

INTRODUCTION

The Asiatic Society, Kolkata. A toxic blend of coal dust and diesel exhaust streaks the façade with grime. The concrete of the new wing, once a soft yellow, now is dimmed. Mold, ever the enemy, creeps from around drainpipes. Inside, an old mahogany staircase ascends past dusty paintings. The eighteenth-century fathers of the society line the stairs, their white linen and their pale skin yellow with age.

I have come to sue for admission, bearing letters with university and government seals, hoping that official papers of one bureaucracy will be found acceptable by another. I am a little worried, as one must be about any bureaucratic encounter.

But the person at the desk in reader services is polite, even friendly. Once he has enquired about my project, he becomes enthusiastic.

“Ah, English language poetry,” he says. “Coleridge. ‘Oh Lady we receive but what we give . . . and in our lives alone doth nature live.’”

And I, “Ours her wedding garment, ours her shroud.”

And he, “In Xanadu did Kublai Khan a stately pleasure dome decree.”

“Where Alf the sacred river ran,” I say.

And we finish together, “down to the sunless sea.”

I get my reader’s pass. But despite the clerk’s enthusiasm, the Asiatic Society was designed for a different project than mine. The catalog yields plentiful poems—in manuscript, on paper and on palm leaves, in printed editions of classical works, in Sanskrit and Persian, Bangla and Oriya—but no unread volumes of English language Indian poetry.

In one sense, though, I have already found what I need: that appreciation of English poetry I have encountered everywhere, among strangers, friends, and colleagues who studied in Indian English-medium schools. Such encounters have punctuated my experience over the past twenty years, leading me to wonder: Why would a young man in Pune be ordered by his father to write a thesis on Marathi poetry rather than on Shelley? And why did he choose Shelley in the first place? Why did the junior official at the police station in Kolkata delight in reciting Wordsworth to me? And the immigration clerk in Mumbai? How did the poems they loved persist as part of a cultural repertoire for so many years? More broadly, I came to ask how poets and readers in India created, perpetuated, and challenged a canon of English language poetry.

This book aims to answer these questions. My project combines historical and theoretical reflection, adding to the canon of English language poetry written outside of Great Britain and at the same time critiquing that canon. In the years since Indian independence, scholars have collected and anthologized poems by important

nineteenth-century poets writing English language verse in India. But this scholarship includes, with one exception, only those poems written by poets born in India of Indian parents. The exception, Henry Louis Vivian Derozio, is claimed as the “father” of Indian English poetry—as the first Indian poet to write in English—despite the fact that his mother was born in Hampshire and his father’s parents were of Portuguese and Indian extraction. Derozio called himself an “East Indian,” and those who admired him called him, after his early death, “the Indian Keats.” It is ironic—but absolutely right—that a poet of complex political views and of complex ethnic, religious, and familial identifications should be thought of as the paterfamilias of Indian English poetry.

I argue here that all poets writing in English in India worked necessarily in a web of affiliation and rupture, identifications and disidentifications. They inhabited polyglot locations. They defined themselves within, against, and across canonical understandings that included much of the British poetic canon, classical European and modern European poetry, and classical and contemporary poetry in the languages of the subcontinent. Writing English language poetry in India is, at best, an uneasy undertaking—and was so from its beginning, both for poets we understand now as “Indian” and for those totally forgotten poets we might now understand as “British.” I use scare quotes here to emphasize that the meanings of nation are always in the making. For the writers I discuss here, whether they were born in India of Irish Catholic parents (Mary Carshore) or schooled in England from the age of ten (Manmohan Ghose), what it meant to be Indian or British or something else was always at issue, never a given. I want to hold in abeyance for the moment—insofar as possible—the taken-for-granted categories of nationalism to look afresh, often for the first time in decades, at poets who made English verse in colonial India. If we were to look only at the current canon of “Indian English poets,” who are, in any case, scarcely known to North American readers, we would be missing at least half the conversation that shaped their practices. Conversely, if we were to follow the lead of an old anthology, *Poets of John Company*, in focusing only on poets associated with the East India Company, we would ignore both Indian poets and the considerable number of British women who wrote poetry on the subcontinent in the long nineteenth century. My aim here is to bring back into conversation all those who were, in fact, parties to literary exchanges in this period.

Scholars of Indian English have shaped the canon of English language verse to the contours of nationalism. Constructing a canon in this way, however, renders *invisible* poets who are not claimed as Indian. It renders *illegible* many nuances of poetic form and influence shaping the texts of those poets who are claimed as Indian. Scholars in India and very recently in the United States and in Britain are beginning to rethink these canonical boundaries and the nationalist discourses that necessarily shaped earlier critical writing. In particular, Rosinka Chaudhuri and the scholars whose work is represented in Arvind Mehrotra’s *Illustrated History of Indian Literature in English* have begun to critique the nationalist and linguistic assumptions that shaped and at the same time delegitimated

English language poetry written in India. Building on their work, I double the scope of English language poetry in India to re-create the mutually constitutive history of British and Indian poets working on the subcontinent in the nineteenth century.

The very awkwardness of the phrase “English language poetry” points to significant historical and critical issues, and I retain it here to clarify and to navigate the vexed territory marked by such phrases as “Indian English poetry” and “Indo-Anglian” and “Anglo-Indian poetry.” The first two phrases conventionally designate poets that include H. L. V. Derozio, Toru Dutt, and Rabindranath Tagore and exclude Sir William Jones and Rudyard Kipling. The third has an ambivalent history. “Anglo-Indian poetry” could be understood in two contradictory ways. Before independence, it would have designated poems written by British people in India; postindependence, it typically indicates poetry in English either by Indian writers or by those who in some circumstances were called “Eurasians.” As a result of this confusion, the category “Indo-Anglian” was sometimes—and awkwardly—used as a marker for English language poetry written in India, excluding poetry written by the British. I want to talk here about poetry written in the English language in India, hence I use the seemingly redundant phrase “English language poetry.”

Describing the family backgrounds of the poets themselves is equally awkward. Some of the poets I discuss here, beginning with Derozio, would once have been described as “Eurasian.” I prefer here to use either the name current among the community in 1820s Calcutta, “East Indian,” or simply—if wordily—to refer to persons of mixed ethnicity. No category is ever innocent of its past or free of the ideology of its own construction. My ostensibly neutral “English language poetry” entails its own polemic, its own claims and disclaimers. Through its very pleonasm, I want to drive a wedge between the nationalist claims of “English” and its denotative linguistic claim, between adjective and noun. I hope in this way to make possible a new understanding of the canon, and here, too, I refer to the notion of canon in its most capacious sense—as poems known and discussed, whatever judgments might further be made about their political efficacy or aesthetic value.

I claim that poetry written in colonial situations can tell us as much as or even more than novels can about figuration, multilingual literacies, and histories of nation and nationalism. In making this claim, I seek to redress what I believe has been a disproportionate emphasis on fiction in the study of colonial, postcolonial, and transnational literatures. From the beginning, poetry was the most important belletristic English form in India. Writing English language poetry, being educated in British poetic tradition, and translating poetry from various Asian and European languages into English were central to the development of Indian English. Taking fiction as the primary form of both colonial and postcolonial Indian English writing obscures the contours of the literary canon as it was experienced by writers in the nineteenth century and as it is often still experienced by Indian poets and novelists. This study (and the anthology that accompanies it—*Anglophone Poetry in Colonial India, 1780–1913*) recovers and makes available carefully

edited texts; it provides a new historical approach to understanding poems written in English in nineteenth-century India; and it argues for an understanding of a canon that takes nationalism as a subject of inquiry rather than a criterion for selection.

The canon of English language poetry in India was in the twentieth century constructed almost entirely on nationalist lines. Poems written by persons identified as “Indian” were read in the context of each other but only incidentally in relationship to poems written by persons identified as “British.” This practice was both useful and problematic. It led to such anthologies as Eunice de Souza’s recent *Early Indian Poetry in English* and to Sisir Kumar Das’s magisterial history of Indian English literature, published by the Sahitya Akademi. Under the categories of “Indian English,” Anglo-Indian, or Indo-Anglian poetry, many poets have been discovered, discussed, and defended from the wider charge—a common feature of linguistic nationalism in India—that no good poetry can be written in English on the subcontinent. Yet despite the critique of linguistic nationalism that is implicit in any defense of poets such as Derozio and Toru Dutt, this poetic canon was itself built on a nationalist foundation. The result is a curious dehistoricization effacing the contestation and conversation that in fact created English language literary culture in India.

Like the scholars I implicitly critique, I too argue for the importance of nationalisms in reading any number of poems, but with the caveat that twentieth-century post-colonial nationalism makes some poets and some poems legible while rendering others mute, uninteresting, or obscure. Attaining an Archimedean point from which to leverage nationalist presuppositions would be impossible; my intention here is to survey the complexities of their construction and to render visible a wide swath of English language poetry, its literary and linguistic contexts, its formal claims, its place in the social formation.

Even the idea of “English language” in the phrase “English language poetry in India” contains more ambiguity than at first meets the eye, for there was a reasonably significant infusion of Scots poetry and, to a lesser extent, of Irish sentiment into the construction of Indian English. I share the premise of Elleke Boehmer and Katie Trumpener that globalization must be understood not only as a late twentieth-century development but also as a phenomenon of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, a time when metropolis and colonial peripheries were constituted also by transperipheral relationships—among, for example, London, Calcutta, the American colonies, Edinburgh, and Dublin. Trumpener is primarily concerned with bardic nationalism as it played out in Scotland and Ireland and to some extent in North America; building on her work, I show how the tropes of bardic nationalism, integral to linguistic and cultural identities marked as Scottish and Irish and recuperated in a depoliticized way by the English, were reprised in nineteenth-century India. The distinctions between the peripheries of internal colonialism and the metropole were important to writers of English language poetry in colonial India. That one might identify with Scots bards or, later, with Irish nationalists meant that British domination had internal fissures and that British, Indian, and East Indian writers responded to these differences.

It is true that when military action was at issue in India, the common identity of “Britishness” overcame the ideological divisions of English internal colonialism; but in political appointments, in what we might call cultural activity, and sometimes in political activity, such differences mattered. Take, for example, John Leyden, who came to India to make his fortune when he found that a career in the Scottish church was impossible. Born a “peasant,” as one of his biographers puts it, he was (like his contemporary Thomas Carlyle) a product of Scots education and his own intellectual ambition.¹ Leyden aspired to rival the great linguist Sir William Jones in classical and oriental learning and might have done so had he not died in 1811, at age thirty-six. Just before he boarded the *Hugh Inglis* bound for Madras, Leyden published his long poem, *Scenes of Infancy, Descriptive of Teviotdale*. The last section of this poem places Leyden’s emigration in a context of enclosures and enforced peasant displacement: the poet identifies with the Scots of his generation who have left their homes, whether to farm in North America or to fight in the Scottish regiments. He identifies too with the “sons of Erin” in the wake of the Act of Union (1801), which followed the bloody rebellion of 1798, and he makes common cause with the Cherokees of North America, who have been turned out of their land in the process of enclosure by some of these same Scots and Irish settlers:

Long may the Creek, the Cherokee, retain
 The desert woodlands of his old domain,
 Ere Teviot’s sons, far from their homes beguiled
 Expel their wattled wigwams from the wild!
 For ah! not yet the social virtues fly,
 That wont to blossom in our northern sky,
 And, in the peasant’s free-born soul, produce,
 The patriot glow of Wallace and of Bruce;

 Not yet our swains, their former virtues lost,
 In dismal exile roam from coast to coast;
 But soon, too soon, if lordly wealth prevail,
 The healthy cottage shall desert the dale,
 The active peasants trust their hardy prime
 To other skies, and seek a kinder clime.

(*Poems*, 200–201)

Leyden’s *Scenes of Infancy*, written in English rather than in Scots, followed his work assisting Walter Scott collect materials for the *Minstrelsy of the Scottish Border*. *Scenes of Infancy* at once captured and resisted the long-term economic and cultural consequences of the Scottish Act of Union (1707). And it drew the lines connecting the Scots diaspora with the fate of those inhabiting the reaches of empire.

Leyden found that it was a long road from a cottage in the Borders even to the drawing rooms of Edinburgh, much less to the shores of India. When he was promoted

from his post in Madras to a better one in Calcutta, Leyden experienced yet another sort of displacement. Upon arriving in Calcutta in 1805, he was given friendly advice by his fellow Scot, General Sir John Malcolm, who later recounted this exchange: “I was most solicitous regarding his reception in the society of the Indian capital. ‘I entreat you, my dear friend,’ I said to him the day he landed, ‘to be careful of the impression you make on entering this community; for God’s sake, learn a little English, and be silent upon literary subjects except among literary men.’ ‘Learn English!’ he exclaimed—‘no, never; it was trying to learn that language that spoilt my Scotch.’”² Though Leyden learned to write “proper” English (he, unlike Burns, was persuaded that his best poetry was written in English rather than Scots), he considered his *speech* too precious to lose. Leyden’s stubborn insistence on his “Scotch” makes clear that even the “English language” in the Indian context comprised competing dialects and identifications. From Teviotdale to Calcutta, from Edinburgh to Madras, from Cherokee lands to the Scottish Borders, highlands, and islands, the transperipheral was as important as the metropole/colony exchange in making the cultural space of English poetry.

As is obvious in Leyden’s experience, the English language in India consisted of multiple regional and class dialects, and these dialects were in turn situated in a thoroughly multilingual space. Though few people on the subcontinent were even literate, those who wrote English language poetry operated among multiple classical languages (Persian, Arabic, Greek, Latin, and sometimes Sanskrit) and vernaculars (Hindustani and Bangla principally, though also in South Indian languages). In entering this multilingual space, poets choosing to write in English had widely different access to language depending on their place of birth, education, religion, gender, and social class or caste. Religion, class, and gender were crucial markers of access to literacy, to belletristic writing, and to participation in constructions of nation and nationalism. In the chapters that follow, I attend to these differences as I delineate the material and social contours that shaped the scene of writing.

Moving among the multiple vernaculars, not to mention classical languages, at play on the subcontinent and moving within and outside of discourses of nation, poets were sometimes tempted to claim a kind of valorizing indigeneity for a particular vernacular or dialect—whether that vernacular be identified, for example, as Scottish or as Bengali. And yet, as Sheldon Pollock has argued, recourse to ideas of the indigenous (for example, to the “mother tongue”) functions as a powerful illusion: “No form of culture can therefore ever be ‘indigenous’; that term, it bears repeating, is only the name we give to what exhausts our capacity for historicization. When taken as anything more than this, the idea inhibits our perceiving that all cultures participate in what are ultimately global networks of begging, borrowing, and stealing, imitating and emulating—all the while constructing themselves precisely by sublating this history and affirming a specious autogenesis. . . . From this processual perspective culture becomes . . . a freeze frame in a film taken for the whole story” (*Language*, 539). Pollock defines cultures as sites for “reprocessing cultural goods that are always already

someone else's" (539). A processual perspective, moreover, suggests a corrective to a singular reliance on spatial metaphors in the historiography of empire.

It is tempting, as I have done above, to think of the multilingual dimensions of empire in spatial metaphors—in terms of center/periphery and transperipheral spaces—but another crucial way of thinking these differential connections is temporal. Patrick Williams argues, following Elleke Boehmer and Ernst Bloch, that global interconnections were also marked by “simultaneous untemporalities” (31). This notion of fissures within what we take to be contemporaneous phenomena allows us to think of the empire as a heterogeneous space—heterogeneous as to technologies of publishing and distribution, as to reception and reading practices, as to language itself.

To capture both temporal and spatial heterogeneity, I move among three registers here: the material histories of uneven development; the geocultural history of the transperipheral; and the psychic history of what Homi Bhabha calls “unhomeliness” (*Location*, 13). These theoretical strands are drawn through each chapter, though with differing emphases. With respect to the histories of uneven development, I am particularly interested in the technologies of publishing and distribution and the development of cultural institutions, including English medium schools and libraries. A focus on the geocultural histories of imperial space brings into view institutions of literary sociality, including the differential reception of English language poetry in Indian and metropolitan periodicals. Finally, a focus on the psychic history of “unhomeliness” allows me to trace the differentials suggested in experiences of displacement, marginalization, and migration and in gendered access to culture. In all these registers, I attend to the consequences for literary conventions, tropes, and formal choices. I ask, for example, what conventions were available to poets writing in India, what forms or tropes were dominant, what other languages or dialects could be evoked through the medium of English language verse, and whether or how these elements of English poetics shifted over time and in their “simultaneous untemporality” from one social location to another.

Fundamental to this argument is the assumption that poetry is crucial to an understanding of the development of English language culture in India. In colonial India at least through about 1860, poetry was the most important form of English language belletristic writing. As I show in more detail in subsequent chapters, from the eighteenth century onward, English language newspapers printed much more poetry than fiction, and printers in the presidencies—Madras, Bombay, and especially Calcutta—brought out various volumes of verse. The publishing of English language verse began in Calcutta, though authors were also eager to print collections in Britain that were then imported to India. Graham Shaw shows that practical items and government regulations, not surprisingly, formed the preponderance of books printed in Calcutta before 1800, but he notes that the majority of belletristic volumes were “collections of very mediocre poetry” or plays (*Printing*, 19). Such titles as *The Oriental Masonic Muse* (1791), *The Oriental Asylum for Fugitive Pieces* (1788), *The Oriental Miscellany* (collecting “airs of Hindoostan”), and Sir William Jones’s translation of *Śakuntalā* indicate the variety

of this early publishing.³ Fiction was often imported but seldom locally produced, at least before the 1860s.

More important for my purposes than its relatively strong place in the world of colonial publishing is the nature of poetry itself. Although all literary forms—novel, story, novella, verse—exist only through convention, formal verse makes still greater claims than fiction on an understanding of convention, operating through meter and rhyme even at the level of lexical choice and syntax. And of course verse genres (epic, elegy, and ballad) and verse forms (ballad stanza, Spenserian stanza, sonnet, and blank verse) have particular histories through which these conventions and poetic practices are transmitted. The result, I believe, is that poetry can be thought of as a kind of pressure cooker for historical and ideological contradictions. I claim here not only that poetry has been understudied and largely untheorized in colonial and postcolonial scholarship but that poetry provides an important site for investigating the cultural contradictions of empire. The pressure of poetic convention makes especially evident the rifts and fissures within the colonial scene of writing. Finally, I argue, poetry is crucial to our understanding of the colonial scene precisely because it is, of all genres, the one most fully understood through writers' and readers' repertoires.

Here I borrow Tracy Davis's extremely useful definition of repertoire, which she has developed to account for the ways an audience finds innovation or invention intelligible. Davis argues that repertoire can be thought of as mutual knowledge and accretions of practice through which, in her case, theatrical performances are made legible. In a recent lecture, she defined repertoire as the "multiple, circulating recombinative discourses of intelligibility that habituate audiences to understand performative tropes, recognizing and incorporating the unfamiliar."⁴ Repertoire, then, is not simply the accumulation of texts (songs, roles, and so forth) to which a performer has access; rather, it can be understood as an accretion of possibilities made through reiteration, revision, and citation.

In the chapters that follow, a central concern is precisely this process of reiteration, revision, and citation. Indeed, I argue that reiteration entails revision. For example, when the trope of exile, much favored by early nineteenth-century British poets writing in India, is repeated by Michael Madhusudan Dutt at midcentury, it is radically revised, almost reversed. The teenaged poet living in Calcutta who sighed "for Albion's distant shore" did not long for a family he had lost. Rather, he manufactured a family he was loath to leave. A more subtle kind of reiteration and revision is evident in Kasiprasad Ghosh's metrical experiments, which turn such forms as Spenserian stanza to his own purposes. And a complex web of citations in their most literal sense is constructed in hundreds of orientalist footnotes attached to hundreds of poems during this period.

The processes of repetition, citation, and revision are key to the development of English language poetry in India, but the divisions within the colonial scene of writing and the divisions between the colony and the metropole often rendered poems illegible or differently legible to audiences in India and in Britain. The repertoire of colonial

English language poetics was built from the intersection of British, classical and vernacular European, and classical and vernacular Indian canons. In this heteroglot and often ambilingual scene of writing, legibility was a moving target. As a result, poets in India surrounded their verse with an extraordinary number of paratexts: footnotes, endnotes, glosses, prefaces, and dedications. This can be understood generally as the poets' attempts to establish the forms of knowledge from which repertoire is built. These paratexts both deflect and invite criticism, both justify the poetic undertaking and excuse its failings. Paratexts are put to a variety of uses in these poems; they create ironies, they apologize, they rhetorically situate poets and readers. But often they also point to poets' insecurities about the very audience that the notion of shared repertoire necessarily takes for granted. Who exactly was the audience for this verse? Where was the audience located? Would the poet be judged by virtue of his attempt to write English poetry in the first place? Would she be judged by her distance from the metropole?

This introduction is, along with the acknowledgments, my own paratext, my place to make my excuses as the poets I discuss often do, to say what this study does not do, as well as what it does. Much like some of those writers whom I describe, I am limited by my linguistic competence (in my case, modern European languages and Latin). Different books could—and should—be written by scholars fluent in Bangla, Hindi and Urdu, Persian and Sanskrit; still another focus might emerge from the nexus of English and South Indian languages. In one sense, this book is only part of a story, steeped as it is in the British poetic tradition and attempting as it does to account for the importance of that tradition in the making of Indian English verse. A different but significantly overlapping story might be told from the perspectives of bhakti poetry, Bengali and other vernacular verse, and classical verse, especially Sanskrit, Persian, and Arabic poetry as understood in north India in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. I bow toward these traditions, as I understand them through translation, in discussing poets to whom such traditions were important.

A second dimension of this study that requires some explanation is its focus largely in Bengal. The simplest reason for this focus is that books are endless and life is short. But more pertinent to my argument is the fact that Calcutta was the administrative capital of British India in this period, and as a consequence, English language publishing flourished in the city from an early period. I have attended to poetry from other locations both here and in the accompanying anthology, but nevertheless most of the poets I discuss were either persons of British parentage or mixed ethnicity who lived part of their lives in Bengal (as well as in other areas of India and South Asia) or were children of Bengali parents who lived part of their lives in Bengal (as well as in Europe or other parts of India). Much—though by no means all—of the historical detail that I bring to bear on the sociology of the book, the history of publishing and reception focuses on Calcutta. This focus enables a fine-grained understanding of the linguistic, educational, and economic conditions that subtended the creation of English language verse, and it allows me to focus attention on English language periodicals in the period.

Moreover, because Calcutta was the administrative capital of the East India Company and then of the British government in India, a considerable amount of historical data is available about topics ranging from sanitation to the collection of Sanskrit manuscripts. This kind of historical detail allows me to yoke broader social concerns to the close reading of poetic texts. At the same time, I have at various points briefly summarized for readers new to these materials larger trends and significant historical events.

THE CHAPTERS THAT follow examine the rise and expansion of English language poetics in India, beginning in the late eighteenth century and ending around 1913, the year Rabindranath Tagore won the Nobel Prize in Literature. Although I trace the larger historical shifts that mark this period—from the invention of orientalist poetics by Sir William Jones and others to the intertwined influences of fin-de-siècle decadence and nationalism in the poems of Sarojini Naidu—my goal is not a cultural history in the broad sense. Rather than creating a sweeping narrative history of English language poetry in India, in which individual poems and even poets would be subsumed to a single paradigm, I want instead to suggest ways of reading these poems by attending to their recalcitrance and contradictions and by bringing these contradictions to bear on our taken-for-granted binaries (colonizer/colonized, colony/metropole, British/Indian). I want also to emphasize that, despite unequal power differentials, persons from multiple backgrounds and from different social locations created among themselves a new repertoire of performative tropes and what Davis calls “recombinative discourses.” Hence, each chapter that follows brings together poets from differing backgrounds, and in all but the first, each chapter reads together British and Indian (or “East Indian”) poets. In some cases, these readings uncover literary friendships: for example, H. L. V. Derozio and Emma Roberts. In other cases, they juxtapose poems through a common interpretative strategy: for example, in my reading of poetic tropes and forms in the poems of Kasiprasad Ghosh, Michael Madhusudan Dutt, and Mary Carshore. Each chapter returns to a series of common threads—or interpretative strategies—that ground my argument. Each chapter forms part of an implicit argument that the canon of English language poetry in India cannot be fully understood through a retrospective nationalist reading. And in each chapter, I bring to light poets who shared a cultural space but whose connections have not been understood, and I analyze poems that are unknown or scarcely legible to most readers of colonial and postcolonial literature.

The first section of this study, chapters 1 and 2, examines the origins of English language poetry in India and its dominant tropes. Chapter 1 addresses issues of language and education, the classical and the vernacular, and the place of orientalist learning at the foundation in India of English language literature. It focuses on Sir William Jones, a radical Whig, the dominant force in Indian orientalism and the founder of the linguistic argument for the common origin of Indo-European languages. I pair Jones with two other British poets: Sir John Horsford, who left his Oxford fellowship for reasons

unknown to enlist in the Indian army; and the anonymous Anna Maria, a young woman who was deeply influenced by the “Della Cruscan” poets of late eighteenth-century London. These three poets represent different kinds of access to poetic tradition and different orientations to the metropole. Anna Maria longed to make a mark in London; Jones, having already established himself, longed to gather as much knowledge in India as he possibly could and imagined his audience globally to include Europe and North America as well as India; Horsford, happily ensconced with his Indian partner and a family of East Indian children, gave little thought to the metropole.

Chapter 2 examines the dominant tropes of English language verse as they emerged in a terrain marked by ideological and cultural divisions among the colonizers—many of whom were of Scottish, Welsh, or Irish origins. The tropes of bardic nationalism were exported from Britain’s “internal colonies” to India, but they were realized in the specific terrain of local political debates (about sati and the condition of women, for example), even as these debates also shaped British thinking about India. The two poets I focus on in chapter 2 are the East Indian writer H. L. V. Derozio and his friend Emma Roberts, the first British woman to make her living as a journalist in India. Roberts’s work in turn influenced the orientalist poems of her colleague Letitia Landon, who was one of the most popular British poets of this period. Derozio is still something of a hero in Calcutta, where his birthday is celebrated annually by students of Presidency College. I read together their poems on Indian “scenes”—ruins and graveyards particularly—to argue that writing empire entailed remaking both the sublime and the picturesque. And I read their Oriental tales as they were imbricated in political controversy in the colony and the metropole.

Although chapters 1 and 2 also attend to the material conditions of book production and consumption, the second section of this study looks in much greater detail at English language publishing in India in the first half of the nineteenth century. In chapter 3, I discuss periodical publishing, the importation of English books, patterns of book ownership, the development of libraries, and formal and informal educational curricula. I focus primarily on Bengal, with some attention to publishing and distribution of English language literature in the other presidencies, and in light of these developments I discuss a group of poets who moved in and out of Calcutta in midcentury. Central to this chapter is the impresario of English verse in nineteenth-century India, David Lester Richardson, whose multifarious roles as editor, reviewer, teacher, poet, and publisher of annuals placed him at the center of canon formation and literary taste-making. Richardson’s anthology of British poetry, published at the request of Thomas Babington Macaulay and the Calcutta Schoolbook Society, could be thought of as the English language canon in India in the shape of a doorstep: it contained a bookshelf in a single volume. I contrast Richardson with two poets, T. W. Smyth and Henry Page, who are more obscure. Smyth and Page were friends of Derozio’s; from a radical position informed by Baptist views and perhaps by complexities of race and ethnicity, they were highly critical of mid-Victorian empire and allied themselves to

Derozio's memory in attempting to imagine English as a crucial language in an Indian "land of poesy."

In chapter 4, I turn my attention from the material circumstances of publishing and reception to the poetic repertoire itself. I examine in detail the poems of Kasiprasad Ghosh, who described himself as the first Hindu poet writing in English; Michael Madhusudan Dutt, a student of Richardson's who wrote much English juvenilia but is best known as the outstanding Bangla poet at midcentury; and Mary Seyers Carshore, the daughter of Irish parents, who lived all her life in India, dying in the uprising of 1857 at Jhansi. I compare these three very different poets to trace the layered mimicry of colonial poetics, arguing that both mimicry in Bhabha's sense of recalcitrant mimesis and imitation in the more usual sense of repetition and citation are key to understanding the development of the colonial repertoire. I focus especially on the choice of verse forms and the ways these forms shift through repetition and citation.

Chapters 5 and 6 form the last section of this study, situated after the Sepoy Rebellion of 1857. Chapter 5 addresses the role of religion and the drama of exile in the making of Indian English poetry. As Bruce King has pointed out in *Modern Indian Poetry in English*, many of the Indian poets writing in English in the nineteenth century were Christian or came from Christian families or, like Tagore, came from the unorthodox Brahmo Samaj. As I argue with respect to Derozio in chapter 2 and Madhusudan Dutt in chapter 4, deconversion or religious conversion was perhaps even more important in India than in Britain, throwing a writer into a highly contradictory social space. In chapter 5, we can see the impact of this contradiction in the men of the Dutt family, whose conversion and whose identification with the British administration profoundly shaped their verse, and in the work of Toru Dutt—the most distinguished poet of the family, whose work was triangulated by English, French, and Bengali vernacular poetry and finally by Sanskrit poetics. I contrast Toru Dutt with Mary Eliza Leslie, who like Toru found her experience as a poet profoundly shaped by her family's religious affiliation. As the daughter and granddaughter of Baptist missionaries, Leslie wrote as much missionary literature and devotional verse as secular poetry. These two poets, both interested in formal experimentation, nevertheless represent very different situations, with the elder, Mary Leslie, constrained by religious ideology and the younger, Toru Dutt, claiming a cosmopolitan and multilingual space within the confines of a circumscribed domesticity.

My final chapter is shaped by recent theories of cosmopolitanism; it examines the new situation at the *fin de siècle* in which Indian writers moved much more freely in Europe and America than they had before. I show how conventions and discourses of late nineteenth-century aestheticism and the discourses of empire and nationalism uneasily intersected. Cross-cultural friendships coupled with international travel and residence abroad shaped poets' reception in London and their reputations at home. Here I focus on three pairs of friends, all of whom shared space in the literary world

of fin-de-siècle London: Manmohan Ghose published poems in London and established an abiding and crucial friendship with Laurence Binyon, who became keeper of Oriental Prints and Drawings at the British Museum and introduced East Asian art to the British public; Sarojini Naidu (later the first woman president of the Indian Congress Party, a feminist, and a friend of Gandhi's, Nehru's, and Jinnah's) was as a very young woman befriended by Arthur Symons, a leading Decadent poet; and finally Rabindranath Tagore (the first Indian to win the Nobel Prize in Literature), who in part owed his European fame to his friendships in London with the painter William Rothenstein and the poets W. B. Yeats and Ezra Pound. London hospitality brought together strangers, but as Jacques Derrida and Seyla Benhabib have argued, *hospis* (host) and *hostes* (enemy) have common roots.⁵ The lyrics of Manmohan, Sarojini, and Rabindranath can be read as extended meditations on, even theorizations of, the unhomeliness implied in the double valence of hospitality. An epilogue retraces these steps in a satiric mode, returning through poems by Rabindranath and Kipling to the figure of the "griffin," the callow youth who represents all the uneasiness of colonial encounter.

FRIENDSHIP, POETRY, CONVENTIONS, canons, languages, commerce. Few were foolish enough to imagine making a living by writing English language verse in India—but many negotiated the straits between belles lettres and commerce, for poems functioned as a form of social currency. Few understood this function of verse as well as John Leyden, who frankly said that languages—if not poetry itself—might enable his political and material success. His "Ode to an Indian Gold Coin," written at the beginning of the nineteenth century, was much anthologized over the next hundred years. It established a trope of exile yet, in its own contradictions, was proleptical of unhomeliness yet to come. In the metonym of the gold coin, the poet addressed his ambition, his need for material success—the deepest motive for empire:

Slave of the dark and dirty mine!
 What vanity has brought thee here?
 How can I love to see thee shine
 So bright, whom I have bought so dear?—

 By Cheral's dark wandering streams,
 Where cane-tufts shadow all the wild,
 Sweet visions haunt my waking dreams
 Of Teviot loved while still a child,
 Of castled rocks stupendous piled
 By Esk or Eden's classic wave,
 Where loves of youth and friendships smiled,
 Uncursed by thee, vile yellow slave!

(*Poems*, 312)

At this point Leyden, suffering a liver complaint, might well have seen in himself a “vile yellow slave,” his face matched to that imprinted on the guinea he sought. The poet’s valediction curses the vehicle of his own curse: “Vile slave, thy yellow dross I scorn, / Go mix thee with thy kindred clay!”⁶

The Scottish poet abroad saw himself transformed in the mirror of gold through the medium of English language verse. In the long nineteenth century, as English language poets negotiated differentials of power, money, gender, and language, many of them were, like Leyden, forced to consider what might count as “kindred clay.”