

NINETEENTH-CENTURY BRITISH NATIONALISM AND THE POETICS OF EXILE

by

MONICA RAE SMITH

(Under the Direction of Tricia Lootens)

ABSTRACT

This study focuses on the intersections between exile and nationalism in nineteenth-century British verse, arguing that exile, as both historical reality and literary trope, paradoxically serves as a foundation for the ideas and ideologies of nationhood. The primary texts underscore the range of exilic experience and patriotic positions in Romantic and Victorian poetry and include both canonical works and texts by relatively unknown poets: George Gordon, Lord Byron's *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage*; Charlotte Smith's *The Emigrants*; Elizabeth Barrett Browning's *Casa Guidi Windows*; Ellen Johnston's *Autobiography, Poems and Songs of Ellen Johnston, The Factory Girl*; and Alfred, Lord Tennyson's *Maud*. Close examination of exile in these works reveals the multitude of ways in which their authors sought to create national identity: Britain as heir to Western artistic ideals, Britain as home of the oppressed, Britain as the next great imperial power. After all, this is the age when Britain becomes the empire on which the sun never sets, an imperial territory unmatched by any before it in the modern world. As Britain grew larger and more powerful, however, it became increasingly more difficult, as William Butler Yeats later would write, for the center to hold. Thus over the course of the century, British poets struggled to make sense of how a tiny island in northern Europe could hope to contain an ever growing segment of the globe, particularly during a time of such conflict over what it meant to become or remain a nation. In order to understand the nation and the empire as each was reformed in a nineteenth-century context, these poets thought it necessary to remove themselves from their homeland. In order to see Britain, to understand and write about it, they had to leave it, whether literally or metaphorically.

INDEX WORDS: exile; self-exile; expatriate; nationalism; Romantic; Victorian; poetry; George Gordon, Lord Byron; Charlotte Smith; Elizabeth Barrett Browning; Ellen Johnston; Alfred, Lord Tennyson; working-class; Italy; Greece; England; Britain

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DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to my parents and my husband with tremendous love, affection, and gratitude.

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It may take a village to raise a child, but it took a metropolis to raise me from graduate student to degree candidate to prospective Ph.D. Perhaps I am excessively needy and require lots of attention; if so, I hope I am equally excessive and attentive with my gratitude—for I owe tremendous thanks to so many people.

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before the year was out, that class would be solely responsible for turning me from an American Lit person to a British Lit person, a twentieth-century person to a nineteenth-century person, and from a novels person to a poetry person—a change that has made me profoundly happy, and for which I am most grateful. I owe a particular debt of thanks to Robin Warren, Jeff Marker, and my husband David Hart, who were all there to witness my abrupt and rapid about-face, for not laughing at me too much either then or now.

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INTRODUCTION

WRITING BACK TOWARD HOME: EXILE AND NINETEENTH-CENTURY BRITAIN

Exile is strangely compelling to think about but terrible to experience. It is the unhealable rift forced between a human being and a native place, between the self and its true home: its essential sadness can never be surmounted. And while it is true that literature and history contain heroic, romantic, glorious, even triumphant episodes in an exile's life, these are no more than efforts meant to overcome the crippling sorrow of estrangement. The achievements of exile are permanently undermined by the loss of something left behind forever.

Edward Said, "Reflections on Exile"

Whoever lives true life, will love true love.
I learnt to love that England.

Elizabeth Barrett Browning, *Aurora Leigh*

This study addresses the ways that exile, as both historical reality and literary trope, paradoxically serves as a gateway to understanding the ideas and ideologies of nationhood in nineteenth-century British verse. I explore a range of exilic experience and patriotic positions in Romantic and Victorian poetry, including both canonical and relatively unknown poets: Charlotte Smith; George Gordon, Lord Byron; Elizabeth Barrett Browning; Ellen Johnston; and Alfred, Lord Tennyson. Close examination of exilic strains in their verse reveals the multitude of ways in which these authors sought to create national identity through an exilic stance: Britain as heir to Western artistic ideals, Britain as home of the oppressed, Britain as the next great imperial power.

Undergirding the entire project is the assertion that British political poets who employ exilic stances gain some understanding of the nation that other British political poets do not. Because exile affords poets the vantage point of outsiders, they can step outside of conventional “Britishness” in an attempt to understand not only their own particular British identities but also Britishness as a whole. This dual process of disentanglement and subsequent refocusing allows the poet to attempt a clearer and more coherent commentary on both the creation and the status quo of national identity.

Because any act of understanding involves both the act of knowing and the thing which is known, British political poets concerned with understanding the nation in formation find themselves compromised by two things: their location within the nation and the fluidity of the thing they wish to know. These writers are trying to know something that they are a part of, which limits their vision of both the subject (themselves as British) and the object (Britishness). While in this instance no distinct split between the subject and the object exists, it is precisely such a split that the political poet craves in order to attempt a kind of critical, ambitious comment about the nation. Poets deeply concerned with fashioning a critique of the nation therefore must find a way to disentangle themselves from their membership within the nation as a whole, thus freeing themselves from both the limitations of their subjectivity and from the circumference of their object. All of the writers I will address fashion an exilic speaker in order to take advantage of such a paradoxical, dual vantage point. Exile provides a way for the poetic persona, sometimes clearly autobiographical and sometimes not, to be simultaneously part of the nation and outside of the nation.

i. “There is no world without Verona walls”: Exile from Britain

In *The Excellent and Lamentable Tragedy of Romeo and Juliet*, Shakespeare visits upon his young romantic hero a horrible punishment for a Verona nobleman: banishment. As a Montague who has murdered a Capulet, even while avenging the death of a friend, Romeo cannot escape the awful power of the state; Escalus, Prince of Verona, swiftly and unmercifully commands that for his “offence / Immediately we do exile him hence” (3.1.181-182).¹ If Romeo will not leave, he will be executed: “Let Romeo hence in haste, / Else, when he is found, that hour is his last” (3.1.188-189). Such is the portrait of exile with which we are most familiar: the power of the state visited upon the individual, either in retribution for a crime committed or in an attempt to control activities underway. But exile is a larger and more complicated phenomenon than straightforward judicial or monarchical decree, something that Romeo well appreciates. He flees to Friar Laurence, crying that

There is no world without Verona walls
But purgatory, torture, hell itself.
Hence banishéd is banished from the world,
And world’s exile is death. Then ‘banishéd’
Is death mistermed. (3.3.17-21)

“Death mistermed”: for many victims of exile, that is exactly what exile feels like—a death sentence. Romeo knows that this punishment will rob him of everything he loves as well as negate everything he has come to believe himself to be: citizen of Verona, heir to a noble house and name. He will no longer be what he was, and he will forever be a man without his home.

Friar Laurence, in a well-meaning but unsuccessful attempt to calm his young friend, admonishes him for what he sees as an unnecessarily theatrical reaction:

O deadly sin, O rude unthankfulness!
Thy fault our law calls death, but the kind Prince,

¹ William Shakespeare, *The Excellent and Lamentable Tragedy of Romeo and Juliet*, *The Norton Shakespeare*, ed. Stephen Greenblatt (New York: W.W. Norton, 1997) 865-941.

Taking thy part, hath rushed aside the law

And turned that black word 'death' to banishment.
This is dear mercy, and thou seest it not. (3.3.24-28).

Indeed Romeo does not see the mercy in his punishment, for “banishment” is a far blacker word than “death” for him—“ 'Tis torture, and not mercy” (3.3.29), he bitterly replies. Exile removes him from the people and the place he treasures, and such a punishment seems crueler than death. It is this wrenching from home, this imprisonment through exclusion rather than containment, that makes exile so powerful a force.

Of course, both Shakespeare's England and the Verona he creates for his Romeo were very different places than the Britain of two centuries later, and it may seem strange to rely upon an early modern play to establish a context for nineteenth-century exile. Yet such an analogy makes a perfect kind of sense when we view it through a nationalist lens. The rise of the modern English nation-state and its corresponding liberal nationalism, both acknowledged products of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, have their roots in the age of Shakespeare, the time of Restoration and Reformation:

By the early seventeenth century, those elements which together form the marrow of nationalism were already present in England. The roots of nationalism were already embedded in the English national character. The sense of national pride was strong. Shakespeare recognized the spirit. In *Henry V*, the King speaks to 'you good yeomen, whose limbs were made in England,' and urged the cry 'God for Harry! England! and St. George!'.²

Shakespeare's nation not only would see the beginnings of a new nationalism, however, but also would soon see its king exiled, only to have him restored to the throne eleven years later. Early English nationalism was a complicated and tenuous phenomenon, and so it would remain.

² Louis L. Snyder, *Encyclopedia of Nationalism* (New York: Paragon House, 1990) xvii.

By the end of the eighteenth-century, though, the exilic upheaval of the Interregnum and the Restoration seemed to be a thing of the past, since neither royals nor subjects, barring complete revolution and political upheaval, could be exiled from this Britain, a point *Blackstone's Commentaries on the Laws of England* makes patently clear. “A natural and regular consequence” of the personal liberty guaranteed to every freeborn “Englishman” was that he could “claim a right to abide in his own country so long as he pleases.”³ While a king may, “by his royal prerogative, [. . .] issue out his writ *ne exeat regnum*, and prohibit any of his subjects from going into foreign parts without licence,” since such prohibitions may “be necessary for the public service and safeguard of the commonwealth,” even the monarch could not permanently banish a subject: “no power on earth, except the authority of parliament, can send any subject of England *out of* the land against his will.”⁴

Indeed, British law was “so benignly and liberally construed for the benefit of the subject,” that while the monarch might compel service within the borders of the realm, “command[ing] the attendance and service of all his liegemen,” he could not “send any man *out of* the realm, even upon the public service; excepting sailors and soldiers, the nature of whose employment necessarily implies an exception.”⁵ Even forcing a man to take an ambassadorial position against his will would amount to a violation of these protections against exile: “[The king] cannot even constitute a man lord deputy, or lieutenant of Ireland against his will, nor

³ William Blackstone, *Commentaries on the Laws of England*, Vol 1 (Chicago: Callaghan and Company, 1884) 136.

⁴ Blackstone 136.

⁵ Blackstone 136.

make him a foreign ambassador. For this might in reality be no more than an honorable exile.”⁶ British subjects were seemingly protected from exile of any form, honorable or not.

Even criminals were exempt from such punishment, since “exile, and transportation, are punishments at present unknown to the common law; and, whenever the latter is now inflicted, it is either by the choice of the criminal himself to escape a capital punishment, or else by the express direction of some modern act of parliament.”⁷ In other words, a convicted man could choose transportation to the colonies, but this was not conceived of as exile by the state. Rather, the attitude was that if this ungrateful, unpatriotic person preferred life in another place to execution in England, well then, let him go: “Persons capitally convicted are frequently pardoned on condition of their being transported for life.”⁸ But no one in nineteenth-century England was “sentenced” to exile or banishment.

Perhaps these legal realities help to explain why a book like Charles Connell’s *World Famous Exiles*, a text that surveys and catalogues exactly what the title promises, includes no Britons between Charles II (1630-1685) and James Joyce (1882-1941). Other “famous exiles” of the period are included: Madame de Staël, Napoleon, Victor Hugo, Giuseppe Garibaldi, Gauguin. But the book includes no one from Great Britain, not even Byron, certainly a famous exile if there ever was one. Why would Connell make such a choice? Not because he decided to limit his text to those individuals who were exiled by the state, given that Gauguin’s exile, for instance, has far more in common with someone like Byron than with someone like Napoleon. The reason for the absence of British subjects in this and most every other study that

⁶ Blackstone 138.

⁷ Blackstone 136.

⁸ Blackstone 136, fn. 17.

encompasses nineteenth-century exile in the Western world is threefold: first, the nineteenth-century British government did not officially exile anyone; second, during the nineteenth-century, Britain was free of the kind of domestic political upheaval that sent citizens of other nations into exile; third, and most significantly, Britain was known to the rest of the world as the great home for exiles. Over the course of the century, scores of political exiles, even powerful and potentially volatile ones, found welcome and sanctuary (albeit sometimes short-lived) in England.⁹

Émigrés fleeing the French revolution, mostly aristocrats and those with royalist sympathies, began arriving in England in 1789, with a second wave of French exiles arriving in 1792, this time exiled clergy.¹⁰ Both groups were influential in establishing an French émigré journalistic community that prospered in London between 1792 and 1815.¹¹ In 1812, following the 1808 French invasion of Spain, numbers of Spaniards arrived in England; after absolutism was restored in Spain in 1823, another swell of liberals landed on English shores.¹² The 1820s and 30s brought various revolutions in several Italian states, and as a result, yet another group found sanctuary in England: persecuted Italian revolutionaries and supporters of the Italian *Risorgimento*, perhaps most famously Giuseppe Mazzini and Giuseppe Garibaldi. The 1830s also brought Polish and German exiles to Britain, again groups fleeing political upheavals in

⁹ Italian patriot Giuseppe Garibaldi, for example, found a warm reception in Britain, even though he soon decided to leave; see chapter four, “Factory Girl, Factory Exile: Ellen Johnston’s *Autobiography, Poems and Songs*,” for more.

¹⁰ Charlotte Smith deals with the plight of both groups of exiles in *The Emigrants*, a verse I address in Chapter one, “For I too have known Involuntary exile”: Charlotte Smith’s Poetics of Exile.”

¹¹ An Oxford Companion to the Romantic Age British Culture 1776-1832, Iain McCalman, gen ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999) 495. See also Velicu, Versions of Exile Morality: Refugees in Britain, 1790-1845.

¹² Elizabeth Barrett Browning addresses this period in Spanish history in her verse “On a Picture of Riego’s Wife,” a poem I discuss in Chapter three, “‘Exiled is not lost’: E.B.B.’s Exile and Her Nationalisms.”

their homelands.¹³ The continental revolutions of 1848 sent significant numbers of German exiles to England:

By the summer of 1849 uprisings all over Europe had been put down, and reactionary governments and monarchs who had been temporarily unseated had returned to power and were pursuing their repressive policies as before. From Paris, Brussels, Cologne, even Geneva and Zurich, which had been alternative refuges for some exiles before 1848, liberals and radicals were now systematically expelled. They came to England.¹⁴

Hungarian exiles, notably Lajos Kossuth and Ferencz Pulszky, also found British refuge in the wake of the 1848 uprisings.¹⁵ Britain's reputation for sheltering exiles continued across the century; Karl Marx wrote *Das Kapital* from his exilic home in England, and Sun Yatsen, Chinese revolutionary against the late nineteenth-century Manchu regime, found asylum in London at the end of the century.¹⁶

In the face of Britain's reputation as a sanctuary for displaced people, scholarship on exile neglects the nineteenth century: biographies of individual exiles can be found, but larger studies of Britain and exile in the nineteenth century are strikingly rare in comparison with studies of other time periods. Scholarship on English exile and the early modern period abound, for example, as do works addressing the early twentieth century, but the nineteenth century is largely ignored. This void, however, belies the reality of exilic experience in England, both for those native born and those who adopted the country as a refuge. Marx, for example, found a qualified welcome in England. While he did write *Das Kapital* in England, British publishers in

¹³ Ellen Johnston's poem "The Exile of Poland" addresses the plight of refugees from Polish political upheavals, and she also dedicates two verses to Garibaldi; see chapter four.

¹⁴ Rosemary Ashton, *Little Germany: Exile and Asylum in Victorian England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986) 3.

¹⁵ See Kabdebo, *Diplomat in Exile: Francis Pulszky's Political Activities in England, 1849-1860*.

¹⁶ See Wong, *The Origins of an Heroic Image: Sun Yatsen in London, 1896-1897*.

1883 were still declining to publish it, sixteen years after the publication of the first volume in German.¹⁷ His request for British citizenship was denied in 1874 on the grounds that he was “the notorious German agitator, the head of the International Society, and an advocate of Communistic principles” in addition to failing to be “loyal to his own King and Country.”¹⁸ Marx’s experience was not an isolated one either; Italian patriot Giuseppe Garibaldi, for instance, found an exuberantly warm welcome from the working people of England, but the reaction of the ruling aristocracy was more complicated; his qualified reception led directly to his decision to stay only a short while in England, rather than making it his permanent home.

But while exile from Britain in the nineteenth century was neither of these things, neither mandated punishment from the state nor the effect of mass displacement, that does not mean it did not exist. As Christine Brooke-Rose succinctly formulates, exilic experience can be roughly divided into two categories:

1. *Involuntary exile*, usually political or punitive (“Isaiah,” Ovid, Dante, Thibault, Charles d’Orléans, Byron, Mickiewica, and all the moderns such as Ionesco, Semprún, Cernuda, Kundera, Solzhenitsyn, etc.). And these can be further divided into those exiled for their books or their behavior (Ovid, Byron, Mme de Staël, Victor Hugo, Wilde, Solzhenitsyn) and those who as private persons fled from political conditions or war.

2. *Voluntary exile*, usually called expatriation, itself for many more personal reasons: social, economic, sexual (e.g., Radclyffe Hall and the lesbian group in Paris in the twenties), or simple preference (Beerbohm retired in Rapallo, Ezra Pound choosing Italy).¹⁹

While Brooke-Rose’s definition is both useful and illuminating, I will depart from her formulation on one significant point: I employ a definition of exile that separates the term from

¹⁷ Ashton 6.

¹⁸ Ashton 8.

¹⁹ Christine Brooke-Rose, “Exsul,” *Exile and Creativity: Signposts, Travelers, Outsiders, Backward Glances*, ed. Susan Rubin Suleiman (Durham: Duke University Press, 1998) 11.

its frequent counterparts, in this instance “expatriate” and “emigrant.” Unlike Brooke-Rose and other writers who address exilic experiences, I will not use the terms “exile” and “expatriate” interchangeably, for to do so ignores a crucial aspect of the exilic experience. Expatriation implies a voluntary exchange of one homeland for another, a willingness to adopt a new nation as one’s own, and, most importantly, the possibility of return should things not work out. But for the exile, external forces always compel displacement, and this displacement brings about an unceasing desire for the lost homeland, even when a return home seems unlikely at best. German exile Johanna Kinkel wrote of the contradictions this desire to return home produces in the exile. In 1854 she complained of the exiles in London who had still not turned their vision away from Germany and toward their new English home:

Would you believe it?—there are still clubs of Continental refugees . . . sitting around here, not mixing at all with the English, but just carrying on among themselves the squabbles about 1849. Amongst these people it’s the fashion to criticize England, and people like us are actually looked on with suspicion, because we reconcile ourselves to our situation and put up with our surroundings.²⁰

The reason her fellow German political exiles could not reconcile themselves to their new surroundings is because they wanted to go home. While their gaze was focused on Germany, they could not be reconciled to their new home. These elements of duress and feelings of immutable, permanent loss are crucial in understanding exile and separating it from its frequent and often incorrect synonyms.

The etymology of “exile” brings home the point:

exile e.ksil, e.gzil, , sb.1 Also 4 exil, 5-6 exyl(e, exyll(e. [a. OFr. *exil*, refashioned form of *essil*, state of banishment, also (cf. sense 2) devastation, destruction [. . .].]²¹

²⁰ Johanna Kinkel to Kathinka Zitz, 31 May 1854, ‘Briefe an Kathinka Zitz’, 51. Quoted in Ashton, *Little Germany*, 188.

²¹ “Exile,” *Oxford English Dictionary* 1989 ed.

“Exile” not only implies but in fact derives from “devastation, destruction,” a change that can never be repaired. Expatriation implies no such comparable, irreparable severing of ties with the homeland. Expatriates can go home, should they choose; the exile has no such option.

For the purposes of this study, one that consciously seeks out the interplay between exile and nationalism, Yossi Shain’s distinction between expatriation and political exile provides a useful framework; he defines “expatriates as political exiles if they engage in political activity directed against the politics of a home regime, against the home regime itself, or against the political system as a whole, so as to create circumstances favorable to their return.”²² The impulse to return, to continue looking back toward the homeland, is intense, and it is a key part of distinguishing exile. The exilic consciousness differs from that of the expatriate by this yearning for home.

The individual’s gaze homeward: perhaps the most important litmus test for exilic experience as opposed to that of an expatriate, for the exile always looks back—not just back at the place abandoned, but back at the lost and forsaken home. But what is home? Is it the physical place alone? Or is there something more intangible, more elusory about “going home”? As Susan Pearce formulates it, going home means returning to “a perceived integrity of time, place, people and circumstances, which convey a sense of identity through belonging.”²³ For the exile, then, a return home can involve a particular physical place, certainly, but the exilic consciousness that develops as a result of an exilic experience, however, transcends physical

²² Yossi Shain, *The Frontier of Loyalty: Political Exiles in the Age of the Nation-State* (Middletown, Connecticut: Wesleyan University Press, 1989) 15.

²³ Susan Pearce, “Bodies in Exile: Egyptian Mummies in the Early Nineteenth Century and Their Cultural Implications,” *Displaced Persons: Conditions of Exile in European Culture*, ed. Sharon Ouditt (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2002) 55.

location. Even after a return to the homeland, exile persists for some individuals; these people retain vestiges of exilic consciousness despite the fact that they have left the place of exile. For these individuals, the physical act of removal and then return is really secondary; for others, it is completely unnecessary. The exiled writer, unlike the expatriated one, is not just looking back toward the home she has left, but she is always writing back toward home as well.

ii. Nationalism, Patriotism, and the Nineteenth Century

Nationalism and patriotism have become increasingly important concerns for nineteenth-century British studies. After all, this is the age when Britain becomes the empire on which the sun never sets, an imperial territory unmatched by any before it in the modern world. As Britain grew larger and more powerful, however, it became increasingly more difficult, as William Butler Yeats later would write, for the center to hold. Thus over the course of the century, British poets struggled to make sense of how a tiny island in northern Europe could hope to contain an ever growing segment of the globe, particularly during a time of such conflict over what it meant to become or remain a nation.

But how are we to distinguish between “nationalism” and “patriotism”? Can we, and should we, make distinctions between the two? In short, while “nationalism” and “patriotism” have much in common and are “often used interchangeably,” they are not “semantic twins”:

Each has its own distinctive meaning. Nationalism is derived from the Latin root *natio*, referring to the people of a territory under a single government, a country, or a state. Patriotism comes from the Greek *patriotes*, or Fatherland, and signifies a person who loves and zealously supports his own country. The emphasis of patriotism is upon *people*, that of nationalism is upon *territory*.²⁴

²⁴ Snyder 321.

But these are complicated issues, for the “most fundamental problem in any attempt to define ‘patriotism’ today is to establish its relationship with ‘nationalism’”—and the negative associations both terms acquired during the twentieth century.²⁵ Where does one sentiment begin and the other begin? And more importantly for this study, when does a poem stop being patriotic and start being nationalist? Or vice versa? Are all nationalist verses undergirded by a kind of patriotism?

Most of the time, the answer to that question is yes, they are. Most nationalist verses have a kind of patriotism undergirding them, whether that patriotism is a jingoistic brand of flag-waving fervor, a Habermasian “constitutional patriotism”²⁶ working to counter more xenophobic brands of patriotism, or its close counterpart, the “cosmopolitan patriotism” Martha Nussbaum has identified.²⁷ At the root of both “nationalism” and “patriotism,” however, is some conception of what it means to be loyal to a particular place, a particular “home,” no matter how differently “home” may be defined in individual contexts. In order to understand the nation as it was reformed in a nineteenth-century context, the poets I address in this study all found it necessary to establish a remove from their homeland. In order to see Britain, to understand and write about it, they had to leave it, whether literally or metaphorically. This idea of conscious exile from national identity, and the degree to which such a separation is even possible, resonates directly with current concerns in literary scholarship as well as historical studies of the formation of the modern nation.

²⁵ Athena S. Leoussi, ed., *Encyclopaedia of Nationalism* (New Brunswick, New Jersey: Transaction Publishers, 2001) 239.

²⁶ See Jürgen Habermas, “Citizenship and national identity: Some reflections on the future of Europe,” *Praxis International* 12.1 (1992): 1-18.

²⁷ See Martha C Nussbaum, *For Love of Country: Debating the Limits of Patriotism*. Boston: Beacon Press, 1996.

A key question for this study becomes, therefore, the degree to which writers and characters are not just exiled from a place—if they are at all—but how they find themselves cut off from ideas—the ideas of “Britishness,” of nation, and of home. In *Imagined Communities*, Benedict Anderson analyzes the creation of the modern nation and concept of nationalism. For Anderson, nationality and nationalism are “cultural artifacts” created near the end of the eighteenth century through “the spontaneous distillation of a complex ‘crossing’ of discrete historical forces.”²⁸ He is careful to point out, however, that “once created, [these discrete historical forces] became ‘modular,’ capable of being transplanted, with varying degrees of self-consciousness, to a great variety of social terrains, to merge and be merged with a correspondingly wide variety of political and ideological constellations,”²⁹ thereby describing part of the process of domestic and imperial expansion. Anderson’s further definition of the nation proper as an “imagined political community,” one imagined as “both inherently limited and sovereign” provides us a way into understanding the loyalty and devotion inspired by the nation.

As persuasive and useful as Anderson’s argument is, however, it cannot offer us the key to all mythologies, for when we talk about the nation and nationalist principles, policies, and activities, we are also talking about race, ethnicity, and regrettably, violence against the individual, a point Ernest Gellner stresses. In contrast to the “deep, horizontal comradeship” that Anderson posits for the modern conception of the nation, Ernest Gellner holds that there are a “variety of ways the [spirit of the] nationalist principle can be violated”: first, the “political boundary of a given state can fail to include all the members of the appropriate nation”; second,

²⁸ Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities* (London: Verso, 2000) 4.

²⁹ Anderson 4.

it can “include them all but also include some foreigners”; third, it can “fail in both these ways at once, not incorporating all the nationals and yet also include some non-nationals”; finally, the nation may “live, unmixed with foreigners, in a multiplicity of states, so that no single state can claim to be *the* national one.”³⁰

The role of the state is central to Gellner’s argument, for while following Max Weber’s definition of the state as “that agency within society which possesses the monopoly of legitimate violence,” Gellner also critiques this definition by adding that although the “idea enshrined in this definition corresponds fairly well with the moral intuitions of many, probably most, members of modern societies,” it is not completely sufficient.³¹ He goes on to cite examples of states that do not monopolize “legitimate violence” within their territories but are nonetheless, for the most part, still in control of the territory.³² These states lack “either the will or the means to enforce their monopoly of legitimate violence,” and yet they “nonetheless remain, in many respects, recognizable ‘states’.”³³ Gellner seeks, therefore, to underscore the relationship between the nation, the state, and legitimated violence, for he holds that in modern societies, the state becomes “that institution or set of institutions specifically concerned with the enforcement of order” regardless of “whatever else they may also be concerned with.”³⁴

Gellner is careful to point out that the “problem” of nationalism cannot “arise for stateless societies,” for if there is no state,

³⁰ Ernest Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1983) 1.

³¹ Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism* 3.

³² Gellner *Nations and Nationalism* 3.

³³ Gellner *Nations and Nationalism* 3-4.

³⁴ Gellner *Nations and Nationalism* 4.

one obviously cannot ask whether or not its boundaries are congruent with the limits of nations. If there are no rulers, there being no state, one cannot ask whether they are of the same station as the ruled. When neither state nor rulers exist, one cannot resent their failure to conform to the requirements of the principle of nationalism.³⁵

So for which states does the “problem of nationalism” arise? For while in modern societies, “[h]aving a nation is not an inherent attribute of humanity,” it has nonetheless “now come to appear as such.”³⁶ In other words, if Byron is not English, then what or who is he? If Ellen Johnston is not Scottish, then how is she to identify herself, both to herself and to others?

This very connection between the self and the nation makes the writings of the exile, indeed the very idea of exile, so compelling. Exile represents for the post-Industrial Revolution reader and writer a destruction of self so devastating as to be almost unfathomable. As Gellner reminds us, while we as modern individuals have little trouble conceptualizing society in which the individual is not subject to a state, we have far greater difficulty envisioning the individual without a nation: “the idea of a man without a nation seems to impose a far greater strain on the modern imagination.”³⁷ Yet if we, following Benedict Anderson, conceive of the nation as an “imagined political community,” why would the pain of separation be so very great? If the nation is a product of our individual and collective imaginations, why would we have such difficulty contemplating its absence? Perhaps the pain is so profound and the contemplation so arduous because for the modern sensibility, nation equals home: the most primal and most personal of all places, a “perceived integrity of time, place, people, and circumstances, which

³⁵ Gellner *Nations and Nationalism* 4.

³⁶ Gellner v6. He is quick to note, however, that while nations and states are “contingenc[ies],” they are not the “same contingency” (6).

³⁷ Gellner *Nations and Nationalism* 6.

convey a sense of identity through belonging.”³⁸ As a state of displacement, frustration, and longing, exilic experience is ultimately defined by one irreducible denominator: the desire to go home.

iii. Exilic Experience in Nineteenth-Century British Nationalist Verse

Chapter one argues for the consideration of Charlotte Smith, novelist, poet, children’s literature author, as an exilic writer, a woman William Wordsworth acknowledged as “a lady to whom English verse is under greater obligations than are likely to be either acknowledged or remembered.”³⁹ By the end of the nineteenth century, Wordsworth’s assessment of her canonical staying power would prove eerily prescient, for she would all but have disappeared from anthologies, scholarly discussion, and cultural memory. Yet Smith’s career was both an ambitious and a successful one; her poetry and novels were reprinted again and again, testifying to her popularity with readers. As a writer, she strove to bring to light issues of social and political injustice that she observed both in her native England and in her exilic home in France, particularly those injustices that women like herself faced as *persona non grata* in the eyes of the English civil system. Exiled to France with her eleven children because of her spendthrift husband’s constant debt and denied access to an inheritance bequeathed by her father-in-law, Smith earned a unique perspective on exile through her experiences, one which she initially presents in her first published collection, *Elegiac Sonnets*, and then redeploys most compellingly in her alternately meditative and polemical verse *The Emigrants*. A poem centering on the plight of exiled men and women from 1780’s revolutionary France, *The Emigrants* ostensibly addresses

³⁸ Pearce 55.

³⁹ William Wordsworth, *The Prose Works of William Wordsworth: Critical and Ethical*, Vol. III, ed. Rev. Alexander B. Grosart (London: Edward Moxon, Son, and Co., 1876) 516.

the dangers faced by the exiles both in their native land and in their new English home. Yet an additional argument runs through Smith's poem, one which understands Britishness by juxtaposing English civil law and procedure against both the hopeful gains and abominable excesses of the French Revolution. Chapter one therefore explores Smith's self-construction as a complicated embodiment of British nationalist poetry: simultaneously a melancholic speaker and an assertive persona, both a proud British voice and a condemning critic of England writing from exile.

Charlotte Smith was not the only English Romantic poet of the period to endure exile; George Gordon, Lord Byron, probably the most famous exile of the period, also found himself barred from English shores. Self-exiled from England, Byron denied himself access to the England he simultaneously adored and despised. But as painful as exile was for him, it did have its artistic rewards. A critical commonplace about Byron holds that his self-exile allowed him to find his own poetic voice, one free from the conventions of English verse—a voice critics generally agree finds its fullest expression in his comic verse *Don Juan*. Chapter two, however, complicates this scholarly understanding of Byron by drawing attention to another kind of freedom he finds through exile: his own concept of nationalistic ideals. Because of his life-long ambition to be a great patriot, his poetry about his home continually returns to his vision of an ideal nation. In particular, Byron's verse written from exile implicitly defines what any great Western nation should be. This chapter therefore begins with Byron's ideas of nationalism formed before exile and expressed in his parliamentary addresses and then moves to *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage*: a verse begun in England, finished in exile, and containing his most compelling and intimate ideas of the nation. While he critiques and condemns English manners,

mores, and political management in *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage*, he still imagines a Britain that, although falling short of his ideal, constitutes a standard by which other nations might be judged.

In contrast to Byron's self-exile to escape public scandal stands Elizabeth Barrett Browning's self-exile for love. In 1846, she married fellow poet Robert Browning and left England with her new husband, bound for Italy. Because of family tensions over her marriage and her own declining health, Barrett Browning would never return to England to live. Consequently, over the next fifteen years she found her loyalties stretched to two different nations: England, the place of her birth, and Italy, the place of her often commented upon "rebirth." In Italy, E. B. B. found increased health, happiness, and new artistic inspirations. But while her new home may have provided the catalyst for the "remaking" of Barrett Browning, it did not destroy her previous national or personal loyalties. Long before her self-exile to Italy, an exilic strain appears in E.B.B.'s verse, beginning with her first periodical publication, a verse largely influenced by Byron's exilic experiences, "Stanzas on the Present State of Greece." From this poem, her exilic consciousness further develops, in many ways along a Byronic trajectory: through meditations on Greek nationalism and exile in the 1826 *Essay on Mind, with Other Poems* to condemnations of nationalistic abuses in England and America in her 1844 *Poems*, particularly "The Cry of the Children" and "The Runaway Slave at Pilgrim's Point." Much like Byron's in *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage*, E.B.B.'s exilic consciousness culminates in her first major verse written in Italy, *Casa Guidi Windows*, a poem centering on the Italian *Risorgimento*. Chapter three, therefore, places Barrett Browning and *Casa Guidi Windows* both squarely within an exilic context, examining the poem as a product of an English poet's profound desire to reshape both her homes, Italy and England, through her verse.

British political poetic responses to Italy, however, were not limited to critically acclaimed poets like E.B.B., nor were they limited to English poets. Ellen Johnston, the Scottish “Factory Girl,” mediates British national identity not just through Italy, but also through France, Russia, and most importantly Scotland in her 1867 *Autobiography, Poems and Songs*. Chapter four complicates poetic exilic space even more than the previous three chapters, for Johnston presents a unique case. As a Scottish laborer wrestling with the exclusion inherent in traditional nation-making, Johnston also faces the domestic policies of inclusion and exclusion rooted in centuries old class distinctions and under siege by nineteenth-century industrial growth and expansion. Unlike Smith, Byron, or Barrett Browning, Johnston does not possess the traditional intellectual or social clout to stand as a spokeswoman in the arena of British political versifying—and yet she does so without reservation and without apology. As opposed to Smith, Byron, and Barrett Browning, exilic poets shaping Britishness for the erudite English reader, Johnston constitutes the exilic poet redefining Britishness for the working-class Scottish reader, a group no less invested, Johnston argues over the course of her volume, in what it means to be British. Through her very literary presence, she complicates notions of who speaks for and about Britain. Chapter four begins by tracing Johnston’s self-fashioning as an exilic poet, a woman known for her poetry as a Factory Girl but who presents herself as “The Factory Exile” both in her poetry and her prose: a woman exiled from the factory, the heart of her identity as a writer. Next the chapter turns to Johnston’s specifically nationalist verse, poems whose persona confidently occupies an exilic space and uses it to refashion “Britishness” as predicated on Scottish national identity, and the chapter closes with the verses in which Johnston’s exilic persona turns to other exiles, other victims of flawed national policies and identities: Polish émigrés to England and Italian patriot Giuseppe Garibaldi.

If Ellen Johnston represents the least likely political poetic voice of Britain, Alfred, Lord Tennyson naturally represents the most likely, for Tennyson's position as poet laureate requires no justification for his commentary on national events. But a poetics of exile from the poet laureate? Certainly Tennyson was no political exile, at least not in a literal sense. In chapter five, however, we find perhaps the most haunting rendering of exilic experience yet. Chapter five begins with the origins of Tennyson's exilic consciousness in two of his earlier verses, "The Exile's Harp" and "Enoch Arden," continues with an exploration of Tennyson's nationalist strains in his patriotic poetry of the 1830s and 1852, and culminates with a discussion of *Maud*, an ambitious and complicated verse generally understood as an imperialistic call to arms, a poem overtly supportive of British involvement in the Crimean War. By examining both the literal and figurative manifestations of exile in *Maud*, chapter five concentrates on the ways in which these two exilic experiences work in tandem to fashion the speaker's concept of himself as a British man—a man who ultimately finds Britishness not in England but on a Russian battlefield, fighting for the preservation and expansion of the British empire.

All of the chapters seek out the ways in which these five poets develop a poetics of exile, a poetics capable of integrating personal experience, political hopes, and nationalist ideals into verse. These provocative nationalist works are undergirded by exile, whether through an exilic persona, an exilic experience, or an exilic consciousness. All capitalize on what exile offers: a chance to critique the very thing they hope to reform—not just Britain, but their home.

CHAPTER 1

“INVOLUNTARY EXILE”: CHARLOTTE SMITH’S POETICS OF EXILE

I mourn your sorrows; for I too have known
 Involuntary exile; and while yet
 England had charms for me, have felt how sad
 It is to look across the dim cold sea,
 That melancholy rolls its refluent tides
 Between us and the dear regretted land
 We call our own—

Charlotte Smith, *The Emigrants*

While the year 1776 was one of great liberation and declarations of independence for thousands of British colonists in America, it was a year of dark omens for British subject Charlotte Smith. Richard Smith, Charlotte’s father-in-law, died that year leaving a large and prosperous estate—an estate he was eager to keep out of the hands of his son Benjamin, a notorious spend-thrift, womanizer, and ne’er do well.¹ In a well-meaning attempt to secure a financial future for his daughter-in-law and grandchildren, Richard bequeathed his entire estate to Charlotte and her children, cutting Benjamin—he hoped—out of the financial picture. Richard’s last will and testament, however, was of such Byzantine complexity in its well-meaning attempts to keep Benjamin away from controlling interest that the document effectively

¹ And to this list of disparaging names, add abuser and tormentor. In her letters, Smith alludes to—and sometimes describes—not only the mental and emotional trauma she endured at her husband’s hands, but the physical abuse as well. In an October 9, 1793 letter to Joseph Cooper Walker, Smith bluntly states that Benjamin’s “temper [had] been so capricious and often so cruel that [her] life was not safe” (Stanton, *Letters* 79). In other letters, she details her husband’s terrorizing techniques: smashing open drawers, throwing keys at her, hitting her sometimes in front of their children, and hurling a four pound loaf of bread at her head (see Stanton, *Letters* 13, 607, 714). Charlotte would later use Benjamin as model for some of her more disreputable male characters, e.g. *Desmond’s* Verney.

rendered the estate untouchable. Thus Charlotte Smith found herself virtually penniless with a husband incapable of managing their financial affairs and an ever-growing family for whom to provide.²

By 1783, Benjamin's careless and negligent ways landed him in King's Bench Prison for debt. Acting the part of the dutiful wife, Charlotte left her children under her brother's protection and followed her husband into prison. Less than a year later, during the summer of 1784, she was able to secure Benjamin's release through a short-term agreement, an arrangement that would buy her only a few months of time. Benjamin quickly left for France, and by October of that same year, unable to fend off creditors any longer, a pregnant, reluctant, and discouraged Charlotte acquiesced to her husband's wishes, gathering her eleven children and moving them all to France to join Benjamin in exile.

Sarah Zimmerman conjectures that "Smith seems to have accompanied her husband [into exile], with their children, because he could not speak French,"³ and while a language barrier may well have been an issue for Benjamin, Loraine Fletcher reminds us of a significant reality: while exile to France may have been voluntary for Benjamin, for Charlotte it was compulsory. To disobey her husband's command would have brought about not only the possibility of legal repercussions but the certainty of social ones as well. Smith had

no legal right to keep his children—or for that matter herself—from him. [To] do so would cut her off forever from all those wives whose self-esteem rested on their ability to endure. [. . .] But though Benjamin had thrown away whatever

² Smith would bear the burden of providing for her family until the day she died. It would not be until 1813, over two decades after Richard Smith's death, that Charlotte Smith's four surviving children would finally be able to claim what little was left of their grandfather's estate after monumental legal fees. See Curran, *The Poems of Charlotte Smith* xxi.

³ Sarah M. Zimmerman, *Romanticism, Lyricism, and History* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1999) 39.

affection she once felt for him, she must fulfil to the letter all that her social circle seemed to expect from her.⁴

It seems that what her social circle expected of her was to follow a hostile and abusive husband into exile in a place not especially overjoyed to host her family. Quickly unmasked to servants and neighbors as someone desperately unequipped to manage life in exile, Smith found herself an object of curiosity, suspicion, and sometimes derision in Rouen.⁵ Six months later, during the spring of 1785, Charlotte returned to Sussex and made arrangements to settle Benjamin's debts and prepared for his return to England. Her efforts both at reconciling with Benjamin and saving him financially were in vain, for by 1787 the Smiths were legally separated, and Benjamin, again drowning in debt, left England once more for exile in France.⁶

During these years of crippling financial liability, family troubles, and desperate uncertainty, Charlotte Smith first began writing. As she makes pointedly clear in the preface to her first published work, the 1784 *Elegiac Sonnets*, monetary need, not burning artistic desire, precipitated her entrance into the public literary sphere. Smith hints at the financial "circumstances" which "determined" her to "put [her poems] into their present form" (3), sharing no specifics with her readers, and the prefaces to the second through fifth editions continue much in this same vein. But by the 1792 sixth edition of *Elegiac Sonnets*, the gloves come off. No longer content to allude genteelly to the mismanagement of her children's inheritance and her livelihood, Smith starts naming names, pointing specifically at the

⁴ Loraine Fletcher, *Charlotte Smith: A Critical Biography* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1998) 6.

⁵ Fletcher memorably dramatizes Smith's exilic flight to France and her days in Rouen in the first chapter of *Charlotte Smith: A Critical Biography*, a chapter appropriately entitled "Exile."

⁶ But while Charlotte did obtain a legal separation from Benjamin, she did not secure control over her financial affairs in the agreement, and consequently she would be plagued by her husband's demands for money until her death in 1806, even though the two would never again live under the same roof as husband and wife.

‘Honourable Men’ who, *nine years ago*, undertook to see that my family obtained the provision their grandfather designed for them [. . .] Still to receive—not a repetition of promises indeed—but of *scorn and insult* when I apply to those gentlemen, who, though they acknowledge that all impediments to a division of the estate they have undertaken to manage, are done away—will neither tell me *when* they will proceed to divide it, or *whether they will ever do so at all*” (emphasis hers, 5-6).

Her introductory remarks for the 1797 second volume of *Elegiac Sonnets* are over twice as long as any previous preface and twice as direct. In the third paragraph, she details the disasters her family has endured, including the death of a son forced into a military post by the family’s dire financial straits, blaming all of them on the inaccessible inheritance and the managers of the estate (7).

Even the volume’s title, *Elegiac Sonnets, and Other Essays by Charlotte Smith of Bignor Park, in Sussex*, betrays her allegiance to a different sort of life than that of the struggling writer. Indeed, her title makes plain her attachment to a specific identity, one predicated on both nation and station. She deliberately claims her position as a member of the British landed gentry, a move both self-protective and deliberately self-promoting, a tactic she also employs in *The Emigrants*, for it allows her to capitalize both on her personal heritage and the aristocratic heritage of verse. In *The Emigrants*, Smith renders palpable her own experiences as both a literal exile in France and a type of continued exile in England, a woman wrongfully separated from the life that is rightfully hers by a rotten deal in the marriage market,⁷ inept estate management, and unfair laws governing inheritance, property ownership, and a woman’s legal

⁷ This is a market Smith critiques in her correspondence and her novels, *Ethelinde, or the Recluse of the Lake* (1789), *Celestina* (1791), *Marchmont* (1796), and perhaps most powerfully, *Montalbert* (1795). In a June 15, 1804 letter to Sarah Rose, the wife of Samuel Rose, editor to Goldsmith and legal advisor to Cowper and Blake, Smith describes with deliberate and undisguised vehemence her feelings about the circumstances of her marriage; she describes Benjamin as “the monster (whose name it has been so long my misery to bear & to whom I was sold a legal prostitute in my early youth, or what the law calls infancy” (Stanton, *Letters* 625). While Rose and Smith never met, the two women carried on a “faithful,” “warm and intimate” epistolary friendship, and Smith “wrote to her with more wit and acerbity than to anyone else” (Stanton, *Letters* 775).

status. *The Emigrants* builds on the exilic strain Smith crafts in *Elegiac Sonnets* by engaging and toying with her previous self-construction as the melancholic subject, creating in its stead a much more direct and aggressive voice, a voice deeply invested in employing exilic experience to critique the body blamed for causing that exile in the first place: the modern European nation.

i. “Shipwreck’d by the storms of Fate”: The Exilic Impulse in *Elegiac Sonnets*

While *The Emigrants* is certainly Smith’s most overt exilic work, it is not her first; Smith’s poetics of exile begins with *Elegiac Sonnets*, a volume primarily concerned with her personal and private sufferings.⁸ Sonnet I establishes Smith as the melancholic, anguished artist, claiming that “The partial Muse has from my earliest hours / Smiled on the rugged path I’m doom’d to tread” (1-2). Smith struggles with her “partial Muse,” the muse who either burdens her with attentions by being “partial” to Smith or neglects her with only “partial” attention. Even though the muse “with sportive hand has snatch’d wild flowers, / To weave Fantastic garlands for my head” (3-4), this attention is not enough to ease Smith’s pain: “But far, far happier is the lot of those / Who never learn’d her dear delusive art; / Which, while it decks the head with many a rose, / Reserves the thorn to fester in the heart” (7-8). Her muse weeps over her, “bid[ding] soft Pity’s melting eye / Stream o’er the ills she knows not to remove” (9-10), but she remains either unable or unwilling to alleviate Smith’s distress. By the end of the poem, it becomes clear that to reduce Smith’s worries would be to destroy her art, for “Ah! then, how dear the Muse’s favours cost, / *If those who paint sorrow best—who feel it most!*” (emphasis hers, 13-14). Smith footnotes her final line with a reference to the closing lines of Pope’s

⁸ This is particularly true of the early editions of the *Sonnets*; by the time Smith adds a second volume in 1797, though, four years after she publishes *The Emigrants*, more public verse will become part of the collection; see particularly “The female exile” (96), “Written for the benefit of a distressed player, detained at Brighthelmstone for debt, November 1792” (99), and “The Forest Boy” (111).

“Eloisa to Abelard”: “The well-sung woes shall soothe my pensive ghost; / He best can paint them who shall feel them most” (365-366).⁹ By referencing Pope and by including this sentiment in her verse, Smith accomplishes two things. First, she establishes herself as a poet consciously working within a specific English literary tradition and adapting that tradition’s conventions for her own purposes. Second, she finalizes a connection she begins in lines 7-8, aligning herself with the melancholic songstress à la Philomel, the one who sings because after all she has endured, her voice is all that is left her.

Smith will continue this pattern throughout much of the first edition of *Elegiac Sonnets*, to the point that a *Gentleman’s Magazine* reviewer for the 1786 third edition sincerely praises Smiths’ pathos but also hopes that the described afflictions are fictional:

It has been suggested by a valuable correspondent that we cannot adopt a more elegant decoration than a few sonnets by this pathetic poetess. To the number of those originally published by her, she has now made up an addition of twenty new ones. We cannot, however, forbear expressing a hope that the misfortunes she so often hints at, are all imaginary. We must have perused her very tender and exquisite effusions with diminished pleasure, could we have supposed her sorrow to be real.— It would be hard indeed if a lady, who has so much contributed to the delight of others, should feel any want of happiness herself.¹⁰

Unfortunately, while the reviewer may have hoped that Smith embellished her situation for emotional effect, it simply was not so. Though they were expressed dramatically, Smith’s hardships were also genuine, and the exilic strain she goes on to develop in the volume, particularly in later editions, was personal and real. She describes herself in Sonnet III as a nightingale (Sonnet III), Philomel horribly violated and then rescued only by forever removing her from her own humanity; in Sonnet XII as a mariner “shipwreck’d by the storms of Fate”

⁹ Alexander Pope, “Eloisa to Abelard,” *The Norton Anthology of English Literature: The Restoration and the Eighteenth Century*, Vol. 1C., 7th ed., ed. Lawrence Lipking (New York: W.W. Norton, 2000).

¹⁰ *The Gentlemen’s Magazine* April 1786: 333-334.

(10), “Cast on a rock” (11) vainly gazing toward “the distant land / From whence no succour comes—or comes too late” (11-12); in Sonnet LXX as envious of a madman for his lack of “*nice felicities* that shrink / From giant horrors” (11-12), coveting the fact that he “seems (uncursed with reason) not to know / The depth or duration of his woe” (13-14). An acute awareness of having been cut off from human contact, either through violence or abandonment: in all of these renderings, Smith’s poetic persona portrays herself as one exiled from the world she craves but is denied.

Elegiac Sonnets does include, however, moments that foreshadow Smith’s later movement toward more public commentary. The poems dedicated to Thomas Otway particularly demonstrate the pity Smith feels for those who have lost what is rightfully, she feels, their own. The popular playwright and successful tragedian eventually lost everything: his riches, his fame, and perhaps most tragically, his art. In Sonnet XXXII, Otway the artist becomes the possession of pathos: “Here, by his native stream, at such an hour, / Pity’s own Otway I methinks I could meet, / And hear his deep sighs swell the sadden’d wind!” (9-11). Melancholy becomes, for both the speaker and her subject, a condition of spirit and intellect, one which “soothe[s] the pensive visionary mind” (35). The parallel Smith establishes between herself and the late playwright as simultaneous courtiers and victims of melancholy forges another, more sinister connection between the two writers. Like Otway, Smith could lose it all, should pathos come to rule her as well. Perhaps this is why most of the figures she aligns herself with in *Elegiac Sonnets* are fictional: figures such as Otway hit a bit too close to home for comfort.¹¹

¹¹ An abundance of fictional sufferers appear in *Elegiac Sonnets* and the novels, all of whom are writers themselves, and all of whom, with the exception of Werther, are Smith’s creations: Mrs. Glenmorris, Delmont, and Elizabeth Lisburne from *The Young Philosopher* (Sonnet 85, Sonnet 86, and Sonnet 87, respectively), Sommers Walsingham from *Montalbert* (Sonnets 66-67), Mrs. Denzil from *The Banished Man* (Sonnet 64), Orlando Somerive from *The*

In Sonnet XLIII, Smith specifically compares herself to a fictional, anonymous exile, the only person capable of understanding her pain; by extension, her personal pain allows her to understand his misfortune. The exiled man in this sonnet is “confine[d] / To the bleak coast of some unfriendly isle, / Cold, barren, desart, where no harvests smile, / But thirst and hunger on the rocks repine” (1-4). He stands “hopeless” watching “Sun after sun [. . .] decline / In the broad shipless sea” (6-7). The exile standing at the shoreline’s edge, looking back toward his or her lost homeland, becomes a potent emblem of exilic suffering for Smith, one she will come back to in *The Emigrants*. In this sonnet, though, the sea becomes an ever changing canvas that shifts from promise and hope to despondency and despair: “if a flattering cloud appears to show / The fancied semblance of a distant sail, / Then melts away—anew his spirits fail, / While the lost hope but aggravates his woe!” (9-12). Smith reconfigures the poem’s initial male figure into one aligned with her exilic poetic persona, for “perhaps [he] may know / Such heartless pain, such blank despair as mine” (7-8). The exiled man in Sonnet XLIII transitions between hope and despair, possibility and rejection, excitement and melancholy, and so too does Smith.

ii. “Beholding the unhappy lot / Of the lorn exiles”: Redeploying the Exilic Speaker

In many ways, Smith’s *The Emigrants* grew out of two intensely personal experiences: her exile in France and her daughter’s marriage to an exiled man. In 1793, while France and England were formally at war, Smith’s middle daughter, Anna Augusta, planned her marriage to exiled French chevalier Alexandre Marc-Constant de Foville. De Foville met the Smith family in December of 1792 when Charlotte’s sympathy for the exiles led her to open the family home to

Old Manor House (Sonnets 61-62), Godolphin and Lady Adelina Trelawny from *Emmeline* (Sonnets 38-39 and “Ode to Despair,” respectively), and Celestina De Mornay (Sonnets 49-53), the title character in *Celestina*. More than one of these serve as prototypes for Smith.

them.¹² By all accounts, the courtship was a quick and passionate one, leading Smith to agree to her daughter's marriage by the summer of 1793, despite the seemingly insurmountable obstacle before the couple—the difficulty of arranging both Protestant and Catholic ceremonies in England without the consent of the groom's mother.¹³ But even though Madame de Foville was still in France and beyond the reach of English communiqués, and civil and political unrest prevented correspondence between mother and son, it did not prevent Alexandre's marriage to Anna Augusta.¹⁴ After an eight month acquaintance, the young lovers were married in a Church of England ceremony without the blessing of the de Foville matriarch, without a corresponding Catholic service, and without Charlotte Smith obtaining any absolute guarantee of Alexandre's family acknowledging the legitimacy of the marriage, a notable detail which caused Charlotte substantial distress. After spending the entirety of her own married life wrangling with the difficulties of a wastrel husband and an intractable legal system, Smith had an acute anxiety about a bride's place in her new family.

But instead of using exile solely to reinforce the pathos of her personal situation as she does in *Elegiac Sonnets*, Smith crafts a poetics of exile in *The Emigrants* by meditating on the effects of exile in the wake of the rapidly escalating French Revolution. Whereas she is the one

¹² From Smith's letter to Joseph Cooper Walker, dated 12 February 1793: "Will you forgive me, Dear Sir, for this short and incoherent letter, but I am writing in company & in embarrassments inconceivable of new & strange natures, out of which Heaven knows how I shall escape" (Stanton 60). As Judith Phillips Stanton notes, the "company" with her were emigrants living in her home, and the "embarrassments were almost certainly the seizure of her books and furniture for failure to pay her rent" (61). There is no indication, however, that Smith charged her boarders any sort of fee to cover the expense of housing them, despite her obviously desperate situation.

¹³ In *Charlotte Smith: A Critical Biography*, Fletcher details the various impediments to Augusta's marriage, including the need for episcopal dispensation, double ceremonies, and parental permission (198-199).

¹⁴ Interestingly, it was through Dr. Charles Burney, father of novelist Frances Burney, that Smith was able to make the Catholic marriage happen. Frances had been married in both Protestant and Catholic ceremonies, and Charlotte wrote to Dr. Burney requesting his guidance and advice, both of which he provided. See Fletcher 198 and 200, as well as Smith's letters to Burney dated August 13, 1793 (Stanton, *Letters* 65-67), August 21, 1793 (Stanton, *Letters* 68-71), and October 15, 1793 (Stanton *Letters* 83-84).

“shipwreck’d by the storms of Fate” in *Elegiac Sonnets* (Sonnet XII), by the time she writes *The Emigrants*, the gaze of her poetic persona has turned. No longer solely focused inward, she looks away from herself, now

[. . .] beholding the unhappy lot
Of the lorn Exiles; who, amid the storms
Of wild disastrous Anarchy, are thrown,
Like shipwreck’d sufferers, on England’s coast,
To see, perhaps, no more their native land,
Where Desolation riots: They, like me,
From fairer hopes and happier prospects driven,
Shrink from the future, and regret the past. (2.9-16)

In this more public verse, Smith redeploys and redevelops her well-developed exilic persona from *Elegiac Sonnets* in order to expose “exile” as a label that strips away previous public identity and replaces it with an almost meaningless intermediary identity: “the exile,” no longer British or French, no longer landed gentry or a churchman, no longer an aristocrat. Paradoxically, it is through the removal of previous social category via exilic experience that discernment of the personal and private, and the ways in which these undergird the public and political, becomes possible. Thus Smith’s personal exilic positioning is crucial to her ideas, for as she reminds us in her poetry, she can understand the impact of national policies and actions on individual lives in a way that others cannot: she can see the ways the French exiles “[s]hrink from the future and regret the past” (2.16). Her actual exile in France, as well as what she characterizes as a kind of continual financial and social exile within Britain, allows Smith the freedom to use the private to comment on varieties of exilic experience and the ways in which exile shapes the public and political. Ultimately, then, Smith creates her poetics of exile in *The Emigrants* to show the general and specific abuses committed by both England and France, the mistreatment both of entire social categories and the very real individuals within those categories.

iii. Tensions Between the Personal and the Political: *The Emigrants* and Revolution

The Emigrants was written during a significant time in Smith's career. Written in tandem with *The Old Manor House* during the years Florence Hilbish calls Smith's "French Period,"¹⁵ the verse marks a turning point in Smith's relationship to French Revolutionary ideals. In 1792 Smith was firmly dedicated to Girondist principles, decidedly more libertarian and radical than Feuillant but more moderate than Jacobin, going so far as to sign a letter to Joel Barstow, "Permettes, Citoyen, qu'en ecartent les formules de l'ancien esclavage, je me borne à vous assurer de mon respectueuse attachement—Charlotte Smith": "Allow me, Citizen, while eschewing expressions of former oppression, I content myself with assuring you of my respectful attachment."¹⁶ With this closing, Smith could avoid the standard "your humble and obedient servant," offering instead her "attachment" or affection,¹⁷ thereby observing social niceties without debasing herself or, in her mind, her reader.

Smith wrote her first pro-revolution text, *Desmond*, in early 1792.¹⁸ The novel's stance on democratic reform, however, was so potentially explosive that Thomas Cadell, Smith's longtime publisher, wouldn't touch it, so George Robinson published it instead in the summer of 1792.¹⁹ An epistolary novel set in England, France, and other points continental, the novel combines marriage scenes reminiscent of Smith's own tortured union with thwarted romance and restrained passion between would-be lovers; foolish, pseudo-intellectual aristocrats alongside

¹⁵ Florence Hilbish characterizes the years between 1791-1793 as Smith's "French period," a time when when she wrote out of "sympathy for those oppressed, whether politically, socially, or economically" (151). Hilbish goes on to call *The Emigrants* Smith's "longest and most inferior poem," crediting its "moral and patriotic teachings" with satisfying "the taste of the times" and leading to "its being frequently listed among Mrs. Smith's works to the exclusion of better productions" (151-152).

¹⁶ Stanton, *Letters* 52 note 4. Stanton's translation.

¹⁷ Stanton, *Letters* 52 note 4.

¹⁸ See letter to Robinson dated July 4, 1792 (Stanton, *Letters* 46-47).

wise and noble peasants; and stilted Burkean discourse next to enthusiastic pro-Jacobin sentiment, all in an attempt to promote the nobility of the French revolution and to underscore the futility of English resistance to reform.²⁰ The novel wholeheartedly embraces the idea and execution of bloodless revolution, primarily for its potential to incite similar change across the Channel.

But once the revolution turned bloody in 1793, suddenly Smith found staunch support of her French compatriots not only morally and ethically questionable, but also personally dangerous, as did many of her fellow writers with similar political sympathies. In her dedication to *The Emigrants*, she acknowledges the pressures that she and other English writers labored under, primarily the duty, as she characterizes it, to rehabilitate the name of “Liberty” (133). Given the “dreadful scenes” which “have been acted in France during the last summer,” the 1792 attack on the Tuileries and the September Massacres, Smith acknowledges that it is “unfortunat[e] but too true” that the “body of the English” has “acquired new force” for its “national aversion” to all things French—an aversion Smith finds “unworthy of great and enlightened nations”²¹ (133). Ultimately, however, Smith claims neither greatness nor enlightenment for Britain. Because of the inability or unwillingness of most Englishmen and women to see any part of the Revolution as productive or good, “the very name of Liberty has not only lost the charm it used to have in British ears, but many, who have written, or spoken, in

¹⁹ This was the only volume of Smith’s that Robinson ever published. See Stanton, *Letters* 21n1.

²⁰ For the political tensions in *Desmond*, see Bowstead, “Charlotte Smith’s *Desmond*: The Epistolary Novel as Ideological Argument”; Bray, “Removing the Anglo-Saxon Yoke: The Francocentric Vision of Charlotte Smith’s Later Works”; Conway, “Nationalism, Revolution, and the Female Body: Charlotte Smith’s *Desmond*”; Flanders, “An Example of the Impact of the French Revolution on the English Novel: Charlotte Smith’s *Desmond*”; and Wikborg, “Political Discourse versus Sentimental Romance: Ideology and Genre in Charlotte Smith’s *Desmond* (1792).”

²¹ Note that Smith characterizes both France and England as great and worthy nations at this moment in the dedication.

its defense, have been stigmatized as promoters of Anarchy, and enemies to the prosperity of their country” (134). Democratic reform is no longer “the glory of Englishmen to avow and defend” (134).²²

Yet despite the danger of embracing revolutionary ideologies, Smith cannot quite relinquish the dream of reform. As a woman neglected by her family,²³ disenfranchised by her nation, and strangled by Chancery, she had much to gain from the potential upheaval of English social mores and civil procedures promised by revolution. On the other hand, she also had much to lose by not conceding to anti-Jacobin pressures, most importantly, her ability to sell works and provide the sole financial support for her children, a very real need of which she regularly reminds her readers. But while Smith does not shrink from detailing her personal woes in the prefaces to *Elegiac Sonnets*, she does not specify what her troubles are in the dedication to *The Emigrants*. She alludes to them only briefly by praising Cowper’s poetry for providing her “infinite consolation” while “amid the heavy pressure of many sorrows” (132). This absence of specific detail in the introductory remarks underscores the idea that while *The Emigrants* mingles the personal and the public, it does not depend on the personal in the same way that *Elegiac Sonnets* does, either in concept or execution.²⁴ Until this moment in her career, Smith’s success as a poet has been predicated on the idea of her as a melancholic, long-suffering victim, the good

²² *The Emigrants* marks Smith’s return to her previous publisher, Thomas Cadell. In her correspondence with him, she carefully downplays the political content of the poem, hoping to avoid a repeat *Desmond*. She claims that the poem is “quite unlike in its nature any I have printed & is, tho not on politics, on a very popular & interesting subject mingled with descriptive and characteristic excursions in the way of the Task, only of course inferior to it” (*Letters* 55). As Stanton notes, the poem is “surely political in painting a sympathetic picture of women, children, priests, nobility, and military men who were exiled from France during the Revolution” (*Letters* 55); but as “Cadell published it in the end, he must not have found it as politically offensive as *Desmond*, which he refused to publish” (*Letters* 55).

²³ In her letters, Smith paints her father’s decision to marry her off to Benjamin to make way for Miss Meriton, a 40 year old woman with £20,000 and “a strong dislike of her future stepdaughter” (Stanton, *Letters* 81 note 10). See *Letters* 3 and 80.

mother entering the morally questionable literary world only as a last resort. In contrast, through the absence of personal contextualization for the poem in the introductory remarks, *The Emigrants* is predicated on the idea of Smith as an active participant in political debate, a socially conscious woman with a contribution to make in the debates about the direction of the modern British nation.

Had she written only as a means to a monetary end, as she claims in *Elegiac Sonnets*, then abandoning dangerous political sympathies should have been easy, even inconsequential. But abandonment not only was difficult for Smith, it also seems not to have been possible, particularly in *The Emigrants*. Nor was it possible in her novels, for these two volumes of poetry mirror the gap between Smith's propaganda for revolutionary ideals in *Desmond* and renunciation of them in *The Banished Man*, a novel unrelenting in its condemnation of democracy as "that fallacious, that pernicious philosophy that has undone us all" (224). Though it was composed only months after *The Emigrants* and published in August 1794, barely fifteen months after *The Emigrants* appeared in print, *The Banished Man* has none of the idealistic, egalitarian sentiment of her earlier works, while still retaining critiques of corrupt political and social life in England. So while Smith does stop writing fiction that promotes social reform via revolution, she never quite accomplishes the same in her poetry. In *The Emigrants*, Smith manages to unite personal experience with political criticism; she need not renounce the personal or the political, for this long poem centers precisely on the dialectic between the two.

Smith opens Book One of *The Emigrants* with an epigraph that sets her stage, locating her poetic persona and subjects in a particular time and place:

²⁴ Wolfson addresses Smith's use of a Miltonic republican discourse via blank verse in "Charlotte Smith's *Emigrants*: Forging Connections at the Borders of a Female Tradition"; see 102-105 in particular.

SCENE, on the Cliffs to the Eastward of the Town of Brighthelmstone in Sussex.

TIME, a Morning in November, 1792.

Smith's decision to begin the poem so deliberately during this particular month and year is intriguing. She consciously separates these details from the verse itself, making it clear that this information comes not from the persona but from the poet. She offers no explanation for the timeframe other than to express her revulsion at the August 1792 storming of the Tuileries and her distress over the ways in which "those who are the victims of the Revolution, have not escaped the odium, which the undistinguishing multitude annex to all the natives of a country where such horrors have been acted" (133). Smith's penchant for conversing within her own text, for qualifying, revising, expanding, and sometimes contradicting her own statements via prefaces and footnotes, makes this moment even more puzzling for its absence of specific authorial contextualization.²⁵ Critics have read the date in various ways, all situating it in a general time of Revolutionary escalation.²⁶ Yet it is crucial to remember that Smith sets *The Emigrants* not in a general time but rather in a very particular one—a moment of very real, impending threat to British sovereignty and safety.

²⁵ For Smith's strategy in endnoting her creative works, see Labbe's "'Transplanted into More Congenial Soil': Footnoting the Self in the Poetry of Charlotte Smith." Wolfson provides a valuable caution to the modern editorial practice (in Curran's *Poems*, Duncan Wu's *Romantic Women Poets, An Anthology*, and Mellor and Richard Matlak's *British Literature, 1780-1830*) of printing Smith's endnotes as footnotes: "Smith's use of endnotes (with very faint signaling in the poem text) makes their content ancillary, even negligible. To print them as same-page footnotes [as modern editors have largely chosen to do] effects a semiotic reformatting" (96).

²⁶ For example, Labbe reads the significance of the November 1792 dating as a "contextualizing date that allows her readers to understand the 'lawless Anarchy' does not necessarily characterize the Revolution itself, but rather its turn to Terror" ("The Exiled Self" 42). Wolfson reads the November date as "six months after priests who refused to support the Constitutional Church were declared traitors, three months after the decree for their expulsion and the arrest of the royal family at the Tuileries, two months after the September massacres (3 bishops and 220 priests among the slaughtered) and the confiscation of emigrants' property, and one month after the death penalty was established for any returnees. By November, Robespierre, the Terror's architect, had risen to power and Saint-Just was demanding judgment of Louis XVI as 'a foreign enemy' of the Republic's 'independence and unity'; in the same month, Smith was sheltering some emigrants in her own home" ("Charlotte Smith's *Emigrants*" 83). Neither reads the date as directly related to a specific threat from the revolutionary French government to the English state.

During 1789-1792, the years of the French Constitutional Monarchy, the revolution seemed to bring about relatively peaceful change.²⁷ During the summer of 1792, however, the political climate intensified considerably. Between the August 1792 attack on the Tuileries and the January 1793 execution of the Louis XVI, two significant events occurred in France, both with substantial ramifications for England. The first was the September Massacres, “the most grisly single incident in the Revolution, an example of lynch law and of a crowd baying for blood,”²⁸ during which over 1,100 political prisoners, mostly aristocracy and clergy, were murdered during a five day period in early September after the news of the fall of Verdun reached Paris. The second, and more immediately threatening to British interests, was a public proclamation issued by the French National Convention on November 19, less than two months after the monarchy was abolished and France declared itself a Republic. The new republican French government formally called for European revolution, pledging its assistance, loyalty, and fraternity to other revolutionary nations. T.C.W. Blanning argues that this decree marks the revolution’s “progress[ion] from a war of prudence to a war of propaganda to a war of imperial expansion,”²⁹ a progression clearly indicated when one juxtaposes the 1792 decree with one issued only two years earlier. In the 1790 declaration, the National Assembly promised that “the French nation renounces the undertaking of any war with a view to making conquests, and will never use its power against the liberty of any other people.”³⁰ The 1792 decree, publicly

Curran alone characterizes the date as a time of specific threat to England in a footnote in his edition of Smith’s verse (p. 135 fn. “November 1792”)

²⁷ Bailey Stone, *The Genesis of the French Revolution: A Global-historical Interpretation*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994) 109.

²⁸ Alan Forrest, *The French Revolution* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1995) 53-54.

²⁹ T.C.W. Blanning, *The Origins of the French Revolutionary Wars* (London: Longman, 1986) 136.

³⁰ Quoted by Blanning, 59.

rationalized by a desire for liberating all from their oppressors, clearly indicated that “propaganda-as-policy would give way to territorial annexation-as-policy.”³¹ This declaration signaled at the very least a hardening of Anglo-French relations and at most that the French were looking for an excuse to invade.

In response, the rhetoric of the English press, which previously had been worried and interested but not frantic, now became histrionic, panicky, and jingoistic.³² Just as the upheaval across the Channel had been seeping into the currents of English revolutionary discord since the June 1789 formation of the French National Assembly, it officially made its way to England via the French government’s November 1792 call for revolt, thereby setting in motion events leading to England’s declaration of war against France on February 11, 1793. By beginning *The Emigrants* in November 1792, Smith therefore deliberately sets her own work within a precise time of specific threat to and anxiety about the security of the English nation.³³

Ultimately though, Smith is more concerned with illustrating the state’s impact on the individual than with didactic pronouncements on the state of the nation. She is especially concerned with the person who has been cut off from the nation, exiled from the place that shapes his/her identity. For though she mourns the terrible turn of the Revolution in France, laments that Francophobia has found dangerous new fervor in England, and seeks to “humanize both countries” (133) through her verse, she aims to do so through a focus on the individual, a “delineation of those interesting objects which happened to excite my attention, and which even pressed upon a heart, that has learned, perhaps from its own sufferings, to feel with acute, though

³¹ Stone, *The Genesis of the French Revolution* 169. See also 159-172.

³² For example, the Wednesday, November 21, 1792 *Times* contained an almost full column address “To every Honest and Thinking Man, in Great Britain,” one that bears repeating almost in its entirety. See Appendix A.

unavailing compassion, the calamity of others” (132). Smith uses the individual to shed light on the nation by paralleling her suffering with that of the French exiles.

iv. “Discriminated anguish”: Movement from *Elegiac Sonnets* to *The Emigrants*

The speaker’s first characterization of self is one of suffering: she is a “weary soul” (1.35), one victimized by “proud oppression” and “legal crimes” (1.36) that cause her to long for solitude. In the face of the injustices she has suffered at the hands of the English Chancery, she longs for self-exile—the freedom to fully reject the system that harms her.³⁴ But in the face of these injustices, the speaker only “half-abjure[s] Society” (1.42). Her rejection, her repudiation of community is incomplete and extends only to a figurative withdrawal. Instead of actually removing herself physically, emotionally, or artistically, she enacts an only partial resistance to sorrow and circumstance, one mirrored by the only partially protected and obscured natural world. She “sigh[s]” for some

lone Cottage, deep embower’d
In the green woods, that these steep chalky Hills
Guard from the strong South West; where round their base
The Beach wide flourishes, and the light Ash
With slender leaf half hides the thymy turf!—
There do I wish to hide me; well content
If on the short grass, strewn with fairy flowers,
I might repose thus shelter’d [. . .] (1.43-50)

In 1784, financial difficulties forced Smith into literal exile with her husband, an experience that was painful and scarring. In the wake of continued financial difficulties, including the wrangling with the lingering Chancery suit, securing suitable educations and positions for her sons, and

³³ For more on the panic engendered in Britain by the French Revolution, specifically as this relates to Smith’s poetry, see Labbe, *Charlotte Smith* 125.

making marriages for her penniless daughters, Smith creates a poetic persona who longs for exile. But in this instance, Smith's speaker dreams of self-exile—a voluntary, autonomous movement, one of personal protection that will lead her to private sanctuary and growth. She dreams of retreating into a pastoral setting, thinking that while immersed in the “beauteous works of God” (1.56), safe from “human woes” (1.57), she might “better learn to bear / Those that injustice, and duplicity / And faithlessness and folly, fix on me” (1.58-60).

Smith makes three crucial points in these lines. First, through her speaker, she yearns to be free from the emotional burden of watching the exiles around her suffer, principally because it is a kind of suffering with which she so clearly identifies. Secondly, she wants to be able to draw strength from a peaceful, meditative, natural landscape unsullied by human tragedy. And finally, she wants this strength so she can better bear her own tragedy and perhaps get back to the private, melancholic poetry of *Elegiac Sonnets* as well as her sentimental, romantic novels, both of which have been stopped in their tracks by the effects of the Revolution.³⁵ Smith longs for a place that will allow her the emotional and ethical freedom to meditate on the personal, not the public, in her verse. She wants to be able to write the poetry of *Elegiac Sonnets*, rather than feeling compelled to write *The Emigrants*, a sort of intermediary form, a verse dedicated to the intersections between public and private that she typically separates by genre: poetry for private, novel for public.

³⁴ These injustices are railed against in an autobiographical, parenthetical aside: “(For such are in this Land, where the vain boast / Of equal Law is mockery, while the cost / Of seeking redress is sure to plunge / Th’ already injur’d to more certain ruin / And the wretch starves, before his Counsel pleads” (1.37-41).

³⁵ Before 1792, Smith wrote and published *Emmeline* (1788), *Ethelinde* (1789), *Celestina* (1791), and numerous editions of *Elegiac Sonnets* (1784, 1786, 1789, 1790, 1792). Yet between 1792-1794, her works centered on the French Revolution and the state of the English nation: *Desmond* (1792), *The Old Manor House* (1793), *The Emigrants* (1793), *The Wanderings of Warwick* (1794), and *The Banished Man* (1794). Significantly, there are no new editions of *Elegiac Sonnets* during these years.

Smith makes clear in *The Emigrants* that her empathy for others leaves her incapable of ever fully escaping sorrow, and in a moment decidedly different from those found in *Elegiac Sonnets*, she aligns her persona with real people enduring real distress during the very moments she writes: “For never yet could I derive relief, / When my swol’n heart was bursting with its sorrows, / From the sad thought, that others like myself / Live but to swell affliction’s countless tribes!” (1.61-64). Like the fictional and real-life sufferers of *Elegiac Sonnets*, Smith’s exiled poetic persona in *The Emigrants* cannot find peace. But unlike the lyrical solitude and melancholic separation she both craves and laments in *Elegiac Sonnets*, Smith’s speaker has now been thrust into the company of those who feel comparable pain: “Tranquil seclusion I have vainly sought; / Peace, who delights in solitary shade, / No more will spread for me her downy wings” (1.65-67).³⁶ The company of fellow exiles is no comfort, for at its core, Smith recognizes, exilic experience is a solitary one. She may feel their pain, sympathize with their suffering, but ultimately, she recognizes that it belongs to them.

The speaker addresses herself as “Mourner” not only to underscore her private suffering, however, but also to establish herself as someone whose unwilling engagement with private sorrows proves ironically beneficial: she is now a capable and appropriate mourner for both the public and the private outside her own personal experience. Whereas in *Elegiac Sonnets* the speaker laments private sorrows, in *The Emigrants* the speaker’s elegiac stance opens up possibility for serious, politicized commentary on public events. Unlike others who encounter the emigrants, this speaker can see “Discriminated anguish” (1.113) in “each expressive face” (1.112), signifying two significant points. First, not everyone suffers the pains of exile in the

³⁶ This separation and then immersion is mirrored by the form: melancholy detailed in the separate, distinct sonnets which, as sonnets, are limited in scope and length, as opposed to melancholy immersed in a long work of blank verse, a revolutionary form of limitless scope. See also Wolfson, “Forging Connections.”

same way, a distinction she makes clear in Book One through her depiction of individual exiles and in Book Two through her depiction of the captured French royal family. Secondly, and more importantly, she makes clear that her poetic persona possesses the ability to know and distinguish between these different sufferings. She recognizes the inhumanity of the emigrants' position, regardless of any personal, religious, or national differences that she may have with them or that her nation may have with theirs, and her vision is shrewd enough to distinguish the individual burdens borne by each of these figures, burdens in addition to exile and in some sense independent of their public losses. Her vision stems from her privileged position: a position not privileged because of station or nation, but because of shared experience. She too has "known / Involuntary exile" (155-156), the despair, indignities, and confusion that the emigrants now face, and she uses this knowledge to stage her response, to delineate the individual and the private beneath the seemingly homogenous, public exterior.³⁷

The public condition of exile is a complicated phenomenon. On the one hand, the emigrants gain a new social persona: they are members of the public group called "exiles." This new social role is predicated upon the stripping away of all other roles, all other public group identifications and memberships—in the case of Smith's exiles, membership in the First or Second Estates. In this way, one's public identity as exile constitutes a lack of public identity, since the "exile" is by definition rooted to no place and to no characteristic other than that of being place-less, homeless. When the priest is no longer a priest, the aristocrat no longer the nobleman, and so on, then the distinct identities of these fellow sufferers become unclear, for these identities were constituted by the very roles that have been stripped from them. As

³⁷ On the ways in which Smith establishes a parallel between herself and the exiles, see Curran "The 'I' Altered" 201.

walking negations, they are not French but not British, neither aristocrat nor serf, part of neither church nor state.

In the face of this indiscriminate mass, though, Smith nonetheless distinguishes particular sufferings. Citing her own personal experience as an exile, Smith suggests that she can fathom the experience of each particular exile.³⁸ But what sense does this make, given that the exiles have been stripped of their identities? Surely, the sufferings of each particular exile remain hidden, whereas the poet, perhaps at most, can point to the public persona that has been lost. Certainly Smith can publicize the latter, for these roles are by their very nature public. Given that these have been lost, however, how can she describe the individual exiles as individuals, their own unique sorrows, their own singular experiences?

Smith can describe the particular personal experiences of those she observes because first, unlike her fellow Englishmen and women, she claims to possess the requisite experience necessary to see them, and second, she is willing and able to see beyond the new, impersonal public identity of “exile” and recognize both the specific social constructions and the individual experiences underlying these. When Smith was exiled to France, she completely lost the public persona so important to her, a persona she would be very certain to claim in *Elegiac Sonnets*: Charlotte Smith of Bignor Park, Sussex. Upon her return to England, however, she would never really regain that public persona. This loss permeates her poetry, and it directs her depiction of the exiled French men and women—four clergymen, an exiled noblewoman and her family, and the captured French monarchy—who populate *The Emigrants*.

³⁸ Labbe characterizes Smith’s depictions of the exiles as “metaphors for Smith’s own sense of marginality, personal and cultural” (*Charlotte Smith* 122). Her argument seeks to stage “a reading sympathetic to Smith’s self-presentation as exiled,” maintaining that Smith “stage-manages an image of subjectivity able to converse with equal authority on the political and the personal” (117).

v. Monks and Mothers: Exilic Figures in *The Emigrants*

The first emigrant the speaker presents is a poor monk.³⁹ As the lowliest of the Catholic clergy, he possessed no accoutrements of worldly success for exile to strip away. Instead, his most significant losses are mental and emotional; his sense of truth and falsity, orthodoxy and heresy, borders on collapse. The horrors of exile have led him to abandon his absolute belief in the Roman Catholic Church as the true Church as well as the security he found in dogmatism. All he possessed was his faith in both doctrinal and spiritual superiority, his ability to “obtain a better” life by “renounc[ing]” (1.119) much of his earthly one. Devoid of the trappings of high clergy, he thought his “meagre abstinence,” (1.117) “wak[ing] / From his hard pallet with the midnight bell” and living on “eleemosynary bread” would “please [his] God” (1.118-119). But all of that certainty is gone now, leaving him “amaz’d” (1.120) to receive “[t]he pity, strangers give to his distress, / Because these strangers are, by his dark creed, / condemn’d as Heretics” (1.121-123). Not only has his confidence in his life’s work been shaken, but also his faith in his Church and his religious calling have deserted him, leaving him with a “sick heart” that “[r]egrets his pious prison, and his beads” (1.123-124). Exile transgresses his spiritual and doctrinal boundaries in a way that his pious religious training and lowly cloister life leave him woefully unprepared to manage.

The second exiled clergyman, a man of “more haughty port” (1.125), struggles with “mute despair” (1.126) that sends his “high indignant thoughts [. . .] back to France” (1.127). He can barely contain his disgust over “all he lost” (1.128): “the Gothic dome / that vied with

³⁹ Carol Fry reads *The Emigrants* as a “plea for tolerance of those who fled the troubles in France, albeit a rather cool one” (*Charlotte Smith* 81). Of Smith’s depiction of the exiled clergy in particular she claims that “Smith’s republican principles do not permit her to describe them with much sympathy” and her “description of them strikes a decidedly negative tone” (82). Fry’s criticism of *The Emigrants*, however, is compromised by the way she wants to read the poem; she wants to see it as “one that can in some respects [. . .] be read as another entry in the pamphlet war” (81). In the end, this predisposition leads her to interpret the verse as didactic and emotionally controlled rather than sympathetic and emotionally charged.

splendid palaces; the beds / Of silk and down, the silver chalices, / Vestments with gold enwrought for blazing altars” (1.128-131). Still, his unhappiness does not end with his material losses, for he mourns his loss of personal power just as much: “And still with more than living Monarchs’ pomp / Surrounded; was believ’d by mumbling bigots / To hold the keys of Heaven, and to admit / Whom he thought good to share it” (1.135-138). As a man of “daring soul and high ambition” (1.139), this loss of power leaves him as disheartened as the poor monk is with his loss of faith. As someone whose sense of self was based on being a particular kind of priest in a particular time and place, having these temporal and physical anchors stripped away leaves him angry and bereft.

Smith distinguishes the third exile, an Abbé who travels with the second priest, from his companion by his “less contracted brow” (1.149) and somewhat less unsettled countenance. But while the Abbé “[s]till smiles and flatters, and still talks of hope” (1.150), his optimistic exterior cannot conceal his unhappiness. Though he is “[l]ighter of heart” (1.147) than his companions, the speaker sees that his heart is nonetheless “heavier far / Than he was wont” (1.147-148). And though Smith’s speaker remains unconvinced by his confident manner, the hopefulness which, “sanguine as he is, he does not feel” (1.151), she nevertheless grants that he can momentarily cheat “the sad and weighty pressure / Of evils present” (1.152-153). Despite the transparency of the Abbé’s façade, the effect nonetheless prevails; the misery of exile temporarily recedes, on the surface at least.

In the case of each exiled clergyman, Smith can see the personal through the surface of an otherwise faceless “exile,” ultimately underscoring the democratic reality of exile: it can happen to anyone, regardless of whether or not the individual “deserves” it. The exile of the haughty Catholic priest, certainly not a sympathetic figure in Francophobic Protestant England,

could easily have been dismissed by Smith's less sensitive readers as a just punishment for an ungodly man. A central point for *The Emigrants*, however, is that even the good average man cannot escape exile or exilic suffering. In contrast to the other Catholic clergy, Smith next presents a parish priest, a "simple shepherd in a rustic scene" (1.170). Even this "poor and pious priest" (1.186), a "humbled" man (1.180) whose "lowly undistinguish'd" (1.181) home was the site of a "life of purest piety" (1.182), a man scorned by nobility for his station (1.185-186), "even such a Man / Becomes an exile" (1.190-191).

In Book One, the speaker makes clear that "Tranquil seclusion [she has] vainly sought" (65), for peace is not to be hers. And while her own efforts to court serenity have failed, she does not stage this as a personal failure. Instead, she acknowledges that peace will not come to anyone who suffers exile, regardless of the kind of exile one endures. In Book Two, set five months after Book One in the midst of the Terror, the speaker again sees the "unhappy lot / Of the lorn Exiles; who amid the storms / Of wild disastrous Anarchy, are thrown, / Like shipwreck's sufferers, on England's coast, / To see, perhaps, no more their native land, / Where Desolation riots" (2.9-14). She laments that "They, like me, / From fairer hopes and happier prospects driven, / Shrink from the future, and regret the past" (2.14-16). These victims of the terrible power of the new French state remind her of her own exilic predicament and, in a moment to which Wordsworth must be indebted, pities them for their own sorrows as well as the universal sorrow they represent: "my soul is pained / By the variety of woes that Man / For Man creates" (2.412-414), because "Man, misguided Man, / Mars the fair work that he was bid enjoy, / And makes himself the evil he deplores" (1.32-34).

Smith describes an exiled French noblewoman as the most pathetic victim of exile, and the one with whom she most clearly identifies. This woman parallels another of Smith's

abandoned figures, the eponymous character from “The female exile. Written at Brighthelmstone in November 1792,” a verse that appeared in a later version of *Elegiac Sonnets*.⁴⁰ Despite the abundant similarities, one considerable difference distinguishes the two; while the woman of “The female exile” mourns the greater miseries of the world around her (23-24), the mother of *The Emigrants* laments only her own sorrows.⁴¹ In “The female exile,” this solitary female figure finds herself on “hostile soil” (26), affording Smith the opportunity to explain her own personal troubles on hostile English soil, but in *The Emigrants*, Smith keeps the focus on her exilic figure in the verse and does not turn to herself (at least not at this juncture). This moment exemplifies the crucial departure Smith makes in this verse: a simultaneous extension and reconfiguration of previous images, devices, and ideas that lead her to public verse about real exiles instead of private verse about metaphorical exile. Yet it is her earlier depiction of self as a fellow exile that underscores both the pathos and the ethos of this moment. In *Elegiac Sonnets*, Smith is the victim of a flawed national conception of woman: woman as a non-entity in the civil and legal system that governs her life, a governing process she has no say in shaping. But in *The Emigrants*, Smith shifts from a critique of English civil policy toward women to a critique of British behavior and policy toward large groups of exiles as instantiated by the suffering of one exiled woman.

⁴⁰ In a footnote to “The female exile,” Smith notes that “This little Poem, of which a sketch first appeared in blank verse in a Poem called ‘The Emigrants’, was suggested by the sight of the group it attempts to describe—a French lady and her children” (97). Smith’s dating of the poem, November 1792, would make it roughly contemporaneous with her composition of *The Emigrants*; her footnote, however, suggests that *The Emigrants* appeared first. If we follow this chronology, then the earliest that “The female exile” would have appeared as part of *Elegiac Sonnets* is the seventh edition in 1795 published by Cadell and Davies. Smith’s inclusion of this verse in a post-*Emigrants* publication, though, keeps *The Emigrants* connected to her later works and reinforces the exilic strain already developed in *Elegiac Sonnets*.

⁴¹ Both verses are set in November 1792, and both women recline on a bed of seaweed near a chalky coast (“Female exile” 5; *Emigrants* 1.204) while watching the ocean waves (“Female exile” 9-12; *Emigrants* 1.215-219). Both scenes depict a mother, a woman of status (“Female exile” 9-12; *Emigrants* 1.220-222), and her children; in both, the children are unaware of the severity of their situations (“Female exile” 19-20; *Emigrants* 1.204) as they fashion a “fairy ship” (“Female exile” 19-20; *Emigrants* 207-208) to play with.

Smith positions her *Emigrants* figure on an eroding borderline, a cliff compromised or “hollow’d” by “wintry” storms warring at its edges (1.200). Significantly, at a point when the world as she knows it is collapsing, the French aristocrat stands on a disintegrating place, the natural erosion paralleling the political and social erosion around her, staging what looks to be a Sapphic leap. But despite these decaying surroundings, her domestic scene appears to be one of calm and unity, and it is the force that keeps her on the cliff and out of the water. Her children play around her, creating a toy navy out of paper and string. With this fragile, ephemeral force, “The fairy vessel, with its ribband sail / And gilded paper pennant” (1.207-208), Smith seems to be implying a dual meaning of ribband: first, an earlier eighteenth-century usage of “ribband” as interchangeable with “ribbon”;⁴² and second, “ribband” as a “wale or strip of wood,” specifically used in shipbuilding: “In shipbuilding, a long narrow flexible piece of timber, of which a number are nailed or bolted externally to the ribs of a ship from stem to stern, to keep them temporarily in position.”⁴³ The depiction of children playing with war machines, no matter how seemingly benign, during a time of revolution and impending war adds to the creepiness and unrest of the scene, for the children’s “navy” of ribbon and cloth stands in contrast to the real navy of metal and wood that will be marshaled and launched in only a few months when England goes to war against France.⁴⁴ So while Smith describes the children’s creation as a “fairy vessel,” something that hardly constitutes a man-of-war battleship, it is still nonetheless a vessel designed for war.

⁴² “Ribbon,” *The Oxford English Dictionary* 1989 ed.

⁴³ “Ribband,” *The Oxford English Dictionary* 1989 ed. “Ribband” is exclusively associated with military and naval uses, including “a wood scantling used in the construction of a gun or mortar platform” and a “square timber fastened on the outer side of the bilge-ways” to aid in launching a ship (884).

⁴⁴ See also *Elegiac Sonnets* XXVII, a poem which also depicts (and laments) children as victims of a future sorrow.

The speaker does not seem critical of this “softer form” (202) or at least certainly not as critical as she is of the woman’s husband; instead, the speaker seems to have real sympathy for her and her obvious distress as she sits on the ground, “wearied by the task / Of having here, with swol’n and aching eyes / fix’d on the grey horizon, since the dawn / Solicitously watch’d the weekly sail / From her dear native land” (1.215-219).⁴⁵ But despite this exilic figure’s hopelessness, life is not all despair. Her weariness “yields awhile” (1.219) to “kind forgetfulness” and daydreaming, “while Fancy brings, / In waking dreams, that native land again!” (1.220). The remembered land turns out to be Versailles, classing and marking her as a noblewoman, albeit a fallen one. Through this figure, Smith juxtaposes the losses of the clergy with those of the First Estate.⁴⁶ The noblewoman recalls a time of welcomed class distinctions when “the crowd / Paid willing homage” (1.224-225) and a place where “Beauty gave charms to empire” (226). Beauty and empire unite in this memory of pre-Revolutionary France in three ways: first, metaphorically, in that everyone is happy with the beautiful French nation; secondly, also metaphorically, in that the nobility see only beauty in their imperial domestic status over the French people; and third, literally, in the formally resplendent figures of the king and queen, who are themselves now physically debased and separated, having been imprisoned since August of 1792.⁴⁷ Yet her repose and reverie are all too quickly disturbed by the sounds of the ocean; the “unheeded foam” (231) calls her from memory back to “drear reality” (230).⁴⁸

⁴⁵ See also Sonnet XLIII of *Elegiac Sonnets*.

⁴⁶ It is important to note that all of the French exiles in *The Emigrants* are from the First and Second Estates; no French peasants and no *petit bourgeoisie* appear in the verse, an omission in line with Smith’s class prejudices toward certain social strata in both her novels and her verse.

⁴⁷ As noted, *The Emigrants* is set in November 1792; though Louis XVI and Marie Antoinette were not executed until 1793—Louis in January, Marie in October—they were separated during their imprisonment.

⁴⁸ Both Wolfson (“Forging Connections”) and Labbe (“The Exiled Self: Images of War in Charlotte Smith’s *The Emigrants*”) read this passage as Smith critiquing this woman, with little sympathy for her predicament; Saglia also

If the exiled noblewoman is a sympathetic figure, she is certainly made more so by the fact that she is the long-suffering, devoted mother, a trope Smith manipulates with great success in her writing.⁴⁹ Two other mothers appear in *The Emigrants*, one a heroic figure fleeing to the mountains in a futile attempt to save herself and her child from the ravages of war, and the other the imprisoned French queen, Marie Antoinette. But Smith is not content to set up the queen as an object of pathos; in order to bring her critique back to the nation, she establishes her as a different type of exile, one with which she is intimately acquainted: those people living in the nation who are, paradoxically, *de facto* not part of the nation.

Book Two of *The Emigrants*, often rightfully described as a meditation on the evils of war, is certainly focused on the horrors of warfare; indeed, the entire book is saturated with blood: Louis's, the soldiers', and that of the other victims of the Terror. The natural world too is coated with blood: "violets lurking in their turfy beds / Beneath the flow'ring thorn, are stain'd with blood" (2.70-71); "showers of blood have drench'd th' affrighted earth" (2.97); "lilies, trampled now in dust / And blood-bespotted" (2.105-106). In the midst of this gory landscape Smith places Marie-Antoinette, first characterized not as France's monarch, but as young Louis's unfortunate, "wretched Mother, [who,] petrified with grief, / Views [her son] with stony eyes, and cannot weep" (2.152-153). Like the exiled noblewoman on the English coast, Marie-Antoinette is forever exiled from the life she was born to, a fact Smith pities, not because the

reads this moment as denoting Smith's "essentially hostile position" ("The Dangers of Over-Refinement: The Language of Luxury in Romantic Poetry by Women" 656). The animosity these critics allude to, however, depends upon reading Smith as maintaining a particularly radical position in this verse; reading *The Emigrants* as part of a larger progression in Smith's political ideologies, which this work in particular seems to make clear between Books One and Two, makes her depiction of the this woman far more nuanced than these readings allow.

⁴⁹ For Smith's treatment of motherhood, see Boyd, "Professing Drudge': Charlotte Smith's Negotiation of a Mother-Writer Author Function"; Ruwe, "Benevolent Brothers and Supervising Mothers: Ideology in the Children's Verses of Mary and Charles Lamb and Charlotte Smith."

queen lost a life of grandeur and leisure, but because as a woman and as an aristocrat, she did what she was told:

Ah! much I mourn thy sorrows, hapless Queen!
 And deem thy expiation made to Heaven
 For every fault, to which Prosperity
 Betray'd thee, when it plac'd thee on a throne
 Where boundless power was thine, and thou wert rais'd
 High (as it seem'd) above the envious reach
 Of destiny! Whate'er thy errors were,
 Be they no more remember'd! (2.154-161)

Like Smith, Marie-Antoinette is an exile in her own land, a woman trapped by circumstance she could not control and punished for obeying the dictates of family and station. Smith's speaker aligns herself with the queen, mournfully asking "who knows, / From sad experience, more than I, to feel / For thy desponding spirit" (2.169-171)?

In Book Two, Smith deliberately identifies with mothers cut off from their rightful places in life, not just the fallen French queen but also a commoner, a nameless, nationless woman of the countryside. This second heroic, doomed maternal figure, one to whom verses like Felicia Hemans's "Suliot Mother" may well be indebted, flees, "pale and breathless" (2.258), with her infant child from the horrific scenes of war all around her to "a wild mountain, whose bare summit hides / Its broken eminence in clouds; whose steeps / Are dark with woods; where the receding rocks / Are worn by torrents of dissolving snow" (2.254-257). Pursued by enemy soldiers, beaten by ferocious weather and rugged terrain, she seeks shelter in the mountains. Ultimately, however, her protective acts are all for naught, for both she and the child die, victims of battles they were powerless either to engage in or to prevent. Smith later parallels this moment with a section on her own personal horrors:

How little dream'd I then the time would come,
 When the bright Sun of [May]
 Should, from disturb'd and artificial sleep,

Awaken me to never-ending toil,
 To terror and to tears!—Attempting still,
 With feeble hands and cold desponding heart,
 To save my children from the o'erwhelming wrongs,
 That have for ten long years been heap'd on me!—
 The fearful spectres of chicane and fraud
 Have, Proteus like, still chang'd their hideous forms
 (As the Law lent its plausible disguise),
 Pursuing my faint steps [. . .] (2.347-358)

Smith uses this moment to clearly underscore one of the poem's central premises: that the wrongs perpetrated against her in England, a nation without the excuse of war or social and political upheaval, are as devastating and as morally wrong as the those perpetrated in France because of revolution and war. For Smith, denying a noblewoman her home, cutting off a queen from her throne, and chasing a mother and child to their deaths are all violations of freedom and liberty, violations that in Smith's mind the modern republican nation can ill afford.

vi. "Nature's commoners": Critique of the Pastoral

Inasmuch as Smith is clearly interested in promoting the resolution of her own personal difficulties in *The Emigrants*, she is also passionately dedicated to equal promotion of social reform, two aims that are ultimately interrelated. In her novels, she writes frequently of the need for change in English social structure, most often limiting herself to those individuals within her own social sphere. And her pre-*Emigrants* verse that includes figures from the laboring-classes and peasantry can be characterized by "an embarrassing surplus of the 'Blest is yon shepherd' theme."⁵⁰ Yet now, Smith's strategy changes: she aligns England's poor with French exiles in order to portray both groups as worthy of pity from the philanthropic English gentry. Her treatment of the English pastoral setting leads to a decidedly critical view of that landscape and

⁵⁰ Fletcher 49.

the figures who populate it in the English literary imagination. Smith exposes the poetic, pastoral ideal as naively utopian and, ultimately, dangerously false.

In *The Emigrants*, Smith places a shepherd not on “turf reclin’d / [idly gazing] on the vaired clouds which float above,”⁵¹ but instead on the “bleak russet downs” (1.298) tending his “dun discolour’d flock” (1.300). Such a rendering allows Smith to reference a glorified pastoral tradition while simultaneously critiquing it as unreliable and unrealistic. Her shepherd, “unlike / Him, whom in song the Poet’s fancy crowns / With garlands, and his crook with vi’lets binds” (1.300-302), stands to indite the eighteenth-century pastoral as hopelessly farfetched and, more importantly, complicit in perpetuating a harmful popular mythology about “the poor”: that radiant contentment presides within the “low hut / Of clay and thatch, where rises the grey smoke / Of smold’ring turf” (2.179-181), surrounding all inhabitants with a protective coating of blissful ignorance, sparing them the harsh realities and realizations of their social betters. Smith specifically denies automatic pastoral bliss to this rural peasant and to anyone who seeks to find comfort in the natural world. She asks “where happiness is found?” (2.176) and woefully answers that the protective embrace of the “lone Cottage, deep embower’d / In the green woods” (1.43-44) that she longed for in Book One will not save anyone now: “Alas, in rural life, where youthful dreams / See the Arcadia that Romance describes, / Not even Content resides!” (2.177-179).

In place of the blessed shepherd yon, she creates a “labourer” (2.182), thereby making this new figure both generic and specific, exactly as she presents the French exiles: he could be any worker in non-urban England, and yet he is not simply one of “the poor.” Unlike the poor shepherds of *Elegiac Sonnets* who loll about in beautiful scenery watching the clouds drift by,

⁵¹ Sonnet IX, *Elegiac Sonnets*.

this man “toils / From the first dawn of twilight, till the Sun / Sinks in the rosy waters of the West” (2.182-184). But despite his earnest efforts, “bread, and scanty bread, is all he earns / For him and his household” (2.186-187). And should he fall ill and be unable to work, Smith makes plain that neither the parish (2.191-193) nor his landlord (2.199-203) will step in to help his family or try to save his life.

This critique of the pastoral stands in stark contrast to Smith’s other moments of idealization. At earlier points in the verse she depicts figures as longing, yearning for escape into the natural world, but here she says that will not work. So which is it? Can the pastoral provide respite and relief, or not? Perhaps it is both: maybe nature does have a kind of Romantic, Wordsworthian restorative power, the ability to teach and nurture the human spirit. But unlike that Wordsworthian natural world, the one Smith portrays is not always dependable.⁵² Whereas Wordsworth will be able to say only five years after Smith, “And this prayer I make, / Knowing that Nature never did betray / The heart that loved her” (122-124)⁵³ in *The Emigrants*, Smith is unable to offer such a prayer for herself or anyone else. This natural world will betray those who love it. If one is left to depend on this natural world for sole support, Smith seems to say, one may be left with nothing.

When Smith first introduces him, the laborer could be either an English or a French peasant. But in lines 2.204-209, she makes it clear that she is critiquing British treatment of laborers, for it is the English landscape, “our vallies” (2.206), that are “too oft deform’d / By

⁵² Anne Mellor reads Smith’s depiction of the natural world as even more hopeless: “But where Wordsworth and Coleridge found consolation in nature for the ravages of the French Terror, Charlotte Smith finds no ‘Content’ in ‘rural life’ (II.176-85)” (“Female Poet and the Poetess” 86), a charge that seems too absolute given Smith’s glorification of the bucolic earlier in the poem.

⁵³ William Wordsworth, “Lines Written a Few Miles Above Tintern Abbey,” *The Norton Anthology of English Literature*, Vol 2., 7th ed., gen. ed. M. H. Abrams (New York: W.W. Norton, 2000). Considering that both the text and the sentiment of Smith’s *Emigrants* predate *Lyrical Ballads* by five years makes the impact of her critique all the more compelling.

figures such as these” (2.204-205). Yet though she quickly claims that England’s poor are better off than those in France (2.210-215), she does not use this claim to mitigate or undercut her critique of British treatment of the poor. Instead, she carefully moves from a description of English workers to French exiles, establishing them as two parts of the same body. The speaker’s descriptions of exiles suggest that they are citizens of everywhere, citizens of nowhere; they are “Poor wand’ring wretches” (296), “Poor vagrant wretches! outcasts of the world!” (303), people who “no abode receives, no parish owns” (304). Much like the poor people she places them alongside, they have been neglected and shuttled aside by both the British church and state, as the word “parish” indicates in its enveloping of both church and state. Alongside British commoners, then, the exiles become “Nature’s commoners” (305), left to the mercy of the individual altruistic Englishman or woman: mercy which Smith clearly believes to be in short supply.⁵⁴

vii. The Fate of the “Ill-starr’d wanderers”

Smith’s critique of pastoral convention and English civil policy serves to set up the simultaneously didactic and ominous ending to Book One. Smith constructs a not so subtle warning to her fellow English:

Study a lesson that concerns ye much;
And trembling, learn, that if oppress’d too long,
The raging multitude, to madness stung,
Will turn on their oppressors; and, no more
By sounding titles and parading forms
Bound like tame victims, will redress themselves! (1.332-337)

⁵⁴ As Wolfson notes, “Nature’s commoners” (1.305) has an additional referent: “the simile recalls domestic commoners, whose lot was worsening in the 1790s with each new enclosure law, exiling them from their own country lands” (105).

In perhaps one of the most overtly Burkean moments in the poem, her direct address continues, warning that if the English allow “Confusion” (1.343) to reign over “fair Order” (1.340), the “infernal passions”—“Vengeance” (1.347), “Avarice,” and “Envy” (1.348)—will “Pollute the immortal shrine of Liberty, / Dismay her votaries, and disgrace her name” (1.349-350). England has far more to lose by resisting change than by embracing it.

Just as Smith ends Book One with an invocation of British pride, so too does she end Book Two on a national note. In the first book, she concludes with anti-war rhetoric, implicitly identifying peacefulness with British nobility. She is clear that “bloodless laurels “ are “nobler far / Than those acquir’d at Cressy or Poictiers” (1.368-370) or of those “bestow’d / O him who stood on Calpe’s blazing height / Amid the thunder of a warring world, / Illustrious rather from the crowds he sav’d / From flood and fire, than from the ranks who fell / Beneath his valour!” (1.372-376). Smith unambiguously links mercy with greatness:

Actions such as these,
Like incense rising to the Throne of Heaven,
Far better justify the ride, that swells
In British bosoms, than the deafening roar
Of Victory from a thousand brazen throats,
That tell with what success wide-wasting War
Has by our brave Compatriots thinned the world. (1.376-382)

By the end of Book Two, however, her wish has altered. Rather than pleading to what she hopes is the better nature of humanity, she calls on the “Power Omnipotent” (2.421), who with “mercy view[s] / This suffering globe” (2.421-422) and asks that it “cause thy creatures cease, / With savage fangs, to tear her bleeding breast” (2.423). In a tone of both reverent petition and fervent demand, she pleads for mercy for her world; her emphasis on the imperative makes plain her desire: “Restrain that rage for power, that bids a Man, / Himself a worm, desire unbounded rule O’er beings like himself” (2.424-425) and

Teach the hard hearts
 Of rulers, that the poorest hind, who dies
 For their unrighteous quarrels, in thy sight
 Is equal to the imperious Lord, that leads
 His disciplin'd destroyers to the field" (2.426-430).

No longer content in this book, set five months after the first, to ask nicely for what is right, now she insists upon it. Her ultimate wish is that "lovely Freedom, in her genuine charms, / Aided by stern but equal Justice" (2.431-432) will "drive / From the ensanguin'd earth the hell-born fiends / Of Pride, Oppression, Avarice, and Revenge" (2.432-435)—all so that the exiles can go home:

Then shall these ill-starr'd wanderers, whose sad fate
 These desultory lines lament, regain
 Their native country; private vengeance then
 To public virtue yield; and the fierce feuds,
 That long have torn their desolated land,
 May (even as storms, that agitate the air,
 Drive noxious vapours from the blighted earth)
 Serve, all tremendous as they are, to fix
 The reign of Reason, Liberty, and Peace.

For Smith, restoring these "ill-starr'd wanderers" to their home is synonymous with a "reign of Reason, Liberty, and Peace," for as long as the exiles remain cut off from their home, their home will never truly be at peace.

Much the same claim can be made for Smith's predicament as well. In her conception of Britain as a modern, progressive land, for her to remain cut off from her life, to remain a type of "ill-starr'd wanderer" herself, compromises England as much as the treatment of French exiles compromises France. Her continued exile in her homeland, cut off from the life that is rightfully hers, diminishes Britain, making it as much a creator of exiles as it is a safe haven for them.

CHAPTER 2

“THEY MADE AN EXILE—NOT A SLAVE OF ME”: BYRON’S EXILIC NATIONALISMS

A bitter lesson; but it leaves me free:
 I have not vilely found, nor basely sought,
 They made an Exile—not a slave of me.
 George Gordon, Lord Byron, “The Prophecy of Dante”

Surprisingly, Clement Tyson Goode’s *George Gordon, Lord Byron: A Comprehensive, Annotated Research Bibliography of Secondary Materials in England 1973-1994* contains no index entry for “exile.” But then again, neither do other standard Byron texts: Jerome McGann’s *Fiery Dust*; Leslie Marchand’s *Byron: A Portrait* or his *Byron’s Letters and Journals*; Robert Gleckner’s *Byron and the Ruins of Paradise*—the list goes on and on. Yet references to Byron’s self-exile from England in 1816 are as commonplace as accounts of his awakening in 1812 to find himself the very famous author of *Childe Harold’s Pilgrimage*. Much anecdotal use has been made of Byron’s exile, employing it handily for chapter titles and biographical footnotes, but little attention has been paid to the effect exile had on Byron’s writing,¹ except for

¹ Mark Phillipson’s unpublished dissertation, “Byronic Exile,” is a notable exception; unfortunately, his readings of exile rely on what is intended to be the euphemistic idea of “displacement,” a strategy that does not give enough credit to the very real psychic cost of self-exile. In “First Look at Exile: Byron’s Art in 1816,” Bone uses Byron’s exile in 1816 as the starting point for an analysis of the verse technique in Byron’s Switzerland poems; he does not, however, go on to develop his admittedly “tentative suggestion” that B’s Swiss verse “does not easily accept exile as freedom” (78). Other interpretations have depended upon psychoanalytic readings of strains of “dissociation,” both literal and figurative, in Byron’s verse and biography, for example Elledge, “Byron’s Harold at Sea.”

the occasional remark that either exile from England caused Byron little or no distress or that the effect it had was overwhelmingly beneficial for his verse, and thus worth the pains.²

Exile always damages, though, no matter how eventually glorious an artistic or political outcome may arise. The rift between exile and home, citizen and nation, child and family, leaves an indelible mark, and few are able to leave the homeland forever behind. Byron was no exception. Indeed, before leaving England in 1816, while busily and loudly proclaiming his intent never, ever to return, he also made certain that one tie with England would remain unsevered: according to the House of Lords Proxy Book for 1816, “George Earl of Essex hath the proxy of George Lord Byron.”³ Just as he was prepared to participate in Parliament by proxy, Byron continually attempted to reform England in absentia.

Though he was physically absent from England for much of his adult life, he remained connected in vital ways: his publishing, his friendships, his politics. The many other nations he visited, then, became proxies for England, his view of them colored by all the ways that they either were or were not England, particularly the ways in which they were not Albion, a significant distinction for Byron. Chapter two will explore the ways that Byron’s exilic turns back to his homeland are thus doubly shaped by nostalgic yearning: a longing for a country

² Marchand’s assessment, for one, is that “No sooner had Byron left England, shaking its dust from his feet after the scandal of the separation, than he began the third canto of *Childe Harold*” (Marchand, *Byron’s Poetry* 46). MacCarthy agrees with Marchand, arguing for the beneficent effect of exile: “In the years of his exile Byron’s writing changed and deepened. Tom Moore was to see the rush of eloquence in Byron’s poems of summer 1816—the third canto of *Childe Harold*, *The Prisoner of Chillon*, ‘The Dream’, ‘Darkness’—as a defiant reaction to his recent struggles, the effect on his mind of these conflicts ‘in stirring up all its resources and energies.’ But from 1816 there are also the first signs of a new sensibility, a grandiloquence that finds its full expression in the famous lines from *Manfred*: ‘Sorrow is knowledge: they who know the most / Must mourn the deepest o’er the fatal truth, / The Tree of Knowledge is not that of Life.’ Out of England, determined to kick the dust of this now hated country from his feet, Byron finally renounced all traces of the provincialism of his early poems” (*Byron: Life and Legend*, 283-284).

³ House of Lords Record Office, Proxy Book 1816, vol. 91, 17. As Stabler notes in *Byron, Poetics and History*, this little known detail makes plain Byron’s intent to “re-engage with English politics via a different route,” since “[o]ne abrupt change of direction is shadowed by an alternative and, in this case, opposite course of action” (1).

capable of incorporating his patriotic ideals, a feat at which his homeland failed miserably, while at the same time, developing a republican idealism itself shaped by a kind of nostalgic desire, one for the Albion, Caledon, Græcia, Italia of old—the greater nation, both politically and artistically.⁴ The chapter will first explore the ways that Byron’s parliamentary speeches make plain the kind of England he envisioned and wished to help bring about, and then turn to *Childe Harold’s Pilgrimage* Cantos I-II and their underlying narrative of a hope for the revival of a great Western civilization. Finally, the chapter will address the last two cantos of *Childe Harold’s Pilgrimage*, works created after Byron leaves Britain in 1816, in which we can see both Byron’s idealism and pragmatism irrevocably altered by his exilic state.

i. “Half a framebreaker myself”: Byron’s Parliamentary Addresses

Only days after the much celebrated first canto of *Childe Harold* appeared, Byron delivered his first address in the House of Lords. After much deliberation and drafting, he settled on the “Frame-breakers” revolts in Nottinghamshire, county seat of his ancestral home at Newgate.⁵ While Nottingham was a hotbed for Luddite activity from 1811-1816, the years of 1811-1812, particularly through the fall and winter, saw particularly vigorous protest. This deliberately disruptive act, workers destroying textile machinery in protest of working conditions

⁴ In “Cosmopolitan Masculinity and the British Female Reader of *Childe Harold’s Pilgrimage*,” Franklin rightly points out that Byron’s nostalgic turn, both literally toward the Orient and figuratively back in time, is a specifically masculinized one: “the poem’s initial gesture of turning away from modern Britain is reinforced by the fact that its Eastward movement is also a journey backwards in time, culminating in Harold’s arrival in the still-feudal Albania” (108). Because Harold’s “rejection of modernity is specifically a transgressive rejection of the bourgeois gender roles enjoined by English Protestantism in the Evangelical movement,” his quest should be read as one for “a specifically aristocratic, masculine literary identity” (108). Makdisi, in *Romantic Imperialism: Universal Empire and the Culture of Modernity*, adds an additional important reading of Byron’s engagement with the Orient, specifically reading Byron’s vision of the Orient as “refuge from and potential alternative to modernity” in *CHP* II is “contested and redefined in later spatial productions: its critical and imaginary terrain had to be seized, cleansed, and totally re-organized and re-invented,” particularly in a verse like Shelley’s *Alastor*; see particularly 122-137.

⁵ Byron drafted parts of the Luddite and Catholic claims speeches in tandem, only choosing to go forward with the frame-breakers speech, a topic he found more urgent, in early February. See Nicholson *Prose* 281.

and trade actions, gave rise to numerous rumors and fallacies, heightening an already anxious government and citizenry fearful of domestic insurrection and foreign invasion:

It was variously suggested at the time that the Luddites were French agents, working at Bonaparte's instigation, paid to sabotage the war effort on the industrial front, embarrassing the government and absorbing its military forces; that the Luddites were receiving their instructions from Cobett and other national leaders of the reform movement in London; that they were local Tories whose aim was, presumably, to discredit all reform movements, and, even more ludicrous, that Luddism was a scheme put up by the Ministry of the day to enable it to place areas under the heel of military despotism.⁶

The fear over a possible workers' revolt was palpable, and governmental response was swift and unforgiving, bringing first in 1788 an act of Parliament making frame-breaking a felony.⁷

Deeming the available punishments "ineffectual," the 1812 Frame Work Bill asked for the death penalty for anyone found guilty of frame-breaking.⁸

Over the course of his address, a speech littered with biblical, classical, dramatic, and poetic allusions, Byron veers away from customary legislative discourse, a rhetorical style generally comprised of equal parts ingratiating flattery and numbing pedantry. In its place, he substitutes a fiery, passionate rhetoric indebted somewhat to a tradition of Whig liberalism but most significantly to his own righteous indignation. He explains both the rationale behind and the vehemence of his position in a letter to Whig leader Lord Holland, nephew of libertarian Whig Charles James Fox, Byron's own parliamentary patron: "My own motive for opposing ye. bill is founded on it's palpable injustice, & it's certain efficacy.— —I have seen the state of

⁶ Malcolm I. Thomis, *Politics and Society in Nottingham, 1785-1835* (New York: A. M. Kelley, 1969) 78. See also E.P. Thompson, *the Making of the English Working Class* 530-602.

⁷ Andrew Nicholson, ed., *Lord Byron: The Complete Miscellaneous Prose* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991) 285.

⁸ Nicholson, *Prose* 285. Nicholson goes on to note that the bill received "the Royal Assent on 20 Mar. 1812" (285).

these miserable men, & it is a disgrace to a civilized country.”⁹ He continues with a measured and reasonable declaration that it “can never be too late to employ force in such circumstances,” referring to the death penalty proposed by the Tory leadership as well as the military forces stationed and charged with maintaining order in Nottinghamshire.¹⁰ Both were deeply offensive to Byron, and he made his objections clear—perhaps too much so, he must have suspected, since his letter to Holland ends with a half-serious, half-jesting postscript: “P.S.—I am a little apprehensive that your Lordship will think me too lenient towards these men, & *half a framebreaker myself*.”¹¹ By the time of his speech, though, he must have come to terms with the possible ramifications of publicly disclosing his personal and political principles, for the tone of his address differs substantially from the obeisance of his letter to Holland. A shrewd awareness of form and occasion on Byron’s part also accounts for the difference in tone between personal correspondence and public speech, a difference that has troubled and angered critics, some of whom have charged him with offenses ranging from carelessness and indifference to heartless playacting.¹² When untangling Byron’s political loyalties and ideals, it is important to remember

⁹ Leslie Marchand, *Lord Byron: Selected Letters and Journals*, 12 vols (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1982) II.165-166.

¹⁰ Thomis notes that the “authorities, local and central, found it impossible to secure the necessary information to uncover the Luddite organization in spite of their willingness to expend great sums of money, and throughout this time domestic troubles tied down so many troops as to make the Luddites almost as great a military problem as the French” (78-79).

¹¹ Marchand, *BLJ* II.166.

¹² Kelsall, for instance, takes issue with Byron’s shifts in tone between his speeches, letters, and verse, charging him with failing to produce a “coherent, practical and effective strategy for resolving the problem” (52) and reading these shifts in language as capricious: “Clearly one would not predict this kind of over-the-top invective [as found in the frame-breakers speech] from the cool summary and hesitant modesty of the letter to Lord Holland. It is a Philippic. The super-charged rhetoric is partly the product of the public chamber (compared with a private epistle), but partly also a symptom of irresponsibility. Since what is said will not affect what is done, form may dominate content and one may use rhetorical violence secure from violent consequence” (47). Foot staunchly defends Byron against such accusations: “[Kelsall] makes the charge that Byron was guilty of intensifying his anger as he went along [. . .] Indeed, there was such a shift of emphasis, and why not? The twenty-year-old Byron cannot be convicted of anything but common sense in furthering the cause of his adoption, if he addressed his patron, his fellow peers and the outside public in somewhat different language” (137). Gross self-consciously places his own

that despite his later melodramatic grumblings about the beauty of despotism,¹³ Byron's sincere belief in individual liberties exercised in defiance of tyranny remained strong.¹⁴

The frame-breakers speech ends with two images emblematic of the citizen and the tyrant: the beleaguered worker and the bloodthirsty magistrate:

But suppose it past, suppose one of these men, as I have seen them, meagre with famine sullen with despair, careless of a life,—which your Lordships are perhaps about to value at something less than the price of a stocking frame,—suppose this man surrounded by those children for whom he is unable to procure bread at the hazard of his existence, about to be torn forever from a family which he lately supported in peaceful industry, & which it not his fault that he can no longer so support, suppose this man,—& there are ten thousand such from whom you may select your victims, dragged into court to be tried for this new offence by this new law, still there are two things wanting to convict & condemn him,—& these are in my opinion, twelve butchers for a Jury, & a Jefferies for a Judge. (27)¹⁵

By ending his first speech on such a note, Byron accomplishes several things integral to his parliamentary and patriotic aims. First, he humanizes the worker with a deliberately heartrending

text, *Byron: The Erotic Liberal*, alongside these two contentious interpretations of Byron's political idealism and legacy by reading Byron's parliamentary activities as neither particularly heroic or suspiciously dilettantish but instead as indebted to Sheridan's theatrics and Brummell's dandyism; see particularly 15-21.

¹³ See Kelsall 53-55.

¹⁴ That Byron's devotion to the individual's power to exercise his rights in the face of state authority was not destroyed over the course of his life is remarkable, particularly considering the impact the state had on his life. In *Byron: Life and Legend*, Fiona MacCarthy makes a compelling case for the suffocating dictates of sexual propriety in England being the primary reason for Byron's exile, not just public scorning as rumors of a sexual relationship with his half-sister Augusta Leigh surfaced, as most biographers and critics have either claimed or assumed. Instead, allegations of anal intercourse with his wife, incest with his half-sister, and homosexual liaisons with numerous men combined, MacCarthy argues, to drive him away from his homeland (MacCarthy 266-269). A not unreasonable assertion, given the shockingly brutal and unmerciful punishments for sodomy in Regency England: the pillory for those found guilty of "assault with attempt to commit sodomy" and execution for those who successfully completed the act (Edsall 56). The two punishments, however, often amounted to the same thing, the pillory being "a cruel enough punishment for any offense but tantamount to a sentence of severe physical injury, even death, for sodomites" (Edsall 56). If fear of reprisal for sexual behaviors did drive Byron out of England, a more convincing and reprobate example of state interference in the personal life of a citizen could scarcely be found. Byron's title and connections could not have sheltered him from this interference, as he would have been well aware, given the sensational social and professional exile of William Beckford a generation earlier, to say nothing of the Vere Street arrests in 1810 (Edsall 56-57). See also Cocks, *Nameless Offences: Homosexual Desire in the Nineteenth Century* 122-124; Murray Goldsmith, *The Worst of Crimes: Homosexuality and the Law in Eighteenth-Century London* 114-116.

¹⁵ All references to Byron's speeches are from Nicholson's *Lord Byron: The Complete Miscellaneous Prose*.

hearthside scene, the decent working-man, now failed husband and father, about to widow and orphan his loved ones. Second, he demonizes the forces of law and order by accusing the Tory opposition of setting a dollar value on a human life, “something less than the price of a stocking frame” (27).¹⁶ Third, those men charged with enforcing the framework bill would out of necessity have to be brutes as well, with cutthroats on the jury and bloodthirsty magistrates on the bench, i.e. George Jeffreys, first Baron Jeffreys of Wem.¹⁷ Finally, Byron establishes himself as the validating presence, the one who has “seen” these starving men, unjustly treated by an greedy capitalist enterprise and further exploited by an apathetic Parliament. Byron uses his noble presence in this noble house to draw attention to a largely unacknowledged reality of the frame-breaking controversy: the genuine distress of the worker.¹⁸

This personal witnessing is crucial for Byron, for it establishes him as a unique kind of authority in a room full of men convinced of their own power, power granted to them by social position not experience. In contrast, Byron uses his personal experience to bolster his assertions,

¹⁶ As he also does in “An Ode to the Framers of the Frame Bill,” published anonymously in *The Morning Chronicle* in March 1812:

The rascals, perhaps, may betake them to robbing,
The dogs to be sure have got nothing to eat –
So if we can hang them for breaking a bobbin,
'Twill save all the Government's money and meat:
Men are more easily made than machinery –
Stockings fetch better prices than lives –
Gibbets on Sherwood will *heighten* the scenery,
Showing how Commerce, *how* Liberty thrives!

For a fuller discussion of the verse, its publication, and its importance in understanding Byron's activist writings, see Mole, “Byron's ‘Ode to the Framers of the Frame Bill’: The Embarrassment of Industrial Culture.”

¹⁷ Jeffreys was the Lord Chancellor who in 1685 orchestrated the “Bloody Assizes,” sentencing “more than 300 people to execution, and 1,000 to transportation” (Nicholson, *Prose* 289 note 46).

¹⁸ Thomis, following Felkin, maintains that even though precise “unemployment figures are incalculable because of the degrees of unemployment that the organization of the industry allowed, “it nonetheless seems clear that in January 1812, “almost half of the town's population was being relieved from poor rates” (79-80). The system was overhauled, instituting relief tickets and larger subscriptions; 10,000 tickets were quickly exchanged at food shops (80), but even this strategy backfired, being too little and too late for some: “One case was quoted of a man so wasted and emaciated that he was unable to cope with the food he received and died when he tried to eat” (80). All in all, Thomis claims, “there is good reason to see 1811-1812 as a particularly severe period” (80) in Nottingham.

moving quickly to the first-person, claiming that despite being a “a stranger not only to this house in general, but to almost every individual whose attention I presume to solicit,” he must nonetheless “claim some portion of your Lordships’ indulgence, whilst I offer a few observations on a question in which I confess myself deeply interested,” interested in part because he is “a person in some degree connected with the suffering county” (22). Convinced that “the state of that county” (22) was unchanged when he left Newstead, his Nottinghamshire estate, on January 11, 1812,¹⁹ Byron was certain that he had “reason to believe it to be [significantly changed] at this moment” (22).²⁰ But while he quickly acknowledges the unlawfulness, rowdiness, and danger of the workers’ actions, calling them “outrages [that] must be admitted to exist to an alarming extent” (22), he just as quickly points an accusing finger at the source of this unlawfulness, “circumstances of the most unparalleled distress,” for the “perseverance of these miserable men in their proceedings, tends to prove that nothing but absolute want could have driven a large & once honest & industrious body of the populace into the commission of excesses so hazardous to themselves, their families, & the community” (22). He stands convinced that such rebellious and destructive behavior had to be motivated by extreme distress rather than a desire for random lawlessness.

Even as Byron defends this “honest & industrious body” (22), however, his defense is clearly motivated by paternalistic concern. One of the paradoxes of Byron’s writings is his clear enjoyment and staunch defense of the privileges of nobility alongside his unrelenting support of personal liberty. Yet given his conception of personal liberty, such a stance seems not terribly contradictory, for while he certainly espouses a belief in liberty for all, he qualifies his definition

¹⁹ Norman Page, *A Byron Chronology* (Boston: G.K. Hall, 1988) 24.

²⁰ Felkin cites over forty frames broken in Nottinghamshire during the first two weeks of January alone (*A History* 234).

of “liberty” carefully: men are certainly free to do all the things that their station will allow, but they are not free to do all things. Certain actions remain the right of the privileged, and others are the province of the laborer: a class division that Byron loyally and enthusiastically adhered to all his life.²¹ Yet Byron’s class snobbery, no matter how offensive, never strayed over the line into class tyranny.²² Byron believed in the free-born Englishman: free to reach whatever levels of personal success and happiness one’s station afforded. Thus the proposed capital punishment of men and women protecting, in Byron’s conception of class hierarchy, what was rightfully theirs, epitomized the tyranny of the state over the individual most abhorrent to him. Byron’s conception of the nation demanded individual autonomy and a freedom from state interference in pursuing individual freedoms.

Like his Frame-breakers speech, Byron’s Roman Catholic Claims address, delivered to a packed House on April 21, 1812, is saturated with literary, classical, and biblical allusions.²³ The subject of the debate was the franchisement of Irish Catholics, a topic eloquently summarized by the Earl of Donoughmore on April 20:

Our object is avowed and direct; earnest, yet natural: it extends to an equal participation of the civil rights of the constitution of our country, equally with our fellow-subjects of all other religious persuasions; it extends not further. We would cheerfully concede the enjoyment of civil and religious liberty to all mankind; we ask no more for ourselves. We seek not the possession of offices, but mere eligibility to office, in common with our fellow-citizens; not power or ascendancy over any class of people, but the bare permission to rise from our prostrate posture, and to stand erect in the empire.²⁴

²¹ Two of the privileges of rank Byron most ardently cherished were the right to sexual liberties with social inferiors, and the right to mock the literary pretensions of workers, e.g. his numerous affairs with servant girls and his condescending, scathing criticism of working-class poets like Robert and Nathaniel Bloomfield (in *English Bards and Scotch Reviewers*, for example).

²² Unless, of course, one sees exploiting servant girls for repercussion-less sexual trysts as a kind of tyranny, using these young women as a kind of bourgeois, heterosexual, masculine training ground, which one could certainly do.

²³ Nicholson *Prose* 295.

²⁴ *Cobbett’s* xxii (1812) 457.

As in the frame-breakers speech, and perhaps to an even greater degree in this second address, Byron uses English nationalism as a battering ram against his conservative Parliamentary opponents. Once again, “The enemy is without, and distress within” (33). For Byron, national security, threatened both by those who would challenge England’s sovereignty abroad as well as those who would keep England divided against itself, constitutes the single most important item on Parliament’s agenda:

It is too late to cavil on doctrinal points, when we must unite in defence of things more important than the mere ceremonies of religion. It is indeed singular, that we are called together to deliberate, not on the God we adore, for in that we are agreed; not about the King we obey, for to him we are loyal; but how far a difference in the ceremonials of worship, how far believing not too little, but too much (the worst that can be imputed to the Catholics,) how far too much devotion to their God, may incapacitate our fellow-subjects from effectually serving their King. (33)

In this speech, his disturbing inference is as follows: if we fail to unite England, if we fail to ensure that all subjects are united not under the Church but the Crown, Great Britain will fall. For Byron, the King trumps God, regardless of whether the Father’s home base is Canterbury or Rome.

Perhaps Byron’s most potent images in the Catholic speech are those that depict parliament, and by extension, the nation and national policies that parliament creates and sanctions as barbaric. In these moments his language becomes its most forceful and his deriding wit its most cutting, even while he eases into the critique, allowing ironic understatement to make a point. He cites, for example, the case of the King vs. James Kittson, a Protestant found not guilty of murdering a Catholic man despite clearly presented evidence of his guilt and the judge’s unambiguous, legitimate guidance of the jury. Byron glibly summarizes the “partiality”

of both the legal system in this particular case and the flawed human participants in that system's charades:

A yeoman was arraigned for the murder of a Catholic named Macvournagh; three respectable uncontradicted witnesses deposed that they saw the prisoner load, take aim, fire at, and kill the said Macvournagh. This was properly commented on by the judge; but to the astonishment of the bar, and indignation of the court, the Protestant jury acquitted the accused. So glaring was the partiality, that Mr. Justice Osborne felt it his duty to bind over the acquitted, but not absolved assassin in large recognizances; thus for a time taking away his license to kill Catholics. (35)

On other occasions, however, Byron does not hesitate to use direct condemnation, name-calling, and well-placed hyperbole to make his points. His strategies include succinctly capturing the logical absurdities embedding within the opposition's platform:

The opponents of the Catholics may be divided into two classes; those who assert that the Catholics have too much already, and those who allege that the lower orders, at least have nothing more to require. We are told by the former, that the Catholics never will be contented: by the latter, that they are already too happy (34);

finger-waggingly admonishing his parliamentary predecessors for deliberate duplicity:

There was indeed a time when the Catholic clergy were conciliated, while the Union was pending, that Union which could not be carried without them, while their assistance was requisite in procuring addresses from the Catholic counties; then they were cajoled and caressed, feared and flattered, and given to understand that 'the Union would do every thing;' but the moment it was passed, they were driven back with contempt into their former obscurity (36);

shamelessly punning in the service of castigation:

It is true, that time, experience, and that weariness which attends even the exercise of barbarity, have taught you to flog a little more gently, but still you continue to lay on the lash, and will so continue, till perhaps the rod may be wrested from your hands and applied to the backs of yourselves and your posterity (39);

and sneering with undisguised disgust: "Such is law, such is justice, for the happy, free, contented Catholic!" (35).

But it is when he fixes his sights on national identity that his barbs hit most accurately. If individual liberty is the ultimate aim of his political endeavors over the course of his life, Byron's discourse becomes most passionate at those moments when both the individual and the nation are in jeopardy, for the individual bolsters the liberty that only the nation can secure. To make his point, Byron again, as he did in his first parliamentary address, relies on comparisons between England and a "savage" land. In this particular instance, he proposes that it would be infinitely better for England's sons to be raised as honest and true savages rather than become barbarians in disguise. He wonders, asking "our spiritual pastors and masters" whether "this [is the] training of the Gospel before the time of Luther? that religion which preaches 'Peace on earth and glory to God?'" (37), whether this church is "bringing up infants to be men or devils?" (37). Far better, Byron maintains, to send Britain's young "any where [instead of teaching] them such doctrines"; it would be preferable to "send them to those islands in the South Seas, where they might more humanely learn to become cannibals," for "it would be less disgusting that they were brought up to devour the dead, than persecute the living" (37). He laughingly dismisses the idea of religious education in this particular context: "Schools do you call them? call them rather dunghills, where the viper of intolerance deposits her young, that when their teeth are cut and their poison is mature, they may issue forth, filthy and venomous, to sting the Catholic" (37-38).²⁵

Byron makes the point that England eagerly rushes to the aid of foreign allies in trouble, but is then reticent if not unwilling to aid those in need at home, a point he also presses in his frame-breakers speech. The tension between Britain's foreign and domestic policies becomes Byron's strongest and most fervently argued point:

²⁵ Protestant petitions against claims were fervent and frequent from Oxford and Cambridge, Byron's alma mater. Nicholson 298, note 13.

It is singular, indeed, to observe the difference between our foreign and domestic policy; if Catholic Spain, faithful Portugal, or the no less Catholic and faithful king of the one Sicily (of which, by the bye, you have lately deprived him) stand in need of succour, away goes a fleet and an army, an ambassador and a subsidy, sometimes to fight pretty hardly, generally to negotiate very badly, and always to pay very dearly for our Popish allies. But let four millions of fellow subjects pray for relief, who fight and pay and labour in your behalf, they must be treated as aliens, and although their “father’s house has many mansions” there is no resting place for them. (41)

England’s financial obligations to her allies were significant, as Byron alludes. In March of 1812 alone, the month prior to his address, Britain committed itself to a renewal of a £400,000 annual Sicilian subsidy and approved £2,000,000 for Portugal,²⁶ to say nothing of the continued expenses of the Peninsular war. Ultimately, though, these infractions carry less weight than what Byron sees as this nation’s ultimate wrong: the forced assimilation of an independent people. Characterizing this assimilation with violently animalistic and scatological imagery, he portrays Britain as gluttonously carnivorous. If Great Britain “must be called an Union,” he says, “it is the union of the shark with his prey”—“the spoiler swallows up his victim, and thus they become indivisible” (41) to the detriment of the former and the annihilation of the latter. Finally, the nation has “swallowed up the parliament, the constitution, the independence of Ireland, and refuses to disgorge even a single privilege, although for the relief of her swollen and distempered body politic” (41). Great Britain, England, London, Parliament, Citizen—Byron equates the smallest unit with the largest group, working back and forth between the two ends of the spectrum, making the nation only as great as its most downtrodden and disregarded citizen: in his first speech, the unemployed, disenfranchised frame-breaker, and in his last, the tyrannized Catholic citizens of Ireland.

²⁶ These measures approved on March 25, 1812 and March 16, 1812, respectively. Nicholson, *Prose* 308 note 57-58.

Unfortunately, Byron does make some factual errors in his Parliamentary addresses, and he also misinterpreted precedents, obviously damaging his credibility.²⁷ As a rhetorician, however, his skill was praised, and his flair for the dramatic clearly separated him from his peers and his speeches from traditional, standard Parliamentary declamation.²⁸ Byron's determined placement of himself on the fringes of parliamentary sentiment and debate, however, separates him the most. He quite willingly adopts the posture of the firebrand reformist, even when his politics were hardly radical, for he is eager to hold England accountable for becoming what it already purports to be: the great home of the free. Even as he stands inside an ultimate insider spot—in doors, in Parliament—he seeks out the borders. Even while he's still on the inside, he deliberately stands on the edges.²⁹

ii. “Written amidst the scenes it attempts to describe”: *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage*

Since the publication of the first canto in 1812, Byron's *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage* has been received and taught in a variety of guises: poetic homage to Spenser, travelogue, confessional diary, budding incarnation of the Byronic hero, manifestation of a “new cultural phenomenon, the Romantic Man of Feeling,”³⁰—and rightfully so. For in this early work, Byron guides his reader through not only the landscape of post-Revolutionary Europe, but also across

²⁷ See Nicholson *Prose*.

²⁸ Whether standing apart from his peers served to Byron's benefit or to his detriment depends upon whom you consult. Holland's dismissal of Byron's skills and potential as a parliamentarian has been taken as the undisputed authoritative assessment, though the poet was not without his fans and supporters within and out of doors, Grenville for one, and Lord Holland as well (see notes to Framebreakers speech in Nicholson for specifics).

²⁹ In “Byron and England: The Persistence of Byron's Political Ideas,” Ruddick addresses the contradiction between Byron's overt political influence abroad and a seeming lack of any direct or immediate influence on English politics or social movement. Despite any easy evidence for impact on English liberalism, Ruddick argues that Byron's influence can be seen in radical and working-class poets, and that the real effect of Byron's politicized verse can be seen in the next generation of British poets; see particularly 44-46.

³⁰ Norton anthology introduction to the poem, 563.

the landscape of the later Romantic poetic mind. Correspondingly, most students come to the poem with an expectation of a particular Romantic vision—and visionary—and they are not disappointed. They expect to see a work centering on the “inexorable drama of the Romantic ego: the compulsive search for an ideal and a perfection that do not exist in the world of reality,”³¹ and that is what both textual and critical scholarship predominantly provide.³²

The abridged versions of the poem in standard classroom anthologies give a good picture of both contemporary reception and pedagogy. In the early part of the twentieth century, a favored strategy for anthologizing *Childe Harold* (as well as *Don Juan*) was to include entire cantos, generally Canto III, and to ignore the first two cantos entirely.³³ Curtis H. Page’s *British Poets of the Nineteenth Century*, first published in 1904 and revised in 1929, includes all of Canto III and 44 stanzas from Canto IV; Cantos I-II are neither included nor even mentioned. The 1929 *English Poetry of the Nineteenth Century* also reprints Canto III in its entirety, but includes no selections from the other three cantos. As the title indicates, *The Poetry of the Age of Wordsworth: An Anthology of the Five Major Poets* (1927) departs from this trend and focuses on the Wordsworthian Romantic moments in *Childe Harold*, anthologizing stanzas 21-30 of Canto III, subtitled by the editor as “Waterloo—Before and After,” and stanzas 85-97 (“Lake Leman in Calm and Storm”) from Canto III, as well as stanzas 1-7 (“‘I stood in Venice’”), 27-29 (“An Italian Sunset”), and 179-184 (“The Ocean”) from Canto IV.

³¹ Marchand, *Byron’s Poetry* 38—itsself a classical “Critical Introduction” for students.

³² For a few of the critical treatments of *Childe Harold* centering or building on what McGann calls in *Fiery Dust* “the substance of the poet’s tale of himself” (32), see Manning, *Byron’s Fictions* and Emerson, “Byron’s ‘one word’: The Language of Self-Expression in *Childe Harold* III.”

³³ As Robert Gleckner noted in 1967, almost “no other major poem in English literature has fared as badly as has *Childe Harold’s Pilgrimage*, at the hands of critics, scholars, students, teachers, anthologists, and even the casual reader of poetry,” for [i]t is not only fashionable but critically ‘correct’ to dismiss the first two cantos almost as if they never existed, in direct contempt of a reading public and literary world that made Byron famous overnight for

Later twentieth-century anthologies follow this strategy, including moments deemed most clearly “Romantic,” along whatever lines the editors chose to define the movement. The seventh edition of the *Norton Anthology of English Literature*, for example, includes only the first six stanzas of Canto I, none of Canto II, seventy-three stanzas from Canto III, focusing attention on the personal, contemplative, and visionary moments, and twenty-two of the 186 stanzas of Canto IV. Duncan Wu’s *Romanticism: An Anthology* (1994) includes forty-three stanzas from Canto III, and Jerome McGann’s *New Oxford Book of Romantic Period Verse* (1993) includes stanzas 1-9 of Canto II; stanzas 3-6, 34-45, 68-84, 92-97 from Canto III; and stanzas 93-98, 115-127, and 179-184 from Canto IV. The 2003 second edition of Susan Wolfson and Peter Manning’s *Longman Anthology of British Literature* contains only twenty-six stanzas from Canto III and only twenty-two from Canto IV; the first two cantos are not represented at all. Anne Mellor and Richard Matlak’s *British Literature 1780-1830*, though they avoid the standard appellation “Romantic” in their title, nonetheless include a standard selection, one more substantial in number than the Norton though similar in tone: twenty-nine stanzas from Canto I, eighteen stanzas from Canto II; 113 stanzas from Canto III; and forty-five stanzas from Canto IV.

The purpose of this cataloging is not to lament the abridgment of long poetic works, although that is certainly problematic. Abridgment is, after all, a transformative process which novels generally do not undergo in post-secondary American education. What is more interesting, and more troubling, are the ways in which anthologies typically focus on the personal, visionary parts of *Childe Harold’s Pilgrimage* and thereby distort the public, political whole. The sections chosen for anthologization reflect the critical and theoretical disposition of our times, revealing the accepted pedagogical “story” of *Childe Harold* by both general

writing them,” and “it is all but impossible to find an anthology which includes even selections from these cantos” (*Byron and the Ruins of Paradise* 39).

Romanticists and Byron specialists alike. This story in many ways ignores Byron's own description of the poem in his preface to Canto I: "The following poem was written, for the most part, amidst the scenes which it attempts to describe"—scenes that are intensely political, deliberately particular to a specific time and place. Skipping to the visionary sections—the "here's Byron being a Romantic!" sections—misreads the poem and betrays a critical apparatus designed to make a poet fit an accepted academic mold of "Romanticism," a mold designed as much to preserve institutional categories and job descriptions as to understand poetry. Even those who try to dodge the "movement" bullet, e.g. Mellor and Matlak, still fall in step with the standard presentation of Byron's verse despite their attempts to the contrary.³⁴ And if, as Stuart Curran has said, anthologies "represent the very front line" in canon reformation, what image of Byron are contemporary anthologies (re)presenting?³⁵ What are they (re)forming, to use Curran's language? The Byron that emerges from this rethinking, re-presenting, re-forming of the Romantic canon is a largely de-politicized Byron,³⁶ a move that does not seem either particularly challenging to the past fifty years of Byron studies or to traditional understanding of *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage*.

Yet setting Byron and *Childe Harold* in a particular political, specifically nationalist context, focusing our energies not on what the poem reveals about the Romantic poetic mind per se, but instead on what the poem reveals about this mind encountering particular territories

³⁴ Mellor and Matlak choose, for instance, to include excerpts from Byron's parliamentary speeches as well as his letters. For the challenges of anthologization, see Matlak, "The Making of *British Literature 1780-1830*," in which he discusses and defends the choices he and Mellor made, focusing predominantly on their rationale for including women and for situating works in a specific social/historical context. He does not discuss the abridgment of long works.

³⁵ Stuart Curran, rev. of anthologies by Ashfield, Breen, Mellor/Matlak, and Wu, *Studies in Romanticism* 39 (2000): 165.

³⁶ Mellor and Matlak excerpt Byron's Frame-breakers parliamentary speech, a notable departure from other editors.

marked as both sovereign and public, adds to the traditional reading of the verse. Rather than a poem centered on “the inexorable drama of the romantic ego,”³⁷ *Childe Harold’s Pilgrimage* can also be read as the speaker’s and the hero’s moods shifting around the relentless drama of the Romantic nation: the imagined communities evoked by the physical locations presented in the poem and the fledgling modern European nation that a majority of the 495 stanzas circle around. By switching our focus, we find a verse deeply invested in an exiled man’s understanding of the ways that his relationship with the nation changes him, both through engagement with his lost homeland and his new exilic space, as well as the ways he continually hopes to change his former nation from afar.

iii. “Loathed he in his native land to dwell”: Childe Harold and the Nation

Byron introduces Childe Harold as a profligate, spoiled malcontent; bored by everything around him, he craves new action and fresh interaction. The “fulness of satiety” (I.34), the run through “Sin’s long labyrinth” (I.37), has left him “sore sick at heart” (I.46), not complete or contented. Twice our speaker tells us that the pressures of finding himself satisfied lead to Harold’s profound unhappiness not with his occupations or amusements, but with his nation, a significant turn:

Then loathed he in his native land to dwell,
Which seem’d to him more lone than Eremite’s sad cell (I.35-36)

And from his native land resolved to go,
And visit scorching climes beyond the sea (I.51-52).

It is not just his ancestral home, “his father’s hall: / [. . .] a vast and venerable pile” (I.55-56) that leaves him forlorn, but “Albion’s isle” (I.10). And so he abandons his “house, his home, his heritage, his lands” (I.91) to “cross the brine, / And traverse Paynim shores, and pass Earth’s

³⁷ Marchand *Byron’s Poetry: A Critical Introduction* 38.

central line” (I.98-99). But Harold only makes the turn toward characterizing the thing he leaves as “home” after ten stanzas have been devoted to making plain that it is the nation that leaves him both overwrought and bereft—not an isolated place but the whole part and parcel of England must be rejected. Thus to the fading lines of England’s coast Harold sings his “Good Night” song, rejoicing in leaving his “native shore” (I.118) with what is quickly becoming his characteristic defiant stance:

With thee, my bark, I’ll swiftly go
 Athwart the foaming brine;
 Nor care what land thou bear’st me to,
 So not again to mine.
 Welcome, welcome, ye deserts, and ye caves!
 My native Land—Good Night! (I.190-197)

Any rising vista is fine with Harold, so long as it is not the white cliffs of Dover.

His first stop is Portugal, conflicted participant in the recent 1808 Convention of Cintra. Upon arrival he is dazzled, for “What beauties doth Lisboa first unfold” (I.216); but this initial rapture quickly turns to outrage, as Harold first realizes how very difficult, indeed impossible, it will be to leave his nation behind. Moments after reaching Biscay Bay, the travelogue turns from recording sights to political analysis, a course it holds for much of its four cantos. The aim becomes not necessarily understanding the particular politics of the current area, but instead British involvement, for better or worse, in these particular conflicts. While Harold is in Portugal, for instance, he characterizes Britain first as valiant savior of a distressed nation, then as a nation disgusted by those actions. The image of Lisbon “floating on that noble tide, / Which poets vainly pave with sands of gold” (I.217-218) has now been marred by “a thousand kells” (I.219) as a direct result of British aid. Since “Albion was allied, / And to the Lusians did her aid afford” (I.220-221), Portugal has become “A nation swol’n with ignorance and pride, / Who lick yet loath the hand that waves the sword / To save them from the wrath of Gaul’s unsparing lord”

(I.222-224). Harold focuses, then, on seeing what Britain has made of Portugal by defending the “delicious land” where “fruits of fragrance blush on every tree” (I.208-209) against the man who would “mar them with an impious hand” (I.211). Ultimately, though, Harold is less concerned with French occupation of Portuguese territories, despite his vicious characterization of France and sensual descriptions of Portugal, than he is with British entanglements in these occupations. He’s been gone from England for two stanzas and one song, and he’s mentally right back where he began—critiquing, censuring, defending the thing he supposedly abandoned, the thing he could not wait to get away from: his native land.

Byron wrestles with the ideas and problems of the Western European nation throughout the rest of Canto I. He meditates on the fragile nature of national borders, considering the spot “Where Lusitania and her Sister meet” (I.360), a place where no visible boundary marks the site where one nation ends and another begins. “Doth Tayo interpose his mighty tide?” he asks, “Or dark Sierras rise in craggy pride? / Or fence of art, like China’s vasty wall?” (I.363-365); no, he answers, nothing serves as a tangible line of demarcation between Portuguese and Spanish soil, “ne barrier wall, ne river deep and wide, / Ne horrid crags, nor mountains dark and tall, / Rise like the rocks that part Hispania’s land from Gaul” (I.366-368). Searching the landscape, he finds only a “silver streamlet” (I.369), a slight, almost indistinguishable natural boundary; “scarce a name distinguisheth the brook” (I.370) even though powerful forces, “rival kingdoms press its verdant sides” (I.371). The power of such a delicate line to keep two antagonistic forces at bay underscores one of the subjects Byron wrestles with throughout *Childe Harold’s Pilgrimage*: the strength it takes to maintain or to conquer a national border, itself a slight boundary, indeed, an invisible line.

The force that maintains those boundaries, though, is not a slight one, nor is it an invisible one; military forces and imperial ideologies, two mighty powers when separate and particularly vicious when combined, make or break nations. Spain was just at the moment of surrendering to France when Byron arrived in Seville on July 25, 1809,³⁸ a capitulation he anticipates and questions in Canto I: “Ah! Spain! how sad will be thy reckoning day, / When soars Gaul’s Vulture, with his wings unfurl’d, / And thou shalt view thy sons in crowds to Hades hurl’d” (I.546-548). He ends the canto with a lament for this very fate, wondering when Spain’s “Olive-Branch [shall] be free from blight? / When shall she breathe her from the blushing toil?” (I.922-923), longing for the day when “Freedom’s stranger-tree [shall] grow native of the soil!” (I.926)

iv. “Immortal, though no more; though fallen, great”: Byron’s Greece

At the beginning of Canto II, Byron turns away from Spain, and he devotes the majority of this next installment to Greece—its history, politics, possibilities, and failures. With an opening lamentation for and invocation of the “Ancient of days,” the “august Athena” (2.10), Byron’s perception of a great national trauma, Greece’s fall from power, colors all of Canto II. At the very moment of his lamentation/invocation, he interrupts himself, footnoting his text and revealing an important piece of information. While Byron clearly and unabashedly laments the

³⁸ Page, *A Byron Chronology* 15. Napoleon entered Spain with an army of 150,000 in 1808 (Mellor and Matlak 1410), the effect of which was to “provoke a radical change in the foreign policy of the Spanish authorities who were resisting Napoleon. Their forced search for British diplomatic and military support concluded with the signing of a Treaty of Peace, Friendship and Alliance on 14 January 1809. Spain also signed a similar treaty with Russia, another of Napoleon’s enemies, in July 1812. With the diplomatic backing of both alliances and the decisive military support of Britain, the new authorities elected by the Cortes of Cádiz waged an exhausting war, dominated by guerrilla tactics, at the same time as they were undertaking a process of liberal social and institutional reform. By early 1814 their efforts had succeeded in expelling the French from Spain and restoring Ferdinand VII to the throne” (Moradiellos 112). Elizabeth Barrett Browning will return to this moment in Anglo-Spanish relations, Spanish republican activity, and civil war in her 1826 “On a Picture of Riego’s Widow.” See also Seton-Watson, *Britain in Europe* 22-31.

fallen glory of Greece as the seat of Western art and culture, a specific topical concern undergirds his argument and provokes his outrage: Elgin's plundering of the marbles. Thomas Bruce, seventh Earl of Elgin, served as England's ambassador to Constantinople from 1799-1803.³⁹ While abroad, he collected Athenian sculptures and architectural ornaments, returning them to England for display, a decision that proved to be extraordinarily controversial in Britain and abroad.⁴⁰

"We can all feel, or imagine, the regret with which the ruins of cities once the capitals of empires, are beheld," Byron begins, but "the reflections suggested by such objects are too trite to require recapitulation" (189).⁴¹ Yet in this instance, Byron has discovered a ruin of such pathos that it overcomes the commonplace feelings evoked by similar places; in this instance, "never did the littleness of man, and the vanity of his very best virtues, of patriotism to exalt, and of valour to defend his country, appear more conspicuous than in the record of what Athens was, and the certainty of what she now is" (189). The dangers of "patriotism," and Byron uses that word both deliberately and carefully, have not brought glory to the nation, but destruction and despair instead. Ultimately, both Greece and Britain will be degraded by one nation picking away at the ruins of another, even if it is in the name of Art. Byron feels no sympathy for the argument that the artifacts being ferried away represent the great artistry of the Western world and thus Britain has a duty to preserve and protect them. Instead, Byron paints Elgin as a grave-

³⁹ *An Oxford Companion to the Romantic Age* 495.

⁴⁰ For specifics of the controversies in England surrounding Elgin's collections, both those who praised his actions and those who derided them, see St. Clair, *Lord Elgin and the Marbles* and Vrettos, *The Elgin Affair: The Abduction of Antiquity's Greatest Treasures and the Passions It Aroused*.

⁴¹ All references to Byron's notes to *CHP* are cited by page number from McGann's *The Complete Poetical Works*.

robber not a savior, an opportunist ripping away pieces of a “nation’s sepulchre” (II.21).⁴² Art is not being preserved; a Nation is being destroyed. For Byron, the sins of the latter clearly outweigh the virtues of the former.

Byron comes back to Elgin in stanza 11 of Canto II, and instead of striking a blow at “preservationists and archivists” in general as he does earlier, this time he aims right for the individual man. He paints Elgin as “The last, the worst, dull spoiler” (II.94) of a place “where Pallas linger’d, loth to flee / The latest relic of her ancient reign” (II.92-93), leading up to his most piercing insult, one figured in national terms: “Blush, Caledonia! such thy son could be! / England! I joy no child he was of thine” (II.95-96).⁴³ In the body of his verse, he wants Scotland to bear the responsibility for creating this monstrous son, this man capable of such atrocities. Yet in his prose note, he does not shrink from also indicting “Britain” in this sacrilege:

This theatre of contention between mighty factions, of the struggles of orators, the exaltation of deposition of tyrants, the triumph and punishments of generals, is now become a scene of petty intrigue and perpetual disturbance, between the bickering agents of certain British nobility and gentry. “The wild foxes, the owls and serpents in the ruins of Babylon,” were surely less degrading than such inhabitants. The Turks have the plea of conquest for their tyranny, and the Greeks have only suffered the fortune of war, incidental to the bravest; but how are the mighty fallen, when two painters contest the privilege of plundering the Parthenon, and triumph in turn, according to the tenor of each succeeding firman! Sylla could but punish, Philip subdue, and Zerxes burn Athens; but it remained for the paltry antiquarian, and his despicable agents, to render her contemptible as himself and his pursuits. (189-190)

⁴² As Gillen D’Arcy Wood notes, Byron’s critique at other moments takes on a decidedly sexual bent, portraying Elgin as an “imperial rapist” (176) in *CHP* and “Curse of Minerva,” demonstrating how fiercely Byron disapproved of Elgin’s brand of cultural imperialism.

⁴³ Gleckner reads these stanzas as diminishing Byron’s critique of Elgin’s actions: “As in ‘The Curse of Minerva,’ the narrator seems more impressed with the fact that Elgin was not an Englishman than with his despoliation of the Grecian monuments: England, ‘the Ocean Queen, the free Britannia,’ shall never be accused of being ‘happy in Athens’s tears’” (*Ruins of Paradise* 75). Yet it seems that the combination of critiques on national and cultural grounds seems to strengthen both, rather than one outweighing the other.

The previous “theatre of contention” on Greek soil, that of national conflict, war, even tyranny, was better than the theatre of paltriness Byron witnesses now. Conquerors and patriots may be excused for razing a nation to the ground, but Byron finds the interference of individual British nobles in this instance to be reprehensible. Always, Britain’s “free-born men should spare what once was free,” not “violate each saddening shrine, / And bear these altars o’er the long-reluctant brine” (II.97-99). Byron always depicts the removal of the marbles in national terms: what is acceptable for men of different nations, and whose standards of conduct should be the highest. As he does in his parliamentary speeches, he holds Britain to the highest standards—he wants to hold his nation accountable for being as great as it claims to already be.

Finally, he cuttingly replaces the despots of previous stanzas with a British one in stanza 12:

But most the modern Pict’s ignoble boast,
To rive what Goth, and Turk, and Time hath spared:
Cold as the crags upon his native coast,
His mind as barren and his heart as hard,
Is he whose head conceived, whose hand prepared,
Aught to displace Athena’s poor remains:
Her sons too weak the sacred shrine to guard,
Yet felt some portion of their mother’s pains,
And never knew, till then, the weight of Despot’s chains. (100-108)

No longer content to allude to Elgin through circumstance and nation of birth, Byron once again interrupts his poetic narrative with an additional note at line 101, taking aim and naming names: “At this moment (January 3, 1809 [i.e. 1810]), besides what has been already deposited in London, an Hydriot vessel is in the Piraeus to receive every portable relic. Thus, as I heard a young Greek observe in common with many of his countrymen—for, lost as they are, they yet feel on this occasion—thus may Lord Elgin boast of having ruined Athens” (190). While Elgin and his compatriots “confine themselves to tasting medals, appreciating cameos, sketching

columns, and cheapening gems, their little absurdities are as harmless as insect or fox-hunting, maiden-speechifying, barouche-driving, or any such pastime” (191). When their antiquarian interests lead them to become active collectors, when they “carry away three or four shiploads of the most valuable and massy relics that time and barbarism have left to the most injured and most celebrated of cities; when they destroy, in a vain attempt to tear down, those works which have been the admiration of ages” (191), Byron loses all patience with his countrymen. “I know no motive which can excuse, no name which can designate, the perpetrators of this dastardly devastation. The most unblushing impudence could hardly go farther than to affix the name of its plunderer to the walls of the Acropolis” (191); for Byron, Elgin is no patron of art, but rather just a remorseless pillager. Perhaps his most trenchant criticism of Elgin comes, however, not in the first paragraph of this note, with its insults and hyperbole, but instead in the second, one-sentence paragraph: “On this occasion I speak impartially: I am not a collector or admirer of collections, consequently no rival; but I have some early prepossession in favour of Greece, and do not think the honour of England advanced by plunder, whether of India or Attica” (191).⁴⁴

While much of this is familiar ground, it bears repeating, for Greece was crucial in Byron’s early thinking about the nation. Even while he still planned a life in England, even a life as the only occasionally in residence nobleman, Greece captured his poetic vision and his political idealism. But the Greece Byron loves is a fallen nation, “Fair Greece! sad relic of departed worth! / Immortal, though no more; though fallen, great!” (II.693-695). This paradoxical rendering of a nation in shambles yet still great, immortal but dying, seems to defy understanding. How can Greece be these diametrically opposed, contradictory things? How are

⁴⁴ Ogden reads Byron’s anger over the Elgin marbles as contradictory: “Ironically, at the conclusion of his Grand Tour, Byron was angered beyond reason by Lord Elgin’s plundering of Athens’s art treasures, but the poet apparently did not care to recognize in his own Venetian activities the actions of another version of imperial

these contradictions to be resolved? In his verse, Byron asks the “sons” (II.708) of Greece to rise in defense of the motherland, and then immediately dismisses such a thing as an impossibility.

“Who now shall lead thy scatter’d children forth, / And long accustom’d bondage uncreate?”

(II.695-696) he asks, chastising Greece’s sons for “idly rail[ing] in vain, / Trembling beneath the scourge of Turkish hand, / From birth till death enslaved; in word, in deed, unmann’d” (II.708-710). He mocks their dependancy on “foreign arms and aid” (II.717), for which they “fondly sigh,” not daring to “encounter hostile rage” from their oppressors or “tear their name defiled from Slavery’s mournful page” (II.718-719). His tirade builds to a passionate plea for action in stanza 86:

Hereditary bondsmen! know ye not
Who would be free themselves must strike the blow?
By their right arms the conquest must be wrought?
Will Gaul or Muscovite redress ye? no!
True, they may lay your proud despoilers low,
But not for you will Freedom’s altars flame.
Shades of the Helots! triumph o’er your foe!
Greece! change thy lords, thy state is still the same;
Thy glorious day is o’er, but not thine years of shame. (II.720-728)

He nags, he berates, he humiliates—calling his Greek contemporaries “Shades of the Helots,” an ancient Spartan serf class, men existing on the borderland between slave and citizen, is exactly the kind of well-placed insult that he hopes may move these men to action. At the same time, though, Byron’s pessimism betrays him, for he believes that “ne’er will freedom seek this fated soil, / But [rather] slave succeed to slave through years of endless toil” (II.736-737). He wonders if “Greece one true-born patriot still can boast” (II.784), and he rebukes the people of Greece again: “Ah! Greece! they love thee least who owe thee most; / Their birth, their blood, and that

ravaging” (123); by “imperial ravaging” Ogden means Byron’s expensive houses and lavish spending on women, all while bragging in his letters that he was getting such a fantastically cheap deal on both.

sublime record / Of hero sires, who shame thy now degenerate horde!" (II.789-791). Byron wants Greece to be great now because of how great Greece used to be.

But Byron knows such a thing is an impossibility. While his verse may laud the glories of lost antiquity, he is at heart an English nobleman, and he knows the political score: Greece is a colonized land, and revolution against imperial authorities is a serious matter. One may versify over the magnificence of revolution, but one must not advocate it seriously. That he is aware of the gravity of the situation, both for Greece and for England, becomes apparent not in his verse, though, but in a note he attaches to the contradictory lines II.693-695: "Fair Greece! sad relic of departed worth! / Immortal, though no more; though fallen, great!"⁴⁵ He spends the first thirteen paragraphs of the note detailing his travels around the country, the superiority of Greek weather, the delights of Athens, and the general agreement between foreigners on the character of the Greek people. These pages of description allow Byron the chance to take a stab at the current vogue for travel writing, knowing "as I do, that there be now in MS. no less than five tours of the first magnitude and of the most threatening aspect, all in typographical array by persons of wit, and honour, and regular common-place books" (201). But his real aim is political positioning, and by engaging current political situations in prose, Byron reveals his imperialist stance. He states emphatically that the "Greeks will never be independent; they will never be sovereigns as heretofore, and God forbid they ever should!" (201); Greeks may, however, "be subjects without being slaves," for "Our colonies are not independent, but they are free and industrious, and such may Greece be hereafter" (201).

⁴⁵ In "Byron's Digressive Journey," Stabler characterizes rightly this moment of interruption as "disturb[ing] the conventional pattern of reflection as well as the lyrical genesis of *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage*" (233). She further reads Byron's note within its hostile critical contemporary reception, particularly from the *British Review*, the *Anti-Jacobin*, and the *Satirist*, as well as alongside travel poetry published before Byron's *Childe Harold* (232-234).

This imperialist stance is difficult for Byron to maintain, however, and he quickly lapses back into his role as rhetorically flashy defender of liberty, á la his parliamentary speeches:

At present, like the Catholics of Ireland and the Jews throughout the world, and such other cudgelled and heterodox people, [the Greeks] suffer all the moral and physical ills that can afflict humanity. Their life is a struggle against truth; they are vicious in their own defence. They are so unused to kindness, that when they occasionally meet with it they look upon it with suspicion, as a dog often beaten snaps at your fingers if you attempt to caress him. ‘They are ungrateful, notoriously, abominably ungrateful!’—this is the general cry. Now, in the name of Nemesis! for what are they to be grateful? Where is the human being that ever conferred a benefit on Greek or Greeks? They are to be grateful to the Turks for their fetters, and the Franks for their broken promises and lying counsels. They are to be grateful to the artist who engraves their ruins, and to the antiquary who carries them away; to the traveller whose janissary flogs them, and to the scribbler whose journal abuses them! This is the amount of their obligations to foreigners. (2.201)

The obligations of England to Greece, however, are greater and equally clear. The English, who “have at last compassionated their negroes” and may one day “under a less bigoted government [. . .] release their Catholic brethren,” must realize that “the interposition of foreigners alone can emancipate the Greeks, who, otherwise, appear to have as small a chance of redemption from the Turks, as the Jews have from mankind in general” (2.202). But despite all of his idealization of the Græcia of old in his verse, in his prose Byron is less the revolutionary republican and more the beneficent nobleman, graciously extending his munificence, seemingly unaware of his oppressive patronizing:

To talk, as the Greeks themselves do, of their rising again to their pristine superiority, would be ridiculous; as the rest of the world must resume its barbarism, after reasserting the sovereignty of Greece: but there seems to be no very great obstacle, except in the apathy of the Franks, to their becoming an useful dependency, or even a free state with a proper guarantee; — under correction, however, be it spoken, for many and well-informed men doubt the practicability even of this” (202).

Only a few years later, of course, Byron's attitude toward Greece's ability to rule itself would have changed. During the drafting of Canto II, Byron's paternalism toward Greece was shadowed only by his fury with Britain over its treatment of Græcia.

v. "What exile from himself can flee?": *CHP* Canto III and *Manfred*

While in Athens for the second time on his 1809-1811 tour with Hobhouse, Byron wrote to his mother in January 1811 that he was now "so convinced of the advantages of looking at mankind instead of reading about them, and of the bitter effects of staying at home with all the narrow prejudices of an Islander, that I think there should be a law amongst us to set our young men abroad for a term among the few allies our wars have left us."⁴⁶ It is with the same certainty that he introduced *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage* in 1809 with an epigraph from Louise Charles Fougeret de Monbron's *Le Cosmopolite, ou le Citoyen du Monde*:

L'univers est une espèce de livre, don't on n'a lu que la première page quand on n'a vu que son pays. J'en ai feuilleté un assez grand nombre, que j'ai trouvé également mauvaises. Cet examen ne m'a point été infructueux. Je haïssais ma patrie. Toutes les impertinences des peuples divers, parmi lesquels j'ai vécu, m'ont réconcilié avec elle. Quand je n'aurais tiré d'autre bénéfice de mes voyages que celui-là, je n'en regretterais ni les frais, ni les fatigues.⁴⁷

At this point in his travels and in his writings, Byron is self-consciously cultivating a cosmopolitan stance, a posture that, for Byron, means affecting the manner of a man so at ease in different places that he no longer seeks the comfort of his national homeland. This nation-less man experiences both the joys and the sorrow of dislocation, but always with the understanding

⁴⁶ Letter to Mrs. Byron date "Athens. January 14 1811."; Marchand *Letters* 2.34.

⁴⁷ "The universe is a kind of book of which one has read only the first page when one has seen only one's own country. I have leafed through a large enough number, which I found equally bad. This examination was not at all fruitless for me. I hated my country. All the impertinences of the different peoples among whom I have lived have reconciled me to her. If I had not drawn any other benefit from my travels than that, I would regret neither the expense nor the fatigue." Trans. from Wolfson and Manning edition (787-788).

that he can return home; he is, as the epigraph to *CHP* notes, reconciled to her. But the exiled man, the man Byron becomes and the stance he cultivates in *CHP* III and IV, in contrast, has no hope of becoming reconciled with his nation in such a way. For him to return to his homeland to live permanently is an impossibility, unless the conditions that precipitated his exile change. He may be able to return periodically for short visits, as Byron was, but residence becomes an impossibility. Such a man then finds himself comparing every other place not to the homeland he will one day return to, but instead viewing every other place in comparison with the homeland he has lost.

In the years between Cantos I and II, Byron's situation in England has changed—and not for the better. Separated from his wife, scarred by sexual scandal, run out of society and out of England: when he comes to *CHP* III, he does so as an exile, a fully realized one. He is no longer playing at “leaving forever”; this time it is for real, both for Harold and for Byron.

He begins *CHP* III in a classic exilic stance: out of control, directed and shaped by things outside of his command. Grandly calling “Once more upon the waters! yet once more!” (III.10), his similes undercut his bravado, for while “the waves bound beneath me as a steed / That knows his rider” (III.11-120, he is not only “rider” but also a “weed” on the waves, “Flung from the rock, on Ocean's foam, to sail / Where'er the surge may sweep, the tempest's breath prevail” (III.17-18): he both governs his actions and is overruled by a force more powerful than himself. Simultaneously, he is a controlling force, the “rushing wind [that] / Bears the cloud onward,” pulling Harold, “The wandering outlaw of his own dark mind” (III.20), along behind him.

This unbearable place of irreconcilable tension sends him fleeing toward forgetfulness, yearning for escape both in poetry and geography. He cares not whether he is pulled from “selfish grief or gladness” (III.34), just so long as “it fling / Forgetfulness around me” (III.34-

35). Previously, in canto II, he characterizes solitude as wandering alone, being a man of no nation, “the world’s tired denizen” (II.228)—“This is to be alone; this, this is solitude!” (II.234). But now, in Canto III, Byron understands why the soul seeks solitude: he knows “Why thought seeks refuge in lone caves, yet rife / With airy images, and shapes which dwell / Still unimpaired, though old, in the soul’s haunted cell” (III.42-45). But this is a different kind of solitude than in Canto II; now it is the solitude of the imagination:

‘Tis to create, and in creating live
A being more intense, that we endow
With form our fancy, gaining as we give
The life we image, even as I do now. (III.46-49)

This moment makes clear why, when Harold reappears in a few stanzas, he will become “Self-exiled Harold.” Byron creates Harold explicitly as an exile in Canto III because he is, at the same time, fashioning his own life as an exile. Through the verse, he can imagine a new life, the life that must begin, no matter how painful.

The narrator’s address in stanzas 1-2 makes plain how wrenching it is to leave England this time, particularly in comparison with the departure in Canto I. There Harold was disdainful, contemptuous, singing a farewell song to his native land with his eye trained on the horizon he faces, not the shore he departs: “Yon Sun that sets upon the sea / We follow in his flight” (I.122-123). He sings to home, but looks to the unknown. In Canto III, however, the gaze has shifted; Byron now watches the shores of England recede, encapsulating the exile’s tearing from home. In stanza 1, both his song and his gaze are directed at Britain, toward the child he will never see and the home he will never know again. But in stanza 2, he again shifts to the unknown, calling “Once more upon the waters! yet once more!” (II.10), thus making the turn that every exile must make: looking away from home toward the future. For the exile, “home” and “future” are mutually exclusive terms.

Despondency turns fairly quickly to bravado, though, for both hero, narrator, and poet: “But soon he knew himself the most unfit / Of men to herd with Man; with whom he held / Little in common” (III.100-103)—and for whom he held such contempt. In a classic Byronic pose, he refuses to commune with or give power to those for whom he has no respect, in this instance, namely those in England who made it impossible for him to remain. He will not “yield dominion of his mind / To spirits against whom his own rebell’d,” for he is “Proud though in desolation,” in which he feels confident he can find “A life within itself, to breathe without mankind” (III.105-108).

This posture of defiance will later reach its pinnacle, of course, in Manfred, the consummate Byronic hero for whom Harold was both prototype and warm-up. Begun alongside *CHP* III during the infamous summer of 1816, the months Byron spent with Percy Bysshe Shelley, Mary Godwin, John Polidori, and Claire Clairmont in Switzerland, *Manfred* too encompasses and explores a type of exilic stance. Deliberately sequestered from everyone around him, separated from the only one he loves, Manfred shares many of Harold’s exilic desires, particularly the need for exile from the self. He wants forgetfulness:

MANFRED Forgetfulness—
 FIRST SPIRIT Of what—of whom—and why?
 MANFRED Of that which is within me; read it there—
 Ye know it, and I cannot utter it. (1.136-138)

Yet this one thing that Manfred wants is the one thing he cannot have; “Oblivion, self-oblivion” (1.1.144) is beyond the power of both the most powerful spirit and the most powerful man. Manfred knows all too well what Harold will not learn until well into Canto IV: leaving one’s home, in many ways, is just geography. Escaping the emotional ramifications of separation requires more than just physical space and more than time. After all, wherever one goes, there

one is, a harsh truth Byron acknowledged seven years earlier in “To Inez,” Childe Harold’s second song, placed almost at the end of *Childe Harold’s Pilgrimage* Canto I:

What Exile from himself can flee?
To zones, though more and more remote,
Still, still pursues, where-e’er I be,
The blight of life — the demon Thought. (1.857-860)

Manfred experiences the most painful vision for an exile: a vision of the life he lost. At his request, Nemesis resurrects the spirit of Astarte. Standing before Manfred, this being from the past appears strangely animated, yet frighteningly inhuman: “Can this be death? there’s bloom upon her cheek; / But now I see it is no living hue, / But a strange hectic—like the unnatural red / Which Autumn places upon the perish’d leaf” (2.4.98-101). This vision of his lost love, the one creature who made earthly existence bearable, who made his physical surroundings seem like not a prison but a home, has been resurrected for his viewing. But like the exile’s vision back toward the homeland, this vision of home is changed, altered, and unnatural. Once the bond between a native and the nation has been severed, not unlike the bond between the living and the dead, it can never be made to be what it was before.

Reading *Manfred* as a exilic text is interesting in several ways, for Manfred is, after all, one who deliberately self-exiles from all external authorities. The church has no hold on him, his neighbors exert no influence, supernatural spirits cannot command him, and even the woman he loves cannot control him. As an exilic figure, then, he demonstrates the power of displacement: the ability to establish a personal code of conduct and live by it, if one is willing to accept the consequences of such an action. But by living by his own rules, Manfred serves as a cautionary tale as well as a hero. After all, he does suffer terribly, and he does die alone. He stands as an extreme version of the Childe Harold we meet in Canto III, capturing Byron’s personal anger and his most violent feelings about his exile.

vi. “A grand object—the very *poetry* of politics”: Italy’s *Risorgimento*

The political world of *CHP* Cantos III and IV is a radically different one than that of the first two cantos, and Byron’s focus shifts first to France. Napoleon Bonaparte’s central position in European affairs had been shaky since he was forced into retreat by Allied forces in 1813, a move that led to wars across Europe in the wake of French withdrawal. A year later, the Allies entered Paris, and Napoleon was exiled to Elba, although he escaped in 1815 and began his Hundred Days Rule. But in that same year, the British defeated French forces at Waterloo, and Napoleon’s exile to St. Helena permanently ended his reign in France. In the often anthologized and discussed “Waterloo” and “Napoleon” moments in Canto III, a section of the poem composed in 1816, Byron’s first year in exile, he laments what has happened in France, seeing it as a microcosm of a vastly different—and vastly diminished—Europe. He mourns a lost liberty for a country that could, in his estimation, have become the leader, laid the groundwork for much of what he would like to have seen happen in England and elsewhere.

Upon arrival at the scene of battle, Byron dramatically interrupts himself: “Stop!—for thy tread is on an Empire’s dust!” (III.145)—such an emphatic reorientation of the reader’s focus underscores how crucial the “nation” passages are. This command turns quickly to lamentation, though; we have stopped on the battlefield at Waterloo where “An Earthquake’s spoil is sepulchred below” (III.146), searching the ground and the sky for some kind of monument, some kind of permanent commemoration of all that fell here: both man and nation.⁴⁸ Yet we find none; and so “As the ground was before,” now we must “thus let it be” (III.150). But let it be Byron cannot do—for Waterloo represents so many failures for him: liberty destroyed, Napoleon conquered, England shamed. Just as Charlotte Smith used her exilic stance to push for particular

⁴⁸ See lines 3.147-148.

English actions at the dawn of the French Revolution, so too does Byron urge England to act, here at the final end, the grave of the long begun revolution, at Waterloo. He wants England to lament its wrongheadedness, feel guilt for destroying not just Napoleon, but for being part of the “banded nations” (III.160) who “pierced” the “eagle” through (III.158-160) and for destroying the kind of liberty that Napoleon represented.⁴⁹

Yet despite Byron’s obvious passion for a nation fallen and liberty denied, France cannot hold his exilic gaze. Instead, it is upon Italy that his vision halts; it is Italy that inspires his poetic vision and captures his political passion in the years immediately after his exile. As Byron wrote in his Ravenna Journal on February 18, 1821, it is “no great matter, supposing that Italy could be liberated, who or what is sacrificed [for the Italian *Risorgimento*] is a grand object—the very poetry of politics. Only think—a free Italy!!!”⁵⁰

By the end of Canto III, Byron’s eye has turned to Italy, the site that will occupy him for the rest of *CHP*. Looking beyond the Alps, “Italia! too, Italia! looking on thee,” he cries, ““Full flashes on the soul the light of ages [. . .] Thou wert the throne and grave of empires” (III.1022-1027). At this moment, Byron once again adopts an exilic stance: “in the crowd / They could not deem me one of such; I stood / Among them, but not of them” (III.1053-1055). In every country he has visited and every place he has described, he stands alone, neither willing nor able to become assimilated to a larger body. Everywhere he goes, he is still an exiled Englishman. As Byron’s ideas of national liberty and reformation in England become both more precisely focused and clearly articulated in *CHP* Canto IV, however, this exilic stance shifts. Instead of

⁴⁹ Indeed, in “To ‘Sing It Rather Better’: Byron, the Bards, and Waterloo,” Bainbridge argues that the fullest reading of the “Waterloo” section of *CHP* must take place “within the cultural contexts of the British response to Waterloo and particularly within the generic context of the ‘Waterloo’ poem,” for Byron “subvert[s] the expectations of his readership and rebuk[es] those who represent the battle as a great and decisive event” (70).

⁵⁰ Marchand *Letters* 8.47.

only standing “among them,” by the time he leaves for Greece he will be one “of them”—“them” being the liberators, the freedom-fighters. Ultimately, Byron’s “home” becomes not England or Greece or Italy, but Liberty—or at least the fighting for it.

By the time of Byron’s arrival in Italy, his characterization and conception of his own exile has changed. In May of 1817, he wrote to Douglas Kinnaird from Venice that he had “no design or desire to return *wittingly* to England—unless for an occasional—& by no means—a speedy visit.”⁵¹ While he cautions that “to form decisive resolutions is idle,” he nonetheless says “very sincerely — that if I could or can expatriate myself altogether I would and will,” and he asks his friend to see to it that he is not “obliged to return to England—if it can be helped,” for Kinnaird can “have no idea of my disgust & abhorrence to the thought of living there even for a short time.—I am serious.”⁵² By 1820, he becomes even more plainly spoken about his intense dislike for English soil, telling John Cam Hobhouse in one letter that he “shall let ‘*dearest Duck*’ [Lady Byron] waddle alone at the Coronation — a ceremony which I should like to see and have a right to act Punch in — but the Crown itself would not bribe me to return to England — unless business or actual urgency required it.”⁵³ In a second letter to Hobhouse from August of that same year, Byron’s animus toward his homeland very nearly scorches the paper during a discussion of the Queen Caroline affair:

On her Majesty’s part — I have done my best through some acquaintance here — to get persuaded the Macchiarelli’s (the first family of Pesaro and nearly related to Count Gamba my Dama’s father) to repair to England — where they have been [remanded?] to attest her Majesty’s morality.— —For myself I see not what good I could do to her — as my first duty is to call out her Attorney General — which will be due the first time I come among you — to which I have no inclination —

⁵¹ Marchand *Letters* 5.230.

⁵² Marchand *Letters* 5.230-231.

⁵³ Marchand *Letters* 7.50.

not on account of the Scoundrel whom I desire of all things to destroy — at any personal peril — but because I hate the Country more than I do even that cowardly villain; — and I do not feel sure that anything could compensate to me the loathing I should feel to be in it.⁵⁴

But despite his declarations of disgust and annoyance with all things English, Byron's own letters betray him: he has left England, and everyone knows he has left England, yet he feels compelled to say again and again that he's gone and he's not coming back. He cannot leave the subject alone.⁵⁵ Even though his exilic leave-taking occurred four years earlier, he still proclaims his intention to live in exile, as if there were any doubt.

Byron's Italy poems, both the serious and the comic verses, are colored with this exilic longing.⁵⁶ "The Prophecy of Dante," composed in Ravenna in 1819, treats Dante's exile from a first-person perspective, Byron asking his reader to "suppose that Dante addresses him in the interval between the conclusion of the *Divina Commedia* and his death, and shortly before the latter even, foretelling the fortunes of Italy in general in the ensuing centuries."⁵⁷ He apologizes to his Italian audience, begging their indulgence for treating so powerful a national topic, "since the Italians, with a pardonable nationality, are particularly jealous of all that is left them as a nation,—their literature." He can only imagine the reception "in England of an Italian imitator of Milton," and his apology draws to a close on an interesting note: "But I perceive that I am deviating into an address to the Italian reader, when my business is with the English one." Byron's business was indeed with the English reader, the audience to whom he has always

⁵⁴ Marchand *Letters* 7.153-154.

⁵⁵ See also Marchand *Letters* 6.240 and 7.40-41.

⁵⁶ For the ways in which Byron's readings in Italian literature influenced his later verse, see Vassallo, *Byron: The Italian Literary Influence*.

⁵⁷ This verse is, as Gleckner notes, "pre-eminently a political poem prophesying the forthcoming unification and 'resurrection' of Italy" (*Byron and the Ruins of Paradise* 312).

appealed, and it is this constant reflective turning back to his lost homeland that makes him such a powerful exilic poet.⁵⁸

Byron's developing conception of himself as an exile shows up powerfully in the final canto of *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage*, the section that treats his time in Italy. He arrives in Venice, "on the Bridge of Sighs; / A palace and a prison on each hand" (IV.1-2), and his temperament, like his setting, has changed. Gone is the contradictory but dramatic bravado of the opening lines of Canto III; in its place, we find a more contemplative, less cocksure voice. He has become a self-made man of the world, albeit through necessity and choice: "I've taught me other tongues — and in strange eyes / Have made me not a stranger; to the mind / Which is itself, no changes bring surprise; / Nor is it harsh to make, nor hard to find / A country with — ay, or without mankind" (IV.64-67). But even though he has left England behind, "the inviolate island of the sage and free" (IV.71), he still feels a connection to that nation, for he was "born where men are proud to be, / Not without cause" (IV.69-71). Even though he has sought out "a home by a remoter sea" (IV.72), he still feels England's pull. "Perhaps I loved it well" (IV.73), he offers, his lack of conviction leaving open the possibility that perhaps he did not love his country well. But regardless, "should I lay / My ashes in a soil which is not mine, / My spirit shall resume it — if we may / Unbodied choose a sanctuary" (IV.73-76); should he die on foreign soil, which would come to happen, Byron will return to England, if only in spirit.

Importantly, the defiant cold shoulder of the earlier cantos has been replaced. Part of this new, warmer attitude in Canto IV undoubtedly has to do with literary pretensions, given that he

⁵⁸ As Maura O'Connor argues, "the romance of Italy" (1) provided a way for numerous British writers to imagine a "bourgeois, liberal, and, above all, English social order during a critical historical period when class society was being reconfigured and the parameters of national identity were being renegotiated in Britain" (1). She reads Byron's *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage*, along with de Staël's *Corinne, or, Italy*, and Samuel Rogers's narrative poem *Italy* as central texts for English understanding of Italy, its culture, history, and "precarious political and diplomatic position after Waterloo" (23); see particularly 23-28. Also see Melchiori, "Byron and Italy: Catalyst of the Risorgimento."

clearly says, “I twine / My hopes of being remember’d in my line / With my land’s language” (IV.76-78), though he quickly undermines these hopes:

[. . .] if too fond and far
 These aspirations in their scope incline, —
 If my fame should be, as my fortunes are,
 Of hasty growth and blight, and dull Oblivion bar
 My name from out the temple where the dead
 Are honour’d by the nations — let it be —
 And light the laurels on a loftier head!
 And be the Spartan’s epitaph on me —
 ‘Sparta hath many a worthier son than he.’ (IV.78-86)

In the meantime, though, he will seek “no sympathies, nor need” (IV.87), for the “thorns which I have reap’d are of the tree / I planted, — they have torn me, — and I bleed: / I should have known what fruit would spring from such a seed” (IV.88-90).

By the time he writes Canto IV, Italy becomes his focus for the downfall of western art and civilization; in place of the focus on Spain, Greece, and France of the first three cantos, the emphasis here falls on the politics and maneuvering of the Italian *Risorgimento*, a theme which will captivate Elizabeth Barrett Browning during her years in exile thirty years later. But Byron’s most powerful concern here is artistic corruption and downfall in the wake of an ever diminishing Italian nationalism. Italy still has the power to inspire creation; even in ruins, this land still possesses unparalleled beauty. The “commonwealth of kings” sprang from “the men of Rome” (IV.226), and ever since that ancient time as well as “now, fair Italy” remains “the garden of the world, the home / Of all Art yields, and Nature can decree” (IV.227-229). Nothing compares to Italy, even a desolated, distressed Italy, for it is the home of great rulers and brilliant artists: “Even in thy desert, what is like to thee? / Thy very weeds are beautiful, thy waste / More rich than other climes’ fertility; / Thy wreck a glory, and thy ruin graced / With an immaculate charm which cannot be defaced (IV.230-234). This nation is the “Mother of Arts” (IV.417) and

“Parent of our Religion” (IV.419) as it was “once of arms” (IV.417), and Europe owes Italy a debt, one which should be repaid: “every other land / Thy wrongs should ring” (IV.416) and “Europe, repentant of her parricide, / Shall yet redeem thee, and, all backward driven, / Roll the barbarian tide, and sue to be forgiven” (IV.421-423).

Or will it? Will Europe—read: England—rise to Italy’s aid? Throughout the canto, Byron yearns for someone to save this fallen nation. Mourning that the “Suabian sued, and now the Austrian reigns — / An Emperor tramples where an Emperor knelt” (IV.100-101), he depicts the oppressed separate states that Italy has been carved into:

Kingdoms are shrunk to provinces, and chains
Clank over sceptred cities; nations melt
From power’s high pinnacle, when they have felt
The sunshine for a while, and downward go
Like lawine loosen’d from the mountain’s belt;
Oh for one hour of blind old Dandolo!
Th’ octogenarian chief, Byzantium’s conquering foe. (IV.102-108)

Here Byron alludes to a desire he makes specific in *Don Juan*: “I want a hero” (1.1). He acknowledges in *Don Juan* that this is an “uncommon want, / When every year and month sends forth a new one” (1.1-2), but nonetheless, a hero is what he craves. In *CHP*, he wonders if all the liberators have disappeared, and if now “tyrants [can only] but by tyrants conquer’d be” (IV.856), if “Freedom [can] find no champion and no child / Such as Columbia saw arise when she / Sprung forth a Pallas, arm’d and undefiled” (IV.857-859). He wonders if “Earth [has] no more / Such seeds within her breast, or Europe no such shore?” (IV.863-864). The potential liberators of revolutionary France have now become a cautionary tale, since that nation “got drunk with blood to vomit crime” (IV.865). Since then, “fatal” have France’s “Saturnalia been / To Freedom’s cause” (IV.866-867). Nevertheless, even though the banner of “Freedom” is “torn,” it still flies, “Stream[ing] like the thunder-storm *against* the wind” (IV.874-875). Byron

calls on England to act, to replace these failed liberators and prove that despite the failed attempts at European liberation over the past forty years, there is still hope for a end to despotism, beginning in Venice:

Thus, Venice, if no stronger claim were thine,
Were all thy proud historic deeds forgot,
Thy choral memory of the Bard divine,
Thy love of Tasso, should have cut the knot
Which ties thee to thy tyrants; and thy lot
Is shameful to the nations, — most of all,
Albion! to thee: the Ocean queen should not
Abandon Ocean's children; in the fall
Of Venice think of thine, despite thy watery wall. (IV.145-153).

Byron deliberately plays on English anxieties over its own position as an ever-expanding world power, and aims to use those fears to motivate action.⁵⁹

At the end of Canto IV, Byron claims he wants to leave his reader with a moral:

Ye! who have traced the Pilgrim to the scene
Which is his last, if in your memories dwell
A thought which once was his, if on ye swell
A single recollection, not in vain
He wore his sandal-shoon, and scallop-shell;
Farewell! with *him* alone may rest the pain,
If such there were — with *you*, the moral of his strain! (IV.1666-1674)

But what is the moral of this pilgrim's tale? In many ways, it is less a moral than an exultation: a call to act on behalf of the beleaguered, oppressed nations of Europe, a call Byron himself accepted in 1823, sailing for Missolonghi and loaning the Greek government £4000 to finance revolution. Less than one year later, early in 1824, Byron wrote his last prose piece, a short item

⁵⁹ As Ogden persuasively argues in "Byron, Italy, and the Poetics of Liberal Imperialism," the poet's "self-reflexive warning to England could not be more direct: as a fellow maritime power and limited democracy (Venice was an oligarchic republic prior to French and Austrian intervention), England should assist in liberating the former independent city-state from Austrian rule; were England to take any other course, it need only glance at decrepit Venice to witness a grand historical canvas of its own eventual demise at the hands of a continental great power" (122). Byron employs "fertile seeds of an imperial anxiety, seeds that Byron, drawing on his own firsthand Italian experience, means to plant in the minds of his English readers," providing "a panorama of parallel Venetian/Italian and English imperial decline as a means of stirring English indignation and military and political action in defense of the tarnished jewel of the Adriatic" (122).

entitled “The Present State of Greece.”⁶⁰ Most likely intended for the *Telegrafo Greco*, Byron either never submitted or withdrew the piece from publication.⁶¹ In it, he claims that he wants to clear the air, for “We are not here to flatter, but to aid, as far as in our power, to a better order of things, and, whether *of* the Greeks or *to* the Greeks, let the truth be spoken” (193): a far different tone than that of his parliamentary speeches little over a decade earlier. The youthful fire of those early republican statements has been tempered, and Byron now depicts the role of foreign reform as a far more complicated matter than either his verse or earlier prose works indicated:

One thing it is essential to remark, viz. that hitherto *no* stranger has succeeded in Greece, either in doing much for the natives, or for himself. French, Germans, Italians, English, Poles,—men of all nations, ages, and conditions,—military and naval, rich and poor, good and evil, speculative and practical,—merchants, officers, tars, Generals, German Barons and Bankers, English gentlemen and adventurers,—and surely some men of talent and good intention amongst them—have in the course of the last three years run the Gauntlet of Greece, and, of the Survivors of fever, famine, fatigue, and the sword, the greater part of those who have not gone back in disgust—remain in misery. (193-194)

Byron too would remain in Greece, living only a few more months before succumbing to fever at Missolonghi in April.⁶² Despite his requests to the contrary, his body was returned to England, and after being denied burial at Westminster Abbey, his interment took place near his Newstead home in July. In retrospect, a moment from “The Prophecy of Dante” seems eerily prescient of Byron’s own death:

Alas! how bitter is his country’s curse
To him who *for* that country would expire,
But did not merit to expire *by* her,
And loves her, loves her even in her ire!
The day may come when she will cease to err,
The day may come when she would be proud to have

⁶⁰ Nicholson *Prose* 193-194.

⁶¹ Nicholson *Prose* 502.

⁶² For the enormous outpouring of grief Byron’s death provoked among the Greek people, see Protopsaltis, “Byron and Greece: Byron’s Love of Classical Greece and his Role in the Greek Revolution,” particularly 102-105.

The dust she dooms to scatter, and transfer
Of him, whom she denied a home, the grave. (69-76)

Though denied an English home and refused a poet's grave, Byron nonetheless died a patriot, though not for his England. His patriotism was larger than the boundaries of one nation, and his prophetic vision of liberty greater than he could have known: "The king-times are fast finishing. There will be blood shed like water, and tears like mist; but the people will conquer in the end. I shall not live to see it, but I foresee it."⁶³

⁶³ From Byron's Ravenna Journal, entry dated January 13, 1821. Marchand *Letters* 8.26.

CHAPTER 3

“EXILED IS NOT LOST”: E.B.B.’S EXILE AND HER NATIONALISMS

Much has been made of Elizabeth Barrett Browning’s treatment of exile in one of her earliest works, the 1844 “A Drama of Exile,” a poem the author called “the longest and most important work (to *me*!) which I ever trusted into the current of publication.”¹ In this verse, E.B.B. consciously attempts to establish herself as a poetic exile, separating herself from her literary predecessors (in this case, specifically Milton), but she, by her own admission, fails. She felt that Milton “should be within [. . .] with his Adam and Even unfallen or falling,—and I, without, with my EXILES,—I also an exile!”; but ultimately, “It would not do” (144): “The subject, and his glory covering it, swept through the gates, and I stood full in it, against my will, and contrary to my vow,—till I shrank back fearing, almost desponding; hesitating to venture even a passing association with our great poet before the face of the public” (144). She tried to separate herself out from the Miltonic tradition, but decided it was not possible, so instead, she consciously immersed herself in that tradition while adapting it for her own purposes.

Thus most critics have rightly read “A Drama of Exile” as Barrett Browning’s negotiation and rethinking of exile from a feminine position, a conceptualization of exile that ends on a self-consciously ironic, upbeat note: “Future joy and far light / Working such relations,

¹ All references to Barrett Browning’s writings, unless otherwise noted, are from Charlotte Porter and Helen A. Clarke, eds., *The Complete Works of Elizabeth Barrett Browning*, 6 vols (New York: Thomas Y. Crowell, 1900). Verses will be cited by line number (and volume where applicable) and prose prefaces by volume and page number.

/ Hear us singing gently / *Exiled is not lost.*” In E.B.B.’s rendering of humanity’s connection with the divine, exile does not equal a perpetual, hopeless wandering, as her italicized final line emphasizes. But what of her treatment of exile from a nationalist perspective? Does this same strain of hopefulness permeate all of her poetics of exile? In short, yes, it does—for through her exilic verse that intersects deliberately with issues of nationhood and national identity, E.B.B. reveals a poetics of exile that encompasses both the tragedies and struggles of life in exile while also illustrating how potent that exilic experience can be for illuminating and working to correct the wrongs of the nineteenth-century European nation.

In this chapter we will begin with an examination of the origins of E.B.B.’s exile in the sickroom alongside her fascination with Byron, the most famous literary exile of the period and a poet for whom she felt great admiration and affinity, both for his verse and his politics; we can see the roots of her poetics of exile in her earliest periodical publication, “Stanzas on the Present State of Greece,” a poem indebted to Byronic influence. Her exilic consciousness continues along this Byronic trajectory, through meditations on Greek nationalism and exile in the 1826 *Essay on Mind, with Other Poems* to condemnations of nationalistic abuses in England and America in her 1844 *Poems*, particularly “The Cry of the Children” and “The Runaway Slave at Pilgrim’s Point.” The chapter will culminate with an examination of E.B.B.’s poetics of exile in *Casa Guidi Windows*, a poem centering on the Italian *Risorgimento*. This crucial mature verse reveals the ways in which Barrett Browning deliberately deploys her already developed exilic, nationalist stance in order to reshape both her homes, Italy and England, through her verse.

i. Byronic Influence

Poor, poor L^d Byron! Now w^d I lay the sun & moon against a tennis-ball that he had more tenderness in one section of his heart, than M^{rs} Norton has in all her's,—though a tenderness misunderstood & crushed, ignorantly, profanely & vilely, by false friends and a pattern wife. His blood is on our heads—on us in England! even as Napoleon's is! — Two stains of the sort have we in one century—& what will wash them out?

E.B.B. to Richard Hengist Horne, letter dated January 29, 1844²

Elizabeth Barrett never made a secret of her admiration and affection for Lord Byron's Romantic Hellenism, his heroism, or his poetry.³ Early in her career, she memorialized and praised him in verse, leading her brother Edward to send to his "dearest Bazy" a "very beautiful *silver remember* medal of Lord Byron, which I hope you will value and preserve as it deserves" (*BC* 1.218).⁴ Her family members were quick to praise her elegiac verses in honor of the fallen nobleman, particularly "Stanzas on the Death of Lord Byron,"⁵ and E.B.B. frequently sprinkled quotations from Byron's verse throughout her own letters to family members and literary acquaintances alike. Thus it comes as no surprise to the reader of E.B.B.'s correspondence to encounter the poet's admission to Mary Russell Mitford that at the age of ten she wanted to run off and be Byron's page (*BC* 6.42).

Yet Barrett did not wish to follow Byron out of purely artistic motivations; in fact, her admission to Mitford makes clear the root of her desire: escaping prescribed British middle-class femininity in favor of a literary life. A confessed failure at woman's "work," that required skill

² *BC* 8.176. All references to Barrett Browning's letters, unless otherwise noted, are from Philip Kelley and Ronald Hudson, eds., *The Brownings' Correspondence* (Winfield, KS: Wedgestone Press, 1984-). Quotations from *The Brownings' Correspondence* (*BC*) will be noted parenthetically by volume and page number.

³ See *BC* 1.67, 2.138-139.

⁴ "Brozy" couldn't help teasing his sister even as he made a gift of the medallion: "it struck my fancy last Saturday in Oxford St. from its extreme elegance, and beauty of execution, and a still stronger recommendation was, that I was at a loss to discover which it most resembled L^d Byron, or myself" (*BC* 1.218).

⁵ *BC* 1.198.

with a needle, E.B.B. confesses to her friend that “As to the cross-stiches—or stiches alas! of any sort, . . . I am ashamed to say how useless & unaccomplished my fingers are in respect to them” (*BC* 6.41).⁶ She deliberately paints a funny picture of herself; when she “pretend[s] to work! Such pricking of fingers & knotting of thread, & sowing backwards in certain evolutions, instead of forwards!—I ought to have been well whipped at six years old, & then—that is, now—I sh^d whip better” (*BC* 6.42), and the only excuse she can muster for herself is that “the occupation was never put to me in the form of a duty. I had nothing to mind or do, needle-ways for myself or others” (*BC* 6.42). But this supposed lack of mandatory tasks is, as E.B.B. quickly notes, not the real reason for her failure at fancywork; instead, it is that she was

always insane about books & poems—poems of my own, I mean,—& books of everybody’s else—and I read Mary Wolstonecraft when I was thirteen: no, twelve! . . . and, through the whole course of my childhood, I had a steady indignation against Nature who made me a woman, & a determinate resolution to dress up in men’s clothes as soon as ever I was free of the nursery, & go into the world ‘to seek my fortune.’ ‘How’, was not decided; but I rather leant towards being poor Lord Byron’s PAGE. (*BC* 6.42)⁷

Given her acknowledged childhood precocity, a claim to have read Wollstonecraft’s writings seems perfectly reasonable for the prepubescent Elizabeth Barrett Barrett—but not exactly simple.⁸

⁶ E.B.B. is also referring to the opening line of her earlier letter to Mitford, letter 981.

⁷ E.B.B. later shared this childhood literary desire/anecdote with Hugh Stuart Boyd, with an added emphasis: “Why, when I was a little girl (and whatever you think, my tendency is not to cast off my old love!) I used to think seriously of dressing up like a boy & running away to be L^d Byron’s page. And *I* to be praised not for being ‘liberal’ in admitting the merit of his poetry! !!!!” (*BC* 6.192; note that the last part, underlined twice here, is actually underlined four times in E.B.B.’s letter). In response to this letter, Boyd replied: “The part about Byron, has the truth and spirit of Conversation. How delightful it would have been, to see the little Page walking, or jumping and frisking at the heels of Byron; that Page, whose *pages* were one day to outshine those of her Master” (*BC* 6.207). Of course, had E.B.B. known exactly what was required of a woman who agreed to play Byron’s page, ala Caroline Lamb, she might have changed her mind; see MacCarthy, *Byron: Life and Legend* 75-76.

⁸ As early as 1821, Mary Moulton-Barrett noted “yours and Mrs. Wolstonecrafts system” in a letter to her daughter written ca. September 1821 (*BC* 1.132-133), around the time of E.B.B.’s completion of “Fragment of an ‘Essay on Woman’” (*BC* 1.133 n.5).

In order to become the kind of poet she desired to be, E.B.B. had to relinquish certain powers in exchange for others, namely that drawn from the early nineteenth-century woman's world of morning visits, philanthropic endeavors, decorative needlework, parlor performances, and household management. For almost the first four decades of her life, she lived the life of an exile, sequestered in rooms at the top of the house, away from domestic noise and bother, it is true, but also away from much human interaction. But in order to become the intellectual and poet she desired to be, such seclusion was paramount. Like all writers, she needed emotional and physical space to learn and to practice her craft; like all intellectuals, she needed time and materials for study and mental energy not allocated to trifling matters of social and domestic life. Exile afforded her these things, but at a significant cost.⁹

A triad of things are at work in E.B.B.'s early exile: first, her illness(es); second, her shyness; third, her desires to write. She was not faking illness so she could be alone and write anymore than she learned Greek and wrote poetry just to pass the time in her sickroom. But it is clear from her letters and biographers that she wanted to be alone, both to write and to be spared demands of social convention. Her father's pathological aversion to anyone who wasn't a family member coming to visit also played a significant part in keeping her secluded. All of these things conspired to turn E.B.B. into the invalid poet of Wimpole Street.

⁹ By 1843, E.B.B. felt confident to advise others on the "costs" one must be prepared to pay in order to make poetry both a "private pleasure" and a "public distinction" (BC 8.15). When asked by Mary Minto to critique the writings of an unidentified young woman, E.B.B. advised careful study and studied caution before entering the public literary sphere: "I do not dissuade her, as you anticipate, from her intention to endeavour at public distinction,—but I do venture to suggest, by force of the interest with which she inspires me, that she sh^d *count the cost well*, . . . and above all things, not attempt to publish until she is ready to pay the price [. . .] My humble advice to her is, that she sh^d not publish at present,—& that if she sh^d be resolved to try the strength of her faculty at whatever cost, she sh^d subject herself to the labour & discipline without which no artist can excel [. . .] I take courage from my interest in her, to advise her to think more, to read more, & dream somewhat less, . . . to study hard our English poets, & even prose writers of the graver reasoning order, . . . to write with compression & concentration of meaning, & more thoughts in proportion to the sentiments, . . . to do all this *before* she publishes. It is a mistake to think that a true poet (whatever his gifts!) can sing like a bird; he must work on the contrary like an artist. We have L^d Byron's & Wordsworth's witness to this fact, that the study of a life is necessary to a poet's excellence" (BC 8.15). Luckily for her, E.B.B. possessed family money and support so that she could devote herself to *belles lettres* as fully as she advises her young admirer.

But as critics and biographers have dramatically rendered, E.B.B.'s cloistered life was hardly glamorous; intellectually and artistically productive and rewarding certainly, particularly in light of her voluminous correspondences with early mentors, but E.B.B. paid a heavy price for her seclusion.¹⁰ Riddled by various physical ailments, the cause of her exile to the sickroom in the first place, her weakened body was continually further debilitated by cures: cupping; a spine crib, a sort of hammock that kept her suspended four feet off of the ground for months at a time; opium prescribed at age fifteen; setons, a process of running skeins of cotton underneath the skin and leaving them in place in order to promote drainage; instructions to never rise from a sofa and never change her clothes.¹¹ In 1843, E.B.B. would write to Richard Hengist Horne, recalling the years 1838-1841 as "the enforced exile to Torquay, . . . with prophecy in the fear of grief & reluctance of it—a dreadful dream of an exile, which gave a nightmare to my life for ever, & robbed it of more than I can speak of here."¹²

Emotionally, she further painted herself into a tight spot with her dismissive attitudes toward romantic attachments¹³ and her supposed desire for nothing more than a life of Christian

¹⁰ See Mermin, *Elizabeth Barrett Browning: The Origins of a New Poetry* for a particularly distressing example: "In September 1841 she returned to London and began the long incarceration which became the stuff of legend and the setting for the most famous literary love story of the nineteenth century. For the next few years she lived in one room, not leaving it for months at a time. She was usually alone during the day and saw her family in the evenings. her father, whose room adjoined hers, came every night to pray with her. Arabel slept on the couch. Flush, the cocker spaniel that Mary Russell Mitford had given her, provided a sorely needed element of physical affection, amusement, and even joy. Doctors had prescribed opium some time back to calm her pulse and help her sleep, and she continued to take it. 'The consequence of living through the winter in one room, with a fire, day & night, & every crevice sealed close, . . . you may imagine [. . .] At last we come to walk upon a substance like white sand [. . .] The spiders have grown tame—and their webs are a part of our own domestic oeconomy,—Flush eschews walking under the bed' (*LMRM* 2.217). She had two dresses, black silk for summer, black velvet, fully lined, for winter, which she was advised by her physicians never to change. From the disagreeableness—the dirt, the staleness, the smells—that must have lain behind her cheerful descriptions of her mode of living, the imagination shrinks appalled" (Mermin 78).

¹¹ For the specifics of the various cures attempted for E.B.B.'s complaints of a "swollen spine," headaches, and fatigue, see Forster 24-27; Mermin 78.

¹² *BC* 7.354. The nightmare she refers to was the death of her brother, Edward Barrett Moulton-Barrett, "Bro.," in July 1840.

¹³ Margaret Forster, *Elizabeth Barrett Browning: A Biography* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1988) 60.

piety with her family, all of which made her elopement with Robert Browning all the more harrowing. By eloping, not only did she openly defy her beloved father, but she reneged on the unstated agreement she had made with her family: if they would consent to protect her from the outside world so that her shyness would not be challenged¹⁴ and her artistic goals almost never overtly thwarted, then she would agree never to challenge the *paterfamilias* demand to remain part of the family household.

But her goals were thwarted. Her father and brothers did make nuisances of themselves at times, deigning to play censor of her proposed projects, a possible verse opposing England's Corn Laws, for instance. In 1845 the Anti-Corn Law League requested a verse from E.B.B.; the overwhelmingly negative response from the men in her life coerced her into declining.¹⁵ And in addition to freely expressed opinions about what women should and should not write, E.B.B.'s father also held strong convictions about sorts of women read particular authors; Byron and Rousseau, for instance:

He has very strict ideas about women & about what they sh^d read, (you w^d not

¹⁴ Forster builds a compelling case, drawing on E.B.B.'s letters and diary, for E.B.B.'s notorious dread of visits and strangers, in part because of her father's influence. The machinations and attacks of "nerves," which would be laughable were they not so pitiful, precipitating almost every significant meeting she had with new people—Hugh Stuart Boyd, William Wordsworth, Mary Russell Mitford, to name only a few—indicate, however, that more was at stake than displeasing her father. Though she resented his interference in meeting Boyd for the first time, for example, she too was complicit in prolonging the meeting. See also her peculiar behavior over meeting Henrietta's beloved (Forster 137-138), Wordsworth (Forster 80, 82), and Mitford (Forster 81-82).

¹⁵ E.B.B. expressed her regrets, her anger, and her shame to Mary Russell Mitford: "You are right . . . and I (to do myself some shameful justice) am right about the League. I am heartily vexed. Is it not hard to have power & see a duty, & yet find it impossible to apply one to another? A man would act—a woman . . . ! I wrote my 'no' as feelingly as I could—but if other people think, as I think myself, that I have acted unworthily . . . why how can I blame them? M^r Chorley told M^r Kenyon he felt so strongly about it, that if he had heard accidentally of my having such an intention in my head, he w^d have written to give his opinion of it unconsulted. Oh—I did not consult him. I consulted M^r Kenyon. But it was Papa in the first place—or I sh^d have written at once to accept. Seeing Papa adverse, I wanted a quick opinion on my side, & consulted dear kind M^r. Kenyon. As to my brothers, . . . they just made me angry: & I was very angry, chafed, & out of sorts,—& sh^d not have minded (as I told them) the great storm of their 'most sweet voices' . . . if it had not been for Papa. The secret of the bearing of men towards women, let it be ever so much 'made up of adorations' & the like, is just . . . contempt: they make idols of them because they recognize their raw material to be wood or brass" (*The Letters of Elizabeth Barrett Browning to Mary Russell Mitford, 1836-1854* 3.80).

think so now, from *me!*) & I heard him say once that he could not think highly of the modesty of any woman who could read Don Juan!! He used to keep a canto of Don Juan locked up from wandering eyes,—and does the same at this time, with the Heloise [. . .] I fancy that he has a high opinion of my curiosity about books & is content that I sh^d be supposed to have read the right & left, through a filter, without having done myself much harm. Only if I were to *ask* him for that copy of the Eloise locked up in the drawer, . . . my dearest Miss Mitford,—he w^d as soon give me Prussic acid if I were thirsty! —” (BC 9.166-167).¹⁶

Yet despite her father’s censure of Byron’s verse, E.B.B. remained dedicated to the poet throughout her life. This dedication did not extend, however, to blind devotion; she could and would critique Byron, both privately and publicly, but his influence on her writings nonetheless remained profound.

E.B.B.’s first periodical contribution, the 1821 “Stanzas, Excited by Some Reflections on the Present State of Greece,” is an especially Byronic verse, yet hardly an imitative one.¹⁷ Appearing as part of the inaugural volume of *The New Monthly and Literary Journal*,¹⁸ these Spenserian stanzas dedicated to singing the praises of a fallen nation begin with a combination of lamentation and denigration: “Greece! glorious Greece! what art though but a name?” (1).¹⁹ The speaker wonders if Greece is now only an “echo” gone by, a “once victorious voice” that now “trembles in a sigh” (2, 4). This fear that the great Western nation is gone, that the seat of Western art, political ideology, and patriotic glory is unreachable and its greatness forever

¹⁶ And of the possibility of discussing Madame Dudevant, George Sand, with her father, E.B.B. is shrewdly aware of just how interfering, annoying, and debilitating her father could make himself if he took a mind to: “As to Papa, why he knows nothing of Madame Dudevant,—& I don’t feel inclined to explain her to him. Of course if I were to say . . . ‘she is a great genius, & no better than she should be, . . . and I have read her books & want to write to her,’—he w^d think I was mad & required his paternal restraint in all manner of ways” (BC 9.166).

¹⁷ E.B.B. had an absolute horror of imitative poetry; see her remarks on John Edmund Reade’s *Italy*, a verse widely criticized for its remarkable likeness to Byron’s *Childe Harold* (BC 4.47-48). Mermin calls *Essay on Mind* imitative of Pope (*Elizabeth Barrett Browning* 34), an assessment E.B.B. agreed with herself (BC 7:354).

¹⁸ See Taplin, “An Early Poem by Mrs. Browning.” Interestingly Taplin’s note on E.B.B. follows a note about Byron in this 1950 edition of *Notes and Queries*.

¹⁹ “Stanzas, Excited by Some Reflections on the Present State of Greece,” *The New Monthly Magazine and Literary Journal* 1 (1821): 531.

demolished, goes to the heart of Byron's *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage*. But unlike *CHP*, this early E.B.B. poem does not point to Britain as the next great Western power; this comparison will come later, and for now, mourning the fallen is the task at hand.

For this kind of magnificent mourning, E.B.B. needs a particular kind of poetic voice, one that is singular, embodied, but still maintains a kind of transcendence. She needs the voice of the bard.²⁰ "Stanzas" self-consciously claims a kind of literary presence and heritage, one she goes to some lengths to distance herself from, albeit through self-effacement, in the 1844 *Poems*.²¹ But the 1821 voice of "Stanzas, Excited by Some Reflections on the Present State of Greece" enters the poem as the self-proclaiming voice of the nation's glory, with all the assurance attributed to a Romantic lyrical persona, indicating E.B.B.'s early love of her Romantic heroes: "And *I will sing* thy glory's lullaby— / For *I have loved* thee, Greece" (emphasis mine, 5-6).²² But this assurance is short-lived, for this bard will not sing a triumphant song of national glory; instead, "o'er the lyre / Faintly and sadly shall [her] fingers fly" (6-7) as the "mournful cadence dies upon the wire, / And on the desolate winds, those melodies expire" (8-9). This poet's song is fleeting, faint, near death.

But despite this mournful beginning, the poem does specifically link Greece and glory, even while diminishing that link as stemming perhaps from youthful fantasy and desire: "Yes! I

²⁰ E.B.B.'s bardic figure is not only Miltonic and Byronic, but Carlylean as well. For E.B.B.'s self-conscious deployment of "Victorian sage discourse" in her verse, see Marjorie Stone 154-155; for her relationship with a Carlylean notion of poet as hero, see Avery and Stott 78-80; for Carlylean though and a feminist aesthetic in the later verse, see Laird, "*Aurora Leigh*: An Epical *Ars Poetica*"; for Carlylean influence on E.B.B.'s poetic theory, see Freiwald, "'The world of books is still the world': Elizabeth Barrett Browning's Critical Prose 1842-1844."

²¹ Porter and Clarke, *Collected Works* 2.142-145.

²² In a September 7, 1843 letter to Mary Russell Mitford, E.B.B. specifically claimed her position as a later Romantic: "Byron, Coleridge . . . how many more? . . . were contemporaries of mine without my having approached them near enough to look reverently in their faces, or to kiss the hem of their garment—and young as I was, I cannot get rid of a feeling of deep regret, that, so,—it sh^d have been. I think sometimes . . . how many were probably nay certainly, English contemporaries of Shakespeare, who never stood face to face with Him—and the idea startles me as something unnatural & unworthy!" (BC 7.319).

have loved thee—and my youthful soul / Hath wildly dreamt of glory, and of thee— / Burst the proud links of man’s severe control, / And sprung to sojourn with the great and free! / Oh! who would not thy vot’ry, Græcia, be” (10-13). Interestingly, though, the speaker locates this glory in a peculiar place: the text. It is over “th’ enchanted page” that she has stood “Entranced,—and wept thy fallen liberty” (15-16). It is the page that causes her “breast thrill’d with all the patriot’s rage” (17), and leads it to “soar [. . .] aloft, to greet the hero, poet, sage” (18). It is not the sight of Greece’s marred monuments or its war-ravaged landscape that “entrances” this lyrical poet and leads her to weep and sing. Instead, the texts that she reads, imaginative landscapes of poetic vision and rendering speak to her, greet her, as she self-consciously stands in the position she herself creates and delineates, that of hero, poet, sage: the figures who are E.B.B.’s idols, and in many ways, her aspirations. But in the last lines, we discover the poem is not just “reflections” but actually an elegy: “And I will love thee, though despoil’d of breath, / For thou art beauteous, Græcia, e’en in death” (26-27). The nation she longs for, the idealization of national possibility, is dead.

ii. Mourning the Exile: E.B.B.’s Early Nationalist Verse

When Byron died in 1824, E.B.B. was quick to compose and publish her elegy for him, “Stanzas on the Death of Lord Byron.”²³ Although it appeared in publication that year, E.B.B. also chose to have it reprinted in *An Essay on Mind, with Other Poems* in 1826, her “first real book, her first serious attempt to address the world as a poet and find her own voice.”²⁴ “Stanzas on the Death of Lord Byron,” along with three other “Miscellaneous Poems”—“Stanzas

²³ “Stanzas on the Death of Lord Byron” appeared in the London *Globe and Traveller* on June 30, 1824. See *BC* 1.198-199.

²⁴ Mermin, *Elizabeth Barrett Browning* 33.

Occasioned by a Passage in Mr. Emerson's Journal," "On a Picture of Riego's Widow," and "Riga's Last Song"—form an important subset of that volume, constituting her first public assertions as a nationalistic poet and establishing republican refrains by glorifying the real-life exiled rebel, those of Greece, Spain, and Britain.

At first glance, "Stanzas on the Death of Lord Byron" seems to be straightforward elegy, but it is more complicated and important than a celebratory memorial. E.B.B. placed two epigraphs before the poem; the first from Bion's "Lament for Adonais," which translates as "Say to all he is dead";²⁵ and the second from Byron's *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage*: "I am not now / that which I have been."²⁶ Significantly, two of the first acknowledged parallels for Shelley's *Adonais* were Bion's "Lament for Adonais" and Moschus's "Elegy for Bion," the latter from which Shelley took one of his epigraphs.²⁷ By using an epigraph from Bion, E.B.B. accomplishes several crucial things. First, she consciously aligns her elegy for Byron alongside Shelley's elegy for Keats. Second, she places her poem in the tradition of the pastoral elegy, specifically as continuation of the Romantic elegy for the Romantic poet. Third, she places herself not only in the company of later Romantic poets, but in the company of exiled British writers, for both Shelley and Byron were exiled from England. It is not a Wordsworthian or Coleridgian tradition she places herself in here.

The lines E.B.B. chose for the second epigraph come from the next to the last stanza of *Childe Harold* Canto IV. The stanza in full reads:

My task is done—my song hath ceased—my theme
Has died into an echo; it is fit
The spell should break of this protracted dream.

²⁵ Translation Porter and Clarke, *Collected Works* I.271, note to "Mottoes."

²⁶ *CHP* IV.185.

²⁷ Shelley 408. Unless otherwise noted, quotations from Shelley's verse and prose are from Donald H. Reiman and Neil Fraistat, eds., *Shelley's Poetry and Prose*, 2nd ed. (New York: Norton, 2002).

The torch shall be extinguish'd which hath lit
 My midnight lamp—and what is writ, is writ,—
 Would it were worthier! but I am not now
 That which I have been—and my visions flit
 Less palpably before me—and the glow
 Which in my spirit dwelt is fluttering, faint, and low. (4.1657-1665)

E.B.B.'s first line of her elegy—"He *was*, and *is* not!"—indicates shock, dismay, and horror that he who once existed could now be gone. She emphasizes the changed state of being, yet it is not so much that "he is dead," for this is not like the first line of Shelley's lament: "I weep for Adonais—he is dead!" The emphasis here is not on the mourner's grief, her weeping, or her sorrow, but instead on a shift in state of being that has occurred for the one she mourns: he *was* something, and now he *is* something else—that something else being a negation, "he *is* not." And of course, the line is also an initial refusal to acknowledge what between the epigraph and line three ("That Harold's pilgrimage at last is o'er—") the speaker must come to terms with; the end Byron wrote of in the last stanzas of *CHP* has at last come to fruition.

E.B.B. goes on to paint Byron as the hero of Greece, the one for whom "Græcia's trembling shore" (1) will shout the news of the poet's death, rendering "Mute the impassioned tongue, and tuneful shell / That erst was wont in noblest strains to swell— / Hush'd the proud shouts that rode Ægæa's wave" (4-6). It is significant that Greece announces his death, both for his poetic loyalty and his political action, for the poem goes on specifically to name Byron as both "Britannia's Poet" and "Græcia's hero" (19), acknowledging that the poet who wanted so much to be a great English patriot would never realize that ambition, instead rising to fame in exile as patriot in a foreign land. With that line, E.B.B. underscores and mourns Byron's separation from his homeland. And while his adopted country adopts the posture of the widowed woman, "Mourn, Hellas, mourn! and o'er thy widow's brow, / for aye, the cypress wreath of sorrow twine" (10-11), it is "Freedom" who "bending o'er the breathless clay, / Lifts up her

voice, and in her anguish weeps!” (20-21).²⁸ E.B.B. acknowledges the kind of liberalism Byron championed gives it a voice to lament the fallen hero. Significantly, “Britannia” is given no such enactment of public grieving to satisfy, with the exception of one particular task, a burden the poet herself shoulders:

For *us*, a night hath clouded o’er our day,
And hush’d the lips that breath’d our fairest lay.
Alas! and must the British lyre resound
A requiem, while the spirit wings away
Of him who on its strings such music found,
And taught its startling chords to give so sweet a sound! (22-27)

E.B.B.’s imperative construction leaves no doubt that she does not ask for the British lyre to sound, but instead demands that it must, both making a demand and satisfying it simultaneously. The exiled Byron must be mourned, and will be mourned, by a British poetic voice: Greece may grieve, and Freedom may wail, but England will speak for Byron.²⁹

Of course, in “Stanzas Occasioned by a Passage in Mr. Emerson’s Journal,” a poem that falls three verses after “Stanzas on the Death of Lord Byron” in the 1826 *An Essay on Mind, with Other Poems*, grief for Byron has become so pronounced that his name may not even be uttered without causing a strong man, a “warrior” (11), to dissolve into tears; thus this poem ends with

²⁸ In *Elizabeth Barrett Browning*, Marjorie Stone makes the following point about E.B.B.’s 1821 Greek poems published in *The New Monthly*, one of which was “Stanzas Excited by Some Reflections on the Present State of Greece,” an important point that we can well extend to “Stanzas on the Death of Lord Byron”: “[These 1821 poems in *The New Monthly*] also reflect the impact of Byron’s Romantic Hellenism. Mermin suggests that Barrett identified so strongly with Greece as a ‘damsel in distress’ both in *The Battle of Marathon* and in her poems on Greek liberation because she could find no individual heroic women to identify with. Hence her ‘imaginative identification is political and impersonal’, contributing to her ‘lifelong habit of associating geography with gender and imagining England as male as Greece and Italy . . . as female’ (23-7). But the gendering of Barrett Browning’s geography was also significantly shaped by de Staël’s *Corinne*, while her youthful Hellenism derives as much from the ardent political Republicanism she associated with Byron as from her identification with Greece as a ‘damsel in distress’” (60).

²⁹ As Mermin notes in *Elizabeth Barrett Browning: The Origins of a New Poetry*, this naming without naming is typical of this early E.B.B. volume: “Byron has become an object of such extreme love that he cannot be named—‘Name not his name,’ the speaker adjures—without evoking tears. As usual when the subject of naming comes up in this volume, the poem half-contradicts itself, naming Byron not in the poem but only in the subtitle [‘Occasioned by a Passage in Mr. Emerson’s Journal, which states, that on the mention of Lord Byron’s name, Captain Demetrius, and old Roumeliot, burst into tears’]” (254 note 9).

“Then, Briton, name me not his name— / I cannot choose but weep!” (43-44). This mourning can and must happen, but the speaker must cry for an unnamed man, lest the power of that name undo everyone—poetic persona and reader alike. Thus E.B.B.’s placement of these two elegies for Lord Byron creates in the volume a tension between the desire and duty to name and the agony of doing that duty.

This coherence between the Byron poems, to say nothing of the other Greece/political verses in *An Essay on Mind*, seems to undercut Dorothy Mermin’s assertion that the “lyrics that make up the rest of the volume show a backward-turning impulse [. . .] a nostalgia for early childhood and a fear of growing up that is sometimes explicit and sometime implied by a strange childishness that forms an astonishing contrast to ‘An Essay on Mind’” (36). While Mermin does have more patience with the nationalistic poems, particularly for the ways in which E.B.B. uses them to “celebrate fame with unimpeded ardor and examine its meaning for women” (37), she ends her criticism of the volume on a decidedly negative note: “the poems are tonally and stylistically marred, by archaisms, inversion, an overabundance of italics and exclamation marks for emphasis, awkward syntax and diction, and such stock sentimental idioms as the ruined joys, broken heart, and sacred tears of Riego’s Widow” (39). If we separate out the nationalist and elegiac poems and consider them alone, we see that they are in fact not marred by these things; instead, these poems show E.B.B. coming to terms with the elements and traditions of British patriotic/nationalistic verse.³⁰

In comparison with the poet’s inability/unwillingness to speak stands “On a Picture of Riego’s Widow, Placed in the Exhibition,” a poem based on Spanish military leader Colonel

³⁰ I do not, however, think that Mermin’s overriding critical comment is that the volume lacks coherence, as Simon Avery attempts to argue (*Elizabeth Barrett Browning* 60); while this is indeed a criticism Mermin makes (33), over the course of her chapter “The Development of Genius,” her overall assessment seems to be that the individual poems are mawkish and juvenile—not so much that the volume lacks coherence, but that the individual poems do.

Rafael Riego who in 1820 led his troops to mutiny against the autocratic government of monarch Ferdinand VII. This king, imprisoned in France and returned to power in 1814 by the Allies, vowed to honor the dissolution of Spain's absolute monarchy as decreed by the Constitution of 1812.³¹ Within two months of his return, however, Ferdinand broke his promises, rejecting the constitution and arresting leaders of liberal factions.³²

Ferdinand has been depicted alternately as a ruthless, capricious, unstable ruler, a despot nicknamed "The Chosen One" by traditionalists eager to see Spain returned to absolutism, or a victim of international and domestic intrigue. Undoubtedly, his continual upsets at court, to say nothing of his negotiations with Napoleon against Manuel Godoy,³³ damaged his reputation within his country and beyond. The struggles between "the absolutist supporters of the restored monarch" and the "Liberals who had given the country its first constitution [the Constitution of 1812]" lasted for quarter century, finally only being settled after a seven year civil war (1833-1840).³⁴

So on January 1, 1820, Colonel Rafael Riego, after six years of Ferdinand's rule as an absolute monarch, initiated a *pronunciamiento*—"a public 'pronouncement' of opposition to the existing government by a small network of military conspirators and their civilian allies"³⁵—and led his forces into Madrid on January 1, 1820 to reinstate the Constitution by force.³⁶ The king

³¹ See Hilt, *The Troubled Trinity* 266-267; Burdiel, "The Liberal Revolution, 1808-1843" 21-23; Esdaile, *Spain in the Liberal Age* 38-40.

³² Kern, Robert W., ed., *Historical Dictionary of Modern Spain* (New York: Greenwood Press, 1990) 209.

³³ *Historical Dictionary of Modern Spain* 209.

³⁴ José Alvarez Junco and Adrian Shubert, eds., "Introduction," *Spanish History Since 1808* (London: Arnold, 2000) 13.

³⁵ Carolyn P. Boyd, "The Military and Politics, 1808-1874," *Spanish History Since 1808*, eds. José Alvarez Junco and Adrian Shubert (London: Arnold, 2000) 67.

³⁶ Douglas Hilt, *The Troubled Trinity: Godoy and the Spanish Monarchs* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1987) 267.

was taken prisoner, and on March 20 he swore allegiance to the 1812 Cádiz Constitution. Fears of revolution, however, were acute in 1820s Europe, for it was “now known that revolution in a single country could be a European phenomenon; that its doctrines could spread across the frontiers and, what was worse, its crusading armies could blow away the political systems of a continent.”³⁷ It had become painfully clear to all of Europe that “social revolution was possible; that nations existed as something independent of states, peoples as something independent of their rulers, and even that the poor existed as something independent of the ruling classes.”³⁸ De Boland’s 1796 observation that the “French Revolution is a unique event in history”³⁹ had been revealed by the 1820s as a wrongheaded claim; de Boland’s “unique event” was now understood to be a “universal event,” one from which “[n]o country was immune.”⁴⁰

And while fears of a renewed Franco-Jacobin expansion were also acute, the fears of revolution on the French model were greater.⁴¹ So when France invaded Spain in 1823 with powers granted by the 1822 Congress of Verona, it did so with no interference from Britain, the nation most likely to oppose absolutisms or strenuously avoid the inevitable reforms.⁴² France suppressed the rebellion, and condemned the leaders to death. Riego’s wife, Teresa del Riego, who was by then a refugee in England, worked to secure the intervention of the French government through Polignac, the French ambassador; her efforts failed, and her husband was horrifically executed on November 7, 1823: “dragged through a delirious crowd on a charcoal-

³⁷ Eric Hobsbawm, *The Age of Revolution: 1789-1848* (New York: Vintage Books, 1975) 9.

³⁸ Hobsbawm, *The Age of Revolution* 9.

³⁹ quoted in Hobsbawm, *The Age of Revolution* 9.

⁴⁰ Hobsbawm, *The Age of Revolution* 9

⁴¹ Hobsbawm, *Age of Revolution* 109.

⁴² Hobsbawm, *Age of Revolution* 109. In fact, the provisions of the Congress of Verona were challenged and protested by Whigs in England as soon as the Congress concluded.

burner's cart drawn by a donkey, then executed in public, and finally quartered with each severed part consigned to a separate grave."⁴³ Porter and Clarke note that one year later Riego's wife "died of grief."⁴⁴

In E.B.B.'s verse, Riego's wife tellingly keeps her sorrow from British eyes; she will not court their sympathy. Indeed, Teresa del Riego emphatically hides her grief from English viewers. They will look into "the Widow's face / And only read the Patriot's woe" (7-8), for she will not "give to vulgar eyne / The sacred tear which fell for him" (11-12). She will let no "word, no look, no sigh" make her husband's "glory seem more dim" (9-10); she will not "hold to the world's view" her "ruined joys" or her "broken heart" (13-14). She bears her sufferings privately, refusing to display her grief for the voyeuristic satisfaction of the British for two reasons: first, out of pride for her husband, and second, because she will give the British no further cause to pity her, the one they watched struggle, valiantly but unsuccessfully, to save her husband. The end of the verse makes plain where the shame lies:

Peace be to thee! while Britons seek
This place, if British souls they bear,

'Twill start the crimson in the cheek
To see Riego's widow there! (37-40)

Those who truly possess British "souls" will be the ones betraying their own emotions; the mark of England's failure to come to the aid of Spain will be left on the cheek of every true Briton who views this woman. E.B.B. thus sides squarely with the forces of rebellion in Spain in this verse, and her shame at her nation's conduct—or the lack thereof—is made plain.⁴⁵

⁴³ Hilt 267.

⁴⁴ *Collected Works* I.272 note to poem.

⁴⁵ Significantly E.B.B.'s letters around this period say little of overtly political matters, with two exceptions: a draft of letter from 1817 protested suspension of habeas corpus (*BC* 1.41-43), and an 1831 letter on reform written to Boyd (*BC* 2.311-312), with much "Papa says" to authorize her voice.

“Riga’s Last Song” tells the story of a third exiled rebel, a “forerunner and first martyr of Greek liberty,”⁴⁶ Constantine Rhigas, Rhigas of Velestinos, or Rhigas Pheraios. Born in Velestino in approximately 1757, Rhigas adopted the appellation Velestinos or Velestinlis in recognition of his birthplace (“Pheraios” an anachronism later attributed to him).⁴⁷ His education was typical for a young man of his station, and at age twenty he accepted a clerk’s position with a noble family in Ypsilantis.⁴⁸ During the years 1790-1796, he traveled between Mavrogenis, Vienna, and Wallachia, initiating a “vigorous political and national line of activity,” including translating Metastasio and the Abbé Barthélemy and publishing revolutionary pamphlets and songs.⁴⁹ His political activities brought him to the attention of Austrian rulers;⁵⁰ he was arrested at Trieste, turned over to Turkish authorities, and summarily executed.⁵¹

Rigas was a poet and a patriot; a statue in his honor stands in front of the University of Athens, and its inscription reads “The Pheraeian singer sowed the seeds of Liberty.”⁵² It is to both the rebellious revolutionary and the patriotic poet that E.B.B. dedicates her verse—she writes as nationalistic poet to a nationalistic poet.

⁴⁶ Linos Politis, *A History of Modern Greek Literature* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1973) 102.

⁴⁷ Politis 102.

⁴⁸ Politis 102.

⁴⁹ Politis 102.

⁵⁰ Porter and Clarke maintain that he was betrayed by one of his countrymen to the Austrian police (*Collected Works* 1.273), though more recent interpretations of his arrest and execution do not confirm this assertion.

⁵¹ Politis 102. The exact manner of Rhigas’s death seems to be a matter of some contention. Porter and Clarke, basing their retelling of the incident on Mrs. E. M. Edmonds “Rhigas Pheraios, A Biographical Sketch,” claim that he was shot. Linos Politis, one of the modern Greek literary scholars whose work is available in English, maintains that Rigas and his co-conspirators were strangled. And E.B.B., in her version of Rhigas’s death, depicts his execution as death by beheading: “And I bend my brows above the block, / Silently waiting the swift death shock” (33-34).

⁵² Politis 102.

The verse beings with the patriot poet about to be martyred, and his last act is to sing: “I have looked my last on my native land, / And over these strings I throw my hand” (1-2). In these moments of the “death-hour’s minstrelsy,” he bids farewell not to his loved ones, but to his beloved nation, “Hellas, my country! farewell to thee!” (3, 4). As he stands on the coast, a classic exilic spot, gazing at his “native shore” (5), he realizes that he will “tread” his “country’s plains no more” (6), and his “last thought is of her fame,” his “last breath speaketh her name!” (7-8). This act of speaking, of performing his bardic function even at the moment of his death by “throw[ing his] hand” over “these strings” (2) gives him the chance to enact the patriot’s stance: “And though these lips shall soon be still, / They may now obey the spirit’s will; / Though the dust be fettered, the spirit is free— / Hellas, my country! farewell to thee!” (9-12). This moment of defiant song is crucial for E.B.B.’s construction of Rhigas as a heroic rebellious figure: she positions him as someone dying for a glorious cause rather than being unjustly executed by imperial authorities. Because E.B.B. fashions him as a martyr, his death will have a noble purpose; even as he prepares to die, he “leave[s] behind / The stirrings of Freedom’s mighty mind; / Her voice shall arise from plain to sky, / Her steps shall tread where my ashes lie!” (13-16). He dies with the typical heroic stance of the national hero, proclaiming that though may kill him, they will not kill his cause.

Rhigas’s song becomes momentarily reflective, pausing to remember the places and landscape of his homeland: the “mountains of proud Souli” (17) and “Marathon’s plain” (19). Then in a moment reminiscent of the opening lines of *Casa Guidi Windows*, Rhigas remembers a particular part of his travels across his homeland: “And as I journeyed on my way, / I saw an infant group at play; / One shouted aloud in his childish glee, / And showed me the heights of Thermopylæ” (21-24). All of the sights Rhigas recounts, whether found on his own volition or

through the guiding voice of the child, hold tremendous significance for Greek nationalism: Souli, the site of an independent Greek republic until 1803, and Marathon and Thermopylæ, both locations of great military victories.

But ultimately, Rigas cannot maintain his song. “No more!” he cries, “I dash my lyre on the ground— / I tear its strings from their home of sound— / For the music of slaves shall never keep / Where the hand of a freeman was wont to sweep” (29-32). As long as he remains part of a nation of “slaves,” his verse cannot live. And yet it does—through her depiction of his final moments, E.B.B. both ends and continues his song. She has Rigas claim that he can no longer be a poet at the same time that she memorializes and establishes him as exactly that: the poet who proclaims “Hellas, my country! thou *shalt* be free!” (emphasis hers, 28).

At the same time that E.B.B.’s poetry dedicated to nationalist concerns and rebellious patriotic figures develops, so too does her poetry specifically concerned with Christianity. For the most part, her religious verse occupies a separate trajectory, until the *Poems* of 1833. In this volume, E.B.B.’s nationality and Christianity become specifically linked in the verse “The Appeal,” a verse Dorothy Mermin characterizes as “grotesque and dreadful.”⁵³ The poem is admittedly hard to handle, given the enthusiastic calls for the “Children of our England” (1) to “Shout aloud the words that show / Jesus in the sands and snow;— / Shout aloud the words that free, / Over the perpetual sea” (18-21). Yet no matter how problematic the imperialist intent of the verse may be, it does stand at an important juncture in both E.B.B.’s writings as a nationalist poet. In “The Appeal,” she stages a commandment: “Speak ye. As a breath will sweep / Avalanche from Alpine steep, / So the spoken word shall roll / Fear and darkness from the soul”

⁵³ Elizabeth Barrett Browning: *The Origins of a New Poetry* 55.

(22-25). This moment stands in direct parallel with the command she will issue twenty-seven years later while promoting abolitionist activity in “A Curse for a Nation”:

Because ye have broken your own chain
 With the strain
 Of brave men climbing a Nation’s height,
 Yet thence bear down with brand and thong
 On souls of others,— for this wrong
 This is the curse. Write.

Nonetheless, however, in “The Appeal,” the imperative is a bit more aggressive and inescapable, and the command more brutal, for it seems clear that the object of the verse is to promote a kind of passionate missionary zeal that quickly becomes difficult for the verse to control. If the “children of Britain” (44) do not perform their Christian duty, the rest of the world will be denied its beneficent civilizing influence. The change she calls for is profound:

Rocky hearts wild waters pour,
 That were chain’d in stone before:
 Bloody hands, that only bare
 Hilted sword, are clasp’d in prayer
 Savage tongues, that wont to fling
 Shouts of war in deathly ring,
 Speak the name which angels sing.

But while promoting the end of warfare is a noble aim, to “Shout aloud the words that free, / Over the perpetual sea” (lines E.B.B. repeats twice), to advocate hurling Christian doctrine so forcefully at other nations in order to save them from their “savagery,” is a clear and frightening imperialist stance, both in national and religious terms.

iii. English Children and American Slaves: “Weeping in the country of the free”

By the 1844 *Poems*, E.B.B.’s nationalistic verses become fiercer and more impassioned. She still uses figures of pathos, but with more of a bite than before as she begins to deal with more complicated, specifically exilic figures. Perhaps her most compelling verse of this kind is

“The Cry of the Children,” for this verse does not contain the universal cry of the wounded, wronged child; instead, these are specific children in particular place at particular time, children cut off from the very essence of “home” in familial, religious, and national terms. They are exiled within their homeland, left destitute and without any recourse to reclaim the home that should have been theirs. E.B.B. makes this sentiment plain in the first stanza; these children are “weeping bitterly,” “weeping in the playtime of the others / In the country of the free” (11-12). Other young creatures, lambs, birds, and fawns, are free to play and sing, but England’s children are only free to “lean [. . .] their young heads against their mothers / And [even] *that* cannot stop their tears” (3-4). Of course, not all of England’s children find themselves in such a predicament; only those children who have been put to work by the same parents who are conspicuously absent in the verse, except for the mother evoked in the first stanza. Thus the children’s pleas are issued to the “brothers” of England, both giving power to a figure other than “mother” or “father,” and simultaneously placing the children outside of England’s “brotherhood”—if they were part of this group, then their suffering would not have gone unnoticed.⁵⁴ But they are excluded, and their appeals to their “Fatherland” (24) fall on deaf ears. Thus the poem accuses the patriarchal system of failing because it neglects to inquire after the children and to recognize that there is a problem: “But the young, young children, O my brothers, / Do you ask them why they stand / Weeping sore before the bosoms of their mothers, / In our happy Fatherland?” (21-24).

This Fatherland has failed as a protector, disastrously so, for through its failure to act, the exilic position of these children has so extreme that they yearn for death, echoing and parodying simultaneously the Christian trope of mortal life as exile from heaven. These children envy the

⁵⁴ Significantly, too, “sisters” are never invoked in the verse, only “brothers,” implying that the locus of change lies with men.

old, for they will soon have graves to go to, and because “ ‘Your old earth,’ they say, ‘is very dreary, / Our young feet,’ they say, ‘are very weak; / Few paces have we taken, yet are weary — ” (29-31), the only rest they see forthcoming, their own “grave-rest” (32), is “very far to seek” (32). They want to “Ask the aged why they weep” (33), for in their eyes, the grave equals safety and warmth: “For the outside earth is cold, / And we young ones stand without, in our bewildering, / And the graves are for the old” (34-36). The children desire to be rid of their one possession, their bodies, inasmuch as they can possess that which they are not allowed to control, in exchange for relief.

Probably one of the most contentious and condemning moments of the poem comes from the speaker’s voice, not that of the children, reproaching the naiveté of those who see the cure for what ails the children as a Romantic submersion in the restorative powers of the natural world:

Go out, children, from the mine and from the city,
Sing out, children, as the little thrushes do;
Pluck your handfuls of the meadow-cowslips pretty,
Laugh aloud, to feel your fingers let them through! (57-60)

Like Charlotte Smith in *The Emigrants*, E.B.B. quickly reveals the natural world as incapable of curing these ills. Like Smith’s domestic exile, the shepherd, E.B.B.’s domestic exiles in the form of factory children too face a natural world that is at best indifferent and at worst hostile, and the children answer unequivocally that the healing powers of their surroundings bear no relation to the idealized version presented to them :

But they answer, “Are your cowslips of the meadows
Like our weeds anear the mine?
Leave us in the quiet in the dark of the coal-shadows,
From your pleasures fair and fine!
“For oh,” say the children, “we are weary,
And we cannot run or leap;
If we cared for any meadows, it were merely
To drop down in them and sleep.
Our knees tremble sorely in the stooping,

We fall upon our faces, trying to go;
 And, underneath our heavy eyelids drooping
 The reddest flower would look as pale as snow. (60-72)

A romp through a flower covered field will hardly suffice to bring these children back to wellness; the “wheels of iron / In the factories” that they drive “all day” in “the coal-dark, underground” (74-76) present too powerful a force to be undone by an afternoon among the cowslips.

Inasmuch as the father, both the national fatherland and the Holy Father (101-124) fail these children, so too do the mothers. Motherhood plays an interesting role in “Cry of the Children,” primarily through its absence. The power for change, for correction of the evils presented, lies squarely with the masculine, the “brothers” and “fatherland,” both secular and sacred. The mother’s only agency is a refusal to act, to fail as a protector and comforter, and the children’s only recourse is tears, creating “the child’s sob in the silence [which] curses deeper / Than the strong man in his wrath” (159-160). Changing “strong man” in the last line to “strong woman” would give us the plot of *Medea*, the play from which E.B.B. takes the poem’s epigraph. Like the mothers in “Cry of the Children,” Medea is a terrible protector; indeed, she fails to the extent of courting failure. She becomes an agent in her own destruction, murdering her own children with the hope that the cry of her children will be much more devastating to Jason than any curse stemming from her wrath.

The *Medea* epigraph has generally been read along these lines, as indicative of a parallel between Medea’s infanticide and England’s perhaps slower but nonetheless deadly intentional murder of its young. Certainly, the epigraph is the voice of a murderous parent; but it is also the voice of an exile. Barred from returning to her homeland, branded a savage in her new land, Medea is reduced to an unfathomable act of infanticide as what seems like her only means of

revenge or perhaps her most potent. She does kill, after all, not just her child but the heir to the throne. She cannot return to her family or her homeland, and she is barred from any kind of social/political agency in Greece. Jason makes her into a political exile, set adrift by the one person capable of keeping her anchored. Thus E.B.B. shows us what exile creates: horrible parents and egregiously violated children, both in the ancient world and in nineteenth-century England.

In 1846, E.B.B. went into exile herself, marrying fellow poet Robert Browning and leaving England for Italy. The first poem E.B.B. wrote upon arrival in Italy was one she had been planning for some time, a verse that continues developing the exilic strain of the 1844 *Poems*: “The Runaway Slave at Pilgrim’s Point.”⁵⁵ Commissioned by the Anti-Slavery Bazaar in Boston in 1845, it was not until Barrett Browning left her father’s home and its watchful, censorious eyes that she composed and forwarded the poem in February 1847.⁵⁶ And E.B.B. herself feared that this abolitionist verse would be considered by her American readers and editors as “too ferocious” for publication (*LMRM* 3.203). Yet she sent it on anyway, thinking that if Americans did publish it, she would then think them “more in earnest” (*LMRM* 3.203) than she did at that moment.

As in “The Cry of the Children,” Medea appears in this nationalistic verse, as an implied parallel this time rather than one explicitly stated by the poet. The poem opens with lines that position the verse as one concerned with the transformation of the exile:

I stand on the mark beside the shore
Of the first white pilgrim’s bended knee,
Where exile turned to ancestor,
And God was thanked for liberty. (1-4)

⁵⁵ Mermin, *Elizabeth Barrett Browning* 156.

⁵⁶ Mermin *Elizabeth Barrett Browning* 156.

By physically positioning her speaker at “Pilgrim’s Point,” E.B.B. remarks an already “marked” exilic place; the runaway slave stands as an exile on a spot marked as exilic. Significantly, she acknowledges the transformation of those exiles who stood there before her—a transformation unavailable to her.⁵⁷ This woman can never be “turned to ancestor,” for she has murdered her child. But more importantly than that, blacks in nineteenth-century America could not become ancestors, for they were denied the things necessary for cultivating ancestry: home, family, name. Thus the runaway slave emerges as a parallel exile figure, but with no hope of making a home as the pilgrims did. She and every other American slave is condemned to perpetual displacement, permanent exile.

Just as she does in “Riga’s Last Song,” E.B.B. places the slave woman on a classic British exilic threshold, the shoreline, ending the first stanza with “I look on the sky and the sea” (7), a line repeated numerous times in the verse (63, 85, 197, 246). This line competes with the verse’s other continual refrain, “I am black” (22, 57, 106, 114, 218), in defining this displaced figure. Visibly marked by her race, she is now doubly marked by her position at the coastline: she is the American exile. The first exiles to land on American shores, as she notes in the first stanza, have transfigured into permanence; they have achieved ascendancy. She remains, however, the displaced person, victim of the African diaspora. In E.B.B.’s early political verse, the black slave woman occupies the exilic space and has adopted the exilic stance employed by earlier writers. Like Smith’s exiled aristocrats and clergy gazing toward France, like Childe Harold looking back to England and forward to the Mediterranean, the runaway slave stands on the shoreline, looking at the sea and the sky, hoping for comfort, seeking a place to flee. But

⁵⁷ “The suggestively condensed line ‘Where exile turned to ancestor’ itself contains the paradox of history in miniature: that, even as the Pilgrims landed, there was a subtle transformation and they became, no longer drifting outcasts but power originators of a new line” (Leighton, *Writing Against the Heart* 99).

unlike these earlier exilic figures, the slave woman has no hope of movement toward home, either her forced “home” of slavery, “the white man’s house, and the black man’s hut” (169), or her former home in Africa. For the exile, the sky and the sea are the only two constants: these are the only two things that look like home—yet they are both inaccessible, and both mutable.

iv. Through *Casa Guidi Windows*: Italian *Risorgimento* and British Exile

Poets [. . .] were called in the earlier epochs of the world legislators or prophets: a poet essentially comprises and unites both these characters. For he not only beholds intensely the present as it is, and discovers those laws according to which present things ought to be ordered, but he beholds the future in the present, and his thoughts are the germs of the flower and the fruit of latest time.

Percy Bysshe Shelley, *A Defense of Poetry*⁵⁸

E.B.B.’s life in Florence has often been characterized as a “rebirth,” a revelation of the “true” E.B.B. finally able to flourish in the warmth of southern climes, new husband, and baby boy. A moving and romantic story it is, and certainly a familiar one, but ultimately an incomplete one. Barrett Browning may have been able, even overjoyed, to forge a life for herself in Italy; however, she positions herself in her writings not as an expatriate but as an exile—someone incapable of severing ties with the homeland, someone passionately devoted to continual engagement with the nation from which she is forever estranged. Italy certainly proved rejuvenating for Barrett Browning, both artistically and politically, but the move did not eradicate her previous national loyalties or concerns. She may have been able to live outside England, but she could not quite live without it, for she creates her greatest rendering of England and her most intense ideas of British nationalism through the *Risorgimento* as portrayed in *Casa Guidi Windows*.

⁵⁸ Shelley 513.

Though *Casa Guidi Windows* was composed by a woman living in exile and dedicated to events she observed but did not join, the poem is not merely a “simple story of personal impressions” as the advertisement would have us believe, nor should the author be taken at her word as solely “proving her warm affection for a beautiful and unfortunate country” through “indicating her own good faith and freedom from partisanship.” Instead, E.B.B.’s *Casa Guidi Windows* should be read as a political verse written from a specific exilic position: the exiled Barrett Browning speaking to England through meditations on Italy.⁵⁹ By reading *Casa Guidi Windows* as the culmination of E.B.B.’s poetics of exile, the verse’s poetic call for political collaboration between Britain and Italy from a person in a singular position to understand both nations becomes crucial to the poem as a whole. Like Smith and Byron before her, the question at hand for E.B.B. is more than how to restore Italy, but also how to reform England. From implicit pleas to direct demands, the exiled Barrett Browning calls on England to act as an agent of peace and reconciliation, fostering alliances between opposing forces both at home and abroad.

To accomplish this goal, *Casa Guidi Windows* enacts a Romantic, specifically Shelleyan tension between inspiration and creation, and the advertisement to the verse makes plain her awareness of this very strain.⁶⁰ What Shelley sees as a liminal stage between illumination and

⁵⁹ Her first attempt to publish the poem, after all, was not in an Italian publication, but in *Blackwood’s*, who rejected it. E.B.B. sent the first half of the poem, then considered as a separate whole subtitled “A Hope in Italy,” to Blackwood in 1848; to what degree she revised it for the 1851 edition is not known. Markus speculates that she may not have revised much, if at all; see *Casa Guidi Windows* 117.

⁶⁰ Shelley’s influence on *Casa Guidi Windows* has not gone unnoticed by Barrett Browning scholars; see for instance Mermin, who sees E.B.B. as “carry[ing] forward the inspiration to revolution in Shelley’s ‘Lines Written among the Euganean Hills’ and ‘Ode to Naples’” (167); Markus, who describes E.B.B.’s view of Michelangelo as “an unacknowledged legislator of mankind whose republican hopes are about to be realized” (47) and notes that her sentiments in 1.127-143 are “consistent with the Romantic tradition and are particularly reminiscent of Shelley’s ‘Ozymandias’ and *Defense of Poetry*” (49); Schor, who notes that E.B.B.’s Dane “owes a great debt to Shelley’s *Defense of Poetry*” (316); and Dillon and Frank, who read a Shelleyan analogy between the preface of *Casa Guidi Windows* and Shelley’s preface to *Hellas* (473).

actualization, Barrett Browning terms “the interval between aspiration and performance” (249); this anxiety permeates and shapes the work as a whole.⁶¹ The most often quoted passage from Shelley’s *A Defense of Poetry* must be the final line of the work: “Poets are the unacknowledged legislators of the world” (535). Speaking of the poets of his day, Shelley claims that they “measure the circumference and sound the depths of human nature with a comprehensive and all-penetrating spirit, and they are themselves perhaps the most sincerely astonished at its manifestations, for it is less their spirit than the spirit of the age” (535). By 1859, E.B.B. will wrestle with these Romantic, Shelleyian sentiments in having Aurora Leigh proclaim her position on the poet’s role:

But poets should
Exert a double vision; should have eyes
To see near things as comprehensively
As if afar they took their point of sight,
And distant things as intimately deep
As if they touched them. Let us strive for this.
I do distrust the poet who discerns
No character or glory in his times,
And trundles back his soul five hundred years,
[. . .]
Nay if there’s room for poets in this world
A little overgrown, (I think there is)
Their sole work is to represent the age,
Their age, not Charlemagne’s, - this live, throbbing age,
That brawls, cheats, maddens, calculates, aspires,
And spends more passion, more heroic heat,
Betwixt the mirrors of its drawing-rooms,
Than Roland with his knights at Roncesvalles.
[. . .]

⁶¹ On a related note, Barrett Browning’s confidence level in *Casa Guidi Windows* has been the subject of some debate. Mermin describes the verse as “confident, graceful, flexible, easily accommodating changes of tone and relatively free of mannerisms”; in addition, E.B.B. seems “perfectly at ease, in control of her medium and of the didactic public voice she had not used for a major work since ‘An Essay on Mind’” (*Elizabeth Barrett Browning* 165). In contrast, Leighton considers the poem “not one of her best works, but its rough energy and forthrightness, its cosmopolitan vision, and its grappling concern with certain large questions about poetry make it, in many ways, a summing up of lifelong preoccupations” (*Writing Against the Heart* 110); much in the way Sandra Gilbert does, Leighton privileges the personal over the political. Other critics have pronounced the poem dead, lost, or simply of little or no interest because it is not very good; see particularly Radley, Irvine and Honan, and Lewis.

Never flinch,
 But still, unscrupulously epic, catch
 Upon the burning lava of a song
 The full-veined, heaving, double-breasted Age:
 That, when the next shall come, the men of that
 May touch the impress with reverent hand, and say
 ‘Behold, - behold the paps we all have sucked!
 This bosom seems to beat still, or at least
 It sets ours beating; this is living art,
 Which thus presents and thus records true life.’ (5.183-221)

Poetry is, for Shelley, in part the embodiment of the essence of a particular historical and spiritual time, and in part a channeling of that essence: an attempt to render tangible that which is inherently intangible.⁶² Ultimately, Shelley concludes that creation will always fall short of inspiration; the greatest poetry ever written must always remain a “feeble shadow of the original conception of the poet” (531). In *Casa Guidi Windows*, Barrett Browning wrestles with these same issues. The opening remark of the Advertisement, for instance, deceptively characterizes the verse not as a treatise or discussion or even as an opinion, but rather as the “impressions of the writer upon events in Tuscany of which she was a witness” (249); word choice in this instance would seem to indicate a denigration of the content of the poem by the poet herself. Critics have indeed read the advertisement as just such a disavowal of lyrical power, but these analyses miss Barrett Browning’s awareness of her perspective as poet in exile.

Establishing Barrett Browning as an exile can be challenging, particularly given the current critical understanding of Italy as inducing E.B.B.’s glorious “rebirth.” Yet while Italy was indeed a powerful place for Barrett Browning, the seat of the ideals of Western art and ideology, it was also her exilic space. Barrett Browning did return to England after her initial

⁶² Granted, Shelley earlier denies that the poet should “embody his own conceptions of right and wrong which are usually those of his place and time in his poetical creations, which participate in neither” (517). But the emphasis for Shelley is the danger of didactic, moral verse based on particular religious ideologies, for the divinity, and therefore the purpose of poetry that Shelley seeks lies outside the boundaries of traditional (and Anglican, state-sanctioned) rhetoric.

move south, but never permanently, for even had she desired such a move, it would have proven difficult, and possibly life-threatening. To return to England once and for all would have exacted a tremendous price from her both personally and artistically. Her health, which underwent such a dramatic resuscitation in Italy, could have very easily become dangerously precarious were she subjected to the climate and pollution of her English home. Her writing, which underwent a dramatically significant turn, could have been jeopardized. Writing of James Joyce's voluntary exile from Ireland, George O'Brien notes that "[c]loser intimacy with the native realm, a more graphic, unsparing and comprehensive revelation of home, improvements in perspective, focus, and vision [. . .] are the fruits of absence"; he goes on to wonder whether or not "such rewards are being deliberately sought" by the voluntary exile.⁶³ Such a parallel certainly seems plausible for Barrett Browning. The significant accomplishments of her Italy years—*Aurora Leigh*, *Casa Guidi Windows*, the *Poems* of 1850, *Poems Before Congress*—bear witness to the power of exile for this writer.

Perhaps Barrett Browning could never return permanently to England, not if she wanted to retain the poetic momentum she experienced during her years in exile. As Michael Seidel notes about Henry James and Joseph Conrad, writers in exile do stand to gain a certain critical and artistic perspective from the experience; what James and Conrad in particular hoped to gain by abandoning their homelands was "to extricate themselves from the social grid of native culture, to confound the all-seeing eyes of their prison of origin."⁶⁴ Through (re)locating themselves in an alternate terrain, what Seidel characterizes as a "literal dislocation," each hoped to "slip through the grids of cultural placement, to achieve anonymity in a strange land. In this

⁶³ George O'Brien, "The Muse of Exile: Estrangement and Renewal in Modern Irish Literature." *Exile in Literature*, ed. Maria-Inés Lagos-Pope (London: Associated University Presses, 82-101) 83.

⁶⁴ Michael Seidel, *Exile and the Narrative Imagination* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1986) 18.

way, they could, as writers, reverse the process of surveillance, to become the eyes that see rather than the object seen.”⁶⁵ Analogously, we can read E.B.B.’s relocation to Italy as a similar process of disengaging herself from her British ties and thus enhancing her ability to see the political and social landscape of her home more clearly. Though she did not “achieve anonymity” in the strange land of Italy, exile nonetheless granted her the opportunity to shed one identity and reshape herself through another.

Exilic turn toward Italy and immersion in Italian politics gives E.B.B.’s nationalistic verse a greater focus and greater resonance in *Casa Guidi Windows* than anything that came before it or follows it. “Mother and Poet,” a later Italy poem, shows E.B.B. turning back to what worked for her earlier in her career: a focus on the specific, pathetic, displaced figure in order to stage a commentary on larger socio-political issues. But *Casa Guidi Windows* reveals a depth of commentary not dependant on the pathetic figure, one that creates a powerful kind of nationalist exilic verse that doesn’t need a runaway slave or a factory child or an abandoned lover to anchor the critique. Instead, this critique centers on the centrality of art in the western world, Italy as the center of the western world, and England as the next in line.

In *Casa Guidi Windows*, E.B.B. wrestles with the dual questions of the poet’s role, the “double vision” of *Aurora Leigh*, and correspondingly her own role as an English poet, claiming that ultimately she can only “muse in hope upon this shore / Of golden Arno as it shoots away / Through Florence’ heart beneath her bridges four” (1.52-54). Yet she does not wish to continue what she sees as negative traditions: gazing at Italy’s past glories and allowing them to blind her to present needs. For Barrett Browning, the job of the poet is threefold: she must gain awareness

⁶⁵ Seidel 19.

of the past; she must vow to live in the present; and she must bear in a new age.⁶⁶ In the process of coming to terms with this admittedly weighty agenda, though, she reconfigures Italy in the poetic mind and space. As Tricia Lootens notes, Italy could, “as a feminized and alluring, if often ultimately inaccessible, Western European homeland [. . .], shift from what Sandra M. Gilbert calls a potential ‘political state to a female state of mind’; as a political state, it could provide inspiration for reimagining England and Englishness.”⁶⁷ This crucial step from imagining Italy to reimagining England has been treated lightly by most critics,⁶⁸ yet it is a large part of the exilic meditation in *Casa Guidi Windows*.

For the artist, and by extension, for Italy (and England), the past performs a particular function—inspiration, but not validation: “We do not serve the dead—the past is past” (1.217). The artist does not live to serve—not the past, at any rate. Unfortunately though, as E.B.B. understands the situation that is precisely what happens; the “Dead, upon their awful ‘vantage ground / The sun not in their faces” (1.224-225) feed on the energies of the present. But the poet declares this parasitic relationship must end; the past shall “abstract / No more our strength; we will not be discrowned / As guardians of their crowns, nor deign transact / A barter of the present; for a sound / Of good so counted in the foregone days” (1.225-229). Trading the vitality of the here and now for the abstracted glories of the long gone by no longer constitutes a viable option. Directly addressing past creators (and eerily echoing her own first Sonnet from the

⁶⁶ As Schor succinctly and rightly notes, Barrett Browning is “meditating on the resonance between poem making and nation making” (309).

⁶⁷ Tricia Lootens, “Victorian Poetry and Patriotism,” *The Cambridge Companion to Victorian Poetry*, ed. Joseph Bristow (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000) 260.

⁶⁸ Cronin and Lootens are notable exceptions to this trend. Harris hints at this juncture, but does not pursue the matter. Others, however, devote little or no energy to the nationalist impulses and agenda at work in the poem, particularly Leighton, Gilbert, and Mermin.

Portuguese⁶⁹), Barrett Browning declares that they “shall no longer cling to us / With rigid hands of desiccating praise, / And drag us backward by the garment thus, / To stand and laud you in long-drawn vinelays” (1.230-233). Not wishing to sound like an ungrateful, petulant child, she thanks her poetic/artistic/political past actors, for it was they who “first unlatched the door” (1.238); sounding instead like an emancipated adult, she firmly declares her place and project:

We will not henceforth be oblivious
Of our own lives, because ye acted well.
[. . .] We hurry on to extinguish hell
With our fresh souls, our younger hope, and God’s
Maturity of purpose” (1.234-242).

An urgency undergirds this passionate declaration of purpose and this faith that the young and the new have the power to save, an urgency dictated by an awareness that “[s]oon shall we / Die also!” (1.242.243). Before these earthly opportunities pass away, clearly a great task lies ahead—a duty to “bear our age as far, unlimited, / By the last mind-mark; so, to be invoked / By future generation, as their Dead” (1.247-249). “Bearing” one’s age, however, implies a dual task: first to give birth to and then to carry, constituting both a burden and a delight. A few lines later, the bearing forth of the new from the dead reappears: “We, who are the seed / Of buried creatures, if we turned and spat / Upon our antecedents, we were vile” (1.287-289). But though E.B.B. emphasizes her own responsibility and that of her contemporaries to usher in the new, she does not advocate wholehearted acceptance of the tenets this latest “new” is predicated upon. She does not, for instance, unreservedly embrace the Grand Duke who has, she ironically notes, “not quite of course” allowed the “citizens to use their civic force / To guard their civic homes” (1.458-461). Though pleased that the Florentines now enjoy the spectacle (see lines 1.745-765) and the reassurance of a civic guard, the Duke’s largesse is not all that large in the eyes of this

⁶⁹ From Sonnet I, *Sonnets from the Portuguese*: “Straightway I was ‘ware, / So weeping, how a mystic Shape did move / Behind me, and drew me backward by the hair; / And a voice said in mastery, while I strove,— / “Guess

English poet. She goes on to detail what Italy still does not have: a charter for Tuscany and a leader free from partisanship (1.541-546). Pushing the republican strain even further, she uses her prophetic tone to forecast a day when nobility will not maintain full control. Wishing that Florentine rulers may, “while” they “reign,” all “wear in the visible overflows / Of spirit, such a look of careful pain! / For God must love it better than repose” (1.573-576) not only encompasses a clearly stated warning of God’s possible disapproval but also posits an end to their control. In *Casa Guidi Windows*, God stands on the people’s side, and so does the poet.

E.B.B. takes seriously her role as prophet and her text’s as prophesy. She positions herself as a singer of a new day, one who “Prefer[s] to sing with those who are awake, / With birds, with babes, with men who will not fear / The baptism of the holy morning dew” (1.155-158) rather than “join those old thin voices with my new” (1.162). The vision of the future Shelley claims the poet-prophet sees in the present Barrett Browning embodies in the child singing “ ‘Neath Casa Guidi windows, by the church, / *O bella libertà, O bella!*” (1.2-3). This same child’s song she finds preferable to “some safe sigh / Cooped up in music ‘twixt an oh and ah” (1.163-164) sung by “those poets [who] croon the dead or cry ‘*Setu men bella fossit, Italia!*” (1.166-167).

In defining the nation, E.B.B. relies on the role of the individual in the nation: “A land’s brotherhood / Is most puissant: men, upon the whole, / Are what they can be,—nations, what they would” (1. 658-661). If “soul by soul” (1.657) and “with one purpose” (1.657), individuals will join together, “better” could begin to mean “freer” (1.670). But to attain this unity of purpose and direction, Barrett Browning is quick to decry the use of force. Indeed, “the Heavens” themselves “forbid” that “passion [should be used] to confront / The brutal with the brutal” (1.674-676), for only “[c]hildren use the fist / Until they are of age to use the brain”

who holds thee?”—“Death,” I said. But, there, / The silver answer rang—“Not Death, but Love” (9-14).

(1.685-686), though an important irony goes unacknowledged in the verse. She describes a class unity grounded not upon a love of a greater good, but a hate of a greater wrong:

Griefs are not despairs,
So uttered, nor can royal claims dismay
When men from humble homes and ducal chairs
Hate wrong together. (1.550-553)

In Europe of 1848, group hate of a greater wrong led to over fifty revolutions in the German and Italian states and the Austrian Empire provinces alone.⁷⁰ The class unity the verse describes circumvents any hint at revolutionary fervor, yet the hidden threat remains: if those from “humble homes and ducal chairs” do not hate together, then that scorn can become insurrection.

Part One reaches the final conclusion that the responsibility for regaining the glory of old lies not in passive idealization of the past nor in active avoidance of the present, but in coming to terms with the past, embracing the present, and working for the future—both for Italy and England. Her messages of unity and reform are directly addressed to the entity to whom they have appealed implicitly all along: England. Directly addressing her homeland, “my England,” E.B.B. implores it to “stifle the bad heat and flickerings / Of this world’s false and nearly expended fire!” (1.708-709). Physical force terrifies this poet-prophet, and she portends not violence but reformation. For Italy, she desires reunification, and for England she longs for reform, but in neither case does she advocate or wish for violent revolution. Esther Shor maintains that Barrett Browning’s “notion of political agency is rooted in Enlightenment principles once associated with Jacobinism, but which, in the wake of Chartism and revolutionary upheaval on the Continent, had come to appear conservative.”⁷¹ Yet it is not just that E.B.B.’s rhetoric “appears” conservative, but that it is conservative, and for good reason. She sympathizes with the aims of revolution, but she does not endorse the means. As a poet

⁷⁰ Pricilla Robertson, *Revolutions of 1848: A Social History* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1980) vii.

crafting herself as a prophet in *Casa Guidi Windows*, Barrett Browning embraces the Shelleyan notion that poetry has the power to spurn people to action, and she wields this power carefully and judiciously.

By the beginning of Part Two, however, E.B.B.'s faith has begun to slip. Much like the second part of Charlotte Smith's *The Emigrants*, the latter half of *Casa Guidi Windows* begins on a very different note from the first. Richard Cronin reads this moment as Barrett Browning both adopting Smith's two-part format for her verse as well as employing the form for its ability to enable her "to present her meditation on Italian nationalism dramatically,"⁷² which it certainly does. Both Parts One and Two begin with the poet's declaration of past experience: in Part One "I heard last night a little child go singing / 'Neath Casa Guidi windows, by the church, / *O bella libertà, O bella!*" (1.1-2), and in Part Two "I wrote a meditation and a dream, / Hearing a little child sing in the street" (2.1-2). But the mood sharply diverges in Part Two, consumed with past action of writing a careful consideration of a fervent hope, a "dream" now dashed. The passionate belief in the patriot's song, a lá "Riga's Last Song," is gone:

O Dante's Florence, is the type too plain?
 Didst thou, too, only sing of liberty,
 As little children take up a high strain
 With unintentioned voices, and break of
 To sleep upon their mothers' knees again? (2.8-12)

She wonders if the cries of jubilation at long-awaited emancipation that so recently rang in the street can be so easily discarded, and reluctantly, she answers yes: "Could'st thou not watch one

⁷¹ Schor 306.

⁷² Richard Cronin, *Romantic Victorians: English Literature, 1824-1840* (New York: Palgrave, 2002) 185. Cronin also maintains that Smith's *Emigrants* is the "first major political poem in English written by a woman" (185), a most compelling claim, for if this is true, then the first major political poem in English by a woman depends upon exile to make its case. Political poetry for women in England, then, will thus be colored by this first entry, a poem that depends upon exile to understand nationalism, a breaking away from the system to understand and critique the system.

hour? Then, sleep enough—” (2.13). She feels lost, and wonders what she will do now as one of the “poets” who “wandered round by dreams” and “hailed / From this Atrides’ roof [. . .] The fire-voice of the beacons, to declare / Troy taken, sorrow ended,—cozened through / A crimson sunset in a misty air,— / What now remains for such as we, to do?” (2.20-25).

She remembers her “vision” of “ten thousand eyes of Florentines / Flash back the triumph of the Lombard north” (2.29-30), and her vision turns to sorrow. She laments that she ever “believed the man was true” (2.65), that she ever put her faith in Leopold II, who in the two years time since the time of Part One had fled Florence only to be reinstated under Austrian auspices.⁷³ She recounts how the people of Florence

[. . .] rose up in the dust
Of the ruler’s flying feet, and shouted still
And loudly, only, this time, as was just,
Not ‘Live the Duke,’ who had fled, for good or ill,
But ‘Live the People,’ who remained and must,
The unrenounced and unrenounceable.
Long live the people! How they lived! And boiled
And bubbled in the cauldron of the street. (2.112-119)

The city that represents all that is glorious in both Italian patriotism and Western art in Part One of *Casa Guidi Windows* is now the seat of turmoil, destruction, and betrayal. Florence has become a boiling cauldron. “Bitter things I write,” E.B.B. says, “So with my mocking. Bitter things I write, / Because my soul is bitter for your sakes, / O freedom! O my Florence!” (2.191-193). If Florence is lost, then so too is freedom, for E.B.B.. She feels betrayed, and she feels that Florence has been betrayed because “Conviction was not, courage failed, and truth / Was something to be doubted of” (2.239-230).

But eventually, even the noise of the bubbling cauldron is hushed, as “Meanwhile, from Casa Guidi windows, we / Beheld the armament of Austria flow / Into the drowning heart of

⁷³ See Markus, note to *Casa Guidi Windows* Part Two, 98.

Tuscany” (2.352-354). This “drowning heart” goes down in silence, for “yet none wept, none cursed, or, if ‘twas so, / They wept and cursed in silence. Silently / Our noisy Tuscans watched the invading foe; / They had learnt silence” (2.355-358). And so too, apparently, had E.B.B.; this retrospective poem gives no indication of the imperative command to speech or writing that appeared in “The Appeal” or will soon appear in “A Curse for a Nation.” Instead, all of the sounds of the poem are silenced, including her own self-recrimination and her anger. Her indignation of only a few hundred lines ago—“Bitter things I write, / Because my soul is bitter for your sakes, / O freedom! O my Florence!” (2.192-194)—is replaced by a hollow resignation. She portrays the Florentines as “they,” and does not group herself with them during this crucial description. It is not that “we” were quiet as the guard changed hands, but that “they, so prodigal / Of cry and gesture when the world goes right, / Or wrong indeed. / But here, was depth of wrong, / And here, still water; they were silent here” (2.362-365). Fairly quickly, though, the poem changes tone again, for E.B.B. cannot maintain the distanced retelling for long. Her desire for immersion in the scene leads her to a passionate cry, the passion she so clearly feels was missing in the street below her windows:

Enough said!—by Christ’s own cross,
And by this faint heart of my womanhood,
Such things are better than a Peace that sits
Beside a hearth in self-commended mood,
And takes no thought how wind and rain by fits
Are howling out of doors against the god
Of the poor wanderer. What! your peace admits
Of outside anguish while it keeps at home? (2.405-412)

This moment requires E.B.B. to speak that which she finds abhorrent, “I loathe to take its name upon my tongue,” for “ ‘Tis nowise peace. ‘Tis treason, stiff with doom” (2.413-414). This “peace” leads not to harmony, order, or contentment, but to “gagged despair and inarticulate wrong” in the form of an “Annihilated Poland, stifled Rome, / Dazed Naples, Hungary fainting

‘neath the thong” (2.416-417), and the worst of all, “Austria wearing a smooth olive-leaf / On her brute forehead, while her hoofs outpress / The life from these Italian souls” (2.419-420).

Such despair leads E.B.B. to a posture of mourning: “But wherefore should we look out any more / From Casa Guidi windows? Shut them straight, / And let us sit down by the folded door, / And veil our saddened faces, and, so, wait / What next the judgment-heavens make ready for” (2.425-429). From this moment, she turns to a meditation on and message to Italian patriot Giuseppe Mazzini,⁷⁴ ending on a final cautionary note:

Let thy weft
Present one woof and warp, Mazzini!—stand
With no man hankering for a dagger’s heft,—
No, not for Italy!—nor stand apart,
No, not for the republic!—from those pure
Brave men who hold the level of thy heart
In patriot truth, as lover and as doer,
Albeit they will not follow where thou art
As extreme theorist. Trust and distrust fewer;
And so bind strong and keep unstained the cause
While (God’s sign granted), war-trumps newly blown
Shall yet annuntiate to the world’s applause. (2.566-576)

From the moment of sincere advice coupled with finger-wagging admonition, Barrett Browning turns to England, the nation that has haunted the entire poem. She knows that “now, the world is busy; it has grown / A Fair-going world” (2.577-578), referring of course to England’s Great Exhibition of 1851. For this occasion, “Imperial England” draws “The flowing ends of the earth [. . .] As if a queen drew in her robes amid / Her golden cincture [. . .] All trailing in their splendours through the door / Of the gorgeous Crystal Palace” (2.578-587). E.B.B.’s description

⁷⁴ As Denis Mack Smith describes him, Mazzini was one of the three most recognized figures of the Italian *Risorgimento*: “Count Cavour, the first Italian prime minister and one of the finest European politicians of the century, combined liberal beliefs with a talent for diplomacy and political manoeuvring that equalled Bismarch’s. Giuseppe Garibaldi, a rebel and legendary master of guerrilla warfare, rose from humble origins to become the best-known and perhaps most admired person anywhere in the world. The third, Giuseppe Mazzini, was the principal theorist and ideologue of patriotic movements in Europe. Though he exercised political power briefly in 1849, nearly all Mazzini’s adult life was spent in exile and under sentence of death, organising conspiracies throughout Italy from the shelter of shabby London boarding houses” (*Mazzini* 1).

is not only an accurate one for the international draw that was the Exhibition, but also of the imperial expansion England was actively engaged in across the globe. The mid-nineteenth century was the time that saw England spreading itself across the globe with an unprecedented aggression, drawing in territories, creating new subjects as well as new groups of exiled peoples who chose not become part, or were not allowed to become part, of the British empire. E.B.B.'s metaphor then, resonates with a far larger Victorian project than the Fair.

Casa Guidi Windows treats the exhibition with a mixture of pride and suspicion, asking whether this display of worldly treasures is all the great nations have to offer. She asks the "Magi of the east and of the west" (2.628) what "gifts for Christ, then, bring ye with the rest?" (2.630). She praises the works they have brought, saying their "hands have worked well" (2.631), but she wonders if "your courage [is] spent / In handwork only? Have you nothing best [. . .] no light/ Of teaching, liberal nations, for the poor, / Who sit in darkness when it is not night?" (2.631-636). She specifically asks her homeland, "Hast thou found / No remedy, my England, for such woes?" (2.640-641), wondering, demanding to be told why, out of all the other great things Britain has accomplished and can do, why it has not done this? She asks why Austria has provided no "outlet" for "the scourged and bound, / No entrance for the exiled"(2.643-643). She asks why Russia has allow "no repose" for "knouted Poles worked underground, / And gentle ladies bleached among the snows" (2.644-645). She asks if America will provide "No mercy for the slave" (2.646). Ultimately, it seems that "Alas, great nations have great shames" (2.648), and she places herself at the "roadside of humanity" to "Beseech" the "alms" (2.654-655) of these great nations as they "all go to [the] Fair" (2.653). All of these great countries will converge on her homeland, and she takes it upon herself to designate herself

a spokeswoman for liberty and freedom, the exiled Englishwoman imploring the greatest nations in the world to help other countries, not out of hope of gain, but out of altruistic duty.

E.B.B.'s altruism was amply rewarded by her Italian admirers, and as *the Atlantic Monthly* reported after her funeral, it was "meet that Mrs. Browning should come home to die in her Florence, in her Casa Guidi, where she had passed her happy married life, where her boy was born, and where she had watched and rejoiced over the second birth of a great nation."⁷⁵ Though she was beloved by many in Italy, *Casa Guidi Windows*, it should be remembered, was at the time of its publication a contentious verse; in 1853, E.B.B. wrote to her sister Arabella that " 'Casa Guidi Windows' is prohibited in Florence—there's an honour! It's a sign at the same time that eyes, we are not suspecting, may be on us,"⁷⁶ and *Blackwood's* in England declined to publish the poem. Because of the poem's rigorous political idealism, fervent passion for change, and devastation in the wake of hopes dashed, encountering E.B.B.'s *Casa Guidi Windows* must have been for her readers much like Barrett Browning's experience of encountering Italy itself: "And to rise up out of the warm lap of Italy, from the blue lakes, & chestnut-covered hills & gorgeous sunshine, into that sublime of cold desolation . . . you cannot realize the sensation."

⁷⁵ *Atlantic Monthly* 8.47 (1861).

⁷⁶ Scott Lewis, ed., *the Letters of Elizabeth Barrett Browning to Her Sister Arabella*, 2 vols. (Waco, Texas: Wedgstone Press, 2002) I.583.

CHAPTER 4

FACTORY GIRL, FACTORY EXILE: ELLEN JOHNSTON'S

AUTOBIOGRAPHY, POEMS AND SONGS

Old Scotland shall feel proud ere long,
 When time your worth unfurl,
 That she you crowned the Queen of Song
 Was but a Factory Girl.

Ellen Johnston, "An Address to my Brother Bards"
 from *Autobiography, Poems and Songs by Ellen
 Johnston, The Factory Girl* (1867)

Ellen Johnston's readers did indeed think of her as their "Queen of Song." A powerloom weaver turned published poet, she inspired a loyalty from her fans that transcended her embraced appellation "The Factory Girl," for in their opinion she possessed the proper voice to sing of life outside the lofty, erudite literary world. While she wrote of things familiar to those outside the working-classes—raising a child, falling in love, losing a loved one, strength in the face of defeat and despair—she could also sing, quite gloriously and authentically, of both the pains and the glories of working-class life in mid-century Britain. Yet it was her specifically Scottish, working-class voice that drew her readers to her. They applauded her willingness to speak to them in verse and in prose about the subjects important to the laborer: finding and securing work, making a life in the cities, struggling for acknowledgement as a valuable member of British society. They relished her ability to say in verse that she would "a thousand times" be "a Factory Girl" despite the rigors such a life so clearly demanded.

But for the Factory Girl, becoming the “Queen of Song,” engaging with the literary world, was a political act, one with the potential to harm her when others sought retribution not for what she wrote, but for her writing at all. As a victim of sexual abuse at the hands of her stepfather, the mother of an illegitimate daughter, and a factory-girl turned versifier, Johnston found herself exiled, sometimes violently, from numerous communities. Forbidden by her family to read and write, she was sent out to factory service at age ten in an attempt to curb what they (particularly her stepfather) viewed as her slipshod, dreamy, bookish ways. The birth of her daughter, Mary Achevole, left her abandoned not only by the child’s father, but also by her family members. Jealous fellow factory workers literally beat her in the streets in retribution for what they considered her pretensions to intellectualism and artistry. Her lack of formal education and vernacular voice disqualified her from serious consideration from the literary world. Consequently, Johnston’s exilic experiences function on numerous levels: professional, personal, and artistic. Her subjectivity, shaped by being “The Factory Girl” and “The Queen of Song,” is equally shaped by her experience as “The Factory Exile.”

But there is another aspect to Johnston’s exile, one that this chapter consciously seeks to remedy. Like that of so many of her working-class peers, Johnston’s poetry still suffers from a kind of exile in literary criticism and nineteenth-century scholarship. Consider these two examples: Regenia Gagnier’s *Subjectivities* and Florence Boos’s essay “‘Nurs’d up amongst the scenes I have describ’d’: Political Resonances in the Poetry of Working-Class Women.” In the first, Gagnier analyzes and compares “subjectivity and value across social class and gender in nineteenth- and early twentieth-century Britain”; as part of a very brief discussion of Ellen Johnston’s 1867 *Autobiography, Poems and Songs*, Gagnier dismisses Johnston’s successful lawsuit against the terms of her dismissal from a Dundee textile mill as an indication that “the

Factory Girl has learned to imitate the middle class in more than literary hegemony.”¹ Second, in an overview of ten Victorian working-class women poets for *Functions of Victorian Culture at the Present Time*, Florence Boos covers Johnston’s verse in her “Explicitly Political Works” category, and yet she mentions only two poems, neither remarkably or “explicitly” political: “An Address to Nature on Its Cruelty” and “The Last Sark.”² Her choice seems especially curious given that she includes within this category working-class poems that “espoused independence movements in Hungary, Poland, Italy, and Spain; and mourned the dead—Britons and others—in the Crimean War”—a brand of political verse that Johnston certainly wrote.³ What these two critical pieces have in common is a distrust of Johnston’s voice, a voice emphatically trusted by her audience. Even among critics who are dedicated to exploration of non-canonical writers, as Boos and Gagnier certainly are, a thread of suspicion haunts these analyses: how seriously can we consider the political views, the assessment of international affairs, of a working-class writer? Do we dismiss poems that engage with international politics as works that show the writer “go[ing] international,” aiming for something just a bit out of her league, as Gagnier does? Can we consider these poems as serious political thought, or do we concentrate instead on the ways that these verses draw on “complex regional and demotic contexts,”⁴ as Boos does, and leave the poems that range beyond the regional alone?

¹ Regenia Gagnier, *Subjectivities: A History of Self-Representation in Britain, 1832-1920* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991) 53.

² Florence Boos, “‘Nurs’d up amongst the scenes I have describ’d’: Political Resonances in the Poetry of Working-Class Women,” *Functions of Victorian Culture at the Present Time*, ed. Christine L. Krueger (Athens, Ohio: Ohio University Press, 2002) 140-141.

³ Boos, “‘Nurs’d up amongst the scenes I have describ’d’: Political Resonances in the Poetry of Working-Class Women” 139.

⁴ Boos, “‘Nurs’d up amongst the scenes I have describ’d’: Political Resonances in the Poetry of Working-Class Women” 137.

If we choose to ignore the poems that “go international,” however, we miss a crucial part of Johnston’s volume, her verse, and her poetic persona. She goes to such great lengths to establish herself as Scottish in her poetry and prose, someone specifically connected to a region, that to ignore how she develops and then deploys that regional identification misreads both individual verses and her self-construction over *Autobiography, Poems, and Songs* as a whole. In this chapter, then, we will first examine the ways in which Johnston uses her autobiography to carefully craft a literary persona for herself, one that works in tandem with her multi-faceted, self-consciously created poetic persona. In verses like “An Address to Nature on Its Cruelty” “The Last Sark,” and “The Working Man,” we will see how deeply invested Johnston was in claiming and promoting her place in her factory and literary community, even as she found that position constantly threatened by her exilic experiences. Next we will turn to verses like “O Scotland, My Country!” and “The British Lion” in which she makes plain her devotion to her country and her station, even as she clearly advocates change for both. Finally, by turning to “Welcome Garibaldi,” “Mourning for Garibaldi,” and “The Exile of Poland,” we will see the ways in which Johnston demonstrates her profound concern with larger issues of nationality surrounding the exilic position of others brought about by state injustices: in this case, struggles around the reunification of Italy. Like Charlotte Smith some seventy years earlier, when Johnston speaks to exiles, she speaks as an exile, one sympathetic to their sorrows since she too has known a kind of “Involuntary exile.”⁵

⁵ Smith, *The Emigrants* 1.155.

i. The Factory Exile

Johnston tells the story of her December 1863 dismissal from her Dundee factory in “The Factory Exile.”⁶ Summarily dismissed without justification or severance pay, Johnston chose to exercise her rights in the courts rather than slink meekly away. “Smarting under this treatment” (14), she successfully sued the foreman for dismissal without notice and cause, receiving a week’s wages as recompense. Her victory was a double-edged sword, though, causing her peers to turn on her with a vengeance:

But if I was envied by my sister sex in the Verdant Works for my talent before this affair happened, they hated me with a perfect hatred after I had struggled for and gained my rights. In fact, on account of that simple and just law-suit, I was persecuted beyond description—lies of the most vile and disgusting character were told upon me, till even my poor ignorant deluded sister sex went so far as to assault me on the streets, spit in my face, and even several times dragged the skirts from my dress. Anonymous letters were also sent to all the foremen and tenters not to employ me, so that for the period of four months I wandered through Dundee a famished and persecuted factory exile. (14)⁷

But it wasn’t just Johnston’s successful use of the courts in her own defense that sentenced her to factory exile. Instead, she specifically blames for her troubles the thing she also credits with her salvation: her poetry. It was the “favour and fame of the poetic gift bestowed on me by nature’s God” that made her “the envy of the ignorant, for the enlightened classes of both sexes of factory workers love and admire [her] for [her] humble poetic effusions, so far as they have been placed before the public” (15). She claims that “falsehood of the deepest dye” (1) precipitated her firing, and that falsehood has now “doomed [her] an Exile” (2).

⁶ Please see Appendix B for the full-text of “The Factory Exile” and other poems addressed in this chapter.

⁷ Quotations from Johnston’s autobiography are from the 1867 edition of *Autobiography and Songs*, which appears in its entirety appears in Appendix C. The appendix text is taken from the 1867 version of *Autobiography, Poems and Songs* as well, but the significant alterations made for the 1869 edition are indicated also.

Johnston returns to this exilic self-construction repeatedly in her verse. In “The Lay of a Scottish Girl,” she laments that while “Dear Erin, Scotland was my home, / The land where I was born,” she is now “an exile” and “wander[s] all forlorn” (10-12). In “The Morning: A Recitation,” she mourns that while “[Scotland] once was a garden both lovely and green, / And ‘Genius’ placed there a song-weaving queen,” now a “false-hearted gardener, from motives unseen, / Doomed her an outcast in the morning” (13-16). In “Lines to Mr. James Dorward, Power-Loom Foreman, Chapelshade Works, Dundee” she admits her joy at having found a new home after her exile from her factory: “O I was sorry then, Jaime, a wand’ring poor exile, / Begging my brothers of the earth to give me leave to toil; / Pale poverty stood at my door, my hope on earth was fled, / Until I found a resting-place within the Chapelshade [Works]” (5-8). Johnston clearly viewed her experiences as exilic, and she makes the pain of her ostracism and loneliness palpable for the reader.

“Exile” is a loaded word in any context, however, but particularly this one. After all, Johnston has not been forced to leave her home, only her job, and she has not been banished from her country, just a factory. But for this nineteenth-century British laborer, such estrangement would indeed have felt as wrenching and as threatening as any exile could have been. Johnston’s volume makes plain that the factory constitutes not only her place of work, but also virtually her entire community; she is known, after all, as “The Factory Girl.” If she cannot earn her living in a textile mill, what alternatives are left her? How will she support herself and her child?

She will not do it through her writing, certainly. As “The Factory Girl” turned poet, Johnston faced numerous obstacles, almost insurmountable ones, it would seem. Much has been written of the barriers women writers of the nineteenth-century faced in attempting to join the

literary world: freedom from the incessantly interruptible state thought necessary for womanhood, years spent childbearing and a lifetime spent childrearing, a lack of rooms of their own. All of these were shared by the working-class woman writer, and to this list, we should add a few: the demands of labor outside the domestic sphere as well as within, aesthetic ideologies with no room for the concerns or productions of the worker-poet,⁸ middle-class control of publishing.⁹ Publishing had never, and given the track record of her working-class poet predecessors, probably never would pay the bills.¹⁰ Johnston needed her day job. Unlike Charlotte Smith, she couldn't put the name of her family's home on her title page to claim elevated gentry status and thus a different kind of access to publication, and she had no hopes of one day landing an inheritance. Unlike Elizabeth Barrett Browning, she had no family money and no protected space at the top of Hope End. Unlike Byron, she had no aristocratic title to open doors and no ancestral estate to help fund her travels, and unlike Tennyson, she had no university education and no Henry Hallam to guide and support her. So what did Johnston have? She had her child, she had her verse, and she had her job. Instead of a patriot or political exile mourning loss of her homeland, with Johnston we find a factory worker mourning the loss of both her identity and livelihood.

⁸ Matthew Arnold is a good example here, though not the only one, to be sure.

⁹ As Gustav Klaus notes, "working people were at an immense disadvantage [in publishing] since the London- or Edinburgh-based journals and commercial publishers catered almost exclusively to middle-class taste. Until the rise of a working-class press after the Napoleonic Wars there was no alternative to the system of subscription, and this required a patron in the first place, with all the imponderables this involved. But even after the appearance of the initially often short-lived radical magazines the difficulties persisted for anyone trying to market a whole volume of poems instead of merely contributing a few to a sympathetic publication. Charles Fleming, a handloom weaver, succinctly summed up the dilemma in the middle of the nineteenth century: 'Extensive as the publishing trade is, and innumerable as are the volumes issued by it on almost every brand of knowledge, it is really a very difficult matter, except to a privileged class, *to appear in print*. The difficulty vanishes like a shadow before the man of wealth, influence, or rank; but to the one of lowly degree it is almost insuperable'" (12-13).

¹⁰ While Gerald Massey is a notable exception, a working-class poet who was able to earn a living through publication, Victorian working-class poets were almost always dependent upon their non-literary labors for survival. In Johnston's case, neither publishing nor factory work would suffice.

The factory provided much more than just income for Johnston, however; it also provided her with both her social community and her literary one. She describes her travels around Great Britain in terms of where she worked, and the leisure outings she mentions were all taken with coworkers at the expense of employers.¹¹ But more even than these, Johnston's fellow workers provided her with what was seemingly the most important response she received to her verse. So when she was fired from "Verdant Works" in Dundee, Johnston was threatened with losing much more than an already desperately needed income: she faced losing connection to the people who made up her most loyal and most vocal poetic audience. If she could not write to them as "The Factory Girl," then who was she? Losing her position as power-loom weaver threatened her position as poet in a very real and very frightening way; without her factory job, Johnston would be vulnerable to exile from her most vital communities, factory and literary. So *Autobiography, Poems and Songs* presents us with an exilic figure no less exilic for its uniqueness.

ii. "'A Thousand Times I'd Be A Factory Girl'": Becoming "The Factory Girl"

Johnston prefaces *Autobiography, Poems and Songs* (1867, 1869), her only published collection, with the following disclaimer:

GENTLE READER,—On the suggestion of a friend, and the expressed wishes of some subscribers, I now submit the following brief sketch of my eventful life as an introduction to this long expected and patiently waited for volume of my Poems and songs.

Like every other autobiographer, I can only relate the events connected with my parentage and infancy from the communicated evidence of witnesses of those events, but upon whose veracity I have full reliance.

I beg also to remind my readers that whatever my actions may have been, whether good, bad, or indifferent,—they were the result of instincts derived from the Creator, through the medium of my parents, and the character formed for me

¹¹ See "Galbraith's Trip" and "Tennants' Excursion."

by the unavoidable influence of the Time and Country of my Birth, and also by the varied conditions of life impressing themselves on my highly susceptible and sympathetic natures—physical, intellectual, and moral.

Johnston devotes only a scant third of the autobiography to her early childhood, an unusual choice for nineteenth-century working-class autobiographers,¹² and she soon reaches the pivotal moment in her life and narrative, marking this moment with the only subtitle in the text, “HOW I BECAME THE FACTORY GIRL.” Constituting the bulk of the piece, the story of how she became this girl involves and intertwines a number of narratives: familial, national, social, and literary. Gustav Klaus, the author of the only single volume study dedicated to Johnston’s verse to date, takes issue with anthology editors who spend more time addressing Johnston’s life in their introductory remarks than they do her poetry: “More space is devoted to her autobiography as if we were still at the stage where the woman is the poem and her actual work can be pushed into the background” (11). Kustav’s point is a valuable and important one, and he rightly warns against a dangerous temptation: collapsing the poetry into the woman, reading the verse only through what is known—or what we think we know—about who the author was. On the flip side of that temptation, however, lies an equally seductive one, particularly when dealing with working-class verse: collapsing the life into the poetry, reading all working-class verse as transparently confessional, and creating a real life person from a poetic persona.

Unfortunately, such a strategy often seems to be the only available one, for in the absence of the scholarly apparatus available when studying canonical writers—full-length critical biographies, collections of letters, and edited diaries and journals—the poet’s verse may be all

¹² As Burnett, Vincent, and Mayall note in the introductory remarks to *The Autobiography of the Working Class*, childhood often received “substantial attention from autobiographers, and some accounts continue no further than its end” (vol 1, xxiii).

that the critic has to work with.¹³ But biography, and especially autobiography, is more complicated for the working-class writer than Klaus's admonition acknowledges. While we do not want to fall prey to either extreme, making the poetry the life or the woman the verse, we cannot ignore the poet's own self-representation through autobiography when we are fortunate enough to encounter it. Indeed, we must consider the working-class poet's personal history carefully, particularly as she herself presents it, for such examination constitutes a crucial part of the process of canon (re)formation. When we examine a writer's autobiography alongside her verse, we find our assumptions about who can be seriously considered a poet, who we can understand as having lived a literary life, doubly challenged. The working-class poet is in many ways cut off from the life experiences we take for granted in more canonical writers, particularly in her education and ability to connect with other serious authors. When we engage thoughtfully with a working-class poet's autobiography, we come face to face with just how different her life has been than her fellow writers from the middle-classes, gentry, or aristocracy. The question we find ourselves confronting, then, is to what degree this life—her education or lack thereof, her class standing, her non-literary labor—excludes the poet from careful consideration.

In Johnston's case, when we extend careful consideration to her volume in its entirety, both autobiography and poems, we find a compelling exilic leitmotif, one that connects life and writing without erasing either one. We find that we are dealing with a poet who explicitly defined herself as both "The Factory Girl" and "The Factory Exile," and we must pay close attention to the circumstances that led to her exilic self-definition.

¹³ Even coming by the verse can be a challenge. By and large the work of most working-class poets appears only in anthologies; very few full volumes are in print. Johnston's verse has been reprinted in *Victorian Women Poets: An Anthology*, eds. Leighton and Reynolds; *Nineteenth-Century Women Poets*, eds. Armstrong and Bristow; *An Anthology of Scottish Women Poets*, ed. Kerrigan.

Johnston was born around 1836 in Glasgow to James and Mary Johnston.¹⁴ James, a stone-mason and poet, was the son of James Johnston, a canvas-weaver, of Lochee, Dundee. Mary, the second daughter of James Bisland of Bridgeton Dyer, was only eighteen when she married, and Ellen was to be her only child (4).¹⁵ When Ellen was a baby, her father worked for the Duke of Hamilton, providing masonry services for the extension of the northern wing of the Duke's palace (4). When meeting on the grounds, the Duke would "familiarily" address James as "Lord Byron," in reference to Johnston's poetic ambitions (4).

Ellen credits these ambitions, along with "some literary and scientific attainments"(4) and a "strong desire to become a teacher and publish a volume of his poetical works" (4) with motivating her father's decision to emigrate to America. James made all of the arrangements for his family, but at the last moment, Mary refused to accompany him, pleading the safety of young Ellen. In her autobiography, Johnston makes a particular point of characterizing her mother's refusal as one of maternal protectiveness: "But when all the relatives and friends had assembled at the Broomielaw to give the farewell kiss and shake of the hand before going on board, my mother determined not to proceed, pressed me fondly to her bosom, exclaiming—'I cannot, will not go, my child would die on the way'" (5).

¹⁴ Boos has found no birth records (see "The 'Queen' of the Far-Famed Penny Post": 'The Factory Girl Poet' and Her Audience"), and Johnston does not give her exact birthdate in her autobiography. She does, however, give the date of her daughter's birth, and judging by that date and an earlier reference Johnston makes to being sixteen, I'm surmising this approximate date.

¹⁵ Johnston's autobiography is the only primary source of information available on her life; thus all biographical information has been taken from the autobiography and cited by page numbers from the 1867 edition of *Autobiography, Poems and Songs*, unless otherwise indicated. The content of the 1869 autobiography is unrevised, although large sections have been removed; see Appendix C. Johnston's subscriber list has also grown significantly by the time of the second volume. The "Patrons and Subscribers" list of the 1869 edition numbers 48, both individuals and groups, personages as eminent as Her Majesty Queen Victoria and the Right Hon. Benjamin Disraeli, M.P., both new to Johnston's list of supporters, as well as military men (Lord Raglan; Major-General Sir Vincent Eyre, R.A., K.C.S.I., C.B.; Colonel Sykes, M.P.), merchants (the Galbraiths, the Hendersons), a remarkable number of esquires (22 in all), and one Oxford professor (Jos. Bosworth, D.D., F.R.S., F.S.A., &c., Professor of Anglo-Saxon, Oxford).

James continued on to America as planned. Mary returned to her father's house in Bridgeton, where she and Ellen lived with the elder Bisland, and Mary worked as a seamstress to support herself and her child. Johnston paints these years in Bridgeton as idyllic, her age innocent and her setting pastoral, both soon to be transformed by industry:

In my childhood Bridgeton, now incorporated with the city of Glasgow, abounded with green fields and lovely gardens, which have since then been covered over with piles of buildings and tall chimneys. The ground on which the factory of Messrs Scott and Inglis stands was then a lovely garden, where I spent many, many happy hours with 'Black Bess,' my doll, and 'Dainty Davie,' my dog [. . .] (5).

But this tranquil time would not last long; just as industry would quickly encroach on the Scottish countryside near her family's home, Johnston's domestic setting would also dramatically change, and not for the better. When she was eight, her mother, believing that James had died in America, married a power-loom weaver, a man Johnston leaves unnamed in her autobiography. He quickly moved his new family away from the Bilslands, against Ellen's grandfather's wishes, to Cross Keys Tavern, London Road (6). Two months later, the new family moved again, following Johnston's stepfather's jobs, this time to North Street in Glasgow, where she would spend "the two last years of young life's sweet liberty" (7) before, at the age of eleven, being put to work by her stepfather to learn power-loom weaving in a factory.

It also seems, judging by Johnston's autobiography, that when her stepfather ordered her out to factory work was also around the time that he began sexually molesting her, abuse that would continue throughout her adolescence. Johnston's references to the abuse are appropriately veiled, but are also numerous and pointed enough to make plain the severity of the attacks. She cannot describe her stepfather's actions, for "no language can paint the suffering which I afterwards endured from my tormentor" (7). Between the ages of eleven and fifteen, Johnston ran away at least five times from her "tormentor," fleeing once to the home of a sympathetic

woman in Glasgow, another time to Airdrie, where she spent six weeks homeless, “wandering often by Carron or Calder’s beautiful winding banks” (9). But each flight ended in a return trip home, either by choice or by force, the latter described by Johnston in graphic detail:

I did not, however, remain long in my new lodgings, for on the Tuesday evening [. . .] I was laid hold of by my mother’s eldest brother, who, after questioning me as to where I had been, and what I was doing, without receiving any satisfaction to his interrogations, compelled me to go with him to my mother, who first questioned me as to the cause of absconding, and then beat me till I felt as if my brain were on fire; but still I kept the secret in my own bosom. But had I only foreseen the wretched misery I was heaping upon my own head—had I heard the dreadful constructions the world was putting on my movements—had I seen the shroud of shame and sorrow I was weaving around myself, I should then have disclosed the mystery of my life, but I remained silent and kept my mother and friends in ignorance of the cause which first disturbed my peace and made me run away from her house for safety and protection. However, I consented to stay again with my mother for a time, and resolved to avoid my tormentor as much as possible. (8-9)

Johnston was eleven years old.

Her “tormentor” is of course never directly named, but the circumstances and descriptions of her flights from home leave little doubt as to his identity. And since Johnston learned, both from her abuser and from her mother, the woman who beat her unmercifully when she tried to leave, that she could not physically escape this house, she found other means of escape: daydreams, fantasies, stories, and books. No longer allowed to roam freely with dog and doll, Johnston used her time away from her factory labor to read and dream:

Before I was thirteen years of age I had read many of Sir Walter Scott’s novels, and fancied I was a heroine of the modern style. I was a self-taught scholar, gifted with a considerable amount of natural knowledge for one of my years, for I had only been nine months at school when I could read the English language and Scottish dialect with almost any classic scholar; I had also read “Wilson’s Tales of the Border” [. . .] (7)

With these claims, Johnston places herself in a specific Scottish literary tradition, a Scottish poet who has read the most famous Scottish writer of the early nineteenth-century. She claims

intellectual and literary agency for herself by fashioning herself as a “natural” poet and a scholar. In this way, she can place one foot in the lingering traditions of the eighteenth-century “natural genius” poet as well as one foot in the learned, bookish poetic tradition, capitalizing on both while really being part of neither one. She consciously and shrewdly crafts her depiction of her early years to legitimate her adult pursuits: inasmuch as the struggles of industry and the horrors of home made her who she would become, so too did the Scottish world of letters.

But it’s not just as a scholar and a poet Johnston crafts herself as in her autobiography; she also gives ample space to her aspirations for the stage: “I had also heard many say that I ought to have been an actress, as I had a flow of poetic language and a powerful voice, which was enough to inspire my young soul to follow the profession” (7). She believed she would be a natural fit for the theatre, for she was “one of those beings formed by nature for romance and mystery, and as such had many characters to imitate in the course of a day” (7). This ability to “imitate” various “characters” was more than adolescent fantasy for Johnston, however; indeed, this ability to adopt different personas, convincing exteriors that no one would question, served both as mental escape and very real world protection:

In the residence of my stepfather I was a weeping willow, in the factory I was pensive and thoughtful, dreaming of the far off future when I would be hailed as a “great star.” Then, when mixing with a merry company no one could be more cheerful, for I had learned to conceal my own cares and sorrows, knowing well that “the mirth maker hath no sympathy with the grief weeper.” (7-8)

Johnston used what she construes as a naturally romantic, melancholic sensibility as a protective device. Those around her expected a performance of cheerfulness, and that is what she gave them: “I often smiled when my heart was weeping—the gilded mask of false merriment made me often appear happy in company when I was only playing the dissembler” (9).

But dissembling would only satisfy for so long, and Johnston longed for genuine happiness and affection. She lavished affection on “Dainty Dave,” her childhood dog, and was apparently devastated when he ran away, crying herself to sleep for “three successive nights,” for the dog was “the pride of my heart, for I could not live without something to love, and I loved before I knew the name of the nature or feeling which swelled my bosom” (5). Such craving for affection, such deprivation of real love, left Johnston susceptible to young men with less than honorable intentions. Abandoned by her father, abused by her stepfather, neglected by her mother: Johnston was a textbook example of a vulnerable young woman. And such she was; deserted by her “first love,” another young man soon “offered me his heart—without the form of legal protection—and in a thoughtless moment I accepted him as my friend and protector” (10). Alas, this relationship ended much the way those in Johnston’s tragic storybooks did: Johnston becomes the fallen woman, pregnant and abandoned. In describing her predicament, she quotes a song from Oliver Goldsmith’s *The Vicar of Wakefield*, the “When lovely woman stoops to folly verse” from Chapter 24:

When lovely woman stoops to folly,
And finds too late that men betray,
What can soothe her melancholy,
What can wash her guilt away?

The only art her guilt to cover,
To hide her shame from every eye,
To wring repentance from her lover,
And sting his bosom, is to die.¹⁶

Much to her credit, however, she follows this quotation with what is for Johnston a characteristic nose-thumbing at conventional feminine behavior: “I did not, however, feel inclined to die when I could no longer conceal what the world falsely calls a woman’s shame” (11). Instead, she

¹⁶ Oliver Goldsmith, *The Vicar of Wakefield*, ed. Frederick W. Hilles (New York: Modern Library, 1955) 412.

“never loved life more dearly,” and she longed for “the hour when [she] would have something to love [her]” (11); she says that her wish was “realised by becoming the mother of a lovely daughter on the 14th of September, 1852” (11).¹⁷

Her daughter’s birth prompted Johnston to “turn the poetic gift that nature had given [her] to a useful and profitable account,” so she began “with vigorous zeal” to compose verses, and send them to local weekly newspapers (11). By 1854, she had become “extensively known and popular” to the degree that upon her publication of “Lord Raglan’s Address to the Allied Armies” in the *Glasgow Examiner*, her name became “popular throughout Great Britain and Ireland” (11); and perhaps more importantly, the publication later prompted a gift of £10 from Lord Raglan himself. Such financial windfalls were crucial for Johnston, particularly at that point. Her mother and stepfather had taken ill, and both were unable to work. At the same time, Johnston’s own health began to fail her, and she could no longer continue factory work, relying instead solely on her writing to support herself, her child, her mother and stepfather. In a moment of desperation, another verse, “An address to Napier’s Dockyard, Lancefield, Finnieston,” was forwarded to Robert Napier, who was then in Paris, and he sent Johnston “a note to call at a certain office in Oswald Street, Glasgow, and draw as much money as would set [her] up in some small business, to see if [her] health would revive” (12). She accepted Napier’s offer, and requested £10, which she notes was not only “freely given” to her, but she suspected could have been doubled, had she asked for it (12). Napier’s ten pounds allowed Johnston five months of recovery time, after which she returned to factory work at Galbraith’s Mill, where she remained until July 1857 (13).

¹⁷ Johnston unabashedly celebrates her daughter, “Mary Achin,” in “A Mother’s Love.” Intriguingly, in the second edition of *Autobiography, Poems and Songs*, references to her child are excised from her autobiography, but verses about her daughter are not. To what degree her new subscriber list (see footnote 15) influenced these editorial decisions is an intriguing question.

It is important to note that while Johnston clearly accepted financial responsibility for her mother and stepfather during this rough point in 1854, she did so with a clear sense of self-preservation. Martyrdom in the name of familial loyalty was not part of her plan:

Many sleepless nights did I pass, thinking what to try to bring relief to the afflicted household—although I did not consider myself in duty bound to struggle against the stern realities of nature, and sacrifice my own young life for those whose sympathies for me had been long seared and withered. Yet I could not, unmoved, look on the pale face of poverty, for their means were entirely exhausted, without hope to lean upon. Neither could I longer continue in the factory without certain death to myself, and I had never learned anything else. (12)

Johnston uses this moment to make several things clear to her reader. First, let us know that she remained loyal to her mother and stepfather, despite clearly feeling emotionally estranged from them, though it is not out of any sense of familial warmth or any attempt to garner their favor that she does so. Instead, she works to support them because she pities those who are helpless, those with the “pale face of poverty”—boldly telling her reader that the larger social ill tugs at her heartstrings, not the fact that these particular people have been affected by this ill. She could just as easily be speaking of strangers. Secondly, she is not willing to continue working in an environment that will kill her, her “medical adviser” having told her that without “a change of air,” she would not survive another three months (12). But even in the face of severely debilitated physical health and the fear of having no other profitable, legitimate occupation to turn to, Johnston does not continue industrial labor. Instead, she quits her job, refusing to martyr herself either to her family or to the factory. The frail, emotionally vulnerable adolescent Ellen has grown into a tough but compassionate woman, one interested in working for others, but one also capable of saving herself, things the nineteenth-century woman did not always find easy to attain together.

In 1857, however, she found herself in much the same situation again: her health was poor, and she couldn't continue working in the factory. So, for that necessary and beneficial "change of air," Johnston left Scotland for Belfast, where she would remain until 1859, moving then to Manchester for three months before returning to Dundee. In Ireland she became quite "notorious" for her "poetic exploits," so much so that "the little boys and girls used to run after [her] to get a sight of 'the little Scotch girl' their fathers and mothers spoke so much about" (13). By the time she returned home, "much improved in body and mind" (13), these "new scenes and systems" had brought about such "a great change in [her] natures" that she became "cheerful, and sought the society of mirthmakers, so that few would have taken [her] for the former moving monument of melancholy" (13). It hardly seems coincidental that this healthy, happy spirit emerged after two years away from her family.

Upon her return to Scotland, Johnston resumed working for Galbraith, and things at home were pleasant and harmonious for a time: " 'My bonnie Mary Auchinvole' was growing prettier every day and I was growing strong; peace and good-will reigned in our household, the past seemed forgiven and forgotten, and the 'Factory Girl' was a topic of the day for her poetical productions in the public press" (13). Unfortunately, this newfound domestic bliss was short-lived, brought to an end by two wrenching events in the course of one year: the deaths of both of her parents. James Johnston, long thought dead in America, sent a letter to Mary Johnston, asking for a reunion with his wife and daughter; upon learning of "their fate" (13), he committed suicide. What Johnston leaves unsaid are with what particulars of "their fate" her father became acquainted: her mother's remarriage, to be sure, but whether or not he learned of his daughter's illegitimate child and the strained relationship between Ellen and her stepfather, she does not say. She does, however, note that her mother, who had been an invalid for some time, became "aware

of the mystery of my life” (13), and then “closed her weary pilgrimage on earth on 25th May, 1861” (13). Thus Johnston sets up a cause and effect in her narrative; her father’s suicide was brought about by her mother’s actions, and her mother’s death was brought about by learning of the abuse Ellen suffered at the hands of her stepfather. Mary Johnston’s decision to marry her second husband, according to Ellen Johnston’s interpretation of events, had dire consequences for everyone.

She does not profess to hate her mother, though; upon her mother’s death, Johnston mourned being “left without a friend, and disappointed of a future promised home and pleasure” (13). Preferring not to stay in Glasgow without Mary, Ellen left for Dundee, where her father’s oldest sister lived. She found work in the Verdant Factory (quite a name for a textile mill), and she was very successful at her work, both in industry and in publishing. Her poetry was well-received in the local press, and her fabric was praised by factory bosses as exemplary, a model for other workers to follow (14). But then she was fired, an experience that scarred her and created her the “Factory Exile.” Her experience in Dundee was not an isolated one, though, for while working in Glasgow during her adolescence, she had “other trials to encounter” in addition to her “home sorrows”: “Courtied for my conversation and company by the most intelligent of the factory workers, who talked to me about poets and poetry, which the girls around me did not understand, consequently they wondered, became jealous, and told falsehoods of me. Yet I never fell out with them, although I was a living martyr, and suffered all their insults” (9). “Most intelligent of the factory workers” in this instance seems to be euphemistic for “men,” since it is “the girls” around her who become jealous; such envy would hardly seem warranted if Johnston had confined her intellectual conversation to the old married women on the factory floor. But

clearly she did not, and she suffered the stings of her peers' envy for being artistic, strong, willful, attractive, and opinionated.

By the time of the publication of her subscription volume, *Autobiography, Poems and Songs of Ellen Johnston, The 'Factory Girl'*, Johnston had found other factory work in an atmosphere seemingly more congenial to her literary aspirations than her former environment. It is during this period between 1864-1867 that Johnston begins contributing to "Poet's Corner" in the *Penny Post*; through this publication, Johnston garners the most praise and the most attention she had ever received for her verse.¹⁸ In this paper, her poems seemed "to cast a mystic spell over many of its readers whose numerous letters reached [her] from various districts, highly applauding [her] contributions, and offering their sympathy, friendship, and love" (15). Indeed, her effect on her readers was so intense that a number of them, "inspired by the muses," responded to Johnston "through the same popular medium" (15). The "Factory Girl" poet carried on print "correspondences" with readers, all in verse.

In *Autobiography, Poems and Songs*, Johnston performs modesty as necessary. She humbly acknowledges those who aided her in publication, both Alex Campbell of the *Penny Post*, and the august Reverend George Gilfillan, who contributed a testimonial for the volume, one filled with qualified praise, borderline insult, and exhortations to self-improvement.¹⁹

Ellen Johnston, the "Factory Girl," has asked me to look over her verses. This I have done with very considerable interest and pleasure. She labours, of course, under great disadvantage, but subtracting all the signs of imperfect education, her rhymes are highly creditable to her heart and head too—are written always with

¹⁸ For Johnston's involvement with this periodical as well as a general history of the *Penny Post* and 1860-1868 editor Alex Campbell, see Boos, "The 'Queen' of the 'Far-Famed Penny Post': 'The Factory Girl Poet' and Her Audience."

¹⁹ The quotation contains Gilfillan's testimonial in full. In fairness, it should be noted that the Reverend's lukewarm commentary in this instance is of course not terribly different from that which he composed in response to the poetry of Felicia Hemans and Elizabeth Barrett Browning, for example, in his in *Modern Literature and Literary Men, A Second Gallery of Literary Portraits*. For Gilfillan, Johnston's greatest impediment is not just that she was born a laborer, but also that she was born a woman.

fluency and often with sweetness, and, I see, have attracted the notice and the warm praise of many of her own class. I hope she will be encouraged by this to cultivate her mind, to read to correct the faults in her style—arising from her limited opportunities—and so doing, she cannot fail to secure still increased respect and warmer patronage. (vii)

As Klaus beautifully summarizes, Gilfillan manages “the extraordinary feat of being distrustful and dismissive without actually saying so” (70).

Gilfillan was right on one important point, though. Johnston did get attention from her working-class peers, and she seems at all times to be aware of them as her fundamental readership. She dedicates the volume to those fellow workers, “worker” being explicitly defined in this instance as those who work for social improvement, those with social conscience: “Dedicated to all men and women of every class, sect, and party, who by their skill, labour, science, art, literature, and poetry, promote the moral and social elevation of humanity, by their obedient servant, Ellen Johnston, *The Factory Girl*” (iii). Throughout her volume, both in her autobiography and in her verse, Johnston makes plain what she sees as her ethical obligations: to care for those in economic distress, despite the lack of warm, familial bonds between them; to fight for fair labor practices, even at the expense of reputation, social standing, and future employment; to establish first a personal and then a national ethos of responsible, conscientious, humane behavior and then act on those beliefs. Paradoxically, though, Ellen Johnston does all of this from the position of not just *The Factory Girl*, but also *The Factory Exile*: a woman who exists on the borderland between worlds, that of the laborer and that of the poet.

iii. Borderland between worlds: Laborer and Poet

O call me sister, and I will
 Give deep, unselfish love away;
 O call me sister, for, like thee,
 I weary toil from day to day,
 And feel sharp worldly thorns each hour,
 Yet gather, too, sometimes a flower.
 “Lines to the Factory Girl, by a Glasgow Lassie”

In the middle of the first edition of *Autobiography, Poems and Songs*, Johnston placed a section entitled “Poetic Addresses & Responses,” in which she includes verses written to her from her working-class readers, along with her responses to them, all of which had appeared in the *Penny Post*. Some have labeled Johnston’s inclusion of this verse as puzzlingly self-aggrandizing,²⁰ but in the context of her exilic self-construction, their inclusion makes perfect sense. She prided herself on being a kind of spokeswoman: the voice of the worker, the voice of the love-lorn, the voice of the disenfranchised, the voice of the exiled. So it seems quite natural that she would proudly include the results of her poetic speech, the tangible proof that she was not shouting into a void, but instead that she was speaking to particular people who heard her, who identified, and who approved.

Johnston also needed to prove to her volume’s readers that both women and men paid attention to her, and she needed to substantiate her claims that her verse had been popular enough to warrant a full volume. She knows that her own voice most likely will not be believed, and she dedicates a poem to this realization: “An Address to Nature on Its Cruelty.” “O Nature,

²⁰ Klaus’s assessment of Johnston’s decision seems especially harsh: “Just why these versified exchanges from the *Penny Post* have been included in a volume that would have been substantial enough without them is difficult to say. In Ellen’s eyes and those of her publisher these tributes may have stood her in good stead, superseding Gilfillan’s feeble recommendation. Yet as with all mutual admiration societies that seek public attention, there is something embarrassing about this display of reverence and flattering, and the affected tone of gratitude from the recipient of such honours and laurels” (71). I don’t find these verses embarrassingly at all; in fact, I find them encouraging, for a very reason that Klaus goes on to note: the working-class press could serve a very useful function for “culturally ambitious working people with no literary circle to turn to for support and encouragement” (71).

thou to me was cruel” (1), the poem begins; the poet-speaker is so “small” that she “cannot shine / Amidst the great that read [her] rhyme” (3-4). When the “men of genius pass [her] by” (5), she is “so small they can’t descry / One little mark or single trace / Of Burns’ science in [her] face” (6-8). But these “great men” do not ignore her for long; the temptation to mock her is too great:

Those publications that I sold,
Some typed in blue and some on gold,
Learned critics who have seen them
Says origin dwells within them;
But when myself perchance they see,
They laugh and say, ‘O is it she?
Well, I think the little boaster
Is nothing but a fair impostor;
She looks so poor-like and so small,
She’s next to a nought-at-all;
Such wit and words quite out-furl
The learning of “A Factory girl.”’ (9-20)

In other words, she may be able to fool people with her verses, poems that in the critics’ minds were likely plagiarized, but her body and appearance betray her: “critics read my simple rhyme / And dared to say it was not mine? / Imperfect though my lays may be, / Still thy belong to none but me” (53-56). Unfortunately, such criticisms of the working-class poet’s productions were far from rare. Ann Candler, Charlotte Caroline Richardson, Ann Yearsley, Elizabeth Hands, Janet Little, Mary Masters, Mary Collier, Mary Leapor, Susannah Harrison—all laboring- and working-class poets who faced charges of plagiarism because of their class status and lack of formal education. Many of them—Elizabeth Hands being a wonderful example—wrote verses with much the same sentiment of Johnston’s “An Address to Nature on its Cruelty,” defending themselves in poetry against these unjust allegations.

Before the publication of *Autobiography, Poems and Songs*, Johnston had been a regular and well-received contributor to Alex Campbell’s “Notices to Correspondants” in the *Penny*

Post, and “for three years her verse and others’ responses to it enlivened and sometimes dominated the *Penny Post*’s poetry columns.”²¹ While other contributors “achieved their own distinctive tones,” it was Johnston, however, whose had a voice capable of rising above all others: no other verse “matched the confessional, almost Byronic dramatic qualities of Johnston’s urgent sense of grievance and desire to tell her tale.”²² And the story she had to tell was dramatic; an abusive stepfather, an illegitimate child, and disastrous love affairs all combined to make a dramatic and irresistible story for her readers, especially, it seems, her women readers. But despite these personal hardships, her voice was praised by her readers as being a “cheering strain” (1) for all, the one with the power to wake “the harp that, idly unstrung, / Hung mute and tuneless on its cloister’d wall” (11-12)²³ Her readers are confident that she will be known across the empire, from “Britain’s isles” to “India’s shore” (11-12).²⁴ They honor her for her labors in the factory and on the page, for “weaving for [herself] a name” (15);²⁵ her readers were abundantly aware of the power of such a metaphor—for Johnston did weave a name for herself, both in the factory and in poetry. And should she lose her position in the factory, should she remain “The Factory Exile,” she will lost this very vital connection to her creativity and her readership.

Most importantly, we should remember that the verses of “The Factory Girl,” “The Queen of Song,” “The Factory Exile,” had the power to inspire other members of the working-

²¹ Florence Boos, “The ‘Queen’ of the ‘Far-Famed Penny Post’: ‘The Factory Girl Poet’ and Her Audience.” *Women’s Writing* 10.3 (2003) 508.

²² Boos, “The ‘Queen’ of the ‘Far-Famed Penny Post’: ‘The Factory Girl Poet’ and Her Audience” 508.

²³ Mat[thew] Stevenson, “To the Factory Girl” *Autobiography Poems and Songs* 145.

²⁴ Peter McCall, “To the Factory Girl” *Autobiography, Poems and Songs* 149-150.

²⁵ Peter McCall, “To the Factory Girl” *Autobiography, Poems and Songs* 149-150.

classes to write poetry. While she did have male correspondents who wrote to her via the Poet's Corner in the *Penny Post*, her female readership dominated her public verse exchanges. At least six women poets—"Elsbeth," "Jessie, A Bookbinder," "the Ploughman's Wife," "Edith," "Isable," and a "Glasgow Lassie, C.R." have been identified by Boos as contributing poems to the *Penny Post*, and "the last three elicited direct poetic responses from Johnston."²⁶ Her example was potent and powerful, and her actions gave others the courage to enter into a world they were largely told was beyond their reach.

Across her volume, Johnston makes plain that she is acutely sensitive to the needs of her fellow Scottish workers, and she happily assumes the role of activist and spokeswoman for them. She characterizes the difficulties she faced after suing her employer for back wages as "the persecution I was doomed to suffer in vindication not only of my own rights, but of the rights of such as might be similarly discharged" (15). She fights in her poetry to make plain the challenges faced by the working-class family, challenges virtually ignored in verse acknowledged as more "literary." In one of her most frequently anthologized poems, one of her dialect verses, "The Last Sark," Johnston movingly portrays what happens to the family of a laborer who finds himself out of work, who finds himself cut off from his employment and his community.

The poem's speaker is a laborer's wife, a woman left physically weak and emotionally frail by her family's predicament: "My head is licht, my heart is weak, my een are growing blin'; / The bairn is faen' aff my knee—oh! John! Catch haud o' him, / You ken I hinna tasted meat for days far mair than three; / Were it no for my helpless bairns I wadna care to dee" (21-24). She vacillates between pity for herself, "My head is rinnin' roon about far lichtner than a flee" (3),

²⁶ Boos, "The 'Queen' of the 'Far-Famed Penny Post': 'The Factory Girl Poet' and Her Audience" 511.

worry for her children, “The weans sit greeting in oor face, and we ha’e noucht to give” (15), and righteous anger at those she blames for the situation: “Our merchants an’ mill masters they wad never want a meal, / Though a’ the banks in Scotland wad for a twelvemonth fail; / For some o’ them have far mair goud than ony ane can see— / What care some gentry if they’re weel though a’ the puir wad dee!” (5-8). This last line is the poem’s refrain, a repetitive call for help and simultaneous accusation against “the rich” who have “got the puir folk’s share” (10). She does not feel that the world is “divided fair” (9), particularly as she sits in a “hoose [that] ance bean an’ cosey” (13) but “Feels unco cauld an’ dismal noo, an’ empty as a barn” (14). The only thing left this family is the father’s “auld blue sark” (2). This family’s poverty is real, and the woman’s distress unmistakable; the poem presents no solution and gives no hope. John, the husband and father, is given no voice to speak either in defense of himself or to comfort his wife. This working-class verse constitutes no call to arms; rather, it aims to be a portrait of what happens to people when their livelihood disappears.²⁷

But not all of Johnston’s verses about working-class life are dour and mournful. In “The Working Man,” she entreats the “sons of toil” (1), “Oh dinna let your spirits sink, cling closer aye to hope” (4), for the “spring is come at last, my freens” (1). This poem’s refrain, rather than being one of hopeless despair, relies instead on the cycles of the natural world and the comfort working people can take from the seasons: “The spring is come at last, my freens, cheer up, you sons of toil” (1); “The summer’s drawing near, my freens” (13); “The harvest soon will be, my

²⁷ This family’s loss of income is not an unfortunate, singular situation, but an all too common reality in nineteenth-century Scotland, particularly in urban areas. While the late eighteenth-century showed improvements in nutrition, made possible by relatively low food prices prior to the French wars, improvements between 1820-1850 seem to have been diminished sharply because of the growing urban center, poorer diet, work intensity and accidents, and occupational disease (Sharpe, “Population and Society 1700-1840” 510-511). Women were hit particularly hard during these years; while their wages went down, their unemployment numbers went up (Horrell and Humphries 89-117). Population increases in Scottish cities, particularly Glasgow, were a serious and rapidly growing problem, one exacerbating other problems faced by industrial centers all over Britain; Glasgow’s population increased threefold in

freens” (25). But Johnston gives her “Working Man” something to draw strength from other than a glorified rendition of the changing seasons (winter, after all, is conspicuously absent): “If youth and health be on your side, you ha’e a richer boon / Than him that’s dressed in royal robes and wears a diamond crown; / Nae widow’s curse lies in your cup, you bear nae orphan’s blame; / Nae guilty conscience haunts your dreams wi’ visions of the slain” (5-8). He may be poor, and he may be worn down by labor, but the working man is infinitely better off than the aristocrat crippled by heritage and guilt. She challenges “him that ne’er kent labour’s yoke” to “come to Glasgow town” (17) and “take a cannie walk her bonny buildings roon” (18); she wants this privileged man, “wi’ his lady hands, his cheeks sae pale and wan” (19) to “[s]tand face to face, without a blush before the Working Man” (20). This poem ostensibly may be addressed to the working man, but Johnston’s light hand with the dialect makes plain that she expects her readership beyond the Scottish working classes to engage with this verse and try to answer the question that concludes the poem: “Oh what would bonny Scotland do without the Working Man?” (28).

iv. “O Scotland my country!”

It is significant that Johnston ends “The Working Man” by reminding her readers of that nation’s debt to the working-classes, for she takes great pride in her Scottish heritage.

Johnston’s national loyalties, however, are complicated, and not as simple as a verse like “The Working Man” might seem to indicate. On the one hand, she is a fierce proponent of all things Scottish: literature, land, people, culture. She uses her knowledge of Scottish writers and literature to validate her claims of cultural literacy, particularly the novels of Sir Walter Scott and

just four decades, standing at 77,385 in 1801 and increasing to 274,533 by 1841 (Sharpe 51). See also Floud, Wachter, and Gregory, *Height, Health and History*.

the romantic tales of *Wilson's Tales of the Border*.²⁸ She proudly recounts and dramatizes Scottish history, through people, places, and events. But on the other hand, sometimes within the same verse, she is also clearly loyal to the greater body politic, the UK—but with one important caveat. If Britain is threatened, then Scotland will rise to its defense, but if the choice is between Britain and Scotland, Scotland wins. Occasionally, Johnston proclaims British power over the rest of the world, but far more often, Johnston clearly ranks Scottish patriotism as superior to English.

Like Byron before her, she uses her exilic condition, a combination of her nationality and class station, as a platform for configuring nationalism; but unlike Byron, E.B.B., or Smith, Johnston deliberately decenters the English stronghold on what it means to be a British patriot. In a cagey and provocative move, she becomes a thoroughly British poet by placing Scottish nationalism at the heart of British patriotism. For Johnston, to be a true patriot and a true British poet is to be Scottish. Her self construction as a Scottish outsider becomes then a strategic self construction as the ultimate insider: because of her “lesser” position, she becomes the outsider who is ironically closer to the heart of Britain than those in power, those “officially” speaking as the voice of Britain. She stands on the edge of two kingdoms, and poetically reconfigures her exilic space—both Scotland and the page of a working-class poet—into a place of privilege and power, creating herself by remaking the idea of Britishness and the idea of a British patriot.

Correspondingly, Johnston's ideas of the laborer's rights, duties, and loyalties toward nation and station operate under a similarly strict hierarchy. First, working people should be

²⁸ Compiled and published by John Mackay Wilson, playwright and editor of the *Berwick Advisor* from 1832 until his death in 1835. Wilson's six volume *Tales* first appeared in weekly installments in 1834; his wife oversaw the continued serialization after his death until 1840, with Andrew Leighton serving as editor. Leighton added new editions 1857-1859, for a total of twenty, and in 1869 added four more volumes (*Myers Literary Guide to North-East England*). In all likelihood, then, Johnston refers to the 1834-1840 collection in her autobiography.

proud of their station and their labor; they should not be ashamed of their lot in life or instigate revolution to change it, unless their sphere is threatened by their social betters, in which case they must fight. Secondly, Scots are to be Scottish first, British second: if Britain is threatened, then laborers must come to the aid of country, but if Britain (i.e. England) threatens Scotland, then Johnston advocates retaliation and defense without hesitation or fear. She seems to revel in almost taunting the powers that be with the force that Scotland could release—if it chose to do so.

In 1857, when she fled Scotland for Ireland, seeking a place to recover from both the physical demands of factory work and the emotional turmoil at home, Johnston wrote a song for her homeland, “O! Scotland, my Country.” The first stanza mourns the land she left; she wonders when she will “gaze on [its] heath hills again” (2), the “dear land where freedom’s bells blossom” (5) in glens that “are the martyrs and patriots’ graves” (6). In the refrain, she invokes the name of William Wallace, a figure of substantial force in the volume, for he is the messianic figure whose actions are the stuff of meditation and instruction:

O! Scotland, my country, wherever I wander,
Thy name to my bosom a guide star shall be;
On the deeds of thy Wallace often I’ll ponder,
Wha focht and wha fell, my country, for thee. (9-12)

As Scotland’s hero and its greatest martyr, Wallace is the one who, in Johnston’s verse, could save Scotland from English oppression.²⁹ The speaker’s “heart bleeds to hear” of Scotland’s sorrow and pain (36), and she cries for a hero of old to save her nation: “O, God, that they had but their Wallace again!” (38). Significantly, at this point in the verse it is “they” whose troubles

²⁹ Today Wallace is still a figure of profound importance, although one complicated by the mythic status that has continued to grow around his name in spite of a continued lack of much solid historical materials. On December 18, 1999, for instance, *The Scotsman* reported the results of a *Who’s Who* survey in Scotland that asked respondents their opinion on the greatest Scots in history. With 169 votes, Wallace edged out Robert the Bruce and his 161 votes for second place. Both political heroes, however, were left in the dust by a poet: Robert Burns pulled down a

she laments, not “we.” She remains outside the suffering, even outside the label of “Scottish” in this poem written from Belfast in 1857. Exiled to Ireland in body, she has emotionally exiled herself; in this poem she stands outside all the British nations:

Let England boast of her high titled gentry,
Her queens and her princes, her palace and throne;
Despite a’ her grandeur, she’ll n’er be a country
Emblazon’d wi’ fame like my auld Caledon.
Let green Erin boast of her wild woven bowers,
Her ivy-clad walls and her green shamrock soil;
The spirit of bigotry springs wi’ her flowers.
A feeling of discord inhabits her isle. (22-29)

Dismissively critical of England and Ireland, Johnston praises Scotland as the supreme nation of the British isles, simultaneously lamenting its fall and lauding its greatness. It is not, after all, even “Scotland” she aligns herself with here, it is “Caledon.” Such an alignment for this Scottish poet is as telling as Byron’s lamentations for the Albion of old, because the current state of affairs makes identification with modern day Scotland impossible for Johnston in this verse, and the only version of her homeland she can connect with and yearn for is one long since past.

By the end of the poem, though, the speaker’s fire has petered out. Rather than building to a triumphant declaration of personal intent, or sounding a battle cry to action, the poem ends on a helpless note of ineffectual and not particularly passionate wishing, the only time the refrain changes:

O! Scotland, my country, wherever I wander,
My heart’s purest wish still shall linger wi’ thee;
On the deeds of thy Wallace I often ponder,
And wish for thy sake, I a Wallace could be. (39-42)

Instead of a patriotic rabble rousing, a route the poem could easily have taken, Johnston has chosen instead to continue a particular kind of exilic strain: the public mourner for the body

landslide victory with 268 votes. Walter Scott, regrettably, only placed seventh with 63 votes. See Morton’s chapter “wallace.com” in *William Wallace* for a discussion of the Wallace cult over the twentieth century (134-152).

politic, one whose role is to cry and bleed and inspire through, ironically, inaction. Johnston can never be a Wallace for Scotland; she is the Queen of Song, not a soldier. But by uttering this wish, by putting the legendary figure of Scottish nationalism again and again in front of her readers, she can, through her very inability to embody a space, draw attention to that void. She can't be Wallace, she can't stand in that space, but by highlighting her own inadequacy through "wish"ing rather than acting, she throws a spotlight on the empty saddle on the back of the hero's horse. She cannot lead her people to victory, but someone can—there's a history and a place and a need for the Scottish hero.

But a hero is a complicated thing in Johnston's hands. Her hierarchy, remember, demands that if Britain is threatened, that Scotland and her heroes must rise to its aid. Even Wallace, that great defender of Scottish integrity against English injustice, must become reconciled to the larger body and fight alongside the English: the parts, whatever their differences, must unite to save the whole. And what greater, or at least more historically loaded, common enemy could the parts share than France? Anxiety, trepidation, sometimes terror: things Gallic have nagged and troubled British writers for all of the nineteenth-century, and Johnston is no exception. In two particular poems, her passions betray her; her passive position of hands-off exilic Cassandra, shouting warnings of dire dangers from the sidelines, evaporates in the face of her own Francophobia. Most brutal of these verses is "The British Lion," one short enough, venomous enough, and impertinent enough to bear reprinting in full:

Poodle doodle doo, cried the blessed baby's dog,
 When he was done with dinner and had swallowed up a frog,
 I am not satisfied while another it is frying,
 I will go and pass the time, and I'll fight the British lion
 With my poodle doodle doo!
 Come on, you mighty lion,
 And show what you can do
 With your bow wow wow.

The dog began to bark and the lion he did bellow—
 How dare you look at me, you usurping little fellow?
 The dog faced the lion, his moustache all greased with tallow,
 The lion caught his prey and the little dog did swallow
 With my poodle doodle doo!
 Come on now cried the lion,
 And show what you can do
 With your bow wow wow.
 The lion gave a grin, and when the little dog went down
 He gazed on kingdoms three, famed for glory and renown;
 He couldn't count their armies, their navy and their cannon,
 Britain is well fortified, in that there is no gammon
 With my poodle doodle doo!
 She has swallowed me alive,
 And nothing I can do
 With my bow wow wow.

Humiliation, condescension, and consumption with a dash of satire are the name of the game for this British Lion.

But Johnston isn't contented with camp for long. In "The Rifleman's Melody," she calls on the "freemen" (3) of Britain to give what she is convinced are soon-to-arrive French invaders "a hearty welcome, boys, / And let them feel the power / Of British might before they fight / Her sons a half-an-hour" (5-8). This Britain is one with the "glorious fire of freedom [. . .] burning in her heart" (13-14). This Britain is one that can have "noble William Wallace" (27) ride under its flag. In this poem, the third person plural "they" of "O Scotland, my Country" has been replaced by the first person "we":

By Heaven, we love our home, boys,
 With love that is sincere;
 But we love the breath of freedom,
 It is to us more dear.
 And whilst our arms can draw the sword
 Our willing aid to lend,
 Like 'Wallace Wight' we'll sternly fight
 Our country to defend. (33-40)

Our arms, our freedom, our aid, our country: love of the greater nation absorbs the exilic back into the whole. War is the thing that unites all things for Johnston. It is the action, it is the state of being that transcends all other loyalties and makes personal and national autonomy possible.

v. Scotland's "The Factory Exile" on the Nineteenth-century Political Exile

Johnston's concern for the political exile appears early in her volume. She works much like Charlotte Smith; she wants the exiles to know that Scotland will welcome them, but only with a certain understanding in place: the political exiles must be willing to adhere to the conventions and expectations of their hosts, or they will find their warm reception quickly cooled. Right on the heels of "The Factory Exile," the verse addressing her dismissal from the Dundee factory, she places two poems dedicated to exiled Italian patriot Giuseppe Garibaldi, hero of the Italian *Risorgimento* and a man second only to Wallace in heroic status in *Autobiography, Poems and Songs*. Johnston wrote her Garibaldi poems during her Dundee years, a time past the years of Garibaldi's exile in America and at the moment of his well-heralded arrival in England.³⁰ In the first one, "Welcome Garibaldi," subtitled "A Voice from Dundee," the poetic voice welcomes the "Illustrious patriot warrior who set fair Italy free" (2), the man who gave to "slaves of Inquisition a balm" and "burst the galling fetters that bound [his] nation's heart" (4-5). By the second stanza, it becomes clear that this "voice" is not Johnston's singular voice, but a collective one, a voice that speaks for Scotland: that Garibaldi is "king uncrowned, a conqueror" (7), "we truly know" (7), the *we* being the people of Scotland, not the royal *we* of the poet. Johnston speaks as her nation for her nation, the "Queen of Song" speaking to the King of Liberty, a "king" more welcome in Scotland than any other monarch: "No king

³⁰ See Trevelyan, *Garibaldi and the Making of Italy* 288-291; Hibbert, *Garibaldi and His Enemies* 121-132 and 339-351.

did ever wear a crown nor held a court levee / That we would make more welcome, brave warrior king, than thee” (15-16).³¹

Johnston ultimately pays this Italian patriot the ultimate honor—she compares him to her beloved Wallace:

Thou art welcome, Garibaldi! thou are the true born type
Of our departed Wallace, who gained our country’s right;
Defying every danger, he rushed amidst the strife,
And purchased Scotland’s freedom with the ransom of his life. (25-28)

For Johnston, Garibaldi is the nineteenth-century hero *par excellence*, as he was for millions of people around the globe. And so this new hero of national independence against imperialist oppression will be accepted and honored by both Scotland’s rich and its poor, for all of Scotland loves this kind of hero. The “fare of the cottage heath” and the “feast of palace hall” (30) will be open to Garibaldi; indeed, “Old Scotland hath no honour that she would not give to thee” (31).

Sadly, though, this hero’s welcome will not transmute into a life of comfort and ease. Like Tennyson’s faded hero Ulysses, domesticating Johnston’s hero renders him powerless. While she ends the poem by wishing “Long life to Garibaldi!” (37), it is a life of continued action, not retired repose, that she wishes for him: a life of purpose and success, and finally a hero’s death:

Long life to Garibaldi! and when all thy warfare’s done—
When thy task on earth is ended, and thy last victory won—
Oh, sweet shall be thy dreamless sleep, with angels for thy guard,
And a glorious crown in Heaven shall be thy rich reward. (37-40)

Warfare as revelation—war allows Garibaldi to be true to himself, his purpose, and his place.

³¹ Since Johnston’s own monarch’s vexed feelings about Garibaldi’s presence in her realm, such a statement is a bold and brass one; given that the poem was included in the volume alongside “Mourning for Garibaldi,” the next poem I’ll discuss, the move becomes even braver.

But then, by the time of Garibaldi's 1864 arrival in England, he was a man who hardly appeared capable of starting a fight, much less inciting and leading a revolution. The crowds who gathered at Southampton to welcome him to Britain on April 4 saw not a triumphant revolutionary in the military garb of his portraits, but rather a 57 year old man wearing "plain dark clothes, leaning heavily on a walking stick, bowing politely to the crowds who stood to cheer him in the pouring rain."³² And crowds there were; tens of thousands at the shore, and during his arrival in London, over 600,000 people crammed the streets, a gathering larger than any assembled for any other dignitary—including monarchs.³³

Aristocratic Tory reactions to his arrival in England were as apprehensive as the popular response was enthusiastic. Garibaldi's popularity with the populace over the years had been strong in Britain; English support for his Sicilian expedition outnumbered that of his native country, for example, and much of other support had come over the years from the British people: "In 1854, the working men of Newcastle had subscribed to give him a present; in 1861, 17,000 inhabitants of Brighton contributed a penny each to make him another; and these were typical of many such instances."³⁴ But both the English and the Italian governments were nervous about his motivations for traveling north: both governments feared an outpouring of revolutionary fervor and a renewed support for insurrection sparked by his presence,³⁵ despite his

³² Christopher Hibbert, *Garibaldi and His Enemies: The Clash of Arms and Personalities in the Making of Italy*. (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1966).340.

³³ Hibbert 342.

³⁴ Smith, *Garibaldi* 73

³⁵ Hibbert 339.

assurance that his trip was only “to obtain the benefit of medical advice and to pay a debt of gratitude he considers he owes to the English people.”³⁶

Garibaldi’s plan, after arriving in London, was to undertake a tour of the provinces. Gladstone, however, after reflection and consultation with other worried officials, including the Queen, suggested Garibaldi cut the provincial tour short and spend the bulk of his time in London, where his comings and goings, his meetings, dinners, and morning callers could be carefully but surreptitiously observed and controlled. Garibaldi said he would just go home instead. One problem, though—he didn’t have a home to go to. He was in exile, and the popular opinion was the England should become his new home. The public outcry against what was shortly perceived as England’s ousting of a great man was deafening.³⁷ By remaining the Italian patriot, the threatening presence of exilic rebellion seeking a place to start anew, Garibaldi was doomed to life outside his land and outside of Britain, the most likely place in Europe for him to go. Continued revolutionary struggle (or even the appearance of it), the one thing that would allow him to continue as a hero, is the one thing that dooms him a wandering exile.

“Mourning for Garibaldi,” Johnston’s companion verse to “Welcome Garibaldi,” appears just following it in her volume, and the second poem rages over the Italian patriot’s treatment in England. While the first verse celebrated Garibaldi’s heroism and Britain’s wisdom in welcoming him, “Mourning for Garibaldi” laments England’s actions, and what Johnston (and others) see as a free nation’s unforgivable behavior toward a hero. England’s “fame-spreading story” (1) is now “Wrapt in a cloud of heart-bleeding shame” (2). This wrongdoing is specifically English, and Johnston even more definitively places the blame squarely at Queen Victoria’s door, in essence calling the monarch a contemptible coward:

³⁶ Qtd. in Hibbert 339.

And where is the throne where thy sovereign is seated
 With the crown of royalty over her brow?
 Can she deem for one moment we thus shall be cheated
 By her lords, dukes, and earls, who basely did bow
 To a foreign despot, and his dastard dictations? (5-9)

If the English government thinks for one minute, Johnston says, that anyone will be fooled by the actions of a bunch of aristocrats, that government is sorely mistaken. Instead, by banishing Garibaldi, returning him to exile, Victoria's action will bring shame to her country: "O! woe to thee England, the deed thou hast done / Shall brand thee for ever the meanest of nations; / Thou'st lost in one hour what in centuries was won" (10-12). This is a severe charge indeed; Johnston sees English treatment of Garibaldi as so wrong that it has the power to cripple an empire. The nation that "once wert the 'gem' of the world" (15) now has seen its own "glory grown tarnished and dim" (16).

But in this mess, Scotland is blameless. Scottish "love-tears shall wash from [Garibaldi's] bosom [England's] shame" (26), for "Old Scotland's a nation true hearted" (31). In contrast to Scotland's excellent behavior stands England's unforgivable error: "And thy dastard insult ne'er in memory shall perish, / Thou hast snapt the gold link of our sister-wove chain" (27-28). England has severed the link between Italy and Britain, the link that nationalist poets like E.B.B. worked so hard to establish. How, Johnston asks, can England be Italy's heir, the inheritor of the great ideals of Western culture, when it won't protect the greatest Italian patriot of the century?

Johnston's sympathy extends not only to the particular, famous, heroic political exile, but also to larger classes of political refugees. In "The Exile of Poland," she self-consciously speaks as the voice of Britain, gently admonishing "Weep not for thy country, poor exile of Poland, / O'er the depth of her wrongs or the gall of her chain" (1-2), assuring that "while they are here we

³⁷ For details of the way England politely (or not so) handed Garibaldi his hat, see Hibbert, "London 1864" 339-351.

shall never deny them / Our dear country's best love" (9-10). More than anything, though, the poem calls for the exiles to be reunited with their homeland: "May the exiles of Poland once more be delighted / In the homes of their fathers at banquet and hall" (7-8); "we hope that oppression ere long will be vanished, / And sweet freedom restore them the land of their birth" (15-16). For "Russian eagles" to be "fetter'd for ever" is this verse's most potent refrain, for it speaks not only to Johnston's sympathy for the victims of imperial aggression, but also to her awareness of Britain's position regarding Russian territorial expansion. While the poem clearly voices a hope that the exile of Poland "yet may'st rejoice in Russia's defeat" (28), the implicit desire undergirding the poem is that Britain too may one day rejoice in Russia's defeat.

Through her critiques of social and political realities both in Scotland and abroad, Johnston demonstrates the needs of two distinct figures: the political exile and the industrial laborer. Yet inasmuch as she carefully depicts the experiences of the industrial worker and the political exile as separate and unique, she cagily draws distinct parallels between them. As she comments on British nationalism through the dual lens of current international events and social issues at home, Johnston fashions the most unlikely authoritative voice on Britishness: the Scottish working-class woman poet. As she asserts again and again in her verse, she occupies a number of contradictory spaces: she's Scottish and British, she's a poet and a factory worker, she's part of a laboring-class community and part of a literary community. Both her country and station of birth along with her two occupations combine to fashion Johnston's precarious exilic space, and it is precisely this exilic position that makes her perspective on revolution, war, and British nationalism unique.

Probably Johnston's most wrenching exilic experience occurs after *Autobiography*, *Poems and Songs*. In April 1873, four years after the second edition of *APS*, the *Penny Post*

issued an appeal for “our former contributor,” relating that she was now under “distressing circumstances” and asking for those who were able and willing to send money for her aid.³⁸

Distressing indeed: like that of so many exiles, Johnston died cut off from her home communities, except this time, she died not in a distant land, but in a cruel and foreign “home”—the Barony Poorhouse. No adopted Greece or Italy for Johnston, only the wretched conditions of a place designed to house her until she died on April 20, 1874 of kidney failure complicated by anasarca: “A dropsical affection of the subcutaneous cellular tissue of a limb or other large surface of the body, producing a very puffed appearance of the flesh.”³⁹ In other words, because of extreme malnutrition, her body’s tissues swelled tremendously with blood and fluid and her kidneys could no longer function. She died alone, with none of her communities—family, national, literary—coming to her aid, a pathetic end for one so devoted to the communities that so completely failed her in the end.

³⁸ “Notices,” *Penny Post*, January 1873.

³⁹ “Anasarca,” *OED* 1989 ed.

CHAPTER 5

“AT WAR WITH MYSELF AND A WRETCHED RACE”:

TENNYSON AND THE EXILIC EXPERIENCE

By the death of the late lamented Mr. Wordsworth the office of Poet Laureate to the Queen became at Her Majesty's disposal.

The ancient duties of this office, which consisted in laudatory odes to the Sovereign, have been long, as you are probably aware, in abeyance, and have never been called for during the reign of Her present Majesty.

The Queen however has been anxious that the office should be maintained; first, on account of its antiquity, and secondly because it establishes a connection, through Her household, between Her Majesty and the poets of this country as a body.

Letter from Charles Beaumont Phipps to Alfred Tennyson,
November 5, 1850

When Queen Victorian appointed Alfred Tennyson Britain's poet laureate in 1850, it was largely on the basis of his recently published and wildly popular *In Memoriam*, a volume that had sold over 5,000 copies. In comparison with the previous laureate's crowning achievement, *The Prelude*, which had sold only 2,000 copies, such a record-topping success was indeed extraordinary.¹ But it was not on the basis of sales that Queen Victoria chose Tennyson as her laureate; Albert's admiration for Tennyson and for *In Memoriam* played no small part in her decision.² Based on her husband's esteem for both the poet and the verse, both of which seemed

¹ Robert Bernard Martin, *Tennyson: The Unquiet Heart* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1980) 351.

² Hallam Tennyson, *Alfred Lord Tennyson: A Memoir*, 2 vols. (New York: Macmillan Company, 1897) 334. Queen Victoria chose Tennyson after Samuel Rogers declined the position, citing old age and poor health.

wholly at one with their solid Englishness, Tennyson seemed a fitting choice to assume the role that would connect Windsor to the rest of literary England, as Phipps's letter to Tennyson says, "as a body."³

So what does it mean, then, for the man who occupied this important position, this role so clearly conceived as connecting the monarch, herself the embodiment of Britain, and the world of literature and letters, to produce as his inaugural laureate volume a collection like *Maud, and Other Poems*? After all, it seemed to bear little relation to *In Memoriam* and much of Tennyson's earlier verse, a disconnection that both horrified and vexed the reviewer for the *Edinburgh Evening Courant*, who unequivocally condemned the work: "to all the multitude who know by heart the 'May Queen' and 'Locksley Hall,' the 'Talking Oak,' the songs in the 'Princess,' and the noblest strains of 'In Memoriam,' ['Maud' will be] a thing to be blotted, if possible, from the memory."⁴ Hepworth Dixon in the *Athenaeum* put it more bluntly: "This volume is not worthy of its author."⁵ Not worthy of Tennyson—or of his office either, the implication would seem to be, for the faith and strength of character so praised in *In Memoriam* had been replaced by tremendous doubts in regards to England and its imperial project.⁶ The hero of *Maud* seems a most unlikely British hero, and is, indeed, a deeply flawed British man,

³ Letter from Charles Beaumont Phipps, Keeper of Her Majesty's Privy Purse, to Alfred Tennyson, November 5, 1850. *The Letters of Alfred Lord Tennyson*, 342. For the tensions inherent in the public role of laureate and the ways in which this role influenced and shaped a number of Tennyson's later, short occasional pieces, see Robin Inboden, "The 'Valour of delicate women': The Domestication of Political Relations in Tennyson's Laureate Poetry," especially 205-208.

⁴ *Edinburgh Evening Courant* (2 August 1855) 2.

⁵ *Athenaeum* (4 August 1855) 894. Leslie A. Marchand identifies Hepworth Dixon as the author in *The Athenaeum: A Mirror of Victorian Culture* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1941) 278.

⁶ A disjunction between the two collections Isobel Armstrong reads as natural and to be expected under the circumstances: "The two poems belong to different kinds of history [. . .] The watershed of the Crimean War, and its consequent reconceptualising of Britain's relation to Europe and of Europe itself, divides them" ("Tennyson in the 1850s" 102).

one whose family has lost everything and who goes on to lose everything himself, his home and his sanity, only to be reconciled to both through exile—exile to France and then self-exile to a disastrous war zone.

A patriotic volume centering on British masculinity and the performances and roles that such masculinity demands, *Maud, and Other Poems* celebrates a particular brand of heroism and personal will, one well traced by Tennyson in his earlier patriotic verses.⁷ The volume as a whole pays homage to his earlier attempts at capturing in verse these ideals of patriotic heroism—its glory, fatalism, and danger. Bookended by the title verse at the beginning and “The Charge of the Light Brigade” at the end, the collection begins and ends with fatal heroic acts undertaken in the name of country.

By ending the volume on the tragic but nonetheless glorious note of the doomed charge at Balaklava, Tennyson counters the volume’s opening notes of pessimism, despair, and resignation. The resolute determinism of the brigade in the face of obviously overwhelming Russian artillery replaces all of the waffling, whining, and indecision of *Maud*’s soliloquist. By the end of the collection, the one resigned man has been replaced by the many, both the many of the brigade and the many who should honor the charge. But if we are going to honor the fallen cavalry, the volume implicitly asks, should we honor *Maud*’s speaker as well? After all, he goes off to the same conflict and faces many of the same challenges: inept leaders, botched communications, shockingly poor supply lines. He has no expectation of returning from battle, and neither did those men at Balaklava.⁸ So why, then, is the Charge so glorious and *Maud* so

⁷ For discussions of the ways masculinity is constructed and critiqued in *Maud*, see Bristow, “Nation, Class and Gender: Tennyson’s *Maud* and War” and Linda Shires, “*Maud*, Masculinity and Poetic Identity.”

⁸ In “*Theirs But to Do and Die*”: *The Poetry of the Charge of the Light Brigade at Balaklava, 25 October 1854*, Patrick Waddington places Tennyson’s “Charge” alongside numerous other verses dedicated to the light brigade, not to diminish its place as the most famous verse from that moment, but to show how powerful an emblem the charge became for numerous writers.

troubling? Perhaps because we know so much more about the soliloquist's internal makeup than we do about any one soldier in the light brigade. *Maud* is, after all, in addition to other things, a "splendidly executed psychological study."⁹ The soliloquist is not a faceless six hundred, but a very particular one, a one slowly taken apart by warfare.

Economic warfare and the Crimean War work in tandem to dismantle and dissect the exiled soliloquist, ultimately allowing Tennyson, through a rewriting of British pastoral imagery and a break with traditional lyricism, to portray a disordered literary persona through a conflicted literary form.¹⁰ His relentlessly Byronic anti-hero—the rejected son, spurned lover, melodramatic madman, frustrated exile, resigned warrior—shares a strain of merciless introspection common to and dictated by two primary experiences: madness and exile. But while the speaker does indeed experience literal, traditional exile in France, madness itself constitutes an exilic experience for him and leads him to his final exilic act—self-removal to the battlefield of the Crimea. Much the way economic and literal war work in tandem to destabilize the speaker's consciousness, so too do psychological and literal exile.

i. "Shout for England!": Tennyson's Nationalist Verse

Maud was not just received as part of a volume unworthy of the new poet laureate; it was received by many as an unworthy poem, period. The Hargrett Rare Book and Manuscript Library at the University of Georgia owns two copies of Alfred Lord Tennyson's 1855 *Maud, and Other Poems*, one published in London, the other in Boston. They are identical in contents and nearly in presentation, one covered in a decorative green binding and the other in brown, but there is

⁹ Hill, Robert W., ed., *Tennyson's Poetry* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1999) 310.

¹⁰ See Herbert Tucker's claim in *Tennyson and the Doom of Romanticism* that the poem demonstrates the contamination of the lyric by politics and social realities.

one interesting difference between the two. The 1855 London edition has been annotated by an owner.¹¹ On the title page for the poem *Maud*, someone has transcribed the following lines in careful and elegant pencil script around the block letters of the poem's title:

There's a letter too much in "Maud,"
 Say what should that letter be?
 It isn't the M that begins the word,
 And it isn't the final d.
 There's a letter too much in 'Maud'
 Perhaps 'tis the letter u,
 So leave it out and your 'Maud' is mad,
 And you'll find that her title's true.
M A U D
 There's a letter too much in 'Maud'
 Methinks 'tis the letter a;
 So leave it out, and your 'Maud' is Mud
 Alas! and ah, well a-day.
 From the 'Morning Post'—

Of course this criticism of the poem is familiar to every Tennyson student—the famous witticism that cuts so sharply to the core of the poem's immediate reception and its continuing hold on the reader. As the *Morning Post* reviewer, author of the above rhyme, goes on to state plainly, his question seems to be whether the poem is crazy genius or an awful mess, and his final answer is a little bit of both: "Yes, there is, undoubtedly, a letter too much in 'Maud,'" he says, but "[w]hether it is the *a* or the *u* that is *de trop* we must leave to the reader to determine."¹² "Probably one of these letters might be omitted alternately," he continues, "and then you will have *mad mud*, which really conveys a very correct idea of this wild and splashing performance."¹³ Today, the University of Georgia's altered first edition of the poem, which

¹¹ The only information available to Hargrett librarians about the provenance of the volume is the following. The book's last owner was George O. Marshall, Jr., English department faculty member at the University of Georgia, and he donated the text to the Hargrett in 1964. Marshall asked that the bookplate read "Presented in honor of Sir Charles Tennyson." The records contain no remarks about the volume's previous owners.

¹² *Morning Post* (Saturday September 1, 1855) 5.

¹³ *Morning Post* (Saturday September 1, 1855) 5.

bears no other signs of having been annotated or marked in any other way, carries this particular criticism with the verse, a most unusual burden for a volume of poems to have to bear. We don't know who wrote these verses down or why, whether out of amusement at the impertinence of a reviewer who clearly missed the point of a beloved poem, out of ebullience at having found someone who too despised the poem, or simply out of appreciation for the criticism's cruel but satirically funny wit. Regardless, whoever did made certain to place them in a spot where subsequent readers would find them and carry that review into reading the poem. That owner made sure that criticism words would follow that particular version of the poem wherever it went—an appropriate choice, since that particular response to the poem has enveloped its reception as surely as that reader's transcription envelopes the poem's title on the page.

Reviews of *Maud* fluctuated from acid condemnation to adoring acclaim: *Blackwood's* proclaimed it "ill considered, crude, tawdry, and objectionable"¹⁴ while the *Atlas* called *Maud* "a splendid and an exquisite poem."¹⁵ A particular issue singled out for praise was Tennyson's attention to the issues of his time and place. His focus on "nineteenth century life, with its perplexities, its wars of caste, its heartbreakings and heart-burnings, its pride of wealth and meanness of Mammonism, its craven peace men and its red-rising battle dawn of promise" was lauded as an exemplary example of a poet fulfilling his duty to "reflect the interests, activities and aspirations of his age."¹⁶ The *London University Magazine* compared Tennyson's grasp of the central issues of his age to Shakespeare's representation of "the Middle Age mind, with all its strange conceits and fantastic beauties" and Milton's "mixture of material and spiritual ideas that

¹⁴ *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine* 73 (September 1855): 311-321. For a fuller cataloging of the venomous disapproval *Maud* provoked, see Shannon, "The Critical Reception of Tennyson's 'Maud'" (398).

¹⁵ *Atlas* (4 August 1855): 499. Shannon also covers the praise the poem garnered as well as the defenses critics mounted to the negative reaction in "The Critical Reception of Tennyson's 'Maud'" (399-401).

¹⁶ Gerald Massey, quoted in Shannon 400.

reigned in the speculative theology of the seventeenth century.”¹⁷ Tennyson did, “as a great man might,” what was expected of a poet of his stature: he looked for “what is most distinctive in the age in which he writes, and that he has bodied forth the result with consummate imaginative power.”¹⁸ Such praise for Tennyson’s focus on contemporary events was not unanimous, however; Coventry Patmore, who said privately he would not “change one of his own poems for fifty *Mauds*,”¹⁹ spoke more delicately in public, couching his criticisms of the verse inside a larger commentary on the poor understanding of verse in mid-Victorian England. In the *Edinburgh Review*, he complained that the British reading public was “widely afflicted just now with certain odd notions of what poetry ought to be”; the worst of these notions being that “a poet must belong to his age,” for “our forefathers have always held that a poet ought to belong to no age.”²⁰

If we hold this to be true, if we believe in ideas of good poetry’s necessary universality, then *Maud* would indeed be a failure, for it is steeped in mid-century concerns about commerce, peaceful society, patriotism, and imperialism. Public commentary on public events, though, was a vexed and delicate thing for Tennyson. As poet laureate, he felt his position required a certain degree of comment, even when it was not specifically asked or required of him. “Ode on the Death of the Duke of Wellington,” for example, the fourth poem in *Maud, and Other Poems*, was not written “at the request of the Queen and had no official publication, but Tennyson none the

¹⁷ *London University Magazine* I (May 1856): 1-11.

¹⁸ Peter Bayne, *Essays in Biography and Criticism* (Freeport, N.Y.: Books for Libraries Press, 1972).

¹⁹ Martin, 390.

²⁰ *Edinburgh Review* CII (Oct), 498-519. Patmore’s authorship confirmed in. *Courage in Politics and Other Essays*, ed. Frederick Page (London: Oxford University Press, 1921) 205.

less felt that it was his public duty.”²¹ In a note to his aunt Russell, Tennyson laments the final product of the ode, and explains the reasons for its composition: “I ordered Moxon to send you a copy of my ode which I hope you will have received before this. I have made some improvements since it was printed. It is not so good as I could wish it to be. Then, you see, I wrote it because it was expected of me [. . .]”²² Expected of him, yes, but also enjoyed by him: Tennyson had been writing patriotic verse since his Cambridge days, and the “Ode,” at its core, is both an elegy for a lost hero and adulation for the principles he served: masculine British heroism, God, Queen, Country. This poem, rather than being an exception to the rule, was part of a larger strain in Tennyson’s verse that far preceded his laureateship—a nationalist strain that parallels the exilic strain developing his poetry.²³ It is important to note, however, that we must read Tennyson’s patriotic verse and his exilic verse as two separate streams of poetic thought: it is only when we arrive at *Maud* that the two streams intersect.

Tennyson’s patriotic verse falls into two categories: early poems written in the 1830s and 1840s, and the 1852 verses. The earliest verses can further be roughly divided into three categories: the ballads, early experiments with the *In Memoriam* stanza, and the “Freedom” verses.” Of the three sections, the ballads—“English Warsong” and “National Song”—are the earliest and the fiercest poems: bloodthirsty, jingoistic, and sexist. The 1830 “English Warsong,” for example, begins with an antagonistic call in the first line, “Who fears to die? Who fears to die?” (1), and this questioning call becomes strikingly more direct in the second line,

²¹ Martin 368.

²² Cecil Y. Lang and Edgar F. Shannon, Jr., eds., *The Letters of Alfred, Lord Tennyson*, 3 vols (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1981) 2.50.

²³ In *The Artistry and Tradition of Tennyson’s Battle Poetry*, J. Timothy Lovelace argues for the careful consideration of Tennyson’s nationalist verse as part of one of Tennyson’s most serious themes. He examines the ways in which Tennyson “absorbed and made current the Homeric, heroic ideology of the ancient literature in which he was so deeply immersed” (4).

directly challenging the reader: “Is there any here who fears to die?” (2). Should anyone be foolish enough to answer “yes” to the speaker’s question, the next four lines make clear what reception he will receive: “He shall find what he fears; and none shall grieve / For the man who fears to die” (3-4); instead, “the withering scorn of the many shall cleave / To the man who fears to die” (5-6). In this model of personal and national heroism, even the mere mention of fear for one’s own life will bring on death—and those who die because of cowardice are not worthy of mourning by this English singer or by anyone else with a true British heart, anyone with the guts to stand and bravely “Shout for England! [. . .] England for aye!” (7, 11).

But those afraid to join in the singing of this warsong are not just ridiculed and dismissed as cowards, they are lesser humans. They do not possess rich, stout, brave English hearts, but instead are “hollow at heart” (12). These diminished Englishmen “shall crouch forlorn” (12), “eat[ing] the bread of common scorn” (13), bread which “shall be steeped in the salt, salt tear” (14) of their countrymen. The shame of not fighting for England will be so great that all will mourn the coward’s disgraceful action, and eventually, “his own salt tear” (15) will too soak the very bread he eats. Indeed, it would be “Far better, far better he were never born / Than to shame merry England” (16-17).

Shrewdly, the verse does not name a specific enemy of the realm, depending instead upon an unnamed, unspecified “ancient enemy” as the focus of jingoistic rage, creating a song versatile enough for any conflict. The “Lion of England” (23) will “dazzle and blind [the enemy’s] eyes” (24) when on “the ridge of the hill his banners rise” (21). Because “we alone of the earth are free” (26), everyone else must by definition be enslaved weaklings who not only can be conquered and killed, but also will deserve their fate, all for the glory of England:

The child in our cradles is bolder than he;
For where is the heart and the strength of slaves;

Oh! where is the strength of slaves?
 He is weak! we are strong; he a slave, we are free;
 Come along! we will dig their graves. (27-31)

Immediately after digging these graves, the conquerors will sing the verse's chorus:

Shout for England!
 Ho! for England!
 George for England!
 Merry England!
 England for aye!

And before singing the chorus for the last time, good Englishmen will “Charge! charge to the fight! / Hold up the Lion of England on high! / Shout for God and our right!” (36-38). But “our right” to what exactly? Territory? People? Goods? Trade routes? As a verse deeply steeped in the imperialistic right and duty of England to save and civilize the rest of the world, this “English Warsong” would answer “all of the above.” And should the rest of the world refuse Britain’s beneficent civilizing influence, then England has the “right” to raze it to the ground.

“National Song,” written around 1828-29, published in 1830, and later adapted for the 1892 *The Foresters*, continues in this vein, with a slightly tempered tone. The enemy has become a specific one, France, who the speaker prays “God speed ‘em / Unto their heart’s desire, / And the merry devil drive ‘em / Through the water and the fire” (12-14). Unlike “English Warsong,” however, “National Song” does not depend upon just masculine ideals of personal heroism—“There are no men like Englishmen, / So tall and bold as they be” (7-8)—but also upon English ideals of womanhood and femininity. “There is no land like England, / Where’er the light of day be” (19-20) both because British men are willing to fight and because there “are no wives like English wives, / So fair and chaste as they be/ [. . .] / There are no maids like English maids, / So beautiful as they be” (25-26). National unity, success, and world position depend equally upon masculine heroism and feminine goodness in this verse.

Not surprisingly, the poems that experiment with what will become the *In Memoriam* stanza—“ ‘Love thou thy land, with love far-brought’” (composed 1832, published 1842), “ ‘Hail Briton!’” (composed 1831-33), and “ ‘You ask me, why, though ill at ease’” (composed 1833, published 1842)—are more temperate in tone than the ballads. “ ‘Love thou thy land, with love far-brought’” is the most didactic of the *In Memoriam* stanza verses, lecturing the reader on appropriate conduct and the British imperial mission:

But pamper not a hasty time,
 Nor feed with crude imaginings
 The herd, while hearts and feeble wings
 That every sophister can lime.
 Deliver not the tasks of might
 To weakness, neither hide the ray
 From those, not blind, who wait for day,
 Though sitting girt with doubtful light.
 Make knowledge circle with the winds;
 But let her herald, Reverence, fly
 Before her to whatever sky
 Bear seed of men and growth of minds. (9-20)

The bloodthirst of the ballads has been replaced by a more restrained version of imperialism, but England’s duty remains clear: educate and civilize Britain and the rest of world. “Hail Briton!” shares this colonizing vision: “Britain had an hour of rest; / But now her steps are swift and rash; / She moving, at her girdle clash / The golden keys of East and West” (21-24). While the ballads seem most concerned, as patriotic ballads often are, with raising spirits and rallying passionate support, mission of the *IM* stanza verses is rather to promote England’s global duty and ever increasing position of power.

The final section of Tennyson’s 1830s and 1840s patriotic verse is made up of the “freedom” verses: “Song [The winds, as at their hour of birth]” (published in 1830 as “We Are Free”), “ ‘Of old sat Freedom on the heights’” (composed 1833, published 1842), “ ‘I loving Freedom for herself’” (composed 1832-34), and “ ‘O mother Britain lift thou up’” (composed

1833-34). The first of these, the short, only two stanza “Song,” seems most like the mature Tennyson out of these early poems:

The winds, as at their hour of birth,
 Leaning upon the ridgéd sea,
 Breathed low around the rolling earth
 With mellow preludes, ‘We are free.’
 The streams through many a lilied row
 Down-carolling to the crispéd sea,
 Low-tinkled with a bell-like flow
 Atween the blossoms, ‘We are free.’ (1-8)

Much like the opening moments of *Maud*, these lines depend upon pathetic fallacy for an evocation of mood: in *Maud*, a mood of previous tragedy and impending doom, while in “Song,” a mood of peaceful national contentment. Like “The Lady of Shalott,” the setting of “Song” tells us much about the story to come: while the “[l]ong fields of barley and of rye / That clothe the wold and meet the sky” (2-3) along the riverbanks of Camelot and the “Little breezes [that] dusk and shiver / Through the wave that runs forever / By the island in the river” (11-13) lead us to the Lady’s “silent isle” (17), “Song” also leads us to the sea—a potent emblem of British military and imperial power. And just as the flowers of “Now Sleeps the Crimson Petal” speak volumes about erotic desire, here they speak to the “naturalness” [wrong word] of national “freedom” for the English people.

In January and February 1852, Tennyson wrote a group of patriotic verses in response to Louis Napoleon’s December 1851 coup d’état and subsequent fears of invasion by France: “The Penny-Wise,” “Rifle Clubs!!!,” “Britons, Guard Your Own,” “For the Penny-Wise,” “The Third of February, 1852,” “Hands All Round!,” and “Suggested by Reading an Article in a Newspaper.” In some, the title would seem to indicate a far more jingoistic verse than actually

materializes, “Rifle Clubs!!!” in particular.²⁴ What would seem to be, judging by the title, a ferocious call to arms, is instead a dialogue between the speaker and Charon, who carries “the dead, the dead, the dead, / Killed in the *Coup d'État*” (8). While the poem can be read as sincerely elegiac or sneeringly parodic, such dual readings further Tennyson’s cause regardless, whether by shocking or amusing the reader. But the excessively punctuated, hysterically shrieking title “Rifle Clubs!!!” seems out of place in either instance. Such hyperbole, however, is common with Tennyson’s 1852 patriotic verses. In many ways, these poems look back to the jingoistic ballads of the early 1830s, particularly the paranoid “Britons, Guard Your Own,” a verse with six of the ten stanzas concluding with the same ominous, censuring, end-stopped line, “Britons, guard your own.” By the seventh stanza, the charge to stand guard becomes specifically based on class and military roles, “Seamen, guard your own” (42) and “Yeomen, guard your own” (48), and by the end of the verse, all of Britain has been called upon to take up the call:

Should he land here, and for one hour prevail,
There must no man go back to bear the tale:
No man to bear it,—
Swear it! We swear it!
Although we fought the banded world alone,
We swear to guard our own. (55-60)

Three years later, Tennyson would publish the first edition of *Maud, and Other Poems*, a volume in which his nationalist verse will combine with his exilic poetry.

ii. Exilic Strains in Tennyson’s Verse

The exilic strain that is so prominent in *Maud* has its roots in an early Tennyson verse, “The Exile’s Harp,” and it will reappear later in his career in “Enoch Arden.” Both instances

²⁴ Never published during Tennyson’s lifetime, “Rifle Clubs!!!” first appeared in a 1964 essay by Christopher Ricks

mark important points of development in Tennyson's consciousness as a nationalist poet. By examining these two other verses, we can compare the ways that this exilic leitmotif becomes most fully realized in *Maud*, a work deeply invested in exile on a number of levels: estrangement from home, nation, and self.

In 1827, Tennyson published "The Exile's Harp," a significant piece of early verse that anticipates several characteristics later to be associated with his mature work: experimentation with form, musical and alliterative language, and a decidedly Romantic bent. The poem's speaker is a soon-to-be exiled bard, but for what reason we do not know. He addresses his verse to his harp, which he must leave behind: "I will hang thee, my Harp, by the side of the fountain, / On the whispering branch of the lone-waving willow" (1-2). There the instrument of his song will remain, "abandoned, forsaken" (5), as it transfigures into an eolian harp, an instrument now played by the forces of nature alone: "The winds shall blow by thee [. . .] / The wild gales alone shall arouse thy sad strain" (5-6). There will be no "heart or [. . .] hand to awaken / The sounds of thy soul-soothing sweetness again?" (7-8). The thing the speaker most regrets losing, however, is not his sound, but his home, what he calls his "heritage" (9). He cries, "Oh! Harp of my fathers! / Thy chords shall decay, / One by one with the strings / Shall thy notes fade away" (9-12). As the physical instrument rots and decays, so too will the song, eventually leaving the harp soundless, even in the face of the greatest powers, for "the fiercest of tempests / Around thee may yell, And not waken one sound / Of thy desolate shell" (13-16).

This bardic speaker equates his harp and his verse with home; to lose one is to lose the others. So as he leaves the physical place, he decides to "fling a wreath round [the harp], / With the richest of flowers in the green valley," (17-18) so that "[t]hose that see shall remember the hand that hath crowned thee, / When withered and dead, to thee still they are clinging" (19-20).

Ostensibly the “withered and dead” refers to the instrument, which has died like a living thing, not slowly fallen apart like an inanimate object. But the positioning of the descriptors also leaves the possibility that it is the people who are withered and dead, that “still they are clinging” to the harp, yearning for the sound that is not there. The exile of the bard will lead to the destruction of the people, those who will remember and long for “the hand that hath crowned” (18) the harp. Even though he knows that the flowers he uses to adorn his abandoned harp will not stand as a permanent monument, for “the lapse of one day [will] see their freshness declining” (23), he achingly calls for even a temporary memorial: “Yet bloom for one day when thy minstrel has fled!” (24). Why he flees we do not know, we only know that this bard cannot take his lyrics with him: “One sweep will I give thee, / And wake thy bold swell; / Then, thou friend of my bosom, / For ever farewell!” (31-32). In “The Exile’s Harp,” home, poetic voice, and exile are all intimately tied together, but “home” is not defined as specifically English.

Later in his career, Tennyson turned again to the yearning engendered by exile, most plainly in “Enoch Arden,” and whereas his earlier exilic work was not specifically concerned with Englishness or class, “Enoch Arden” is. This poem links exile specifically with British identity and class station. An English sailor, Enoch fell from a masthead while in harbor (105-109), and a “limb was broken when they lifted him” (107). While he recovered, his family’s already fragile financial situation rapidly worsened. Although he was “a grave and staid God-fearing man” (112), “lying thus inactive, doubt and gloom” (113) took over his mind. Enoch felt, as the speaker describes him, “in a nightmare of the night, / To see his children leading evermore / Love miserable lives of hand-to-mouth, / And her, he loved, a beggar” (114-117). He offers a fateful prayer: “ ‘Save them from this, whatever comes to me’ ” (118). As if in answer to his plea, his ship master comes to him, offering a place on his “vessel China-bound” (121).

“Would he go?” the master asks; “[w]ould Enoch have the place?” (125). He agrees, “[r]ejoicing at that answer to his prayer” (127). To save his family, he will abandon his England.

Enoch’s ship arrives safely in the Orient, where he “traded for himself, and bought / Quaint monsters for the market of those times, / A gilded dragon, also, for the babes” (534-535). “Less lucky [the] home-voyage” (537), though: a storm destroys Enoch’s ship and all aboard, save Enoch and two shipmates. His fellow sailors quickly succumb to the hardships of the desert island, leaving Enoch alone to “read God’s warning ‘wait’” in “those two deaths” (567). The years Enoch spends alone on this isolated island is the time most critics wrongly term his exile—wrongly because being “shipwrecked” is not synonymous with “exiled.” Exile is never an accident; being shipwrecked is. Enoch’s actual exile happens later and is much more painful, for whereas the shipwrecked man has hope of one day going home, and Enoch eventually does, he has no such hope once he finally gets back to England. By the time he does make it back to his nation, too much time has passed for him to reenter his home. He fears what his abrupt reentry, the return of a husband and father long presumed dead, would do to his wife and children, particularly since his wife has remarried, and she and her new husband have a healthy, beautiful baby, and more importantly, a happy home. Rather than disrupt, indeed destroy, this blissful domestic sphere, Enoch stands outside it and watches his family, his home, continue on without him:

For cups and silver on the burnished board
Sparkled and shone; so genial was the hearth:
And on the right hand of the hearth he saw
Philip, the slighted suitor of old times,
Stout, rosy, with his babe across his knees;
And o’er her second father stooped a girl,
A later but a loftier Annie Lee,
Fair-haired and tall, and from her lifted hand
Dangled a length of ribbon and a ring
To tempt the babe, who reared his creasy arms,

Caught at it and ever missed it, and they laughed;
 And on the left hand of the hearth he saw
 The mother glancing often toward her babe,
 But turning now and then to speak with him,
 Her son, who stood beside her tall and strong,
 And saying that which pleased him, for he smiled. (738-753)

The speaker's switch from referring to Enoch's wife as "Annie" to just "the mother" mirrors the shift that happens for Enoch. As "the dead man [who has] come to life" (754), he chooses to see his family as not his own any longer; instead he sees "[h]is wife his wife no more" (755). He sees

All the warmth, the peace, the happiness,
 And his own children tall and beautiful,
 And him, that other, reigning in his place,
 Lord of his rights and of his children's love,—
 Then he, [. . .]
 Staggered and shook, holding the branch, and feared
 to send abroad a shrill and terrible cry,
 Which in one moment, like the blast of doom,
 Would shatter all the happiness of the hearth. (757-766)

Rather than entering his home and reclaiming what is rightfully his, he "therefore turning softly like a thief" (767) leaves the window where he has spied on the family and returns to his "solitary home" (790) just across town. Out of love for his family, he exiles himself, deciding never to reveal himself to his wife or his children, resolving " 'Not to tell her, never to let her know'" (794). Enoch's proximity to the place and the thing he is exiled from makes his experience so painful—he could literally walk across a threshold and be home, but he will not do so. Like the soliloquist in *Maud*, Enoch chooses self-exile over resuming his rightful place in his home and in England.

iii. “Bury myself in myself”: The Exilic Speaker of *Maud*

When a man hath no freedom to fight for at home,
 Let him combat for that of his neighbours;
 Let him think of the glories of Greece and of Rome,
 And get knock'd on his head for his labours.

To do good to mankind is the chivalrous plan,
 And is always as nobly requited;
 Then battle for freedom wherever you can,
 And, if not shot or hang'd, you'll get knighted.

George Gordon, Lord Byron

With *Maud*, Tennyson crafts a more ambitious portrait of the exiled man, one that integrates ideas of exile he has dealt with in these earlier poems. The soliloquist in *Maud* is the traditional exile, who, like the speaker in “The Exile’s Harp,” flees his native land, leaving his love behind. But he is also the more figurative exile, who, like Enoch Arden, exiles himself to satisfy ideas of duty and honor. And like Enoch, the soliloquist in *Maud* desperately fears the damage his own actions could do both to himself and those he loves:

So dark a mind within me dwells,
 And I make myself such evil cheer,
 That if *I* be dear to some one else,
 Then some one else may have much to fear” (I.527-530).

But there is a third element at play in *Maud*, an exilic experience neither of Tennyson’s earlier portraits addresses. While the soliloquist seeks refuge in France after killing his rival, an equally dramatic exilic experience takes place after his arrival in Brittany. Exiled from England and fearing the punishment and losses that await him at home, he goes mad; a fugitive in a foreign land, he also becomes a stranger to himself, the man exiled from his sanity. After his recovery, he self-exiles himself a final time, this time to a Crimean battlefield. Like the speaker in Byron’s “When a man hath no freedom,” the soliloquist finds life in England to be futile and fatiguing, whereas the Crimea offers an exilic escape into purpose and productivity—he will be able to

follow the “chivalrous plan,” caring little whether he is knighted or hung. What matters most is that he is somewhere other than home, some place where the tyranny of insanity—personal and national—cannot reach him again.

From the earliest moments of *Maud*, we recognize that we are dealing with a man already exiled from his life, regardless of the fact that he still resides in the family home in England. His father, a once prosperous man, lost everything to a neighbor he thought was a friend; unable to cope with his financial devastation, the “vast speculation [that] had failed” (I.9) and the corresponding change in circumstance, the soliloquist’s father “muttered and maddened, and ever wanned with despair” (I.10), eventually taking his own life. The poem begins with the soliloquist’s wrenching description of this terrible time and place:

I hate the dreadful hollow behind the little wood,
Its lips in the field above are dabbled with blood-red heath,
The red-ribbed ledges drip with a silent horror of blood,
And Echo there, whatever is asked her, answers ‘Death.’

For there in the ghastly pit long since a body was found,
His who had given me life—O father! O God! was it well?—
Mangled, and flattened, and crushed, and dented into the ground:
There yet lies the rock that fell with him when he fell. (I.1-8)

He remembers the night of his father’s suicide, the sounds of “a shuffled step, by a dead weight trailed, by a whispered fright” (I.14), and he all too clearly remembers how his “pulses closed their gates with a shock on my heart as I heard / The shrill-edged shriek of a mother divide the shuddering night” (I.15-16). Since the moment he heard that scream, like that still, dark night he too has been a divided creature, split between the life he could have had, and the one he his father left him.

It is no coincidence that immediately after telling the story of his father’s suicide he demands to know why “they prate of the blessing of peace” (I.21); the poem implicitly asks how

a man who seems never to have known a moment of personal peace can be expected to joyfully embrace the blessings of a larger, social “peace”—if that peace even exists at all. The soliloquist certainly does not see the England around him as a peaceful place. This man, who lives haunted by visions of most unnatural scenes, dreadful hollows and blood-red heath, a father’s torn and twisted body flung upon the ground, this man finds no glory and comfort in the social structures, policies, or political happenings around him. His personal unrest will not allow it. The family enemy, the man the soliloquist blames for his father’s ruin, who “Dropt off gorged from a scheme that had left us flaccid and drained” (I.20), did more than suck the life from the soliloquist’s father. His vampiric, parasitic, and emasculating actions left “*us* flaccid and drained”—not “him” (emphasis mine, I.20). The father was not the only one who died that night; he took his son with him.

Of course, it would take the son some decades to die. It was a slow death for him, and his suicide of a different bent. Of his soliloquist, Tennyson said that he

is wrong in thinking that war will transform the cheating tradesman into a great-souled hero, or that it will sweep away the dishonesties and lessen the miseries of humanity. This history of the Crimean War proves his error. But this very delusion is natural to him: it is in keeping with his morbid, melancholy, impulsive character to see a cure for the evils of peace in the horrors of war.²⁵

The soliloquist details and rails against these “evils of peace” for much of Part I:

Why do they prate of the blessings of Peace? we have made them a curse,
Pickpockets, each hand lusting for all that is not its own;
And lust of gain, in the spirit of Cain, is it better or worse
Than the heart of the citizen hissing in war on his own hearthstone?

²⁵ Henry van Dyke, *Studies in Tennyson*, 1920, p.97

But these are the days of advance, the works of the men of mind,
 When who but a fool would have faith in a tradesman's ware or his word?
 Is it peace or war? Civil war, as I think, and that of a kind
 The viler, as underhand, not openly bearing the sword. (I.21-28)²⁶

The social chaos in England seems to him more horrific than that of a battlefield. The poor live “hovelled and hustled together” like “swine” (I.34) while “vitriol madness” drives men mad (I.37). Women are beaten, the masses eat not bread but chalk, and “spirit of murder” lurks all around, forcing “Sleep [to] lie down armed” (I.41). In this man’s worldview, lunacy and the danger are everywhere. Is this peace or is this war, he asks again, hurtling toward his most agonizing example of social madness and finally coming to a brutal and heart-wrenching conclusion:

When a Mammonite mother kills her babe for a burial fee,
 And Timour-Mammon grins on a pile of children's bones,
 Is it peace or war? better, war! loud war by land and by sea,
 War with a thousand battles, and shaking a hundred thrones. (I.45-48)

Tennyson said these are the evils the soliloquist thinks he can cure through the horrors of war. Or are they? Certainly he gives us ample indication of his disgust with his fellow man, and Tennyson goes to great lengths to give his speaker’s voice more than a modicum of misanthropy. But is that what drives the soliloquist? Is it cynicism that motivates him? Hostility? Hatred? Despair? To a degree, all of them. But there is something deeper than all of these, something that fuels them all: his own fear. At every turn, the soliloquist sees madness, so he wonders if it would not be best if he “fled from the place and the pit and the fear?” (I.64). If he had “the nerves of motion as well as the nerves of pain” (I.63), wouldn’t it be best if he just left, if he just abandoned his fears and tried to escape? Maybe, but that strategy has one shortcoming: he could

²⁶ For a synthesis and expansion of the debates surrounding the origins of Tennyson’s “peace or war” rhetoric, see Dereli, “Tennyson’s *Maud*: Ambiguity and the War Context.” Dereli argues that whether or not Tennyson “drew directly” on Swayne’s “Peace and War” articles in *Blackwood’s* is in many ways a secondary concern, the primary

flee the place, England; and he could flee the pit, his father and his home; but he can never flee the fear. The one thing he cannot escape is the one thing he most wants to discard.

But before he can leave (if he ever planned to at all), he hears that Maud is coming home, his childhood playmate and daughter of the man who ruined his father. Educated abroad, she has returned home to live with her brother, a politically and financially ambitious man. But the soliloquist reacts strangely to the news of Maud's homecoming; rather than joyful or at least curious to see her after all these years, he is suspicious and hostile: "What is she now? My dreams are bad. She may bring me a curse" (I.73). It is in keeping, though, with his morbid worldview to assume the delight will be a curse. He fears what Maud may have become; she may have changed and no longer be the "delight of the village" (I.70).

The soliloquist decides he has nothing to fear, for he does not think he will be worthy of Maud's attention. His situation in life makes it unlikely that she will see him as an object of desire, a desire he renders in terms of hunter and prey, a hunter out for a larger financial kill than he offers: "No, there is fatter game on the moor; she will let me alone" (I.74). He is cheered by his own seeming insignificance, that he is "nameless and poor" (I.119), and so he determines to "bury myself in myself, and the Devil may pipe to his own" (I.76). Just the memory of Maud and the possibility of what she might have become causes the soliloquist to resolve himself to a kind of ironic self-exile: not a voluntary exile from the place, but a voluntary exile from the world into the self, a burial of self in self.

This desire for self-exile, which he tries to claim comes from misanthropy, his furious despair over the sorrowful condition of man, drives his desire for removal. No matter what one

one being that "Tennyson's introduction of comparisons between war and peace certainly took him into areas of discourse which were the province of journals and newspapers and which most poets avoided" (4).

does in this world, for the soliloquist, he is still a puppet, incapable of voluntary action or of independent decisions:

We are puppets, Man in his pride, and Beauty fair in her flower;
Do we move ourselves, or are moved by an unseen hand at a game
That pushes us off from the board, and others ever succeed?
Ah yet, we cannot be kind to each other here for an hour;
We whisper, and hint, and chuckle, and grin at a brother's shame;
However we brave it out, we men are a little breed. (I.126-131)

Despite his railing, his sarcasm, and his disgust, he affects the posture of a misanthrope in order to cloak an even deeper desire, the urge to control his own passions. Desiring neither the life of the “man of science” or the “poet,” he wants instead a “temperate brain”:

The man of science himself is fonder of glory, and vain,
An eye well-practised in nature, a spirit bounded and poor;
The passionate heart of the poet is whirled into folly and vice.
I would not marvel at either, but keep a temperate brain;
For not to desire or admire, if a man could learn it, were more
Than to walk all day like the sultan of old in a garden of spice. (I.138-143)

In these lines, the soliloquist reveals his truest desire. What he fears more than anything is his own passion, and what he desires more than anything is control over his passions. He lives in constant terror that they will destroy him, run away with him, or betray him. If the satisfaction of desire is beyond his ken, better to lead a “philosopher’s life,” seeking to control his own mind and thereby to gain command of desire itself. This “expressed wish to ‘bury myself in myself’” quickly creates a new set of problems, though, for the speaker realizes that “such a centripetal movement might cause consciousness to collapse within a center in which there is only chaos and horror. To enfold oneself within one’s own mind, as Tennyson suggested in ‘Mariana,’ is to inhabit a turbulence of sensations and images that make contact with nothing but themselves. It is to court and to be absorbed by the dark shadows of madness.”²⁷

²⁷ Robert E. Lougy, “The Sounds and Silence of Madness: Language as Theme in Tennyson’s *Maud*,” *Victorian Poetry* 22.4 (1984): 411.

In response, he yearns for detachment. He cannot know the ways of God, for “the drift of the Maker is dark, an Isis hid by the veil” (I.144); and because he cannot know the will of God, he cannot understand “the ways of the world, how God will bring them about” (I.145). “Our planet is one, the suns are many, the world is wide” (I.146): the enormity of it all, the scope of the universe he finds himself incapable of fathoming leaves him dismissive of all. He asks, “Shall I weep if a Poland fall? shall I shriek if a Hungary fail? / Or an infant civilisation be ruled with rod or with knout?” (I.147-148). No, he answers, he will neither weep nor shriek, for “*I* have not made the world, and He that made it will guide” (I.149). He detaches himself from both national and international duty, denying the purposefulness to be found in national identity and foreign policy.

Such faith rings tremendously hollow though, for it is not faith. This is not a man turning over his terrors to his God; this is a man dismissing his terrors, denying responsibility—when no one has accused him, except himself. So in the face of his self-accusation, he turns immediately to his pastoral fantasy of a “philosopher’s life in the quiet woodland ways” (I.150), a place where if he “cannot be gay” (I.151), then at least a “passionless peace be my lot” (I.151). He yearns for exile from the people he detests so much. He aches to find himself

Far-off from the clamour of liars belied in the hubbub of lies;
 From the long-necked geese of the world that are ever hissing dispraise
 Because their natures are little, and, whether he heed it or not,
 Where each man walks with his head in a cloud of poisonous flies. (I.152-155)

But all this venom is only an outlet for his fear. When he finally admits what really terrifies him, it is not the horrors of the world he finds himself having to face, but himself that scares him the most. His own passions are his greatest fear, for “most of all” he would like to “flee from the cruel madness of love” (I.156). He characterizes love as madness, because this man sees any

extreme passion except anger as madness.²⁸ Anger can be expressed without fear of harm, but anything else—love, joy, excitement—must be feared, contained, and ignored at all costs.

iii. “Ready in heart and ready in hand”: Maud’s Battle Song

With Maud’s song, though, things begin to change. She arrives in England, back in the family home, and the soliloquist claims to be unmoved by his first sighting of her; she has “neither savour nor salt, / But a cold and clear-cut face” (I.78-79). Maud’s beauty is cold, frighteningly so. He finds her “perfectly beautiful” (I.80), but wonders, “where is the fault?” (I.80). There appears to be none, for she is “Faultily faultless, icily regular, splendidly null, / Dead perfection, no more” (I.82-83), a perfection tempered only by the rigors of travel, which lend just a slight “paleness, an hour’s defect of the rose” (I.84). Her appearance is marked though, however minimally, by two physical characteristics, an “underlip” just a “little too ripe, too full” (I.85) to suggest anything other than the potential for sexual pleasures, and “the least little delicate aquiline curve in a sensitive nose” (I.86), a quality better befitting a bird of prey than a dewy English rose.

While the soliloquist may be able to steel himself against the lure of Maud’s beauty, he can exercise no such restraint against the sound of her voice. He hears a “voice by the cedar tree / In the meadow under the Hall” (I.1620163); Maud sings a martial ballad, a warsong, and he finds himself awestruck and changed. Suddenly the nationalism, the Englishness, and the purposefulness through national identity that he has tried so hard to ignore, suppress, and deny in

²⁸ Christopher Ricks describes this moment in *Maud* as part of the poem’s larger “unprecedented evocation of a deep fear of love”: “*Maud* is not a poem which uses the word ‘madness’ lightly; the essential madness is the fear of love, and the hero is thinking not of traditional cheerful pangs, but of the worst psychic cowardice and dismay” (*Tennyson* 239). For Ricks, the soliloquist’s central fear is not “that he cannot be loved but that he cannot love” (*Tennyson* 239).

the first part of the poem becomes mingled with romantic desire. Patriotism and love merge in Maud's "martial song" (I.166), reaching the speaker's ears like "a trumpet's call" (I.166). She is

Singing alone in the morning of life and of May,
Singing of men that in battle array,
Ready in heart and ready in hand,
March with banner and bugle and fife
To the death, for their native land. (I.167-172)

It is strange that a man who has tried so desperately to distance himself from Britain and from his own Englishness would be so moved by a military ballad, one that applauds men who march to "the death, for their native land" (I.172). The man who has had no faith in his own nation to solve its social ills is now moved by a song extolling the glories of giving one's life for the nation. Maud's "passionate ballad gallant and gay" (I.165), a song we do not get to hear, awakens his passion, his gallantry, and his happiness; the tunes of nationalism sung in her voice do not ring hollow to the soliloquist, as have all the other voices in the poem. Instead, this merger of love and country rings true and glorious and nearly devastates him with the realization of how poorly he compares to the heroism of Maud's ballad:

Maud with her exquisite face,
And wild voice pealing up to the sunny sky,
And feet like sunny gems on an English green,
Maud in the light of her youth and her grace,
Singing of Death, and of Honour that cannot die,
Till I well could weep for a time so sordid and mean,
And myself so languid and base. (I.173-179)

But the soliloquist finds only temporary respite in her song, and he quickly turns away. "Silence, beautiful voice!" he commands, "Be still, for you only trouble the mind / With a joy in which I cannot rejoice, / A glory I shall not find" (I.180-183). Her song tortures him, for it forces him to confront two painful things: first, the Englishness he has tried so hard to deny, and second, the man he has become, one who can neither fully love nor fully hate his nation. He is unwilling to

do anything to better it, yet he cannot summon the strength to leave. Her song reminds him, if only briefly, of how glorious others find the England he professes to despise.

The soliloquist is haunted by all the deaths and disappointments wrapped up in the physical emblem of his England, his family's house:

Living alone in an empty house,
Here half-hid in the gleaming wood,
Where I hear the dead at midday moan,
And the shrieking rush of the wainscot mouse,
And my own sad name in corners cried,
When the shiver of dancing leaves is thrown
About its echoing chambers wide [. . .] (I.257-263)

This place drives him to the edges of his sanity, drives him to “a morbid hate and horror” of a “world in which [he has] hardly mixt” (I.264-265). The England he professes to so completely hate is, by his own admission, a place he barely knows. After Maud's song, though, he wonders if his own heart is truly a “heart half-turned to stone” (I.267), if it is really “flesh, and caught / By that [it] swore to withstand?” (I.268-269). Has he been captured by Maud's charms, and has he been seduced by her song into believing in the glory of the nation:

What if with her sunny hair
And smile as sunny as cold,
She meant to weave me a snare
of some coquettish deceit,
Cleopatra-like as of old
To entangle me when we met,
To have her lion roll in a silken net
And fawn at a victor's feet. (I.212-219)

For the soliloquist, love of Maud and love of Britain come to be one in the same; Maud comes to represent all that is potentially good in England. If he has Maud's love, England seems better.

But if Maud is true, then the world will seem a better place:

Yet, if she were not a cheat,
If Maud were all that she seemed,
And her smile had all that I dreamed,

Then the world were not so bitter
But a smile could make it sweet. (I.280-284)

Things change quickly on the moors, though, and as soon as the soliloquist admits his desire for Maud, Tennyson sends in a rival, snuffing out the hero's faint glimmer of hope. He sees Maud out riding with "two at her side" (I.322), her brother, a man the speaker despises as a "dandy-despot" (I.231), and his friend, the "new-made lord" (I.332), who has come to woo and win Maud's heart and hand. The soliloquist's mood turns on a dime, away from the optimism of only a few lines earlier to a darker, foreboding pessimism:

Something flashed in the sun,
Down by the hill I say them ride,
In a moment they were gone:
Like a sudden spark
Struck vainly in the night,
Then returns the dark
With no more hope of light. (I.323-328)

This new suitor is everything the soliloquist hates: rich, aristocratic (even if the ink is still wet on his appointment), and one with himself. He displays none of the self-hatred, none of the self-doubt that so consumes the soliloquist. He has no desire to bury himself in himself. Instead, he is "Rich in the grace all women desire, / Strong in the power that all men adore" (I.342-343)—two things the soliloquist is not. He holds the new-made lord, a man he knows to be his rival for Maud's affections, in complete contempt, mocking the "shine" of his "gewgaw castle" (I.347), itself as "New as his title, built last year" (I.348). He loathes the origins of his family money, handed down by the "old grandfather" who

[. . .] has lately died,
Gone to a blacker pit, for whom
Grimy nakedness dragging his trucks
And laying his trams in a poisoned gloom
Wrought, till he crept from a gutted mine

Master of half a servile shire,
 And left his coal all turned into gold
 To a grandson, first of his noble line [. . .] (I.334-341)

The kind of capitalist enterprise, financial success, and social ascendancy displayed by this newcomer rankles the soliloquist to the core, as do what he holds to be this man's intentions. He is certain the new-made lord is "Bound for the Hall, I am sure was he: / Bound for the Hall, and I think for a bride" (I.354-355), and he is equally certain of the reception this showy capitalist will find: "Blithe would her brother's acceptance be. / Maud could be gracious too, no doubt / To a lord, a captain, a padded shape, / A bought commission, a waxen face" (I.357-360). In the face of such competition, such certain defeat in the economic arena, class war, and marriage market, the soliloquist cries "Bought? what is it he cannot buy?" (I.362). This realization devastates him: "And therefore splenetic, personal, base, / A wounded thing with a rancorous cry, / At war with myself and a wretched race, / Sick, sick to the heart of life, am I" (I.362-365).²⁹

We discover that Maud's brother has hosted a ball, a gathering from which the hero was pointedly excluded:

A grand political dinner
 To the men of many acres,
 A gathering of the Tory,
 A dinner and then a dance
 For the maids and marriage-makers,
 And every eye but mine will glance
 At Maud in all her glory.
 For I am not invited [. . .] (I.817-824)

²⁹ The new-made lord represents the rapid social change and economic upheavals of mid-Victorian England that motivate the soliloquist's desire to flee. His desire to retreat into himself away from the vicissitudes of life in a rapidly changing England seems to be part of a larger Victorian condition, the desire to escape the rapid change that can make the individual feel powerless. Tennyson's martial hero in "Locksley Hall" shares this fear of large-scale change, and also loses himself in the exile of war.²⁹ This speaker indulges in a bit of visioning before leaving for battle: "Here about the beach I wandered, nourishing a youth sublime / With the fairy tales of science, and the long result of Time; / When the centuries behind me like a fruitful land reposed; / When I clung to all the present for the promise that it closed: / When I dipt into the future far as human eye could see; / Saw the Vision of the world, and all the wonder that would be" (11-16). "All the wonder that would be" quickly turns into a vision worthy of the soliloquist in *Maud*, a vision of imperialist control over a world "lapt in universal law" (130).

He has been treated as if he were disenfranchised, when he is not. He has been denied acknowledgment both as a franchised man and as a possible suitor for Maud, emasculated in both instances. His disappointment at being snubbed is momentarily tempered, however, by the joy he feels at his anticipated meeting with Maud in the garden:

For I know her own rose-garden,
And mean to linger in it
Till the dancing will be over;
And then, oh then, come out to me
For a minute, but for a minute,
Come out to your own true lover,
That your true lover may see
Your glory also, and render
All homage to his own darling,
Queen Maud in all her splendour. (I.827-836)

Part I ends with the “exhultant affirmation”³⁰ of this anticipated tryst and the speaker’s love at the end of the “Come into the garden, Maud” section, lyrics both beautiful and frightening:

She is coming, my own, my sweet;
Were it ever so airy a tread,
My heart would hear her and beat,
Were it earth in an earthy bed;
My dust would hear her and beat,
Had I lain for a century dead;
Would start and tremble under her feet,
And blossom in purple and red. (I.916-923)

This moment reveals itself as hauntingly prescient by the beginning of the next part of *Maud*.

The soliloquist’s “exultation is a bitter irony,”³¹ for the next line of the poem reveals how devastatingly the soliloquist’s passions have ruled him, despite all his attempts to suppress and control them: he murders the new-made lord, his rival for Maud’s affections, in a duel. Forced to

³⁰ Ricks, *Tennyson* 244.

³¹ Ricks, *Tennyson* 244.

flee England for France, he leaves with his victim's last words ringing in his ears: " 'The fault was mine,' he whispered, 'fly!'" (II.30).

And fly he does, across the Channel to Brittany, quickly finding himself on the classic exilic threshold, the edge of the sea. He marvels over the beauty and fragility of a "lovely shell / Small and pure as a pearl" (II.49-50) lying "on the Breton strand" (II.77).³² "Breton, not Briton" (II.78) he repeats in the very next line, as if to remind and convince himself of where he has landed: exiled and alone, in France not England, eventually plagued by "a hard mechanic ghost" (II.82) that looks awfully like Maud. He stands on "the dark sea-line / Looking, thinking of all [he has] lost" with an "old song vex[ing] (II.95) his ear. The song in his memory is Maud's warsong, the ballad she sang in the garden, but now the soliloquist knows that he will only hear his new song: "that of Lamech is mine" (II. 96), from the fourth chapter of Genesis:

Adah and Zillah, hear my voice:
Wives of Lamech, listen to my speech!
For I have killed a man for wounding me,
Even a young man for hurting me.
If Cain shall be avenged sevenfold,
Then Lamech seventy-sevenfold.³³

Cain's punishment was to be exiled forever while bearing the mark of God, to be a "fugitive and a vagabond [. . .] on the earth."³⁴ Thus the soliloquist takes the mark of God upon himself, one much greater than that assigned to Cain, one on par with the murderous Lamech.³⁵ He cannot be

³² Lougy reads this moment as "further amplify[ing] the implications of this dialectic" between "the two impulses of emergence (out of the world and its social landscapes) and retreat (into himself and away from the world)" (416). And although the shell itself is "a work of nature," it is also "dead, vacated, an empty enclosure into which the speaker momentarily enters" (417)—not unlike the empty enclosure of exile he has entered. Isobel Armstrong, however, does not read *Maud* as a dialectical poem; rather, its different parts "simply mirror each other" ("Tennyson in the 1850s" 133).

³³ Lamech's song, Genesis 4.23-24.

³⁴ Genesis 4:12.

³⁵ Lamech was the son of Enoch, the first son of the exiled Cain, and the name of Tennyson's exiled sailor.

killed by anyone who knows him for who he is, lest God's wrath be visited upon that man. Of course, if he is killed in battle, then who knows? Perhaps God's curse will not be visited on that man—and even if it were, what would it matter? For the wrath of God to fall on England's enemy at seventy-seven times its strength might be a real advantage on the Crimean battlefield.

iv. The Doom Assigned: The Soliloquist's Exilic Homeland

The *Maud* we know is not the poem Tennyson originally published, with significant repercussions for understanding the exilic impulse in the verse. The revisions of 1856 are generally taken to have “improved the logic of the poem”;³⁶ they included adding three stanzas to the opening, toning down peace-party attacks in the first part, and, most importantly for exilic and nationalist concerns, adding a stanza at the very close of the poem:

Let it flame or fade, and the war roll down like a wind,
We have proved we have hearts in a cause, we are noble still,
And myself have awaked, as it seems, to the better mind;
It is better to fight for the good than to rail at the ill;
I have felt with my native land, I am one with my kind,
I embrace the purpose of God, and the doom assigned. (III.54-59)

These last lines are the most controversial of the poem, for they provide a very different ending than the original one, which closed the poem with a parallel vision of the color of blood, the “blood-red blossom of war with a heart of fire” (III.53). The original ending was that of a poetic patriot; in contrast, the 1856 ending seems to be the voice of the imperialist. Both are troubling, disturbing images in their own right, but the latter one, along with the 1865 decision to divide out the last fifty-nine lines of the poem into Part III have provoked strong reactions.³⁷

³⁶ Tennyson: *A Selected Edition* 513.

³⁷ In the *Westminster Review*, George Eliot charged Tennyson with hating peace and loving war. In response to the line “For the long, long canker of Peace is over and done,”³⁷ she wrote that it was “possible, no doubt, to allegorize all this into a variety of edifying meanings; but it remains true, that the groundnotes of the poem are nothing more

In Hallam Tennyson's memoir of his father, the soliloquist is described as the "heir of madness, an egotist with the makings of a cynic, raised to sanity by a pure and holy love which elevates his whole nature [. . .] driven into madness by the loss of her whom he has loved [. . .] [and when he] has recovered his reason, giving himself up to work for the good of mankind through the unselfishness born of his great passion" (342). Judging by this account, the speaker would seem to have recovered completely from his exilic experiences in France. Yet there's another kind of exile at play in *Maud*; for the soliloquist's ultimate act of madness and his ultimate exilic experience takes place after he has "recovered his reason." The soliloquist rejects the more "rational" place, home, the thing one would seem to naturally crave after such a traumatic ordeal, for the "irrational"—the battlefield of the Crimea. And as the speaker rejects home in favor of war, he rejects another part of his existence, a far more troubling aspect of himself: with his decision to leave, he rejects madness for war. For this man, war constitutes a saner, more rational choice than staying home and risking losing himself again. He would rather die on the battlefield than die of madness at home.

than hatred of peace and the Peace Society, hatred of commerce and coalmines, hatred of young gentlemen with flourishing whiskers and padded coats, adoration of a clear-cut face, and faith in War as the unique social regenerator. Such are the sentiments, and such is the philosophy embodied in *Maud*; at least, for plain people not given to allegorizing; and it, perhaps, speaks well for Tennyson's genius, that it has refused to aide him much on themes so little worthy of his greatest self" (unsigned review "Belles Lettres" *The Westminster and Foreign Quarterly Review* vol LXIV No. CXXVI, October 1855, 601. (total pages for review 596-615). Overall, like Eliot, critics read *Maud* as the poet's personal stance on war, and having read the poem as his manifesto, responded in wildly divergent ways. Some, such as *The Times*, praised the poem's politics; even though the same review "excoriated 'Maud' as a literary work," reviewer Eneas Sweetland Dallas "rejoiced 'to find the Laureate proclaiming the truth with regard to the war—that this great war is the salvation of the country from evils far more to be dreaded than any which excite the peacemongers.'" Significantly more reviewers, however, read the poem's politics as horrifying and ridiculous: "Let the nation commence the work of self-reform; let it choose better rulers, make better laws, transport swindlers, institute a strict medical police. . . . To wage 'war with a thousand battles and shaking a hundred thrones,' in order to cure a hypochondriac and get rid of chicory in coffee, is a bathos" (Goldwyn Smith for the *Saturday Review*, quoted in Shannon 404). And in the twentieth century, the end of *Maud* has been characterized as everything from "patriotic twaddle" and "a mistake" (Jonathan Wordsworth, "'What is it, that has been done?': The Central Problem of *Maud*." 361 and 362) to to "an inevitable outgrowth of the speaker's mind in Parts I and II" (Bennett, "*Maud*, Part III: Maud's Battle Song" 36.)

Tennyson describes his soliloquist as being “Sane, but shattered” at the beginning of Part Three.³⁸ The man whose “life has crept so long on a broken wing / Through cells of madness, haunts of horror and fear” (III.1-2) has now “come to be grateful for a little thing: / My mood is changed” (III.3-4). Recovery from madness, though, hardly seems to be a “little thing”; rather, it is not only a restoration of sanity but also an exorcism of previous demons, the scattershot rage and intense self-loathing that formerly clouded his life.³⁹ Like the “starry Gemini” he describes hanging “like glorious crowns / Over Orion’s grave low down in the west,” (III.7-8), he too is still two men. He remains who he was before exile and madness, and yet has changed, becoming the man who sincerely believes that he has “awaked [. . .] to the better mind” (III.56). His fervent cry from Part I of the poem becomes reality in Part III, at a tremendous cost: “And ah for a man to arise in me, / That the man I am may cease to be!” (I.396-397).

The poem that begins with blood-red heath (I.2) ends with “The blood-red blossom of war with a heart of fire” (III.53). The gore soaked landscape of his childhood, the “red-ribbed hollow behind the wood” (II.23) from which “a million horrible bellowing echoes broke” (II.24), “thunder[ing] up into Heaven the Christless code, / That must have life for a blow” (II.26-27), has not only been reconciled to him, but has been internalized. His changed mood is more than a

³⁸ Tennyson: *A Selected Edition* 580 fn. iii.

³⁹ If his sanity has been restored. Robert E. Lougy offers a persuasive reading of the soliloquist’s final actions as being the maddest of all: “For while the speaker wears various masks of madness throughout the earlier sections of *Maud*, it is only when he removes those masks in order to reveal the face of restored sanity and normalcy beneath that we see the real face of madness staring at us, especially terrifying because it alone believes itself to be sane” (409). James Bennett offers a close reading of Part III, showing “how the ending emerges coherently from the preceding character of the narrator and brings a to a meaningful resolution the central patterns of the poem.” Readings along these lines have been offered by Marilyn J. Kurata, Ralph Rader, and Ann C. Colley. Chris R. Vanden Bossche seeks to counter these readings of *Maud* with a focus on the “tension between romance and realism” in the poem and the ways in which this tension can “explain another significant critical crux, the role played by war, specifically the Crimean War, in the poem” (“Realism versus Romance: The War of Cultural Codes in Tennyson’s *Maud*” (70). In addition to these responses, see also O’Neill, “Anthem for a Doomed Youth: Ann Interdisciplinary Study of Tennyson’s *Maud* and the Crimean War” 167-169; Robert E. Lougy, “The Sounds and Silence of Madness: Language as Theme in Tennyson’s *Maud*” 423-424.

movement from madness back to sanity, for the “cry for a brother’s blood” that would “ring in my heart and my ears, till I die, till I die” (II.34-35) is soon to be replaced for different cries for blood: the cry for blood to be shed on a battlefield, and the wails of pain and mourning after the battles.

The man the soliloquist was before has been destroyed by his exilic journey, and at the beginning of Part III, he now sees himself to be a better man, one capable of seeing the “glory of manhood stand on his ancient height” (III.21), reveling in the end of the Britain he so despised and a return to a feudalistic Britain of old:

Nor Britain’s one sole God be the millionaire:
No more shall commerce be all in all, and Peace
Pipe on her pastoral hillock a languid note,
And watch her harvest ripen, her herd increase,
Nor the cannon-bullet rust on a slothful shore,
And the cobweb woven across the cannon’s throat
Shall shake its threaded tears in the wind no more. (III.22-28)

As Joseph Bristow argues, the hero desires to “resurrect an idyllic picture of an era when, implicitly, serfs are once again enfeoffed to their paternalistic landed masters.”⁴⁰ He takes great joy in unleashing the dogs of war to avenge his personal pains. And despite the pain he knows will come for the “many who shall weep / For those that are crushed in the clash of jarring claims” (III.43-44), that will not diminish the glory:

Yet God’s just wrath shall be wreaked on a giant liar;
And many a darkness into the light shall leap,
And shine in the sudden making of splendid names,
And noble thought be freer under the sun,
And the heart of a people beat with one desire. (III.45-49).

R. J. Mann wrote that “sad as open and declared war is, it has in it those touches of moral grandeur which make its horrors tolerable in comparison with the more dreadful social, and

⁴⁰ Joseph Bristow, “Nation, Class and Gender: Tennyson’s *Maud* and War,” *Tennyson*, ed. Rebecca Stott (London: Longman, 1996) 141.

domestic hostilities, which seethe continuously in the dense populations of overcrowded lands.”⁴¹ We can go one more step with this idea: maybe the moral grandeur of war makes the horrors of the self tolerable as well—the soliloquist has the potential to achieve greatness in battle in ways he was never able to accomplish at home. Exile to the battlefield is therefore an ironic homecoming for him. Unlike his familial and national home, the battleground will be the place that gives him the comfort and the security in knowing he does the right and the good in a way that neither his family home nor his national one ever made him feel. Perhaps the “honourable suicide” of the son as soldier “may redeem the dishonourable suicide” of the father.⁴²

But we must remember that his exilic homeland is a terrible place. As Tennyson acknowledges by placing “Charge of the Light Brigade” in the same volume with *Maud*, he was aware of what happened to soldiers in the Crimea. He was perfectly cognizant of what he was sending his soliloquist out to find. As he well knew, it was “a beautifully dressed but ill-trained and ill-equipped little army that the British landed in the Crimea, geared for peace and not for war, and scarcely anyone, from private to commander-in-chief, knew his business properly.”⁴³

Eric Hobsbawm offers a chilling interpretation of the war’s cause and repercussions. He calls the Crimean War the “nearest thing to a general European war between 1815 and 1914,” a situation that “turned into a major, notoriously incompetent, international butchery between Russia on one side, Britain, France and Turkey on the other, and in which it is estimated that over 600,000 men perished, almost half a million of them because of disease: 22 percent of the

⁴¹ R. J. Mann, “Tennyson’s ‘Maud’ Vindicated: An Explanatory Essay,” *Tennyson: The Critical Heritage*, ed. John D. Jump (London: Routledge, 1967). 211

⁴² Ricks, *Tennyson* 248.

⁴³ Byron Farwell, *Queen Victoria’s Little Wars* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1972) 70.

British, 30 per cent of the French and about half of the Russian forces.”⁴⁴ But the most tragic part of the war, according to Hobsbawm, is how ultimately avoidable the conflict was: “Neither before nor after [the Crimean War] did the Russian policy of either partitioning Turkey or turning it into a satellite [. . .] envisage, require or indeed lead to a war between the powers.”⁴⁵ But in the 1850s, international tensions led to war, even though there is “little doubt that nobody wanted such a war, and it was called off, without making any visibly lasting difference to the ‘Eastern Question’, as soon as the powers could extricate themselves.”⁴⁶ Unfortunately, though, this extrication took place too late, after the “mechanism of ‘Eastern-Question’ diplomacy, designed for simpler confrontations, temporarily broke down—at the cost of a few hundred thousand lives.”⁴⁷ Ultimately, then, this battlefield, one where tragically high numbers lives were lost, becomes the speaker’s exilic space: an ironic safehouse sheltering him from the oppression of home. His final action and decision in the poem, to leave England for battle in the Crimea, thus becomes not a loss of self to the forces of imperialism, but a submersion of self into a protective community, one defined in explicitly national terms, the only possible home England has left him.

⁴⁴ Eric Hobsbawm, *The Age of Capital* (New York: Vintage Books, 1975) 76.

⁴⁵ Hobsbawm, *The Age of Capital* 76.

⁴⁶ Hobsbawm, *The Age of Capital* 76.

⁴⁷ Hobsbawm, *The Age of Capital* 76.

CODA

This study begins with the assertion that the poet who adopts an exilic stance does so for a particular reason, to gain a vantage point outside his or her own conception of “Britishness,” a way to comment upon the national identity that in many ways defines him or her. The poet does gain a different access to Britishness through exilic removal, seeing the nation and commenting on it in a different way. But what does looking at these works through a nationalist, exilic lens give us? What does the recognition of this dynamic do for us as critics?

We discover that as we engage with these works in this way, our own vantage point shifts as well. We find that when we come to Charlotte Smith’s *The Emigrants*, while we are still concerned with her melancholic, Romantic persona, we are also deeply concerned with how that persona becomes a political one, how the poet deliberately politicizes a persona connected to herself and disconnected from her nation in intimate and provocative ways. We find ourselves less concerned with the more typically Romantic, Wordsworthian visionary moments of *Childe Harold’s Pilgrimage* and more concerned with a politicized, exiled Byronic hero, a hero who tells us much not only about Byron’s conception of the condition of man but also the condition of the nation. *CHP* becomes then a later Romantic, canonical, poetic representation of the nation written by a man deeply estranged from that nation. We find a strong nationalist, exilic strain in E.B.B.’s poetry, a strain of equal importance to her commentaries on gender, marriage, sexuality, and womanhood. Her important nationalist critiques balance her commentaries on womanhood; after all, scholars have undertaken far more studies of gender in *Aurora Leigh* than anything else,

a critical void made more apparent when the depths of E.B.B.'s nationalist works are revealed. We find that a nationalist, exilic stance forces us to recognize that Great Britain is in fact not one nation; rather it is England, Ireland, Scotland, and Wales, and in the case of Ellen Johnston and Tennyson, Great Britain is more importantly revealed as what Disraeli called the "two nations." Frequently commented upon in the works of these writers, class war becomes, from where we sit now, class exile.

Taking as its chronological starting point English anxieties about French territorial and ideological expansion in the wake of late eighteenth-century revolution, this study ends thematically with Tennyson's 1855 *Maud* and chronologically with Ellen Johnston's 1867 edition of *Autobiography, Poems and Songs*. Such an ending, just on the cusp of the 1870s, marks an important time period when British conceptions of nationalism, imperialism, and ideological expansion begin to shift. As Patrick Brantlinger has argued, "studies of British imperialism as an ideological phenomenon" have largely "confined themselves to the period from the 1870s to World War I, in part because those years saw the development of a militantly expansionist New Imperialism."¹ English political verse does indeed shift into a different mode in the last quarter of the nineteenth century, becoming largely "imperialist" rather than "national"; but does this happen for "British" verse, or is it just "English" poetry? What happens after 1870, I would conjecture, is an emergence of a poetics of exile in the rapidly expanding empire.

As Britain grows larger over the course of the century, it becomes more difficult to conceptualize what it would mean to be exiled from that immense "imagined community." Can

¹ *Rule of Darkness* 19. Brantlinger continues by citing the work of John Gallagher and Ronald Robinson and their conclusions that British overseas expansion "went on apace" in the years preceding 1880, despite an "official attitude [. . .] resist[ant] to that expansion" (*Rule of Darkness* 20). Despite the realities of such imperial expansion during the early part of the century, however, this "official attitude" cannot be discounted.

the members of an empire have an imperial consciousness that parallels a national identity? Can individuals identify with an empire in the same way that they identify with the nation? Will that identification provoke the loyalty of the national “imagined community”? If it could, and I am not at all certain that such a thing would be possible, what then would it mean to be “exiled” from Britain when one lives in—and has quite possibly never been outside—India or Africa or Ireland? Isn’t such a spot of residence in and of itself always a kind of exile from the heart of Britain—England, and even more specifically, London? Would forms of self-governance in the colonies mitigate these feelings of estrangement? These questions, difficult ones for which I have few answers, would suggest a next direction for this project, a direction focused specifically toward the colonies, especially Ireland.

The union of Great Britain and Ireland was, at its best, a contentious decision that inaugurated a difficult and tumultuous period. However, the surrender of governance and legislative autonomy on the part of the Irish Parliament is compelling for the literary scholar interested in nationalism and national identity. Turning over management of Irish issues and affairs to a parliament located in England provoked “an increased attentiveness, in Ireland, to marks of nationality, to the question of language, and to the differences between the English and Irish temperaments”: “Poetry, it was felt, was the means by which a people’s temperament could be understood, because in poetry were to be heard the complicated voicings of its sense of itself.”² Yet this reliance upon poetry as a litmus test for a national consciousness comes with its own set of unique difficulties. Significant amounts of Irish nationalist verse were written in Gaelic, a written language inaccessible to English colonizers, to say nothing of the equally inaccessible oral tradition in Ireland. Thus the translation problem begins: what does it mean to

² Robert Welch, “Translation and Irish Poetry in English,” *Literary Interrelations: Ireland, England and the World*, eds. Wolfgang Zach and Heinz Kosok (Tübingen : G. Narr Verlag, 1987) 5.

study works written in a colonizing language? For the critic interested in a poetics of exile, how would one manage reading and writing about Gaelic works largely translated into English as part of an imperial process of assimilation? Aren't all works in translation of this kind already subjected to a kind of exilic experience—cut off from the very language that created them and the reader they were designed for? What of Irish nationalist poetry deliberately written in English? How would a poetics of exile shape this verse?

Even though most studies of nineteenth-century Irish literature focus on literature of the “revival years,” 1889-1929, Irish literature written long before the Act of Union is permeated with an exilic consciousness, one that constitutes a “distinctive and distinguishing feature of Irish literary sensibilities and literary history.”³ But what of the earlier years of the century? Undertaking an examination of the poetics of exile in Ireland could not begin in the 1870s or with John O’Leary’s return from exile in 1885 or with the foundation of the National Theatre, although these are moments the examination might easily move toward—moments that could very well prove the most profitable. As this study ends with the turn toward a uniquely late century nationalism, it would seem most appropriate to follow that turn, looking toward the colonies, the ever expanding Britain.

³ Ward xii.

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APPENDIX A:

“To every Honest and Thinking Man, in Great Britain.”

From the *Times*. 21 November 1792. 3.

The audacious attempts which French emissaries, assisted by factious and unprincipled men in this country, have long been making to sow dissensions amongst us, and introduce all the miseries of anarchy in the room of peace and good order, are now too glaring to escape the commonest observer. In various parts of this happy island, but particularly in the metropolis, seditious and malignant libels, defaming our beloved Monarch, and vilifying our free and invaluable constitution, are circulated with the wickedest industry. The horrid crimes committed in France are, in these writings, excused or denied, nay, sometimes even recommended to our imitation. Great Britain, flourishing beyond all former example in her trade and revenue, enjoying, from EQUAL laws, impartially administered, the trust and most genuine LIBERTY, is represented as enslaved, oppressed, and miserable. Are these things so? or are they the shameful falsehoods of enemies, foreign and domestic, intent upon our destruction? The common sense of every man, *high or low* tells him they are falsehoods. but as the laws of this free country are inadequate to the prevention, and in many cases to the punishment of these pernicious delinquencies, it is seriously recommended to all good men, of whatever rank or condition, who feel the blessings of our present excellent Constitution in Church and State, and who wish to preserve it inviolate, to discountenance, by all the means in their power, the efforts that are making to disturb the public tranquility.

The friends of peace, order, and good government, are numerous and respectable through every rank of the community:— the abettors of faction and French mischief, though clamorous and insolent, are, in number, reputation, and consequence, at present very contemptible.

[. . .] Let every honest British subject watch, detect, and expose the villains whom he shall observe, whether insidiously or openly, attacking the quiet and happiness of the public: let him deliver them, for punishment to the arm of the law; or, when the law cannot reach their iniquity, to the hatred and contempt of every good Englishman. If individuals want strength or courage, in so interesting a cause, let good men of all parties and of all ranks, ASSOCIATE themselves together to defend and preserve—all that can be dear to them—their liberty, their property, their lives. Shall the best rights of Britons be treacherously invaded, under false pretenses,—and shall they want courage and exertion to maintain them against English traitors or French Jacobins? Forbid it shame!—forbid it common sense, and a just regard to their own interest!

Friends and Countrymen, let us be true to ourselves, and the combined malice of the whole world cannot destroy the happiness for which we are indebted to our Constitution.

APPENDIX B:

SELECTED VERSES FROM *AUTOBIOGRAPHY, POEMS AND SONGS*

This appendix contains poems addressed in Chapter 4, “Factory Girl, Factory Exile: Ellen Johnston and *Autobiography, Poems and Songs*.” Poems reprinted as they appear in the 1867 edition of *Autobiography, Poems and Songs*; page numbers in parentheses refer to placement in the 1867 edition as well.

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An Address to Napiers' Dockyard, Lancefield, Anderston

Hail! prince of public works—mechanic arts—
 For men of genius and for noble hearts;
 Honour and fame, peace, power, and merit,
 Men well fill'd with philanthropic spirit.

I cannot speak like scientific men 5
 Whom literature gives colour to their pen,
 Who clothe their genius in that golden robe
 Wrought by learning, and not by nature's God.
 Those gilded abstracts of high inspiration
 Quoted out to gain man's admiration. 10
 Give me origin—such I hold at bay
 Who steal from authors of a bygone day;
 Pampering pages with record unnumber'd
 Robb'd from men who hath for centuries slumber'd.

Nay, nay, dear Work, to thee I'll only speak! 15
 Like what I am—a woman frail and weak.
 My self-taught learning may have power to move,
 For it is drawn from truth and heartfelt love,
 Free from flattery and from language vain,
 The sprouting of a love-sick woman's strain 20
 Whose hopes are centered now within thy walls.
 One of thy noble sons my heart enthrals!
 No marvel then I love to breathe thy name,
 It cheers my heart and fans a secret flame;
 No marvel then I oft walk round thy dock, 25
 Gazing intently on each secret spot,
 Anxious to know when last my love stood there
 That o'er it I might breathe a fervent prayer.

Dear Work, you know not what a gorgeous sight 30
 Thou art to me when wandering forth each night;
 Inhaling the breeze of summer's flow'ry scene,
 Musing on nature's lovely mantle green;
 When all is still and silent as the grave,
 When golden moonbeams kiss the silver wave
 That rolleth gently o'er sweet Clutha's breast 35
 That gorgeous stream where commerce never rests;
 Upon whose banks I've oft distill'd the dews
 Of fervent love, and pour'd on thee my muse,
 That prince of rivers that joins the mighty sea
 That's borne so many brave ships built by thee; 40
 And will, I hope, yet bear a thousand more
 With wealth and tidings to our Scottish shore.
 Who would not love that stream, old Scotland's Clyde?
 Oft have I watch'd its waters gently glide

Like infant angels o'er fair Shandon's beach, 45
 Where thy dear master's princely mansion stretch
 Its Gothic towers beneath the sun's bright rays—
 The ancient emblem of departed days.
 Oft have I wept in its surrounding woods
 Where Gareloch gently rolls her silvery floods, 50
 And sweetly echoes back o'er hill and plain
 The monarch organ's sweet and deep-toned strain,
 That fell like heavenly music on mine ears,
 And filled my soul with thought of brighter spheres.
 And I have seen that gorgeous window glass 55
 Filled with the heroes of great mount Parnass—
 Shakespeare, Milton, honoured Newton, too,
 Burns, Scott, Goldsmith—Britain's authors true—
 And many more brave and distinguished men,
 Whose works for centuries yet still wear a gem. 60
 Thy master's library contain a store
 Num'rous as sands on Shandon's lovely shore.
 And who could dream I've wandered in those halls
 Long ere the painters' hands adorned their walls;
 That I have knelt and prayed within that place 65
 Long ere the workman set with taste and grace
 The rich enamelled China diamonds neat,
 Which oft have kissed thy honoured master's feet.
 This was my prayer—that his brave sons might be
 The emblem of himself, noble and free, 70
 And useful members through life's fleeting dream,
 As their dear father many years has been.
 That his gay mansion of such stately grace
 May shield for centuries his own kindred race.
 And thinkest thou his prayer will not avail, 75
 Because 'twas breathed by woman weak and frail?
 God listens to the weak as well's the strong,
 And he may yet thy master's life prolong
 To be a very aged honoured man;
 Whose name and fame hath sailed to every land 80
 Yet still thy dusty walls give joy to me
 More pure than all the treasures of the sea.
 Oh! what were all its wealth heaped mountains high
 Could I no more thy towering dock descry?
 If hills and mountains, oceans dark and blue, 85
 Between us rolled to hide thee from my view.
 I would not leave thee, dear beloved place,
 A crown, a sceptre, or a throne to grace;
 To be a queen—the nation's flag unfurl—
 A thousand times I'd be a Factory Girl! 90

To live near thee, and hear thy anvils clink,
And with thy sons that hard-won pleasure drink.
That joy that springs from wealth of daily toil,
Than be a queen sprung forth from royal soil.
Farewell, dear Work, the twilight hour is past, 95
Dark Luna's curtain o'er thy walls is cast;
Heaven's vaults distil their crystal dew,
Queen Venus waits to hail my midnight muse.
Farewell! Remember my best wish shall be
Thy master's welfare and success in thee. 100

An Address to Nature on Its Cruelty

O Nature, thou to me was cruel,
 That made me up so small a jewel;
 I am so small I cannot shine
 Amidst the great that read my rhyme.
 When men of genius pass me by, 5
 I am so small they can't descry
 One little mark or single trace
 Of Burns' science in my face.
 Those publications that I sold,
 Some typed in blue and some on gold, 10
 Learned critics who have seen them
 Says origin dwells within them;
 But when myself perchance they see,
 They laugh and say, 'O is it she?
 Well, I think the little boaster 15
 Is nothing but a fair imposter;
 She looks so poor-like and so small,
 She's next unto a nought-at-all;
 Such wit and words wuite out-furl
 The learning of "A Factory Girl." ' 20
 At first they do my name exalt,
 And with my works find little fault;
 But when upon myself they gaze,
 They say some other claims the praise.
 O Nature, had'st thou taken time 25
 And made me up somewhat sublime,
 With handsome form and pretty face,
 And eyes of language—smiles of grace;
 With snowy brown and ringlest fair,
 A beauty quite beyond compare; 30
 Winning the charms of fortune's smile.
 Still dressed in grandeur all the while;
 Then those who see me would believe
 I never tried for to deceive
 By bringing out a publication 35
 Of borrowed lines or yet quotation.
 But those who see me in this dress,
 So small and thin I must confess,
 Well may they dare the words to use.
 Can such a vase distill Love's muse; 40
 Well may they ask dare I profess
 The talent of an authoress?
 Oh who could deem to gaze on me,
 That o'er I mused on land or sea,

That I have sat in shady bower	45
Musing on thy fairest flower;	
That I have sought the silvery stream	
At midnight hour, calm and serene,	
When skies of diamond sparkling flame	
Shed pearly tears of heeartsick shame,	50
To see me boudn in hardship's blight,	
Whilst man did rob me of my right,	
And critics read my simple rhyme	
And dared to say it was not mine?	
Imperfect thou my lays may be,	55
Still they belong to none but me.	
My blighted breast is their abode,	
They were placed there by nature's God;	
And though my years are spent in pain,	
Still seeking fortune's smiles in vain,	60
Still sighing youth's sweet eyars away,	
Changing life's light into clay;	
Hard toiling for my daily bread	
With burning heart and aching head.	
A vision of delusions's dream,	65
Hastening downward death's dark stream;	
Yet nature between you and I,	
Beneath the universal sky,	
Who dares to say I have bereft	
Another genius of their gift.	70

The British Lion

Poodle doodle doo, cried the blessed baby's dog,
 When he was done with dinner and had swallowed up a frog,
 I am not satisfied while another it is frying,
 I will go and pass the time, and I'll fight the British lion
 With my poodle doodle doo! 5
 Come on, you mighty lion,
 And show what you can do
 With your bow wow wow.
 The dog began to bark and the lion he did bellow—
 How dare you look at me, you usurping little fellow? 10
 The dog faced the lion, his moustache all greased with tallow,
 The lion caught his prey and the little dog did swallow
 With my poodle doodle doo!
 Come on now cried the lion,
 And show what you can do 15
 With your bow wow wow.
 The lion gave a grin, and when the little dog went down'
 He gazed on kingdoms three, famed for glory and renown;
 He couldn't count their armies, their navy and their cannon,
 Britain is well fortified, in that there is no gammon 20
 With my poodle doodle doo!
 She has swallowed me alive,
 And nothing I can do
 With my bow wow wow.

The Exile of Poland

Weep not for thy country, poor exile of Poland,
 O'er the depth of her wrongs or the gall of her chain;
 But hope for the future though now she has fallen,
 That time may restore her to freedom again.

Though her laurels of honour be traml'd and blighted, 5
 And her harp slumbers still in her desolate halls,
 May the exiles of Poland once more be delighted
 In the homes of their fathers at banquet and ball.

But while they are here we shall never deny them
 Our dear country's best love round their hearts to enthrall, 10
 Like true philanthropists feel glad to supply them
 With the fare of our cottage or the feast of our hall.

Though the brave sons of Poland like outcasts are banished
 For to toil with the stranger who knows not their worth
 Yet we hope that oppression ere long will be vanished, 15
 And sweet freedom restore them the land of their birth.

Yes, we hope that the chain of oppression may sever,
 And bright sun of freedom his golden beams shower;
 And the Russian eagles be fetter'd for ever,
 No longer to soar on the pinions of power. 20

Then gladsome as summer, in brightness careering,
 The sweet homes of their childhood shall hail them with glee
 When the Russian tyrants, like clouds disappearing,
 They shall sink underneath their own dastard decree.

Weep not for thy country, poor exile of Poland! 25
 Ah! forbid those large tears to moisten they cheek,
 Though thy soul like a fountain of sorrow hath swollen;
 Ah! thou yet may'st rejoice in Russia's defeat.

The Factory Exile

Thou lovely verdant Factory! What binds my heart to thee?
 Why are thou centered in my soul, twined round my memory?
 Why dost thou hover o'er my dreams my slumbers to beguile?
 When falsehood of the deepest dye has doomed me an Exile.

With tear-dimm'd eyes through fancy's veil I gaze upon thy walls; 5
 Their bright enamelled golden tinge my bleeding heart enthrals,
 I deem I am what once I was, still bending o'er my loom
 And musing on a lovely form of beauty's sweetest bloom.

The love-born joy that sweels my soul, whilst I in fancy toll
 Within thy much-loved walls again—shwere first I saw a smile 10
 That I can never see again save with a sad regret;
 Its sunny lustre now is lost in gloomy retrospect.

Ah, me! that one so beautiful should own so cruel a heart
 As injure one who still to him did act a friendly part;
 What have I done that he hath wrung my heart with bitter woe? 15
 I was to him a faithful friend—Why has he grown my foe?

Language never can express how much I thought of him,
 I prized his perseverance—so deep did I esteem
 His active, energetic powers, his patience, and his worth:
 Alas! I thought that he excell'd all other men on earth. 20

But God alone can only tell the base and cold reward
 That he gave me in return for such a true regard;
 He scattered thorns across my path, calumny o'er my name,
 And crushed the blossoms of my hope—the laurels of my fame.

And God alone can only tell how I have been betrayed, 25
 But vengeance unto Him belongs—then why am I dismayed?
 Though I am tossing to and fro on sorrow's galling wave,
 The persecuted findeth rest and peace beyond the grave.

Thou love, verdant Factory! though doom'd a poor exile—
 Disgraced, degraded, never more within thy walls to toil, 30
 I will forgive my enemies, though they have me belied,
 And may the wrongs I bore in thee to me be sanctified.

The Last Sark

Written in 1859.

Gude guide me, are you hame again, an' ha'e ye got nae wark,
 We've naething noo tae put awa' unless yer auld blue sark;
 My head is rinnin' roon about far lichtner than a flee—
 What care some gentry if they're weel though a' the puir wad dee!

Our merchants an' mill masters they wad never want a meal, 5
 Though a' the banks in Scotland wad for a twelvemonth fail;
 For some o' them have far mair goud than ony ane can see—
 What care some gentry if they're weel though a' the puir wad dee!

This is a funny warld, John, for it's no divided fair,
 And whiles I think some o' the rich have got the puir folk's share, 10
 Tae see us starving here the nicht wi' no ae bless'd bawbee—
 What care some gentry if they're weel though a' the puir wad dee!

Oor hoose ance bean an' cosey, John; oor beds ance snug and warm
 Feels unco cauld an' dismal noo, an' empty as a barn;
 The weans sit greeting in oor face, and we ha'e noucht to gie— 15
 What care some gentry if they're weel though a' the puir wad dee!

It is the puir man's hard-won toil that fills the rich man's purse;
 I'm sure his gouden coffers they are hot wi' mony a curse;
 Were it no for the working man what wad the rich men be?
 What care some gentry if they're weel though a' the puir wad dee! 20

My head is licht, my heart is weak, my een are growing blin';
 the bairn is faen' aff my knee—oh! John, catch haud o' him,
 You ken I hinna tasted meat for days far mair than three;
 Were it no for my helpless bairns I wadna care to dee.

The Lay of a Scottish Girl

Dear Erin, wilt thou still thy harp?
 And I will sing to thee;
 For thou hast been, sweet Emerald Queen,
 The songstress of the sea.
 Thine are the bards, whose love-born muse 5
 Like jewell'd stars will shine,
 Although they sleep in slumber deep
 Beneath their sea-girt shrine.

Dear Erin, Scotland was my home,
 The land where I was born; 10
 Though now an exile, here I roam,
 And wander all forlorn.
 Yet still I love the land wherein
 I've borne a thousand wrongs,
 And spent youth's years in sighs and tears, 15
 Whilst others sung my songs.

And I have dwelt in foreign lands,
 Where wealth was shining bright—
 And I have roamed o'er sunny strands,
 Where all seemed life and light. 20
 I've wreath'd my brow with jessamine
 From India's balmy soil,
 Yet sweeter seems the shamrock green
 Of Erin's lovely isle.

And I have danced in Italy's halls 25
 With lordly gallants gay,
 Whose waving plumes and star-clad breasts
 Bespoke their high-born sway.
 Their dazzling grandeur made me sad,
 For scorn lurked in their smile— 30
 I prize by far, without a star,
 The youths of Erin's isle.

My native land hath heath clad hills,
 With thistles waving free;
 My native land hath murmuring rills 35
 That wander to the sea;
 But Erin hath a humble hut
 Where I may ever dwell,
 The heather hills and murmuring rills
 I bid the now farewell. 40

Dear Erin, thou art now my home,
 My fate shall blend with thine;
I never more may leave thy shore,
 Let weal or woe be mine.
And when Death's hand hath laid me low, 45
 To slumber in thy soil,
My blessing, like a spirit bright,
 Shall beam on Erin's isle.

Lines to Mr. James Dorward, Power-Loom Foreman, Chapelshade Works, Dundee

The first and best friend to the authoress in the deepest hours of her trials and tribulations in
Dundee

The summer's come again, Jamie, twa happy years ha'e fled
Since ye gied me a limm, Jamie, in the dear Chapelshade;
And I will ne'er forget that time until they day I dee,
That happy blessed morning when ye gied that limm to me.

O I was sorry then, Jamie, a wand'ring poor exile, 5
Begging my brothers of the earth to gie me leave to toil;
Pale poverty stood at my door, my hope on earth was fled,
Until I found a resting-place within the Chapelshade.

There was muckle said and dune, Jamie, by mair than ane or twa, 10
To take frae me my limm, Jamie, and get turned awa;
But ye were my faithful friend in need, and I will ne'er forget,
Until I'm numbered wi' the dead, how deep I'm in your debt.

And may Heaven bless ye, Jamie, and a' your kith and kin,
For ye ha'e left it in my power the victory for to win;
I've conquered a' my foes, Jamie, that did my ruin plan, 15
And noo I bid defiance to every perjured man.

While you are on my side, Jamie, I carena a bawbee
For a' the West-end tenters that ever screwed a key;
I'm happy as a queen, Jamie, in the bony Chapelshade,
And whilst you're pleased to keep me there, wi' you I'll earn my bread. 20

And wha are they would blame, Jamie, altho' I wish ye weel?
For words can never name, Jamie, the gratitude I feel;
Ye are the first, the truest friend I've met wi' in Dundee,
And whate'er may be my future lot, I'll bless your mem'ry.

May heaven bless your wife, Jamie, wha aye will share a part 25
Of the ne ver dying gratitude that lives within my heart;
May God restore her better health, and may she live to see
Her bairns' bairns smiling in manhood's pride and glee.

And may your bonny Maggie be as gude as she is fair,
Likewise your absent Ellen, that's beneath anither's care; 30
May their lot through life be happy, and God still be their guide—
May they be their father's comfort, their mother's joy and pride.

And may William, George, and Thomas, all grow up useful men,
 Ah! gie them lots o' learning –make them masters o' the pen;
 The man that's master o' the pen is master o' an art, 35
 That on the tower o' science still hauds the master part.

And may your dear Elizabeth, and Agnes your wee pet,
 And your wee rosebud Davy, ne'er cause ye to regret;
 But twine like ivy round your heart wi' love that sill endears,
 And licht like sunshine in a storm the winter o' your years.

Frae the bottom o' my heart, Jamie, thus I wish for thee– 40
 May you and yours aye be as weel as I wish ye would be;
 May health and wealth and joy and love aye round your hearth be spread;
 Long may ye be my foreman in the bonny Chapelshade.

Lines to the Factory Girl, by a Glasgow Lassie

Had I been gifted, gentle maid,
 With half thy sweet poetic fire,
 Then would I made the Muse my slave,
 And bid the heavenly-sounding lyre
 Extol they praise till none should be
 So famed as Ellen of Dundee. 5

But Fate so willed that thou shouldst sing.
 And I must list to they sweet strains,
 And thank kind Heaven for sending here—
 To dry our tears and soothe our pains— 10
 A creature womanly and kind,
 With gentle heart and sterling mind.

Thy pretty songs I always read
 With genuine feelings of delight,
 And know none save a maiden pure
 So warm and tenderly could write. 15
 Kind wishes to thy shrine I bring—
 Wishes my only offering.

O call me sister, and I will
 Give deep, unselfish love away; 20
 O call me sister, for, like thee,
 I weary toil from day to day,
 And feel sharp worldly thorns each hour,
 Yet gather, too, sometimes a flower.

Thou lovest—blush not, sweetest maid— 25
 The heart secured is worth thy keeping;
 'Tis joy to know on foreign soil
 A manly heart is warmly beating
 With love that distance cannot fade
 For thee, his gifted Scottish maid. 30

Perchance thy face I ne'er may see;
 If cruel fate has so designed,
 Fancy shall ever picture thee
 As gentle, beautiful, and kind.
 Thine be a bosom free from care, 35
 Thine be a brilliant bright career,
 So fondly hopes thy friend, C.R

The Morning: A Recitation

Most respectfully dedicated to the Dundee Power-Loom Tenters' Spouting Club.

Hushed now are the rebels that fought in yon den,
Whose leading commanders were God-fearing men—
We hear not the echo from mountain and glen
Of the Factory Boy's song in the morning!

In sackcloth and ashes his muse is laid low, 5
He feels his defeat and weeps now o'er his woe;
His sigh has the sound of a dastardly foe—
He is seeking retreat in the morning!

And he wanders yon haunt of falsehood and guile, 10
Where wolves in sheep's clothing and hypocrites toil;
Where Love, Truth, and Virtue can ne'er again smile—
For their glory hath gone with the morning!

It once was a garden both lovely and green,
And 'Genius' placed there a song-weaving queen;
But the false-hearted gardener, from motives unseen, 15
Doomed her an outcast in the morning.

Like a storm-battered barque tossed on the sea,
A poor 'Factory Exile' she wandered Dundee;
Head-Tenters combined, at each committee—
For to keep her at bay in the morning. 20

In an hour of her wildest sorrow of heart,
Ah! she sought for a balm to solace the smart;
But 'Gall of Infamy' was pour'd on the part—
For to heal up her wounds in the morning!

No longer she's crying outside of its walls, 25
Her muse she is sighing Chapelshade Halls;
Her voice, though still faint, unto memory recalls—
She'll shine like a star in the morning!

When the withering blast of falsehood and shame
Shall crumble its strong walls and darken its fame; 30
The wormwood and nettle shall coil round its name—
No flower shall e'er gladden its morning.

Like the ruins (of old) of Babylon's towers,
The cypress and willow shall weep in its bowers;

For a dark cloud of falsehood over it lowers— 35
 And a curse hovers there in the morning!

No flag of triumph waveth over its gate,
 Nor guards of our city like sentinels wait
 To guard from its rebels of malice and hate—
 Our poor Factory Exile in the morning! 40

Its old heirless owner is hastening away,
 Where homage to mammon no longer he'll pay;
 When his marrowless bones are mingled with clay—
 Then oblivion shall dawn o'er his morning.

Behold his new mansion! so stately and gay— 45
 The boast of the ferry—looks down on the Tay;
 But the ghost of a bankrupt, grim-like and grey—
 Wanders through its vast halls every morning!

The voice of his handmaids no longer we hear,
 Like the growl of a lioness, burst on our ear; 50
 In the local bard's column no loner appear—
 His Factory Boy's song in the morning!

The vengeance of Heaven hath smitten his lyre,
 And the glory is dim of his poetic fire:
 Now he fans no false flame his muse to inspire— 55
 For to brand us with shame in the morning!

No marvel his cheeks hath grown pale with regret,
 The wrongs he hath done us he cannot forget;
 And an old withered shrub of dark disrespect—
 It doth haunt his mind's eye every morning! 60

But the fame of that shrub immortal shall bloom,
 When its old withered stem is wrapt in death's gloom;
 Its blossoms of talent shall scatter perfume—
 O'er our Bonnie Dundee in the morning!

If the heavens send forth their glorious light 65
 For to beam on our land of freedom and right;
 The people shall know 'tis for justice we fight—
 We shall conquer or die in the Morning!

Mourning for Garibaldi

Oh, England! where now is thy fame-spreading story?
 Wrapt in a cloud of heart-bleeding shame;
 And where's Garibaldi, that hero of glory,
 In whose love-fraught bosom you've planted a stain?

And where is the throne where thy sovereign is seated 5
 With the crown of royalty over her brow?
 Can she deem for one moment we thus shall be cheated
 By her lords, dukes, and earls, who basely did bow

To a foreign despot, and his dastard dictations?
 Oh! woe to thee England, the deed thou hast done 10
 Shall brand thee forever the meanest of nations;
 Thou'st lost in one hour what in centuries was won.

And where are the banners thou proudly unfurled
 When thy gay halls re-echoed that patriot's hymn?
 Oh, England, thou once wert the 'gem' of the world, 15
 But now is thy glory grown tarnished and dim.

Dost thou remember that thou wert in danger?
 Though no Garibaldi had e'er trod thy soil;
 For the eagle-eyed vulture could be thy avenger,
 He thirsts for thy blood, oh! trust not his smile. 20

Though thou hast obeyed him, and sadly bereaved us
 Of a hope which no language had power to impart;
 Though thy worthless conspired, and basely deceived us,
 Garibaldi's dear form still dwells in our hearts.

Though we ne'er may behold him, his name we will cherish, 25
 Our love-tears shall wash from his bosom thy shame;
 And thy dastard insult ne'er in memory shall perish,
 Thou hast snapt the gold link of our sister-wove chain.

Farewell, Garibaldi, though thou hast departed,
 Torn from our hearts by Napoleon's base tools; 30
 Know'st thou that old Scotland's a nation true hearted,
 She ne'er shall be mocked by England's gay fools.

O! Scotland, my Country

Written in Belfast, April, 1857.

O! Scotland, my country, thou land of my father,
 When shall I gaze on thy heath hills again?
 O! when shall I see the swet calm twilight gather
 Among the grey cairns of my auld native hame?
 For though are the dear land where freedom's bells blossom,
 Thy glens are the martyrs and patriots' graves,
 And bright is the glory that beams in thy bosom,
 And green are the fields where thy proud thistle waves.

O! Scotland, my country, wherever I wander,
 Thy name to my bosom a guide star shall be;
 On the deeds of they Wallace often I'll ponder,
 Wha focht and wha fell, my country, for thee.

Dear land of my kindred, wha wadna adore thee,
 That e'er heard thy history of heroes so brave?
 Sweet home of the freeman, there never hung o'er thee
 The curse of tyrant nor tear of a slave.
 The usurping Southron long tried thy undoing,
 Thy Wallace he conquered, though basely he fell,
 And auld Bothwell Castle, that moulders in ruin,
 Whilst ivy clings round it his valour shall tell.

O! Scotland, my country, wherever I wander, &c.

Let proud England boast of her high titled gentry,
 Her queens and her princes, her palace and throne;
 Despite a' her grandeur, she'll ne'er be a country
 Emblazon'd wi' fame like my auld Caledon.
 Let green Erin boast of her wild woven bowers,
 Her ivy-clad walls and her green shamrock soil;
 The spirit of bigotry springs wi' her flowers
 A feeling of discord inhabits her isle.

O! Scotland, my country, wherever I wander, &c.

A change hath passed o'er thee; sad, sad is the story
 That brings the saut tears of grief fast frae my e'e;
 They tell me thy heath hills look dismal and hoary,
 Hung round wi' the curatins of dark poverty.
 O! Scotland, my country, my forefathers' nation,
 My heart bleeds to hear of thy sorrow and pain;

To deem thy brave sones grow weak wi' starvations,
O, God, that they had but their Wallace again!

O! Scotland, my country, wherever I wander,
My heart's purest wish still shall inger wi' thee; 40
On the deeds of thy Wallace I often ponder,
And wish, for thy sake, I a Wallace could be.

The Rifleman's Melody

They say the French are coming, boys!	
To fight on Britain's shore;	
With blood to stain her freeman's plain,	
And soak her fields with gore.	
Give them a hearty welcome, boys,	5
And let them feel the power	
Of British might before they fight	
Her sons a half-an-hour.	
 She conquered Bonaparte, my boys—	
Defeated Nicholas, too;	10
She's already waiting, boys,	
Napoleon to subdue.	
The glorious fire of freedom	
Is burning in her heart;	
So, let the French dogs come, my boys,	15
She fears no mastiff's bark.	
 Enshrined within the tomb, my boys,	
Departed heroes lie,	
And spirits of the martyr'd dead	
That live beyond the sky	20
Inspire each British heart, my boys,	
That burns for French defeat;	
So, let the bloodhounds come, my boys,	
She fears no dastard's threat.	
 Her banners are red, white, and blue,	25
The standard flag of yore,	
When noble William Wallace rode	
Deep in the Saxon's gore.	
And while she sings that patriot's hymn,	
Where freedom's banner waves,	30
Shall French usurpers claim her rights,	
And make her freemen slaves.	
 By heaven, we love our home, boys,	
With love that is sincere;	
But we love the breath of freedom,	35
It is to us more dear.	
And whilst our arms can draw the sword	
Our willing aide to lend,	
Like 'Wallace Wight' we'll sternly fight	
Our country to defend.	40

Arise! the French are coming, boys,
And let our watchword be—
To conquer or to die, my boys,
For Britain shall be free.
And when that they arrive, my boys,
We soon shall let them feel,
Our love of right shall aid with might
Our swords of British steel.

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To the Factory Girl

Sing on, sweet girl, chant forth thy cheering strain,
 And secret solace seek for saddened joy;
 Thy harp's rich numbers Niniam's Bard might wean
 From wandering fortune 'neath a stranger sky.

But friends spring up, fair poetess, like flowers, 5
 Spontaneous beings of a summer day;
 Attachment varies, but affection bowers
 And blooms aye freshest in its native air.

Thy melting melodies, thou empress of song,
 From slumber's silent, lone, secluded cell 10
 Hath woke the harp that, idly unstrung,
 Hung mute and tuneless on its cloister'd wall.

And Scotland's hills and rugged rocks shall ring
 And Ellen's fame shall cleave the crested wave,
 When thine own bard shall waft from Queensland strains 15
 Memorials of thy love in future lays.

Then mourn not, maid, 'tis madness to repine;
 And grief rings love from out young tender hearts,
 Which turns upon itself inflicting pain—
 It tears the bandage from the bleeding smart. 20

How weak thy bard's effusions classed with thine,
 Tho' praise comes pleasant howsoe'er compiled!
 'Tis merit gilds the poet's sacred shrine,
 And favour nurseth talent's orphan child.

Dumfries, Dec., 1865

Mat. Stevenson

To the Factory Girl

The melody of thy sweet muse
 Has waked my sleeping lyre,
 And in my very heart and soul
 Has kindled a desire

To bid my humble muse arise
 And sing with heartfelt glee
 The praises of the Factory girl
 Who dwells in sweet Dundee.

Sing on, thou sweet enchantress, sing,
Thy muse shall higher soar—
Thy fame shall spread o'er Britain's isles,
And cross to India's shore.

Then why repine whilst at they loom,
Amidst the factory dim?
Thou'rt weaving for thyself a name;
Bright honours thou shalt win.

The lustre of thy muse shall shine,
 And stamp its image bright,
 On minor poets yet unborn,
 And fill them with delight. 20

O, thou sweet poetess, accept
 This humble lay of mine;
 Were I endow'd with powers like thee,
 I'd make it brighter shine.

Peter McCall

George Stree, Ayr, Jan, 23, 1866

Welcome, Garibaldi
A Voice from Dundee

Thou art welcome, Garibaldi! to Scotland's sweet Dundee,
Illustrious patriot warrior who set fair Italy free;
To slaves of Inquisition a balm thou didst impart,
And burst the galling fetters that bound thy nation's heart.

Thou are welcome, Garibaldi! unto our brown-heath soil, 5
To charm us with the beauty of thy bright and tranquil smile;
A king uncrowned, a conqueror, we truly know thou art,
Fame's diadem shines on thy brow, and glory jewels thy heart.

Thou are welcome, Garibaldi! where sons of freedom toil, 10
Ours may not be a land like thine, where sunshine ever smiles;
Ours is a land of liberty, where Freedom's flag belongs,
No slave is bowed beneath its yoke, no tyrant sings its songs.

Thou are welcome, Garibaldi! with all thy faithful train,
With heart and soul we hail thee, for freedom is thine aim;
No king did ever ear a crown nor hold a court levee 15
That we would make more welcome, brave warrior king, than thee.

Thou are welcome, Garibaldi! fair Italy's saving star;
Ah! we mourned thee as a brother, when thou from us afar
Lay prostrate on the lonely couch exhausted, pale, and weak,
Disabled by a traitor's ball, but never by defeat. 20

Thou are welcome, Garibaldi! thou didst endure the pain,
It placed thy life in peril, yet deathless was its aim;
Napoleon's greedy eagles were hovering near thy grave,
But God decreed that thou wouldst live some other land to save.

Thou are welcome, Garibaldi! thou are the true-born type 25
Of our departed Wallace, who gained our country's right;
Defying ever danger, he rushed amidst the strife,
And purchased Scotland's freedom with the ransom of his life.

Thou are welcome, Garibaldi! hailed by one and all, 30
We'll give thee fare of cottage hearth, and feast of palace hall;
Old Scotland hath no honour that she would not give to thee,
Thou are beloved in all her lands as thou'rt in Dundee.

Thou are welcome, Garibaldi! across our far-famed Tay,
We'll lead thee to our Baxter Park, where flowers are blooming gay;
The name of those who gave it, like thine own, can never die, 35
But live with fame immortal in a bright and cloudless sky.

Long life to Garibaldi! and when all thy warfare's done—
When thy task on earth is ended, and thy last victory won—
Oh, sweet shall be thy dreamless sleep, with angels for thy guard,
And a glorious crown in Heaven shall be thy rich reward. 40

The Working Man

The spring is come at last, my freens, cheer up, you sons of toil,
 Let the seeds of independence be sown in labour's soil,
 And tho' the nipping blast of care should blight your wee bit crop,
 Oh dinna let your spirits sin, cling closer aye to hope.

If youth and health be one your side, you ha'e a richer boon 5
 Than him that's dressed in royal robes and wears a diamond crown;
 Nae widow's curse lies in your cup, you bear nae orphan's blame;
 Nae guilty conscience haunts your dreams wi' visions of the slain.

Tho' light your purse, and worn your coat the darkest hour of night,
 Is whiles the very ane that is before it dawns daylight; 10
 And tho' your lot looks unco hard, your furture prospects drear,
 Hope's sun may burst through sorrow's cloud, your sinking soul to cheer.

The summer's drawing near, my freens, cheer up ye sons of toil.
 Let the sun of independence aye greet ye wi' a smile;
 His genial beams wil light your hearth when it is mirk wi' care, 15
 When ye ha'e little for to spend, and far less for to spare.

Let him that ne'er kent labour's yoke but come to Glasgow toon,
 And let him take a cannie walk her bonny buildings roon
 and let him wi' his lady hands, his cheeks sae pale and wan,
 Stand face to face, without a blush, before the Working Man. 20

But the man who wins fair fortune wi' labour's anxious pain,
 He is the man who'd justly earned her favour and her fame;
 And may he aye keep flourishing wherever he may gang,
 And ne'er forget the days that gane when but a Working Man.

The harvest soon will be, my freens, cheer up, you sons of toil. 25
 And the fu'some hand of plenty will store your domicile;
 Ye are the sons of nature's art, aye forming some new plan,
 Oh what would bonny Scotland do without the Working Man?

APPENDIX C:

ELLEN JOHNSTON'S *AUTOBIOGRAPHY*, 1867 and 1869

Appendix C contains the full text of the “Autobiography of Ellen Johnston, ‘The Factory Girl’” from her 1867 *Autobiography, Poems and Songs*. Pagination from the 1867 edition is indicated by bracketed numbers. Sections in **bold typeface** indicate passages that do not appear in the 1869 second edition of *APS*. The section in *alternate typeface* indicates a passage altered for the second edition; explanatory note attached.

Gentle Reader,—On the suggestion of a friend, and the expressed wished of some subscribers, I now submit the following brief sketch of my eventful life as an introduction to this long expected and patiently waited for volume of my Poems and Songs.

Like every other autobiographer, I can only relate the events connected with my parentage and infancy from the communicated evidence of witnesses of those events, but upon whose veracity I have full reliance.

I beg also to remind my readers that whatever my actions may have bee, whether good, bad, or indifferent, — they were the results of instincts derived from the Creator, through the medium of my parents, and the character formed for me by the

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unavoidable influence of the Time and Country of my Birth, and also by the varied conditions of life impressing themselves on my highly susceptible and sympathetic natures---physical, intellectual, and moral.

According to the evidence referred to, my father was James Johnston, second oldest on of James Johnston, canvas-weaver, Lochee, Dundee, where he learned the trade of a stone-mason. After which he removed to Glasgow, where he became acquainted with my mother, Mary

Bilsland, second daughter of James Bilsland, residing in Muslin Street, and then well known as the Bridgeton Dyer.

I do not remember hearing my father's age, but my mother at the time of her marriage was only eighteen years old. I was the first and only child of their union, and was born in the Muir Wynd, Hamilton, in 183--, my father at the time being employed as a mason extending the northern wing of the Duke of Hamilton's Palace.

When the Duke was informed that my father was a poet, he familiarly used to call him Lord Byron, and, as I have been told, his Grace also used to take special notice of me when an infant in my mother's arms, as she almost daily walked around his domain.

When I was about seven months old my father's contract at Hamilton Palace was finished, and being of an active disposition, somewhat ambitious, proud, and independent, with some literary and scientific attainments, with a strong desire to become a teacher and publish a volume of his poetical works, he resolved to emigrate, engaged a passage to America for my mother and himself, and got all things ready for the voyage.

But when all the relatives and friends had assembled at the Broomielaw to give the farewell kiss and shake of the hand before going on board, my mother determined not to proceed, pressed me

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fondly to her bosom, exclaiming---'I cannot, will not go, my child would die on the way;' and taking an affectionate farewell with my father, he proceeded on the voyage, and my mother fled from the scene and returned to her father's house, where she remained for some years, and supported herself by dressmaking and millinery.

Having given the evidence of others in respect to my parentage and infancy, let me now, gentle reader, state some of my own childhood's recollections, experience, and reflections thereon.

In my childhood Bridgeton, now incorporated with the city of Glasgow, abounded with green fields and lovely gardens, which have since then been covered over with piles of buildings and tall chimneys. The ground on which the factory of Messrs Scott & Inglis stands was then a lovely garden, where I spent many, many happy hours with 'Black Bess,' my doll, and 'Dainty Davie' my dog, with whom I climbed many a knowe and forded many a stream, till one day he left my side to follow a band of music, and we never met again; but for whose loss I deeply mourned, and for three successive nights wept myself to sleep, for 'Dainty Davie' was the pride of my heart, for I could not live without something to love, and I loved before I knew the name of the nature or feeling which swelled my bosom.

Perhaps there are few who can take a retrospective view of their past lives, and through their mind's eye gaze on so many strange and mysterious incidents. Yes, gentle reader, I have suffered trials and wrongs that have but rarely fallen to the lot of woman. Mine were not the common trials of every day life, but like those strange romantic ordeals attributed to the imaginary heroines of 'Inglewood Forest.'

Like the Wandering Jew, I have mingled with the gay on the shores of France---I have feasted in the merry halls of England---I have danced on the shamrock soil of Erin's green isle---
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and I have sung the songs of the brave and the free in the woods and glens of dear old Scotland.

I have waited and watched the sun-set hour to meet my lover, and then with him wander by the banks of sweet winding Clutha, when my muse has often been inspired when viewing the

proud waving thistle bending to the breeze, or when the calm twilight hour was casting a halo of glory around the enchanting scene; yet in all these wanderings I never enjoyed true happiness.

Like Rassellas, there was a dark history engraven on the tablet of my heart. Yes, dear reader, a dark shadow, as a pall, enshrouded my soul, shutting out life's gay sunshine from my bosom---a shadow which has haunted me like a vampire, but at least for the present must remain the mystery of my life.

Dear reader, I have wandered far away from my childhood's years. Yes, years that passed like a dream, unclouded and clear. Oh that I could recall them; but, alas! they are gone for ever. Still they linger in memory fresh and green as if they were yesterday. I can look back and see the opening chapters of my life---I can see the forms and faces, and hear their voices ringing in my ears---one sweet voice above the rest echoes like a seraph's song; but I dare not linger longer at present with those joyous hours and beloved forms that were then my guardian angels.¹

In the course of time my mother received some information of my father's death in America, and again married a power-loom tenter when I was about eight years of age, till which time I may truly say that the only heartfelt sorrow I experienced was the loss of 'Dainty David;' but, alas! shortly after my mother's second marriage I was dragged, against my own will and the earnest pleadings and remonstrance of my maternal grandfather, from this then happy home to my stepfather's abode, next land to the Cross Keys Tavern, London Road.

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HOW I BECAME THE FACTORY GIRL.

About two months after my mother's marriage, my stepfather having got work in a factory in Bishop Street, Anderston, they removed to North street, where I spent the last two years of young life's sweet liberty—as it was during that time I found my way to Kelvin Grove,

and there spent many happy hours in innocent mirth and glee—but ‘time changes a’ things.’ My stepfather could not bear to see me longer basking in the sunshine of freedom, and therefore took me into the factory where he worked, to learn power-loom weaving when about eleven year of age, from which time I became a factory girl; but no language can paint the suffering which I afterwards endured from my tormentor.

Before I was thirteen years of age I had read many of Sir Walter Scott’s novels, and fancied I was a heroine of the modern style. I was a self-taught scholar, gifted with a considerable amount of natural knowledge for one of my years, for I had only been nine months at school when I could read the English language and Scottish dialect with almost any classic scholar; I had also read ‘Wilson’s Tales of the Border,’ so that by reading so many love adventures my brain was fired with wild imaginations, and therefore resolved to bear with my own fate, and in the end gain a great victory.

I had also heard many say that I ought to have been an actress, as I had a flow of poetic language and a powerful voice, which was enough to inspire my young soul to follow the profession. In fact, I am one of those beings formed by nature for romance and mystery, and as such had many characters to imitate in the course of a day. In the residence of my stepfather I was a weeping willow, in the factory I was pensive and thoughtful,

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dreaming of the far off future when I would be hailed as a ‘great star.’ Then, when mixing with a merry company no one could be more cheerful, for I had learned to conceal my own cares and sorrows, knowing well that ‘the mirth maker hath no sympathy with the grief weeper.’

By this time my mother had removed from Anderston to a ship in Tradeston, and my stepfather and myself worked in West Street Factory. when one morning early, in the month of

¹ Section concludes the autobiography in the 1869 second edition.

June, I absconded from their house as the fox flies from the hunters' hounds, to the Paisley Canal, into which I was about submerging myself to end my sufferings and sorrow, when I thought I heard like the voice of him I had fixed my girlish love upon. I started and paused for a few moments, and the love of young life again prevailed over that of self-destruction, and I fled from the scene as the half-past five morning factory bells were ringing, towards the house of a poor woman in Rose street, Hutchesontown, where, after giving her my beautiful earrings to pawn, I was made welcome, and on Monday morning following, got work in Brown & M'Nee's factory, Commercial Road. I did not, however, remain long in my new lodgings, for on the Tuesday evening, while threading my way among the crowd at the shows, near the foot of Saltmarket, and busy dreaming of the time when I would be an actress, I was laid hold of by my mother's eldest brother, who, after questioning me as to where I had been, and what I was doing, without receiving any satisfaction to his interrogations, compelled me to go with him to my mother, who first questioned me as to the cause of absconding, and then beat me till I felt as if my brain were on fire; but still I kept the secret in my own bosom. But had I only foreseen the wretched misery I was heaping upon my own head—had I heard the dreadful constructions the world was putting on my movements—had I seen the shroud of shame and sorrow I was waving around myself, I

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should then have disclosed the mystery of my life, but I remained silent and kept my mother and friends in ignorance of the cause which first disturbed my peace and made me run away from her house for safety and protection.

However, I consented to stay again with my mother for a time, and resolved to avoid my tormentor as much as possible.

Weeks and months thus passed away, but, alas! the sun never shed the golden dawn of peaceful morn again around my mother's hearth. Apart from my home sorrows I had other trials to encounter. Courtied for my conversation and company by the most intelligent of the factory workers, who talked to me about poets and poetry, which the girls around me did not understand, consequently they wondered, became jealous, and told falsehoods of me. Yet I never fell out with them, thought I was a living martyr, and suffered all their insults. In fact, life had no charm for me but one, and that was my heart's first love. If a sunshine of pleasure ever fell upon me, it was in his company only for a few short moments, for nothing could efface from my memory the deep grief that pressed me to the earth. I often smiled when my heart was weeping—the gilded mask of false merriment made me often appear happy in company when I was only playing the dissembler.

Dear reader, as this is neither the time nor place to give farther details of my young eventful life, I will now bring you to my sixteenth year, when I was in the bloom of fair young maidenhood. Permit me, however, to state that during the three previous years of my life, over a part of which I am drawing a veil, I had run away five times from my tormentor, and during one of those elopements spend about six weeks in Airdrie, wandering often by Carron or Calder's beautiful winding banks. Oh! could I then have seen the glorious gems that have sprung up for me on those banks, and heard the poetic strains that have since been

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sung in my praise, what a balm they would have been to my bleeding heart, as I wandered around the old Priestrig Pit and listened to its engine thundering the water up from its lowest depth. For days I have wandered the fields between Moodiesburn and Clifton Hill, wooing my sorry muse, then unknown to the world—except to a few, as a child of song—in silence looking

forward to the day when the world would know my wrongs and prize my worth; and had it not been for the bright Star of Hope which lingered near me and encouraged me onward, beyond doubt I would have been a suicide. `’Tis, however, strange, in all my weary wanderings that I have always met with kindhearted friends, and there were two who befriended me when I was a homeless wanderer in Airdrie. Fifteen years have passed since I saw their tears roll down the youthful cheeks and heard the heavy sigh that exploded from their sympathising hearts. But the best of friends must part, and I parted with them, perhaps never to meet again in this lovely world of sunshine and sorrow.

Dear reader, should your curiosity have been awakened to ask in what form fate had then so hardly dealt with the hapless ‘Factory Girl,’ this is my answer:—I was falsely accused by those who knew me as a fallen woman, while I was as innocent of the charge as the unborn babe. Oh! how hard to be blamed when the heart is spotless and the conscience clear. For years I submitted to this wrong, resolving to hold my false detractors at defiance.

While struggling under those misrepresentations, my first love also deserted me, but another soon after offered me his heart—without the form of legal protection—and in a thoughtless moment I accepted him as my friend and protector, but, to use the words of a departed poet—

**When lovely woman stoops to folly,
And finds too late that men betray,
What can soothe her melancholy,
What can wash her guilt away?**

**The only art her guilt to cover,
To hide her shame from every eye,
To wring repentance from her lover,
And sting his bosom, is to die.**

I did not, however, feel inclined to die when I could no longer conceal what the world falsely calls a woman's shame. No, on the other hand, I never loved life more dearly and longed for the hour when I would have something to love me—and my wish was realised by becoming the mother of a lovely daughter on the 14th of September, 1852.

No doubt every feeling mother thinks her own child lovely, but mine was surpassing so, and I felt as if I could bring all my past sorrows again if Heaven would only spare me my lovely babe to cheer my bleeding heart, for I never felt bound to earth till then; and as year succeeded year, 'My Mary Achin' grew like the wild daisy—fresh and fair—on the mountain side.

As my circumstances in life changed, I placed my daughter under my mother's care when duty called me forth to turn the poetic gift that nature had given me to a useful and profitable account, for which purpose I commenced with vigorous zeal to write my poetical pieces, and sent them to the weekly newspapers for insertion, until I became extensively known and popular. As an instance, in 1854 the Glasgow Examiner published a song of mine, entitled 'Lord Raglan's Address to the Allied Armies,' which made my name popular throughout Great Britain and Ireland; but as my fame spread my health began to fail, so that I could not work any longer in a factory.

My stepfather was unable longer to work, and my mother was also rendered a suffering object; my child was then but an infant under three years of age, and I, who had been the only

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support of the family, was informed by my medical advisor that, unless I took a change of air, I would not live three months.

Under these circumstances, what was to be done? I did not then want to die, although I had wished to do so a thousand times before, to relive me from unmerited slander and oppression.

Many sleepless nights did I pass, thinking what to try to bring relief to the afflicted household—although I did not consider myself in duty bound to struggle against the stern realities of nature, and sacrifice my own young life for those whose sympathies for me had been long seared and withered. Yet I could not, unmoved, look on the pale face of poverty, for their means were entirely exhausted, without hope to lean upon. Neither could I longer continue in the factory without certain death to myself, and I had never learned anything else.

Under those conflicting conditions and feelings, one night as I lay in bed, almost in despair, I prayed fervently that some idea how to act would be revealed to me, when suddenly I remember that I had a piece of poetry entitled ‘An Address to Napier’s Dockyard, Lancefield, Finnieston,’ which a young man had written for me in imitation of copperplate engraving, and that piece I addressed to Robert Napier, Esq., Shandon, Garelochhead, who was then in Paris, where it was forwarded to him. Having written to my employer for my character, which was satisfactory, Mr Napier sent me a note to call at a certain office in Oswarld Street, Glasgow, and draw as much money as would set me up in some small business, to see if my health would revive. According to the good gentleman’s instructions, I went as directed, and sought L.10, which as freely given to me; and I believe had I asked double the amount I would have readily received it.

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Dear reader, I need not tell you what a godsend those ten pounds were to my distressed family, and kept me out of the factory during five months; after which I resumed work in Messrs Galbraith's Mill, St Rollox, Glasgow, where I continued till July, 1857, when my health again sank; and for a change of air I went to Belfast, where I remained for two years, during which time I became so notorious for my poetic exploits that the little boys and girls used to run after me to get a sight of 'the little Scotch girl' their fathers and mothers spoke so much about.

In 1859 I left Belfast and went to Manchester, where I worked three months, and then returned again to my native land, much improved in body and mind.

New scenes and systems made a great change in my natures. I became cheerful, and sought the society of mirthmakers, so that few would have taken me for the former moving monument of melancholy. I had again resumed work at Galbraith's factory, and all went on well. 'My bonnie Mary Auchinvole' was growing prettier every day and I was growing strong; peace and good-will reigned in our household, the past seemed forgiven and forgotten, and the 'Factory Girl' was a topic of the day for her poetical productions in the public press, but the shadow of death was hovering behind all this gladsome sunshine.

My mother had been an invalid for several years, and, to add to her sorrow, a letter had come from her supposed dead husband, my father, in America, after an absence of twenty years, inquiring for his wife and child; on learning their fate he became maddened with remorse, and, according to report, drank a death-draught from a cup in his own hand; and my mother, after becoming aware of the mystery of my life, closed her weary pilgrimage on earth on 25th May, 1861. Thus I was left without a friend, and disappointed of a future promised home and pleasure which I was not destined to enjoy, I therefore made up my mind to go to

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Dundee, where my father's sister resided, whose favourite I was when a child.

Dear reader, were I to give details of my trials, disappointments, joys, and sorrow, since I came to 'bonnie Dundee,' they would be, with a little embellishment, a romance of real life, sufficient to fill three ordinary volumes. Suffice here to say, that after myself and my child had suffered neglect and destitution for some time, I got work in the Verdant Factory, where the cloth I wove was selected by my master as a sample for others to imitate, until, on the 5th of December, 1863, I was discharged by the foreman without any reason assigned or notice given, in accordance with the rules of the work. Smarting under this treatment, I summoned the foreman into Court for payment of a week's wages for not receiving notice, and I gained the case. **But if I was envied by my sister sex in the Verdant Works for my talent before this affair happened, they hated me with a perfect hatred after I had struggled for and gained my rights. In fact, on account of that simple and just law-suit, I was persecuted beyond description—lies of the most vile and disgusting character were told upon me, till even my poor ignorant deluded sister sex went so far as to assault me on the streets, spit in my face, and even several times dragged the skirts from my dress. Anonymous letters were also sent to all the foremen and tenters not to employ me, so that** for the period of four months I wandered through Dundee a famished and persecuted factory exile.

From the foregoing statements some may think that I am rude, forward, and presumptuous, but permit me to say this much for myself, and those who know me best will confirm my statement, that I am naturally of a warm-hearted and affectionate disposition, always willing, to the extent of my power, to serve my fellow-creatures, and would rather endure an

insult than retaliate on an enemy. All my wrongs have been suffered in silence and wept over in secret. **It is the favour and fame of the**

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poetic gift bestowed on me by nature's God that has brought on me the envy of the ignorant, for the enlightened classes of both sexes of factory workers love and admire me for my humble poetic effusions, so far as they have been placed before the public, but I merely mention this to clear away any doubt that may possibly arise in the mind of any of my readers.

In conclusion, I am glad to say that the persecution I was doomed to suffer in vindication not only of my own rights, but of the rights of such as might be similarly discharged, passed away, and peace and pleasure restored to my bosom again, by obtaining work at the Chapelshade Factory, at the east end of Dundee, where I have been working for the last three years and a-half to a true friend. I had not been long in my present situation when I fortunately became a reader of the 'Penny Post,' and shortly afterwards contributed some pieces to the 'Poet's corner,' which seemed to cast a mystic spell over many of its readers whose numerous letters reached me from various districts, highly applauding my contributions, and offering me their sympathy, friendship, and love; while others, inspired by the muses, responded to me through the same popular medium some of whose productions will be found, along with my own in the present volume.

And now, gentle reader, let me conclude by offering my grateful thanks to the Rev. George Gilfillan for his testimony in respect to the merits of my poetic productions, to Mr Alex Campbell, of the 'Penny Post,' for his services in promoting their publication, as well as to the

subscribers who have so long patiently waited for this volume, which I hope may prove a means of social and intellectual enjoyment to many, and also help to relieve from the incessant toils of a factory life.

ELLEN JOHNSTON,
THE FACTORY GIRL

OCTOBER, 1867.