the grave, and that fact allies these poems with the many friendship poems about memory" (315). The speakers' portrayals of their friends' deaths that have often not yet occurred demonstrate the uniqueness of Sapphic elegies that involve greater attention to mutual desire between friends than the typical friendship poem or a poem that depicts primarily heterosexual desire. The Sapphic pastoral elegy additionally differs from the traditional pastoral of Elizabeth Hands's "Love and Friendship," instead encompassing the elegiac form of poems such as Seward's and Wordsworth's depictions of contemporary settings. From Seward's late-eighteenth-century elegies for Honora Sneyd during and after her life to Wordsworth's "Irregular Verses" written decades later, the Sapphic monument between separated friends remains largely the same. Whereas Sneyd appears frequently throughout Seward's corpus, Wordsworth features a more explicit closure that promises a continued but fulfilled process of remembrance through poetic nature. Mourning for these speakers is personal and individual, unlike the tradition of the pastoral elegy's abstractions and idealisms, but the communal is still successfully invoked by the universality of nature. Rooting love for a friend in a supposedly permanent landscape, the hope for a reunion "can the wonted face of things renew" (Hands, "An Epistle" 40), claiming endurance for nature that friends share in their memories.

Chapter Two

A Tomb of "Lasting Ice": Shelley's Sapphic Monument in "Rosalind and Helen"

Percy Bysshe Shelley's poetic oeuvre is preoccupied by various monuments and legacies. In "Ozymandias," the speaker encounters the ruins of masculine empire where "Nothing beside remains" (line 12). Shelley participates in the tradition of attaching memory to architecture that Jonathan Sachs defines as "the Romantic cult of ruins" (Sachs 7). This cult signals the "competing orders of time" resulting from modernity's new invented technologies and scientific discoveries that expand humanity's conceptions of temporal scopes (Sachs 125). This chapter will focus on Shelley's representation of an alternative, feminine poetics of memorialization. In 1819, the eponymous poem of his collection *Rosalind and Helen, A Modern Eclogue, with Other Poems* depicts the reunion of two Englishwomen who live together in Italy until their deaths. The poem ends by depicting Rosalind's "pyramid of lasting ice" that Helen and their children visit (line 1299). I argue that Shelley's "Rosalind and Helen" immortalizes feminine mourning in a natural tomb, a monument that reconstructs Romanticism's powers of memorialization to Sapphic love. In comparison with Shelley's later elegy *Adonais* (1821), "Rosalind and Helen" exemplifies the distinct parameters of the Sapphic monument in Romantic poetry.

The origins of "Rosalind and Helen" frame Shelley's Sapphic monument in biographical details that contextualize the poem within the wider Romantic tradition of Sapphic elegies. Kelvin Everest and Geoffrey Matthews conclude that Shelley likely began writing "Rosalind and Helen" at Lake Geneva during the summer of 1816 and finished writing it near Bagni di Lucca, Italy, two years later (Everest and Matthews 266). Shelley's first draft of "Rosalind and Helen" is interwoven with a draft of "Mont Blanc" (1817) and doodles of Lake Geneva (*The Geneva Notebook*), demonstrating both the poem's original setting and Shelley's struggle to focus on

"Rosalind and Helen" (Hebron). Edward Dowden, Percy's biographer, theorized that Helen and Rosalind are inspired by Mary Shelley and her childhood friend Isabella Baxter (Everest and Matthews 268). Percy likely only composed a small portion of the poem in 1816, resuming it over a year later, seemingly at Mary's request.[9] The first draft of "Rosalind and Helen" employs the names "Isabel" and "Robert," Baxter's brother's name, as Rosalind and her half-brother; Rosalind's abusive husband recalls Baxter's husband David Booth; and Helen's lover Lionel is a revolutionary with the same anti-monarchal and anti-marriage ideals as Percy (268). Additionally, Booth forbade Baxter from visiting the Shelleys due to Percy's revolutionary ideals and elopement with Mary, a sequence of events that resembles Rosalind's inability to see Helen due to her relationship with Lionel (268). Like the elegies between living friends that I documented in my first chapter, Isabella and Mary's separation prompts an elegy as though one of them has died, although in this case, neither woman composed the elegy. Percy's life and the circles of women and poets he knew therefore background the events of "Rosalind and Helen."

Shelley's relationship to homosexuality has been well documented by biographers and by Shelley himself. His translation of Plato's *Symposium* famously referred to the close relationships between men as "lovers," but its posthumous 1840 edition substituted "lover" for "friend" (O'Connor xiv). His essay *A Discourse on the Manners of the Antient Greeks Relative to the Subject of Love* contains "a candid, critical, and philosophical discussion of Greek pederasty" (Crompton 288). Ultimately, the essay suggests that Shelley is "sympathetic" to love between men during the classical period, due to "the high estimate he put on love per se and his sense of the unique beauty and charm of the young Greek male" (Crompton 292). This chapter

[9] Mary's record of her "pretty eclogue" suffering from Percy's prohibition from writing poetry during September 1817 indicates that she was attached to one of Percy's poems in progress; Everest and Matthews suggest that the eclogue in question is "Rosalind and Helen," which cements Mary's relationship to it and supports the idea that Helen and Rosalind are inspired by her and Isabella Baxter (Everest and Matthews 266).

adopts a similar methodology to Amanda Berry's, wherein investigating Shelley's biographical details and philosophical work participates in "a series of interpretive operations that comprise one scholar's assessment of the sensibility of queerness in a part of Shelley's work and life" (par. 11). My goal is to integrate my reading of "Rosalind and Helen" as a Sapphic pastoral elegy into Shelley's queer corpus, theorizing the Sapphic monument written by a man.

Shelley did not appear to value "Rosalind and Helen" highly during or after its composition. He sustains his simultaneous draft of "Mont Blanc" for several consecutive pages, whereas "Rosalind and Helen" is fragmented and rife with doodles of trees (*The Geneva Notebook*).[10] Moreover, Shelley referred to "Rosalind and Helen" as his "little poem" to his publisher (Everest and Matthews 266). Its publication history and poetics, however, complicate Shelley's apparent dislike of the poem. His 1819 volume is titled *Rosalind and Helen, A Modern Eclogue, with Other Poems*, despite the success of the volume's other poems during his lifetime and after his death: "Lines written on the Euganean Hills," "Hymn to Intellectual Beauty" (first published in 1817), and "Ozymandias" (first published in 1818). Lanser relates Dorothy Wordsworth's poetics in "Irregular Verses" to the irregular meter of "Rosalind and Helen" (*The Sexuality of History* 238), which Shelley himself describes as one that "only pretends to be regular inasmuch as it corresponds with, and expresses, the irregularity of the imaginations which inspired it" ("Advertisement" 6). Furthermore, Shelley's characterization of "Rosalind and Helen" as a "mere extempore thing" (qtd. in Everest and Matthews 268) complicates the role of the poem's temporality given Shelley's typical commitment to preserving his own legacy and

[10] Stephen Hebron, Curator of Special Projects at the Bodleian Library, notes that Percy's increased doodles in his manuscripts indicated that he was either distracted by other ideas or was struggling with the poem at hand (Hebron); the encouragement that Mary and his publisher, Charles Ollier, ostensibly gave him appear necessary.

oeuvre beyond his lifetime.[11] The optimistic ending of "Rosalind and Helen" claims that nature and memory preserve the women's love, but Shelley does not accord the same eternity to the poem itself. The poem's mixed temporalities continue in its nostalgic eclogue form. The subtitle of "Rosalind and Helen," "A Modern Eclogue," invokes the pastoral setting and dialogic format of eclogues from the Ancient Roman Virgil to the proto-Romantic Thomas Chatterton.[12] Shelley links the poetics of Helen and Rosalind's relationship to the idyllic natural landscape that they occupy along the shores of Lake Como. The dialogic mode allows Helen's and Rosalind's words to be less mediated by a speaker, and the metrical shifts within the poem characterize the irregularity in theme that is caused by the assemblage of various forms, plots, and transgressions.

Locating Sapphism in "Rosalind and Helen"

The relationship between Helen and Rosalind most resembles Faderman's "romantic friendship," in which it is ambiguous whether women shared a sexual relationship, but their lives are intertwined (Faderman 18). Sexual activity is not necessary to qualify these friendships as romantic or Sapphic, as Backscheider notes by quoting from the anonymously written *The Correspondents, An Original Novel in a Series of Letters* (1775): "Let us do justice to my favourite heroine: while David and Jonathan, Pylades and Orestes, … are so triumphantly held up on your side, let us at least erect one standard of friendship on our own, and inscribe it with the names of Celia and Rosalind" (qtd. in Backscheider 185). Like the author of *The Correspondents*, Shelley may also recognize the model of passionate female friendship in Celia and Rosalind of William Shakespeare's *As You Like It* (1603) when he changes Isabel's name to

[11] Shelley's obsession with poetic endurance led him to claim in a letter to Elizabeth Hichener that he "*will* live beyond this life"; he signed off this letter as "yours most imperishably" (qtd. in Bennett 166).
[12] The Shelleys read Virgil and Chatterton prior to the composition of "Rosalind and Helen" (Vicario 161; M. Shelley, *Journals* 91).

Rosalind (Everest and Matthews 269). Shelley's Rosalind, therefore, is predisposed by literary contexts to model an ideal romantic friendship for readers, for other characters in the poem, and, in her case, for all who visit her tomb of ice beyond her death. Backscheider documents, however, that romantic friendship poems often depict "friendship with a woman as the ideal relationship between husband and wife [and] offer an image of the ideal man" (187). Lionel, Helen's lover, is the closest character in the poem to a model man, but he does not earn the same material memorialization as the two women. "Rosalind and Helen" instead frames the bond between the two women as an ideal romantic friendship by contrasting their relationship with other transgressions that occur early in the poem.

Multiple stories of transgression within the poem frame the relationship between Helen and Rosalind as redemptive. The poem begins with their reuniting by a stone seat in the woods where a local brother and sister had an incestuous relationship (156–57). The stone seat demonstrates for the first time the affective power of nature for the women, as it represents a sanctuary from the "suffocating sorrow" of the lakeshore for Helen, who proposes that they venture into "the dell of yon dark chestnut wood" where the monument holds "a solitude / Less like our own" (67–70). In the secrecy of the forest, Helen and Rosalind recover their own memories of transgressive and failed acts of heterosexual unions. Helen's child is born out of wedlock with Lionel, a revolutionary whose political perspectives resemble Shelley's, particularly his oppositions to marriage and religion. As for Rosalind, before an unhappy marriage that results in her loss of custody of her children, she unknowingly almost marries her half-brother, who dies of shock upon learning of this at the altar (295–303). In a similarly tragic punishment for incest, the siblings represented by the stone seat at Lake Como are killed by a mob (161–66). Shelley contrasts these transgressive narratives with the memorialization of

Rosalind, which closes the poem. The stone seat marks the violent tragedy in which the brother and sister are unnamed; moreover, they are neither elegized nor remembered after their deaths in the same way as Helen and Rosalind.

In the secluded clearing, Helen is no longer overwhelmed by the affect of the lake and can appreciate Rosalind amid nature, establishing the poem's frequent connection of embodiment, nature, and memory. Sara Ahmed's queer phenomenology is helpful here to envision memory as a dwelling-place that can impact characters in various ways—monuments entail mourning, but the particular way that Rosalind and Helen navigate their spaces enables feminine affect to make a home of their exile (Ahmed 9). Before Rosalind tells her story, Helen holds her hand, and her voice, sighs, and heartbeat "Unbind the knots of her friend's despair, / Till her thoughts were free to float and flow" (214–215). The speaker likens this sensory power to "the autumn wind, when it unbinds / The tangled locks of the nightshade's hair," releasing the nightshade from "the walls of an outworn sepulchre" (207–208, 210). Rosalind herself becomes affective nature, finding herself bound by architectural ruins and released by Helen's natural power. Helen's efforts to relocate Rosalind to the stone seat prompt Rosalind to revisit and share her memories. Rosalind's story is more redemptive than the siblings': her two attempts at marriage, including an unintended incestuous relationship, fail, but she is remembered instead for her and Helen's immortal love: "if love die not in the dead / As in the living, none of mortal kind / Are blessed, as now Helen and Rosalind" (1316–1318). While the poem begins with a punished transgression, it ends with the commemoration of the eternal love of two women. Discovering several instances of Sapphism in Romanticism, Lanser describes Sapphism as ushering "an era of a family formation in which it has no future of its own" (*The Sexuality of History* 225). This lack of future refers to the constancy of literary representations of queer

characters who die, in which "The good sapphic couple, we may start to be surmising, is the dead one" (*The Sexuality of History* 225). However, the survival of Helen's and Rosalind's children, who grew up under the parentage of two mothers rather than a married, heterosexual parental unit, simultaneously indicates endurance of their legacy and Shelley's preference for anti-marriage plots. Helen and Rosalind transform typically somber exile and gravesites into a home that resists heteronormativity. Nature and death are embodied throughout Rosalind's story—she is as a result particularly prone to experiencing affective monuments such as the stone seat that commemorates the siblings whom she never met.

Helen, in turn, reveals her story to reciprocate Rosalind's confessions, contrasting her love for Lionel and her love for Rosalind; Helen does not vocally favour one nor the other, but Shelley's representation of nature in the poem favours Rosalind. Helen describes Lionel as a revolutionary who composed "verses wild and queer" (680). Like Seward's speaker in "Elegy Written at the Sea-Side," Lionel writes text in natural ground that is washed away, in his case by tears—a human act of erasing language rather than Seward's tide:

> . . . for there were found,
> Blotted with tears as those relieved
> By their own words are wont to do,
> These mournful verses on the ground,
> By all those who read them blotted too. (P.B. Shelley 759–763)

Prompted by his exile to record his verse in the earth, Lionel fails to leave permanent traces of his grief and love. Helen equates his life force during his prolonged death to transient natural phenomena through a series of similes, beginning with "his health declined, / Like some frail bark which cannot bear / The impulse of an altered wind" (814–816) and ending with "the

gathering soul / Passed from beneath that strong control" (1045–1046). Lionel does not embody nature in the permanent way that Helen and Rosalind do—he is not memorialized by a monument, natural or manmade, and, after Helen finishes her story, she does not mention him explicitly again. Even Lionel's death occurs in his mother's tomb rather than his own, lending poetic power specifically to women as Helen and a female nightingale sing to him while he dies.[13] Helen also undergoes a rebirth when she concludes her mourning of Lionel. Reflecting on the beach where Lionel's life previously faded in tune with her song, she says that "No memory more / Is in my mind of that sea shore" (1195–1196). Although she mourns Lionel deeply, he does not leave a lasting imprint on nature or on memory in the way that Helen and Rosalind do.

Love between women is also prioritized by Rosalind, who asks Helen not to remember her love for her fiancé, but to remember her. Rosalind hopes that Helen's "memory for a term may be / [Her] monument" (563–64). This same concept of memory as monument is present in William Wordsworth's "Tintern Abbey," where he allows "a wild secluded scene [to] impress / Thoughts of more deep seclusion; and connect / The landscape with the quiet of the sky" (6–8). The speaker of "Tintern Abbey" preserves the solitary mourning characteristic of many Romantic monuments before he finally turns to the scene's witness, his sister Dorothy, to ask her to join him in preserving memory as a "mansion" and a "dwelling-place" (W. Wordsworth 140–142). The exceptionality of a monument to a shared feminine memory, rather than to a singular masculine mourner's, is even traceable within "Rosalind and Helen." Their dead lovers are mourned elaborately by the two women, but they are forgotten by future generations. Instead, the

[13] Lionel's mother is memorialized by a marble temple surrounded by a myrtle wood (1049), contributing to the contrast in "Rosalind and Helen" between mourning for men and women. Unlike in Shelley's other elegiac poems, no men are offered significant memorials—only Rosalind's husband has a grave that the speaker or the women mention explicitly in the poem, and his family does not remember him fondly (231). Lionel's mother is commemorated in a similar enduring fashion to Helen and Rosalind, but she is remembered as an individual rather than for the love she shared with another person.

love shared between Helen and Rosalind is a model for a love that "die[s] not in the dead" (1316). By elegizing not only individual women but their love for each other, the speaker frames the monuments in "Rosalind and Helen" as favouring Sapphic love over heterosexual love.

Like the speaker of "Tintern Abbey," Helen does keep Rosalind in her memory, but Rosalind also receives a permanent monument placed high in nature for all to see:

> . . . a pyramid of lasting ice,
> Whose polished sides, ere day had yet begun,
> Caught the first glow of the unrisen sun,
> The last, when it had sunk; and thro' the night
> The charioteers of Arctos wheeled round
> Its glittering point. (1299–1304)

The emphasis on "lasting ice" and its "polished sides" and "glittering point" elevates the pyramid to immortality bestowed by nature and preserved by the idealized pastoral. Similarly, Anne Grant's "The Nymph of the Fountain to Charlotte" (1803) depicts a monument of ice at the center of a pastoral landscape. Grant's poem imagines a mournful nymph, sharing the supernatural element of Shelley's poem, who wants a young woman to return to her at the site of their initial encounter: "Come where my lucid waters flow / And bathe thy graceful form again" (lines 47–48). Here, also, ice generates rather than interrupts commemoration of Sapphic love: "Hard ice, that crusts my current clear, / Renews more pure my sparkling stream" (53–54). Ice, as a natural material that was more everlasting in nineteenth-century Britain than it is today, is more suitable for the permanence of Sapphic memory.

Eric Wilson's study of ice during the Romantic period heavily features Shelley's poetic oeuvre but does not address "Rosalind and Helen." Wilson attributes Percy's interest in ice as "a

vehicle and revelation of vital energy" to his and Mary's trip to Switzerland in 1816 that inspired "Mont Blanc" and *Frankenstein* (1818), texts that demonstrate their interest in ice in its many forms. Wilson establishes a Shelleyan hierarchy of ice:

> Shelley, in much of his verse, hated ice. He found it distant, cold, aloof, deadly. Yet, glaciers, sublime and alive, strangely attracted him. He knew: glaciers, numinous, are more than geology. They are ambiguous immensities of rectitude and weirdness, necessity and violation. They flicker with the illuminated darkness of blasphemy and the obscure light of genius. They are demons, inhumane and destructive. They are daimons—familiar spirits connecting poets to life. (74)

The supernatural qualities of glaciers, which Wilson places in the same category as mountain peaks similar to Rosalind's monument, sustain these natural phenomena with the mythology that surrounds them. Shelley gives the tomb of ice agency by way of its numinosity and manipulation of affect.

Rosalind's tomb has a manmade aspect, as it was "raised" by her mourners, but its place in the landscape from which it originated secures its permanence. The Sapphic monument acts in opposition to the ruins that Jonathan Sachs describes as "about experiencing the incommensurability of multiple temporalities" (123). Shelley's speaker depicts this incommensurability in the narrative and formal irregularities that Lanser references in her study of "Irregular Verses," but Rosalind's monument also reimagines past, present, and future similarly to Sachs's incommensurable ruins (Sachs 123): the ice does not reflect the effects of time. Shelley's poetry frequently features the concept of "suspended animation" that scientific advancements in the Romantic period inspired. The connections that it offered "between past and future and between death and life" employ "slow time" to suspend the rapid and unfulfilling pace

of "automaticity" (Mitchell 111, 126). In contrast to our contemporary understandings of glaciers and icy mountain peaks as melting due to climate change, Shelley during the period of the "Year Without a Summer" that prompted a short ice age in 1816 fears the opposite: "Witnessing the geomorphic force of the glaciers, Shelley fears that their icy engines will one day ruin, like the 'Deluge' of *Prometheus Unbound* (1819–20), an entire cycle of civilization" (Wilson 105). This apocalypse is not a pessimistic projection, as "To quake under the glacier is to experience time opening into infinity and space changing into a giant poet at his cosmic drafts" (Wilson 105). The temporal permanence of ice further preserves the legacies of the elegized by transforming irregular time into a prolonged state of durability.

Helen and Rosalind's shared home further demonstrates nature's transformative power in the idealized English home that they construct in Italy. Like the Ladies of Llangollen, the women live together in Helen's home for the rest of their lives. Helen and Rosalind's love endures beyond thresholds of mortality, as Helen explains when Rosalind closes her story: "we will not part / Henceforth, if death be not division; / If so, the dead feel no contrition" (577–579). The men who are the subjects of their dialogue and the provocation of Helen's musings about the boundaries of death frame the power of remembrance for Helen and Rosalind. The women's shared family, in turn, proves the effectiveness of such projections of a domestic future.

Helen's and Rosalind's deaths do not stop the future of which they dream; their children are recipients of a projected happiness. Helen, who dies when she is old, leaves behind her and Rosalind's children, whom Shelley portrays as preserving the couple's affective legacy (1324–1325). Helen and Rosalind are exiled from their home country and die, but as Jack Halberstam notes for feminine queer figures, "failure has often been a better bet than success" (4). Halberstam's construction of wandering and negation as optimistic are anticipated in the

represented legacies of Helen and Rosalind, figures whose children find "the shadow of the peace denied to them" in their failed heterosexual relationships (1299–1300). Whereas Lee Edelman rejects the reliance of futurity on the child "as disciplinary image of the Imaginary past or as site of a projective identification with an always impossible future" (31), a queer futurity in "Rosalind and Helen" positions children as a vehicle for preserving queer histories. In the same vein as Kathryn Bond Stockton's *The Queer Child*, Helen's and Rosalind's children perform "sideways growth" by being raised in a non-heteronormative domestic environment (13). They raise a girl and a boy in the same way, "until each mind / Like springs which mingle in one flood became" (1288–1289). Helen and Rosalind have achieved alternative, or sideways, paths to reproduction. Shelley's portrayal of collective memory here also counters the thesis of Love's *Feeling Backward*, a work that details the erasure of queer lives throughout history. By returning to the Sapphic monument, their children will not soon forget their parents' love.

"Rosalind and Helen" figures Sapphic love as a lasting memory by turning to the pastoral elegy to articulate immortality. Jack Donovan notes that community enables Helen and Rosalind to "[live] through the most painful of their past experiences in acts of sympathetic reconciliation" ("Shelley's Second Kingdom" 149). Helen's son asks her to "Bring home with [her] / That sweet strange lady-friend" (90–91), and Shelley's poem then transforms heteronormative domesticity into queer domesticity. Following in the tradition of the pastoral elegy, the poem represents a procession of mourners, her family, who

> . . . each year would come,
> With willing steps climbing that rugged height,
> And hang long locks of hair, and garlands bound
> With amaranth flowers, which, in the clime's despite,

Filled the frore air with unaccustomed light. (1305–1309)

Amaranth flowers, like those that Spenser leaves Sidney in "Astrophel" and Milton leaves Edward King in "Lycidas," are notably tied to mourning for poet figures in pastoral elegies ("Pastoral, Exile, Memory" 263). Shelley's *Adonais* features "eternal flowers" (217) that provide light in death like Rosalind's amaranths (173–175). Eric Smith has depicted the amaranth's poetic role as a linguistic monument to the elegized, wherein "the decking [of the tomb] with flowers, whether real or of 'poesie,' represent[s] the producing of the expressive monument in words" (E. Smith 21). While Lionel's mother and Helen deeply mourn Lionel, he is not granted the grandeur of a tomb such as Rosalind's, which, despite the rigidity of its frozen pyramid, is a monument brightly lit with symbols of love for its occupant. Peter Sacks notes that the elegy typically excludes attention to women's mourning (13), but Shelley transforms elegiac poetics into a vehicle for Sapphic memory. Moreover, Shelley's replacement of the character name "Isabel" with "Rosalind" introduces the word "lined" within her name, based on the final rhyme of the poem between "kind" and "Rosalind" (1317–1318). Her identity is linked to poetic lines and material frames, casting her as a poetic monument herself. Shelley presents Rosalind as a poet who died prematurely, framing her death as a consolation like many elegies for male poets; Rosalind is made a poet figure in death whereas Helen demonstrated this power in life.

"Rosalind and Helen" constitutes one of Shelley's earlier attempts at the pastoral elegy and constitutes part of his project of queer poetics. The subtitle "A Modern Eclogue" immediately locates the poem in a pastoral setting, and the poem consists of multiple partial elegies before closing on Rosalind's grandiose memorial. Eclogues, while they are frequently homoerotic, primarily celebrate love between men. These men are typically shepherds who represent differing relationships to nature (Alpers 193). Helen and Rosalind are not

shepherdesses, but their affective connections to nature demonstrate some of the traits of the idealized shepherds of the pastoral. Furthermore, Donovan offers the possibility of "something of the elegy about the 'modern eclogue,' with its train of deaths (Rosalind's is the fourth premature one), its lament for lost vitality (764–79), its epitaph (547–62), its political last will and testament (894–901)," but he dismisses the idea because these themes are historically masculine ("Pastoral, Exile, Memory" 263). Shelley is, however, a man; his foregrounding of two women who retain their own voices through the eclogue's dialogic form do not negate this fact about its author. Therefore, the pastoral elegy as a masculine form remains the contextual reality for "Rosalind and Helen," but Donovan's challenge holds; Shelley must feminize the pastoral elegy in order to shape it to Helen and Rosalind's story.

Expanding Shelley's Queer Corpus

Shelley's queer poetics in "Rosalind and Helen" anticipates his major pastoral elegy, *Adonais*, composed two years later on the death of John Keats. Returning to "Rosalind and Helen" allows us to re-envision Shelley's *Adonais* as participating in a queer poetic tradition. George Haggerty famously depicts *Adonais* as a queer elegy whose consolation "reassert[s] physical loss and erotic desire" (401). Shelley's later poem depicts Keats's place of rest in Rome, where "flowering weeds, and fragrant copses dress / The bones of Desolation's nakedness" (lines 435–437). Comparing Rosalind's and Keats's graves foregrounds the difference between feminine and masculine sites of grief in Shelley's queer corpus. Shelley invokes community to mourn "him *we* lose with scarce extinguish'd breath" (450), but he frames his elegy in self-reflection in order to foreground the mourner, Shelley himself; the poem opens with "I weep for Adonais—he is dead!" (1) and ends with "I am borne darkly, fearfully, afar" (492). Andrew Bennett contrasts

masculine and feminine posterity when discussing Felicia Hemans's "The Image in Lava" (1828) and Shelley's "Ozymandias": "[Hemans's] specifically gendered figuration of posterity, posterity as a function of (female, maternal) love rather than a physical and public monument, opposes an emotion only contingently, accidentally preserved to those artifacts specifically designed to last" (79). Keats's grave, the subject of Shelley's queer desire, can constitute a distinctly masculine monument that contrasts with Rosalind's tomb by becoming detached from the speaker's mourning. Hemans's feminine posterity, like the legacy of women's love that Rosalind's mourners maintain, contrasts with Keats's grave that still lies lonely among the ruins.

Like the "keen pyramid with wedge sublime" of Caius Cestius that resides near Keats's grave (*Adonais* 444), the fictional Rosalind's tomb is a pyramid. Bruce Haley explains that "[i]n Shelley's day the pyramid was emblematic of lost history and the irrecoverability of human intention" and occurred "above nature but involved in living process" (215). Similarly, Shelley's "Ozymandias," which he published in the same volume as "Rosalind and Helen," does not feature a pyramid, but the titular monument in ruins evokes similar themes of masculine legacies of war and royalty. Timothy Morton compares the elegiac pyramid in Shelley's "Alastor" (1816) to "Ozymandias," noting that "something seems to have gone awry, something to do with the place from which we view the wreckage—a no man's land" (258). Linking Shelley's queer monuments in "Rosalind and Helen" and *Adonais* with the lonely monuments in "Alastor" and "Ozymandias" foregrounds the collective and optimistic power of the Sapphic monument. Rosalind's tomb of ice, like the tomb in *Adonais*, represents queer remembrance that will "No more let Life divide what Death can join together" (477). Keats's grave and its neighbouring pyramid, however, are manmade stone architectures and are thus distinguished from the feminine affect situated in privacy and domesticity by their ties to heroic, masculine history. Unlike the

monuments in *Adonais*, Rosalind's natural pyramid is not subject to ruin while frozen in the mountains away from the rapidly transforming urban landscapes of modernity. While the two poems enact queer elegy, they do so in differently gendered ways, and neither poem copies nor improves on the other; taken together, they establish a Shelleyean interest in monumentalizing queer affections.

The permanence of Rosalind's tomb does not appear to allow her and Helen's love to be forgotten, as the pyramid of ice remains in the memorial practices of the family she leaves behind. Framed by transgressions such as incest and childbirth out of wedlock, the love that these women rediscover in Italy is what is ultimately remembered. They therefore leave behind their pasts as many queer Romantics did in exile, such as Lord Byron and the Ladies of Llangollen. Rosalind's tomb of ice mirrors the monuments in *Adonais*; through the parallel gendered differences between the poems, we can establish Shelley's queer elegiac lineage. The endurance of the affective monument, doubly demonstrated by its resilience to weather and time and its connection to amaranth flowers indicating immortality, claims for Helen and Rosalind a permanent rather than transient Sapphic love.

Chapter Three

"Sacred Friendship, permanent as pure": Sapphic Monuments for the Ladies of Llangollen

Eleanor Butler and Sarah Ponsonby, Irishwomen who lived together in Wales free from the restraints of marriage to men from 1778 until Butler's death in 1829, are known as "the Ladies of Llangollen." Their influence on the Romantic period is most discernible in the literary traces of Butler and Ponsonby by their visitors. Their home, named "Plas Newydd," or "new place" (Lanser, *The Sexuality of History* 231), attracted literary figures who travelled to Llangollen to admire the women who built a life together outside of the social limitations of heterosexuality. Critical biographies—notably Elizabeth Mavor's *The Ladies of Llangollen: A Study in Romantic Friendship* (1971) and Fiona Brideoake's *The Ladies of Llangollen: Desire, Indeterminacy, and the Legacies of Criticism* (2017)—trace the histories of perceptions of Butler and Ponsonby throughout the past two hundred years. The idyllic landscape of the region of Llangollen provides various settings for the Sapphic monuments that populate these elegiac tributes.

Despite Butler and Ponsonby's fame that merited visits from famous contemporaries such as Edmund Burke, Lord Byron, and the Duke of Wellington (Brideoake, *The Ladies of Llangollen* xvi), little is documented about their relationship behind closed doors. Lord Byron, writing about John Edleston, claims that their love "shall put Lady E. Butler and Miss Ponsonby to the blush, Pylades and Orestes out of countenance, and want nothing but a catastrophe like Nisus and Euryalus, to give Jonathan and David the 'go by'" ("To Miss Pigot" 54). Lanser describes Byron's inclusion of Butler and Ponsonby among mythological relationships between men as "characterizing exclusive female coupling at once, and paradoxically, as an epitome of virtue and a transgression of social and sexual norms," encompassing the simultaneity of contemporary understandings of Butler and Ponsonby that seem contradictory ("Put to the

Blush" 5). Investigating this fascination with the Ladies of Llangollen during their lifetime, Brideoake claims that the indeterminacy of their relationship "lies at the heart of both their continued fascination and appropriability" ("Extraordinary Female Affection" 5). The Ladies of Llangollen, therefore, were largely perceived as using social roles of women's passivity and domesticity in order to resist heteronormative obligations.

Mary Pilkington's *Memoirs of celebrated female characters, etc.* (1804) documents Butler and Ponsonby separately, yet both entries portray both women. When Pilkington discusses Butler, she imagines Butler and Ponsonby "so completely gratified were they in the society of each other, that they entertained the determination of never becoming wives" and publishes the narrative that Butler and Ponsonby's elopement was similar to an adventure plot: "[Butler] was actually confined to prevent the possibility of their meeting, but by the assistance of a female servant she contrived to make her escape" (Pilkington 64). Memoirs such as Pilkington's depict the occupants of Plas Newydd in the same heightened and idealized language as the Romantic poetry that they inspired. After Pilkington details Ponsonby's important family relations, the only notable biographical detail in her section of her and Butler as a pair: "Although a similarity of taste have united lady Eleanor and miss Ponsonby in the bonds of friendship, yet their dispositions appear not to be alike; the former is represented as being sprightly without volatility, and the latter pensive without any tincture of gloom" (Pilkington 283). Addressed almost exclusively as a pair by their contemporaries, the Ladies of Llangollen perform the unity that their name entails, "masking the disparity between their powerful families and their anomalous social situation, and displacing their exiled status with the identity of landed locals" (Brideoake, *The Ladies of Llangollen* 72). The histories of Butler and Ponsonby appear inextricable from each other: "The attached friends once more enjoyed the society of each other, and every wish of

their hearts thus gratified, they defied the opinion of the world, and retired to Llangollin, in Wales, where they have now resided in the harmony of true friendship upwards of twenty years" (Pilkington 64). Contemporary biographers of Butler and Ponsonby such as Pilkington demonstrate their contradictory admiration and ostracization of the women, whose move from Ireland to Wales was portrayed as both an act of exile and retirement.

Poets depicting the Ladies of Llangollen do not need to invent a Sapphic monument—the valley surrounding Plas Newydd is both idyllic and rich with history. Thomas Pennant's *Tour in Wales* (1770) documents the region of Llangollen before Butler and Ponsonby arrived:

> I know no scene in *North Wales*, where the refined lover of picturesque scenes, the sentimental, or the romantic, can give a fuller indulgence to his inclination. No place abounds more with various rides or solemn walks. From this central spot, he may (as I have done) visit the seat of *Owen Glyndwr*, and the fine valleys of the *Dee*, to its source, beyond the great *Llyntegid*: or pass the mountains to the fertile vale of *Clwyd*. (295)

Pennant depicts Llangollen Vale as an Eden or otherwise idyllic scene that offers liberating possibilities. Before Llangollen was associated with Butler and Ponsonby, it was known as a historical site for military occupations and battles led by Owen Glendower, Henry IV, and Richard II, all of which Anna Seward depicts briefly in "Llangollen Vale" (1795), a poem that claims that the imperial histories of Llangollen are less notable than the love shared between Butler and Ponsonby. Llangollen becomes a site where exile and desire are commemorated: "Charity, pity, and knowledge, the emotional and intellectual byproducts afforded by modernity and commercial society, are made possible here, paradoxically, by the ladies' status as exiles" (DeLucia 111). Plas Newydd is a monument of its own, depicted frequently as being a part of the

natural landscape despite its architectural form. Unlike other gothic architectures that are associated with queer men in the Romantic period such as William Beckford's Fontill Abbey and Horace Walpole's Strawberry Hill (N. Reynolds 21; Fincher 29, 34), the queerness of Plas Newydd extends into the nature and history that surround it.

Echoing Pennant's description of the idyllic area of Llangollen, Butler and Ponsonby transform the nature around their cottage into a bower-like garden that embraces the queer ecology around them. Visitors' idealized and transcendent descriptions of Butler and Ponsonby align with the nostalgic "bucolic scenes of idle shepherds in Arcadian landscapes" (N. Reynolds 88). Reading the enclosed bower in Seward's "Llangollen Vale" as a potentially yonic feminine shelter, Brideoake explains that "The shrouding of dusk enacting the Foucauldian logic through which the repression of sexuality serves as its elaboration and disclosure" (*The Ladies of Llangollen* 207). Even without the guidance of poetic tributes that describe Llangollen Vale and Plas Newydd at length, admirers of Butler and Ponsonby inferred the importance of the landscape for the Ladies of Llangollen. Poetic histories about Butler and Ponsonby borrow Sapphic monuments from the inhabitants of Plas Newydd themselves—exile and desire are memorialized in their home, the material traces of the women's elopement.

Romantic poets were attracted to tourism as a social activity, and Plas Newydd became a site of pilgrimage (N. Reynolds 88). Ruth Vanita cites the Romantic desire for community, which the Ladies of Llangollen seem to exemplify, as a motivator for Romantics' admiration for alternative styles of living (Vanita 3). Brideoake, however, posits "that they ameliorated their status as unmarried and sexually suspect Irish exiles by employing carefully orchestrated sociable and epistolary practices to consolidate their place within the local Welsh gentry" (*The Ladies of Llangollen* xvi). They embraced the vocabulary of Romantic pilgrimages with a poem

they composed that frames a well on their property; it begins with the lines “Drink, gentle pilgrim, from the well, / Thus sacred in this hollow dell!” (qtd. in Gordon 156). This poem, unlike those composed by their admirers, focuses exclusively on the idyllic landscape as an escape from urban life without alluding to their relationship. Butler and Ponsonby employ Romantic occupations with nostalgia, similar to Freeman’s discussion of the “stubborn lingering of pastness [as] a hallmark of queer affect” (8), to establish their physical sanctuary as a temporal one as well. By crafting Plas Newydd as a simultaneously gothic and pastoral environment, they invite their visitors to step into a place that resists the normative passing of time.

With the records of major literary figures praising their idyllic companionship, Butler and Ponsonby “[ensured] that accounts of their sororal bond circulated widely in print and epistolary form” and would “[distance] them from the putatively metropolitan vice of sapphism” (Brideoake, *The Ladies of Llangollen* xvii). Resisting the assumptions about them by their contemporaries, such as the late writer Hester Thrale who describes them as “damned sapphists” (Rupp 132), Butler and Ponsonby also resist the “scandalous celebrity” that Clara Tuite theorizes when discussing Lord Byron and the rise in tourist travels in the Romantic period (Tuite 3–4). One of the many visitors to Llangollen Vale was Anne Lister, whose marriage-like partnership with Ann Walker was inspired by Butler and Ponsonby’s elopement (Lanser, “Befriending the Body” 193). Lister’s visit to Llangollen appeared to be more motivated by personal curiosity than tourism: “her anxiety for acceptance reflected in her careful gathering of information from their gardener and the two hours she spent washing and dressing before their meeting” (Brideoake, “Extraordinary Female Affection” 21). Butler and Ponsonby therefore became a site of pilgrimage for visitors fascinated by their open attachment to each other as well as an inspiration for women such as Lister to pursue similar relationships.

Sonnets about Llangollen

As Charlotte Smith's elegiac sonnets demonstrate, the sonnet as an object of affection combined with mournful elegiac language and settings effectively illustrates Romantic yearning to achieve an idyllic escape from social restraints. Mary Robinson and Anna Seward, two poets whose works feature heavily in my study of Sapphic pastoral elegies, are also significant figures in the revival of the sonnet during the Romantic period and inspired William Wordsworth and Samuel Taylor Coleridge's famous use of the form (Moore, *Seward* xxviii). Matilda Betham's "To a Llangollen Rose, The Day after it had been given by Miss Ponsonby," William Wordsworth's "To the Lady Eleanor Butler and the Hon. Miss Ponsonby," and Seward's "Sonnet, Written September 1799" employ the brevity of sonnets while demonstrating an elegiac tone that commemorates the living women.

Matilda Betham's Sapphic monument in "To a Llangollen Rose" is a natural object that commemorates the love shared between Butler and Ponsonby and their influence on Betham, but the monument is more ephemeral than the relationship that it memorializes. The elegiac sonnet mourns the fading of a rose given to the speaker by Sarah Ponsonby following a visit to Llangollen—a "soft blushing flower" whose "tender tints decay" (lines 1, 3). The speaker is not alone in her pilgrimage seeking "some little treasur'd relic" from Butler and Ponsonby, a practice that allows travellers to employ "pausing memory" to recall the implied pleasures of visiting Llangollen (8). However, the speaker's "sweet memento mine" (10) cannot survive separation from the Edenic space from which it originates, and the rose turns from the object of the poem to a personified nature:

> But, lo! Its fainting head reclines;

It folds the pallid leaf, and pines,

As mourning the unhappy doom,

Which tears it from so sweet a home! (11–14)

Betham's Sapphic monument of the Llangollen rose demonstrates, despite its decay, the affective power of the vale. Whereas its decay would depict the fragility of memory, Butler and Ponsonby are still alive during the composition and publication of this sonnet and are thus far from forgotten. Instead, the rose suggests that the true power of the monument rests with the space that Butler and Ponsonby occupy, as it stands strong in its community where the isolated rose does not. Through the rose, Betham attributes a queer ecology to the vale that permeates poetry about the Ladies of Llangollen: Their queer identity that their visitors perceive is intertwined with the nature that surrounds them, exemplified in the rose that dies upon leaving its ecological community of Llangollen.

In William Wordsworth's sonnet "To the Lady Eleanor Butler and the Hon. Miss Ponsonby," the "Vale of Friendship" celebrates the Ladies of Llangollen as "Sisters in love, a love allowed to climb, / Even on this earth, above the reach of time!" (lines 10, 13–14). The celebratory sonnet demonstrates "the public and sisterly space of the pastoral" that desexualizes the relationship between Butler and Ponsonby to render their love appropriate for admiration (Lanser, "Put to the Blush" 22). Brideoake notes that "the poem figures them as transcending the passage of time, the linkage of temporality and corporeality underscoring the presumptive chastity of Wordsworth's sororal metaphor" (*The Ladies of Llangollen* 211). Whereas in "Irregular Verses," Dorothy Wordsworth names her use of the irregular to demonstrate the non-normative family structure that she wishes to achieve with her friend, William's irregularity is disguised. Lanser notes that his sonnet on the Ladies of Llangollen "is irregular within the

context of his oeuvre: while the overwhelming majority of his sonnets are Petrarchan, 'To the Lady E.B. and the Hon. Miss P.' is mainly Spenserian, with an oddly Petrarchan third quatrain, and its final rhymed couplet is an exceeding rarity among Wordsworth's 500-odd sonnets" (Lanser, "Put to the Blush" 32). William Wordsworth's poetics in relation to his larger body of work demonstrate the uniqueness of his sonnet for Butler and Ponsonby and draw further attention to the setting as a Sapphic monument.

Lastly, Anna Seward wrote one of her many tributes to the Ladies of Llangollen in the form of a sonnet, "Sonnet, Written September 1799, in the thatched Shed, by the brook, at Plas Newydd, in Llangollen Vale, the Villa Of the Right Hon. Lady ELEANOR BUTLER, and Miss PONSONBY." The layered description of geography in the title, contrasting the architectural shed and Plas Newydd with the natural brook and valley, cements the importance of place for the Ladies of Llangollen. Seward's speaker depicts a stranger who explores the landscape of Llangollen, following a "wild brook" (line 2): "Impetuous DEVA'S honours yield to thine, / Dear BROOK! For, O! thy scanty billows lave / Friendship and Fancy's consecrated shrine!" (9–11). In this poem, the natural world of which Butler and Ponsonby are custodians contains a rebellious brook that has yet to learn that the Ladies of Llangollen "gild thy Vale with INTELLECTUAL ray" (14). Whereas in Betham's and Wordsworth's sonnets, the women and their home appear to occupy the same consciousness, Seward separates them and portrays natural phenomena as agents who merely obey the women who live at Plas Newydd. The sonnet offers an ideal form for tributes to the Ladies of Llangollen and Llangollen Vale separately.

Anna Seward and the Ladies of Llangollen

In addition to "Sonnet, Written September 1799," Seward composed multiple longer poems that were inspired by the picturesque landscape surrounding Butler and Ponsonby: "Llangollen Vale" (1795), "A Farewell to the Seat of the Right Honorable Lady Eleanor Butler and Miss Ponsonby" (1803), "To the Right Honorable Lady Eleanor Butler, with the Same Present" (1810), and "To Miss Ponsonby" (1810). Walter Scott, in his preface to Anna Seward's poetry, refers to Butler and Ponsonby as a major source of Seward's inspiration:

> The beauties of Llangollen Vale, with the talents, virtues, and accomplishment of the ladies who have so long honoured it with their residence, claimed and obtained commemoration. Its inmates were among those whom Miss Seward valued most highly, and the regard was reciprocal. (xix)

Seward, then, was inspired both by the landscape of Llangollen and the relationship between the Ladies of Llangollen.[14] Of Seward's poems about Butler and Ponsonby, "Llangollen Vale" most notably represents an instance of elegiac mourning via a Sapphic monument. It documents the history of the region of Llangollen and concludes by citing Butler and Ponsonby as a model of women's friendship that is more deserving of memorialization than the acts of violence that once dominated the Welsh landscape: "Now with a Vestal lustre glows the VALE, / Thine, sacred FRIENDSHIP, permanent as pure" (lines 85–86).

Seward's "Llangollen Vale" demonstrates the Sapphic monument at its various levels: as a vehicle for women to memorialize their otherwise unacknowledged love in life in a permanent

[14] In a letter to Rev. T. S. Whalley in 1797, Seward writes about a trip to Llangollen: "My destined week of elevated situation past, I sought the vale, and swiftly flew three days of high gratification, scenic and intellectual, with the charming Rosalind and Celia of this lovelier Arden" (Seward, "Letter LXXVIII: Rev. T. S. Whalley. Lichfield, Oct. 10, 1797" 394). This reference to Shakespeare's characters, like Percy Bysshe Shelley's "Rosalind and Helen," links the Ladies of Llangollen to Shakespeare's portrayals of queerness in *As You Like It*.

material object, as a retelling of history through a counter-imperial emotionality, and as the location of human love in a love of nature. JoEllen DeLucia's monograph chapter on "Llangollen Vale" focuses on the influences of history on Seward's poem, both the Welsh history of the land where Plas Newydd is located and the personal history of Seward's relationship with Honora Sneyd. DeLucia notes that the poetic preface that precedes "Llangollen Vale," H.F. Cary's "Sonnet" (1795), foregrounds "fond Friendship's gentle power decreed, / Rear in thy hallow'd Vale the simple shrine" (Cary lines 13–14) and demonstrates that Seward used "Llangollen Vale" "as an experiment in historical method as well as a celebration of female friendship" (DeLucia 115). As in Seward's poems about Honora Sneyd, commemoration of women's love is a major theme in her poetry overall, particularly in her suite of poems about Butler and Ponsonby.

Seward grounds the Sapphic monument of "Llangollen Vale" in a history of its landscape, including the imperial accomplishments of Owen Glendower, Richard II, and Henry IV and the Welsh love story of Hoel and Mifawny.[15] These models of masculine legacy and unrequited heterosexual love are commemorated through architectural monuments; by contrast, Butler and Ponsonby's idyllic natural monument is the Vale itself along with its surrounding landscapes. By positioning these previous occupants of Llangollen Vale as lesser than the love and memorial power of Butler and Ponsonby, Seward frames Sapphic affection and its natural monument of the Vale as part of an enduring history that takes precedence over the Vale's previous histories. She juxtaposes ruins and nature, asking if the "lonely, ruin'd Pile . . . Wore

[15] Seward includes a footnote to the first mention of Hoel and Mifawny in "Llangollen Vale": "In 1390, Castel Dinas-Bran, now a bare ruin, was inhabited by the lovely Lady MIFAWNY VECHAN, of the House of Tudor Trevor. She was beloved by the Bard HOEL. . . . The ruins of Castel Dinas-Ban, are on a conoid mountain of laborious access. It rises in the midst of Llangollen Valley" (Seward, note to "Llangollen Vale" 5). Within the poem, Seward demonstrates the superiority of Butler and Ponsonby's love to Hoel and Mifawny's by denoting nature as more worthy of praise than architectural ruins.

one young lip gay ELEANORA's smile? / Did ZARA's look serene one tedious hour beguile?" (145–150) and signalling the endurance of Butler and Ponsonby's love over that of Hoel and Mifawny. During the poem's composition as well as in our own time, we can confirm her projection to be true: Llangollen, as Seward's poem documents, is the setting for multiple major historical moments across Welsh history, but Butler and Ponsonby still bear the title of the Ladies of Llangollen, linking their identity as women of higher class to the geographical site.

Seward uses nature as a tool to characterize Butler and Ponsonby's relationship in "Llangollen Vale." Backscheider remarks that Seward "transforms description to a metaphoric rendering of the women's presence and relationship [and] appropriates nature so completely that she can use it to express the inexpressible" (311). The inexpressibility of the women's love, by being rooted in a natural landscape that has endured political violence, demonstrates the tradition of politically charged friendship poems that Backscheider studies: "The friendship poem here is pretext, the strategy that protects Seward from charges of moving outside acceptable conduct, yet it is an important poem in establishing her as a daring commentator on current events" (230). Seward's use of the historical in this poem frames the elegy's mourning in an enduring landscape that preserves its history as well as rewrites a masculine history in favour of a Sapphic pastoral history. DeLucia provides a queer reading to Seward's occupation with history and politics, explaining that by queering history, Seward "[challenges] progressive narratives of the nation and the family" (DeLucia 89). Seward, like Butler and Ponsonby, introduces alternatives to heterosexual marriage, making the Ladies of Llangollen the ideal model for living without marriage in her poetry.

Reading "Llangollen Vale" as an experimental pastoral elegy brings together disparate yet related theories of feminine pastoral and feminine elegy of the Romantic period. When it

comes to the pastoral elegy, women tended to avoid the genre's necessary "distance between the poet and the lost beloved [because] they were rarely entirely confident of their status either as acknowledged connoisseurs of poetry or as successful professional writers" (Mellor 444). Seward counters this dilemma in "Llangollen Vale" by foregrounding history as evidence to the proximal emotions that she depicts between the speaker and the women, between the readers and the women, and between the women themselves. The consolation is a violent natural force that still brings comfort to the speaker:

> May one kind ice-bolt, from the mortal stores,
> Arrest each vital current as it flows,
> That no sad course of desolated hours
> Here vainly nurse the unsubsiding woes!
> While all who honor Virtue, gently mourn
> Llangollen's Vanish'd Pair, and wreath their sacred urn. (169–174)

Traits of the pastoral elegy include the procession of mourners that is implied by those who will "wreath their sacred urn" and the consolatory ice-bolt that Brideoake notes "emphasizes the futurity of their relationship" by preserving their love in their deaths ("Extraordinary Female Affection" 15). Once again, the Ladies of Llangollen occupy a contradictory role in their simultaneous nature: The lightning strike that would end their lives unites them in a reparative consolation wherein they are immortalized by the Sapphic monument. DeLucia's study of "Llangollen Vale" links Seward's anachronistic positioning of Butler and Ponsonby to Love's "feeling backward," wherein the women desire a life from an idealized past time (DeLucia 89). Seward's poem thus queers elements of nostalgia and memory to bridge her historical poem with the attributes of the mournful pastoral elegy.

Seward's themes of Sapphic love and endurance persist throughout her oeuvre, manifesting frequently in monuments within poems that create queer ecologies of grief and mourning. "Llangollen Vale" portrays the natural enclosure of the Vale as "Arcadian bowers; / Screen'd from the storms of Winter, cold and pale, / Screen'd from the fervors of the sultry hours" (98–100). Here, where the protective vale—a pun on veil—and pastoral bowers permit "Friendship's blest repose" (102), Butler and Ponsonby become idealized characters. Seward self-fashions as the objective elegist, resisting the portrayal of desire between Butler and Ponsonby—Stuart Curran describes her as having "made her name as a poet of elegies that paradoxically manifest few traditional signs of grief" (239). "A Farewell to the Seat of the Right Honorable Lady Eleanor Butler and Miss Ponsonby," published in 1803, lacks the elegiac themes and form of "Llangollen Vale" but the Sapphic monument still features heavily as a pastoral site of pilgrimage. Where "Llangollen Vale" and "A Farewell" depict a powerful emotional link between the landscape and women's love, Seward's poems to Honora Sneyd most explicitly perform desire and longing from the point of view of the speaker to another woman. The various Sapphic monuments in the Honora poems aspire to be like the successful monument of Llangollen Vale, in which Butler and Ponsonby, in DeLucia's words, "create a Plas Newydd, a new home or place, and most significantly a new time" (115).

Seward notably does not limit her writings in honour of the Ladies of Llangollen to poems about them. In one of her letters to Butler and Ponsonby, she includes her translation of one of Horace's poems, titled "Forty seventh sonnet of A. Seward's collection, written Dec. 31st 1782, copied for the eye only of Lady E. Butler & Miss Ponsonby." Although she writes on the outside of the envelope, "Sonnet for no eyes but the Ladies!," she composed the poem, which appears in her collected works as "Sonnet XLII," nineteen years before she sent the letter in 1801

("Autograph Letter Signed to Lady Eleanor Butler"). The poem is about human perception of the passing of time upon the new year, with no mention of the Ladies of Llangollen or Sapphic monuments of any kind. Her repeated restriction of the sonnet for only Butler and Ponsonby to read, therefore, appears only to indicate the close relationship that she had with both of them in their correspondence.

Seward's pair of poems that depict the women separately, like Pilkington's short biographies, still fail to speak of one without the other. "To the Right Honourable Lady Eleanor Butler, with the Same Present" closes on Ponsonby: "And long, long hence meet ELEANORA'S eye, / While with her ZARA'S it shall frequent rove / The treasur'd records of esteem, and love!" (lines 20–22). The subject of "To Miss Ponsonby" is her relationship with Butler:

> Davidean friendship, emulation warm,
> Coy blossoms, perishing in courtly air,
> Its vain parade, restraint, and irksome form,
> Cold as the ice, tho' with the comet's glare. (lines 9–12)

Denouncing aristocratic life, this poem eerily recalls the "kind ice-bolt" that prompts the optimistic deaths of Butler and Ponsonby in "Llangollen Vale." Lisa Moore's *Collected Poems of Anna Seward* positions these two poems as the final poems about the Ladies of Llangollen that Seward published, leaving them in their idyllic landscape, where they "The life of Angels in an Eden lead" ("To Miss Ponsonby" 16). While Seward does not imagine their future deaths in this poem, she still alludes to their transcendence and otherworldliness, portraying their relationship optimistically and sacredly. Seward leaves a portrait of Honora Sneyd in Butler and Ponsonby's library—DeLucia links this to her composition of poems about the Ladies of Llangollen as "creating a new historical record—a queer history that includes female friendship as well as

those vanquished by war, unrequited love, and religion" (112). Like other Romantic literary figures whom Butler and Ponsonby inspired, Seward's pilgrimages to Llangollen Vale prove beneficial for both her poetic career and her process of grief toward her friend's death.

Coda: Mary Gordon's Chase of the Wild Goose

In 1936, Mary Gordon published *Chase of the Wild Goose*, a novel that fictionalizes Butler's and Ponsonby's lives and represents the narrator's interaction with their ghosts during a pilgrimage to Plas Newydd. The elegiac practice of memorializing feminine friendship and love in an affective imaginative monument therefore extends beyond Romantic poetry, demonstrating the possibilities of the Sapphic monument for women mourners of any kind during and after the Romantic period. Brideoake explains that Gordon's depiction of the Ladies of Llangollen "depicts Plas newydd as a sacred site, a point of temporal, political, and affective origin from which a feminist future is brought forth" (Brideoake, *The Ladies of Llangollen* 269). Both during Butler and Ponsonby's time and after, the admirers they inspire venture to the landscape that has become their monument. Gordon portrays this continued phenomenon:

> They achieved fame at a stroke. They made a noise in the world which has never since died out, and which we, their spiritual descendants, continue to echo. It is true that they never foresaw that the hum they occasioned would join itself to the rumblings of the later volcano which cast up ourselves. Suffice it that they made in their own day an exclusive and distinguished noise. (17)

Gordon's description of their legacy turns to the supernatural, but her descriptions of their lives align with representations of the Ladies of Llangollen over one hundred years prior.

In *Chase of the Wild Goose*, unlike in many of the poems of the Romantic period that feature Butler and Ponsonby, the architectural monuments feature more prominently as Sapphic sites of commemoration by the narrator. Brideoake attributes this conclusion to the self-fashioning by Butler and Ponsonby of the interior of the home that they occupied, as they "sought to monumentalize themselves in life, constructing the substantial tomb from which the figures of Gordon's monument turn away with their nameless faces" (*The Ladies of Llangollen* 271). Before their union, Gordon depicts Butler projecting a future where she and Ponsonby lived together: "She was dreaming of the day when she could stand with Sarah on that far away hillside and watch a crimson sunrise flood mountains and sky from a cottage door" (69). The act of looking at nature rather than experiencing it is more important for Gordon. This shift in focus from the ecology of Llangollen as it relates to Butler and Ponsonby to the architecture of Plas Newydd may be due to the apparent disenchantment of visitors in the mid-nineteenth century with Romantic pastoral nostalgia. Travelogues by Thomas Roscoe and Louisa Costello recognize "at best, a monument to a worthy but misunderstood cause, or perhaps a diverting curiosity, and at worst, a distasteful reminder of a deeply flawed domestic and social experiment" (N. Reynolds 110). Whereas Butler and Ponsonby's linked identities to the ecology of the vale that they occupied were significant to Romantic poets, the uniqueness of the ornate cottage was more sensational to later visitors.

I argue that the landscape of Llangollen and the vale that surrounds Plas Newydd remain the commemorative monuments in Gordon's novel, as the connection between Sapphic love and nature remains the site of pilgrimage for their posthumous visitors. Similar to their representation in poems such as Betham's, the Ladies of Llangollen are tied to place, demonstrated by use of their location-specific shared name. In Gordon's case, Butler and Ponsonby's ghostly appearance

in their famous residence marks their "enduring significance, their confounding of the logic of cause and effect marking their inhabiting of 'queer time'" (Brideoake, *The Ladies of Llangollen* 272). Moreover, geography is embodied both by these pilgrimages and by Ponsonby's claim that "I'd rather drown in these waters, God knows. *You* are my Ireland" in response to Butler's hesitation over leaving their original home (Gordon 139). The spatiotemporal links of monuments and memorialization become most clear in Gordon's novel, where the narrator is separated from Butler and Ponsonby by time as well as distance.

Gordon's novel embraces the immortality of the Ladies of Llangollen more explicitly than Seward, Betham, or Wordsworth did, which accords with her ability to know the actual future of their legacy beyond their deaths where Romantic poets did not. The philosophical discussion that the narrator has with Butler and Ponsonby upon seeing their ghosts turns to the spiritual to explain the endurance of their love. Butler wonders "How are we going to define Ideal?" in response to the narrator's retelling of their legacies, and Ponsonby replies "We don't define it. We symbolize it. As a wild goose—or any other white bird" (Gordon 253). Claiming the women themselves as symbols of the Ideal, or of idealized elopement and isolation, Gordon crafts gradually self-aware Ladies of Llangollen. In the novel, they may not have intentionally built their identities as a model of escapism, but they now recognize and embrace the impact that they left on their admirers long after their deaths. With this recognition of their influence, Butler and Ponsonby can enjoy eternity: "Now unlimited time was their own, and the present really belonged to them" (Gordon 153). In Gordon's novel, Butler and Ponsonby's impressions of their legacy require no conjecture—they take part in ensuring the endurance of their love after their deaths.

Eleanor Butler and Sarah Ponsonby inspired visitors before and after their deaths by living outside of the limitations of Irish society, family hierarchies, and heteronormativity. Their commemorations in poetry during their lifetimes depict their popularity, inspirational lifestyle, and idyllic home akin to the memorialization of love between women that I have outlined in previous chapters. Admirers of the Ladies of Llangollen take them as models for practicing queer love and friendship and adopt elements of their happy exile in order to live more freely themselves. The Ladies of Llangollen, despite the poems that immortalized them, did not live forever: Butler died in 1829 and Ponsonby in 1831. They were buried together in a cemetery in Llangollen along with their servant Mary Caryll, commemorated by a stone monument (Brideoake, *The Ladies of Llangollen* xv). Material traces of the women live on in the curated remains of Plas Newydd's gothic architecture and in the cemetery where their bodies reside, but Butler and Ponsonby's attachment to their landscape is represented in their title of "Ladies of Llangollen," permanently linking their union to the pastoral landscape that constituted their elegiac monument in Romantic poems.

Chapter Four

"Hopes / That look beyond the tomb": Elegizing the Woman Poet

This chapter will compare two imaginative rather than material Sapphic monuments addressed by Romantic women poets to other women poets. In the case of these poems, Charlotte Dacre's "To the Shade of Mary Robinson" and Letitia Elizabeth Landon's "Stanzas on the Death of Mrs. Hemans," the roles of posterity and legacy are heightened from Sapphic elegies for friends or fictional characters: "eulogies provide a way of thinking about the legacy of women's artistic production, not just the legacy of the woman being commemorated, but also that of the woman writing the tribute, who establishes herself as the next link in a rich history of women's cultural contributions" (Runge and Cook 5). Runge and Cook's study of tributes between women during the eighteenth century depicts the collaborative nature of artistic legacy in these tributes, wherein the chaste sororal relationships that were formerly understood by men became more overtly the "extensive networks of exchange and value with their intellect and creativity at the core" (6). In a similar fashion to Romantic and Modernist depictions of Eleanor Butler and Sarah Ponsonby, Dacre and Landon insert themselves into a lineage of women artists whose contributions to British culture are worth commemorating.

Where in the traditional pastoral, the idealized landscape is a site of reunion between two men (Alpers 193), reunions in these two poems are displaced from the disappointing present into the intangible location of an imagined future. The pastoral setting in Dacre's and Landon's poems celebrates Sapphic love nonetheless, locating the endurance of mourning beyond the speaker's memory in the afterlife rather than in a material monument within the poem. These monuments, by their intangible nature, are private rather than public memorials and are typically imperialistic and stately. The eighteenth-century ruin in poetry, as Anne Janowitz discusses,

signifies both decay and English imperialism to build on the concept of "mouldering time [that] shows its power above the designs and vanities of human communities" (2–4). Dacre's and Landon's Sapphic pastoral elegies embrace the paradoxical transience of the imaginative monument instead of the decay represented by ruins. By foregrounding the optimistic creation of place in nature and depicting the poem itself as a textual monument, they make up for the lack of a satisfactory material monument within the poem.

To return to Shelley and the established tradition of elegies between men, *Adonais* stands in contrast to Dacre's and Landon's poems by way of its representation of the friendship elegy between poets. Whereas Shelley's speaker demonstrates "his attempted mastery of and vengeance against nature, or more precisely change" (Sacks 21), these women poets collaborate with nature to envision elegiac monuments that better honour deceased women than their tombs. Backscheider attributes the rarity of women's pastoral elegies to the common use of patriarchal and imperialistic themes that "establish the greatness of the author; by placing themselves first and as the real subject of the poem, poets positioned themselves among the immortals" (277). I have already examined how Shelley, whose *Adonais* is the most notable elegy between poets of the British Romantic period, enters and challenges this model of masculine elegy, but the elegy for women requires different parameters, especially in relation to the disparity between men's and women's conceptions of retirement and exile. Anne Mellor considers various women poets when she claims that "the poetic elegy became an exploration, not so much of the nature and expression of grief, but rather of the ways in which the emotion of grief is a culturally constructed dimension of gender, and specifically of femininity" (Mellor 450). Some of these elegists, such as Anna Seward, Dorothy Wordsworth, and Matilda Betham, find successful

mourning in the refuge of nature. For Dacre and Landon, however, mourning takes place in imaginary rather than material natural monuments.

These Romantic occupations with mourning evoked for many poets the Ancient Greek poet Sappho. Nicknames related to Sappho, according to Yopie Prins, often refer to Romantic women who employ lyricism and grief in their poetry. For example, Mary Robinson, who was sometimes known as the "English-born Sappho," imagined the Sappho who made her suicidal leap for a man, Phaon (Kawatsu 136–137). With this repertoire of references to Sappho in women's poetry that all contribute to repetition of Sappho's loss (Prins 245), constructing the mournful landscape for Dacre's and Landon's elegies to women who were identified as English Sapphos is a communal and genealogical process in the Romantic period.

The speakers of both poems are concerned with their subjects' literary posterity. Again, the processes of posterity in elegies for men and women during the Romantic period differ. Andrew Bennett claims that Mellor's "feminine Romanticism . . . is less concerned with phallic mastery, the sublime and individualistic assertion of identity, or the possibility of personal survival" (Bennett 65). I posit, however, that posterity for woman poets involves additional collaboration toward fashioning afterlives that imagine legacy's growth in the face of the common neglect of woman poets during their lifetimes. The importance of the personal for their mourners, such as Dacre and Landon, exemplifies Backscheider's dismissal of "communal loss and consolation" for the woman mourner—private relationships are not mythologized as in Shelley's elegy for Keats, making them partially inaccessible for the reader (Backscheider 314). The names of the subjects, however, become communal when the subjects' names are recognizable by a general audience, as is the case for Robinson and Hemans. Dacre and Landon cite the names of the mourned in the titles of their poems and throughout the poems, frequently

by their first names or pseudonyms in addition to their surnames. By contrast, Shelley's *Adonais* features Keats's name in the poem's subtitle, "An Elegy on the Death of John Keats," and in the preface but not in the poem. Whereas Shelley attributes the classical figure Adonis to Keats, Dacre and Landon resist mythologizing their subjects' identities as part of their projects of preserving Robinson's and Hemans's oeuvres.

Speakers of similar women's elegies portray posthumous collective mourning by nature's endurance beyond human lives and knowledge. For example, Felicia Hemans in "The Last Song of Sappho" (1834) expresses "the desire to survive as identity-less, effaced, invisible, forgotten, obliterated, anonymous—in other words, a desire for survival which amounts to non-survival . . . the poet fantasises her own obscurity after death in the burial, drowning, obliteration or dissemination of the body, allowing only for an impermanent trace of remains" (Bennett 80). While the speakers of these elegies hope for adequate memorialization of the women they mourn, poets such as Hemans have come to terms with oblivion and their return to nature's temporality, which appears to be superior in its endurance before and beyond human life. As Lisa Moore has explained, "Love between women is represented as interstitial, taking place in spaces 'in between' not only marriage and friendship but also sense and sight, smell and sound, taste and touch. Thus the poet looks to the resources of music, painting, and landscape to construct verbal monuments to these relationships" (*Sister Arts* 119). Moore's positioning of art for Sapphic methods of expression extends, also, to the spaces between life and death articulated in these elegies for women poets. The monuments within the poems are marked only by the speakers' transposed memories, but they remain monuments for the speakers all the same. By willing communal memory into existence through the elegy, these poets make public the action of mourning and the identity of the mourned in order to commemorate the dead collectively.

Charlotte Dacre's "To the Shade of Mary Robinson"

Charlotte Dacre composed "To the Shade of Mary Robinson" following Robinson's death in 1800, personifying a natural phenomenon to host Robinson's spirit. Dacre expresses dissatisfaction with the grave that memorializes her former mentor, calling the tomb "the cold gloomy night" (line 6) and "thy cell narrow" (11). Following these descriptions of the tomb, the speaker's reimagining of Robinson as a cedar tree rejects patriarchal monuments:

> Like a cedar amid the rude desart high soaring,
>
> And looking contempt on the shrubs that surround,
>
> Enduring for years the tempest loud roaring,
>
> And scorning to yield until *broke to the ground*. (17–20)

This personification of a cedar appropriately contains the grandeur and posthumous significance that Dacre's speaker attributes to Robinson, and the speaker actively denounces the masculine agents who allegedly contributed to obstacles for Robinson's literary posterity. Following the description of the cedar, "shrubs so presuming . . . rustle and wave o'er the cedar's *proud* grave" (21–22). The shrubs refer to Robinson's critics, condemning readers who did not adequately appreciate the poet during her life, similar to many Romantic elegies such as Shelley's *Adonais* yet more grounded in ecological and personal relationships (Cross 201). The poem concludes with a self-sacrificial claim by the speaker, where the speaker imagines Robinson taking her spirit to heaven when it is her turn to die.

Dacre notably borrows Robinson's own use of the resilient cedar tree as a natural monument commemorating the executed Marie Antoinette in *Monody to the Memory of the Late Queen of France* (1793): "Midst the wild winds, the lordly CEDAR tow'rs" (line 24). Adriana

Craciun notes that, like Robinson, John Milton referred to the fallen angels in *Paradise Lost* (1667) as "forest oaks, or mountain pines" (Craciun 101), but Robinson claims the cedar tree specifically to commemorate the fallen Marie Antoinette in contrast to Louis, the "parent" oak (*Monody* 9), and Dacre uses the same image to refer to Robinson. These women poets' collaborative genealogy of Satan, Marie Antoinette, Mary Robinson, and Charlotte Dacre "[allies] female Genius (and implicitly themselves) with the ostensibly masculine model of the heroic outcast" (Craciun 102). In addition to the exclusion of women from notable literary spaces during the Romantic period, the poets may also find identities as outcasts along the lines of the accusations of same-sex activity, or "Sapphism," against Marie Antoinette during her trial and execution (Lanser, "Befriending the Body" 193). In any case, the shared fallen identity that Robinson and Dacre craft between them and Marie Antoinette models the queer desire for shared experience in which "a heterosexual order is clearly subverted," excluding men and heterosexual relationships from the genealogy (Lanser, "Befriending the Body" 193). Furthermore, Robinson's poem depicts Marie Antoinette's resistance to criticism and rumour by way of the cedar tree that endures despite a storm: "Amidst the wrecks of NATURE seems to climb / SUPREMELY GRAND, and AWFULLY SUBLIME" (25). Like Marie Antoinette who was "Transplanted from the BOW'R of sweet repose" (12), Robinson's spirit is a seraph who was momentarily out of place on earth, and, although the speaker may see and hear her "sounding sweet in the breeze!" (40), she ultimately appears to reside in heaven, where the speaker will join her after death (56). Moreover, earth and heaven appear to be close, if not linked, in Dacre's poem, crafting a bower around Robinson's grave that resembles a pre-lapsarian afterlife.

Robinson and Dacre never met in person, despite Robinson's significant influence on Dacre's work. Ashley Cross explores in depth their posthumous relationship—she understands

the bowers where Robinson's spirit returns in the form of a cedar as "sites of passion and poetic inspiration" despite their association with Robinson's death and fading of poetic endurance (Cross 203). Dacre imagines, even though they never met, Robinson's guiding spirit occupying the freedom of the natural world with her:

> Oh! say, from thy cold, narrow bed, lovely Mary,
> Say, couldst thou not wander, to smile upon me?
> Oh! why not, sometimes, in thy form light and airy,
> Deign in the deep wild my companion to be? (33–36)

Robinson, during her lifetime, was conscious of her underappreciation by critics, writing to William Godwin, "You tell me I have 'Literary Fame.' How comes it then that I am abused, neglected—unhonoured—unrewarded?" (qtd. in Cross 197). Like Charlotte Smith, Robinson's poetry did not fit eighteenth-century models of traditional, organized expressions of femininity and was thus perceived as "emphatically female"—David Sigler reimagines this category as a "carved out space from which to build solidarity and foster an alternative set of cultural values" (15). Dacre's retelling of Robinson's death aligns with Robinson's perception of herself as a new Sappho, one who "anticipates a tradition of women poets 'as yet unknown' but who will be known—like Sappho—in future ages as well" (Prins 182). Dacre recognizes herself as one of these new poets and adopts Robinson's pseudonym, "The Sappho of the *Morning Post*" (Cross 200). Incorporating Robinson's memory into her poetry as a cedar, Dacre transforms Robinson into a "living metaphor, a shade who roams the landscape of Dacre's imagination" (Cross 206). Dacre combines their poetic careers to prolong Robinson's posterity and to elevate her own.

Charlotte Dacre's wider corpus characterizes her elegy to Robinson, demonstrating an equal finding of endurance through nature in poems such as "The Mountain Violet" (1805). "The

Mountain Violet," while it is ostensibly addressed to a non-agential flower, is another queer poem by Dacre.[16] The semi-elegiac structure of the poem, in which the speaker mourns and celebrates the feminized subject and leads a pilgrimage of "young zephyrs to thy bed" (line 32), mirrors that of "To the Shade of Mary Robinson," particularly in the closing stanzas. Both depict the speaker's willing sacrifice to avenge the subject after their deaths. Although the violet has not yet died, the speaker imagines a future where "Some lawless hand invade thy shrine, / Or nightly blast, with ruthless pow'r, / Sap the short life which might be thine" and portrays a failed rescue of the violet before acquiescing: "I'll, dead, embalm thee with a tear" (34–36, 40). Sharing a depiction of simultaneous deaths, "The Mountain Violet" resembles Anna Seward's "Llangollen Vale" and the ice-bolt that her speaker imagines so that neither Butler nor Ponsonby have to live without the other.

In the case of "To the Shade of Mary Robinson," the poem's subject has already died—therefore, the speaker can only predict her own death:

> Then grant, O great God! since to Mary 'twas given
>
> *Most* perfect among erring mortals to be,
>
> That chief of thy slaves she may serve thee in heaven,
>
> And bear, when I die, my frail spirit to thee. (53–56)

As aspirational as the speaker in "The Mountain Violet," Robinson's mourner does not accelerate her journey toward her own death but is able to wait for the time when Robinson will elevate her to immortality. Dacre rejects the "self-monumentalisation" that Bennett depicts in

[16] Dacre's famous Azor poems are a dialogue-based series of love poems. The critical assumption is that the speaker of the poems is male, particularly due to the female subject, but the speaker is never gendered (Craciun 117). The name "Azor" is notably the first name of Dacre's pseudonym "Rosa Matilda" in reverse (Charlotte Dacre is already a pseudonym for Charlotte King, later Charlotte Byrne upon her marriage to Nicholas Byrne) (Craciun 112). Due to this link to Dacre's persona and to her frequent use of transgressive sexualities in her oeuvre, the Azor poems could be an additional example of Dacre's queer poetics.

poetry by Romantic men, favouring instead posterity achieved through sacrificial oblivion or, as in Helen Maria Williams's "An Address to Poetry" (1823), "self-dissolution" (Bennett 79, 73). These parallel poems, which I place in the same trajectory as Anna Seward's and Dorothy Wordsworth's Sapphic pastoral elegies, craft within Sapphic nature a place outside of natural time wherein commemoration requires the sacrifice of the speaker's own mortality and poetry.

Letitia Elizabeth Landon's "Stanzas on the Death of Mrs. Hemans"

Letitia Elizabeth Landon was known by various nicknames in addition to her initials "L.E.L.": "English Sappho," "a Song-born Sappho of our Age," and "Sappho of a polished age," to name a few (Kawatsu 134, note. 1). Her poem "Sappho's Song" in *The Improvisatrice* (1825) established her conscious poetic link to Sappho's influence, after which her elegy for Felicia Hemans depicts a tribute wherein Sapphism gains the meaning of same-sex desire. The poem, "Stanzas on the Death of Mrs. Hemans," written following Hemans's death in 1835, recounts the speaker's disappointment with conventional memorial practices such as leaving flowers and creating monuments from stone—these actions are welcome gestures, but they are insufficient to commemorate Hemans adequately. The speaker, lacking a natural monument at which to mourn Hemans, creates an imaginative monument and transforms the sanctuary of the enclosed cemetery to fit this model. For Landon's speaker, Hemans, or "The red rose . . . whose sweetness others breathe!" (lines 84–85), will endure in her memory, even if not in others', thus prolonging the mourning of the dead beyond the limitations of a manmade grave.

Bennett examines Landon's concern with Hemans's posterity to suggest that the speaker's projection of Hemans into nature creates "an end to such torments: the poem comes to bury the poetess, not to celebrate her posthumous life" (Bennett 81). As in multiple elegies to

women that feature the Sapphic monument, the use of nature as a monument in the Romantic period has implied the continuation of the monument as a lasting memorial to the women depicted—whether they are the dead, the mourner, or both. For Landon's speaker, the duration of the imaginative monument of the "Flower brought from Paradise / To this cold world of ours" (78–79) will endure in her memory, even if not in others', thus prolonging the mourning of the dead. Bennett's claim that "it is precisely the posthumous neglect of the poet that gives that poet value" may be true in the speaker's reality wherein she finds that Hemans is inadequately mourned (Bennett 83), but the speaker's elegiac mourning depicts a significant lack of neglect.

The transcendence of the dead into nature enables the endurance of the poet beyond the limitations of literary fame. Landon's speaker dismisses the latter as a burden: "While what to others triumph seemed, / To thee was sacrifice" (75–76). Hemans's spirit does not abide by the common desire to have her poetry read for generations. Instead, she answers to a maternal nature: "thou art laid / Within thy mother's breast— / The green, the quiet mother-earth" (105–107). Landon represents nature anthropomorphized, moulding the landscape and objects in the surroundings of Hemans's tomb into the abstract poet figure that she invokes when attempting to imagine Hemans's spirit: "Thy song is sorrowful as winds / That wander o'er the plain / And ask for summer's vanished flowers" (45–47). Nature here is quiet, demonstrating that the speaker has accepted that Hemans's memory will endure in the parts of nature that are less noticeable to the typical mourner. Hemans has become, rather than a cedar tree, the gift that mourners lay on her grave. The poem opens with an epitaph: "The rose—the glorious rose is gone" from Hemans's *Lays of Many Lands* (1825). The metatextual personification of Hemans into the figure of a rose, much like Betham's speaker's fond memory of her visit to Eleanor Butler and Sarah Ponsonby in "To a Llangollen Rose," frames the poem in the memorial practice of leaving flowers (E. Smith

21). Landon has laid the groundwork for a Sapphic elegy as I have detailed it, but the mourner lacks a material monument that is found in nature, and thus the personification is necessary. She invokes nature, sharing Dacre's capacity to request, but not to mould, the site of mourning to acquiesce to her memorial practices.

Landon's poem follows the trajectory of the pastoral elegy, with its focus on song to suggest a communal mourning practice. Karen Weisman explains that "mourning and lamentation produce song, and the song gives pleasure, what [Gregory] Nagy terms 'the delights of elegy'" (Weisman 2), a phenomenon that, in Landon's poem, the dead performs herself, wherein song simultaneously refers to her poetry: "Thy song around our daily path . . . fills the universal heart / With universal love" (17, 24). Furthermore, the representation of Hemans's spirit as her own Sapphic monument transforms what has previously been a material object into an abstraction:

> Oh, Flower brought from Paradise
> To this cold world of ours,
> Shadows of beauty such as thine
> Recall thy native bowers. (78–81)

Landon's displacement of Hemans's fictional origin from Paradise into the fallen world of humanity depicts the speaker's admiration of Hemans's fame and grandeur while incorporating an embodied nature. As a result, the speaker's anthropomorphism of nature transforms the figure of the flower into the elevated persona of Hemans's posterity. By immortalizing Hemans in her transcendence back to her Edenic "native bowers," the Sapphic monument gains new power as the consolatory act that traditionally occurs at this later point in an elegy. Landon posits an alternative temporality for Hemans by reimagining her origins. The reassurance that Hemans's

spirit did not belong to the world of humanity in the first place and that it has now returned to "The green, the quiet mother-earth" (107) closes the elegy to imagine an optimistic natural bower in the real world.

Landon's posthumous record resembles the trajectory of the Sapphic tradition: her verse "refuses to monumentalize the poetess but because posterity remembers her precisely because of this fall into namelessness" (Prins 201). Where fame for Hemans's spirit, according to Landon's poem, remains certain, Landon performs acts of closure in her poetry about her own persona and others. The end of her elegy for Hemans permits the Sapphic monument to endure within the Paradise to which it has returned rather than to retain its power in the real world. The final line also imagines the death of her own poetic voice:

> Thy heart is left within our hearts,
> Although life's pang is o'er;
> But the quick tears are in my eyes,
> And I can write no more. (109–112)

This depiction of the simultaneous death of poetic ability with the object of mourning is where I draw the link between elegiac mourning and same-sex desire in these Sapphic elegies. Similar to Landon's closure in which she relinquishes her own poetic voice in favour of her subject's endurance, Hemans's series elegizing women throughout history, *Records of Woman*, lends her poetic fame to women who were previously written out of literary history. When Landon attempts the same praise of women, she inserts herself into a genealogy of women writers who recognize the importance of those who have come before them. Although Bennett claims that Landon's elegy "[resists] the redemptive value of posterity, and an identification of the proper end of women's writing as posthumous obscurity" (Bennett 83–84), Landon builds on Hemans's

project of retrieving women from obscurity to make the case that Hemans's work should live on in nature.

Charlotte Dacre and Letitia Elizabeth Landon, although they composed their elegies to Mary Robinson and Felicia Hemans thirty years apart, demonstrate the desire for commemoration of women's relationships in Romantic poetry. Whereas in poems that represent fictionalized or real friendships between women, their existing shared love is preserved, Dacre and Landon express their admiration for women poets whom they saw as inadequately memorialized so that "The benefits of their relationships survive the grave" as much as those of Anna Seward and Dorothy Wordsworth's friends, Percy Bysshe Shelley's Helen and Rosalind, and the Ladies of Llangollen (Backscheider 315). These mourners, however, do not need massive architectural monuments. Instead, as Landon writes in "Stanzas on the Death of Mrs. Hemans," their subjects find permanence and importance in "hopes / That look beyond the tomb" (43–44). The Sapphic monuments in these elegies, unlike the mountains and valleys of poems I have studied previously, are mobile—Robinson becomes the shade of a cedar, and Hemans becomes a rose and the song that carries it. As Mellor writes, "never do these female elegists attempt to find 'abundant recompense' for the loss of that which they hold most dear; rather they bear their dead in verbal acts of continual remembrance and love" (459). Dacre and Landon, by way of Moore's "verbal monuments" and Mellor's "verbal acts of continual remembrance and love," find sanctuary for their ambition and for the recognition of women poets they admire in nature, which endures far longer than the architectural monuments that they reject.

Conclusion

This survey of Sapphic elegies of the British Romantic period has addressed the historical, sociological, and literary influences on women's mourning and how they manifest in perceptions of sanctuary, death, and permanence in natural monuments. Across the Romantic period, the Sapphic elegy maintains a focus on the Sapphic monument as a memorial to the deceased or anticipated deceased. These monuments are consistent regardless of the reality of the monument or even the existence or death of the mourned; they are present across fictions and nonfictions, friends and strangers, and timelines of mortality. Romantic reliance on the endurance of nature beyond human memory contrasts with the twenty-first century reality of climate change and the continued failure of nature as we know it to endure. For example, the "pyramid of lasting ice" from Percy Bysshe Shelley's "Rosalind and Helen" might have melted from increased global temperatures (1299). The previously reliable changing of the seasons that occurs at Anna Seward's Lichfield home where she knew Honora Sneyd has now become unstable; the green landscapes and coastal towns of Britain have already begun to suffer from invasive species and rising sea levels that result from rising temperatures (The University of Sheffield). The industrialization that the Romantic poets wrote against is causing the death of the idyllic nature that they placed faith in as a refuge from urban landscapes. Ultimately, the optimistic hope that Mary Robinson's and Felicia Hemans's spirits will endure in cedar shades and the aural qualities of roses is, while not naïve, not the state of the world two hundred years later.

Despite the disparity between Romantic and contemporary landscapes, poets were also preoccupied by a climate crisis. The Romantic period occurred following the "Little Ice Age" that begins in 1770, and the famous 1816 "Year Without a Summer" was at the center of the period, inspiring some of the best-known British Romantic works (Murphy 1). The state of the

environment was also in question then: “For Europe, still recovering after decades of war and their bloody culmination at Waterloo, the dark skies and frigid temperatures of 1816 seemed to portend a troubling future” (Murphy 1). Byron’s “Darkness” (1816) and Mary Shelley’s *The Last Man* (1826), while these Romantics face a different type of climate crisis to ours, grapple with fears of an ecological apocalypse that eliminates human life and revives the true potential of nature as a result (Murphy 13). Wilson concludes in *The Spiritual History of Ice* in 2003 that, inspired by Mary and Percy Bysshe Shelley’s fascination with ice, twenty-first century global warming might similarly “shock us into a new awareness of ice, of its place in the living whole” as the sublime elements overtake human limitations to become “the truest, and most tragic ecology, an end of wasteful death in the name of new life” (220). While humans may not survive what we have done to our environment, nature will live on in different forms beyond our manmade monuments as these poets of Sapphic elegies imagine.

Trust in landscape’s permanence, however, is only partially what these poems’ speakers seek. Their hope for endurance and legacy was metaphorized in nature, but the Romantic understanding that nature was in fact undergoing massive change led to the need for increased reliance on imagination to envision alternatives to changes in nature. Most of the Sapphic monuments, even if they represent sites that exist, are imbued with imaginative power by the speaker and the poem itself. The monuments reside not in actual nature but in the perception of its power; entire landscapes can act as monuments just as specific objects in nature can. Llangollen Vale and the shade of an imaginary cedar tree alike receive representative power from the speakers who find satisfactory mourning in these natural monuments. Changing landscapes, therefore, were anticipated by Romantic writers such as Lord Byron and Mary Shelley, before the advent of climate change, albeit from decreased rather than increased

temperatures. Sapphic women cannot find acceptance in their social environments, such as the Ladies of Llangollen who exiled themselves from their Irish families to the pastoral landscapes of Wales, and they must additionally rely on nonhuman memory, a memory that ultimately has as much capacity for transformation and decay as we do.

Sapphic pastoral elegies of the Romantic period depict anxieties about the continued remembrance of the women that they commemorate, but, as I have begun to demonstrate, Mary Gordon's *Chase of the Wild Goose* has shown the effectiveness of Llangollen Vale as a site of remembrance in the twentieth century. Additionally, this thesis was in part inspired by an increase in the late 2010s in prominent cinematic and televised representations of same-sex desire between women in period pieces, reflecting increased interest in revisionist histories and telling stories that have been untold for centuries. With advances in LGBT+ rights that allow for greater publicity and funding for film and television adaptations of LGBT+ stories, Sapphic histories are now being remembered, celebrated, and preserved. Films and television shows that have centered around love between women during the long eighteenth century include Jordan Hall, Steph Ouaknine, and Jay Bennett's *Carmilla* (2014–2016); Park Chan-wook's *The Handmaiden* (2016); Yorgos Lanthimos's *The Favourite* (2018); Madeleine Olnek's *Wild Nights with Emily* (2018); Wash Westmoreland's *Colette* (2018); Sally Wainwright's *Gentleman Jack* (2019–present); Alena Smith's *Dickinson* (2019–present); and Céline Sciamma's *Portrait of a Lady on Fire* (2019).[17] Each of these pieces and their original historical or literary source

[17] *Carmilla* is a Canadian webseries that modernizes Sheridan Le Fanu's 1872 gothic novella; *The Handmaiden* is a Korean film set during the early twentieth century and based on Sarah Waters's novel *Fingersmith* (2002) which is set in Victorian Britain; *The Favourite* is a British-American film about the relationship between Queen Anne, Sarah Churchill, and Abigail Masham during the early eighteenth century; *Wild Nights with Emily* is an American film about the romantic relationship between Emily Dickinson and Susan Gilbert; *Colette* is a British film about the French novelist Sidonie-Gabrielle Colette set during the late nineteenth century; *Gentleman Jack* is a British-American television series about Anne Lister; *Dickinson* is an American television series about Emily Dickinson as a young adult, including her relationship with Susan Gilbert; *Portrait of a Lady on Fire* is a French film about a fictional love story between an aristocrat and a painter set during the 1770s.

materials is grounded in evidence from the long eighteenth century of love between women and has the goal of recovering lost queer histories.

The pastoral elegy's combination of grief, idealism, and transcendence has the unique capacity for poetic representation of the dead in an imagined utopia that resists the hardships that the subject went through during their life. The pastoral elegy successfully imagines a reality in which love that Romantic women feel for other women find permanence in nature. Many of these depictions of women's love that resists heteronormativity are hidden in plain sight, composed by major Romantic poets such as Letitia Elizabeth Landon and Percy Bysshe Shelley. In some cases, such as the Ladies of Llangollen, their relationship was their major achievement—their elopement inspired their admirers to live more freely and to love more openly, managing what many of these poems also hoped to realize. Sapphic pastoral elegies and the monuments that they represent ultimately serve as commemorations that resist oppressive and precarious landscapes of the Romantic period in Britain.

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