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Katherine D. Harris

San Jose State University, katherine.harris@sjsu.edu

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A. Bristow

Katherine D. [↗Harris](#)

San Jose State University

A. Bristow and *The Maniac*: A Bio-Critical Essay

A. Bristow's volume of poetry, *The Maniac, A Tale, or, A view of Bethlem Hospital: and The Merits of Women, a Poem from the French with Poetical Pieces on Various Subjects, Original and Translated*, published in London by J. Hatchard in 1810, contains twenty-seven original poems and five translations from French poetry. "The Merits of Women," a translation of Gabriel Marie Jean Baptiste Legouvé's 1801 poem, "Le Mérite des Femmes," dominates the volume with its forty-six pages of preface, poem, scholarly notes and coda. "The Maniac," written by Bristow, opens the volume with a Preface, twenty-nine stanzas of heroic couplets and a brief coda. At twenty-three pages, this poem is rivaled in length by Bristow's translation of "The Rural Sage" by M. Jaques de Lille, also originally published in 1801. In this volume, Bristow valorizes recent historical events in both her original poetry and through the translated works. The translations were selected due to their resonance with revolution and women's social roles as well as their popularity in French publications. The shorter pieces wander over domestic issues, scenes of Nature, friendship and Christianity, mostly written in a heroic couplet form similar to the title poem. *The Maniac* does not represent a truly radical volume of poetry in the tradition of Irish Loyalists. Instead, Bristow expresses Enlightenment concerns about passion, nation and family, especially in the title poem. Her writing is both exact and powerful, though the popular press did not necessarily applaud this volume. *The Monthly Review* notes that

If Mrs. Bristow does not appear to be a first-rate-poet, she certainly possesses a respectable portion of talent, and her little volume affords proofs both of correct judgment and of poetic fancy. She pays less attention than some of her contemporaries to the harmony of her numbers, but her serious pieces evince taste and reflection. (211)

In a more scathing review, Richard Davenport writes in *The Poetical Register* that Bristow's

poetical talents never rise above mediocrity, and sometimes sink below it. The Maniac [the title poem] is spun out too much. Had the story been told in half the number of pages, it would have been more interesting. . . . [T]he Maniac [is] written in the heroic couplet, a metre which Mrs. Bristow manages badly. There is neither melody nor variety in her ten syllable verse. In eight syllable verse she is more successful. (570-71)

But Davenport often exposed his own political leanings in his reviews.

No other volumes of poetry appear by an A. Bristow, and it seems that this is the last of her publications, at least under this name. *The Maniac*, though unsuccessful according to the popular press, reached an audience of at least two hundred and forty-one readers if not more. The title poem

has attracted some scholarly inquiry particularly because it pertains to the 1798 Irish Rebellion. Siobhán Kilfeather argues that "The Maniac" represents a deviation from "the conventions of literary realism as established in the eighteenth-century Irish novel" (62). But the Gothic imagery and tone of this title poem, coupled with the historicization of events about an unseated Irish government and an indelibly marked Irish culture, act as a witness to Irish Romanticism.

Bristow's Identity

A. Bristow has been routinely misidentified as Amelia Bristow, novelist and Evangelical Christian. This poetry collection, *The Maniac*, has also been attributed to an Anne Bristow (*Notes Queries* July 6, 1867), perhaps the same Ann Bristow who was diagnosed with monomania during her residency in Bethlem Hospital approximately 1835-1843 (Bethlem Hospital). Though the title poem, translations and other poetry in this volume identify A. Bristow as a sympathizer with the 1798 Rebellion, her nationality is much more difficult to place because "The Maniac" does not employ any typical Irish dialects or idioms to identify with an Irish audience or Irish nationalism. Kilfeather speculates that Bristow's narrative techniques also do not conform to the usual Southern Protestant literary tropes used by women authors: "[I]t is commonplace for loyalist women in the southern counties to describe their alienation from and fear of their servants and neighbors" (62) - a fear and alienation that "The Maniac" does not perform. In fact, the typical conventions discussed by Stephen Behrendt in the introductory essay to the *Irish Women Poets of the Romantic Period* do not completely apply to Bristow's work:

The poem does not contain any political or national issues that need to be decoded; the issues are very starkly, if not graphically, represented. Nor is there an antithetical sense of belonging or a call to resist oppressors; the primary characters in the poem betray each other but only when they are forced to by the failings of the Rebellion. In "The Maniac" external forces larger than British arrogance seem to be guiding the disastrous outcome of the 1798 Irish Rebellion. The entire volume is bound loosely by revolutionary rhetoric; it instead seems to struggle with its own sense of literary place - British or Irish, Enlightenment or Romantic.

Sold through subscription for 10s.6d., *The Maniac* was published in 1810 by J. Hatchard, a Piccadilly-based publisher and bookseller who began selling books around 1795 with distributions of Hannah More's *Cheap Repository Tracts*. The bookseller, later Hatchard Son, became a London publisher by 1801 and continued until 1849 (*British Book Trade Index*). The publication location and publisher, though potentially promising to reveal Bristow's residency, fail to provide clues about Bristow's nationality because much of the publishing trade was filtered through London during the early nineteenth-century. The subscription list, however, provides insight into the volume's readers: Many of the two hundred and forty-one subscribers are from Northern Ireland, or more specifically, Belfast, the origin of the society, the United Irishmen. Among the subscribers are listed four Bristows, including a "Miss Bristow from Birchill, Antrim" who ordered eight copies, the most of any subscriber and perhaps a tacit indication of the author's residence. (Perhaps the brief records in Public Record Office of Northern Ireland in Belfast could provide further insight: they possess genealogical memoranda and correspondence concerning the Bristow family, among records from twenty-five other families 1807-1945.) Because the subscription list is primarily composed of Northern Ireland residents and the title poem deals specifically with the "internecine" atrocities of the 1798 Irish Rebellion as Kilfeather points out (62), A. Bristow is most likely a Protestant, a loyalist or, at the very least, a sympathizer with Northern Protestants.

In contrast to *The Maniac's* poetic themes of revolution, nationalism and women, the novelist Amelia Bristow (1783-c.1845) is best known for her Domestic-Conversion novels, including the *de Lissau* trilogy, that are purportedly autobiographical witnesses to her own conversion from Judaism to Evangelical Christianity. Though scholars of Jewish literature, including Nadia Valman, continue to debate this "truth of testimony" (*Jewess* 67), Amelia Bristow fostered the belief that her many *de Lissau* characters were authentic, if not her memoir: A November 1833 letter from Amelia Bristow to a Miss Brady includes an autograph by Emma de Lissau, the religiously persecuted heroine of the 1828 novel, *Emma de Lissau*. Indeed, Robert Southey "thought the first of these novels 'worth reading, because it is in the main (I have been assured) true'" (qtd. in Katz 346 n.87). A. Bristow also makes a truth claim in the coda to "The Maniac"; however, she refers to the authenticity of events, namely the 1798 Irish Rebellion, and not the characters. It is striking that this title poem's hero's sister is also named Emma, but these seem to be merely coincidences and not substantial evidence that A. Bristow is in fact Amelia Bristow.

It is helpful to sketch the trajectory of Amelia Bristow's career as a novelist in order to contrast it against the work of A. Bristow: *The Faithful Servant*; or, the History of Elizabeth Allen. A Narrative of Facts (1824) signals Amelia Bristow's authorial appearance, followed by the *de Lissau* trilogy. The first, *Sophia de Lissau; or a Portraiture of the Jews of Nineteenth Century; Being an Outline of their Religious and Domestic Habits with Explanatory Notes* (1826), went through five editions by 1840 and was translated into German and Dutch in 1829 (*British Fiction; CW3; Women Writers DB*). *Emma de Lissau; a Narrative of Striking Vicissitudes, and Peculiar Trials; with Notes, Illustrative of the Manners and Customs of the Jews* could be found in circulating libraries and was published through 1847 in six editions. (Coincidentally, this novel was sold by Hatchard & Son, the publisher and bookseller of *The Maniac*.) A series of tales concludes this trilogy in 1830 with *The Orphans of Lissau and Other Interesting Narratives, Immediately Connected with Jewish Customs, Domestic and Religious with Explanatory Notes* with 1859 bearing the last known edition to be published (Howard). *Village Walks: Sketches from Life* published in 1834 deviates from Amelia Bristow's conversion themes (*British Magazine* 479). But, *The Twin Sisters; a Jewish Narrative of the Eighteenth Century*, later re-titled *Miriam and Rosette; or, the Twin Sisters*, continues the evangelical project in 1835 (Garside) and is the last known publication by this Bristow author (*British Magazine* 479).

Amelia Bristow stretched her evangelical work into periodicals by editing *The Christian Lady's Friend and Family Repository* 1831-1832 (*Jewess* Valman 227 n.38). In concert with the British literary annual craze, this Bristow edited *The Scrap Book: Containing a Variety of Articles in Prose and Verse. Chiefly Original*, published in 1833 in silk for substantially less (2s.6d.) than the more popular *Fisher's Drawing-Room Scrap Book* (3£.) edited by Letitia Elizabeth Landon (*Advert Sacramental Week*). If this is the same A. Bristow as the author of *The Maniac*, then her second book of poetry follows twenty-three years later, only after a successful career as a novelist.

Though each of Amelia Bristow's novels sold by subscription, none of the patrons appear to have subscribed to A. Bristow's *The Maniac*. Nor do the *de Lissau* novels, or other subsequent publications by Amelia Bristow, list subscribers' locations. A. Bristow's shorter poems in the volume do not specifically deal with Irish loyalties, but neither do they proselytize Evangelical Christianity. Between the scant evidence offered here and the writing styles of both of these Bristows, it does not appear that the author of *The Maniac* is the same as the author of the *de Lissau* trilogy.

"The Maniac" and Enlightenment Influences

A. Bristow's title poem tells the story of Albert, his sister Emma, his best friend Bernardo and Bernardo's sister Mathilda. The poem opens with an invocation to madness and briefly refers to Bethlem Hospital. Bristow relies upon Shakespearean tragic figures to represent the journey to madness and apologizes in the Preface for not representing a factual, medical or scholarly review of madness. In the poem's retrospective narrative, the speaker chronicles the life of Albert and his role in the 1798 Rebellion. The poem also carefully reveals a non-traditional family structure: Albert marries Mathilda, and Bernardo marries Emma. Bernardo passionately supports the Rebellion but Albert takes part only reluctantly. The speaker soliloquizes on the virtues of war and the rending of nation and family. But the tone is overtly Gothic in its tragic conclusion: death, destruction and mayhem effect Albert most heavily for he becomes, in the end, the Maniac.

"The Maniac, A Tale, or, A View of Bethlem Hospital," consists of twenty-nine irregular stanzas in heroic couplets. Bristow uses a version of the closed heroic couplet in which syntax and rhyme parallel and reinforce each other; however, unlike standard closed couplets that employ a caesura to conclude a couplet, Bristow revises the form to conclude some couplets with a colon, comma or semi-colon. Despite this deviation, each couplet represents a thought that is both clear and precise as is standard with the closed couplet (Brogan 105). According to T.V.F. Brogan, Dryden reinvents the closed heroic couplet as an oratorical device to address "large, potentially turbulent groups. . . . He projected himself not as an individual but as a spokesman" (105). The speaker in "The Maniac," similar to that of Dryden's speakers, witnesses the violence rather than acting in it. This is not an ode to the fallen United Irishmen, nor is it a versification of battle. Instead, as Siobhán Kilfeather argues, this poem represents an "anxiety that the [1798] rebellion has fractured the fiction of an organic relationship between family and nation" (62) - a type of upheaval that could infect any country's citizens with madness.

According to Thomas Arnold, in *Observations Concerning . . . Madness* published 1782-86 and again in 1806, mental health was the responsibility of the government. Arnold, a leader in establishing reforms of asylums and investigating madness and insanity, works from an Enlightenment "right reason" that the rational mind is corrupted by unregulated passions:

Some of the most powerful causes of this kind of Insanity are *-religion,-love,-commerce*, and the various passions which attend the desire, pursuit, and acquisition of riches,-every species of *luxury*,-and all violent and permanent attachments whatever. (15, 25)

In an Anglo-centric account of his observations, Arnold proposes that the British are more susceptible to madness (or insanity) because its citizens are allowed to better themselves by "acquiring opulence." This, in turn, gives "birth to the desires, fears, anxieties, disappointments, and other affections which accompany the pursuit, or possession, of riches" (21). By comparing the English to the French, Arnold concludes that the French are protected against insanity because they are

less ardent in their desires, less sanguine in their hopes, and less liable to be elevated by success, or dejected by disappointment, in consequence of the enervating effects of the nature of their government,-which by its perpetual checks and restraints, produces a habit of tame moderation, and patient acquiescence (21).

England, for Arnold, is the epitome of a civilized nation because "we hear of few or no instances of Insanity among barbarous nations" (23). Arnold continues defining insanity with liberal reliance on literature to describe the corruption of the rational being, including quoting the second stanza of Reverend Thomas Penrose's seventeen-stanza poem, "Madness," in which Penrose "paints in the raving, the love-lorn, the frolicsome, and the devotee" (*Gentleman's Magazine* qtd in *Spenser and the Tradition*) - the very same poem that A. Bristow uses as an epigraph to "The Maniac." Shortly before the publication of *The Maniac*, Penrose's poem was re-published in the widely-circulated and well-received (according to a review in *The AntiJacobin Cabinet of Poetry* in 1808.

Whether or not Bristow read Arnold's philosophical treatise is unclear, but it is certain that "Hail, awful Madness, hail!" (Line 6) from Penrose's often-re-published poem provides a model of the destructive nature of Madness, qualities that are introduced and condemned in "The Maniac's" first six stanzas. Similar to Arnold's observations, Bristow's account of madness proposes that the mind becomes overwhelmed with passions and loses control of Reason. In the Preface, Bristow apologizes for the gloomy (and inherently Gothic) nature of the poem, but provides a utilitarian purpose: "[I]ts near contemplation may not be without its utility, in repressing the pride of human reason, and calling the mind home to a sense of its own infirmities and imbecility, independent of superior support" (xvi). Claire Connolly points to "The Maniac" as a representation of Irish Romanticism, a literary culture that is "marked by a sense of grievance, generated by broken political promises and failed rebellion" (409). Stephen Behrendt proposes that the "gothicization of historical events offered a convenient means for circumventing censorship" ("Gap" 27-28) for women authors like Bristow. Kilfeather argues that loyalist writers, of which Bristow is perhaps one, "attempted to represent the impact of the rising not only in terms of things seen and experienced but in terms of the fears that had been activated and that continued to haunt Ireland for a number of years" (61). Bristow commits all of this in her title poem; however, she writes self-consciously from an Enlightenment tradition that relies upon "real reason" as the savior of humanity - and she does this with acknowledgment toward an Enlightenment poetic form that requires self-discipline, clarity and precision.

"The Maniac"

Bristow's maniac, a man driven mad by political turmoil instead of the conventional woman figure, has regulated his passions appropriately throughout this retrospective narration of his life. Even his reaction to his parents' death early in the poem is tempered by a sense of obligation to his younger sister, Emma. Bristow's tragedy focuses on this maniac's fall into mental instability through excesses that were not in his control.

The first seven stanzas and the author's Preface rehearse literary resonances of madness with loosely quoted phrases from *King Lear*, *Macbeth*, *Measure for Measure* and, later, *Hamlet*. (Bristow may have interjected Shakespeare to quell anxieties about literary patrilineage or promote her own authority as a woman author.) In Stanza 8, the speaker begins the maniac's tale but his name and family situation are not revealed until Stanza 10. Stanza 8 provides a transition between discussing general madness and that specific to Albert with a contrast between his current "hagard aspect, all aghast and wan, / And form distorted, scarcely speak him man!" and his past, glorious self:

His were admiring friends, and well-earned praise.

His, beauty's manly form; the polished mind;

Deep science; genius bright and taste refined:

With powers of reasoning, on *true* reason built,

Of force to check the infidel's rash guilt!

His, every finer movement of the soul,

With warm philanthropy to light the whole. (Stanza 8)

Prior to being committed at thirty years old, "six lustres" (Stanza 8), Albert possessed all of the mental faculties to lead a promising life. Reason and emotion are triumphantly balanced in this young man, which results in a fulfilled life - though the speaker does not linger on the *timely* death of his parents. No tragedy ensues with this loss; however, it does force Albert to become parent to his younger sister, Emma, and thus establishes his role as leader of the family - a role that will come to include Bernardo, his most valued friend, and Bernardo's sister, Matilda, whom he eventually marries.

The epic-style poem spends much of its time establishing the familial relationships among Albert, Bernardo, Emma and Mathilda and then witnessing the upheaval of Irish culture:

Spread wide her baleful influence through the land:

In public, bade her mobs tumultuous rise;

In private, broke through Nature's dearest ties:

And, whilst mock patriotism brawled aloud,

Infused her venom through the insensate crowd. (Stanza 15)

Bernardo, most susceptible to this call to patriotism, becomes a leader devoted to peaceful resolution. He, too, soon falls prey to fanaticism - an element condemned by the speaker, not celebrated. With this, Bernardo severs his fraternal bonds with Albert, who must also "shun whom he was forced to blame" (Stanza 18). The betrayal between these two Northern Protestants causes the dissolution of Albert's familial structure: His sister, Emma, who has married Bernardo, remains loyal to her husband and shuns the brother who raised her. Bernardo becomes the hermit-like outcast, ailing in physical and mental health and wandering with "banditti." At this point in the poem, Bernardo seems to be the maniac described in the first few stanzas. However, Bernardo is occasionally redeemed by the solace of brief, sporadic visits with wife, Emma and his infant son (Stanza 19). Albert remains with his wife and children through most of the violence, a further testament to his original rational nature. Only when the revolution becomes dire does he reluctantly fall into battle, but he does so without the passion that Bernardo originally felt. As is inevitable in this historicized narrative, the loyalists are caught and punished, Bernardo among them. Albert witnesses Bernardo's execution with sorrow - but less for Bernardo than for his own sister, Emma, to whom he must now deliver the news. The two women, Emma and Mathilda, though not actors in the uprisings, represent a domestic bliss that is destroyed by grief and then violent retribution.

The poem concludes with an apostrophe to the "Almighty Being!" - similar to the "Hail, madness, hail" of Penrose's poem - but only after Albert has sunk into his madness. His descent is quick, though. The situation rises to a crescendo in the sixty-line Stanza 27 with the death of his grief-stricken sister and only thirty-six lines later the discovery of his ruined cottage, his stabbed, dead children and his raped, dying wife. He, too, suffers punishment at the hands of the British. Where the previous stanzas luxuriate in their imagery and alliteration, the language of this sixty-line stanza becomes staccato and abrupt with exclamation points, enjambment and dashes that interrupt Albert's thoughts and narrate his frantic actions. By Stanza 28, not only has he descended into madness, but he has also been declared "incurable and dangerous" by an unknown entity. (Bristow uses quote marks liberally to either indicate dialogue or point to a quote from a Shakespearean tragedy.)

Just two lines before the concluding apostrophe, Albert is committed to an asylum, though the name of the hospital is not revealed. The opening stanzas narrate the inmates of such an asylum but qualify the physical building only as walls. The title is the only hint that this is Bethlem Hospital. Albert's madness and subsequent commitment descends upon him so quickly that he is never allowed to roam freely in his madness, like Bernardo, nor is he redeemed by restorative visits to home. The speaker no longer has access to his mind and is unable to convey anything other than his initial "torturing pangs" (Stanza 27). To become mad, Albert must lose all sense of control: "The powers of memory begin to fail. / Fantastic forms thick crowd his maddening brain; / And reason fled, ne'er to return again." (Stanza 27).

"The Maniac" represents not just a reaction to or reflection of the 1798 Irish Rebellion, but also a view of one of the most infamous mental institutions. With this "view of Bethlem Hospital," Bristow joins other authors and artists in depictions of madness. However, like William Hogarth in "A Rake's Progress," Bristow locates madness that is specific to a palatial building - Robert Hooke's "grand, beautiful and noble" (Andrews 397) architectural rendering in Moorfield that was in stark contrast to its inmates, their treatment and even madness itself. Having been published in 1810, "The Maniac" represents a Bethlem that has not yet moved to improved conditions in Southwark, London. Because of its popular reputation as Bedlam - thanks to Swift's 1710 "Tale of a Tub" engravings, Hogarth's final depiction of "A Rake in Bedlam" in 1735 and Henry MacKenzie's account of Bethlem in *The Man of Feeling* published in 1771 - Bethlem governors constantly sought to divest the institution of its reputation as the theater for the mad. Originally, the asylum was in a state indistinguishable from "almshouses, workhouses, jails, and other institutions where the poor and disreputable were increasingly gathered" (Scull 54), invited spectators in order to 1) stimulate charitable giving which would fund substantial portions of the operating budget and 2) act "as a moral lesson . . . illustrating the product and price of immorality" (Scull 53).

Unlike Hogarth's Tom Rakewell, Bristow's maniac suffers from severe trauma, or post-traumatic stress, which results from the mostly violent annihilation of his family and his nation. Though he is an Irish Protestant, he is committed to an asylum in London despite the fact that institutions for the mentally ill were built throughout Ireland during the early nineteenth century purportedly as a result of the 1798 uprising (Kilfeather 60). Jonathan Andrews, in *The History of Bethlem*, contends that "most incurables came from outside London" (393) like Albert. It is questionable, but entirely possible given the speculation surrounding Bristow's residence, that Bristow visited Bethlem prior to its move to witness the theater of the insane or perhaps even obtain a model for Albert's character.

Between 1783 and 1802 causes for admission to Bethlem were classified simply as melancholy, raving melancholy, and raving or mischievousness (Andrews 393) with a larger majority of its patients being paupers. By 1810, madness has moved away from being considered the result of the perils of passion, affectation or immoral behavior. In Bristow's poem, the speaker does not provide a simple, moral tale (at least not for the individual) or a condemnation of conditions at Bethlem. It is still nonetheless a view of madness that rivals the two female spectators who watch Tom Rakewell's imminent mental demise. Bristow's speaker asks the reader to consider madness, not necessarily as an illness or a medical condition, but instead as a total loss of family and nation. For this maniac, mental demise is the direct result of an unstable political state. Albert's condition is irreversible, but Bristow uses the narrative as a preventative tale to exonerate the wide-spread insanity suffered by many Irish loyalists - similar to Bethlem's early governors.

"Poetical Pieces, Sonnets Sacred Pieces"

The Poetical Pieces are a collection of poems that focus on nature, marriage and other domestic themes that were prevalent in later literary annuals. They lack "The Maniac's" editorializing speaker as witness to revolution, though they are written in the same style of heroic couplet, including the zealous punctuation within every line. The Sonnets, however, provide a variation on the heroic couplet that has dominated the volume thus far. In Shakespearean sonnet form, "To Fancy," the first sonnet, directly contrasts with the Enlightenment rationality that is presented in "The Maniac." In "To Fancy," the speaker invokes "visionary power" (Line 1) and extols Fancy's ability to render Nature even more beautiful than Nature could. However, this power is ultimately problematic because it is elusive and represents unattainable beauty. Unlike Samuel Taylor Coleridge and William Wordsworth, Bristow here does not pit Fancy against Imagination. The two, instead, seem to operate in concert.

It is not clear if A. Bristow authored the "Sacred Pieces," but since she is extremely diligent about offering translator's prefaces, it is safe to assume that these are original. These hymns and odes are the closest evidence of Christian ministering and perhaps could be tied to the novelist Amelia Bristow. However, the poetic style of A. Bristow and the prose renderings by Amelia Bristow are not consistent enough to provide affirmative evidence.

Translations: "The Merits of Women" and French Fables

After this impassioned treatment of madness, it seems odd that a translation of Legouvé's popular poem, "Le Mérite des Femmes," should follow. However, in the Translator's Preface, Bristow declares that she was motivated by the poem's popularity in France, the lack of any English translation and the scarcity of the French text. With its 1801 publication, Legouvé's poem explicitly celebrates women's roles during the French Revolution and condemns Napoleon's misogyny, especially his statement that a husband "should have absolute control over the actions of his wife" (qtd. in Stanton 239). The inclusion of Legouvé's poem resonates with the theme of revolution and, more powerfully, with an homage to women who become unwillingly entrenched in political discord. Theodore Stanton comments in 1884 that Legouvé's poem "had great success at a time when women were without friends at court, and few persons were disposed to sing their praises" (239). The original poem went through forty editions with a final edition in 1881 printed by Legouvé's son, Ernest, himself a leader of women's rights in his own time (*Encyclopedia* 256; Offen 465).

The revised and augmented fourth edition in French includes an engraving of a brutal battle scene that takes place on a city street. A decapitated head lies a few feet away from its owner and a woman protects an injured elderly man from the four men threatening him with knives and clubs (*Textes Rares*). Far from representing the domestic sanctuary in "The Maniac," these women actually participate in the violence. Another French edition published in 1824 presents a blissful, domestic scene between a woman and an infant who are lounging in a bower. Though the woman's breasts are exposed and cupped by a very fashionable gown, the scene ignores the violence displayed in the above-discussed engraving or even in the poem itself.

Bristow's translation contains twenty-three scholarly notes that remind readers of the historical references and literary allusions involved in "The Merits of Women." Legouvé provides this editorializing control, though, not Bristow. In fact, Bristow does not include all of the notes in this translation, almost as if the ones already included will convolute this already admittedly dense poem.

Translations by women were not uncommon in the early nineteenth century. Even so, Bristow spends a few moments self-consciously discussing the work of translation - in effect to translate poetry is to "imbibe his feelings; animate themselves with the same fires; and soar on the same daring wing" (23). Bristow complains that the French language and culture prohibit her from succeeding because

. . . in a language so extremely unsusceptible of poetical graces as the French, those animated fires, those lofty flights, are sought in vain. Bound down by want of variety in phraseology, poverty in diction, and, it may be added, uncouthness of measure, the poet can very seldom, indeed, soar on daring wing. (23)

Though the "The Maniac" presents a view of a divided Britain, Bristow's comments about French literary tradition, even French culture, unite Britain against the French despite her prefatorial request that readers refrain from dismissing this French poem because it is French. A reviewer erroneously congratulates Bristow for this writing poem, stating that it "appears to have been written *con amore*, [and] has all the animation of an original composition" (*Monthly Review* 1810). This same review expresses approval of the poem's "maternal solicitude and tenderness [as containing] so much truth and nature, that we hope to be applauded for transcribing it" (211) - perhaps an approbation of themes appropriate to female authors. If the title poem was intended to witness the destruction of family and nation, then "The Merits of Women" was inserted to perfunctorily unite it *and* celebrate the causes of women - causes that will once again rise to public debate in the nineteenth century.

Again, in the Advertisement to her translation of "L'Homme des Champs, ou les Georgiques Françaises" ("The Rural Sage") by M. Jaques de Lille originally published in 1801, Bristow begins with a defense. Apparently, another edition of this fable was due to be published just as she had completed translating the first canto. Upon discovering this, she ceased translating but did not abandon it. The other translation never materialized, and Bristow decides that hers will become the first. She spends the Advertisement assuring readers of the originality of this translation and defending against any potential accusations of plagiarism. The prose, here, is much more forceful and less scholarly than in the other two prefaces included in the volume and lends itself to the anxiety of authorship that frequently visited women authors. Like the Legouvé poem, Abbé de Lille's poem was selected because of the poet's revolutionary reputation. De Lille, though, was touted as the French Virgil and was respected by (and visited with) many British authors. However, this particular poem, as translated by Bristow, does not exhibit the overt revolutionary themes of Legouvé's poem or even of "The Maniac"; instead, it seems to have been chosen to challenge Bristow's translation skills.

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