

ABSTRACT

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Through readings of English-language poems produced in Britain, Italy, India, and South Africa, my dissertation argues that poetry functions as an especially powerful tool for resisting and reshaping nineteenth-century nationalist and imperialist discourses. In the project, I examine the various poetic strategies—particularly the use of affect to promote cross-cultural sympathy and the blending of Eastern and Western forms—that transnational, English-language poets used to interrogate dominant understandings of nationality. Poets studied include Henry Louis Vivian Derozio, Toru Dutt, Elizabeth Barrett Browning, Sarojini Naidu, and Rudyard Kipling. I contend that a school of English-language poets—men and women from diverse backgrounds working in Europe and the colonies—together

played a special role in nineteenth-century culture by presenting to their global readership a cosmopolitan alternative to traditional nationalist narratives.

Key to English-language poets' ability to offer such a radical reimagining of nationality was their ability to subvert, both through form and content, the imagined divisions among people upon which nationalist narratives rely. I understand environments rife with nationalist fervor—the *Risorgimento* period in Italy, the ascendancy of Indian nationalism, and the Boer War years in South Africa—as locations of parallel experience for these poets. I read their work as foregrounding in important ways the increasingly global nature of the lived experiences and intellectual projects of nineteenth-century elites in both Eastern and Western cultures. By structuring the dissertation as a comparative reading of poetic challenges to dominant nationalist narratives occurring simultaneously in Europe and the colonies, my work participates in a scholarly conversation that reimagines as multidirectional the forces that shaped Indo-Anglian and other colonial relationships.

My dissertation joins ongoing efforts to recuperate the voices of English-language poets in India, to better attend to the oft-marginalized political poetry of canonical British poets, and to pay equitable critical attention to the contributions of women poets. It also reinforces recent critical challenges to nationalist canonization practices by imagining a multinational school of poets that together articulate a more cosmopolitan understanding of national identity. The project aims to be of interest to scholars working in poetry, nineteenth-century Anglophone literature, postcolonial literature, and women's studies.

COSMOPOLITANISM AND NATIONAL IDENTITY:
ENGLISH-LANGUAGE POETRY, 1820-1920

By

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Introduction: Cosmopolitan Nationalism and English-Language Poetry

“My soul has fire to mingle with the fire/Of all these souls”

- Elizabeth Barrett Browning, *Casa Guidi Windows* (I, 953-954)

“An’ me, like all the rest, alone—/But reachin’ out to all the rest.”

- Rudyard Kipling, “The Return” (51-52)

“All men are our kindred, the world is our home.”

- Sarojini Naidu, “The Wandering Singers” (4)

In the lines above, Elizabeth Barrett Browning, Rudyard Kipling, and Sarojini Naidu poignantly imagine the breaking down of divisions between people. Written decades apart on three separate continents, each poet celebrates the bonds of shared humanity amid raging nationalist struggles: Italy in the mid-nineteenth century, South Africa at the turn of the century, and India in the opening decades of the twentieth century (respectively). The poets’ conciliatory tone is all the more striking because all three were fierce and famous partisans for their national sides. Barrett Browning staked her personal reputation and her poetic legacy in support of the Italian *Risorgimento* (1815-1861). Kipling would have been knighted (had he not declined the offer) for his fundraising for British troops and their families during the Second Boer War (1899-1902), and Sarojini Naidu was the highest-ranking woman in the Gandhian independence movement (1885-1947). Barrett Browning, Kipling, and Naidu were undoubtedly nationalists. They were also, as the lines above suggest, cosmopolitans. In his long life, Kipling lived on four continents and spent time on two others, failing only to set foot on Antarctica. In recent years, the United Kingdom Antarctic Place-Names Committee has secured Kipling’s legacy even in the icy south: two land formations, the Kipling Mesa and the Patalamon

Mesa, have been named in his honor (3). Naidu spent most of her life in India; however, she lived several years in England during her education and travelled extensively in Europe, Africa and North America as a global representative of the Indian National Congress. Barrett Browning's travels were not so wide, but her British birthright and her allegiance to Italy, the adopted homeland of the last fifteen years of her life, presented her with the same challenge Kipling and Naidu faced: the paradox of cosmopolitan nationalism.

This project examines how Barrett Browning, Kipling, and Naidu as well as earlier Indian poets, Henry Louis Vivian Derozio and Toru Dutt, mediate between the national and the global in order to articulate a coherent cosmopolitan nationalism. In these case studies, I examine the particular properties of poetry that allow poets to effectively resist and reshape nationalist and imperialist discourse in the long nineteenth century. I also identify specific poetic strategies—for example, the use of affect to create cross-cultural sympathy or the subversion of nationalist divisions through form—that these diverse poets share. Based on close readings of their poems and studies of their critical reception, I contend that these poets should be understood as part of a global school of English-language poets—a group that, together, offered their global English-language readership a cosmopolitan alternative to the divisiveness of traditional nationalist narratives. More broadly, by tracing these poets' strategic blending of cosmopolitan and nationalist commitments over the course of the long nineteenth century, I suggest a long-standing intellectual tradition in which contemporary theories that wish to integrate the claims of the national and the cosmopolitan might be rooted.

Cosmopolitan Nationalism: Towards a Definition

Cosmopolitan nationalism is not a new term; however, its component ideas are still much more frequently presented in opposition than in concert. *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, for example, states with certainty and clarity that “the cosmopolitan rejects a strong nationalism” (Kleingeld 1). Scholars have discussed the relationship between cosmopolitanism and nationalism, invariably using the word “tension,” in almost every imaginable context. Carmen E. Pavel has outlined what she calls “the permanent tension” between cosmopolitanism and nationalism in theories of international justice and moral philosophy (489). Miri Yemini, Hed Bar-Nissan, and Yossi Shavit have studied “the acute tension between cosmopolitanism and nationalism in the Israeli education system” (709), while Xiaoqun Xu has examined how “the tension between cosmopolitanism and nationalism” played out in Chinese press descriptions of visits from British philosopher Bertrand Russell, Russian musician Vasilij Eroshenko, and Indian novelist Rabindranath Tagore in the 1920s. It is not only scholars, however, who often imagine cosmopolitanism and nationalism as irreconcilable, competing forces.

In recent public policy discourse, the cosmopolitan ideal has been put forward repeatedly as a counter-measure to rising nationalist movements in various global conflict zones. To cite but two examples, Turkish novelist Elif Shafak, in protest against the increased prominence of far-right parties in her home country as well as in France and Hungary, recently described the relationship between cosmopolitanism and nationalism this way: “nationalism thinks, speaks and commands in ‘either-or’ terms, cosmopolitanism believes it is possible to be ‘both... and ...’ While nationalism uses exclamation marks, cosmopolitanism ends each sentence with a comma” (1). Fareed

Zakaria, writing for the *Washington Post* in the aftermath of the 2014 movement of Russian forces into Ukraine, observes a similar opposition less eloquently: “The crucial elements of Putinism are nationalism, religion, social conservatism, state capitalism and government domination of the media. They are all...different from and hostile to, modern Western values of individual rights, tolerance, cosmopolitanism and internationalism” (1). In today’s scholarly discourse, cosmopolitanism almost always holds a positive charge; however, in public policy debates, critiques of nationalism, like Shafak’s or Zakaria’s, are countered by equally impassioned defenses of nationalism. So crowded is this field of nationalism’s defenders that the exact same title, “In Defense of Nationalism,” has headlined multiple articles in prominent newspapers and magazines in the last decade.¹ In scholarly and public policy discourse in East and West, cosmopolitanism and nationalism are most frequently presented as constituting an important binary within which we must position ourselves, examine our topics of study, and situate our politics. Yet, despite the repetition of such formulations, the “tension” today’s scholars repeatedly observe suggests that nationalism and cosmopolitanism are, in human practice, rather difficult to reduce to a binary, with each exerting strong and complex claims upon the other. It was no different for those involved in the intellectual and political debates of the nineteenth century.

The scholars who have imagined cosmopolitanism and nationalism as compatible have often focused their attention—both in the nineteenth century and today—on judging the claims of one against the other. For example, Martha Nussbaum, in her foundational

¹ The two best known articles by this title were penned by Clive Crook, in the opinion pages of *Bloomberg* in 2014, and John O’Sullivan, for the *National Interest* in 2004.

response to Richard Rorty's criticism of the "unpatriotic academy" (1) and its pedagogical practices, imagines cosmopolitanism as fully compatible with feelings of national belonging—so long as the cosmopolitan takes precedence over the national. In "Patriotism and Cosmopolitanism" (1994), Nussbaum argues that the national is but one category of identity among many others that are subordinate to our primary human identity. Using the image of concentric circles, Nussbaum claims that national allegiance is neither our nearest and dearest—those being "self" and "immediate family"—nor our largest responsibility, which is to "humanity as a whole" (1). When people consider their nationality to be anything more than an "accident of birth," according to Nussbaum, "patriotic pride" becomes "morally dangerous" (1).

Stepping back, momentarily, into the past, it is worth noting that nineteenth-century literary scholars consistently engaged in the same type of hierarchical thinking about the relationship between cosmopolitanism and nationalism, though inverted. Consider, for example, the treatment of Barrett Browning's Italian poems in the *Athenaeum* and the *Saturday Review*. The *Athenaeum*, though it does not use the term, celebrates Barrett Browning's cosmopolitanism, claiming that in *Casa Guidi Windows* "the interests of the single heart have expanded into those of mankind" (597). However, the expansion of Barrett Browning's heart—both nationally and personally—carried with it a significant cost to her poetic style. The *Athenaeum* laments that, while in Italy, Barrett Browning's verse has become too "loose," too "Italian," and too much like her husband's (597). The journal goes on to remind her that "her own poetic mantel," "fraught with the spirit of English strength and insight," "was made of too good stuff" to admit outside influence (597). The *Saturday Review* puts an even finer point on it, complaining of "the

cosmopolitan English exile” who, becoming “the lounge of Paris or Florence...adopts from fluent foreign teachers their opinions, first of their own internal politics, and secondly of that very England which he ought to have known better himself” (403). Nineteenth-century critics recognized that poets might hold cosmopolitan as well as national allegiances; however, they consistently privileged poets’ responsibilities to Britain over all others.²

Over the course of the last decade, however, there has been a sustained scholarly effort to imagine the relationship between cosmopolitanism and nationalism as more dynamic. Consider, for example, the evolution in responses to Nussbaum’s envisioning of cosmopolitanism and nationalism as compatible, only so long as the former prevails. Early critiques, like that of Bruce Robbins, leave this claim largely unchallenged. Robbins objects to Nussbaum’s cosmopolitanism for being too abstract and too idealistic. He contrasts the motivating power of nationalism, as delineated by Rorty and Benedict Anderson, with the supposedly less inspiring “feeling at the philosophic level of humanity” that Nussbaum describes, ultimately concluding that her attempts to equate the two are “not helpful” (Robbins 4). Instead, Robbins argues that we should privilege “plural and particular” (2) and “located and embodied” (2-3) cosmopolitanisms over airy, philosophic theories of cosmopolitanism (like Nussbaum’s). A number of these “plural

² I discuss the relationship between British poets and British nationalism at length in Chapter 2. It is important to note here; however, that Barrett Browning’s critical treatment was fairly representative of how British reviewers responded to poets who criticized British public policy after extended residence in foreign or imperial places. Kipling was criticized in much the same way in the pages of the *Academy and Literature* for his poem “The Islanders”: “Mr. Kipling’s way” of adopting a tone of “aloof disapproval” and “scorn” “perhaps comes naturally to one who, spending much time in travel, acquires the habit of looking upon the island from without” (319).

and particular” cosmopolitanisms coexist alongside—or even “sometimes work together with” (2)—nationalism, a situation that Robbins, like Nussbaum, finds acceptable (if regrettable) so long as we constitute our “cosmopolitics” in opposition to “particular” nationalisms that pose “danger” (13) and inspire “shame” (14). More recently, the tone has shifted a bit, with scholars expressing curiosity rather than anxiety about the ways in which some cosmopolitanisms and some nationalisms can “sometimes work together.” Robert Fine and Robin Cohen, for example, hold out cosmopolitanism as the hoped for “antidote” not to nationalism *per se*, but “to problems of *extreme* nationalism, racism, ethnic conflict and religious fundamentalism” (137) (italics mine). Robert Audi, writing in the field of political philosophy, pushes this idea even farther, arguing that “in qualified forms, nationalism and cosmopolitanism may overlap in what they require of their proponents” (1). Audi examines geopolitical developments—he gives religious sectarianism as one example—that cosmopolitans and nationalists would, by virtue of their philosophical commitments, be obligated to resist together. My work here participates in this trend, in literary studies and other academic fields, towards examining how particular cosmopolitan and nationalist practices inform and overlap each other.

Before turning, in the next section, to what I call cosmopolitan nationalist poetry, I want to situate my use of the term clearly within these critical contexts. Cosmopolitan nationalism is, as I understand it, a political and a poetic practice. It is not abstract but rather, in Robbins’ words, “located and embodied” (2-3) within the socio-political fabric of the long nineteenth century and expressed, specifically, through poetry. This is not to say that other practices of cosmopolitan nationalism did not exist during the period, but rather to emphasize the unique ways in which poetry can articulate and circulate a

cosmopolitan nationalist narrative. Poets, by virtue of their traditional nationalist responsibilities and their mastery of formal and genre conventions, are particularly well-positioned to offer nationalist counter-narratives. The poetic practice of cosmopolitan nationalism, as I explore it here, imagines a stringent nationalism that is also deeply cosmopolitan. In this project, I seek to show that, through poetry, cosmopolitan nationalism, so often regarded as paradoxical or oxymoronic, becomes compatible. This is true even at the most foundational level. The *Oxford English Dictionary* tells us that the term “cosmopolitan,” becoming widespread in the mid-nineteenth century, describes one who “belong[s] to all parts of the world” and who remains “free from national limitations or attachments” (1). To be a nationalist, on the other hand, is to engage in the “advocacy of or support for the interests of one's own nation, esp. to the exclusion or detriment of the interests of other nations” or in the “advocacy of or support for national independence or self-determination” (1). Interestingly, while the *OED* presents the second definitions as supplements to the first, the two definitions of nationalism and cosmopolitan are quite different. Three of the four possible combinations of these definitions of cosmopolitan and nationalism fail a basic compatibility test; however, the final permutation—to simultaneously “belong to all parts of the world” and to “support...national independence of self-determination”—captures the lived experiences of many nineteenth- and early-twentieth century intellectual and political elites. The poets I read here are strong, committed nationalists; however, the nationalism they practice in their poems is open to all others who share their cosmopolitan ethos.

Cosmopolitan Nationalist Poetics: Contexts and Contributions

In examining how cosmopolitan poets used their poems to challenge traditional nationalism, my work joins a vibrant and growing body of scholarship interested in the role that poetry and form played in affirming, resisting, and circulating narratives of national identity in the long nineteenth century. Seeking to correct poetry's historic under-representation in postcolonial studies, many of these scholars are, like me, invested in recovering the political contributions of traditionally marginalized poets and in reimagining as multidirectional the forces that shaped colonial relationships. Together, we imagine poetry as especially positioned to intervene in nationalist discourses both because of its formal and rhythmic properties and because of nineteenth-century perceptions that poetry best embodied a nation's identity. In this section, I outline the critical conversations in which my work participates. I begin with a discussion of two critics, Daniel Malachuk and Roskina Chaudhuri, who have examined multinational groups of nationalist and cosmopolitan thinkers, and then turn to the work of Louise Blakeney Williams and Sheshalatha Reddy, who have ascribed "cosmopolitan nationalism" to poets in the long nineteenth century. My engagement with these critics intends both to provide further critical context to my own use of the term "cosmopolitan nationalism" and to show how their work has refined my arguments about the role of form and affect in its poetic practice.

My work builds upon growing critical interest in understanding how cosmopolitan and nationalist narratives circulate globally and how multinational groups of writers, philosophers, and politicians engage in shared strategic practices of cosmopolitanism and nationalism. Malachuk and Chaudhuri have conducted the most thorough explorations of

such global groups, thus far. Both Malachuk and Chaudhuri frame the difficulty in reconciling cosmopolitanism and nationalism as a recent critical phenomenon: for late-eighteenth- and nineteenth-century thinkers, in Malachuk's words, "advocates... of cosmopolitanism and... nationalism generally understood one another as allies rather than opponents" (139). Far from the intense challenge that these two allegiances seem to present today, Malachuk claims that, in the nineteenth century, "attachment to both one's nation and the world was fairly unremarkable" (139). He supports his assertions through readings of Giuseppe Mazzini, Ernest Renan, George Eliot, and Walt Whitman as "nationalist cosmopolitans," arguing that this diverse group was united in their belief that humanity benefits when individuals work diligently for the love and glorification of their own nations. For nationalist cosmopolitans, according to Malachuk, serving one's own nation through achievement was simultaneously to be cosmopolitan.

Malachuk's work focuses on writers in Europe and North America; however, Chaudhuri extends the idea of a global community of cosmopolitan nationalists to include writers and politicians in India and South America as well. She identifies the period between the 1790s and the 1830s as, to borrow Fine's and Cohen's term, a "cosmopolitan moment" when the French Revolution, a wave of independence uprisings in South America, and the egalitarian writings of Thomas Paine and other Enlightenment thinkers together produced "a republic of intellectuals that spanned the world" and "believed staunchly in the ideological underpinnings of these great upheavals" (lxxiv). The "republic" included men such as Rammohun Roy and Derozio in India, Simon Bolivar and Jose Del Valle in South America, and Guiseppe Garibaldi and Mazzini in Italy. Like Malachuk, Chaudhuri argues these men's nationalist activities were fully consistent with

their cosmopolitan world views. However, Chaudhuri avoids the term “cosmopolitan,” opting for “internationalist” instead. To quote her at some length: “The nationalism espoused by these men at this time was internationalist in character, spilling out of the territorial demarcations of nation into a broad universalism of thought that was not conceived at the time to be contradictory to the spirit of nation formation” (lxxv). For Chaudhuri, the “republic” of “international nationalists” was held together by their shared commitment to achieving their own particular nationalist goals, goals that they each imagined as being regenerative for the broader human community. Thus, Malachuk and Chaudhuri conceptualize their multinational groups of “nationalist cosmopolitans” and “international nationalists” as working in much the same way: serving the nation for the benefit of the human. While Malachuk and Chaudhuri provide important models of how to conceptualize and argue for a global school of cosmopolitan nationalist thinkers, my understanding of the operation and import of a cosmopolitan nationalist poetics is somewhat different. Both Malachuk and Chaudhuri do important work showing how cosmopolitanism and nationalism were easily reconciled by nineteenth-century political and intellectual elites; whereas, I am interested in showing how cosmopolitan narratives of national identity challenged or changed more traditional nationalist narratives.

Williams’ examination of the Indian writer, Rabindranath Tagore, and the Irish poet, William Butler Yeats, as “cosmopolitan nationalists” more closely mirrors my critical investments here. Writing for the *American Historical Review*, Williams sets up her analysis of Tagore and Yeats in much the same way that I frame my readings of Naidu and Kipling. Williams identifies both Tagore and Yeats as poet-politicians, as “sincere nationalists” (73) and as “cosmopolitans” who “traveled to, and resided in, many

places” (71) and “believed in minimum universal values” (95). She argues that both poets articulated a cosmopolitan “alternative version of nationalism” (73), and she examines how both were attacked by more traditional nationalists—in much the same way as Derozio, Dutt, and Naidu—for being too heavily influenced by British intellectual traditions (79). In one further parallel to my work here, Williams imagines Tagore and Yeats as leading a “common artistic response to developments in nationalism in the early twentieth century” (74). While Tagore and Yeats “were the earliest and most eloquent exponents” of this response, Williams argues that other poets, prose writers, critics, and visual artists in Ireland and India adopted their cosmopolitan nationalism (74-75). In other words, Williams, like me, imagines these artists as constituting a multinational school, driven by a desire to intervene in and offer an alternative to traditional nationalist narratives. For all of the important similarities between our work, however, our approaches differ in two crucial ways. First, Williams reads Tagore and Yeats as working in a “cosmopolitan moment” (74) that emerged in the early years of the twentieth century as a result of the parallel experiences of elite cosmopolitan nationalists in Ireland and India. In contrast, I emphasize the global and the sustained nature of poetic experiments with cosmopolitan nationalism throughout the long nineteenth century. Secondly, Williams does not examine the poetry of either Tagore or Yeats. For her, their cosmopolitan nationalism is rooted in a shared rejection of linear theories of time and of progressive theories of the past.³ This is not a critique of Williams’ work: she is a

³ To quote Williams at some length: “Yeats, like most early-twentieth century literary modernists, formulated a complex cyclic theory of history. Tagore had similar historical assumptions, probably inspired by traditional Indian writings about the past. These nonprogressive views of history helped both authors become cosmopolitan nationalists by enabling them to transcend Western antithetical thinking and anticolonial nationalism.

historian by training, so her decision to forego readings of Tagore's or Yeats' poems is not surprising. Nevertheless, the absence of poetry in Williams' discussion of two of the twentieth century's best known poets does point to the need to consider the role of poetry in the cosmopolitan nationalist practices of Tagore, Yeats, and others.

Reddy's work on Sarojini Naidu recognizes poetry's importance to narratives of national and cosmopolitan identity. However, she remains unconvinced that Naidu's poems articulate a compelling kind of cosmopolitan nationalism. Invoking Tagore's *The Home and the World* (1916), Reddy describes Naidu's cosmopolitan nationalism "as a stance she believed could accommodate both 'home and the world'" or, alternatively, as "a nationalism tempered by the demands of global humanism, which takes into considerations interests beyond 'one's own community' and 'one's own self'" (573). Reddy's definition of Naidu's cosmopolitan nationalism captures its breadth and ambition; however, her readings of Naidu's poems narrow its possibilities. In her discussion of Naidu's cosmopolitan nationalism, Reddy focuses on Naidu's poetic depictions of Hyderabad—specifically poems that recollect and reproduce in idealized ways the multicultural Hyderabad of Naidu's childhood. Naidu's glossy, opulent, and antiquated Hyderabad, according to Reddy, actually encourages readers' dis-identification, because her model of cross-cultural harmony so little resembles twentieth-century English or Indian modernity. Of Naidu's poems and speeches, Reddy concludes that they are characterized by "remove as a rhetorical strategy, in the supposed surface quality... of her poetry" and "remove as a political philosophy, in her advocacy of a

Rather than assume that a dichotomy existed between hemispheres, races, or nations and advocate the triumph of a superior one, Tagore and Yeats insisted on the balance or harmony of opposites in all areas of thought and life" (73).

cosmopolitan nationalism that is at once deeply committed *and* disinterested” (580). For Reddy, Naidu’s modelling strategy successfully performs her cosmopolitan nationalism, but it also create a gulf between the exceptionally cosmopolitan speaker/poet and her almost certainly more provincial listeners/readers. Ultimately, Naidu’s poetic performance of her “ideal” leaves the “central paradox of cosmopolitan nationalism as a political ideology under British imperial rule” unresolved (573). Reddy’s reading of Naidu’s poems draws attention both to the poetic and intellectual challenge of sustaining a consistent cosmopolitan nationalist position in the long nineteenth century as well as to the import role of affective connection in cosmopolitan nationalist poetics.

Responding to the poetic void in work by Williams and most other postcolonial scholars, my work is deeply invested in the idea that poetry played a special role in nineteenth-century nationalist discourse and, as a result, was a particularly powerful tool for challenging it. The firm belief that poetry must reflect and reaffirm Britain’s national identity was widely recognized, as I discuss at length in Chapter 2, by nineteenth-century critics, readers, and poets. The many nuances of this connection, particularly the relationship between form and nationalism, have received a great deal of recent critical attention as well. Stuart Curran, for example, traces the origins of the strong link between poetic form and national identity to the mid-eighteenth century and the explosion of interest in Milton and epic poetry. Curran explicitly links the “epic outpouring” of the 1790s to Milton’s assertion that epic poetry was “doctrinal and exemplary to a Nation” and to Britain’s strong desire to bolster its national identity in the face of the ideological pressures brought on by the revolution in France (159). Moving into the nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries and turning her attention to meter, Meredith Martin examines at

length the relationship between nationalism and the contest over how best to understand and to teach English prosody. In her analysis of George Sainsbury's *A History of English Prosody From the Twelfth Century to the Present Day* (1906-1910), for example, Martin argues that Sainsbury's chief aim is not to make arguments about prosody (though he does that too), but instead to lend "stabilization for the healthy, collective, patriotic view of English meter and, by extension, English poetry's role as a stabilizing, patriotic force in national culture" (103). Matthew Reynolds, in *The Realms of Verse* (2001), has also examined at length how the nationalist and/or imperialist politics of nineteenth-century poets were manifested in their metrical styles. Many others, from established scholars like Isobel Armstrong to emerging critics like Francesco Crocco, have also examined the role poetry played in British nationalist discourse in the long nineteenth century.

It is also worth noting that there has been significant critical interest in how engagement with British poetic forms allowed non-English poets to negotiate their relationship to British national and imperial identities. Katie Trumpener, for instance, reads the poems of Scottish poet James Macpherson and Welsh poet Evan Evans as "dramatiz[ing] the refusal of a nation to give up its culture in support of the empire" (8), while Jason Rudy examines the American poet Sydney Lanier in the broader context of how "British poetry and poetic forms... mediat[ed] the experience of emigration" in the long nineteenth century ("Manifest" 254). As Trumpener's and Rudy's work suggests, the British were not the only ones to recognize poetry's important nationalist role. In India, too, as Mary Ellis Gibson has shown, poetry—in all Indian languages except English—was assigned the role of defending Indian cultural heritage against imperial intrusion. Through close readings of poems and particularly careful attention to the ways

poets use form, my work here seeks to participate in these ongoing efforts to understand how poetry, particularly, shaped people's imagining of their relationships to national and global communities in the long nineteenth century.

At its best, as Gibson claims, poetry works as a kind of "pressure cooker" that makes clear the intricate and sometimes subtle "historical and ideological . . . contradictions of empire" (8) which may be less visible in other genres. However, it is important to admit that poets themselves struggled to navigate this complex and contradictory web of identifications and ideas: they were inspired, savvy but not entirely consistent guides through the nexus. For example, as I discuss at length in Chapter 3, Naidu performed a sustained, affective cosmopolitan nationalism in poems spanning all three of her major collections. But, if Reddy is correct (and I think she is), Naidu's attempts to model a cosmopolitan nationalist ideal in her poems on Hyderabad fall a bit flat, imposing distance rather than cultivating connection between and among speaker and readers. Similar inconsistencies can be readily identified in the poetic corpus of each poet discussed here. In a poem called "The Royal Ascetic and the Hind" (1882), for example, Dutt decries the ancient Hindu religious practice of asceticism and urges her readers to embrace the tenets of Christianity instead. Barrett Browning uses India as nothing more than an exotic setting for her exploration of British sexual mores in "A Romance of the Ganges" (1838), and the spirit of Thomas Babington Macaulay's *Minute on India Education* (1835) seems alive and well in Kipling's "Kitchener's School" (1898). These departures from a poetics of cosmopolitan nationalism are as likely in the case of each poet to occur in the late poetry as in the early poetry. They reveal that each of these poets was engaged in the same kind of arduous intellectual and poetic work that

Marjorie Stone traces through Barrett Browning's Italian poetry: the "working through" of "Anglocentricism" (49) that, left unresolved, prevents the holding or the articulation of a cosmopolitan ethos. These poets were committed, to varying degrees, to a bold cosmopolitan experiment—one as much at odds with the critical and readerly expectations of their day as with today's nationalist canonical practices, which have, until recently, succeeded in marginalizing their cosmopolitan poems. Despite the inconsistencies, frequent or infrequent, in their body of work, each poet produced a substantial number of poems that posed a coherent, cosmopolitan challenge to nationalist discourse—poems that made clear their place among the ranks of what Williams' calls "the cosmopolitan losers" of the nineteenth- and "early-twentieth century nationalist debates" (73).

If cosmopolitanism truly has lost the "nationalist debates" of the past two hundred years, the reasons are multifaceted and impossible to trace succinctly. However, one oft-cited reason is, what Robbins calls, "the absence of genuine feeling... on a transnational scale" (4). Describing an intellectual tradition and tracing its roots through Antonio Gramsci, Frantz Fanon, Anderson, and Rorty, Robbins notes that "cosmopolitan identification with the human race" is often positioned "as the thin, abstract, undesirable antithesis to a red-blooded, politically engaged nationalism" (4). While Robbins, himself, would not go so far, he does conclude that "common humanity is too weak a force to generate sufficient solidarity" (4). Whether or not one agrees with Robbins, his critique draws a clear link between the success of cosmopolitanism and its ability to inspire intense feelings of group identification among individuals. Returning to Reddy's reading of Naidu, the poet's inability to produce "genuine feeling... on a transnational scale" is

precisely why her poems on Hyderabad fail to escape the “central paradox of cosmopolitan nationalism” (573). The poems employ “*remove*” as “a rhetorical strategy” and “a political philosophy,” thus, the readers Naidu wishes to convince to join her in her pursuit of the cosmopolitan nationalist ideal remain uninspired.

My work treats affective argumentation as a particularly compelling poetic strategy for cosmopolitan nationalist poets. Nineteenth-century readers and critics, as many recent scholars recognize, felt as sure that the sensations and feelings poetry produced were powerful as they did that poetry was uniquely positioned to embody national identity. Indeed, as Isobel Armstrong has shown, the 1830s saw a vibrant period of poetic experimentation in which particular political objectives or “new forms of thought” were believed to be best relayed through the poetics of sensation rather than of reflection (“Victorian Poetry” 62). Such poets, chief among them the young Alfred Tennyson and Arthur Henry Hallam, imagined that the poetry of “reflection” more easily “hardens into custom, convention, and moral orthodoxies” while the poetry of “sensation” alone is capable of “transforming consciousness” (Armstrong, “Victorian Poetry” 62). Tennyson’s and Hallam’s political objectives were strikingly different from those of the cosmopolitan nationalist poets I discuss here; however, their recognition of sensation as a means of political argumentation in poetry has ripple effects far beyond the 1830s. Feeling, as Adela Pinch argues in *Strange Fits of Passion* (1997), came to be considered so potent and transmissible that it was regarded with a good deal of suspicion. This anxiety was particularly keen among those who imagined feelings “as transpersonal, as autonomous entities that do not always belong to individuals but rather wander extravagantly from one person to another” (3). The sense that poetry, its affects, and its

arguments might “wander extravagantly” was only heightened, as Rudy argues in *Electric Meters* (2009), as poets and critics became increasingly aware of the “necessary connections between bodily sensation and poetic experience” over the course of the nineteenth century (13). Regarding poetry as a bodily experience intensified the “intimacy imagined between the... poet and the... reader” (Rudy, “Electric Meters” 14), an intimacy that, depending upon the poet, caused poetry to be perceived as potentially threatening or particularly transformative. As the work of Armstrong, Pinch, Rudy, and others clearly shows, the nineteenth century’s poets, critics, and readers recognized the real political power of sensational, affective argumentation, particularly when poets set out to advocate “new forms of thought” or to contest “convention.” Thus, in my examination of the practice of cosmopolitan nationalist poetics, I have focused, in the case of each poet, on highly sensational and affective poems.

A Global School of English-Language Poets: Decisions and Directions

To this point, I have traced my understanding of cosmopolitan nationalism as well as signaled some of the critical conversations in which my work participates. Before describing how each chapter contributes to the overall project, I want to pause briefly to explain my choice of poets and to say a bit more about my imagining of them as constituting a global school of English-language poets. Taken together, the case studies I present here are intended to show the sustained nature of a diverse group of poets’ engagement with cosmopolitan nationalism throughout the long nineteenth century. To this end, I selected male and female poets, Eastern and Western poets, and highly

canonical and lesser-known poets whose lives spanned the period.⁴ The diversity of their lived experiences is intended to foreground the significance of the similarities in their poetic practices of cosmopolitan nationalism.

The lives of the poets I selected for my case studies span the years between 1806 and 1949. Barrett Browning was born first, and her years overlap with those of Derozio and Dutt. Dutt was not quite ten years old and living in Calcutta when Kipling was born on the other side of India in Bombay, and Kipling was an adolescent of fourteen when Naidu was born in Hyderabad. There is, then, at least in the most basic sense, continuity among the poets I study. However, Barrett Browning's world was vastly different than Naidu's. In no way, perhaps, were their experiences more dissimilar than in the ease with which they would have travelled to distant places. When Derozio, the only poet discussed here who never left his country of origin, died in 1831, the journey from London to Bombay took six months and was accomplished by sailing around the Cape of Good Hope. When Dutt was born in 1856, it took two months. Still, the journey was forbidding: it involved travel by rail to Italy, by steamer to Suez, by horse-drawn wagon in an 84 mile overland trek to Cairo, by paddle-steamer down the Nile, by barge through the Mahmoudieth Canal to Alexandria, and, finally, by steamer to India (Marshall 1). By the time Kipling was born in 1865, the Suez Canal was open and travel times rarely topped three weeks. When he died in 1936, it took only a week or so of flying (although there were still upwards of 15 stops) (Bluffield 249). Travel times, of course, were not

⁴ The one position of privilege shared by all of the poets discussed here is that of class. Each poet discussed here had access to exceptional educational opportunities and, in all but Derozio's case, the means to travel internationally at a time when such travel was prohibitively expensive for the vast majority.

only significant for the movement of people, but also for the movement of all kinds of texts from mail to volumes of poetry. Derozio, whose favorite poet (not surprisingly) was Percy Bysshe Shelley, waited “a year or two” to receive his copy of Shelley’s posthumously published *The Complete Poetical Works* (1824) (Chaudhuri xviii). As a function of when they lived, the poets I discuss here experienced cosmopolitanism in very different ways, yet their poetic expressions of their cosmopolitan identities bear striking similarities.

In selecting these poets as case studies, I also intended to capture the global scope of the circulation of cosmopolitan narratives of national identity in the long nineteenth century. In the initial stages of drafting, I set out to balance “Eastern” and “Western” poets; however, it became increasingly clear that none of the poets discussed here—except perhaps Barrett Browning—fell neatly into either of these classifications. Derozio, for example, was born in Calcutta to an English mother and a father of Indian and Portuguese descent. He was educated by a Scotsman and incurred the wrath of Hindu College, where he taught briefly, for the excitement about Western philosophy he imparted to his students. Dutt was, likewise, born in Calcutta; however, she lived much of her short mature life in England and France where she was educated, and she spoke English, French, and Bengali and, in addition, wrote Sanskrit. To call either of these poets “Eastern,” or for that matter “Western,” seems an unacceptable erasure. However, these categories are useful insofar as my work here does aim to emphasize the agency of Indian-born poets—Derozio, Dutt, Naidu, and Kipling—in the shaping of what Gibson calls a “mutually constitutive history” of British and colonial poetic engagements with nationalist discourse (3). Eastern and Western poets both faced challenges as they sought

to perform cosmopolitan identities; however, the difficulties in gaining a fair hearing for Indian poets, which I discuss in Chapter 1, were not the same as for British poets, which I discuss in Chapter 2. By choosing poets from a range of cultural backgrounds and balancing the number of British and Indian poets, I emphasize the dynamic, global nature of the practice of cosmopolitan nationalist poetics in the period.

My selection of poets is also intended to foreground women's equal contribution in the cosmopolitan resistance to traditional nationalist narratives. By devoting full chapters to Barrett Browning and Naidu, I join the robust tradition of scholars who have responded to Armstrong's 1995 rallying cry to "make these [women] poets *mean* for us" ("The Gush of the Feminine" 15). I read Dutt, Barrett Browning, and Naidu as savvy advocates for their nationalist beliefs, and I join Armstrong and the many others, including Alison Chapman, Tricia Lootens, Beverly Taylor, and Stone, who have followed her in rejecting readings of these Victorian women's writing as simple, spontaneous, or sentimental. I have intentionally chosen to discuss several poems by women, including Dutt's "Sonnet: Baugmaree" and Barrett Browning's *Casa Guidi Windows*, in which the poet speaks directly to readers. Through these readings, I participate in ongoing efforts, pioneered by Virginia Jackson, to pay meticulous attention to the contexts—physical, social, and historical—of women's lyric poems and, thus, to reassert through my work their "social or historical resonance" as important political contributions (70). My dissertation, in fact, was originally conceived as a project focused exclusively on women's cosmopolitan poetry. My decision to include Derozio and Kipling, ultimately, stemmed from my desire to make as broad a case as possible for the

existence of a global school of English-language poets engaged in a cosmopolitan challenge to traditional nationalism.

Indeed, there are a great number of nineteenth- and early-twentieth century poets whose work would mean differently if examined in the global context of cosmopolitan nationalist poets. Perhaps most obvious is the *Risorgimento* poetry of Algernon Charles Swinburne. Swinburne, like Barrett Browning, was a committed Italian nationalist who framed his advocacy for Italian independence in universal, moral terms. His long poem, *A Song of Italy* (1867), and several poems within his collection *Songs Before Sunrise* (1871) use formal and affective strategies similar to those employed by Barrett Browning and the other poets I discuss. Reading Swinburne alongside Kipling, in particular, would be instructive. The Boer War, which prompted Kipling's experimentation with cosmopolitan nationalism, provoked in Swinburne a total retreat from his long-held cosmopolitan ethos. Scholar Tim Kendall, in unusually strong language for academic discourse, describes Swinburne's Boer War poem "Transvaal" (1899) as an "exercise in hatred" for which he "deserves vilification" ("Transvaal" 1). Certainly, Swinburne's work offers fertile ground for future study as does the poetry, as Williams' work suggests, of Yeats. The work of other English-language poets writing in India, particularly Emma Roberts, Derozio's contemporary and friend, and Michael Madhusudan Dutt, likewise performs national identity in alternative, cosmopolitan ways. What follows are case studies chosen from a wide range of possible sources.

The Chapters: Cosmopolitan Nationalism in Poetic Practice

The arrangement of my chapters intends to give a sense of the evolution of cosmopolitan nationalist poetics over the course of the long nineteenth century. Rather than following strict chronology, however, I have attempted to pair poets whose life experiences and poetic strategies speak most meaningfully to one another. Thus, Derozio and Dutt are studied together in Chapter 1 because both were young poets who articulated a cosmopolitan Indian national consciousness in the decades when the Indian nationalist movement was still emerging. Dutt's poetry was written and published after Barrett Browning, the subject of Chapter 2, died. However, the overlap in poetic strategies between Barrett Browning and Dutt—particularly their ability to critique British and Indian nationalism (respectively) from the position of cultural insider—are more significant than the similarities between Barrett Browning's and Derozio's poems. Departing from a strictly chronological approach has also allowed me to pair my discussion of Barrett Browning's mid-nineteenth century poems with my reading of Naidu's early-twentieth century poems (in Chapter 3). Despite the fifty-odd years that separated the publication of their poems, these two poets, more so than the others discussed here, articulate a fully developed, cohesive, and sustained practice of cosmopolitan nationalism poetics. This organizational move enables a juxtaposition of Barrett Browning's and Naidu's poems while also allowing Naidu and Kipling, who recognized in similar ways the power of affective argumentation, to be read alongside each other in Chapters 3 and 4 (respectively). My arrangement of the chapters intends to both foreground the particular connections between individual poets and to emphasize the coherence of cosmopolitan nationalism as a poetic practice over the entire period.

My opening chapter examines the poetry and politics of Derozio and Dutt. After an extended analysis of attitudes in Britain and India toward Indian poets who wrote in English, I read Derozio as initiating a tradition of culturally-integrative performances of nationality in Indian English-language poetry. In particular, I examine the ways in which Derozio arrives at his clearest articulation of Indian national identity in his most famous poem, “The Harp of India” (1827), through his engagements with British poetic traditions and the politics of revolutionary Greece. The chapter also contains rare close readings of four of Derozio’s poems on Greece—“Thermopylae” (1827), “The Greeks at Marathon” (1827), “Address to the Greeks” (1827), and “Greece” (1827)—which are most frequently discussed in generalized terms as a group. For a number of socio-political reasons, which I outline briefly, it was easier in Derozio’s moment than in Dutt’s to imagine Eastern and Western intellectual traditions as together forging India’s new national consciousness. However, as I show in the second part of this chapter, Dutt took up the project with no less enthusiasm. Dutt’s poems carefully and strategically mediate between Eastern and Western images, tropes, and forms and critically engage with Eastern and Western political movements, particularly British feminism and Indian nationalism. Here, I examine two sonnets—“Sonnet: Baumaree” (1882) and “Sonnet: The Lotus” (1882)—as well as Dutt’s long poem, “Savitri” (1882). I argue that Dutt, like Derozio, countered the emphasis in emerging Indian nationalist narratives on exclusively Eastern cultural traditions with a vibrant cosmopolitan nationalism that cast the emergence of the Indian nation as a global phenomenon.

Chapter 2 is devoted entirely to a politically and poetically situated reading of Barrett Browning’s *Casa Guidi Windows* (1851). I begin by examining, at length, the

nationalist responsibilities assigned to poetry and to poets in the long nineteenth century. Turning to *Casa Guidi Windows*, I argue that Barrett Browning performs dual nationalities in the poem: she is both a British observer writing for a British audience and an Italian patriot writing for a global, English-speaking audience. Despite Barrett Browning's evident cosmopolitanism, *Casa Guidi Windows* has consistently been read as a piece of political writing aimed primarily at British readers and policy makers. My reading seeks to broaden our understanding of Barrett Browning's intended audience, to recognize her claims to Italian nationality, and to understand as radical the cosmopolitan challenge to traditional nationalist narratives that *Casa Guidi Windows* advances. By explicitly theorizing the poetic and philosophical connections between Barrett Browning, Derozio, Dutt, and Naidu, I sketch out in this chapter the shared beliefs and strategies that unite each of the poets discussed here into a global school of English-language cosmopolitan nationalist poets.

My third chapter offers one of only about a dozen extended scholarly examinations of Naidu's poetry in the past two decades. In contrast to much (though not all) of this work, I treat Naidu's poetry and her politics as consistent and, at times, interdependent. I focus, especially, on Naidu's romantic and devotional verses in order to show that much of her poetry—not just her handful of explicitly political poems—participates in her cosmopolitan nationalist project. In particular, I examine Naidu's use of affect to produce feelings of cross-cultural identification or connection in her readers. Through readings of several of her romantic verses, including the set “An Indian Love Song” (1912), “A Rajput Love Song” (1912), and “A Persian Love Song” (1912), I show how Naidu celebrates the ideal of cosmopolitan nationalism by depicting the intense,

universal emotions of romantic longing in settings rife with ethno-religious tension. Further, I show how her devotional verses offer readers the sensory experience of a religiously plural environment and, thus, supplement Naidu's oratorical calls for tolerance. Ultimately, I argue that Naidu constitutes Indian national identity in both her speeches and her poems as open and affective or, in other words, as available to anyone to shares her commitment to cosmopolitan nationalism.

My dissertation closes with an examination of Rudyard Kipling's *The Five Nations* (1903) and, in particular, the collection's final section "Service Songs." Written in both South Africa and England during the Boer War, I argue that these poems reflect Kipling's intense engagement with cosmopolitan nationalist narratives during the period. I frame my discussion of the period with brief treatments of Kipling's highly-canonical poems, "The Absent Minded Beggar" (1899) and "The Islanders" (1902), however, the bulk of my analysis focuses on the lesser studied poems "Half-Ballad of Waterval" (1903), "The Wilful-Missing" (1903), and "The Return" (1903). Taken together, I argue that these highly sensory and affective poems show Kipling's horror at the physical, emotional, and psychological traumas of war and his reverence for the human connections that such experiences forge between all soldiers across national and even enemy lines. By reading Kipling's Boer War poems alongside the poetry of Derozio, Dutt, Barrett Browning, and Naidu, my work here participates in ongoing critical efforts to understand with more nuance Kipling's practices of both nationalism and cosmopolitanism over his long and varied career.

Chapter 1: Imagining India: The Nationalist Poetics of Henry Louis Vivian Derozio and Toru Dutt

The question of national belonging remains a vexing one over two thousand years after ancient Greek philosophers first theorized the qualifications, responsibilities, and rights of citizens of the polis. Our inability to settle the issue is certainly not due to lack of trying: the Library of Congress, alone, holds more than ten thousand books on national identity. Despite all the thought and text devoted to the subject, certain issues—particularly the correlation between birthright and national belonging—still prove intransigent. Now argued, at least in Western public policy discourse, primarily through the question of “birthright citizenship,” how one comes to belong to a nation is still contested regularly and with vim and vigor in the pages of the *New York Times*, *The Times* of London, *Der Spiegel*, and every other newspaper of note. The issue was just as alive in the early- and mid-nineteenth century, when two young Indian poets—Henry Louis Vivian Derozio and Toru Dutt—began attempting to articulate their own highly complex national identities in poetry. Then as now, understanding one’s own national belonging as complex or multi-faceted ran counter to dominant narratives about nationality, in which birthright belonging trumped all other kinds of social, intellectual, cultural, racial, or religious allegiances. For Derozio and Dutt, however, the erasures that would have been required for them to fit neatly into any single national category rival those of the most global citizen today.

Derozio, as I mentioned in my introduction, was born into an Indo-European household in Calcutta and given a rigorous education that included instruction in Eastern and Western intellectual traditions. At the time of his death at the age of twenty-two,

Derozio had published dozens of English-language poems and had recently been dismissed from his position as teacher of English literature at Hindu College. He was fired for teaching Western social and philosophical ideas that challenged the norms of conservative Hindu society. Some fifty years later, Dutt was born in Calcutta to a wealthy family in which many of the men, including her father, were prominent English-language poets. Though she lived a year less than Derozio, dying at only twenty one, her life was kaleidoscopic: she studied in England and France; wrote poems, novels, and essays in English and French; published a collection of French poems and several English-language essays; celebrated Hindu legends in English-language verse; revered British poetic tradition, critiqued British imperialism, studied Sanskrit, and held fast to her devout Christianity. Both wrote, as I will discuss later, at important moments in India's transition into national consciousness. Their poems are remarkable both for their finely-crafted poetic beauty and for their bold cosmopolitan countering of the predominantly Hindu narratives of India's emerging nationalist movement.

Neither Derozio nor Dutt expressed in either their poetry or prose what Mary Ellis Gibson describes as a feeling of "unhomeliness" (231) or a sense that they did not belong anywhere because they, at least partially, identified with so many places. However, both worked diligently, as I will show, to mediate their diverse cultural, intellectual, and poetic traditions. While Derozio and Dutt wrote in the nascent stages of the Indian nationalist movement, the multiplicity and fluidity of the national identities they explore and perform in their poems offer important poetic and political precursors to the cosmopolitan nationalism Sarojini Naidu articulates in her poems and speeches at the height of the independence movement. Derozio's and Dutt's shared willingness to understand

themselves as holding multiple national identifications and their poetic explorations of the consequences of East/West encounters links them to Barrett Browning, writing in Italy at mid-century, and to Kipling, writing in turn-of-the-century South Africa. Derozio and Dutt, not nearly so well-known as the other poets discussed here, committed themselves early and earnestly to challenging nationalist narratives in India and Britain by articulating an Indian national identity open and plural enough to accommodate themselves and, by extension, most other cosmopolitan thinkers who might seek to identify as Indian.

Evolving Perceptions: English-Language Poetry and Indian National Identity

The radical nature of the challenge that Derozio's and Dutt's poetry posed to dominant understandings of national identity is clear in their contemporary critical reception. Consider, for example, Toru Dutt's treatment in the pages of some of Britain's most prominent literary journals. Reviews of Dutt's *A Sheaf Gleaned in French Fields* (1876) and *Ancient Ballads and Legends of Hindustan* (1882) focus as heavily on her identity—particularly her status as an authentic Hindu—as they do on the quality of her verse. The *Saturday Review* describes Dutt as “a pure Hindu without a drop of European blood in her veins” (241). It even praised the rare errors in her English because they “served to make the merits of the writing more conspicuous by proving that the work was genuine” (242). Like the *Saturday Review*, the *Examiner* plays up Dutt's youth and her Indian purity: she is “a young Hindoo lady” who worked “without revision or encouragement even... from any European person” (966). While it offers warm praise of Dutt's poetry, the *Examiner* notes that the book is truly remarkable only if “it really is what it seems to profess to be, a genuine Hindoo product” (967). The *Athenaeum* goes a

step further still, stating outright that Dutt's poetry is only interesting (and even then as a "literary curiosity") because she was a "Bengalee girl" (793). The review condescends even as it admires:

Toru Dutt is a thousand times more interesting than her poetry, which, indeed, is chiefly interesting because it is Toru Dutt's—because it introduces the reader to a curious and striking little individuality and helps him to understand a strange and melancholy little life. (793)

Importantly, the aspect of Dutt's "little" literary "life" that generates the *Athenaeum's* fascination is her decision "to write, not in her own language, but in French and English" and her ability to do so with more than passable skill (793). The *Athenaeum*, like both of the other reviews cited, takes it entirely for granted that English is a "foreign language" to Dutt (793). Her degree of fluency in English inspires incredulity—can her poetry "really be what it seems to profess to be"?—even in her begrudging admirers.

Appearing roughly a half century before Dutt's collections, Derozio's poetry also received significant notice in British periodicals and in critical journals helmed by expatriated British intellectuals in India. John Grant, to whom Derozio's *Poems* (1827) were dedicated, wrote the collection's first notice for the *India Gazette*. Echoing Derozio's self-presentation in his short *Preface*, Grant describes him as "an East Indian, who...has never been out of Bengal, and has been...entirely educated in Calcutta" (389). As Grant continues, however, it becomes obvious that the two men hold different views of Derozio's exclusively Indian education and experience. In Derozio's *Preface*, the young man "Born, and educated in India, and at the age of eighteen... ventures to present himself as a candidate for poetic fame" (i). The "imperfections" for which he begs pardon result, not from his Indianness, but from his rush to present his poems (produced, he

claims, in “only a few hours”) to the public (i). In Grant’s review, Derozio’s background and his youth are lumped into “the various disadvantages under which he must have laboured” (389). For Grant, Derozio’s supposedly limited education and experience (rather than the quality of his poems) becomes what makes “the work before us... an extraordinary one” (389). Famed critic Thomas Campbell adopts similar reasoning in his own review of *Poems* for Britain’s *New Monthly Magazine*, but he stops short of deeming the poems “extraordinary” and merely recommends them “to notice” (104). Derozio’s second collection, *The Fakeer of Jungheera* (1828), received similar treatment. J.S. Buckingham’s London-based *Oriental Herald* reveals most clearly the combination of individual praise for the Indian poet and alarming condescension towards India that so often characterized British responses to Derozio, Dutt, and other Eastern writers. As in the *Athenaeum*’s later treatment of Dutt, the *Oriental Herald*’s review insists that Derozio’s poetry, while decent enough in its composition, is primarily valuable owing to its Eastern authorship:

These volumes... contain the first productions of a young poet, a Native of British India, entirely educated in that country... under circumstances apparently most unfavorable to poetic excellence... a total absence of... natural beauty, the still more complete want of all noble and exalted feelings among those with whom the poet must have associated; the very language, which can hardly be called English, that they speak.... These volumes contain much that, under any circumstances, would have been interesting; and which under those above-mentioned, is really extraordinary. (111)

The poetry of an Eastern writer here becomes “really extraordinary” owing to the total intellectual and aesthetic impoverishment of the East. In light of the consistency of such depictions of India in the opening decades of the nineteenth century, it is not surprising that Derozio’s choice to write in English goes largely unremarked by his reviewers. An

environment devoid of “natural beauty” and of “all noble and exalted feelings” could hardly produce a language in which an exceptional “Native of British India” would choose to articulate his higher thoughts and impressions. Derozio’s use of English appears as a virtual necessity, which requires no further explanation, rather than as an overtly political act, which would call for respectful or at least more astute critical consideration.

As is so often the case with criticism past and present, these treatments of Dutt’s and Derozio’s poetry reveal a good deal more about the reviewers—specifically about the predominant attitudes toward national identity and the English language held by British intellectuals—than they do about Dutt, Derozio, or their poetic projects. According to this kind of thinking about nationality, Dutt—despite her international childhood, her multilingualism, and her immersion in English and French intellectual traditions—can still be described as a “pure” or “genuine Hindoo” because she was born in India to Indian parents. Derozio’s birthplace and his race determine his nationality regardless of any intellectual loyalties he held or linguistic choices he made. In Derozio’s earlier case, his use of English was scarcely noticed because most Britons, including many British intellectuals, considered India so culturally bankrupt that any “native” capable of expressing poetic thought or feeling would obviously do so in an imported language. Such deeply entrenched assumptions of British cultural superiority were institutionalized into Indian education practices in 1835 by Thomas Babington Macaulay’s now-infamous *Minute on Indian Education* (1835). From 1835 forward, British-funded schools in India adopted an English-only policy, creating a new generation of Indians fluent in English from childhood. Nevertheless, fifty years later, when Dutt’s work was published in London, critics were amazed that an Indian woman could write poems in beautiful

English. Their surprise exposes the extent to which Britons still brazenly assumed their ownership of English at mid-century, despite the historical reality that English was already well on its way to becoming a global language. English-language poetry, like Derozio's and Dutt's, posed obvious challenges to binary understandings of national identity and to linguistic nationalism; however, these challenges went largely unrecognized (or at least underappreciated) by the British intellectual establishment.

Around the Cape of Good Hope and across the Indian Ocean, mainstream Indian nationalists in the early- to mid-nineteenth century accepted these same binary formulations of national identity. They insisted on clear distinctions between Indians and others (particularly Britons) and consistently declined to challenge British ownership of the English language. As David Kopf and others have shown, the mainstream of the Indian nationalist movement, from its first stirrings in the 1820s to at least the end of the nineteenth century, recognized English as the necessary medium of trade but displayed a great deal of anxiety about the intrusion of Western personal habits or linguistic practices into domestic, literary, and cultural arenas.⁵ Indian homes had to be safeguarded against Western intrusion by "new women," whose value within the nationalist movement was predicated upon their ability to embody, and thus protect, traditional Hindu spiritual and

⁵ For obvious reasons, English-language cultural productions that seemed indebted to English literary tradition were doubly threatening. Consider, for example, the *Calcutta Review's* attempts to redeem Dutt's poetry by arguing for its essential French-ness. The journal admits that Dutt's work was, in fact, transnational in its influences and its reach. However, it labors to subordinate her identification with England: "Toru Dutt's sympathies with regard to European literature were affiliated to French styles and French modes of thought rather than English" (x). The reviewer goes on to take a dig at both William Shakespeare and Victor Hugo. According to him, Hugo wrote "turgid, ranting, mock heroics" and, yet, Dutt (a poet with "real, innate genius for poetry") placed even him "on a higher poetical pedestal than Shakespeare" (xvi).

cultural practices. Partha Chatterjee has famously argued that Indian nationalists' gendered division of patriotic responsibilities eventually produced both a "new woman" and a "new but entirely legitimate subordination"; nationalism did not dissolve but merely evolved India's gender binaries (248, 246). Within this "new patriarchy," middle-class, nationalist women were granted unprecedented access to education, to economic opportunities, and to elevated social status. Nationalist women defined themselves against lower-class Indian women, who were both uneducated and consistently depicted as lacking social and moral virtue. But, more importantly, nationalist ideology elevated new women above the traditionally privileged class of westernized Indian women, who they now claimed had forfeited their spiritual purity (and, by extension, their femininity) by abandoning traditional Indian values (Chatterjee 245). Of course, the nationalists' handling of the "woman question" informs our understanding of the literary productions and afterlives of female poets like Dutt (and Naidu) who chose to use English publicly and to speak English at home.⁶ More broadly and as importantly, nationalists' insistence that women enshrine in their voices, behaviors, and homes the values and beliefs of an immutable, spiritual essence of Hindu India reveals the extent to which rejection of certain aspects of Western culture—especially the English language when used by cultural purveyors and protectors—lay at the heart of nascent nationalist ideology.

⁶ The strong link between Indian nationalism, Indian languages, and Hindu cultural purity had particularly long-lasting and profound implications for women; however, male thinkers and writers were also impacted. The most famous example, perhaps, is Michael Madhusudan Dutt, his turn from English to Bengali poetry, and his consequent promotion to figurehead status within the Bengali Renaissance. The nationalist narrative that has grown up around his decision treats his English-language poetry as a kind of false start and his turn as the true beginning of a nationally significant poetic career. Today, his Bengali epics are safely and securely ensconced in the Indian national canon while his English-language poetry has faded into relative obscurity.

Nationalist suspicion and devaluation of English-language writers, even those who voiced support for independence or for earlier moves toward national consciousness, persisted in India from the nineteenth century almost to the end of the twentieth century. In an introduction to Harindranath Chattopadhyay's 1918 collection, *The Feast of Youth*, Irish poet James H. Cousins worries over "the knotty problem" of Indians writing in English and the threat it poses to "India's literary and national future in the possible drawing away of other young poets from their true instrument of expression in their mother tongue" (qtd. in Singh 28). Even as he admires the poems, Cousins suspects that Chattopadhyay, like Michael Madhusudan Dutt before him, does a disservice to India's national cause. One critical response to Cousins, penned by St. Nihal Singh for the London-based *Bookman* journal, offers a rebuttal that curiously defends Chattopadhyay by dismissing his poetry. Singh depicts English-language poetry as a passing phase—a kind of poetic adolescence for Indian writers. The poetic soul, according to Singh, is deep and wide enough so that a short-lived fascination with English poetry, which will pass as poets mature and become less enamored with the West, "will not take so much out of them as to starve expression in national and provincial languages" (28). Similar sentiments persisted until the 1980s. Prominent Indian intellectuals, including Professor T.V. Subba Rao and the poet/novelist S. H. Vatsyayan, continued to reject English as an appropriate language for Indian literature. In his 1976 pamphlet, "Indian Writing in English: Is There Any Worth In It?" Rao claims that only "one's own language... can be the natural and appropriate medium for literary expression, and since English is not our language, our writers cannot express their deepest and inmost thoughts in it" (23). Even if such expression were possible, Vatsyayan objects to Indian writers working in English on

explicitly patriotic grounds: “India cannot have a literature—I mean a great literature, one in which her spirit will find expression—except in an Indian language. To me... to be Indian as a writer is first and foremost... to write in an Indian language” (qtd. in G.S. Gupta 174). This fervent linguistic nationalism—which waned only within the last few decades—considered English a foreign language ill-suited for Indian literature, particularly for literature seeking to participate in the articulation of Indian national identity or, relatedly, to be included in the Indian canon.⁷

Despite the deep-rootedness and the long predominance of such ideas, the last two or three decades have seen a sustained scholarly effort to reassert English-language poetry’s important place in India’s literary history. As recently as 2005, when I first began studying Dutt’s poetry, scholars worked from original 1882 copies of *Ancient Ballads and Legends of Hindustan* not only for the undeniable charm of turning old, musty pages but also from necessity. Since then, critical editions have been published of

⁷ From the 1980s onward, as Arnab Chakladar argues, English-language Indian literature, especially fiction, has experienced a significant reversal in terms of its critical treatment. While Indian intellectuals once marginalized English-language literature—as the views of Rao and Vatsyayan suggest—Chakladar claims that English-language Indian literature now too often stands in for Indian literature in its totality. According to him, as South Asian scholars began joining Western literature departments and carving out the sub-field of South Asian studies, the accessibility of Indian English texts meant the marginalization of texts in other Indian languages. To quote Chakladar at some length: “In the age of globalization, ‘Indian literature’ in the international bookstore has actually come to mean ‘the Indian novel in English,’ and this perspective has been mirrored by a sophisticated academic critical apparatus that has based its understandings of and insights into Indian literature, both colonial and postcolonial, almost entirely on this small field. Larger questions about Indian literature as a category remain quite rare, despite over two thousand years of literary production in the subcontinent. And, of course, the novel in English only comes into its own in the mid-twentieth century. So when we speak of a part standing in for the whole, we are speaking of a very small part indeed” (2). By studying poetry, rather than continuing to focus on the novel, and pairing readings of nineteenth-century British and Indian poets, my work attends, in part, to Chakladar’s critique of the field.

both Dutt's and Derozio's poetry (by Chandani Lokuge and Roskina Chaudhuri, respectively). Several important articles on colonial India's English-language poetry—most notably by Tricia Lootens and Sheshalatha Reddy—have also appeared. Still, it was not until Gibson's 2012 *Indian Angles* and its accompanying anthology, *Anglophone Poetry in Colonial India*, that an extended critical treatment of a broad collection of primary texts finally suggested the solidification of a recognizable "field" of study.

My work, here and in my later chapter on Naidu, aims to further advance the dual canonical interventions that Gibson sets forth in *Indian Angles*. First, Gibson insists that a revised canon, which treats "nationalism as a subject of inquiry rather than a criterion for selection," is needed to reflect accurately colonial India's literary culture (4). She argues that when scholars construct canons "to the contours of nationalism... [it] renders invisible poets who are not claimed as Indian" (2). Such canons also "render illegible many nuances of poetic form and influence shaping the texts of those poets who are claimed as Indian" (2). Gibson's approach critiques "canonical boundaries and the nationalist discourses that necessarily shaped" them (2), consistently privileging instead what she calls a "mutually constitutive history of British and Indian poets" (3). Second, Gibson argues persuasively that poetry has been under-represented and under-theorized by scholars of colonial and postcolonial literature. In our field, she argues, this neglect has resulted in distortions of historical reality and missed opportunities for fuller understandings of the competing forces that shaped India's literary culture. Her extensive archival research shows that poetry was the dominant belletristic form in India through mid-century and that it maintained its privileged position, at least among elites,

throughout the century. Gibson's work—like all projects that seek to build or rebuild canons—is explicitly and deeply political.⁸

I contribute to this broad recuperative project by showing that figures such as Derozio and Dutt wrote insistently political poems; poems that experimented with new, more complex ways of thinking and arguing about nationality in the early- to mid-nineteenth century. There is much in the emerging field of Anglophone poetry that feels new, owing to the increasing ease of access to long out-of-print poems, to the publication of never before seen poems and historical documents, and to the mountains of archival materials waiting to be studied. Yet, my readings of Derozio's and Dutt's poems show that efforts to understand the fluidity and complexity of national identifications are as old as the exclusionary narratives with which they compete. Derozio and Dutt saw English-language poetry as a means of intervening in the political project of constructing India's literary canon and, more broadly, her national identity.

Striking the Strain: Derozio's *Poems* and India's Emerging National Consciousness

Derozio's identity, his education, and his poetry reflect the extraordinary heterogeneity of early-nineteenth-century Calcutta's elites. His parents selected Scotsman

⁸ I rely most heavily on Gibson's work because *Indian Angles* is path-breaking in its length, depth, and clarity of purpose. However, as Gibson herself makes clear, her work reflects extensive engagement with other scholars, particularly Chaudhuri. For example, in her 2008 introduction to Derozio's poems, Chaudhuri anticipates Gibson's call for a more "mutually constitutive" historical approach. She claims that "It is now time to acknowledge the use of both the English language and English literary convention in the formulation of Bengali modernity" (xxxv). She also voices Gibson's complaint about critical inattention to poetry: "Poetry in particular has a near-invisible status in postcolonial studies, in spite of the fact that poetry evidently had a very important place in the evolution of national and individual identity" (lxviii).

David Drummond to oversee Derozio's early education in large part because Drummond insisted on instructing all of his students—regardless of race or class—in the same classrooms and with the same expectations. It was through Drummond that Derozio first became acquainted with the poetry of Lord Byron and Thomas Moore and the ideas of Adam Smith, Jeremy Bentham, David Hume, and Thomas Paine. As Derozio matured, his intellectual engagement with these Western poets and philosophers resulted in a fervent commitment to critical thought and a reformist zeal opposing all forms of social and political authority that inhibited individual liberty. Especially among the conservative parents of his pupils at Hindu College and in the power structures of the College itself, Derozio inspired fear with his personal magnetism, his free-thinking, and his anti-authoritarian ideas. These opponents somewhat predictably used accusations of Western co-optation first to force his resignation, and then to attempt to marginalize his ideas and the movement, *Young Bengal*, that his teachings inspired.⁹ The degree of success this campaign enjoyed is evident in Kopf's 1979 assessment of Derozio as "a pioneer among a distinguished coterie of nineteenth-century Calcutta academicians who, however distant from the shores of England, championed the fashionable ideas of progress" (43). Yet,

⁹ Derozio's early death meant that he did not live to see *Young Bengal* reach its peak of influence. In Derozio's lifetime, *Young Bengal* and its members were primarily occupied with challenging, through their lifestyle choices and through academic debates, orthodox Hindu practices. Members expressed their defiance of conservative Hindu society by drinking wine and eating beef. Through their group, the Academic Association, *Young Bengal* hosted public debates of moral issues; debates where Association members consistently argued for the primacy of free thinking and logic. Many of the most prominent mid-century intellectual and political reformers in India were associated with *Young Bengal* in their youth. These men included Sib Chandra Deb, a leader within the later and larger *Brahmo Samaj* reform movement; Krishna Mohan Banerjee, a founder of the Bengal Christian Association; Dakshinaranjan Mukherjee, an early benefactor of women's collegiate education in India; and Radhanath Sikdar, a prominent Indian mathematician who first proved Mt. Everest to be the tallest mountain in the world.

even as Kopf adopts and perpetuates this narrative of Derozio's subservience to Western thought, he sketches 1820s Calcutta as a brief but exciting time when intellectuals (on both sides of what would become a deep national divide) seemed truly undecided about how to organize relationships between races and between Eastern and Western intellectual traditions.¹⁰ The 1820s and early 1830s saw a real intellectual competition underway between those who imagined that Indian and British scholars mutually benefited from their exchange of knowledge and those who imagined Indians as in dire need of Western enlightenment. The adoption of Macaulay's *Minute on Indian Education* settled the rivalry.¹¹ From 1835 on, Eurocentric educational policies threatened the teaching, studying, and preserving of Eastern languages and intellectual traditions,

¹⁰ Kopf depicts Calcutta, throughout the nineteenth century, as "a veritable laboratory of intercivilizational encounter" (42). However, he sees the 1820s as a special time when the strategies pursued under Britain's Orientalist policy—building up India's educational institutions, encouraging the study of Eastern intellectual traditions, and fostering an environment of mutual cultural respect—created truly collegial relationships between British and Indian scholars. Gibson supports Kopf's reading of these years, noting the "culture of dispute" that then pervaded the Bengali intelligentsia. She writes that "poets' social locations, their reading, their horizons of expectation about life's possibilities, their community or lack of community, and the metaphors and memories that shaped their understanding of poetic tradition can in no way be reduced to any simple counters of identity" (67).

¹¹ Though the arguments of Macaulay's minute are widely known, it seems worthwhile to reproduce a short section here, if only to illustrate the drastic nature of this departure from Orientalist attitudes toward Eastern traditions. One of the *Minute*'s most famous and most definitive passages reads: "It will hardly be disputed, I suppose, that the department of literature in which the Eastern writers stand highest is poetry. And I certainly never met with any orientalist who ventured to maintain that Arabic and Sanskrit poetry could be compared to that of the great European nations. But when we pass from works of imagination to works in which facts are recorded and general principles investigated, the superiority of the Europeans becomes absolutely immeasurable. It is, I believe, no exaggeration to say that all the historical information which has been collected from all the books written in the Sanskrit language is less valuable than what may be found in the most paltry abridgments used at preparatory schools in England. In every branch of physical or moral philosophy, the relative position of the two nations is nearly the same" (111-112).

Similarly, Derozio appeals to “Freedom” and recalls the Greeks’ noble ancestors in “The Greeks at Marathon.” Here, he orders the Greeks to remember that the sacrifices of their forefathers make the fields of Marathon “Freedom’s hallowed earth” (29), urging them once again to “Think of victory, think of fame/ Freedom, fortune, nature, name!” (23-24). The images of unsheathed swords and bloodshed combine again with notions of “freedom” and “hallowed” ground as arguments against perceived Grecian hesitancy in the penultimate stanza of “Address to the Greeks”:

Arise! Quench your watchfires—no longer delay—
Your swords should be naked—Your sheaths cast away:—
The ground that ye tread by your fathers was trod;
Their blood shed for freedom has hallowed the sod. (41-44)

Throughout the poem, Derozio’s rhymed couplets propel readers through the lines, but his commands become staccato—almost frantic—as he interrupts his fast-paced lines with long pauses. As just these brief excerpts might suggest, by the time a reader finishes “Address to the Greeks,” the thirtieth poem in the collection and the fifth poem on Greece, Derozio’s imagery, his dizzying pace, and his argumentative pattern—recalling Greece’s heroic past in order to urge bold, violent resistance to the forces of repression in the service of ideals—seem exhausted from repetition. And, yet, surely this dogged repetition signals their importance to Derozio’s poetic and political project.¹²

There are other indications of the close connections between Derozio’s ardent Greek republicanism and his burgeoning sense of Indian national consciousness. For

¹² In addition to the poems discussed here, Derozio’s collection includes “Phyle,” “Sappho,” and “The Grecian Sire and Son,” a fascinating poem about two Grecian minstrels struck down by Turkish troops for praising their nation in song. Poems on Greece make up roughly a sixth of the collection. It is also worth noting that to many nineteenth-century readers of Lord Byron, Derozio’s poems’ Grecian themes, stylized gore, and brave ideals would likely have seemed particularly passé.

example, Chaudhuri's work reveals that the first publication of "Address to the Greeks"—in the *India Gazette* on April 17, 1826—marks an important, nationalistic turn in Derozio's public persona, as he abandons "Juvenis" and, for the first time, signs his poem "An East-Indian" (Chaudhuri xxxi). As telling perhaps as this obvious shift from a personal to a national moniker are the subtle slippages in "The Greeks at Marathon." Aside from their metaphysical justifications for Greek resistance to Turkish aggression, Derozio's poems on Greece are insistently local—they repeatedly name Greek heroes and revisit Greek wars. Therefore, Derozio's assertion of his camaraderie with the Greek soldiers—"Grecians! brothers!"—at the heart of "The Greeks at Marathon" jars (the address comes in line 17 of 40). After this startling declaration, Derozio quickly retreats, listing Greek battles in the next two lines and quoting Leonidas in the following stanza. Yet, by the final stanza, he once again implicates himself—using the pronoun "we" twice in four lines—in the Greek struggle, concluding "Seek we freedom? Grecians, on!/Freedom's field is Marathon!" (39-40). Derozio's question—"Seek we freedom?"—rings broadly, addressed more to his readers than to the Grecians. Derozio's national identity remains distinct from that of the Greek patriots though his brotherhood does signal a shared commitment to liberty, a commitment that the Greeks now must defend at Marathon but that Derozio suggests he too would be willing to defend if India took Greece's place as "Freedom's field." Importantly, Derozio seems aware that the republican struggle will extend beyond Greece and into futurity. In all three poems, Derozio departs from his highly regular rhyme schemes only once, in "Thermopylae," in order to draw attention to two lines emphasizing the enduring nature of the republican fight. Though the Spartans are defeated by the Persians at Thermopylae, their spirits

remain alive and unbowed: “Fighting, falling, unsubdued,/ Unconquered still” (30-31).

Derozio’s poems on Greece are undoubtedly local, but they also reflect in subtle ways his sense of himself as bound up—a “brother”—in a contest between republican ideals and authoritarian forms of government that is both itinerant and ongoing.

While rarely given close readings, Derozio’s poems on Greece have, of course, been noticed by the handful of current scholars studying his work. Gibson views Greece as providing a kind of laboratory for Derozio to test his republican principles: a safer space where he can explore how or even if they should be applied to India’s imperial subjugation. She calls Greece “Derozio’s stalking horse for issues of nation, civil liberties, and freedom” (Gibson 81). For Chaudhuri, Derozio’s Greek poems mean more deeply, drawing their “poetic and cultural identity” from the “changing sensibility” that was sweeping up intellectuals across the globe into a new and shared commitment to “universal discourses of liberty and the rights of man in an era of imperialist and mercantilist expansion” (xxx). The understanding of Derozio as part of an international movement is the cornerstone of Chaudhuri’s reading of him as a “self-consciously nationalist poet” (lxxx). As I noted in my introduction, Chaudhuri links Derozio to more famous national agitators, among them Mazzini and Simon Bolivar, to argue that he practices a kind of nationalism that “spill[ed] out of the territorial demarcations of nation into a broad universalism of thought” (lxxv). For Derozio, she claims, nationalist tenets could be conceptualized and codified in an international arena without the process becoming in any way “contradictory to the spirit of nation formation” (Chaudhuri lxxv). Derozio’s nationalism could be both “global in its thought process” and also

“distinctive(ly) Indian...formed from both local and Western materials” (Chaudhuri lxxvii).

Gibson remains skeptical of what Chaudhuri calls Derozio’s “poetics of universalist nationalism” (lxxxi). She argues instead that Derozio desires to poetically imagine an Indian nation that would stand co-equal with a Greece or an England, but that ultimately he cannot do so. The difficulties that bar such a move, according to Gibson, are specific to Derozio and his environment. Examining Derozio in the context of bardic nationalism, Gibson argues that his attempts to sing India into national being would have necessarily raised questions that, for him, were unanswerable: “What ancient music is to be evoked in memory? Irish music like Moore’s? Scottish music like the last minstrel’s? Indian music? If so, which music? How does the poet construct nation in this context?” (77). Perhaps, most importantly, “as a person born in India of Indian, Portuguese, and English ancestry.... where does Derozio fit?” (78). By Gibson’s reading, Derozio’s complex national identifications and his recognition of India’s cultural heterogeneity render him incapable of bardic self-positioning.¹³ Chaudhuri and Gibson, in agreement on so much in the field they are jointly helping to build, stand at an impasse in their assessments of Derozio: Chaudhuri reads Derozio’s “universalist nationalism” as ushering in nothing short of the advent of Indian modernity, while Gibson reads Derozio’s swirl of identifications and influences as disabling his efforts to imagine and

¹³ Of the Greek poems, Gibson writes, “a turn toward more political subjects, particularly the current war between Greek nationalists and the Ottoman Empire (where Byron’s influence is... apparent)” in the “poems of late 1825 [is] clearly the ground on which Derozio was to become a bard in search of a nation” (72). That Derozio must remain a nation-less bard owes to “the complexity of the poet’s situation as a person of multiple identities and identifications” and to “the impossibility of writing national poetry for a nation that can only be imagined in some futurity” (78).

articulate an Indian national consciousness. But these two positions need not be understood as mutually exclusive. By my reading, Derozio's *Poems* clearly express both universal republican principles and a specific, localized kind of proto-nationalist consciousness. The discrepancies between his tone, his images, and his arguments in poems on India and poems on Greece suggest that his brand of Indian nationalism is distinctive from the nationalism he advocates for Greece. Reading Derozio's "Greece" alongside one of his most nationalistic poems, "The Harp of India," illustrates the parallels and differences he sees between the national moments in Greece and India and, relatedly, the different nationalist methodologies he advocates in each situation.

Derozio's "Greece" calls for violent, home-grown nationalist resistance in the face of military aggression by culturally bereft barbarians. Taken from the Hellenic Chronicle of Missolonghi, the incident that prompts the poem's composition is jarring in its gore, even in a collection filled with images of bloodied weapons and slaughtered patriots. The Ottoman soldiers have roasted a dozen or so Greek men, women, and children on spits and displayed their charred corpses as trophies on their batteries. The epigraph ends with an exclamation that Derozio's poem treats as a question: "what have we done to be abandoned to the ferocity of a race so barbarous!" The answer, it seems, is that Greece has not behaved like the independent nation she wishes to be and, instead, has mistakenly looked outside herself for help and inspiration in her nationalist struggle.

Derozio's poem opens:

Will Europe hear?—Aye, calmly hear—
No arm is stretched to save:
Why need'st thou aid; art thou not Greece,
The glorious and the brave? (1-4)

Greece's plea in the first two lines is answered with a long series of questions—ten in total spanning fourteen stanzas—each directing Greece to look to her own history and to draw upon her own national character to inspire rigorous resistance to the Turks. The mid-section of Derozio's poem reads like a cross between a geographical survey and a Grecian history lesson: Miltiades, Marathon, Thermopylae, Sparta, Salamis, Athens, Corinth, Timoleon, Agis, Codrus, and Thebes all make appearances. Most of the questions intend to evoke Greece's sense of its own historical grandeur, but as the poem draws to its conclusion, Derozio's questions apply specifically to the present day:

hast thou no sons
To seize the flaming brand,
And bravely grasp the freeman's sword
With patriotic hand? (57-60)

Now that the heroes of the past are gone, a new generation of Greeks must take up her nationalist mantle. In the context of Derozio's poem, Europe will offer no succor and will recognize Greece only when she has retaken her own freedom. Derozio's poem concludes:

Will Europe hear? Ah! no—ah! no—
She coldly turns from thee;
Thine own right arm, and battle blade
Must win the victory.—

And then will Europe hear?—she shall,
But not a mournful strain;
The world will hear exultingly
That Greece is free again! (61-68)

Derozio's attitude towards Europe is complex in "Greece." He argues that the Greeks alone are responsible for protecting their freedom, and yet he depicts Europe's indifference as a "coldly turn" (62). He also rejects the notion that Europe holds any

special status in Greece's struggle: Europe will hear when the rest of the "world will hear" (67) that Greece has won her freedom. Greece's "mournful strain" (66) falls on deaf ears, but her victory—sung "exultingly" (67)—will demand recognition worldwide. In "Greece," the nationalist struggle is a straightforward one: the Greeks, who stand for freedom, must gain military victory over the Turks, who stand for tyranny, and then Grecian minstrels will announce their victory to the world.

By magnitudes, Derozio's understanding of India's national moment and the poet's role in singing her nationhood is more complex. Written in the same month, March 1827, Derozio's "The Harp of India" also seeks to "strike" (14) a powerful, national "strain" (14). But, just as the world refuses to hear oppressed Greece's "mournful strain," subjugated India's harp now lays "Neglected, mute, and desolate" (6). Just as a "darker day" has descended over Athens and "dust and ashes" choke Corinth, even the bough that supports India's "lonely" harp has become "withered" (1). India's shame is magnified, like that of Greece, by her past greatness and the obligation it confers upon her present sons to reassert the nation's grandeur. Though without listing specific examples, Derozio recalls the voices "more worthy far than mine" (8) who once sang India to great "Fame" (10) and now lie beneath "flowers still blooming on the minstrel's grave" (11). Like Greece's bygone warriors, India's poets were heroes, heroes who made India audible to a world that only hears the music of free nations. As these parallels between the argumentative strategies in "Greece" and "The Harp of India" show, Derozio saw a clear link between the two countries, their historic greatness, their current subjugation, and their national potential.

Yet, “The Harp of India” has none of the neatness of “Greece” and its celebration of the Greeks, condemnation of the Turks, and dismissal of Europe. Derozio’s poem on his own country articulates an Indian national consciousness that is a complex amalgam of East and West. Derozio refuses to imagine the British, despite their occupation of India, as equivalent to the Turks. “The Harp of India” desires to sing India into being by negotiating with—rather than rejecting—Western poetic forms and allusions as well as British tropes for representing India. For example, “The Harp of India” is, in Gibson’s words, an “almost sonnet” (76). Its fourteen lines, iambic pentameter, and precise rhyme scheme evoke the sonnet, but the poem, ultimately, refuses to fit into Italian, English, or Spenserian patterns. Derozio’s final couplet explicitly calls attention to his poem’s Indianness—the music comes not from England or Italy or the West but from the “Harp of my country” (14). Derozio’s harp conjures that most ancient, Western poetic trope: the Aeolian harp (Gibson 77). Yet, it is not India’s wind (or anything else so amorphous) that can reawaken India’s music. The hand of the poet—Derozio’s hand—is needed to “strike the strain” (14) since “the breeze” passes through the cords “in vain” (4).¹⁴ Derozio’s poem also engages with more current British tropes for representing India, specifically likening the silent harp to a “ruined monument on desert plain!” (7). British poets, foremost among them Derozio’s friend Emma Roberts, consistently expressed the tragedy of India’s cultural impoverishment in poems depicting landscapes littered with the ruins of ancient Indian civilizations’ bygone greatness. Derozio allows the trope to

¹⁴ The short epigraph, from Thomas Moore’s *Irish Melodies* (1808), announces the collection as an Indian’s championing of India akin to Moore’s celebration of Ireland. However, Derozio’s poem claims for the poet a more active role in nation-building. In Moore’s lines, the nation—not the poet—originates the poetry’s “wild sweetness”; the nation stands as the sole owner of all “glory alone.”

stand at the heart of his poem; however, it functions differently, marking an important shift from mourning the harp's current state to imagining, via recollections of the past, her future potential:

O! many a hand more worthy far than mine
Once thy harmonious chords to sweetness gave,
And many a wreath for them did Fame entwine
Of flowers still blooming on the minstrel's grave:
Those hands are cold—but if thy notes divine
 May be by mortal wakened once again,
 Harp of my country, let me strike the strain! (8-14)

Derozio's humility, his bow to poets "more worthy far," transforms into refreshing bravado by the final line. If the harp's "notes divine/May be by mortal wakened," then Derozio designates himself as the poet to do it.

Positioned at the start of Derozio's collection, "The Harp of India," casts a long shadow. The republican poems on Greece and Derozio's other political poems, like "Freedom to the Slave," mean differently because a poem (the only one, in fact) explicitly inciting India to national consciousness stands before them. Derozio's republican principles, as expressed in the poems on Greece, do seem to be based on universal ideals, and his fierce republican advocacy does connect him to Mazzini and Bolivar and, for that matter, Barrett Browning. However, Derozio's Indian nationalism is different, reflecting his understanding of India and of himself as enlivened by the generative tensions produced by the meeting—in a specific society and in a specific poet—of multiple intellectual, aesthetic, cultural, political, and poetic traditions. Through "The Harp of India," Derozio performs a cosmopolitan kind of national identity. Addressing a global English-speaking audience, "The Harp of India" conjures an Indian nation spacious enough to incorporate India's venerated Hindu past and India's extremely

heterogeneous present into the remaking of her national soul. Though Derozio's cosmopolitan nationalism anticipates the views of some prominent later Indian nationalists (most notably, Naidu), his ideas run counter to the early nationalist narratives that arose in the 1830s in response to Britain's turn towards more aggressive colonial policies. In his early literary afterlife, Derozio—with his culturally- integrative theorization of Indian national identity—cut a solitary figure. Yet, as I hope to show through the readings of Dutt's poems that follow, Derozio originated an important strain of thinking about Indian national identity and its complexities that persisted even as exclusionary, binary nationalist narratives became more predominant and more rigid at mid-century. Derozio's magic moment of the 1820s—when Eastern and Western scholars living in India had a strong sense of shared endeavor and mutual respect—had long passed by the time Dutt took up her pen. Yet, by the 1850s, Dutt was also able to join a small but influential and multinational community of poets who were invested in using poetic experimentation to intervene in the highly politicized discourses that surrounded national identity in places (like India, Italy, and later South Africa) in the throes of nationalist struggles.

Crowning the Lotus: Dutt's Ancient Ballads and Legends of Hindustan

One hundred and forty years after Dutt's death, French critic James Darmesteter's eulogistic description remains riveting. He captures the complexity of Dutt's national, cultural, and linguistic allegiances and claims for her poetry an important place in the literary histories of three nations:

This daughter of Bengal... Hindu by race and tradition, an English woman by education, a French woman at heart, poet in English, prose writer in French; who

at the age of eighteen made India familiar with the poets of France in the rhyme of England, who blended in herself three souls and three traditions... presents in the history of literature a phenomenon without parallel. (qtd. Gupta 11)¹⁵

Darmesteter's assessment of Dutt is set apart from so many other critic treatments by his emphasis on Dutt's own agency in cultivating and controlling her multi- or trans-national identity. Darmesteter depicts Dutt as fully and simultaneously owning British, French, and Indian "souls" and "traditions."¹⁶ He treats her "blend[ing] in herself" of these "three souls and three traditions" as a dynamic process over which she exercised careful control. As I read Darmesteter, he is the first critic to regard Dutt as capable of creating and re-creating ever-shifting composite identities. Tricia Lootens, one of the scholars most actively involved in recuperating Dutt's work today, follows Darmesteter in recognizing the multiplicity of Dutt's national influences. She reads Dutt's poems as simultaneously

¹⁵ Darmesteter's assessment of Toru Dutt appeared in his collection, *Essais de Litterature anglaise* (Paris: Delagrave, 1883), alongside essays on William Wordsworth and Percy Bysshe Shelley. The collection was not translated in full into English; however, Darmesteter's remarks on Dutt's hybridity appear in many English-language treatments of her life and work. I cite Padmini Sen Gupta's 1968 translation here, which is one of the earliest and most frequently-cited translations of the original.

¹⁶ Dutt's biography will be familiar to scholars in the Anglophone poetry field but perhaps not to others. Thus, I include a brief summary here. Dutt was born the youngest child of Govin Chunder and Kshetramoni Dutt on March 4, 1856, just one year before the outbreak of the Indian Mutiny. The Dutt family was exceedingly wealthy and already well known for their literary accomplishments. In 1865, they traveled to France, where Dutt learned the language, and then to England, where both daughters attended the Cambridge Higher Lectures for Women. In 1873, the family returned to Calcutta and Dutt's first essays began appearing in *Bengal Magazine*. She also began regularly contributing translations of French poetry. These poems, combined with previously unpublished translations, were printed in 1876 as *A Sheaf Gleaned from French Fields*. In 1877, after a prolonged and painful battle with tuberculosis, Dutt died at the age of only 21. She was widely eulogized in India, France, and England even though most of her work had yet to appear. Her masterpiece, *Ancient Ballads and Legends of Hindustan* (1882), as well as two novels, *Bianca, Or the Young Spanish Maiden* (1878) and *Le Journal de Mademoiselle d'Arvers* (1879), were published posthumously.

rooted in the traditions of Britain, Bengal, and France. Lootens resists readings of *Ancient Ballads and Legends of Hindustan* that imagine the collection as reflecting Dutt's "homecoming" to India after several years spent in Europe. She argues, instead, that Dutt's literary home was "a multiply translated realm within which popular Bengali, Sanskrit, and English" as well as French "traditions claimed intimate place" (Lootens 575).¹⁷ For both Darmesteter in the mid-nineteenth century and Lootens today, Dutt self-consciously and comfortably operates within and among at least three national poetic and intellectual traditions.

Dutt's controlled presentation of a wide and sometimes conflicting array of national identities in her poems poses an obvious challenge to binary understandings of national identity. However, as I argue here, her political project is reformatory and not merely contrarian in nature. Her poems "Savitri" and "Sonnet—The Lotus" offer a clear alternative to dominant narratives about Indian women's socio-political role both within the emerging Indian nationalist movement and within the more established British feminist movement. Taken together, the poems of *Ancient Ballads and Legends of Hindustan* articulate Dutt's cosmopolitan, proto-feminist brand of nationalism and

¹⁷ Lootens' work, like mine, participates in a trend in Anglophone studies of imagining as multidirectional the mutual influences of Indian and European poetic and intellectual traditions. However, it is important to note that this approach to reimagining intellectual exchanges across colonial boundaries remains deeply contested. In fact, many critics continue to interpret Dutt's investment in cultural hybridity as Western co-optation. Chandani Lokuge, editor of the most comprehensive collection of Dutt's writings to date, depicts Dutt as estranged from Indian culture. Lokuge writes, for example, that Dutt "thinks and feels like an imperialist" ("Introduction" xx) and understands herself as "an exile in her own land" ("Introduction" xxxi). Lokuge bases her assertions on instances in Dutt's correspondence—specifically, Dutt's short-lived desire to relocate to England after the family's return to Calcutta, her complaints about the heat of Calcutta's summers, and her infrequent (and ultimately retracted) use of the derogatory term "native."

represent a set of intellectual commitments that share much more with our post-structuralist thinking about nationality than they did with the nationalist narratives that consigned Dutt's work to almost a century of neglect. In her poems and her epistolary discussions of poetry, Dutt consistently depicts Eastern cultural traditions as foundational and describes her readings—begun in early childhood—of modern and classical European literature as exercises that enriched (but did not dominate) her intellectual life.

Consider, for example, Dutt's "Sonnet—Baugmaree" in which sensitive longing for her Indian childhood bleeds into the passionate projection of a violated Indian sanctuary to a global English-speaking audience. Dutt's poem hybridizes two stalwartly Western sonnet forms: she begins with a Petrarchan octave (rhymed ABBAABBA) and ends with a final quatrain and closing couplet that are variations upon either a Shakespearean or Spenserian pattern (rhymed CDCDEE). Unlike Derozio, who seemingly evoked the sonnet only to resist its strictures, Dutt firmly places herself within multiple sonnet traditions, aligning herself with Petrarch in the fourteenth-century; with British Romantics, such as Wordsworth and Keats (to whom she is often likened stylistically and biographically); and with her Western contemporaries, such as Barrett Browning and Christina Rossetti. Yet, the subject of Dutt's hybrid sonnet—British intervention in India's domestic affairs—quite obviously fails to conform to sonnet conventions. For most Westerners, even the lines' rhythm patterns would have been disrupted as readers tripped and tumbled over unfamiliar words. Dutt's "Sonnet—Baugmaree" is densely populated with distinctively Indian creatures and foliage: her garden is filled with "light-green graceful tamarinds" (4), "mangoe clumps of green profound" (5), "palms" (6), "seemuls" (7), "bamboos" (10), and "white lotus" (11).

British hedges of “dull unvaried green” (2) and garden canopies of “pillars gray” (6) appear in the shadows of the poem’s early lines—so dreary in comparison to the “palms” (6) and the “Sharp contrast of all colours” (3) in the “sea of foliage” that “girds our garden round” (1). Though Dutt gestures to the British garden, the Indian garden’s vibrancy marks its separateness; the rightful boundary for Dutt’s garden is the homegrown “sea of foliage” (1) rather than the incongruous, “dull” (2), and foreign hedge.

Despite Dutt’s depiction of the Indian garden as a hyper-Eastern space, the British martial presence in India intrudes through the variegated boundary and into the poem. In the final two lines of the Petrarchan octave, Dutt writes: “And o’er the quiet pools the seemuls lean/Red,—red, and startling like the trumpet’s sound” (7-8).¹⁸ Dutt’s invocation of the shrill trumpet, strongly associated with British military exercises, in the midst of her description of her Indian Eden, brings the otherwise fluid poem to an abrupt halt. Dutt moves quickly to subordinate the trumpet’s imposition, as looking “eastward” (10) she concludes:

One might swoon
Drunken with beauty then, or gaze and gaze
On a primeval Eden, in amaze. (12-14)

In these closing lines, Dutt re-interrupts the “startling... trumpet” (8) and re-imposes her initial mood of dreamy remembrance. She continues to assert, despite the colonial disruption, her authorial right to use the English language and Western forms in the

¹⁸ Though Dutt could not possibly have been aware of the symbolism, even as late as 1877, her poem’s primary colors—green (“tamarinds” and “mangoe clumps”), red (“seemuls”), and white (“lotus”)—ultimately became the colors of the Indian National Flag. Historical accounts place the inception of the Indian National Flag in 1921.

transformation of her Baumaree into “a primeval Eden” (14). For Dutt, Christianity is not the exclusive domain of Western colonizers, and neither, for that matter, is English nor the sonnet. “Sonnet—Baumaree” demonstrates that Dutt is aware of India’s colonial status, her own subjected position, and Britain’s imperial domination: the trumpet’s sound can reach anywhere, even inside the private recesses of an Indian’s garden. Yet, the poem also exemplifies Dutt’s determination to contest British claims of legitimate colonial occupation, to assert her shared ownership of the English-language, and to demonstrate her mastery of Western forms. In “Sonnet—Baumaree,” ultimately, Dutt describes India (her memories, its landscapes, animals, etc.) using English words and forms to present English-speakers with a different imagining of India and England’s rightful relationship: one in which there is no longer a place for the “startling... trumpet’s sound” (8) in an Indian’s garden.

Dutt’s “blending” of East and West in poems like “Sonnet—Baumaree” has led some critics to imagine her as occupying a kind of interstitial place between East and West and between most of the other binary constructs that still shape our engagement with colonial India. Alpana Sharma Knippling’s work offers the best example of this critical approach. She argues that Dutt can be contained by no fixed context; that perhaps she and other third world feminists occupy a “risk-ridden, in-between space” (Knippling 213). Lokuge, quoting Homi Bhabha’s *The Location of Culture* (1994), makes a similar argument: “Toru Dutt claims an ambiguous physical presence, in an ‘interstitial passage between two fixed identifications’” (“Introduction” xiii).¹⁹ Knippling goes on to posit that

¹⁹ I rely more heavily on Knippling’s work because she consistently locates Dutt in a “risk-ridden” space. Lokuge seemingly contradicts the position she states here when she

by “refus[ing] to settle neatly into only one side of any number of binary relationships: female/male, colonized/colonizer, Indian/Western, original/imitative, young/old, sheltered/free,” Dutt was able to “seriously play... with the patriarchal norms of her time” and to establish a precedent (for subsequent third world feminists) of unwillingness to consolidate... politics in binary terms” (225). As my reading of “Sonnet—Baugmaree” suggests, I concur with Knippling that Dutt plays with language, rhythm, and form to subvert a wide range of binaries. And, as my reading of “Savirti” will show, I also agree with her classification of Dutt as a pioneering third world feminist. However, Knippling’s positioning of Dutt in this “risk-ridden, in-between... space” ultimately dilutes or perhaps even neutralizes the power of her overarching political project. Instead, I argue that Dutt’s body of work reveals a distinct strategy, in which she contests binary relationships precisely by “settl[ing] neatly into only one side”—though, importantly, into different sides in different poems. Rather than locating herself “in-between,” I read Dutt as self-consciously and strategically aligning herself—sometimes through dramatized characters and sometimes through lyric passages—with *either* marginalized *or* dominant positions.²⁰ Here, my reading of “Savitri” shows Dutt using this type of strategy, first, to evoke a highly essentialized Indian womanhood and, then, to reappropriate a place for women in patriarchal, nationalist narratives.

depicts Dutt as having a “home” in India that she is, at particular points in her life, either reconciled with or exiled from.

²⁰ In other work, I use the term “strategic singularity” in an attempt to articulate the process by which Dutt chooses, from a multiplicity of available identifications, a single (in some cases, an essentialized) position from which to argue. My article, “Claiming Her Own Context(s): Strategic Singularity in the Poetry of Toru Dutt” (2006), offers a reading of Dutt’s “The Royal Ascetic and the Hind” and an earlier version of this reading of “Savitri” to show how strategic singularity operates in poems that occupy opposing poles on a number of dominant vs. marginal spectrums.

In her longest poem, Dutt initially constitutes Savitri as the archetype of patriarchally prescribed Indian womanhood; however, she ultimately uses her retelling of the legend to challenge the representations of Indian women that predominated in both India and Britain.²¹ In the opening stanzas, Dutt emphasizes Savitri's dark features—her “soft black eyes” (14) and “raven hair” (14)—and employs the fanciful rhetoric of overly-feminized womanhood, likening Savitri to a blooming “lotus” (6) and blessed “vision” (12). She also embellishes patriarchal notions of womanly purity, relating that Savitri's “own peculiar charm” (13) was her “Childlike and innocent and fair” (18) face upon which “no man with thought impure or base/Could ever look” (19-20). Presenting Savitri as an Indian beauty so pure that, despite her literally budding sexuality, men could not even look upon her with lust, Dutt indicates her awareness of patriarchal

²¹ The Savitri legend first appears in the *Mahabharata*, and Dutt's poem is largely faithful to the original. Savitri, the only child of King Aswapati, possessed such beauty and strength of faith and character that all the suitors in her father's kingdom were too intimidated to ask for her hand in marriage. Thus, she was allowed to travel widely in search of her own husband. She finally selects Satyavan, the son of the rightful but blind and deposed king of a neighboring kingdom. Savitri announces her choice to her father in the presence of his friend Narada, who looks into the future and sees that Satyavan will die in only one year. Despite the urging of Aswapati and Narada, Savitri insists on marrying Satyavan and the pair settle into life in his father's lands. On the day he is fated to die—a day known to Savitri but not to Satyavan or his parents—Satyavan sets out into the forest to harvest wood for use in a sacred ritual. Savitri asks and is granted permission from both Satyavan and his parents to accompany him on his errand, and she is with him when he collapses. As Yama, the god of death, approaches, Savitri pleads for her husband's life. When Yama denies her request, Savitri attempts to join Satyavan in death. Yama refuses to allow her to accompany her husband, but he is moved by her faithfulness, her persistence, and her speeches upon the joy of love, family, and children. Yama grants her a succession of boons, allowing her to ask for anything except her husband's life. Savitri, first, restores her father-in-law's eyesight and his kingdom and, then, gives her own father 100 sons. Pleased with Savitri's unselfishness, Yama grants her one last boon; she asks for and is granted 100 sons of her own. Of course, as Savitri points out, she can have no sons without her husband, so Yama agrees—at last—to restore Satyavan's life. He gives them both 400 years on earth to enjoy their wedded bliss and many children.

constructions of Indian womanhood and emphasizes their almost comical, certainly unrealizable nature.

Yet, like the imperial trumpet's short-lived intrusion in "Sonnet—Baugmaree," Dutt's initial depiction of Savitri is drawn only to be subverted. In the sixth stanza, Savitri's sexual purity is supplanted by a surprisingly vivid depiction of her physical response to her future husband, upon whose "tall and lithe" (66) body she "looked and looked" (71) before "she went away/Leaving her virgin heart behind" (102-103). Though Dutt implies no sexual impropriety, Savitri's "look[ing]" and her consequent sexual desire for Satyavan constitute the forfeiture of her "virgin heart." Throughout the poem, Dutt describes this encounter as Savitri's loss of sexual innocence. In stanza fourteen, Savitri tells her father:

When I have given
My heart away, though but in thought,
Can I take back? Forbid it, Heaven!
It were a deadly sin, I wot. (157-160)

Savitri has not even spoken to Satyavan; however, she has "thought," imagined, and desired to give him both her "heart" and body. Significantly, Dutt grants Savitri the power to redefine her own virginity: she chooses to treat her desirous thoughts as a kind of sexual experience and, within the confines of her definition, failing to marry Satyavan would be tantamount to "deadly sin." Savitri holds herself to a standard of sexual purity even higher than that demanded by her patriarchal culture; yet, her refusal to accept its definition of virginity stands as a powerful act of defiance.

While Dutt's challenge to patriarchal constructions—which would have equally indicted Indian nationalists and British imperialists—is the most obvious and successful, Savitri's refusal to surrender Satyavan's soul to Yama also offers a subtle critique of

British feminists' tendency, which Antoinette Burton has discussed at length, to depict Indian women as victims incapable of helping themselves (usually via references to *sati*) (97-98). In one of the poem's most fascinating passages, Dutt seems to draw attention to her own power to shape the world of her poem. After Satyavan's death, Dutt has Savitri attempt to "meekly [follow]" (616) Yama. But, such action, in the context of Dutt's poem, is not only inadvisable; it is impossible. At first, the god "looked surprised" (618) and advised Savitri to follow the prescriptions of earth-bound widowhood rather than to perform the *sati* tradition. Several lines later, Yama tells Savitri flatly that she may not follow her husband into the realm of the dead: "Satyavan's life I may not grant,/ Nor take before its turn thy life" (701-702). Dutt's divine order prohibits Savitri's self-sacrifice, but she remains true to the legend by allowing Savitri to redeem Satyavan's life. To do it, Savitri must rely, not on *sati*, but on her argumentative prowess. Through successive rounds of pleading, flattery, and displays of familial loyalty, Savitri persuades Yama to relinquish Satyavan's soul. Ultimately, Dutt depicts a kind of reversal of *sati* in which Savitri, through a bold display of agency, rejoins Satyavan in life rather than in death. By allowing Savitri to achieve through intellect and argument what she could not through self-sacrifice, Dutt pushes back against British feminists' depictions of Indian women as helpless victims and against nationalist constructions of the ideal, Indian woman. Despite her reconfiguration of the traditional act of supreme wifely commitment, her premarital experience of sexual desire, her reimagining of virginity, her refusal to remain confined within the home, and her willingness to defy male authority figures, Dutt assures us that

As for Savitri, to this day
Her name is named, when couples wed,
And to the bride the parents say,
Be thou like her, in heart and head. (993-996)

Just as Dutt juxtaposed “heart” (158) and “thought” (158) in Savitri’s description of her sexual attraction for Satyavan and her determination to marry him, Dutt reiterates the necessity of allowing brides to follow Savitri in fully expressing the emotions of their “heart[s]” (996) and to freely act upon the decisions of their “head[s]” (996). By perpetuating the legend of this new Savitri through the advice of “parents,” Dutt lends her reimagining of women’s role in India both legitimacy and, at least in the context of the poem, generational staying power.

Dutt vigorously constitutes for her poem a textual space that is—far from being “risk-ridden” and “in-between” in a global context—emphatically Indian and feminine. She chooses Savitri, one of the most venerated figures of Indian womanhood, for her heroine; she dwells upon the darkness of her features; and she repeatedly describes her fierce Hindu piety. By first reproducing the patriarchal imagining of the Indian wife/woman, and then reappropriating it, Dutt urges her readers to join in her critique of the ideals surrounding Indian women’s marital, social, and political roles. She also exposes as an appropriative process the simplification of Indian women’s identities in the patriarchal depictions put forward by Indian nationalists and British feminists. Dutt’s “Savitri” sees the poet working largely from the traditionally marginalized side of a number of binaries (Eastern/Western, female/male, colonized/colonizer, Hindu/Christian, young/old). She achieves her political goals for this particular poem—the articulation of a feminism rooted in the Indian tradition—by claiming and reclaiming these marginalized positions.

The revisionary feminism of “Savitri” and the nationalism of “Sonnet—Baugmaree” come together in “Sonnet—the Lotus.” Though the sonnet is steeped in almost exclusively feminine imagery and set in a flower-filled bower, Dutt points to her political intentions by permeating her lines with explicitly political language. The title in question is “undisputed queen” (2) of all flowers and the debate is characterized by “strife” (8) and a history, on both sides, of political posturing. The rose and lily are “rivals” (4) for the crown with organized “factions” (8) to support them and “Bards of power” (4) to reinforce “their claims” (5). Yet, despite the highly public and politicized nature of the task, Dutt assigns the responsibility of crowning “the queenliest flower that blows” (14) to Flora. In Dutt’s poetic imagining of political discourse, Cupid and Flora engage in a deliberative process—carefully weighing the merits and claims of each flower—but, ultimately, it is Flora, not Cupid, who decides the question. Dutt’s critique of the gender binaries inherent in nationalism’s “new patriarchy” is perhaps the most obvious; however, she also resists notions that women’s practice of nationalism necessarily involves hostility to Western influences. In fact, Dutt speaks her own nationalism, not only in English-language poetry, but also through the quintessentially English code of floriography.²² In the Victorian language of flowers, the two primary rivals for the crown in Dutt’s poem had very stable meanings: the red rose symbolized romantic love, beauty, and respect, while the white lily represented purity and majesty. Furthermore, as Lokuge notes, Dutt’s recasting of the contest between the rose and the

²² According to the *Victorian Bazaar*, the language of flowers or “floriography” was so important during the Victorian period that dictionaries of the symbolic meanings of particular flowers were published in order to ensure smooth communication between people via flower-gifts.

lily invokes a long tradition in English poetry of comparing the virtues of the two flowers (“Introduction” 371). The blending of the colors red and white, intended to settle the long rivalry, in the sonnet’s conclusion (“or, both provide” [12]) even seems to recall the post-War of the Roses (1455-1485) combination of the white and red rose into a symbol of British unity and an official emblem of England. Despite Dutt’s engagement with these western literary codes and traditions, it is not a British national symbol but instead the Indian lotus, later selected as India’s national flower, which forms as the features of the red rose and white lily meld. In addition to depicting a decidedly Indian flower emerging from the political infighting as sovereign, Dutt also contests the floriographic tradition that associates the lotus with “estranged love and forgetfulness of the past” (“Language of Flowers” 1). Leaving the traditional English symbolism of the rose and the lily untouched, Dutt subverts British figurings of the lotus by showing that while the flower might be Other and strange, it is not “estranged” or separate from the lily and the rose—instead, it is an amalgamation of their colors. By emphasizing Flora’s political power and stressing the hybrid nature of the lotus, Dutt articulates a nationalism that envisions gender equality and autonomy for the East without rejection of the West. Dutt, like Derozio before her, uses English-language poems to argue for an integrative Indian national consciousness that reflects the heterogeneous lived reality of Calcutta’s nineteenth-century elites rather than the false binaries erected within mainstream Indian nationalist ideology.

Almost all assessments of Derozio and Dutt mourn their short lives and the limitations illness and early death necessarily imposed on their poetic development. Truly, one cannot help wishing for more from poets who showed such genius in their

lines, depth in their learning, and sophistication in their thought. However, their youth and brevity perhaps lent a passion and a consistency to their political projects which is rarely sustained over long careers. Both Derozio and Dutt transformed their lived experiences into political poetry with bravery and honesty. Their poems are experiments in articulating a kind of Indian national consciousness that reflects rather than downplays India's heterogeneity, including the deep entwinement of British and Indian literary and language traditions that was firmly established early in the nineteenth century. Certainly, in some poems Dutt's and Derozio's awareness of this entwinement produces an anxious uncertainty about how India should respond to her British occupiers. However, their desire to intervene in how Indians come to imagine themselves as part of a nation forms the cornerstone of their political projects.

As mainstream Indian nationalism increasingly reproduced repressive binaries in its attempts to define itself against the West, Derozio and Dutt penned poetic imaginings of an Indian national consciousness large and wide enough to accommodate a range of personal, cultural, and intellectual allegiances and identifications. In life, neither was particularly well-known or influential—Dutt was largely ensconced in her close, family circle, and Derozio, at his height, was a controversial celebrity within the community at Hindu College. Yet, in their short lives, both laid the foundation for indelible intellectual and political legacies. The poetry Derozio and Dutt left behind establishes their place within a global school of English-language poets ideologically committed to a less divisive, more cosmopolitan nationalism: a school of poets that grew in numbers and prominence as the century wore on and came to include literary luminaries, like Barrett Browning, and political giants, like Naidu and Kipling, working around the world.

Chapter 2: Cosmopolitan Nationalism in Poetic Practice: Elizabeth Barrett Browning's *Casa Guidi Windows*

The critical treatment and poetic afterlives of Henry Louis Vivian Derozio and Toru Dutt clearly show the political complexities of entering Indian nationalist discourse through the medium of English-language poetry. Indian nationalists, particularly in the early years of the movement, objected to Indians' use of English in cultural productions because of how strongly the English language was associated with British political, economic, and cultural dominance. This firm connection between English-language literature, especially poetry, and British national and imperial identity had important consequences for British poets too. Specifically, it meant that British poets, like Elizabeth Barrett Browning, who joined Derozio and Dutt in understanding poetry as a particularly effective tool for complicating nationalist narratives, faced staunch critical and public resistance in Britain. As in India, where poetry in the vernaculars had long been a source of cultural pride, there was broad recognition in Britain of poetry's paramount role in reflecting national character and affirming national grandeur.²³ In fact, British poetry and British national identity were so closely linked—imagined as so inherently constitutive of each other—in public and critical consciousness that the political nature of this connection became largely invisible. In other words, poetry was consistently, even insistently, read as apolitical even as it did the powerful political work of reflecting, celebrating, and perpetuating Britain's national and imperial identity and ambition.

²³ Please refer to my introduction for an overview of the critical conversation surrounding British poetry's complex and longstanding relationship to narratives of British national identity.

Despite poetry's widely recognized national importance, most British readers and critics were reluctant to acknowledge and engage with poems as political writing. Even during the closing decades of the nineteenth century, most Victorian poetry critics remained invested in Romantic understandings of poetry as delicate, lofty, and innate. Critics were steadfast in their wariness of reading practices that treated poetry as a medium for the author's strongly held and self-consciously articulated political ideas—particularly when those ideas critiqued rather than celebrated Britain. Some British critics were so intent on avoiding the politicization of Britain's premier national genre that they seemed reluctant to pay critical attention to poems at all. In the summer of 1874, for example, the *Cornhill Magazine* fretted that “in attempting to criticize... poetry, the critic... destroy[s] some of its beauty” just as “we brush the bloom off fruit when we handle it too roughly” (698). On the whole, Victorian critics followed their Romantic predecessors in aspiring to recognize and bring to public notice the genius poet whose gift, as the *Cornhill* puts it, “comes from Nature” and whose poems are best enjoyed “unconsciously” (699). The British poet's job, in turn, was to show the aesthetic heights to which an individual might rise and, through their poetic accomplishments, to justify Britain's cultural and political hegemony. The poet's gift was largely seen as antithetical to the politician's craft.

Pushing back against such critical and readerly expectations, Barrett Browning wrote insistently political poetry that sought to alter rather than merely to reflect many of nineteenth-century Britain's structuring narratives and the public policies they informed. The text I discuss in this chapter, Barrett Browning's *Casa Guidi Windows* (1851), is not a fragile poem meant to be enjoyed “unconsciously”; it is a radical experiment in using

poetry to intervene in national and international politics that offers robust critiques of British foreign and domestic policies. Both a British citizen and a committed Italian patriot, Barrett Browning brazenly used her poem to call for greater public support, in Britain and elsewhere, for the Italian nationalist movement. Moreover, the degree to which Barrett Browning identifies *with* and *as* an Italian patriot causes her to reject a range of exclusionary narratives that seek to privilege a single allegiance—shared language, religion, or birthright belonging—over an individual’s complex array of intellectual, social, cultural, and moral commitments. As existing understandings of nationality proved ever more inadequate to her personal and intellectual experiences, Barrett Browning responded by poetically reimagining national identity for her global English-speaking audience as more open, more fluid, and more cosmopolitan.

Barrett Browning’s poem, in many ways as relevant to our lived experience today as it was to her readers in the 1860s, consistently depicts the erasure of barriers of class, religion, and nation that served then, as now, to divide people in Britain, Italy, and elsewhere. While my work focuses specifically on Barrett Browning’s engagement with nationalist discourse, a spirit of openness and cross-cultural fellowship pervades *Casa Guidi Windows*. Consider, for example, Barrett Browning’s envisioning of religious plurality in the passage below. Here, Barrett Browning follows her personal declaration of tolerance with a stirring image in which the sturdy, opaque walls of a church become luminous and penetrable:

My words are guiltless of the bigot’s sense!
My soul has fire to mingle with the fire
Of all these souls, within or out of doors
Of Rome’s Church or another. I believe
In one priest, and one temple, with its floors
Of shining jasper, gloom’d at morn and eve

By countless knees of earnest auditors;
And crystal walls, too lucid to perceive,—
That none may take the measure of the place
And say, “so far the porphyry; then, the flint—
To this mark, mercy goes, and there, ends grace,”
While still the permeable crystals hint
At some white starry distance, bathed in space! (952-964)

Barrett Browning believes in “one temple”; however, her place of worship is endlessly expansive, bordered by “crystal walls, too lucid to perceive” and open not to one sect but to “countless knees.” She rejects the delimiting claims of all religious groups and denominations, figured as the sparkling red-purple “porphyry,” and instead imagines the variegated floors of her church extending into the “white starry distance”—stretching so far that “none may take the measure of the place.” Admission to Barrett Browning’s “temple” requires only a heart that is humble, “earnest,” and willing take its place within the heterogeneous congregation. As many critics have pointed out, Barrett Browning’s engagement with religion in *Casa Guidi Windows* is more complex than this single passage suggests; however, the ideals and commitments she expresses here map precisely to those that drive her rejection of traditional nationalist narratives.²⁴

Barrett Browning’s cosmopolitan nationalism is undergirded by her desire to break-down divisive barriers, her willingness to join with people of diverse backgrounds to achieve shared goals, and the conviction that group belonging (to a church or to a nation) should be determined by individual choice. The commitments Barrett Browning expresses in this passage and in other passages more explicitly engaged with questions of

²⁴ For a thorough discussion of the complex interactions of Judaism and Christianity as well as Protestantism and Catholicism in *Casa Guidi Windows*, see Steve Dillon and Katherine Frank’s “Defenestrations of the Eye: Flow, Fire, and Sacrifice in *Casa Guidi Windows*” (*Victorian Poetry* 35.4 [1997]: 471-492).

national identity suggest an important and understudied critical context for her work: as part of a global school of English-language poets all invested in using poetry to intervene in tough, nationalist conflicts and in emerging nationalist discourses. Barrett Browning's willingness to imagine deeply entrenched institutions, like the church and the nation, as strengthened rather than weakened by cultural heterogeneity links her to Derozio and Dutt. Her envisioning of a cosmopolitan, affective brand of nationality parallels in striking ways the poetry and political rhetoric of Naidu, and her exploration of the bonds forged across traditional national divisions in the crucible of war-time anticipates the poetic concerns and practices of Kipling. She also incurred, like Kipling, the displeasure of Britain's literary establishment and of her readers for her refusal to perform her patriotic duties as a well-known and globally circulating British poet. After a brief discussion of the nationalist responsibilities assigned to nineteenth-century British poets, the remainder of this chapter examines *Casa Guidi Windows* as a bold, cosmopolitan poem with global poetic and political consequences.

Measuring the Nation: British Poetry and National Identity

Writing for the *Gentleman's Magazine* in March 1893, Clement Boulton (C.B.) Roylance-Kent captured the paradox of political poetics in the long nineteenth-century: most literary critics denied a relationship between poetry and politics and, yet, poets produced volumes and volumes of political poems. Roylance-Kent opens his review of George Saintsbury's collection, *Political Verse* (1891), like this:

Politics do not seem at first sight a very promising subject for poetry, nor is there any apparent relationship between the two. The former seem too prosaic and too matter-of-fact to do other than clog the wings of fancy in its flight. Politics are by no means "an airy nothing," which it is the poets function to clothe with shape

and form, and to which he must give a “local habitation and a name.” On the contrary, they are a very grim reality to many. Nevertheless, the bulk of verse dealing with political subjects is very considerable. (237)²⁵

Roylance-Kent, like many other nineteenth-century critics, works hard to disassociate poetry from the “grim reality” of politics.²⁶ He goes perhaps further than most to deny “any apparent relationship between the two,” even as he arduously reviews a collection of over 250 pages of explicitly political poems. But, despite critical disavowals, like Roylance-Kent’s, of poetry’s political role, a hefty “bulk” of national responsibilities were thrust upon these fragile “wings of fancy” throughout the long nineteenth century.

Through her own reading of Saintbury’s *History of English Prosody from the Twelfth Century to the Present Day*, for example, Meredith Martin traces how poetry, long recognized as formative of moral character, came to be the primary means of developing national character over the course of the nineteenth century. As nineteenth-century social reforms brought education from the elite fringe to the mainstream, poetry became so instrumental to instilling English national identity into students that the study

²⁵ The quotations belong to a politician, the Athenian ruler Theseus, theorizing the role of the poet in Shakespeare’s *A Mid-Summer Night’s Dream* (1605) some three hundred years prior to Roylance-Kent’s invocation of them here.

²⁶ Even as he dismisses the relevance of late-nineteenth-century political poetry, Roylance-Kent’s response to Saintbury’s collection reveals the extent to which poetry and poetry criticism were bound up with the most emergent political questions of the day—particularly concerning expansions in franchise. Roylance-Kent acknowledges as “a plausible objection” that “political verse is not poetry at all,” but he presses on, admitting that there was a time when “political verse wielded a concentrated force”; a time when “all the world who were of any account in politics read the verse and were moved” (238). However, he goes on to lament that with expansions in franchise, “the best political verse does not reach” the “vast majority” of voters and, “if it did reach them, they would not understand it” (238). At the end of the nineteenth century, writing high-quality political poetry is, in Roylance-Kent’s words, “a throwing of pearls before swine” or, worse yet, “an academic exercise” (238).

of poetry itself became secondary. As Martin illustrates, many prominent poetry scholars began to believe their long-standing, esoteric, and contentious disagreements—about basic terminology, about how English meters evolved (in relationship to Anglo-Saxon and classical meters), and about how English lines should be scanned (accent, quantity, or a combination approach)—made them seem ill-equipped for the serious job of inculcating national character. Consequently, Martin argues, men like Coventry Patmore, Lindley Murray, Edwin Guest and, most importantly, Saintsbury felt a fervent desire to have done with (on their own terms, of course) the destabilizing debates that had come to surround poetry studies. Depicting Saintsbury as a savvy prosodic politician, Martin shows how he navigates between competing metrical traditions and between competing theories of metrical pedagogy in order to position English poetry as both a reflection of and a tool for teaching English national character.²⁷ Saintsbury's attempt to settle the question of English prosody and its privileged role in inscribing British national identity was perhaps the most exhaustive (he clocks in, according to Martin, at 1,577 pages); however, he was certainly not alone.

²⁷ To settle the dogged questions of the origins of the English foot and how best to scan it, Saintsbury forwards the notion of “blended originality,” becoming in Martin’s words “the representative for standard English meter based on a subtle blend of classical (foreign, quantitative) and Anglo-Saxon (native, accentual) meters” (97). Yet, Martin notes that Saintsbury’s insistence on retaining the connection between English meter and classical verse raises a stubborn problem for him: how can English poetry, with its classical indebtedness, instill national character in English school children unfamiliar with Greek or Latin verse? Saintsbury’s solution, in a rare agreement with Patmore, was the idea of the “English ear.” Martin reads Saintsbury’s reliance on the innate ability of the English ear to hear English meters as a revealing dodge of actual engagement with questions of prosody—a dodge that exposes the extent to which Saintsbury longs to use his ethos as an eminent scholar of prosody to close down prosodic debates and, thereby, to reassert poetry’s fitness to be at the forefront of English national education.

Consider, as only two of hundreds of other potential examples, descriptions of poetry's national role by the *Quarterly Review* in 1873 and the *Edinburgh Review* thirteen years later. In the context of a rather savage review of H. Buxton Forman's anthology, *Our Living Poets* (1873), the *Quarterly Review* claims, "The condition of poetry is a matter of public concern. Above all other arts, poetry stands pre-eminent in its power to influence the mind of society" (1). In the present, poetry wields the "subtle power" to "invigorate" or "corrupt" thoughts and taste, and, in the future, "the poetry of an age is the monument of its character" (1). In 1886, the *Edinburgh Review* opens its much friendlier critique of Alfred Tennyson's *Tiresias and Other Poems* (1885), with the same claim: "As an index and a school of national character the importance of poetry can hardly be exaggerated. No more potent influence exists to invigorate or corrupt the mind of society; no surer sign of the health or disease of a people, than this monument and epitome of national development" (467). Using several identical key words, both journals, like Saintsbury and the other prosodic theorists Martin examines, depict poetry as a powerful social influencer and as an important historical chronicler of Victorian accomplishments and character. Such consistency of thinking about poetry and its cultural and national role is even more striking when one recalls that the *Edinburgh Review* and the *Quarterly Review* were strongly associated with the rivaling Whig and Tory parties (respectively).

One way to understand critics' seemingly paradoxical denial of poetry's political nature and insistence on poetry's national role is to examine more carefully how they imagined poets fulfilling their national responsibilities. Here, the use of the word "monument" in both the *Edinburgh Review* and the *Quarterly Review* points toward the

dominant view. Most Victorian critics treated British “national character” as a non-contested idea, and poetry as the medium that captured, reflected, or monumentalized this already established national identity.²⁸ They were anxious about what would happen to poetry and to readers’ enjoyment of poetry if it became a vehicle for engaging directly with political debates rather than an embodiment of national ideals. The *Edinburgh Review* claims that people read poetry precisely “to escape in its pure air from the dusty atmosphere of party squabbles” (469). To maintain its appeal and its beauty, poetry needed to offer readers something more than lines that were, in the *Edinburgh*’s allusion to Shelley, “the product of the intolerable itch of poetical legislation” (470). In an 1867 piece for the *Contemporary Review*, Peter Bayne argued that the “passion of artistic production is generally different from the passion of political, theological, philosophical or any other partisanship” (341). In judging Arnold and Swinburne far inferior to Keats, Goethe, and Tennyson, Bayne identifies their “fatal disadvantage” as their need to be

²⁸ Victorian critics’ confidence in their knowledge of “national character” and of poetry’s role in preserving it contrasts starkly with their admitted uncertainty about almost everything else. For example, the *Quarterly Review*’s Buxton piece, which is fairly representative of Victorian reviewers’ faith in poetry’s societal and national importance, quivers with a nervous recognition that poetry itself has come to lack a clear definition. The reviewer feels that, for the first time in history, there is no longer a “settled opinion of what poetry ought to be” (1). Countless literary reviewers and some of the best writers and thinkers of the age—most famously, John Stuart Mill and Matthew Arnold—had provided criteria for poetry’s definition and assessment. Yet, the *Quarterly Review* laments the loss of the “fairly definite standard” (1) that had governed poetic criticism before Victoria’s ascension to the throne. Rattled by this state of critical “anarchy,” the reviewer follows Mill and Arnold in enumerating a set of principles—here a “test of four canons” (2-3)—through which poetry can be identified and judged. But, uncertainty negates definitional power: before even offering his canons, he admits that he cannot be sure “whether [they are] true or false” (2). For much of the nineteenth century, critics’ conviction that poetry was of the utmost importance to chronicling Victorian cultural identity coexists with disagreement and uncertainty about how to recognize and judge what sort of poetry might best perform such a weighty, national task.

“ardently and consciously polemical” and to use their poetry to “fight for a side” (341).

Within the literary establishment, there was broad agreement that poetry played an important role in “monumentalizing” national identity, but those very same critics felt strongly that it fell outside the poet’s purview to *argue* with what Britain might do or fail to do.

Such rigid critical distinctions between poetry and political writing date back at least to the opening decade of the Victorian period, specifically to John Stewart Mill’s highly influential “What is Poetry?” (1833). A prominent philosopher and liberal political activist, Mill’s views on the necessary separation of politics and poetry were even more pronounced than those expressed in the above *Edinburgh Review* and *Quarterly Review* pieces. Not only was political poetry likely to be bad poetry, Mill argued, political poetry ceased to be poetry at all. Consider the most famous passage from “What is Poetry?” in which Mill draws the distinction between poetry and eloquence:

Poetry and eloquence are both alike the expression or utterance of feeling: but, if we may be excused the antithesis, we should say that eloquence is *heard*; poetry is *overheard*. Eloquence supposes an audience. The peculiarity of poetry appears to us to lie in the poet’s utter unconsciousness of a listener. Poetry is feeling confessing itself to itself in moments of solitude, and embodying itself in symbols which are the nearest possible representations of the feeling in the exact shape in which it exists in the poet’s mind. Eloquence is feeling pouring itself out to other minds, courting their sympathy, or endeavoring to influence their belief, or move them to passion or to action. (95)

The purpose of political poetry, of course, is precisely to speak to “an audience” or “to other minds” and to “[court] their sympathy,” “influence their belief,” and “move them... to action” (95). Mill’s understanding of poetry as being “*overheard*” by rather than as speaking to its audience powerfully shaped critical responses to poetry, especially political poetry, throughout the nineteenth century and, as responses to Kipling’s poems

will show, on into the opening decades of the twentieth century. Following Mill, most Victorian critics believed that poetry degraded itself, risking its beauty and its readership, by becoming involved in the argumentative work of politics. Given poets' special role in monumentalizing national character, political poems that complicated British nationalist narratives or critiqued British foreign policy were met with particular critical displeasure.

Of course, as the reams of political poetry produced in the period attest, these dominant views of poetry as apolitical and as responsible for embodying British national identity were fiercely contested in nineteenth-century poetic and critical communities—often most strongly by poets themselves. Mid-century global contemporaries Barrett Browning (in Florence) and Dutt (in Calcutta) are but two examples of poets who wrote poems with insistent political agendas that rejected exclusionary nationalist narratives. As Matthew Reynolds has persuasively argued, most giants of the Victorian poetic scene were self-consciously engaged with both national and global politics, with shaping nationalist discourses, and with the politics of poetry and poetic form. He cites, in addition to Barrett Browning, Swinburne, Tennyson, Clough, and Robert Browning as examples. Beyond this community of luminaries, Jason Rudy has argued that outsider poets—like the rhythmically experimental, working-class poets Sydney Dobell and Alexander Smith—also became alert to the “full political potential of poetic form” in the early- to mid-nineteenth century (“Electric Meters” 13). There seems to be a veritable flourishing of political poetics in the mid-nineteenth century, but understandings of poetry as political and of poets as important wielders of political influence pre-date the Victorians. Percy Bysshe Shelley penned perhaps the most famous declaration of poets' political importance in *A Defence of Poetry* (written in 1821 though not published until

1840), which concludes with the iconic claim: “Poets are the unacknowledged legislators of the world” (90). Shelley claims for poetry a role in all stages of political activity but, in particular, he associates poetry with progressive change. Contra Mill, Shelley imagines poetry, more so than any other genre, as the “unfailing herald, companion, and follower of the awakening of a great people to work a beneficial change in opinion or institution” (89). Shelley’s political/poetic thought provides a shared mooring for Barrett Browning and many other mid- to late-nineteenth-century political poets as well as for Naidu and Kipling.²⁹ Such poets—writing with deep knowledge of British poetic and critical traditions but at different historical moments, from distinct geographical locations, and with a diversity of personal backgrounds and political objectives—clearly believed that they held wide-ranging political power through their vocation as poets and through their poems. Roving the globe, these English-language poets imagined themselves as politically active in the shaping and reshaping of nationalist discourses rather than as merely monumentalizing the accomplishments of any particular nation.

Following the political impulses of Victorian poets, a limited number of critics attempted to validate the role of political argumentation in poetry and, thus, to re-theorize poetry’s nationalist responsibilities. For example, in a well-known essay from 1880, “Three Phases of Lyric Poetry,” Thomas Bayne challenges “the popular estimate of the lyricist,” whose poetry is characterized by “spontaneous and captivating musical expression,” “delicate instinct,” “rich penetrative feeling,” and the “impression that the

²⁹ For a lengthier discussion of Barrett Browning’s “conversation” with Shelley, see Jane Stabler’s “Romantic and Victorian Conversations: Elizabeth Barrett and Robert Browning in Dialogue with Shelley and Byron” (*Fellow Romantics: Male and Female British Writers, 1790-1835*. Ed. Beth Lau. Aldershot: Ashgate, 2009. 231-253.).

poet ‘sings because he must’” (627). Writing in *Fraser’s Magazine*, Bayne sets forth three kinds of poetry—“sentimental,” “artificial,” and “philosophical”—distinguished in large part by their differing relationships to spontaneity, emotional expressiveness, and musicality. Bayne assigns political poetry to the category of “philosophical poetry,” which distinguishes itself “by the reach and massive quality of [its] thought rather than by richness of... note or... mellifluous cadences” (627). For Bayne, political poetry was not particularly spontaneous, emotive, or musical, but it was definitely poetry. Furthermore, Bayne positions it as co-equal with his other two poetic categories. Bayne’s labels were never widely adopted, but his work represents one of the more sustained critical attempts to diversify the qualities by which poetry might be valued and the purposes to which it might be put.

Bayne’s work also anticipates John Addington Symonds’ more famous critique of British poetics, “A Comparison of Elizabethan and Victorian Poetry” (1889), which appeared in the *Fortnightly Review* nine years later. Symonds argues that the “inner unity” of Victorian verse will not be “the powerful projection of a nation’s soul” (66). Instead, he claims its defining characteristics will be found “in the careful analysis and subtle delineation” of “how individual minds have been touched to fine issues of rhythmic utterance by the revolutions in thought which history, philosophy, and criticism are effecting” (66). For Symonds, the most important verse of the Victorian period reflects “individual minds” and not the “nation’s soul”; it springs from human responses to change—to “revolutions in thought”—and not from Nature. Importantly, Symonds also claims that Victorian poetry of quality “is used to express some theory of life,” implying that the best poems at least voice (if not advocate) a set of arguments held by

the poet about how one should think or operate in the world (64).³⁰ Symonds acknowledges that this sustained, intellectual engagement with the world comes at some cost: Victorian poetry is now “inferior [to Elizabethan] in its spontaneity and birdlike intonation” (69). But, for Symonds, birdsong is replaced by poetry that glows “iridescent with the intermingled hues of fancy, contemplation, gnomic wisdom, personal passion, discursive rhetoric, and idyllic picture-painting” (69). Symonds’ 1889 insertion of “discursive rhetoric” amid the “personal passion” and “idyllic picture-painting” long associated with poetry represents an important critical acknowledgement of what Barrett Browning—as well as the other global English-language poets I discuss in this study—fervently believed. For these poets and for the critics who engaged with and supported their work, the best poetry did not merely reflect a nation; it intervened in the toughest questions of domestic and global politics. For them, a poem’s entanglement with the forces that acutely shaped people’s lived experiences—among them class, gender, nationalism, and imperialism—added to its expressive possibilities, augmenting, rather than diminishing, its finely-wrought, evocative beauty.

“Take Voice and Work”: Barrett Browning as Italian Patriot

By the time she took up her pen to write *Casa Guidi Windows*, Elizabeth Barrett Browning was already well-practiced at using her poems to intervene in the hardest political and social questions of her day. To cite only a few examples, Barrett Browning

³⁰ Symonds delineates the “theory of life” that he sees set out in Barrett Browning’s poetry: “Mrs. Browning condenses speculations upon social and political problems” (65). It is worth noting that of all the poets treated in Symonds’ essay—including Byron, Shelley, Wordsworth, Browning, Clough, and Arnold—Barrett Browning is one of only two poets (the other being Swinburne) whose “theory of life” is described as overtly political (64-65).

had strongly denounced, in “The Cry of the Children” (1844), unchecked industrialization and its consequences for Britain’s most vulnerable subjects. In “Lady Geraldine’s Courtship” (1844), “The Romaunt of the Page” (1844), and her two sonnets to George Sand (1844), she had offered subtle but determined critiques of sexual double standards. And, in “The Runaway Slave at Pilgrim’s Point” (1848), she had argued for abolition. Given her strong track record of poetic advocacy for the oppressed, it is unsurprising that Barrett Browning was quickly and deeply drawn into the Italian nationalist cause upon her arrival in Italy. Her first months in Florence in the fall of 1846 were exciting ones for democracy activists: the newly elected Pope Pius IX appeared more progressive than his predecessor, and Tuscany’s Grand Duke Leopold II enacted substantial civic reforms in 1847.³¹ Over the next several years, however, these hopes gave way to a profound sense of disappointment as Italy’s revolutionaries suffered serious military setbacks and saw the leaders of their movement—Giuseppe Mazzini and Giuseppe Garibaldi—exiled. By 1851, when *Casa Guidi Windows* was published, Tuscany’s Grand Duke Leopold, once vaunted for his liberalism, had reasserted his control of Florence with 12,000 Austrian troops in tow. Throughout these tumultuous years, Barrett Browning proved to be more than a fair-weather democrat, remaining fully invested in and publicly supportive of the Italian cause.

³¹ The Italian *Risorgimento* spanned much of the century, beginning in 1815 and culminating in the 1861 proclamation of a united Italian kingdom. The movement is often divided into two phases—the first characterized by popular uprisings for fully democratic rights that ended in the 1849 defeat of Italian revolutionary forces at Novara and the second characterized by efforts to form a united Italy under the rule of the king of Piedmont-Sardinia. Though the process of making modern-day Italy continued until the end of World War I, the *Risorgimento* is widely considered to have ended either in 1861—when Victor Emanuel II, previously the King of Sardinia, was declared King of Italy—or in 1871—when Rome became the capital of the Kingdom of Italy.

Barrett Browning's letters frame her democratic commitment in moral terms, and she remains consistent even when her political ideas—most notably, her support for the French referendum that elected Louis-Napoleon Bonaparte the Emperor of France in 1852—were highly unpopular with the vast majority of Britons, including most of the family and friends with whom she corresponded. Writing from Paris about her views on the referendum only a few months after its conclusion, for example, Barrett Browning defends herself to one of her oldest friends, Mary Russell Mitford: “I am simply a *democrat*, and hold that the majority of a nation has the right of choice upon the question of its own government, *even where it makes a mistake*” (“The Letters” 48). In an even more animated letter to John Kenyon, Barrett Browning articulates her belief that a leader's most important qualification is democratic legitimacy: “let him have vulture's beak, hyena's teeth, and the rattle of the great serpent... the people chose him, and... they have a right to choose whom they please” (“The Letters” 53). Similarly, regarding the cause nearest to her heart—Italian independence—Barrett Browning defended the people's right to rally behind whomever they chose even when she disagreed. She joined with other nationalists, for example, in publicly supporting Mazzini but confessed, in private, that she considered him a “noble man” but an “incompetent” and “unwise” leader (“The Letters” 115). Barrett Browning's political poems—on child labor, on gender inequality, on slavery, and, of course, on Italian nationalism—reveal her firm commitment to democratic values and her willingness to raise her voice against governmental policies (domestic or international) that deprived people of equal treatment or self-determination.

While Barrett Browning's politics made many of her correspondents in Britain uneasy, they endeared her to the small number of expatriated women poets in Florence—all committed to the *Risorgimento*—who quickly coalesced into a literary circle around her. The politically charged poetry written by Barrett Browning and her fellow expatriates reflects the vehemence of their shared nationalist commitment and the extent to which many of them felt a powerful sense of belonging in and ownership of their adopted city. Expatriated women poets—more so than Florence's expatriated male poets or novelists of either sex—were particularly active in their championing of Italy's national independence. In addition to Barrett Browning, Alison Chapman argues that British poets Theodosia Garrow Trollope, Isa Blagden, and Eliza Ogilvy all “placed themselves at the center of nation making, staked their careers on campaigning for Italy, and conceived their writing and professional selves as part of an explicitly female literary, political, and social” advocacy group (75). Critics have long recognized this special relationship between women poets and Italy. Some, like Sandra Gilbert and Julia Markus, have argued that Barrett Browning and other women poets recognized their own feminist struggle for personal autonomy and political equality in the Italian nationalist movement, causing them to metaphorically link Italy's *Risorgimento* with, in Gilbert's words, the feminist “resurrection” of a “lost community of women” and a lost “female poetic tradition” (195). Others, like Reynolds and Leigh Coral Harris, point to overlaps in the mechanisms of political marginalization that denied women poets and Italian nationalists the political recognition and agency they desired.³² Poetry, women, and Italy

³² In the case of women poets, dominant opinion held that they should—following the example of other British middle-class women or of India's New Women—confine themselves and their poetic concerns to the home: a safe, wholesome location from which

all served as ideals of beauty in the British imaginary, and British readers and critics did not want their ideals sullied by involvement with the ugly realities of geopolitics. For Barrett Browning and the *Risorgimento*'s other expatriated women poets, the tasks of claiming political agency for themselves and for Italy were much intertwined and, thus, doubly daunting.

Nevertheless, *Casa Guidi Windows* asserts Italy's right to independence as well as Barrett Browning's right—as a British citizen, an Italian patriot, a woman, and a poet—to argue Italy's case on the world stage. *Casa Guidi Windows* is a poem written in two tonally and temporally distinct parts, the first composed in a comparatively hopeful period following Leopold II's September 1847 reinstatement of civil liberties in Florence and the second written in the bitter aftermath of Austria's reassertion of military control over the city in 1851. It is also a poem written for at least two distinct audiences. In what follows, I argue that Barrett Browning—though consistently expressing her own deeply-held political ideas—shape-shifts strategically throughout *Casa Guidi Windows* as she appeals, in some passages, to Britain's moderate liberals for greater support of the Italian cause and, in other passages, to republicans and revolutionaries of a range of national

they could ably defend and embody national character. The English poetess, again much like the New Woman in India, acquired her elevated status from her unworldliness and from her personal and national purity. For Italian nationalists, the Italy of the British public imaginary was an aestheticized, feminine, and, thus, depoliticized space (Reynolds 75-81). Revered in British culture for its centuries-long record of rich cultural and aesthetic achievement, Italy was so strongly and exclusively associated with beauty and with art that the increasing ugliness of heavy-handed, foreign rule was only slowly recognized in Britain. Harris puts it succinctly: “the British definition of pre-national Italy is the idea of *la bella Italia* as apolitical and even ahistorical” (109). Citing Matthew Arnold, John Ruskin, Charles Dickens, George Meredith, and even Robert Browning as examples, Harris argues that many British writers continued to treat Italy as “an idealized space” (128) even as nationalist ferment boiled over into widespread revolutionary violence.

backgrounds throughout the English-speaking world.³³ Scholarship has already documented thoroughly the ways *Casa Guidi Windows* appeals to a predominantly British audience. Thus, I will touch but briefly on this argumentative mode within *Casa Guidi Windows* and, then, only to recognize its contribution to the poem's polyvocalism and to suggest that focusing too narrowly on Barrett Browning's British audience has unnecessarily circumscribed our understanding of the poem and its global significance. I focus the bulk of my attention on reading *Casa Guidi Windows* in a more global context. I examine the strategies through which Barrett Browning argues before a broad, English-speaking audience and participates in the efforts of English-language poets—working in Britain, India, South Africa, Italy, and elsewhere—to re-imagine nationality in more open and fluid ways. I read Barrett Browning as cosmopolitan, as claiming both English and Italian citizenship, as singing her Italian patriotism in English-language verse, and as performing an inclusive, affective kind of national identity. But, before turning to my examination of Barrett Browning's cosmopolitan nationalism, let me briefly survey the current critical conversation surrounding *Casa Guidi Windows*.

³³ Indeed, Barrett Browning's savvy use of a range of argumentative strategies begins even in the prose passage that prefaces her poem. In the "Advertisement," Barrett Browning—who is clearly working in a Shelleyan or explicitly political mode—presents "the writer" and her poem as conforming to the Millean notion of depoliticized poetry. Aware that alienating broad swaths of her audience would blunt her poem's political impact, Barrett Browning makes transparently false claims about her political intentions. *Casa Guidi Windows*, she claims, was written in the solitude of her apartment, reflecting only "personal impressions" and feelings that she has rendered with "sincerity" into verse (v). Fair enough. But Barrett Browning goes on to deny, with some vehemence, that the poem contains an "exposition of political philosophy" (v). It is a "simple" poem (v), she claims, written in total "freedom from partisanship" (vi). The Advertisement's conciliatory prose presents the poem and its writer as conforming to dominant ideas about women, women's poetry, and poetry's politics. The carefully-drafted prose passage offers little preparation for the bold, intellectually-rigorous, and overtly political poem that follows.

The study of *Casa Guidi Windows* has been dominated by critical treatments that focus on how Barrett Browning sought to represent Italy to British audiences to bolster British support for the *Risorgimento*. By these readings, *Casa Guidi Windows* represents Barrett Browning's resistance to the standard Victorian literary practice of depicting Italy as, in Marjorie Stone's words, an "anglicized and aestheticized space" (36). Reynolds and Harris argue that the poem marks her rejection of dominant British characterizations of Italians as listless and feminine. By recasting Italy instead as "a unified, independent, and political reality" (Harris 109), or, more plainly, as "an emerging nation-state" (Stone 36), Barrett Browning represents Italians to her British audience as robust patriots (very much in their own image) and attempts to win sympathy and support for the *Risorgimento*. At the risk of re-treading critical territory, I want to exemplify—through two brief passages—the perspective that emerges from *Casa Guidi Windows* when this critical lens is applied. Consider, as just one of several possible examples from Part I, Barrett Browning's imagining, here, of Italy as frozen in a liminal space:

Perhaps a truth
Is so far plain in this, that Italy,
Long trammled with the purple of her youth
Against her age's ripe activity,
Sits still upon her tombs, without death's ruth
But also without life's brave energy. (I, 169-174)

Barrett Browning here performs mainstream British narratives of Italy—transforming the nation into a woman languishing among the "tombs" somewhere between "death's ruth" and "life's brave energy"—so as to critique that perspective from within. Just as Dutt rearticulates nationalist narratives of women's extreme piety and purity in "Savitri" only to subvert them, Barrett Browning flaunts her inside knowledge in order to legitimate her

calls for change in British attitudes and policies towards Italy. From this position, she registers her frustration with depictions of Italians as backward-looking loungers—noting, for example, the many “wakers” (I, 159) now willing to “greatly dare and greatlier persevere” (I, 161). She also states her pleasure and pride in participating in the nationalist struggle alongside vibrant, brave Italian patriots:

And I, a singer also from my youth,
Prefer to sing with these who are awake,
With birds, with babes, with men who will not fear. (I, 155-157)

In passages like these, Barrett Browning uses her cultural and political authority—derived from her stature as Britain’s foremost woman poet—to represent Italians “who are awake” and “who will not fear” to her British audience as future-oriented, resilient, energetic, strong, and, most importantly, worthy of support. From the perspective of most modern scholarship, Barrett Browning’s most consistent, successful argumentative position is that of a sympathetic, outside observer who “sing[s] with” the Italian patriots but is not really one of them.

However, there is a growing critical recognition that *Casa Guidi Windows* does more than argue for a British re-evaluation of cultural and political representations of Italy. Indeed, many critics are now as interested in the poetic, moral, and national implications of a British-born poet claiming agency to speak as an Italian revolutionary as they are in the concrete arguments Barrett Browning makes about Italy’s future or Britain’s foreign policy.³⁴ There is an uneasy sense among some scholars that Barrett

³⁴ Richard Cronin suggests that our relatively new critical interest in the poem’s speaker may be a belated response to Barrett Browning’s poetic design. Drawing on Isobel Armstrong’s work on the “double poem,” Cronin argues that the poem’s structure “compels the reader at once to look with the speaker, to see events through her eyes, and to look at the speaker” (“Casa Guidi” 41).

Browning oversteps meaningful boundaries in some passages, several of which I will discuss at length, when she asserts her right to participate fully in revolutionary activities. Christopher M. Keirstead describes this critical discomfort as “a problem of authority” that “emerges when the poet attempts to make a transition from witness to a more direct kind of agency” (70). Both Keirstead and Reynolds identify as particularly morally and poetically problematic passages in which Barrett Browning, writing from the safety of her home, calls on other Italians to lay down their lives for their freedom. How critics respond to this “problem of authority”—more specifically, to the tensions Barrett Browning’s calls expose between the individual and the nation, the national and the cosmopolitan—largely determines their verdict on the poem’s success or failure. For both Keirstead and Reynolds, *Casa Guidi Windows* remains deeply problematic: an example, in Reynolds’ words, “of how not to write poetry about politics” (102). For Reynolds, Barrett Browning’s “campaigning vigour” causes her to plow over “individuals” and their “variety of human values and commitments” (102). For Keirstead, her attempt to “cross borders and mix national identities” actually replicates staid nationalist/revolutionary narratives which demand that “bodies (individuals) are destroyed in an effort to purify the soul (the nation)” (74). Through a very different reading—one that does not suppose that Barrett Browning was merely “carried away” by her “revolutionary enthusiasm” (Reynolds 101) but instead offers a careful examination of the interactions of religious and nationalist discourses in her poetry—Keirstead arrives at the same conclusion as Reynolds: *Casa Guidi Windows* “ends up erasing individual Italians” (74).

Critics like myself who are instead invested in recuperative readings of *Casa Guidi Windows* regard the poem not as problematic, but as experimental. The focus in

such readings turns to the ways Barrett Browning diligently mediates the competing discourses surrounding the individual, the national, and the cosmopolitan. Barrett Browning's calls for Italian self-sacrifice mean differently if nationality itself is under interrogation in the poem. If, as I suggest, Barrett Browning's redefinition of nationality allows her to sing as an Italian for a global-English speaking audience, rather than as a British woman to a British audience, charges of Italian erasure ring less compelling. In recent years, several critics have re-examined Barrett Browning's exploration of the relationship of the individual to the nation-state in *Casa Guidi Windows*. Richard Cronin, for example, describes the poem as "an unending process of negotiation between the individual and the claims of the state" ("Casa Guidi" 49). *Casa Guidi Windows*, he argues, resists the pressure to "try to fix the relationship between the two" and, thus, gives us an ever-evolving text that, like civil society itself, is "always building and never built" (Cronin, "Casa Guidi" 49). Beverly Taylor recognizes a similar negotiation in *Casa Guidi Windows*; however, she broadens our reading of the poem by considering it through a particularly transnational or cosmopolitan lens. Taylor argues that Barrett Browning's poetry "persistently foregrounds the role of individuals in the shaping of the nation-state—and, equally important, the role of individuals in reaching past borders to consolidate relations among peoples of different regions and countries" (77).³⁵ Barrett Browning, Taylor argues, admits the importance of nation-states, but she simultaneously

³⁵ Taylor, ultimately, examines the negotiation of these roles in *Casa Guidi Windows* in the context of "people diplomacy"—a particularly mid-Victorian movement that attempted to deploy transnational connections between individuals and sub-national groups as a counterweight to aggressive nation-states. Taylor reads *Casa Guidi Windows*, with its interest in cross-cultural connections between individuals, as "celebrat[ing] the power of everyday human exchanges... to achieve the survival of individual nations... while building transnational harmony" (79).

celebrates “her own transnational identity” (63) and believes strongly that peace between nations can only be achieved by “individuals’ reaching beyond their own personal and national interests and borders” (60). New archival research by Taylor and Stone also reveals the depth of Barrett Browning’s commitment to “reaching beyond... borders” in a principled way. Barrett Browning was neither blind to nor careless with (as some critics have suggested) the complexities of a British poet claiming a transnational identity and writing poetry in service of an adopted national home. Through painstaking analysis of Barrett Browning’s editing, over the course of years, of her poem “Italy! World’s Italy,” Stone shows the poet thoughtfully “working through” any “Anglocentricism embedded” in the poem (49). Her continual rooting out of what she perceived as “Anglocentricism” was key, according to Stone, to her “unfolding artistic aspirations as an increasingly cosmopolitan poet” (39). It also produced a poetic fragment called “Italy! Italy!—is it but a name” that ultimately served as the “germ of *Casa Guidi Windows*” (Stone 36). As this work by Cronin, Taylor, and Stone shows, Barrett Browning was clearly invested in the individual’s relationship to the nation, in poetically depicting a more cosmopolitan understanding of nationality, and in writing English-language poetry in Italy that defied charges of Anglocentricism. In the reading of *Casa Guidi Windows* that follows, I join these scholars in examining how Barrett Browning’s poem can be understood as the work of what she believed herself to be in 1851: “a citizeness of the world.”³⁶

The interpretative possibilities and political significance of *Casa Guidi Windows* change when we understand Barrett Browning as a cosmopolitan poet writing for a broad,

³⁶ Taylor draws our attention to Barrett Browning’s epistolary description of herself as “a citizeness of the world” in her article “Elizabeth Barrett Browning and Transnationalism: People Diplomacy in ‘A Fair-Going World!’” (2007).

English-speaking audience. The long-held assumption—that Barrett Browning wrote *Casa Guidi Windows* exclusively or even primarily for metropolitan, British readers—now seems too readily taken for granted.³⁷ Barrett Browning was well-known internationally in both learned and popular circles. Simon Avery and Rebecca Stott describe her, at mid-century, as “possessed [of] a growing international reputation throughout America and Europe” as “one of the leading writers of the nineteenth century” (2). Across the English-speaking world, other famous writers—Edgar Allan Poe, Nathaniel Hawthorne, and Emily Dickinson in America and Dutt in India to name but a few—read and greatly admired her poems.³⁸ By the time *Casa Guidi Windows* was published, metropolitan libraries throughout the English-speaking world, including the Library of Congress, the Calcutta Public Library (Gibson 114), and the South African Public Library (Maskew 457), were quick to acquire copies. Barrett Browning, of course,

³⁷ Even critics like Harris and Reynolds, who reach diametrically opposed conclusions about *Casa Guidi Windows*’ political and poetic merit, are in full agreement that Barrett Browning’s intended audience was British. Harris describes the poem as “one of the most politically astute Victorian accounts of Italy written by either sex” (109) and repeatedly notes its profound impact on Barrett Browning’s “British listener(s)” (113) and “British readers” (115, 119, 127). Reynolds, on the other hand, regards the poem as “a dead end for poetry about politics,” but he, too, states plainly that “Like all her writing, *Casa Guidi Windows* is directed primarily at an English audience” (99). Despite the fact that Barrett Browning had physically slipped the boundaries of her birth-nation and had positioned herself as the English-language poet of the Italian nationalist movement, *Casa Guidi Windows* was in her time and is still often read as a poem by a British poet for a British audience.

³⁸ Early in Barrett Browning’s career, Edgar Allan Poe dedicated his *The Raven and Other Poems* (1845) to her, and, towards the end of her life, Nathaniel Hawthorne visited Casa Guidi, expressing clearly in his journal that it was Barrett Browning (rather than her husband) who was the primary draw (12). Emily Dickinson, one of the only female poets of the century whose fame rivalled that of Barrett Browning, had not one but three likenesses of Barrett Browning in her bedroom in 1862 (Wardrop 26). Dutt, who called Barrett Browning her favorite poet in an 1876 letter to Mary Martin, particularly admired her political poems.

knew she had the potential to reach global English-speaking audiences, and she seems to have sought strategically to secure for *Casa Guidi Windows* the widest possible international audience. When she completed Part I in 1848, she submitted the poem only to *Blackwood's*, a British journal that, as David Finkelstein has shown, was moving more aggressively than any other into imperial—if not global—English-speaking markets at mid-century.³⁹ Rather than limiting itself to a British audience, *Blackwood's*—much like Barrett Browning—imagined its audience as the “readership of the English-speaking world” (99).⁴⁰

³⁹ Reynolds supports his contention that Barrett Browning addressed a “primarily English audience” by noting that in 1848, when she completed what would become Part I of *Casa Guidi Windows*, she “did not agitate to have it printed (perhaps in translation) by a revolutionary press in Florence, but instead sent it to *Blackwood's*, who rejected it” (99). For non-British poets, like Dutt, Derozio, and Naidu, the decision to write and publish in English clearly signaled a desire for the widest possible global audience. Although Barrett Browning was British-born and English was her first language, her decision to publish her poem in English—rather than in Italian translation—could, quite reasonably, be read in the same way: as evidence of interest in the broadest possible audience. In contrast, publishing *Casa Guidi Windows* in Florence in Italian would have guaranteed a very small audience. At the time, Italy had tight censorship laws and, as Lucy Riall points out, even the most prominent Italian nationalists, like Mazzini, published their writings outside Italy and then smuggled them back in (30). Even had the Florentine revolutionary presses been well-funded and uncensored, Barrett Browning would have severely limited her audience by publishing in Italian. At unification in 1861, there were approximately 22 million Italians living in the new nation (Donati 20) with approximately 220,000 thousand Italians living abroad (Mack Smith 214). By comparison, David Crystal claims that nearly 60 million spoke English as a “mother tongue” in the 1850s—a number that does not account for the many millions who acquired English as a second or third language (75). Barrett Browning’s decision to publish in English, to entrust her work to an established publisher in a country with a free press, and to submit her work to a journal known for its global circulation and engagement with imperial and nationalist discourses (despite its conservative politics being very different from her own) all seem to suggest that she positioned *Casa Guidi Windows* as best she could to reach a global, English-speaking audience.

⁴⁰ The journal even launched a short-lived colonial edition in 1843 (Finkelstein 99). At mid-century, *Blackwood's* was widely available in urban places throughout the British Empire and, by the end of the century, it had—at least according to one would-be contributor—penetrated deep into the South African bush: J.E.C. Bodley wrote to the

Imagined as aimed at a global English-speaking audience, Barrett Browning's poem argues not only for British support of Italian nationalism but, more broadly, for a cosmopolitan understanding of national identity that invites all those who believe in the ideal of liberty to join the emerging Italian nation. As Barrett Browning pleads Italy's nationalist case before the English-speaking world, she strategically recognizes that the voice of an outside observer—no matter how sympathetic—does not wield the power of a patriot's voice. Thus, in some of *Casa Guidi Windows*' most impassioned lines, Barrett Browning sings as an Italian patriot, subsuming the chorus of voices within her own and adopting Italy as her national home. In these passages, Barrett Browning issues frenzied calls to action from within the Italian *Risorgimento*. Listen, for example, to the ways Barrett Browning draws attention to her assertions of unified action in the following lines:

We will not henceforth be oblivious
Of our own lives, because ye lived before,
Nor of our acts, because ye acted well.
We thank you that ye first unlatched the door,
But will not make it inaccessible
By thankings on the threshold any more.
We hurry onward to extinguish hell
With our fresh hopes, our younger hope, and God's
Maturity of purpose. (I, 234-242)

Here, Barrett Browning is fully immersed, fully a part of the collective actions she urges. Barrett Browning's placing of "We" after each hard stop, in particular, draws attention to her shared participation in and ownership of Italy's emerging national future. In this argumentative mode, Barrett Browning's strategy borrows from that of Chartist poets—

editor in 1888 that "The time-honored cover of [*Blackwood's*] was a very welcome sight to me not only on the tables of the Clubs at Capetown, Kimberley, and Pretoria but frequently also in remote stations & solitary Magistrate's residences" (Finkelstein 105).

England's own failed revolutionaries—who, as Anne Janowitz has argued, collapsed diverse voices into a singular “lyrical identity” that could be “differentiated without being fully individuated” (7). Capturing what Janowitz’s calls the “ongoing interchange” of subjective and collective in several different registers (6-7), Barrett Browning’s chorus reflects the striving of individuals and of a movement to achieve Italian independence as well as the longing of individuals (like herself) and of a generation to claim a noble place in human history. In the remaining lines of the above stanza, Barrett Browning asks her fellow Italians to assume along with her the grand responsibility to “bear our age”:

Soon shall we
Die also! And, that then our periods
Of life may round themselves to memory
As smoothly as on our graves the burial-sods,
We now must look to it to excel as ye,
And bear our age as far, unlimited
By the last mind-mark; so, to be invoked
By future generations, as their Dead. (I, 242-249)

The jagged rhythms of Barrett Browning’s final three lines—especially when read alongside the lines “smoothly” describing a recession into “memory” and earth—point to the arduousness of the revolutionaries’ task. Yet, Barrett Browning’s commitment is clear: she will join other freedom fighters to “bear”—in the senses both of carrying and bringing into life—the Italian nation so that she may someday merit a position within the ranks of Italy’s revered “Dead.” Barrett Browning claims her place within the Italian nationalist movement, fully merges her subjectivity with that of other Italian nationalists, and stakes her legacy on the success of the revolution.

Importantly, *Casa Guidi Windows* is most elastic, inclusive, and cosmopolitan in the moments when Barrett Browning imagines Italy’s unique past giving way to her

national future. *Casa Guidi Windows* is no cavalier act of appropriation by a British poet: Italy's past remains its own, but as Italy transforms into a national entity, its boundaries become more porous. Consider how Barrett Browning's language shifts from that of observance—"this Italy" (I, 188)—to shared ownership—"our Florentine nine gates" (I, 1070)—as she envisions Italy's attainment of nationhood. Here is Barrett Browning's description of "this Italy":

Alas, this Italy has too long swept
Heroic ashes up for hour-glass sand;
Of her own past, impassioned nympholet!
Consenting to be nailed by the hand
To the same bay-tree under which she stepped
A queen of old, and plucked a leafy branch;
And licensing the world too long, indeed,
To use her broad phylacteries to staunch
And stop her bloody lips, which took no heed
How one quick breath would draw an avalanche
Of living sons around her, to succeed
The vanished generations. (I, 188-199)

"This Italy" is anchored—literally "nailed by the hand"—to her glorious history, imprisoned both by her own "impassioned" idealization of the past and by the willingness of "the world" to soothe Italy's wounds with her bygone greatness. "This Italy" is stifled by "the world," which presses ancient scrolls ("broad phylacteries") to her "bloody lips," stopping the bleeding but also hindering the "one quick breath" needed to rally her "living sons around her." Throughout *Casa Guidi Windows*, Barrett Browning keeps her subjective distance from "this Italy" and from the revered past it cherishes.

Contrast Barrett Browning's distant, almost mournful description of Italy's sequestered past with her vibrant cry for an able leader for Italy's nationalist struggle:

Come, appear, be found,
If pope or peasant, come! we hear the cock,
The courier of the mountains when first crowned

With golden dawn; and orient glories flock
To meet the sun upon the highest ground.
Take voice and work! We wait to hear thee knock
At some one of our Florentine nine gates,
On each of which was imaged a sublime
Face of a Tuscan genius, which, for hate's
And love's sake, both, our Florence in her prime
Turned boldly on all comers to her states
As hero's turned their shields in antique time,
Blazoned with honourable acts. (I, 1064-1076)

In this stanza, age-old barriers that separate people become irrelevant in the face of Italy's national emergence. It matters not, for example, "If pope or peasant" leads Italy to independence. "Our Florentine nine gates" that once protected the princely state from "all comers" are now ready to be opened. Barrett Browning recognizes that Florence's gates once shut out foreigners (people like her, in fact) and, yet, in this nationalist moment, she shares ownership not only of Florence but of those very gates. In Italy's nationalist present, the gates will no longer bar entry, but instead will offer the announcement—register the "knock"—of the leader, no matter his or her origins, who will bring about Italy's national emergence. In passages like this, Barrett Browning espouses ideas that are reminiscent of Derozio and Dutt and anticipatory of Naidu. Specifically, she imagines Italian nationality as open to all who will "Take voice and work!" for the ideal of freedom. When she works in this argumentative mode, Barrett Browning depicts her citizenship as plural, claiming both "my England" (I, 720) and "our Florence," and her nationality as a non-exclusive emotional and intellectual commitment. In her polyvocal, cosmopolitan poem, Barrett Browning performs for a broad, English-speaking audience—for people in Italy, in India, in South Africa, in Britain and elsewhere engaged in shaping nationalist and imperial discourses globally. Recognizing that Barrett

Browning's appeal reaches beyond Britain into the broad, English-speaking world follows not only the cosmopolitan spirit of many of the most intense, intimate passages in *Casa Guidi Windows*, but also aligns with contemporary critical reactions to the poem in Britain.

Barrett Browning's contemporaries were keenly aware that *Casa Guidi Windows* not only refused to embody but actively redefined dominant British nationalist narratives. The poem provoked significant—but not universal—critical ire, with much criticism focused on Barrett Browning's intensity and her cosmopolitanism. Most basically, critics claimed that Barrett Browning, who was clearly recognized as the poem's speaker, had allowed her political passions to overwhelm her poetic control. On this point, the *English Review* offers a fairly representative critique. The poem's chief fault is that Barrett Browning's "lyric impulse, which seemed to demonstrate that she sang for singing's sake," disappears and, in its place, she offers a "here and there powerful, political talkification, or rhymed manifesto" (174).⁴¹ In an admonishing tone, the *English Review* notes that "a man or a woman may feel deeply, and rhyme angrily, and assail fiercely, and yet produce indifferent poetry after all" (174). *Casa Guidi Windows* is "grand in places and fervid everywhere, yet scarcely... worthy of her" (173). The *Athenaeum*, although more sympathetic to Barrett Browning's political views, pans the poem in

⁴¹ Note, here, the confidence with which the *English Review* denies the political possibilities of poetry. Barrett Browning's "lyric impulse," the force which enlivened her poetry, remained intact only so long as she "sang for singing's sake" (174). Once her words aim to become "powerful" or "political," they are no longer poetic. Barrett Browning is demoted to the prosaic—*Casa Guidi Windows* is a "manifesto" (only written in rhyme) in which the poet does not "sing" but merely "talks" about her political ideas. Further, the *English Review* suggests, the poet unintentionally working in prose is apt to appear foolish: serious "manifestos," of course, do not rhyme and serious political ideas are rendered in speech rather than "talkifications."

similar terms.⁴² The overall impression is of a poet whose words and thoughts are “fervid, unrestrained,” “loose,” even “Italian” (as opposed, of course, to “English”). The poem is a series of “impromptu inspirations” that the author failed “to shape, to perfect” into quality verse (597). The *Athenaeum*’s reviewer is so bothered by *Casa Guidi Windows*’ “diffusiveness” that he uses the word three times in two paragraphs.⁴³ Even in the more generally favorable review from the *Literary Gazette*, the critic bemoans Barrett Browning’s “frequent lapses into loose rhythm” (372). Victorian critics agreed that Barrett Browning’s overly impassioned politics—which produced this “fervid,” “loose,” “Italian” “manifesto of a poem”—rendered her incapable of poetic control.

Yet, despite her supposed lack of control, the cosmopolitan arguments of *Casa Guidi Windows* and Barrett Browning’s other Italian poems were clear enough to threaten the British critical establishment. Their “un-English” character was recognized at the level of language and argument. Echoing the *Athenaeum*’s complaint about Barrett Browning’s “Italian” discipline, for example, *Fraser’s Magazine for Town and Country* complains—for two full pages—about her grammar, concluding that “It is not English” (620).⁴⁴ On a more substantive level, Barrett Browning’s cosmopolitanism, her Italian partisanship, and her criticism of predominant British attitudes towards continental

⁴² The *Athenaeum* review praises her extraordinary degree of “sympathy” for the “wronged nation” (597). One of the poem’s most political claims—specifically Barrett Browning’s preference for armed rebellion over peace through oppression—even draws positive mention as “passionate, vigorous, and true” (597).

⁴³ The *Athenaeum* reviewer rejects the poem’s “diffusiveness,” its “diffuse and fantastic contexts,” and its “diffuse, over-fanciful, and unmusical style” (597).

⁴⁴ Notably, for *Fraser’s*, Barrett Browning’s claims to poetic greatness are not strictly English either. After pages of dwelling upon her English usage, they conclude by urging her to (grammatically) live up to “her title as the greatest poetess” not merely of England but “of modern Europe” (622).

republicanism struck many critics as decidedly “not English.” *Blackwood’s* savage objections to *Poems Before Congress* (1860), for example, are as applicable to *Casa Guidi Windows* as to the later collection: “We are strongly of opinion that... women should not interfere with politics.... Patriotism in women we honour.... But cosmopolitanism is quite another thing, and so is identification with foreign nationalities” (490). According to *Blackwood’s*, Barrett Browning’s “Italian tendencies” manifest themselves in verse “utterly unfair to England and English feeling” (491). The perceived disloyalty of England’s foremost woman poet caused the *Saturday Review* to employ a reading strategy that insisted upon treating Barrett Browning’s Italian poems as dramatic rather than as expressions of her own political commitments. In order to cope with Barrett Browning’s traitorous poems, “the critic must resolutely forget the personality of the writer” and, instead, assume that “all sentiments in poetry, however they may seem to express the convictions of the writer, are to be attributed to some dramatic personage (403).⁴⁵ The journal distances Barrett Browning, England’s most celebrated woman poet, from this “dramatic personage”—described as the “cosmopolitan poet imagined by the poetess”—whose politics are “culpable, pitiable, and silly” (402).⁴⁶ This “cosmopolitan

⁴⁵ It is important to note that critics responded in similar ways to other poets who voiced their identification with Italy’s nationalist movement. To cite one strikingly parallel example, the *Athenaeum* uses an identical strategy—fabricating an Italian speaker separate from the poet—to distance Algernon Swinburne from the Italian nationalist proclamations of his poem *A Song of Italy* (1867). According to the *Athenaeum*, “The poem, though it is lyric in form, appears to be dramatic in spirit. The singer is probably meant to be understood, not as the English poet in person, but as an Italian patriot, perhaps Roman by birth, certainly a republican in creed.... many things in the poem, otherwise black as night, become plain enough the moment it is made clear that it is not Mr. Swinburne who chants and rhapsodizes but a fiery Italian partisan” (447).

⁴⁶ Interestingly, the *Saturday Review* seems to recognize poetry—as opposed to prose—as the genre most appropriate to experimentation with alternative nationalist narratives. The journal claims that “it is not permitted to Englishmen, or even to Englishwomen, to

poet” was a production, not of Barrett Browning’s heart or mind, but instead of the “deteriorating influences which affect the cosmopolitan English exile.... Detached from his own soil without being engrafted on a foreign stock” (403). Barrett Browning’s critics were simultaneously alarmed by the intensity of her political commitment and by the challenge her cosmopolitan poems posed to mainstream poetic and nationalist narratives: narratives that imagined poetry’s role as embodying English national identity and that constructed nationality as singular and immutable. Barrett Browning’s willingness to identify with Italians *and* as Italian in *Casa Guidi Windows* represented a challenge not only to British foreign policy vis-à-vis Italy but also to structuring narratives about nationality, more broadly, and poetry’s role in upholding them.

Barrett Browning’s poetic and political interventions are distinctive and bold. In fact, of all the poets and poems I examine in this dissertation, *Casa Guidi Windows* offers the only poetic performance of two distinct national identities in a single poem. In some ways, this makes her project different from that of Dutt, Derozio, and Naidu, who work exclusively on reconceptualizing Indian national identity, or from that of Kipling and his cosmopolitan re-examination of British national and imperial identity in his Boer War poems. Barrett Browning focuses not only on broadening or making more porous individual national identities, but also on asserting the poet’s right to multiple national identities. Yet Barrett Browning’s interventions into nationalist discourse share much with the work of these other poets. Like them, she is interested in how nationality can

renounce, in the language of ordinary life, allegiance, loyalty, national instinct.... Meter has, by long established tradition, acquired a privilege of irresponsibility, which criticism by no means ought to withdraw, although poets have too often attempted to abuse it” (402).

achieve definitional power not by excluding based on birthright, language, or creed but by uniting people—as many people as possible—behind a conceptual or political goal that is just and good. Her reimagining of nationality and her recognition of poetry’s political power establish her as an important intellectual forebear for later political poets across the English-speaking world, not least among them Indian poet-political Naidu to whom I now turn.

Chapter 3: Political Poems and Poetic Politics: Sarojini Naidu's Cosmopolitan Nationalism

Henry Louis Vivian Derozio and Toru Dutt wrote in the early days of India's rise to national consciousness. As I discussed in my first chapter, Derozio worked in a moment, before Macaulay's *Minute*, when British Orientalist policy encouraged a coterie of Eastern and Western intellectuals to imagine themselves as part of a mutually enriching cultural and intellectual exchange. Derozio's poems and their cosmopolitan nationalism faced accusations of Western co-optation in conservative Hindu circles, but his pupils—India's future elite—found his integrative imagining of Indian national consciousness to be compelling (or at the very least plausible). By the time Dutt put forward her similarly inclusive notion of Indian nationality, the spirit of camaraderie that characterized Derozio's era had given way to intense cultural divisiveness. Dutt's cosmopolitan, feminist nationalism butted up against mainstream nationalist narratives that began taking firmer shape in the immediate aftermath of the Indian Rebellion in 1857 and that grew ever more rigid and influential over her lifetime. As hostility to the West and to British presumptions of cultural hegemony grew, Derozio's and Dutt's cosmopolitan poetry opened their nationalist credentials to skepticism and, eventually, to dismissal. Both operated on the periphery of a movement that was in its nascent stages during their lifetimes and, thus, their contribution to shaping Indian national consciousness was as theoretical as their access to the people and institutions that dominated nationalist power structures was limited.

In contrast, Sarojini Naidu was one of the most visible, powerful Indian women within the Gandhian nationalist movement that ultimately achieved Indian independence

in 1947. Like Derozio and Dutt, Naidu's English-language verse presents a highly cosmopolitan imagining of Indian national identity. But, unlike her predecessors, Naidu's obvious prominence within the Indian Nationalist Movement renders her—though notably not her poetry—impervious to the kind of historical sidelining Derozio and Dutt posthumously experienced. Until recently, scholars have most often treated her poetry and her politics separately, often lamenting the supposed difficulty of reconciling her English-language poetry and her affiliation with the Indian National Congress (INC). As early as 1925, a Madras-based editor of Naidu's speeches follows his introductory quotation of sixteen lines of poetry with an apology for his digression:

A detailed consideration of her poems will be out of place in this volume which is a collection of her speeches on political, social, educational and humanitarian subjects. These speeches are avowedly propagandistic. This is not the place to discuss the quality of her style nor the characteristics of her poetry. But it is apparent that she has infused into her political and social work all the warmth of a poetic temperament and fervour of poetic eloquence. ("Preface" XI)

Her "poetic temperament" and her "poetic eloquence" translate into her oratorical success, yet considerations of her poems—which, of course, are not "propagandistic"—seem "out of place" in discussions of her "political, social, educational, and humanitarian" work. Early histories of the Indian National Movement replicate this bifurcation of Naidu's dual pursuits: she is almost always referred to as a "poet," but the connections between the politics of her poetry and her nationalist work remain unexamined. Some influential literary scholars, writing as recently as the turn of the twenty-first century, take the division of Naidu's poetry and her politics a step further, depicting her poetry as actually at odds with her political work. Both Meena Alexander and Parama Roy, for example, read Naidu's English-language poetry as a kind of

intellectual adolescence—a messy, brief but necessary stage—through which she passed en route to her true calling as nationalist orator and activist.

Those critics who dismiss Naidu's poetry most frequently cite her embrace of British poetic traditions and her use of orientalist images, tropes, and themes to represent India and its people. Undoubtedly, Naidu designs her poetry to appeal to both Indian and international, especially British, audiences. She often seeks to represent the East through modes familiar to Western readers. Yet, rather than marginalizing Naidu's poetry on these grounds, I read her choices as strategic and integrative: carefully calculated performances of a deeply heterogeneous Indian national consciousness for a global audience. My work joins a small but growing body of scholarship that treats Naidu's poetry and her political activity as deeply intertwined throughout her lifetime.

Specifically, I argue that Naidu's poems invite a global English-speaking audience to join in her imagining of an Indian national consciousness spacious enough to accommodate not only Eastern and Western traditions and influences but also the beliefs, customs, and practices of Indian Hindus, Muslims, Sikhs, Jains, and Christians. Naidu's speeches and poems, like Barrett Browning's *Casa Guidi Windows*, reimagine nationality as open and inclusive. For her, Indian national belonging is available to anyone who feels and commits to furthering the spirit of human brotherhood. By approaching Naidu's poems as experiments in cultural integration that reflect a cosmopolitan understanding of national identity, I demonstrate the deep continuity between her poetic and her nationalist work, which was marked most profoundly by her (ultimately unrealized) desire to unite Hindus and Muslims in a single, Indian nation. I also argue that Naidu's articulation of a more cosmopolitan brand of nationalism in her political poems links her to a global school of

English-language poets working not only in India but in nationalist hotspots the world over. To these ends, I begin with a brief discussion of Naidu's political career and then turn to her three major collections—*The Golden Threshold* (1905), *The Bird of Time* (1912), and *The Broken Wing* (1917).

The Wandering Singer of India: Naidu's Political Commitments and Career

Naidu's official affiliation with the INC began in 1905, the same year her first poetry collection, *The Golden Threshold*, was printed. Like so many other Indian elites, Naidu was outraged and driven to action by the partition of Bengal and by the brutal British response to Indian protesters. By the time her second collection, *The Bird of Time*, appeared in 1912, Naidu was already travelling domestically and internationally, speaking to large crowds and to high-ranking political leaders about India's national future. She met Gandhi for the first time in London in 1914. In 1917, she published *The Broken Wing* and founded, along with Margaret Cousins and Annie Besant, the Women's India Association (WIA). During the 1920s, Naidu often served as Gandhi's envoy, travelling in that capacity to South Africa, Kenya, Uganda, Britain, and the United States. In 1925, she succeeded him as President of the INC. Naidu was famously arrested, along with the rest of the INC's leadership, during the "Quit India" protests and, all told, served almost two years in prison. After independence, she was appointed the first female Governor of an Indian province (now Uttar Pradesh), dying in office in March 1949. Naidu's legacy as a nationalist and feminist pioneer still endures: India continues to celebrate Women's Day on her birthday.

Naidu's meteoric rise within the nationalist movement was tied directly to her usefulness in appealing to two particular constituencies: Indian women and Indian Muslims. Hindu revivalism held great sway with many Indian nationalists, and divisive conflicts arose between leaders committed to the unconditional defense of traditional Hindu practices and leaders, like Naidu, more deeply invested in according greater rights to women and in fostering Hindu-Muslim unity. Responses to what became known as the "Women's Question" were varied and complex; however, a strong desire to safeguard India's (Hindu) essence from Western interference forced many Indian nationalists throughout the century into stances that seemed, even to them, uncomfortably anti-woman. Derozio's stance on *sati* offers a classic example of what we now call "flip-flop" politics: he was for it before he was against it. Derozio's deep-seated opposition to institutional—especially British—prohibitions on the exercise of personal liberty initially led him to oppose William Benedick's 1829 ban on *sati*. According to Roskina Chaudhuri, Derozio was "unabashedly against the misery of women" but also "firmly against banning the rite" (285). It was only after the ban's passage that Derozio, a truly progressive thinker on women's (and most other) issues, penned his poetic reversal, "On the Abolition of Suttee" (1829). At the other end of the century, the revered Hindu revivalist Vivekananda experienced a similar tension when he became swept up in the furor surrounding the 1891 Age of Consent Act. Vivekananda, Bal Gangadhar Tilak, and other prominent nationalists opposed the Act, which raised the female age of consent from ten to twelve, on the by then familiar grounds that the British should not regulate Hindu religious practices. Yet, even as he worked against the Act, "condemning it... as elitist and inspired by alien models," Vivekananda privately expressed frustration with

his position: “As if religion consisted in making a girl a mother at the age of twelve or thirteen” (1405). Derozio, Vivekananda, and many—if not most—other nationalists were invested in improving Indian women’s opportunities; however, they were under strong pressure to privilege Hindu cultural identity over all else, including reform for women.

Naidu addressed the challenge of integrating Hindu revivalism and women’s empowerment by creatively reappropriating Hindu traditions, a strategy that allowed her to remain within mainstream nationalist narratives even as she stretched the boundaries of women’s social and national roles. Chandani Lokuge has argued, for example, that Naidu frequently referenced revered female figures in Hindu mythology, Savitri chief among them, in order to inspire Indian women with a sense of their important place in India’s history and, by extension, India’s future. Through the simple act of naming ancient female heroines, Lokuge claims, Naidu “reinvoke[s] the status of these iconic characters and also... contemporize[s] them, reinstating at the same time their lost dimensions of valour and agency” (“Dialoguing” 129). Lokuge focuses particularly on instances of naming; however, the strategy she observes—in which Naidu claims present-day rights for women based on ancient Hindu precedents—operates in the absence of specific mythological invocations as well. Consider, for example, Naidu’s 1906 speech to the Indian Social Conference in which she depicts broad and thorough education for women as an ancient Hindu tradition. Naidu asserts that, as far back as the first century, India produced “radiant examples of women of the highest genius and widest culture” (11). In her argument, it is the questioning of women’s right to education now—not women’s agitation for educational opportunities—that represents an aberration in Hindu culture and history. Through Naidu’s re-appropriative move, a vexing problem finds a

straightforward solution: educating women accords easily with Hindu revivalism since it simply “restores to women their ancient rights” (11).

Employing the same strategy with even greater boldness, Naidu redefines *sati* in a 1915 letter to Lady Dhanwanta Mehta. Citing Kasturba Gandhi’s selflessness in the service of her husband and her nation, Naidu argues that she exemplifies “the real meaning of *Sati*” (16). Naidu recasts *sati*—the traditional Hindu practice most reviled by Western feminists—as the setting aside of personal desires that interfere with full commitment to India’s national cause. She links *sati* to the notion of “self-negation,” which functions both as a spiritual ideal and as an effective political strategy for Indian nationalists of both sexes. By Naidu’s definition, both Kasturba Gandhi’s decision to forego a reunion with her children in order to support her husband’s nationalist efforts and Mohandas K. Gandhi’s hunger strikes could be seen as *sati* rituals. Naidu allows that *sati* is an important Hindu cultural practice, refusing to follow Western feminists in rejecting it altogether, but her redefinition eradicates the ritual’s gendered violence.⁴⁷ In both her speeches and her poems, Naidu consistently launches her most aggressive pushes against traditional or oppressive narratives from within them.⁴⁸ Her negotiation of

⁴⁷ Lokuge offers a similar reading of Naidu’s renegotiation of *sati* in this letter to Lady Mehta. She reads Naidu as responding to her disillusionment with Western femininity and Western feminism by “remind[ing] the Indian woman (and indeed all of India) of the significance of the ideal behind the ritual, raising the ritual itself to metaphysical heights” (Lokuge, “Dialoguing” 129). It seems true that Naidu was invested in fostering and articulating an Eastern feminism both distinctive from and in conversation with Western feminism, and the ideals used to justify *sati*—service, selflessness, loyalty—were surely in keeping with her understanding of women’s role in the new nation. What Lokuge’s reading misses is Naidu’s conviction that these traits were admirable, useful, perhaps even essential for both male and female nationalists.

⁴⁸ Naidu’s decision to work upon rather than to reject dominant, patriarchal narratives explains, at least to some extent, the tensions critics have long sensed in her oratorical feminism. Often, Naidu’s rhetoric draws from mainstream nationalist talking points (of

the “Women’s Question” is subtle, but her broad message is unmistakable. Addressing nationalist men in her aforementioned 1906 speech, she claims:

Without [women’s] active co-operation at all points of progress all your Congresses and Conferences are in vain. Educate your women and the nation will take care of itself, for it is as true today as it was yesterday and will be to the end of human life that the hand that rocks the cradle rules the world. (13)

In language that is characteristically maternal (and, thus, acceptable for a female politician) and strikingly confrontational, Naidu states clearly that Indian Independence is unachievable without women’s will and work.

Though Naidu was a strong, consistent advocate for Indian women’s rights, her strenuous commitment to Hindu-Muslim unity remains the most defining feature of her nationalism. Naidu vehemently opposed and vigorously attacked the many Hindu and Muslim leaders who sought to generate nationalist fervor by stoking intercultural tensions. In almost every speech, she firmly denounces sectarianism, divisiveness, and fear-mongering. Consider, for example, her strong, humanist argument against religious intolerance delivered in Patna—a city frequented by Buddhist, Hindu, Jain, as well as Sikh pilgrims—in October 1917. In a speech entitled *Hindu-Muslim Unity*, Naidu chastises:

the very kind that Partha Chatterjee and others have critiqued as instituting nationalist women’s subordination). To cite only a single example, Naidu writes in the same letter to Lady Mehta that Kasturba Gandhi’s wifely devotion reinvigorates her own sense that India’s “greatness lies not so much in its intellectual achievement and material prosperity as the underlying spiritual ideals of love and service and sacrifice that inspire and sustain the mothers of the race” (16). Some of Naidu’s prose—and, for that matter, some of her poems—are rife with internal conflict. However, I join Sheshalatha Reddy in reading these inconsistencies as frequently (though not always) strategic, rejecting the prevailing critical notion that they undermine Naidu’s status as a bold and sophisticated feminist. I read her attempts to engage with mainstream narratives as evidence that Naidu is both a consistently principled feminist and a savvy negotiator of competing ideas about women’s social and political roles in an emerging India.

Cursed be every man and woman of every rank and creed in this great country that incites, that excites instead of quelling, that urges on instead of quenching, that separates instead of uniting; that... brings up the difference between creed and creed instead of preaching the fundamental truth of humanity.... These things... are the cancers in the growth of social life. (90-91)

Her condemnations of religious intolerance are similarly rigorous in another speech, given a few months later and entitled *The Ideals of Islam*. In a bold move for a Hindu speaker, Naidu cautions a large group of predominantly Muslim students against pundits within their own faith, who she claims misinterpret Islam to justify sectarianism: “Do not allow anyone to say to you that, for the preservation of the prestige of Islam, there must be separatism, sectional difference, aloofness, division. Those are the teachings of those who have forgotten the fundamental ideals of Islam” (109). Throughout her career, Naidu pits her own rhetorical skills against those of the leaders of religious factions, contrasting her message of pluralism and unity against their messages of separation and division.

Naidu rhetorically positions unity at the heart of her own political commitments and of the Indian nationalist movement. She frequently expresses her great respect for Islam and her strong desire for Hindu-Muslim cooperation both among nationalists and, looking forward, in the Indian nation. In her retelling of her last moments with Gandhi before his 1922 incarceration, for example, Naidu emphasizes unity’s centrality and her particular role in achieving it:

As I took leave of my Master he gave a trust into my hands. He said “I entrust the Unity of India into your hands.” Not National Education, not Khaddar, not the Removal of “Untouchability”—none of these things he gave to me; but he gave to me that which is the soul of Swaraj, the unity of the Indian Nation. And so, since the prison was closed upon Mahatma Gandhi I have been a wanderer throughout the country carrying from corner to corner the message of unity of India. (376)

According to Naidu’s account, Gandhi recognized unity as “the soul” of the movement and selected her from the constellation of nationalist leaders to act as its primary

caretaker. Even before her anointing as unity's chief advocate, Naidu identifies unity as the sole, defining feature of Indian national belonging. In a 1914 speech given to students at National College, Naidu offers a cosmopolitan, affective re-theorization of India's national identity:

You must remember that it is the unity in feeling between the two great races which make up Indian nationality [and] that forms the dominant factor in the realization of national ideals. Unity and not division is the only possible basis on which you can build up great national traditions. There is really only one limitation to the definition of nationality. Your strength must have grown so wide as to have felt the universal thrill of brotherhood that binds the world's races together. You might then come to India as the centre of universal and fundamental brotherhood: and this is the only limitation of the definition of Indian nationality. (51)

Like Barrett Browning before her, Naidu rejects shared birthplace, race, religion, language, or cultural tradition—the usual harbingers of national movements—as the foundations of the nation. Instead, India is the “unity in feeling between the two great races” or, even more broadly, “the universal thrill of brotherhood that binds the world's races together.” Despite her deep connection to India's soil and her faith in political organizations, Naidu defines the new nation not as a space or an institution but as a feeling—a “thrill” accessible to any person willing to substitute the spirit of inclusiveness for narratives of exclusion.⁴⁹ Naidu's definition is so supranational that, at first, it seems

⁴⁹ While many Western poets, including Barrett Browning, advocated for a more open, cosmopolitan understanding of national identity, Naidu's definition of nationality as a “thrill” is particularly well-suited to India's socio-political realities. Unlike in Europe, where, as Ernest Gellner has argued, nationalist movements were helped along by fantasies of imagined unity among cultural groups that dated back centuries, the idea of India as a (potentially) national entity emerged in the early decades of the nineteenth century. In fact, as Brij B. Khare and many others have shown, it was “the dynamics of colonialism itself that created the conditions for unity” (537). The many diverse groups living in India—divided by language, religion, and region—came to a sense of shared identity through their opposition to repressive British policies instituted after the Indian Rebellion of 1857; the emergence of English as a *lingua franca* across India; British-

almost irreconcilable with a specifically Indian national identity. Yet, Naidu imagines India as gaining—through the pioneering adoption of a deeply cosmopolitan national identity—a special status in the international community as the global center for intercultural cooperation and unity.⁵⁰ Though Naidu was an acute political thinker and shrewd political strategist, she most frequently presents herself as a dreamer of a grand but achievable national dream; of an India where men and women and Hindus and Muslims—groups intransigently held separate in dominant, traditionalist narratives—together build an inclusive and multicultural Indian modernity that serves as a model for the world. In a powerful testament to the consistency and efficacy of her self-presentation, this is largely how Naidu, the politician and prose writer, was treated by her contemporaries and how she has since been reproduced by her chroniclers.

funded improvements in communication and travel infrastructure, and, perhaps most importantly, educational institutions that were required (after 1835) to teach primarily Western literature and political philosophy. These “conditions” also allowed Indians to more closely identify with and bear witness to nationalist movements in Europe—for example, the Italian *Risorgimento* and, even earlier in the century, the Greek struggle against the Ottomans. Of course, Indians’ increasing interconnectedness and their shared experience of imperial domination did not reduce their extreme heterogeneity, meaning that an Indian national identity that could include all Indians had—of necessity—to be broad and inclusive. With her open, amorphous “thrill,” Naidu takes on the daunting task of articulating a basis for national belonging without appealing to particular identity groups which, by definition, differentiate and divide.

⁵⁰ The historical reality of India’s journey to independence did not live up to Naidu’s hopes. But, even in the tragic aftermath of India’s separation from Pakistan on the eve of independence, Naidu’s personal commitment to intercultural understanding never wavered. Despite ending up on different sides of the divide, her nationalist-era friendships with many of her Muslim negotiating partners, including Pakistan’s founder Mohammad Ali Jinnah, endured until her death.

The Poet-Politician in Critical Context

Historically, Naidu, the brave-speaking, bold-thinking politician, was almost always positioned in contrast to Naidu, the poet. As most of her critics have noted, the prefaces to her first two collections of poetry, written by Arthur Symons and Edmund Gosse (respectively), present Naidu as the quintessential oriental poetess, possessed of entrancing eyes that see the ancient heart of the East and a pen that exposes its mysteries to the West. Roy, Lokuge, Reddy, and Gibson have all noted Symons' sensualized descriptions of the Oriental poetess's "clinging dresses of Eastern silk" (16) and of her eyes, which "like deep pools" beckoned him "to fall through them" (25). Similarly, Gosse's paternalistic casting of himself as heroic mentor figures prominently in these and most other critical discussions of Naidu's poetic identity. Gosse credits himself with steering the brilliant Eastern poet away from Western imitation and towards her true calling. He recounts advising Naidu to give English readers "what we wished to receive... some revelation of the heart of India," and he recalls that Naidu "immediately" adopted his suggestion with the "docility and rapid appreciation of genius" (5). Steeped in orientalist imagery and absent any mention of her nationalist activities, the prefaces—and Naidu's consent to their publication—have long served as the first points of evidence for critics invested in contrasting her poetic and political lives.

Furthermore, Naidu's contemporary British reviewers celebrated her for so admirably executing Gosse's assignment. The *Academy's* review of *The Bird of Time* describes how Gosse "discreetly counseled" Naidu "to write out of her own heart; to lend her gift to the interpretation of the mystery and passion of the East" (71). As a result of Gosse's—not particularly "discreet"—intervention, "the art of English prosody" becomes

“the vehicle of her own opulent heritage,” as Naidu gives the English their first access to “the poetry of the East in its authentic flow” (71-72). Excerpts of critical praise chosen to advertise *The Bird of Time* also show the success of Naidu’s marketing as an Oriental poetess and as a virtuosic literary curiosity of the first order. The *Times* praises her heartfelt, genuine poetry which “seems to sing itself as if her swift thoughts and strong emotions sprang into lyrics of themselves” (i). *Poet Lore* also notes the poems’ “authentic lyric cry,” thanking Naidu for being the first to offer the English a poetic account of “Hindu life and scenes” told “from the inside” (i). In their glee at having discovered so reliable a colonial informant capable of rendering her service in such exquisite verse, British reviewers uncritically accepted the prefaces’ accounts of Naidu and responded to her poems with a high degree of consistency. A lone reviewer, one Francis Bickley, mentions Naidu’s connection to the nationalist movement. In his reading of *The Broken Wing* for the *Bookman*, Bickley comes closest of his contemporaries to recognizing that Naidu’s poetic project aims to integrate—rather than to imitate or to expose—West and East. He writes, “In acquiring our language, she has acquired our culture while retaining not only her Indian nationalism... but also her Indian soul” (51). More so than in the works of Naidu’s British or Indian counterparts, Bickley claims that “In her poetry East and West blend” (51).⁵¹ Bickley’s review notwithstanding, Naidu’s contemporary critics dutifully followed in the Millian tradition of rejecting—or, at least, refusing to remark upon—any connection between her poetry and her political activities or between her identity as a poet and as a politician.

⁵¹ Bickley’s description of Naidu’s poems as a “blend” of East and West recalls James Darmesteter’s earlier description of Toru Dutt as “blending in herself three souls and three traditions” (qtd. in Gupta 9).

In the 1980s and 1990s, a handful of critics began reexamining Naidu's poetry after decades of neglect. These scholars consistently read Naidu's poems in the context of her political activism; however, they continued to view her verse as largely incongruent with her politics. For example, Alexander and Roy examine the ways in which Naidu's poetry (Alexander) or her status as a poet (Roy) can be read as contrasting with her political identity as the preeminent female force within the nationalist movement. Alexander reads Naidu's poetry as an outlet for deep-seated personal pain that, unless exorcised, would have stunted Naidu's rise as a politician. According to Alexander, Naidu's poems depict "private, pained women suffering emotional deprivation, even psychic imprisonment" and "stand as a direct foil to the public life she so fearlessly took to" (51). As a politician, Naidu spoke "in her strong orator's voice" (51). But, as a poet, Naidu struggled to use anything but the poetess's "cloying diction" (51).⁵² Roy not only adopts Alexander's notion of the "radical cleft" (49) between Naidu's poetic and political work, she presents the bifurcation as obvious and generally accepted (134-135).⁵³ Roy

⁵² Throughout her piece, Alexander repeatedly alludes to Naidu's "private pain" (51) and her "agonizing conflicts" (62), the source of which is never disclosed. The closest Alexander comes to an explanation is poetic rather than private. She argues that Naidu came to maturity in an English poetic culture steeped with depictions of women's domestic confinement, their sexual repression, and their consequent madness. As a result, Naidu's poems are "haunted by a voice telling of... female selves... that endure mutilation and are imprisoned psychically" (Alexander 52). By Alexander's reading, the poems remain deeply problematic for Naidu's feminist legacy even though she supposedly abandoned poetry once she achieved the necessary psychological release.

⁵³ According to Roy, Naidu's poetry or, more specifically, the discrepancy between her poetry and her political life has long vexed both Eastern and Western feminists. To both groups, her poetry seems "anti-modernist and retrogressive" (134). The inadequacy and emptiness of her verse have also frustrated generations of Indian poets seeking to build an Indian canon of English-language poetry. Roy cites the poet Nissim Ezekiel's "dismissal of [Naidu as] an embarrassing poetic foremother," who "wrote at a time when English poetry had touched the rock bottom of sentimentality and technical poverty" (134).

also argues that Naidu's status as a poet actually undermined her effectiveness as a politician: "the bardic gift establishes Sarojini as too hypnotically enthralling for comfort... she can be dismissed as a mere talker, whose bombast... point[s] to a damning lack of substance" (139). Though Naidu's rise to political prominence was made possible in no small part by her poetic accomplishments, scholarly narratives have marginalized her poetry by consistently depicting it as either irrelevant to or at odds with her political work towards Indian Independence.

Naidu herself firmly rejects such notions—which were already in circulation during her lifetime—of her poetry and politics as cleaved. Her prose repeatedly emphasizes her identity as a poet. As Anupama Arora argues, Naidu—so famously named the "Nightingale of India" by Gandhi—"names herself 'a Wandering Singer' and seeks legitimacy for her political role *through* her authorship as a poet" (98). In her study of Naidu's correspondence with Gandhi during her 1928-1929 ambassadorial trip to the United States, Arora shows that Naidu was aware of and rejected her critics' attempts to dismiss her as a mere poet. She writes to Gandhi:

You will say (no, *you* will not say anything so foolish but others may and will) that after all I am a poet, rhapsodizing in my usual way... But I have never rejoiced so greatly before that I am a poet and that the lily wand that I carry in my hand opens all doors and all hearts to my knocking. (qtd. in Arora 98)

Engaging with Roy's argument, Arora frames Naidu's letter as a clear response to those who saw her as "affiliated with 'sentiment' rather than [as] someone who understood realpolitik" (98). Naidu's letter to Gandhi reveals a stubborn refusal to renounce her poetic identity—"I am a poet"—and a belief that, far from undermining her political efficacy, her poet-status augments her political clout. While not herself "unacknowledged," Naidu self-consciously positions herself within the Shelleyan

tradition in which poets are the “legislators of the world.” In fact, she references Shelley throughout her career and more than any other poet (excepting herself) in her speeches. In one of her earliest political talks, given in Madras in 1903 to a group of students, she recommends Shelley’s “Ode to Liberty” (1820). In 1917, in a speech before thousands of people, including other top leaders of the Indian nationalist movement, Naidu recites some of Shelley’s lines on spring to suggest the nascent life of the Indian nation.⁵⁴ Back in Madras in 1919 preparing a large crowd for the arrival of Gandhi, she cites Shelley, Swinburne, Landor, Byron, and Milton as a community of British poets who advanced the global causes of liberty and self-determination through their poetic celebrations of nationalist leaders—Mazzini, Garibaldi, Lajos Kossuth, and Aleksey Kuropatkin—of different national origins. For Naidu, as her invocations of Shelley and her letter to Gandhi suggest, the poet-politician occupies a special place in the public arena, moving more easily across traditional boundaries (figured in the letter as “doors”) and into the “hearts” of those she wishes to persuade. And, as Naidu (and every other shrewd politician before or since) knows, access to people’s “hearts” translates into very real political power.

Following Naidu’s own insistence that her politics and her poetry are intertwined, some recent critics, most importantly Gibson and Reddy, have begun re-theorizing her poetic politics. In *Indian Angles*, Gibson emphasizes Naidu’s self-consciousness about

⁵⁴ Unfortunately, the exact lines Naidu quotes are now lost or, perhaps, are yet to be uncovered in archival materials. In the available collection of her speeches, the editor simply notes: “The lecturer, after quoting Shelley’s lines describing the spring season, proceeded” (67). The editorial decision—while frustrating—accurately reflects the attitudes that then prevailed about poetry’s role—ancillary at best, worth mentioning but not including—in political rhetoric.

her poetry's power to represent India, at a moment of national transition, to the world. Gibson reads many of Naidu's poems, even in her earliest collection, as "critically self-reflexive" attempts to model a highly pluralistic society. Gibson argues that Naidu's poems function as "positive emblems of cultural multiplicity" (245) by "moving among the languages and cultures of India... within the medium of English language verse" and, thereby, "enact[ing] a pluralist national imaginary" (250). Sensing Naidu's investment in the external projection of her national self, Gibson notes that her poetry's socio-cultural diversity does not signal the "trying on [of] various kinds of cultural clothes" but instead the "stitch[ing of] a variegated wardrobe" (245). In a more detailed, extended treatment of Naidu's work, Reddy reinforces the centrality of Naidu's strategic modeling to her overarching political project. In particular, Reddy shows convincingly how Naidu deploys Hyderabad—the Muslim-dominated principality where her Bengali family resided during her childhood—as evidence of the possibility of a peaceful, multicultural society in both her poems and speeches. Gibson's and Reddy's work breaks new ground in our engagement with Naidu's poetry by emphasizing her agency in presenting herself and India as highly complex and cosmopolitan. Their work treats Naidu's Orientalism as strategic, her participation in and manipulation of gendered nationalist narratives as self-conscious, and her cosmopolitanism as thoughtfully developed and deeply held.

Affective Arguments in Naidu's Love Songs

Building on this set of critical approaches, I now turn to Naidu's poetry with the aim of showing that the political ideals expressed in her speeches, especially her cosmopolitan nationalism and its emphasis on unity, are clearly manifest in the body of

her poetry. I argue that Naidu's poems—even those which seem most sentimental and, thus, most removed from her political consciousness—work to reinforce her nationalist aims. In fact, I have largely avoided discussing Naidu's handful of overtly patriotic poems in order to show that many of her poems, not just an exceptional few, participate in advancing her notion of the new India as a pioneering cosmopolitan nation-state. I argue that Naidu's most seemingly feminine and affective poetry—her love songs and devotional verse—offers a way for her to reach an audience wholly unreceptive to the direct articulation of her nationalist ideas in public forums; a way for her to enter the intimate, domestic spaces where poetry reading usually takes place and, there, to confront her global English-speaking audience with poems depicting the human connectedness of East and West; of man and woman; and of Hindu and Muslim. Naidu's poetry, as I read it, contributes to her over-arching argumentative strategy by making affective and subtle but also broad and mobile arguments for the very same ideal—unity through empathy and mutual respect—that fires her political speeches and her political life. Naidu's notion of a heterogeneous India, united by an open, inclusive, and cosmopolitan national identity, also connects her to the broader school of English-language poets seeking to resist and refashion exclusionary nationalist narratives the world over.

From the start of her poetic career, Naidu was deeply self-conscious about the worldwide circulation of her English-language poems. By making the controversial choice to write in English, Naidu sacrifices some readers in India in order to court a worldwide audience of English-speaking elites. Her poetry clearly articulates the global ambitiousness of her project. Consider, for example, *The Golden Threshold's* second poem, "The Wandering Singers"—an early poem given added significance by Naidu's

later naming of herself as India's "wandering singer." Naidu sets "The Wandering Singers" to the tune of nomadic but otherwise non-descript singers, playing upon the word "feet" in the first line to link the singers' physical movements to the transportation of her poetic meters:

Where the voice of the wind calls our wandering feet,
Through echoing forest and echoing street,
With lutes in our hands ever-singing we roam,
All men are our kindred, the world is our home. (1-4)

Naidu's singers "roam," following the "voice of the wind" which, in the poem's last line, becomes "the voice of our fate" (16). The singers give up their own claims to self-determination and their own "dreams" (13) of "hope" (13), "love" (15), and "joy" (15) in order to be guided by fate. Like the singers' songs, Naidu imagines her measures as sounding and re-sounding ("echoing") in ways and in places far beyond India's borders and outside the realm of her authorial control. She imagines the poems—circulating wildly and widely—as making "the world" their "home" (4). In "The Wandering Singers," the poet releases her songs and trusts to fate that they will range as they should.

By the time Naidu published *The Bird of Time* in 1912, she had become savvier in her self-presentation as a poet and more self-conscious about crafting her poems for their global audience. Rather than dramatizing her poetry's travels by linking it to the feet of wandering singers, Naidu's lyrical poem, "Farewell," directly addresses her poems in the moment of their first flight:

Bright shower of lambent butterflies,
Soft cloud of murmuring bees,
O fragile storm of sighing leaves
Adrift upon the breeze! (1-4)

Clearly evoking expectations of the poetess' verse, Naidu describes her poems as "bright" (1), "soft" (2), and "fragile" (3), likening them to "butterflies" (1) and "bees" (2). Barely audible in their "murmuring" (2) and "sighing" (3), her gentle, pretty poems at first seem aimless: like the wandering singers, they are "Adrift upon the breeze!" (4). Yet, even in the opening stanza, Naidu hints that her poems are not really (or, at least, not only) what they appear to be. Conjuring the image of fall leaves swept up in a violent gust, Naidu claims for her poems the force of a "storm" (albeit a "fragile" one). In the second and final stanza, Naidu points to a larger ambition and to her preparation of her poems for their global debut:

Wild birds with eager wings outspread
To seek an alien sky,
Sweet comrades of a lyric spring.
My little songs, Good-bye! (5-8)

Here, the butterflies and the bees are replaced by "wild birds" on a mission, their "eager wings" not merely "adrift" but "outspread" and striving to reach "an alien sky." Naidu acknowledges that her poems are crafted not to drift but "To seek" readers the world over. Naidu's lyric depicts her poems as intimate and passionately wrought, but she also marks them as public, mobile, worldly, and ambitious. Employing her familiar strategy of occupying and then subverting a marginalized subject position, Naidu fashions herself a poetess, disarming those readers—both British and Indian—for whom her status as a prominent nationalist figure would generate suspicion. No matter her politics, she seems to ask, what harm could come of enjoying her "sighing leaves" and "little songs"? In reality, Naidu's poems—her "wild birds"—function as messaging pigeons that infiltrate domestic spaces distant from and sometimes fortified against her oratorical performances,

working to evoke an emotional awareness of the kind of human brotherhood that undermines justifications for sectarian conflict and imperial domination.

Consider, for example, a series of Naidu's love songs in *The Bird of Time*, linked together not so subtly by their titles: "An Indian Love Song," "A Rajput Love Song," and "A Persian Love Song." "An Indian Love Song" dramatizes a romance threatened by the still-unresolved contest between what Naidu casts as forward- and backward-looking visions of intercultural relationships in India. The poem opens as a culturally indeterminate "He" entreats a culturally indeterminate "She" for a glimpse of her face or a physical token of her love. The barrier that He identifies—her veil—obfuscates rather than clarifies her religious and cultural affiliation as veiling was common practice in both Muslim and orthodox Hindu communities. The true barrier between them—historical rather than physical in character—emerges only in the lines where She marks them as participants in an age-old religious dispute. She rebuffs his pledges of love on explicitly religious and historical (though notably not doctrinal) grounds, claiming that interfaith relationships are impossible because of India's history of inter-civilizational strife:

Thy kindred have broken our sacred altars and slaughtered our sacred kine,
The feud of old faiths and the blood of old battles sever thy people and mine.
(21-22)

The actions She cites—the desecration of temples, killing of cows, and fighting between tribes—like the religions themselves are "old." But the legacy of these ancient conflicts continues to "sever" ties between Hindus and Muslims generally and, by extension, between herself and her Muslim lover. Yet, even as She confidently asserts the lasting divisions wrought by historical differences, Naidu depicts her justifications of Hindu-Muslim strife as antiquated and tragic. In the final stanza, He responds with a counter-

narrative that echoes Naidu's political philosophy, claiming that Love has the power to reshape the future:

Love recks not of feuds and bitter follies, of stranger, comrade or kin,
Alike in his ear sound the temple bells and the cry of the *muezzin*.
For Love shall cancel the ancient wrong and conquer the ancient rage,
Redeem with his tears the memoried sorrow that sullied a bygone age. (29-32)

Like the conflicts it presents, the love song is rooted in Indian history and culture: in addition to its title, its measures are set to what Naidu calls "An Indian tune." Naidu's "Indian tune," however, sounds much like an English ballad.

Naidu structures her poem as a dialogue between star-crossed lovers and uses a regular iambic metrical pattern as well as a consistent *aabbcc* rhyme scheme to invoke the English ballad tradition. Yet, despite her frequent use and mastery of the form, Naidu's poems often do not conform to ballad genre conventions. Instead of consolidating or celebrating Indian national identity, for example, "An Indian Love Song" depicts the very ethno-religious tensions that Naidu believes will prevent India's national emergence. The poem enacts a pitched battle between "She" and "He" and, by extension, the intransigent conflict between India's Hindu and Muslim communities. In this unconventional ballad, Naidu does articulate her aspirations for her new India through He's pleas to She; however, the viability of the new nation remains as uncertain at the end of the poem as the romantic destiny of its cross-cultural lovers. Naidu leaves readers in suspense as to whether He will prevail upon She, just as Naidu herself is uncertain whether her messages of national unity—of religious reconciliation and cooperation—will win the day. In Naidu's poem, at least, He gets the last word.

"A Rajput Love Song" and "A Persian Love Song" follow "An Indian Love Song" by ten pages. Positioned adjacent to each other in the collection and provided with

titles that point directly to their different cultural origins, Naidu's poems seem set up to contrast. In actuality, the two poems are strikingly similar. "A Rajput Love Song," the first and longer of the two poems, dramatizes the shared longing of Parvati and Amar Singh. The trappings of love in Naidu's poem are familiar: a bejeweled lady waits at her window, the heroic soldier charges towards her on his steed, both recall and anticipate clandestine nighttime meetings, and both express great hostility towards the dawn.

Parvati and Singh express their desire for intimacy by imagining the beloved's infiltration and alteration of daily life's rituals and routines. Parvati longs for Singh to displace the objects of feminine domesticity—decorations for her hair, her arms, her clothes and even the fan upon her pillow—that mark her closed world as separate from his broader one:

O Love! Were you a basil-wreath to twine among my tresses,
A jeweled clasp of shining gold to bind around my sleeve,
O Love! Were you the *keoras* soul that haunts my silken raiment,
A bright vermilion tassel in the girdles that I weave,
O Love! were you the scented fan that lies upon my pillow,
A sandal lute, or silver lamp that burns before my shrine. (1-6)

For his part, Singh imagines Parvati as accompanying him in his martial pursuits, replacing his hawk, his hat, his sword, and his shield:

O Love! were you the hooded hawk upon my hand that flutters,
Its collar-band of gleaming bells atinkle as I ride,
O Love! were you a turban-spray or floating heron-feather,
The radiant, swift, unconquered sword that swingth at my side.
O Love! were you a shield against the arrows of my foemen,
An amulet of jade against the perils of the way. (20-25)

In "A Rajput Love Song," two lovers and two worlds—marked as separate by Naidu's insistent gendering of the spaces inhabited by her protagonists—come together unashamedly but only in the permissive darkness of night. Parvati and Singh share the same socio-religious heritage; however, the poem's lines are invigorated—like the

entreaties He offers in “An Indian Love Song”—by the lovers’ desire to definitively overcome separateness. This ballad, like “An Indian Love Song,” depicts the as yet unrealized longing of individuals to publicly and permanently come together despite the barriers erected by divisive social and/or religious strictures.

“A Persian Love Song” seems to answer the longing of “An Indian Love Song” and “A Rajput Love Song” in lines marveling at the possible depths of human connection. A lyric rather than a dialogue, the poem’s speaker reflects on the mysterious strength of her emotional inter-connectedness with her beloved:

O Love! I know not why, when you are glad,
Gaily my glad heart leaps,
O Love! I know not why, when you are sad,
Wildly my sad heart weeps.

I know not why, if sweet be your repose,
My waking heart finds rest,
Or if your eyes be dim with pain, sharp throes
Of anguish rend my breast.

Hourly this subtle mystery flowers anew,
O Love, I know not why...
Unless it be, perchance, that I am you,
Dear love, that you are I.

The poem, given in full here, depicts the emotional fruition of the love connections longed for in the companion poems. The speaker intimately observes her beloved’s physical body and emotional states, watching his “eyes” for signs of pain and his “repose” for signs of peacefulness. To her, the interconnectedness of her own emotional and physiological responses with those of her lover suggests that they have become so intertwined as to be, at least, indistinguishable and perhaps even one. Aside from the title, “A Persian Love Song” contains no markers of the poem’s Eastern origin or of the

speaker's culture, religion, or gender. "A Persian Love Song" offers a reflection on a common but extraordinarily powerful human experience—the "subtle mystery" of romantic love—that, by the early twentieth century, had come to form the foundation of British and Indian domestic and social structures. Naidu's love songs clearly situate her speakers in distinctive cultural traditions, but all three poems present a shared, human striving to overcome difference and to achieve unity. Taken together, the poems allow readers, first, to witness the tragedy of divisiveness (through the two dialogues) and, finally, to experience the bliss of communion (through the final lyric). Using the medium of romantic verse, Naidu celebrates unity and argues against sectarian division, against gender binaries, and, more broadly, against the kind of hierarchical thinking that makes imperial domination morally palatable.

Naidu's Devotional Poems at Political Work

Like her "love songs," Naidu's devotional verses argue—effectively and affectively, significantly but subtly—for the religious pluralism and cosmopolitan nationalism that forms the core of her political project. These supposedly apolitical poems do the delicate and important work of emotionally conditioning Naidu's readers to receive the messages of national unity she offers more explicitly in her speeches. Her devotional poems are—again, like her poems on romantic love—integrally part of a coherent, multi-generic argumentative strategy that recognizes both poetry's uniquely evocative qualities and the powerful role affect plays in politics and policy. The argumentative connections between Naidu's poems, her prose, and her political oratory are particularly apparent in the interdependencies among her "Foreword" to *The Broken*

Wing (1917), her speech “The Vision of Patriotism” (1917), and her devotional poems, specifically “The Call to Evening Prayer” (1912) and “The Prayer of Islam” (1917).

Naidu’s self-conscious creation of multi-directional, intertextual links between her poetry and her prose show her awareness that, taken together, these texts make a more powerful case for religious tolerance than either her poems or her speeches make alone.

Naidu’s third poetry collection, *The Broken Wing*, was published in the spring of 1917. By that time, Naidu’s prominence as a leader within the Indian Independence movement was well-established and her oratorical self-positioning as a poet-politician familiar to her audiences. Thus, her framing of her poetry collection as a contribution to India’s national emergence was, perhaps, not surprising. However, Naidu creates more than a casual link between her poems and her political activities. She uses her Foreword to *The Broken Wing* to draw a clear, intertextual connection between her poetry and her political oratory—requiring all readers who wish to understand the Foreword to refer to her roughly contemporaneous speech “The Vision of Patriotism.” In her Foreword, Naidu assigns to Indian women the role of “guardian and interpreter of the Triune Vision of national life,” a responsibility she casts as crucial to the realization of an egalitarian, cosmopolitan Indian nation:

The Indian woman is to-day once more awake and profoundly alive to her splendid destiny as the guardian and interpreter of the Triune Vision of national life—the Vision of Love, the Vision of Faith, and the Vision of Patriotism. Her renascent consciousness is everywhere striving for earnest expression in song or speech. (7)

Indian women (as represented, here, by the woman poet herself) are “everywhere striving” to elucidate, express, and protect their own and their nation’s “renascent consciousness”—a consciousness that Naidu explicitly links to the “Triune Vision of

national life.” Yet, Naidu offers no further explanation either in the Foreword or in the collection of the nature of this Vision, of how it might be shared with or achieved by the public, or of how it might operate to create or nurture India’s national life.⁵⁵ Both in her time and now, Naidu’s readers bring with them to the text their own notions of what Love, Faith, and Patriotism mean; however, to access Naidu’s meaning, readers are required to look elsewhere – specifically, to her speech “The Vision of Patriotism” – to make full sense of the Foreword and its framing of the poems that follow.

“The Vision of Patriotism”—delivered just before *The Broken Wing*’s publication—was, at least to that point, one of the most important speeches of Naidu’s political career. On January 15, 1917, Naidu addressed a mixed crowd of thousands of Indians (of a range of socio-cultural backgrounds) and Europeans gathered at the office of *The Leader*, a highly influential English-language newspaper with wide readership in northern India. She was introduced to loud applause by Motilal Nehru. Though she clearly speaks from multiple positions of power, Naidu begins her speech humbly, attempting to open the way for an emotional connection with her audience through self-deprecation and denials of her political intentions and acumen.⁵⁶ She even attributes her

⁵⁵ International readers of Naidu’s Foreword also seemed to recognize the importance of her “Three Visions” philosophy. In fact, in one of only two notices of the collection in British literary journals, the *Athenaeum* paraphrases Naidu’s Foreword as explanation of the collection’s importance: “As a whole the volume shows that the Indian woman of today is conscious how large her share is destined to be in the guardianship and interpretation of the Triune Vision of Love, Faith, and Patriotism” (201). Curiously, the *Athenaeum* references Naidu’s Foreword as if the language of the Three Visions was widely circulating in international discourses around Indian Independence and women’s role in achieving it. My research has yet to reveal any earlier source for or later replication of the “Triune Vision of national life” outside of Naidu’s own work.

⁵⁶ Naidu opens by begging for quiet, contrasting her quiet, tired voice with the boom of men’s voices. She apologizes for being “a mere poet, a mere woman” and for “my ignorance” and “my weakness,” claiming that her “woman’s intelligence cannot grapple

Three Vision philosophy to her “friend” and “comrade” the Muslim leader (and future founder of Pakistan) Mohammad Ali Jinnah.⁵⁷ Yet, Naidu’s ownership of her “Triune Vision” and the global scope of her ambitions for this personal philosophy soon become evident. Naidu imagines her Triune Vision as leading India and, through India, the world away from rigid, exclusionary nationalist narratives and towards a more inclusive, cosmopolitan model for national identity.

As Naidu outlines her Vision, she traces the interweaving—in her personal philosophy, in her political project, and in India’s national life—of the private and the public, the individual and the national, and the poetic and the political. The Visions of Love and Faith, according to Naidu, are deeply personal; they are the kind of individual, affective experiences that she attempts to make available to readers of her poems. But, these two visions—like Naidu’s poems on romantic love and her devotional verses—are also politically significant: they are necessary precursors to an individual’s experience of the communal Vision of Patriotism. In her speech, Naidu turns, first, to the Vision of Love, depicting it as the driving force behind individuals’ experience of the world and, by extension, behind all major developments of humanity’s collective history:

with the transcendent details of politics” (66-67). As both Lokuge and Reddy have pointed out, Naidu consistently cushions her political arguments within such highly gendered oratorical disclaimers in order to—at least partially—conform to audience expectations for a female public speaker. Such proclamations are as misleading as Barrett Browning’s assurances in her Advertisement that *Casa Guidi Windows* was a “simple” (v) poem, written in total “freedom from partisanship” (vi).

⁵⁷ According to Naidu, Jinnah had expounded an earlier version of the Triune Vision, in which he claimed that the three visions—when experienced together—lead to the fulfilment of the human soul. However, Naidu adapts Jinnah’s original philosophy in important ways. For her, the visions are sequential rather than simultaneous and guide those who experience them not only to individual fulfilment but, more importantly, to national commitment.

Take the history of the world as we know it and see how the vision of Love, working and working and working in the hearts of ages, has built up a great religion, a great literature, has inspired great wars, has caused great victories, has made defeat worthwhile because all was well lost. (68)

The world's history—which can only be experienced “as we” come to “know it” through the stories collected in religions and literatures—originates in the “dreams of poets who behold the vision of love” (68). These poetic visions, according to Naidu, most powerfully find their expression in stories of women's selflessness, their loyalty, and their love for (often unworthy) male partners. For Naidu, the role of “The Vision of Love” in a national, political project is clear: it is an individual experience of a powerful set of emotions that prepares individual hearts to develop a broader, communal, national love.

Naidu's next vision, “The Vision of Faith,” presents a far thornier rhetorical environment. In her speech, Naidu transitions quickly from “The Vision of Love” through “The Vision of Faith” to “The Vision of Patriotism.” She seems wary of dwelling on the powerful, individual experiences of faith that had so often fuelled calls for separate Hindu-Muslim goals, political representation, and even nations. Instead, she folds her discussion of faith (an individual experience) into her discourse on patriotism (a communal experience). The patriotic vision becomes reality when all of the individuals in the crowd before her become willing to take the “Love of India” as communion from a single cup, emblazoned on all sides with symbols of Hindu, Muslim, and Christian faiths. Naidu claims that individuals' feelings are the only barrier to the collective forging of a new Indian identity through the communion she so dramatically offers: individuals' fears of religious persecution, fears of uniting with people of other faiths, and fears about heterogeneous India's capacity for self-rule. Naidu recognizes the creation of strong

emotional and cross-faith connections within her audience as key to realizing her cosmopolitan, national dream. Yet, she shies away from discussing the individual “Vision of Faith” outside the context of the collective “Vision of Patriotism,” signaling her awareness of the extreme sensitivities and difficulties inherent in her desire to present a single “Vision of Patriotism” as both arising from and superseding so many passionate and divergent “Visions of Faith.” Naidu frames her Vision as three-part and structures her speech as if it will sequentially present the three visions. As a consequence, the gap—where a robust discussion of the “Vision of Faith” belongs—is conspicuous.

Naidu’s devotional verses fill this gap, drawing on poetry’s special argumentative properties to do what seems either too risky or impossible through the medium of a public speech. Just as one must turn to Naidu’s speech, “The Vision of Patriotism,” in order to understand her Foreword to *The Broken Wing*, Naidu’s “Vision of Faith”—with its supposed ability to awaken a shared commitment to cosmopolitan nationalism within many different faith communities—is fully comprehensible only through reference to her devotional verse. Naidu’s devotional verses, like her “love songs,” argue affectively for human connections across socio-cultural barriers, making available the emotional experience of religious plurality in a domestic and aesthetic environment.⁵⁸ In the two poems I examine here, “The Call to Evening Prayer” (1912) and “The Prayer of Islam”

⁵⁸ It seems important to note that the poetic strategies Naidu uses in these devotional poems are very different from the multi-cultural modelling strategies that Gibson and, especially Reddy, delineate. As I note in my introduction, Reddy persuasively shows how Hyderabad functions in both Naidu’s speeches and her poems to model cross-cultural sympathy. Here, I examine poems in which we see a different—exclusively poetic, highly affective, and intimate—strategy that makes its own contribution to Naidu’s multi-faceted, multi-generic argumentative project.

(1917), Naidu uses poetic strategies to create a sense of encounter: an affective experience of religious diversity and tolerance.

“The Call to Evening Prayer” (1912) immerses the reader in a religiously pluralistic environment. Naidu creates a world within her poem in which readers must struggle for subjective orientation. As in “A Persian Love Song,” Naidu offers no dramatized setting for the sensory experience of the poem’s chorus of harmonious calls to worship. Here, I include the poem in full:

Allah ho Akbar! Allah ho Akbar!
From mosque and minar the muezzins are calling;
Pour forth your praises, Chosen of Islam;
Swiftly the shadows of sunset are falling:
Allah ho Akbar! Allah ho Akbar!

Ave Maria! Ave Maria!
Devoutly the priests at the altars are singing;
Ye who worship the Son of the Virgin,
Make your orisons, the vespers are ringing:
Ave Maria! Ave Maria!

Ahura Mazda! Ahura Mazda!
How the sonorous Avesta is flowing!
Ye, who to Flame and the light make obeisance,
Bend low where the quenchless blue torches are glowing:
Ahura Mazda! Ahura Mazda!

Narayyana! Narayyana!
Hark to the ageless, divine invocation!
Lift up your hands, ye children of Bramha
Lift up your voices in rapt adoration:
Narayyana! Narayyana!

The intermingling calls of each religion—Islam, Christianity, Zoroastrianism, and Hinduism—are timeless and, thus, current. They could be heard anywhere in the world at any time, as long as religious leaders are free to offer public, competing calls to worship in a peaceful, tolerant environment. Naidu’s stanzas spatially mark the four religions as

distinctive but equal. However, the content of the calls, their rhyme pattern, and their echoing resonance suggest the faiths' intermingling. Each of the calls extends an invitation to worship or to prayer to a divine entity: "Pour forth your praises" (3), "Mark your orisons" (9), "Bend low" (14), "Lift up your hands" (18). Naidu's poem praises the devotion of all worshipers and recognizes each religion as elect and eternal. Additionally, the lines' metrical uniformity and, especially, the end-rhyming of lines 2, 4, 7, 9, 12, and 14 create a rhythmic continuity among the individual stanzas. Naidu's rhythmic linking of the separate stanzas suggests that the calls themselves, repeated in the first and last lines, do not remain confined to their stanzas. Like the end-rhymes, they seem to echo throughout the poem, creating a chorus of separate, mingling calls that draw worshipers to the same spiritual tasks. Encountered in the solitude and quiet of a private, domestic reading space, Naidu's poem creates a sonorous, affective experience of religious encounter and exchange. Even for readers who strongly identify with the call of a particular stanza, the poem's rhythm and echo create a sense of likeness and interconnectedness. "The Call to Evening Prayer" argues through the affective experience of hearing and feeling the ricocheting calls and the reverberations of religious pluralism.

Naidu's strategy of creating disorienting, emotionally charged encounters with other faiths comes most powerfully to fruition in *The Broken Wing's* "The Prayer of Islam." Here, Naidu offers a prayer, which the reader necessarily speaks in the act of reading. The ever-evolving chorus and Naidu's single note mark the prayer as belonging to Islam, but the attitudes expressed towards the deity accord easily with Christian worship of Christ and Hindu reverence for Brahma. Consider the following lines:

We praise Thee, O Compassionate!
Master of Life and Time and Fate (1-2)

Thou art the Radiance of our ways,
Thou art the Pardon of our days (5-6)

Thou dost transmute from hour to hour
Our mortal weakness into power (13-14)

There is nothing particular to Islam—or, for that matter, to Christianity or Hinduism—in these lines. In fact, Naidu seems to play up the transferability of these spiritual attitudes in the poem’s chorus, which she notes uses “some of the Ninety-Nine Beautiful Arabic Names of God as Used by Followers of Islam.” If one might as easily call God “Hafeez” (5), “Waheed” (12), or “Rahman” (20), the poem seems to suggest that other names—perhaps “Christ” or “Brahma”—might apply as well. By calling God a variety of names, Naidu shows that while there is perhaps a limit to how God may be understood (there are only ninety-nine names available after all), that limit might be much broader than traditionally thought. To a Christian or Hindu reader, the poem’s vacillation between familiarity (in the individual lines) and foreignness (in the chorus) disorients. Nevertheless, the reader’s necessary participation in the prayer—to read the poem, one must actually recite it—transforms, even if only momentarily, the alien into the intimate. “The Prayer of Islam” creates an aesthetic, affective encounter and argues for recognition of commonality even in the absence of a reader’s conscious adoption of religious tolerance. The poem suggests what no public speaker, not even one as bold as Naidu, would have dared to claim in deeply religious and deeply divided India: that the “Visions of Faith” experienced by Hindus, Muslims, and Christians—and perhaps even the religions themselves—were not so very different after all.

“The Call to Evening Prayer” and “The Prayer of Islam,” like Naidu’s trio of love songs, do not rank among her explicitly political and, thus, most canonical poems. They

were not occasional poems written for presentation at political gatherings. Instead, they conform closely to the kinds of verse expected from a poetess, offering up sentimental love songs and expressions of piety. Yet these poems, like Naidu's better-known political poems, form a part of an overarching political project aimed at moving Indians to cast aside the socio-cultural barriers that bar national unity and at encouraging a broader, global audience to reconsider the hierarchical relationships that justify the subjugation of one group of people by another. They work in concert with Naidu's oratorical pronouncements, yet the affective arguments of these oft-dismissed poems seem particularly vital to Naidu's cosmopolitan nationalism. Naidu defines Indian national identity as a feeling—as “the universal thrill of brotherhood that binds the world's races together.” She describes the visions of Love and Faith as emotional experiences that masses of individuals must undergo in order to make real India's new nationhood. She describes individuals' feelings—fear, in particular—as the only impediment to India's ascension to her national destiny. Written to be consumed in the relative solitude of British and Indian homes, Naidu's love songs and her religious verse trade in individuals' feelings. They seek to incite emotional responses to the socio-cultural thwarting of otherwise compatible lovers, to the ecstasy of physical and emotional communion, to the sounds of religious harmony, and to the experience of recognizing one's own faith in another man's prayer. Naidu's poems attempt to inspire in readers the “thrill” of unity or brotherhood; a “thrill” that she returns to over a dozen times in her speeches and poems. Careful examination of Naidu's poems and prose writings show clearly that she was what she imagined herself to be: a poet-politician. Her poetry, the full body of it, merits greater critical attention that it has yet received, not only for its role in advancing Naidu's radical

theorization of a highly cosmopolitan nationalism but also for its use of sentiment, affect, or feeling to make coherent, powerful political arguments.

Chapter 4: Making Sense in the Fog of War: Rudyard Kipling's Boer War Poems

By the time Sarojini Naidu's poems appeared, she joined a decades-long, international poetic tradition of writers using English-language poetry to perform nationality in a more cosmopolitan way. The influence of many of these poets, however, remained largely limited to English-speaking elites in the world's cosmopolitan, urban centers. By virtue of her role as a poet-politician, Naidu necessarily cultivated, in many of her poems and speeches, a more common touch—one of the many parallels between her and another of the century's most influential global poets: Rudyard Kipling. Naidu and Kipling are, in some obvious ways, an unusual pair: she was the most prominent female independence activist in India, and he, of course, was the most famous literary champion of imperial Britain. However, re-situating Naidu and Kipling in a more global context allows us to recognize their unexpected connections. Upon re-examination, for example, the geographies of Naidu's life—residence in England, trips to South Africa and America, and extensive travel within India—map on to Kipling's. Her stature within India as an authoritative voice on nationalist discourse rivals (at least more closely than any other poet discussed here) Kipling's standing within Britain as the Imperial Laureate. Whereas Derozio, Dutt, and even Barrett Browning struggled to claim the personal and poetic authority to speak on matters of nationality, both Naidu and Kipling found themselves veritably *called upon* by broad (though different) swaths of the English-speaking world to perform a coherent, overarching national identity.

Both Naidu and Kipling responded to this call by writing cosmopolitan, affective poems that subverted rather than reaffirmed nationalist divisions. Naidu's investment in

cosmopolitan nationalism, as I argued in the last chapter, is bold, sustained, and multi-generic. Kipling's cosmopolitan poems are the product of a relatively brief period of experimentation and represent only a small subset—albeit an important and understudied one—within his overall poetic corpus. Nevertheless, Kipling's poems from the Boer War period, particularly their use of affect, bear many similarities to Naidu's poems, and his critiques of traditional nationalist narratives, while more anxious, are ultimately no less intense than hers. Taken together, Kipling's and Naidu's cosmopolitan poems show English-language poets—working from strikingly different personal backgrounds and from different geopolitical hotspots—participating in a shared, multidirectional, and dynamic renegotiation of nationalist narratives that spanned the nineteenth century and continued into the opening decades of the twentieth century. As I turn now to Kipling, I read his cosmopolitan poems as deeply in conversation with Naidu and with a global school of English-language poets all engaged, whether in India, Britain, Italy, or South Africa, in a paradigm-shifting re-imagining of how individuals experience national identity.

Affect and Action: Kipling's Political Awakening and its Poetic Consequences

Kipling, who never stood for public office, was nonetheless a poet-politician. He was the personal friend of world leaders and of the heads of multinational corporations. His global stature as the British Empire's foremost literary luminary was unrivalled in his lifetime. In March 1899, for example, the *New York Times* wrote of Kipling—then only thirty three years old—that he “has attained the dignity of being a classic; already his works are published in ‘complete’ editions, and one is justified in believing that they will

continue to be so published for many generations to come” (1). Five years before his death in 1936, Kipling’s works had already been translated into 22 languages, including Icelandic, Lithuanian, and Japanese. After his death, world leaders and regular readers in the East and the West alike continued to prize Kipling’s work.⁵⁹ Several of his poems—“If,” “Recessional,” and “The White Man’s Burden”—have long been and remain among the most widely-known in the English language.

The wild popularity of Kipling’s works has endured but so too has the author’s ability to stir strong feelings among his critics. Britain’s *fin-de-siècle* intelligentsia, led by literary critic Robert Buchanan, attacked Kipling for being offensively jingoistic and low-brow. More importantly, much of his public turned on him by the century’s end, complaining that Kipling’s new works—his preachy critiques of British class hierarchies and war-readiness—no longer evoked for them what they needed and demanded from him: the feeling of belonging to and participating in a thriving, just, and lasting imperial enterprise. In the first half of the twentieth century, Kipling’s admirers defended him to their own peril, as a figure no less eminent than T.S. Eliot learned.⁶⁰ More recently, even as Kipling’s literary reputation has been recuperated, a process I will discuss in more detail later, his champions have continued to apologize for much of what he wrote even as they marvel at the exquisite diamonds of thought and expression in Kipling’s racist,

⁵⁹ Jawaharlal Nehru counted *Kim* among his favorite books (Spring 141), and Margaret Thatcher named Kipling her favorite poet (Cronin, “Review” 1).

⁶⁰ T.S. Eliot’s 1941 edition of Kipling’s poems elicited furious responses from his contemporaries. George Orwell most famously insisted in his response to Eliot, “Kipling is a jingo imperialist, he is morally insensitive and aesthetically disgusting” (100). For Orwell, the only thing left for the critic was “to start by admitting that, and then to try to find out why it is that he survives while the refined people who have sniggered at him seem to wear so badly” (100).

imperialist rough.⁶¹ Almost eighty years after his death and after over a century of intense scholarly engagement, however, Kipling remains a figure of almost unparalleled critical fascination and an iconic writer whose works still sell.⁶²

As this brief snapshot of Kipling's place in popular and critical consciousness must suggest, it is the work of lengthy books to wade fully into the contest over Kipling. Thus, in the pages that follow, I engage with only a fraction of Kipling's long and prolific career: the years surrounding the Second Boer War (1899-1902). These years are of particular interest because they mark both an increase in Kipling's willingness to use his poetry for political purposes and a brief but important period of poetic experimentation in which Kipling tests out more humanist or cosmopolitan ideas. Kipling's Boer War poems, specifically the "Service Songs" that close *The Five Nations* (1903), depict destabilizing, intense moments of martial encounter between individual soldiers and push readers toward often uncomfortable sympathies with the fighting men Kipling portrays. Kipling constructs these moments of affective encounter, I argue, to provoke readerly introspection about broader questions of national and imperial identity. Kipling, whose fame was rooted in the connection that common people—particularly military men—felt

⁶¹ Consider, for example, Daniel Karlin's 1999 assessment of Kipling as a fiction writer and a political thinker: "What is powerful and convincing in Kipling's art is so mixed with what is repellent and sometimes mad in his outlook... that it is hard to make the case for him as an artist without engaging in a defense of his politics" (xvii). Karlin concludes, "The truth is that Kipling is indefensible on any other ground than the pleasure he offers his readers, and there he is impregnable" (xix).

⁶² New editions of Kipling's works still appear every year. *The Jungle Book*, for example, has been republished at least once every year since 2000 and a new edition, set to come out in 2015, is already available for pre-order from Penguin Classics Hardcover. No fewer than eight new editions of *Kim* were issued by publishers in 2014 alone. Kipling's poetry is also frequently reprinted: dozens of collections of his poems—for both children and adults—have appeared in the last five years alone.

with him, was especially positioned to understand the political power of affect. In these poems, his intellectual experiment with cosmopolitanism is played out through poetic examinations and evocations of the affective connections—empathy, commiseration, admiration, sorrow, anger—inherent in the intimacy of turn-of-the-century combat. Before turning to the poems and their place within the global framework of nineteenth-century poetic renegotiations of nationalist narratives, however, I begin with a brief contextual discussion of the Boer War and Kipling’s personal and political engagement with it.

The Boer War broke out in October 1899 and was the culmination of decades of tension between British colonists and Afrikaans-speaking settlers in South Africa. The conflict was well-underway and going disastrously for Britain when Kipling arrived in South Africa in February 1900 hoping to provide a much-needed morale boost.⁶³ Kipling felt called to support British troops and their families, and he felt compelled to do so from South Africa. He declined an invitation from India’s Viceroy George Curzon in order to travel to Cape Town, throwing himself into the war efforts as soon as he arrived. In March 1900, Kipling took a hospital train to the Modder River, visited an army camp at Stellenbosch, and answered Commander-in-Chief Frederick Roberts’ request to help establish *The Friend* newspaper in the captured Orange Free State capital of

⁶³ In a single week in December 1899, dubbed “Black Week” by the London press, British forces in South Africa lost over 2,500 soldiers in three consecutive defeats. Between January 23-24, 1900, as Kipling sailed towards South Africa, British fortunes went from bad to worse as poor strategic planning and inadequate leadership led to another British defeat and the loss of another 1,000 British soldiers at the Battle of Spion Kop.

Bloemfontein.⁶⁴ In South Africa, Kipling experienced combat (albeit briefly) for the first time, and, through his almost daily work with the wounded, he saw firsthand the devastating physical and emotional toll of war on Britain's military men and, by extension, their families. At first, Kipling seemed confident in his ability to help: to use his poetry to raise money for soldiers' families and to celebrate British soldiers' sacrifices for a right and just imperial cause. Two poems, one by Kipling and another by a then little known British war correspondent named Edgar Wallace, give a sense of Kipling's political power and of his public's devotion at the beginning of the Boer War period.

Kipling's "The Absent-Minded Beggar" (1899) solidified his stature as the most influential poet-politician in *fin-de-siècle* Britain. Commissioned by London's *Daily Mail* and published only days after the war began on October 31, 1899, "The Absent-Minded Beggar" was written specifically to support British war efforts by raising money to assist wounded soldiers and the families of deployed men. Kipling and the *Daily Mail's* publisher Alfred Harmsworth expected the endeavor to be successful; however, no one could have imagined the spiraling philanthropic phenomena the poem ultimately became. George Shepperson's account of "The Absent-Minded Beggar" gives a full sense of the poem's broad, cross-class circulation and of its movement across genres:

First publishing in the *Daily Mail*... the poem subsequently appeared in a variety of versions: on tobacco jars, ash trays, packets of cigarettes, pillowcases, plates, and many other forms. One of these was a triptych, with the famous Woodville

⁶⁴ Interestingly, Kipling's experience at *The Friend* represented his first attempt at reconciliatory writing during the Boer War. The paper was set up immediately after the capture of Bloemfontein, and one of its goals was to project an image of the British that would calm hostilities with the local population. Kipling's poem, "General Joubert," which eulogized Boer General Piet Joubert (killed in action in March 1900), was written for *The Friend*. His work at the paper represents some of his first published experiments with the cross-cultural sympathies that come to characterize much of his poetry by the end of the Boer War period.

illustration of a British “Tommy,” which was distributed as a souvenir by Lily Langtry in London at the hundredth performance of a play. . . . Lady Tree recited it daily at the Palace Theatre for fourteen weeks and raised 70,000 pounds. Set to music by Sir Arthur Sullivan, it went the rounds of barrel-organs, music halls, smoking-concerts, drawing-room recitals, raising at least a quarter of a million pounds. (84)

To put the success of Kipling’s poem in some perspective, Peter Grant’s research shows that charities raised approximately 6 million pounds to support British war efforts during the Boer War, or roughly 650 million pounds today after inflation (8). Kipling’s poem was directly responsible for one of every twenty-four charitable pounds generated or, in today’s currency, a staggering 27 million pounds. Kipling framed his repeated command that readers “pay—pay—pay!” (14, 28, 42, 56) in explicitly moral terms, as the national and imperial duty of Englishmen at home to brothers defending the empire abroad:

Let us manage so as, later, we can look him in the face,
And tell him—what he’d very much prefer
That, while he saved the Empire, his employer saved his place,
And his mates (that’s you and me) looked out for *her*.
He’s an absent-minded beggar and he may forget it all,
But we do not want his kiddies to remind him
That we sent ‘em to the workhouse while their daddy hammered Paul,
So we’ll help the homes that Tommy left behind him! (43-50)

Kipling’s tone was confident, and his poetic advocacy was highly effective. From the beginning of the Boer War years, Kipling—his fame built primarily on his celebrations of martial life in *Departmental Ditties* (1886), *Barrack Room Ballads* (1890), and the *Seven Seas* (1896)—felt compelled to serve the men who felt him to be their spokesperson and, more importantly, their friend.

This aspect of Kipling’s poetic self-presentation—his desire to be a friend—has been examined at some length by Kipling biographer William B. Dillingham. Dillingham argues that Kipling’s years in America, particularly his embarrassing legal dispute with

his brother-in-law in Vermont and the resulting press depictions of Kipling as an English dandy, rekindled in him a lost sense of humility and a desire, upon his return to Britain, to offer robust and manly service to his countrymen (19-30). Kipling's keen desire to be a friend was also, according to Dillingham, prompted by Wallace's poetic hailing of him as the voice and advocate of the military man in his 1898 poem "Tommy to his Laureate." Originally published in the *Cape Times* on January 25 and reprinted widely across the Empire, Wallace's poem welcomes Kipling and his family to the continent and captures the intense affective connection that British enlisted men in South Africa felt with Kipling. Dillingham cites the poem's most oft-quoted lines, which claim Kipling for the military man and for the Empire:

You're *our* partic'lar author, you're our patron an' our friend,
You're the poet of the cuss-word and the swear,
You're the poet of the people where the red-mapped lands extend. (31-33)

Dillingham's limited focus on these lines fits in with his broader tracing of the recurrence of "friend" in Kipling's life and works—from Wallace's poetic claiming of Kipling as "*our* friend," to Kipling's brief stint as writer for the troop newspaper *The Friend*, to his titling of his autobiography "For My Friends Known and Unknown" at the end of his life.⁶⁵ However, other lines in Wallace's poem merit notice, particularly his depiction of Kipling's global audience.

Written on South African soil by one British poet to another, "Tommy to his Laureate" describes Kipling's influence in explicitly global terms and suggests that

⁶⁵ Dillingham further claims that Kipling's insistence on maintaining a lonely independence was "alleviated by his discovery that if he could not let many become his friends, he could be a friend to many" (128).

Kipling's cosmopolitanism renders him more fit to judge of the military man's character than more sheltered elites. Wallace notes the dismissive attitudes of those who feel "a Tommy isn't class" (16) and who "don't expect intelligence from us" (18). But, Kipling, by virtue of his travels and the global circulation of his texts, knows better:

You 'ave met us in the tropics, you 'ave met us in the snows;
But mostly in the Punjab and the 'ills,
You 'ave seen us in Mauritius, where the naughty cyclone blows,
You 'ave met us under a sun that kills,
 An' we grills!
An' I ask you, do we fill the bloomin' bills? (19-24)

Kipling emerges from Wallace's poem as an advocate of the military man, a fellow traveler of the world's harsher regions, a rebel willing to look beyond class barriers to see a man's true merit, and a poet whose voice is omnipresent not only in the empire but throughout the world. Kipling is, for Wallace, "the ever-speaking voice of everywhere!" (36). Wallace's poem, even to a writer long-accustomed to literary celebrity, offered particularly warm praise. Kipling responded with an ever-stronger and much more public commitment to conservative political and military causes (Dillingham 127).⁶⁶

These formative, invigorating years of travel to and engagement with South Africa changed Kipling, bolstering his desire to forge affective relationships with his readers and to use his poetry to make explicitly political arguments. Yet, at the height of Kipling's political influence and just as his resolve to serve his readers and his country

⁶⁶ Shortly after he returned home from his 1898 trip to South Africa, Kipling began openly campaigning for the first time for George Salisbury's Conservative Party (Gilmour 151). He also began the process of establishing a rifle range, which he paid for himself and which opened in 1900. And, of course, when war broke out in South Africa, he penned "The Absent-Minded Beggar," shamelessly selling his name—as he famously admitted—to raise as much money as possible for soldiers and their families.

solidified, Kipling's once confident, cohesive, and celebratory voice—his “ever-speaking voice of everywhere”—became inflected with anxiety, doubt, confusion, and frustration. Kipling's close witnessing of the Boer War and, especially, of Britain's struggles to defeat the numerically inferior and poorly equipped Boer fighters changed the tone of much of his poetry. Suddenly, to be a friend to his readers meant not only raising money for national causes and celebrating imperial successes but warning his countrymen and, if need be, chastising them for their reckless complacency. Kipling, intensely aware of the political power poets could wield through their affective connections with readers, self-consciously cultivated this more somber, instructional role for himself. However, his poems show that he also struggled mightily at times to deliver coherent, cohesive lessons from his poetic pulpit.

The Boer War years, as Paula Krebs and others have argued, were destabilizing for many Britons, and none more so than Kipling. Consider, as only the most obvious example, the difference between Kipling's “The Absent-Minded Beggar,” written at the start of the war, and “The Islanders” (1902), written as small bands of roving Boer fighters continued to evade much larger British contingents and to embarrass Britain on the world stage. The runaway success of the first poem earned Kipling an offer of knighthood (which he declined). “The Islanders,” by contrast, angered many if not most of his readers. The poem was, as Patrick Scott points out, largely in keeping with a “recurrent theme of Boer War commentary” that contrasted “the manly independence of the Boer farmer commandoes” and “the wilting... British infantry... inadequately prepared for the Darwinian struggle of real-world warfare” (91). Yet, Kipling's tone piqued even those who felt that Britain had grown a bit soft and who suspected that

Kipling was right to urge a more serious approach to war-readiness. It was Kipling's cosmopolitanism—his chief asset for Wallace just before the war—that became, by the war's end, the supposed source of what the *Academy and Literature* in 1903 called his “detached and superior attitude” (319).⁶⁷ Recent critics have characterized Kipling's “attitude” in even less generous terms: Michael Matin calls “The Islanders” an example of Kipling's “lashing out at his British readers” (317). The stark contrast between Kipling's most lucrative, patriotic poem and one of his most infamous poems leads one, naturally, to wonder how Kipling got from “The Absent-Minded Beggar” to “The Islanders” in a few short years.

The agreed narrative of Kipling's experience of the Boer War years is one of gradual disillusionment.⁶⁸ Kipling summered in South Africa ten times, experiencing, at first, especial pleasure in the comradeship of British and imperial troops, then a dawning awareness of the depth of Britain's military problems, and finally deep pessimism and anxiety about the empire's future (Gilmour 150). Kipling ultimately turned away from South Africa in order to mourn what he felt was an unjust and foolhardy peace; a peace that he believed confirmed for the world that Britain lacked the military might and the political will to defend herself and her Empire (Gilmour 150). “The Absent-Minded

⁶⁷ To quote the *Academy and Literature* a greater length, Kipling's “detached and superior attitude” was supposed to “come naturally to one who, spending much time in travel, acquires the habit of looking upon the island from without” (319).

⁶⁸ This narrative of the Boer War years as a turning point in Kipling's poetry is near ubiquitous in Kipling scholarship. Frank Field, to cite but one example, argues that Kipling's sole taste of combat—when a band of Boer riders ambushed the British troops with whom Kipling was travelling and killed 180 before disappearing into the hills—“was only a foretaste of the greater disappointment and disillusionment that Kipling was to experience during the war, for it was a conflict in which the incompetence of the British army was revealed at all levels” (159).

Beggar” and “The Islanders” provide neat bookends to this narrative, which accurately captures the larger arc of Kipling’s (and many others’) war-time thinking. The cleanness of this narrative of Kipling’s disillusionment, however, elides the poetry produced along the way. For Kipling, the result of the Boer War years was, undoubtedly, frustration, anger, and fear; however, in the midst of the conflict, Kipling’s faltering sense of stability—his struggle to make sense of the consequences of war for individual soldiers, the nation, and the empire—resulted in a brief but important period of poetic experimentation. I turn now to this period of Kipling’s poetic career and to *The Five Nations*.

The Cosmopolitan Experiment: Kipling’s “Service Songs”

Uncertainty pervades *The Five Nations* from the geopolitical conflict it describes to Kipling’s confusion about what the cosmopolitan, humanist connections he observed in combat might mean for Britain’s national and imperial future. *The Five Nations* presents emotionally charged snapshots of war, snapshots that capture the many shocks of Britain’s South African campaign: the sensory disorientation British soldiers experienced in South Africa’s combat environment, the unrelenting anxiety brought on by the Boer’s guerilla tactics, and the grudging admiration many British soldiers came to feel for Boer fighters who nobly and skillfully defended their homeland against what increasingly came to feel (to both sides) like an invading force.⁶⁹ The British soldiers Kipling depicts in *The Five Nations* are physically, emotionally, and even morally

⁶⁹ The opinion voiced by Captain Montmorency of the 21st Lancers captures the extent to which many British soldiers questioned their mission in South Africa: “the cause of the Dutch Burghers was a just one and I regarded the Boers as men fighting for their hearths against greedy, foreign aggressors” (Judd 5).

disoriented by the sensory overload of combat in the South African bush: they were engulfed in what General Carl von Clausewitz famously called “the fog of war.”⁷⁰ On the battlefield—and any inch of the Boer republics could become a battlefield at any moment—British soldiers became unsure of senses they once trusted and of things they once knew, most concretely about how they should behave in combat but also, as countless soldier narratives from countless conflicts reveal, about their own relationship to the complex geopolitical forces that manufacture wars in the first place. At least in the case of Kipling in the Boer War, the poet seems to have suffered the effects of “the fog of war” as much as the combatants he chronicled.

Rather than reinforcing the clear-cut binaries—right or wrong, brother or enemy, brave or cowardly—that make war comprehensible, I read many of Kipling’s poems from the Boer War period as unusually and refreshingly muddled. In particular, the “Service Songs,” which close *The Five Nations*, seem to depart from Kipling’s staunch advocacy (whether in a tone of celebration or warning) of British war efforts and, instead, depict and elicit a kind of human sympathy that undermines nationalist and imperialist group-think. The Boer War poems come from a short but significant period in Kipling’s career: one in which he showed a heightened willingness to consider whether England’s imperial aims truly justified the human consequences endured by the men, both British and Boer, whose deadly interactions allowed Britain to claim South Africa for the Empire.

⁷⁰ Clausewitz (1780-1831) was a Prussian general and military theorist. Here is his full description of “the fog of war”: “the great uncertainty of all data in War is a peculiar difficulty, because all action must, to a certain extent, be planned in a mere twilight, which in addition not unfrequently—like the effect of a fog or moonshine—gives to things exaggerated dimensions and an unnatural appearance” (63). “The fog of war” has become a military truism, and today’s soldiers (and war journalists) receive extensive preparedness training—training unavailable to British soldiers fighting in the Boer War.

Kipling's "Service Songs," like Naidu's romantic verses, explore the extent to which poetry can use affect to depict and to forge cross-cultural bonds and, thereby, prompt readers to question and re-evaluate what binds individuals to their nations and, perhaps more importantly, to each other.

Because this cross-cultural, multi-national context may, at first, seem an unusual one for reading Kipling's work, let me pause briefly before discussing the poems to situate my discussion of "Service Songs," first, critically and, then, within this broader school of global, English-language poets. In recent years, Kipling scholars—among them Daniel Karlin, David Bradshaw, and, on a more popular front, Christopher Hitchens—have definitively shown that Kipling's championing of British militarism bears no resemblance to the knee-jerk jingoism of which he was once accused. In fact, their work shows that Kipling's poetic and political support for British war efforts was consistently inflected with a sensitive awareness of the human suffering wrought by armed conflict. In particular, his sense of the moral ambiguities of sending ill-prepared young men into battle to correct the geostrategic errors of their elders was keen. In both Karlin's and Bradshaw's work, the Boer War poems mark Kipling's turn away from the rowdy fun of *Barrack Room Ballads* and toward the more thoughtful, somber, occasionally preachy, and firmly nationalistic poetry surrounding WWI. To be sure, the trajectory of Kipling's life and poetry bears out such readings; however, when the Boer War poems were composed even Kipling's remarkable foresight could not have predicted the resurgence of blunt nationalist pride that would be required to defend Britain and her colonies against Axis aggression.

In fact, as Steve Attridge and a few others have pointed out, the Boer War poems do not fit neatly as a point along a linear progression of Kipling's poetic development. Characterized, in Attridge's words, by "doubt" and a "wavering of belief in the British nation as the centrifugal force for an improving and ordered empire," the Boer War poems merit more than a critical gloss on the way to the WWI poems (85).⁷¹ The purpose of my work, here, is to consider Kipling's South African years as a discrete stage in his poetic career and as arguably the most experimental period of his intellectual and ideological evolution. Whereas Kipling's canon of WWI poems offer stalwart support of the nation, the empire, and the war while lamenting its human toll, the Boer War poems examine war's human toll in the context of questioning what Kipling knew with confidence at most other points in his life: that the British Empire could and should use its military prowess to defend and extend its imperial dominance.

Kipling's willingness to experiment poetically with alternatives to traditional nationalist narratives offers a new and unexpected context through which to consider his work. As I will show momentarily, Kipling's "Service Songs" depict unusual sympathies across national divides; deploy affective and sensory language to encourage uncomfortable readerly identifications; and use individuals' experiences to interrogate nationalist group allegiances. These moves link Kipling to a larger group of nineteenth-century English-language poets writing from a range of nationalist pressure points but responding with poems that share striking similarities. Barrett Browning, for example, championed the cause of the Italian *Risorgimento* through poems that reimagined

⁷¹ Hedley Twidle also notes Kipling's political and emotional disorientation during the Boer War years, describing his responses to the conflict as "confused, extreme, and often callous" (91).

nationality as an open, fluid set of emotional attachments. In India, Derozio and Dutt wrote formally and culturally hybrid English-language poems that depicted Indian national identity as an inclusive, pluralistic combining of Eastern and Western elements. And, in the closest parallel to Kipling, both in terms of political stature and poetic strategies, Naidu's poems created cross-cultural sympathy by evoking the universal feelings experienced in romantic love. Like Kipling, these poets wrote in environments charged by nationalist and imperialist tensions, and they were, like Kipling, eager to use poetry to explore alternatives to the exclusionary nationalist binaries that created the divisions that structured their lived experiences. By situating Kipling in this global poetic context, I seek to approach the Boer war poems in a new way, treating them as a discrete period within the larger canon of Kipling's martial poetry and examining how they reveal Kipling to be in conversation with a group of transnational English-language poets working from nationalist hot-spots the world over. With these contexts in mind, I now examine Kipling's "Service Songs."

In "Service Songs," the intensity of Kipling's interrogation of what he usually holds to be true about British national identity and imperial rectitude correlates to a poem's degree of sensational description. Many of the poems in *The Five Nations* have been read as didactic, cautionary, and consistent with nineteenth-century imperial ideology; the collection includes, for example, "Kitchener's School" and "The White Man's Burden." Yet, in the highly sensory "Service Songs" section, Kipling's poems depict British ways of knowing as clouded by the fog of war or, more specifically, as undermined by individual combat experiences. Rashna Singh points particularly to Kipling's concern with British perceptions of individuality and the ways in which he

imagined the intimacy of cross-cultural military encounters as challenging these notions. In her reading of Kipling's "Arithmetic on the Frontier," Singh suggests that, for Kipling, military conflict revealed a kind of human common denominator, requiring one to "scoff at the very qualities that constituted Anglo-Saxon manhood" and that supposedly distinguished the British as superior to their opponents (116). Singh's work focuses on Kipling's poetic engagement with the Second Afghan War (1878-1880). However, Kipling's doubts about British exceptionalism—which he was reluctant to articulate in prose or speech—manifest themselves similarly in his Boer War poetry: in depictions of intense, intimate, individual encounters that provoke readerly questioning of national and imperial narratives of identity. Kipling's argumentative strategy in "Service Songs" is evocative rather than pedagogic. Kipling's fighting men in "Service Songs" recount horrific combat experiences that forge bonds between British and Boer soldiers: bonds that defy what they know about their adversarial, geostrategic relationship to each other. Dan Jacobson, in his reading of "Service Songs," calls poems like these "reconciliation poems"; poems that Kipling "clearly intended to promote a process of healing between the two 'races'" (60). For Jacobson, though, Kipling's magnanimous tone is made possible only because Britain ultimately prevailed in the conflict: these "reconciliation poems" remain "victor's poems" (60). By my reading, however, these poems seem imbued by a humanism forged amid the grim realities of combat and by a recognition that the experiences of all soldiers, regardless of their side, are harrowing in much the same way. Indeed, as Singh points out, Kipling's poems "reveal a clear-sighted understanding of what war is really about and are, in their way, as anti-heroic" as some of WWI's most

well-known anti-war poems (Singh 104). “Service Songs” seem to share more with the work of Siegfried Sassoon or Wilfred Owen than with Kipling’s early poetry.⁷²

The most cited examples of Kipling’s “reconciliation poems” are “Chant-Pagan” and “Piet,” which opens with the famous lines: “What is the sense of ’atin’ those/Oom you are paid to kill” (1-2). Here, I focus on lesser-studied poems, the “Half-Ballad of Waterval,” “The Wilful Missing,” and “The Return.” The “Half-Ballad of Waterval” explores the complex sympathies of wartime in a most somber, sensory mode. Right away, Kipling’s title signals something unusual: the ballad, of course, is a particularly English form with strong nationalist associations within English poetic tradition. But what is a “half-ballad”? Furthermore, this “Half-Ballad” depicts a human connection at odds with patriotic sentiment and national duty. Here, sympathy—so often celebrated in Kipling’s poems for its powerful bonding together of brothers-in-arms—goes rogue, connecting the British soldier not only to his comrades but to his enemies. Consider how vividly Kipling depicts the physical and emotional experiences the soldiers share. As he supervises Boer prisoners, a British guard recalls his own physical experience of captivity. Kipling’s language highlights the bodily registering of the emotional and mental hardships of war, even describing the soldier’s thoughts—“’Ells own thinkin’”—as embodied and tactile, capable of being felt, held, and weighed “on their ’ands.” I reproduce the poem in full here.

⁷² Singh broadly suggests a comparison between Kipling’s poems and those of Owen. More specifically, Kipling’s depictions of the brotherhood that forms between soldiers, sometimes across enemy lines, seem to anticipate the other-worldly connections between fighting men in Owen’s “Strange Meeting” (1919) or in Sassoon’s “Sick Leave” (1918). Though Kipling was more familiar with the aftermath of combat than with fighting itself, his descriptions of battle are less sustained but as evocative as Sassoon’s in “Counter-Attack” (1918).

When by the labour of my 'ands
I've 'elped to pack a transport tight
With prisoners for foreign lands,
I ain't transported with delight.
I know it's only just an' right
But yet it somehow sickens me,
For I 'ave learned at Waterval
The meanin' of captivity.

Be'ind the pegged bard-wire strands,
Beneath the tall electric light,
We used to walk in bare-'ead bands,
Explainin' 'ow we lost our fight.
An' that is what they'll do to-night
Upon the steamer out at sea,
If I 'ave learned at Waterval
The meanin' of captivity.

They'll never know the shame that brands—
Black shame no livin' down makes white,
The mockin' from the sentry-stands,
The women's laugh, the gaoler's spite.
We are too bloomin' much polite,
But that is 'ow I'd 'ave us be...
Since I have learned at Waterval
The meanin' of captivity.

They'll get those draggin' days all right,
Spent as a foreigner commands,
An' 'orror of the lock-up night,
With 'Ells own thinkin' on their 'ands.
I'd give the gold o' twenty Rands
(If it was mine) to set 'em free...
For I have learned at Waterval
The meanin' of captivity!

The soldier's sympathy for the Boer prisoners—born out of his own recollections of captivity—leads to his assertion that he would “give the gold o' twenty Rands” to spare them his experience. He claims to know that what he is doing is right, but both his heart and his stomach rebel. The individual soldier's bewilderment—his keen sense that fulfilling his patriotic duty requires actions that “sicken” him—represents a fissure rarely

seen in Kipling's poetry between the demands of national military service and individual morality.

Despite the clear division of British and Boers into different camps by the italicized "We" and "They," "Half-Ballad of Waterval" offers the antithesis of Kipling's tendency to meld individual soldiers into what James Whitehead calls, in his reading of Thomas Hardy's Boer War poems, a "group consciousness" (133). The poem shows how human sympathy blurs the artificial divisions erected between human beings by national, imperial, and military ideologies. But it also displays the crisis of conscience in an individual soldier who, at the poem's conclusion, remains torn between the knowledge he holds in himself of the horrors of captivity and the task his nation has assigned him in service of its military machine. Like a more traditional ballad, Kipling's "half-ballad" is imbued with the culture of its place of origin. But, unlike in so many of Kipling's earlier ballads, the soldier-singer of the "half-ballad" feels neither bonded by his war-time experience to his fellow British soldiers nor convinced, by his faith in Britain's moral authority, of the justice of the prisoners' fate.⁷³ "Half-Ballad of Waterval" is truly only half of a ballad: Kipling's soldier performs the role of the balladeer, but his song reveals less about his community than about his personal sense of isolation from it. The empathy

⁷³ Kipling's "Danny Deever" (1890) provides a particularly telling contrast. The poem details the responses of several members of a troop to watching the public hanging of their comrade, Danny Deever, for murder. Particularly "the Colour Sargent," the only solitary voice that speaks in the poem, dreads to witness the act—"I'm dreading what I've got to watch" (4)—and feels deep sympathy for Danny Deever's suffering both before and during the hanging. Yet, despite their sympathy, none of the men question the decision to hang Deever because his actions brought "Nine 'undred of 'is county an' the Regiment's disgrace" (23). This experience of war time brutality binds the men who witness it together, reinforcing their commitment to upholding the high moral standards of the country they serve.

he feels with his enemies disrupts the cohesion of his cultural or national narrative.

Kipling's identification of his poem as a "half-ballad," then, serves to foreground the tension that wartime creates between individuals and their communities.

In "Half-Ballad of Waterval," Kipling confines his dramatization of unusual wartime sympathies to the poem's speaker. In "The Wilful Missing" he uses the same poetic strategies to demand a similarly perverse sympathy from his readers for that most despised military man: the deserter. Here, we see Kipling's soldiers dismiss the loyalties, both national and personal, that bind a man to his regiment, pointing to (though refusing to name) the horrors of war as their reason. Speaking together, the deserters deny readers' inquiries into their justifications for desertion, stating simply: "There are some things too bitter 'ard to bear" (34). Kipling hints at the nature of these "things" as he forces upon readers a vivid explanation of the grotesque and deeply personal business of desertion. To escape, the men perform an unconscionable switch-a-roo, trading clothes with the fallen who are left unrecognizable by wounds, exposure, and vulture activity:

They can't be certain—faces alter so
After the old aasvogel's 'as 'is share;
The uniform's the mark by which they go—
And—ain't it odd?—the one we best can spare. (9-12)

Kipling's jaunty rhythm offers quick passage through the stanza, but even a brief consideration of the mechanics of dressing a vulture-ravaged comrade in one's own uniform jolts a reader out of the easy flow of Kipling's lines. "The Wilful Missing" offers one of three examples in *The Five Nations* of catastrophic facial injuries, wounds that literally rob soldiers of their personhood and stand for Kipling as the summa of wartime

horrors.⁷⁴ Ultimately, the men of “The Wilful Missing” enact a cruel double erasure: as deserters they disappear but they also rob the bodies of their last potential form of identification, forcing those men to falsely stand in their stead at funereal services and in family plots. And, yet, Kipling commands for them his readers’ sympathy.

In the final stanza of “The Wilful Missing” Kipling asks: “What man can weigh or size another’s woe?” (33). On one level, the question denies another person’s right to judgment: after all, no one can know another’s heart. But, in the context of this poem, Kipling’s question seems designed to promote identification: given what these men have seen, done, and felt, perhaps every person should be able to imaginatively inhabit “another’s woe.” In the “Half-Ballad of Waterval,” shared sensations justify sympathy with the enemy, and in “The Wilful Missing,” the horrors we encounter through other men’s eyes demand our sympathy. In these poems, sensory and affective connections between individuals clearly call into question the morality of the nationalist and imperialist ideologies that involve them in war.

Kipling positions the experience of unusual, war-time connections—across enemy lines and in violation of war’s moral code—as crucial to the coming-of-age of the British soldier. *The Five Nations*’ penultimate poem, “The Return,” describes from an individual soldier’s perspective the war-time education of a young man or, as Kipling calls it in the first and final stanzas, “the makin’s of a bloomin’ soul” (20). Kipling emphasizes in this

⁷⁴ Kipling’s imagining of the destruction of the face as the summa of wartime horror makes R. Rider Haggard’s decision, in the aftermath of John Kipling’s death in WWI, not to tell Kipling of what a soldier had reported to him all the more humane: the young man “could swear” he saw John “trying to fasten a field dressing round his mouth which was badly shattered by a piece of shell” and “crying with the pain” (Ricketts 327).

poem, as in many others in the collection, the sensory confusion of the South African combat environment:

Rivers at night that cluck an' jeer,
Plains which the moonshine turns to sea,
Mountains that never let you near,
An' stars to all eternity;
An' the quick-breathin' dark that fills
The 'ollows of the wilderness,
When the wind worries through the 'ills— (21-27)

The South African rivers make unnatural, menacing sounds; bone-dry land appears as water; the mountains are ever-visible but elusive; and the wind—like the disoriented British soldier—“worries” as she moves across the landscape. In this environment of confusion, the soldier reaches out to others—certainly to his comrades in imperial arms, as many critics have noted, but also perhaps to men fighting for the other side. Consider the expansiveness of the human sympathies Kipling describes in “The Return”:

'An men from both two 'emispheres
Discussin' things of every kind
So much more near than I 'ad known
So much more great than I 'ad guessed
An' me, like all the rest, alone—
But reachin' out to all the rest. (47-52)

Kipling's reference to “two 'emispheres” can and has been read as celebrating the shared military work of English men and their imperial brethren from Canada, New Zealand, Australia, and South Africa. However, there is nothing in the poem itself that excludes Boer fighters from “all the rest,” and we know—from soldiers' accounts and, more importantly, from Kipling's poem “Chant-Pagan”—that British and Boer soldiers often interacted with and befriended each other. Kipling's repetition of “all the rest” seems to encompass all the fighting men who are “alone/But reachin' out.” Moreover, in the

disorientation of the Boer War, a British soldier can never really be sure with whom he's speaking—not, at least, until the catastrophic violence of war interrupts the intense, affective connections that war's deprivations and anxieties forge:

An' quiet, 'omesick talks between
Men, met by night, you never knew
Until—'is face—by shellfire seen—
once an' struck off. (33-36)

Soldiers—British, Australian, New Zealander, Canadian, South African, and Boer—are more the same than different in these poems, and Kipling's highly sensory mode demands sympathy from his readers, not just for the imperial troops, but for all fighting men and even for those who once fought but refuse to do so any longer: truly “All the rest.”

For Kipling, poetry provided a way to explore doubts and anxieties about Britain's national and imperial identity that were uncomfortable for him to articulate. Kipling longed, even many years after the concluding of what he considered a disastrous peace, for South Africa to become an imperial partner to England in the way that Canada had done in the decades since her 1867 confederation. He hoped that Australia, which confederated during the war in 1901, and New Zealand, which was granted Dominion status in 1907, would provide fresher examples. Yet, Kipling's fears that South African self-government would look vastly different—particularly in its treatment of non-white people—from that of the rest of the British Empire turned out to be prescient. Kipling was deeply disappointed and unsettled by Britain's handling of the Boer War; however, the conflicting emotions about Britain's national and imperial future that he experienced during this time prompted him to write poetry that imagined what human interactions

might look like in defiance of these ideologies. As the rigid divisions that undergird nationalist conflicts break down and are replaced by cross-national sympathy, Kipling's Boer War soldier comes to share less with Tommy Atkins and more with the culturally crossed lovers of Naidu's lyrics in *The Bird of Time* or the cosmopolitan nationalist who sings *Casa Guidi Windows*. For Kipling and many other English-language poets working in conflict-zones—Italy in the mid-nineteenth century, South Africa at the turn of the century, and India throughout the long nineteenth century—traditional nationalist narratives, specifically their use of national or imperial allegiance to justify violence and repression, seemed to call out for re-examination. Bearing witness to the tragic human consequences of nationalist fervor amplified these poets' sense of the affective interconnectedness of individuals and of the durability and flexibility of human sympathy. In the fog of the Boer War, Kipling turned to poetry to consider seriously how human connectedness might undermine and offer an alternative to the nationalist and imperialist narratives that not only made war but made it comprehensible and justifiable.

Ultimately, Kipling never fully committed to the humanism his Boer War poems explore. By WWI, Kipling's well-documented fear and hatred of the Germans combined with the existential nature of their threat re-solidified his surety that Britain should project her geopolitical dominance globally. While Kipling was throughout most of his life a staunch supporter of Britain's imperial mission and a purveyor of her national grandeur, he was not incapable of seeing that imperialism (as a grand system) would be difficult to sustain against the human pull of identification with the people and the places with whom one is intimate. Thus, these moments of individual encounter that Kipling captures in *The Five Nations* explore a more cosmopolitan kind of model that works

against hierarchical structures of all kinds: most immediately of the British class system but also of the imperial system which has placed these men (who in fact share a great deal) in deadly combat with each other. Kipling's "Service Songs" suggest that even among the strongest proponents of empire, there was a need to explore how cross-cultural and transnational sympathies, once experienced and acknowledged, might shape the way that people understood their national identity and the way they participated, thereafter, in imperial practices and policies.

Conclusions

Kipling's Boer War poems and their presentation of cross-cultural sympathies and transnational connections as an integral part of "the makin's" of British and imperial citizens further undermines the tired-out caricature of Kipling as arch-imperialist jingo. Moreover, when we examine these poems, their ideological arguments, and their poetic strategies, Kipling emerges as an important poetic voice in global, English-language renegotiations of nationalist and imperialist discourse in the long nineteenth century. Kipling's Boer War poems are neither instrumental—the necessary precursors of the more weighty, important WWI-era poems—nor are they merely personal—the simple expressions of Kipling's brief crisis of imperial faith. Instead, they are bound up in deep and complex ways with the questions that unite—across geopolitical, racial, cultural, religious, and gender boundaries—the poets who serve as my case studies in this dissertation and many others poets of the long nineteenth century as well.

Critical responses to Kipling's *The Five Nations*, for example, reveal that the poet's responsibility to speak for the nation outlived the nineteenth century. To cite but

two examples, the *Athenaeum* in 1903 found that Kipling's poems were "disappointing" when "touching large human issues, in speaking the thoughts of a nation" (474-475), whereas the *London Quarterly Review* in 1904 trumpeted him as "the poet voice of England" who "has represented the deepest thoughts and hopes of *The Five Nations* with... felicity and force" (187). Furthermore, the *Athenaeum's* response to *The Five Nations* shows the extent to which the debate about whether poets should or poetry could argue still thrived in the early twentieth century. Reaching to the opening decades of the nineteenth century to quote John Keats and then echoing mid-century critical responses to Barrett Browning's Italian poems, the *Athenaeum* complains:

We hate poetry, said a great poet, that has a palpable design upon us. The most familiar part of this volume is open to such aversion; we have had Mr. Kipling's lessons concerning kinship, geography, war, and politics so dinned into our ears by his and other forcible means that they now seem stale, innovations which have become truisms, a belated second helping to a not always palatable dish." (474)

The volume is too "loud" in its pronouncements, lacking subtlety, sensitivity, and the "inspired way" of speaking and thinking that "alone is poetry" (474). Again, recalling criticisms of Barrett Browning's Italian poetry, the *Athenaeum* questions whether Kipling's political verses are really "poetry," suggesting that their practical, political arguments might disqualify them from the lofty, aesthetic designation. It seems that even during the years that Krebs has described as "the height of literary figures' involvement in public debate on political issues in Britain" (144), some literary critics remained unsure that poetry could survive its participation in politics.⁷⁵

⁷⁵ Critics, of course, worried less about fiction. As Krebs argues at length, "In according authority to imaginative writers on questions of empire, the Victorian press and reading publics were acknowledging the importance of fiction to the fact of empire—the necessity of cultural support for the political/economic/military venture of war" (144).

Some recent scholarly engagements with Kipling's *The Five Nations* reveal continuities between current, nineteenth-, and early-twentieth century critical responses to Barrett Browning and Naidu. Critics both then and now have resisted in various ways attributing the cosmopolitanism of these poems to these poets. For example, Tim Kendall recently argued that Kipling's soldiers in *The Five Nations* expressed opinions that the writer himself did not hold: "As the soldiers' friend, witnessing war at first hand, Kipling accumulates the right to a political poetry. But his own politics rarely inform the attitudes of his soldiers, who convey a diversity of responses which resists dilution to a simple pro-war message" ("Modern" 30). Kendall credits Kipling for writing "a poetry which can be tentative, self-doubting, and compassionate" and for "achieving a polyvocal range... which at least gestures towards the variety of opinions about, and experiences of, the Boer War" ("Modern" 30). However, he resists reading Kipling's poems—as he reads Thomas Hardy's poems—as "disguised lyrics" that "[channel] his own ethical and political predilections through the cipher of other people" (Kendall, "Modern" 37). Instead, Kipling's poems are "dramatic monologues... worthy of the name"; in order to write them, he "carries out... acts of sympathy and self-annihilation" (Kendall, "Modern" 37). Kendall's strategy of reading Kipling's poems as dramatic monologues that do not reflect his personal, intellectual, or political commitments should ring familiar: it is the same strategy used by the *Saturday Review* to dismiss Barrett Browning's political arguments in *Poems Before Congress* (1860).

Quoting Deirdre David's *Rule Britannia* (1995), Krebs argues that fiction—though not poetry—"had long included empire in its material, 'imaginatively collaborat[ing] with structures of civil and military power'" (144). Kipling's choice to make his contribution to Britain's Boer War debates in poetry as well as his sometimes harsh tone was responsible, Krebs argues, for "riling his readers mightily" (161).

The seriousness of these poets' political arguments fare little better when lyrical reading conventions—of the type Virginia Jackson critiques in *Dickinson's Misery* (2005)—are applied. Jackson argues that lyric reading practices from the nineteenth century to today strip poetry of its historical and social contexts. According to her, “other poetic genres... remain embedded in specific historical occasions or narratives,” but “the poetry that comes to be understood as lyric after the eighteenth century is thought to require as its context only the occasion of its reading” (7). Jackson's book traces the evolution of lyric reading through multiple critical schools; however, she eventually concludes that the twentieth-century “trope of the lyric ‘speaker’” merely replaces the nineteenth-century trope of lyric as unmediated, contextless birdsong (230). We can clearly see this kind of reading practice at work in critical treatments of Kipling's and Naidu's political poems. Consider, for example, Attridge's explanation of the imperial “doubt” expressed in Kipling's *The Five Nations*: “It is as if the private soldier, perhaps like Kipling himself, had lost his bearings and his authority during the Boer War” (89). Attridge imagines Kipling's Boer War poems as offering a kind of personal catharsis that, once attained, allowed him to get back to his real political work. Attridge claims that “Kipling's doubts are expressed through these ballads and in this sense of the soldier being displaced from nation and empire, the Boer war marks a moment when Kipling's dream of empire begins to waver” (89-91). After these anxious, personal poems, Kipling “retreats from the dream of Empire” and, notably, from poetry and back into the realm of fiction, where he resumes in a highly self-conscious way the political work of performing a stable, English national identity (Attridge 89-91). This reading of Kipling's poems as personal and cathartic surely recalls Meena Alexander's reading of Sarojini Naidu's

poems as the necessary means of exorcizing her “agonizing conflicts” (62) and her “private pain” (51). Like Kipling in Attridge’s account, Naidu abandons poetry once she achieves psychological release and only then takes up in earnest the political work of securing an independent India. Kipling’s Boer War poems, like Naidu’s romantic and devotional verses, seemed at odds with their public personas as Britain’s staunchest defender of Empire and as the new Indian nation’s indefatigable “Nightingale.” Whether read as dramatic or as lyrical, the political intent of these poems has, until quite recently, been dulled or denied by critical practices that do not reflect the seriousness of their engagement with the socio-politics of their day.

The overlaps in critical responses to Kipling’s *The Five Nations* and to the poetry of Barrett Browning and Naidu point to the myriad difficulties political poets—eminent, little-known, Western, and Eastern alike—faced in gaining a hearing for their challenges to nationalist and imperialist discourse. The obvious complexities and contradictions within their relationships to nationalism and imperialism have further complicated critical willingness to read them together as a global English-language school. In the case of each poet discussed here, there are some poems that reinforce rather than challenge traditional nationalist or imperialist discourses. In Kipling’s case, a poem like “Kitchener’s School” or “Danny Deever” projects an entirely different attitude to imperialism and imperialist discourse than a poem like “Half-Ballad of Waterval.” For Barrett Browning, as I noted briefly in my Introduction, Italy was a special case: the cosmopolitan nationalism she espoused in her Italian poetry was non-transferable to other—particularly non-Western—geopolitical situations. Barrett Browning’s “The Romance of the Ganges” (1838), for example, was published only three years after Macaulay’s *Minute* and set in India. But,

for her, the Indian landscape does not elicit interrogations of imperialism but merely offers an exoticized setting in which to conduct her potentially controversial critique of British sexual mores. In the poetry of Dutt, Derozio, and Naidu, there are inconsistencies in their championing of cosmopolitan nationalism as well. Dutt's "The Royal Ascetic and the Hind" condemns the religious practice of asceticism, and Derozio produced a small number of poems (within an already small poetic corpus) that were fairly criticized by his nineteenth-century critics as imitative of Western poets. Even Naidu, the most consistent champion of cosmopolitan nationalism discussed here, has been critiqued for her regionalism or, specifically, for her use of Hyderabad as an unattainable example of intercultural cooperation for India more broadly. Kipling and these other English-language poet-challengers of nationalist and imperialist discourse present us with numerous contradictions. Yet, like Kipling's front-line Boer and British soldiers, what they share—their belief in poetry as a powerful tool of political resistance, their use of affect to forge cross-cultural sympathies, and their willingness (whether lasting or fleeting) to interrogate divisive nationalist narratives—creates unorthodox but strong connections between them that merit and reward close critical attention.

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