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*Article for Feminist Modernist Studies*

## **Decadent Women Poets: Translingual Thresholds**

Ana Parejo Vadillo

Birkbeck College, University of London

**Keywords:** Christina Rossetti, Cosmopolitanism, Decadence, Multilingualism, Poetry, Postcolonial, Sarojini Naidu, Symbolism, World Literature.

**Abstract:** Though the field of decadence is currently being reformulated as a global phenomenon (the result of a major move in literary studies towards World Literature), the rich culture of modern languages present in the work of women writers remains mostly unexplored. This essay uses as case studies poems by Christina Rossetti and Sarojini Naidu. Through a translingual framework, it reflects on the continual mediation of languages present in their work, the result of their cosmopolitan, multilingual lives. Emphasizing the creative energy modern languages brought to their decadent works, the essay highlights their linguistic experimentalism and how they destabilized the masculine and imperialist politics of the English language. The overall aim of this essay is to underscore that there is a larger linguistic and cultural history of women's decadence that needs to be written by many critics working in many languages and cultural histories.

One characteristic shared by most women writers of what is generally recognized as the “English” decadent movement is that they were multilingual. One might think of Mathilde Blind (German, English, French), Toru Dutt (Bengali, French, English), Laurence Hope (English, Urdu), Vernon Lee (English, Italian, French, German), Sarojini Naidu (Bengali, English, Telegu, Urdu), A. Mary F. Robinson (English, French, Italian), or Christina Rossetti (English, Italian). From the advantageous perspective of our own cosmopolitan moment in decadent studies, their multilingualism is highly revealing. It manifests lives and ideals beyond the reality of *fin-de-siècle* England, while their works, I argue here, exemplify their challenge to a monolingualistic and monocultural *aesthetic quo*.

Deriving from the Latin “de-cadere,” meaning to decline or to fall away, the decadent movement has been valued for its engagement with civilizations that have decayed and, more pertinently for my chapter, for its re-appreciation of their dead languages (Classical Greek and Latin). Women’s lack of formal education in nineteenth-century England, it was argued, deprived them of scholarly knowledge of the classics, and this depreciated their work and contributions to discussions of Classical aesthetics, values, and influences. Recent scholarship however has demonstrated that women were a key part of those debates. In *Ladies’ Greek*, for example, Yopie Prins, has shown how women were “actively recirculating or subverting male classicism, or producing parallel classicisms.”<sup>1</sup> This essay shifts current debates about women’s decadence. It brings attention to their command of modern languages, and the way in which they negotiated their multilingualism for aesthetic and political ends.

In the late nineteenth century, English emerged as a dominant world language. It was the *lingua franca* of the British Empire and, as such, the language that granted gravitas to a writer’s practice. In relation to the domination of English as a global language, Pascale Casanova highlights why paying attention to the politics of language matters: “the very

question of legitimacy is one of the things at stake in the game, and the way it is answered depends on the place occupied by those who are prepared to wager on it.” “Many writers,” she continues, “take advantage of this uncertain balance of power in order to play one capital off against the other.”<sup>2</sup> The cultural capital of languages is for Casanova a political issue because it is a crucial factor in the legitimation of a writers’ practice.<sup>3</sup> Her argument is particularly germane to my discussion because, as I show here, the tyranny of a “pure” English haunted the work of many women writers. “More Italian than English,” writes Amy Levy of Rossetti’s poetry.<sup>4</sup> “Her diction was pure but her accent was not,” writes Richard Garnett of the German-born Blind.<sup>5</sup> “Un-English” is how Arthur Symons describes Naidu’s poetry.<sup>6</sup> Both in public and in private, their multilingualism was at best quaintly exoticized; at worst, it was denigrated for being foreign. Rather than valuing their linguistic diversity, the accents and other distinctive qualities of their writings tended to be either Orientalized or denigrated. Like Nietzsche’s “good European,” women’s decadent writings were often racialised and put into two categories: “pure” English or “un-English.”<sup>7</sup>

Looking at the reception of their works, then and now, it may be argued that multilingual women writers were both haunted and liberated by the accents of the languages in which they spoke. To recover the multilingualism of their poetics, both aesthetically and politically, a new kind of analysis may therefore be required. To start such an analysis, I propose to explore decadence from a translingual perspective. Steven Kellman defines “literary translingualism” as “the phenomenon of authors who write in more than one language, or at least in a language other than their primary one.”<sup>8</sup> How did modern languages inflect and animate the creation of decadent poetry? What, I ask, can we learn of women’s decadence by paying attention to the language or languages in which they chose to write? Did they write those languages into English or perhaps just smuggled them perversely for subversive ends?

My focus here is on the experiments of two women writers: Christina Rossetti and Sarojini Naidu. In line with recent critiques of the period, I approach decadence as an aesthetic movement with a larger trajectory that has its roots in Romanticism and is undivorced from modernism. It is a movement which encompasses various re-inventions and adaptations across the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, including Pre-Raphaelitism, Impressionism, and Symbolism.<sup>9</sup> My vision is also transnational. For this reason, in this essay I am consciously and deliberately forming connections across two centuries, two nations, and two distinct moments within decadence. Rossetti, the daughter of an Italian exile; Naidu an Indian activist. Rossetti is mostly discussed in relation to Pre-Raphaelitism, while Naidu is framed within the discourse of postcolonialism. I do so to make a point about the role of modern languages in constituting their decadent poetics, and to propose a translingual vision of women's decadence, one that exists beyond the national boundaries of England and the linguistic threshold of English. I begin with Rossetti, who used Italian to write women into subjectivity. The second section of this paper focuses on the Symbolist poetry of Naidu, whose choice of English as her poetic language was both aesthetic and political. Rather than looking at questions relating to authenticity and native, foreign, and colonial languages, this essay opens a discussion on how multilingualism and translingual creativity shaped and politicized decadence.

### **I. Speaking Likenesses**

It may look strange to begin with Christina Rossetti (1830-1894), who is mostly considered a Pre-Raphaelite poet, and rarely a poet of decadence. But one might want to pay attention to how Amy Levy wrote about her work. In an 1888 article on Rossetti's first book, *Verses* (1857), Amy Levy writes thus of the poet's whole *oeuvre*: "Those qualities which stamp the work of her maturity – the quaint yet exquisite choice of words; the felicitous *naïveté*, more

Italian than English; the delicate, unusual melody of the verse; the richness, almost to excess, of imagery – are all apparent in these first-fruits of her muse.”<sup>10</sup> Her critique was purposefully Pateresque. Levy was doing for Christina Rossetti what Walter Pater had done for D. G. Rossetti. In his influential essay on the poet, for Thomas Humphry Ward’s collection of essays *The English Poets* (1883), later included in *Appreciations: With an Essay on Style* (1889), Pater had compared D.G. Rossetti to Dante. Noting that he resembled the great Italian poet, Pater’s intention was to pronounce D.G. Rossetti as the voice of aesthetic poetry in England.<sup>11</sup>

Like Pater, Levy was claiming the aesthetic writings of Christina Rossetti for the fin de siècle, and she chose Oscar Wilde’s journal *The Woman’s World* to do so. But what is striking about the review is how strongly she makes a point about Rossetti’s translingualism. Levy exoticized Rossetti’s poetry by using the most current philological theory regarding the affiliation of languages, the tree model, concluding her piece as follows: “From the branches of a wondrous tree, *transplanted* by change to our climate, we pluck the rare, exotic fruit, and the unfamiliar flavour is very sweet” (my emphasis).<sup>12</sup> A few years later, Edmund Gosse (literary mentor of Toru Dutt and Sarojini Naidu) would likewise write of Christina Rossetti: “We cannot fathom these mysteries of transplantation.”<sup>13</sup> In England, Gosse argued, women’s decadent poetry was the fruit of a new linguistic ecology.

Levy, the neighbor of Christina Rossetti’s brother William Michael, knew well that the family was bilingual. But she could not have known that Rossetti had been writing poems in Italian since 1849 because, in the words of William Michael, his sister kept the poems “in the jealous seclusion of her writing-desk.”<sup>14</sup> He found them there after her death in 1894 (Levy committed suicide in 1889). He published them in 1896, in a section entitled “Italian Poems” that was part of a new edition entitled *New Poems by Christina Rossetti. Hitherto Unpublished or Uncollected*.<sup>15</sup> Ten poems of various lengths are included in this section. The

most substantial is the poetic sequence *Il Rossegiar dell'Oriente. Canzionere all'Amico Lontano* ("The Reddening of the East. Songs to the Distant Friend"). Rossetti's own "translation" of poems from *Sing Song: A Nursery Rhyme Book* (1872) was published within this section too.<sup>16</sup> It is not known why she kept the poems private, but Dolores Rosenblum suggests that it is likely that she was worried about her public image as an English poet:

Rossetti wanted to be known unequivocally as an English poet and did not want to be urged by anyone within or outside the family to publish in Italian. Certainly, she would not have wanted to contend with the inevitable labels the critics would have attached to all her verse: its Italian "musicality," for instance, would have been both admired and subtly denigrated.<sup>17</sup>

In my opinion, the hiding is an indication of Rossetti's heightened awareness of the fin-de-siècle politics of languages. It is also very possible that she kept the poems secret because she saw Italian as a safe space, where her poetic experimentation and transgression would remain unjudged because unread.

In this section, I discuss how Rossetti theorized the writing of poetry and that her Italian verses were experiments that formed and inhabited her published writings. In an important re-assessment of her Italian verse, Mélody Enjoubault has advocated that Rossetti's bilingualism performed a complex relationship between "same" (English) and "other" (Italian).<sup>18</sup> I propose here that likeness rather than difference is how Rossetti dealt with languages. "Writing in Italian" benefitted her practice and led her to reflect on what it meant to translate poetry. I then address her own experiments with translation, what translation meant politically, and how, in her own practice, she challenged the idea of a literal translation. Finally, I suggest that she reached a breakthrough in *Monna Innominata* (1881). My overall argument is that languages have a political resonance in Rossetti's work. She uses languages to undercut poetic traditions, while subverting national and masculinist ideologies.

My point of departure is *Il Rosseggjar dell'Oriente. Canzonere all'Amico Lontano*, Rossetti's most substantial poem in Italian. Dedicated to an idealized beloved, *Il Rosseggjar* is a sequence of 21 poems written between 1862 (the year *Goblin Market* was published) and 1868.<sup>19</sup> It is my contention that this poem is the blueprint of *Monna Innominata* (1881).<sup>20</sup> While the subtitle indicates its debt to Petrarch's *Canzonere*, the main title points directly to Charles Bagot Cayley's love sequence *The Purple of the West, A Canzonero* (composed in 1862 and published in 1863).<sup>21</sup> A linguist and a translator of Dante's *La Divina Commedia*, Cayley had been a student of Rossetti's father and a suitor of Christina. She rejected him because he was an agnostic, but they remained lifelong friends. William Michael Rossetti, who believed the poems were about his sister's relationship with Cayley, dismissed the verses as "singularly pathetic."<sup>22</sup> Intertextual references do appear to confirm that Rossetti's poem was somewhat in conversation with Cayley's. As Alison Chapman has shown, poem 3 in the sequence, "Si Rimanda la Tocca-Caldaja" ("La Tocca-caldaja' is sent back"), was written in reply to the following lines by Cayley, "Si scusa la Tocca-caldaja." Poem 4, entitled "Blumine Risponde" ("Blumine responds"), whilst an allusion to Carlyle's *Sartor Resartus*, may have alluded to Rossetti and Cayley's relationship.<sup>23</sup> Jan Marsh notes that Rossetti perhaps used "Blumine" as a nickname for herself in their correspondence.<sup>24</sup> Kamilla Denman and Sarah Smith have also argued that "Blumine" was Christina Rossetti.<sup>25</sup>

Despite those biographical references, the poetic sequence promptly does away with the personal and biographical. In fact, the personal and affective serves Rossetti to unfold a sustained study of female subjectivity. The theme is Love (human and divine), but it would be more appropriate to define *Il Rosseggjar's* subject matter as a woman's musings on Love. In a forward-thinking piece on Rossetti's poetry in Italian, Valeria Tinkler-Villani writes with reference to the sequence: "The power of the self and the strength of its voice is confirmed by two or more features of the Italian poems: the theme of speaking out or being silent – that is,



the affirmation of the self through language.”<sup>26</sup> The sonnet “Blumine Risponde” crystallizes Rossetti’s viewpoint, placing “Blumine” in the subject position. She is the poet, as can be seen in the sonnet’s final sestet:

E perciò “Fuggi” io dico al tempo; e omai  
     “Passa pur” dico al vanitoso mondo.  
 Mentre mi sogno quel che dici e fai  
     Ripeto in me, “Doman sarà giocondo,  
 Doman saremo” – ma s’ami tu lo sai,  
     E se non ami a che mostrati il fondo?<sup>27</sup>

[And thus “Flee,” I say to time; and now

    “Pass” I say to the vain world.

While I dream of what you say and do

    I repeat to myself: tomorrow will be joyful

Tomorrow will be – but if you love me you know,

    And if you do not, why show you my inmost heart?] (my translation)

We can see in this poem how Blumine takes the subject position, commanding space and time. She dreams of the beloved, who speaks and acts, but only in her dreams. By contrast, Blumine is in the present and reiterates her selfhood through repetition (“I repeat to myself”). She enacts her subjectivity and projects herself into the future.

Through Italian, Rossetti productively authored the poet as female, inducing in the process a change in literary tradition as well. While critics have generally agreed that Rossetti was challenging the medieval tradition of the troubadours, I see in the first two poems within the sequence, “Amore Dormente?” (“Love sleeping?”) and “Amor Si Sveglia?” (“Are you

awake, Love?”), a close resemblance to the little-known tradition of the *Cantigas de Amigo* (*A Friend's Song*), a genre of medieval Galician-Portuguese lyric poetry.<sup>28</sup> In the *Cantigas* the speaker is always female. A major source of the *Cantigas*, *The Cancioneiro da Vaticana*, was found in the Vatican Library in 1840 and transcribed by Caetano Lopes de Moura in 1847.<sup>29</sup> Considered in this light, the title of Rossetti's sequence could thus refer to a key feature of the *Cantigas de Amigo*, for a *Cantiga* was a love poem sung by a woman at dawn; hence the “Reddening of the East.” By embedding her poet within the history of Troubadour literature, Rossetti envisions a new beginning for the genre, setting up a change in both the conventions of male love poetry and the authority of the lyric poet as exclusively male. Thus, *Il Rossegiar* sets in motion *Monna Innominata*, the sonnet sequence where Rossetti would openly challenge the conventions of the (male) lyric.

One of the effects of writing poetry in Italian was that Rossetti began to think more profoundly about the relationship between her bilingualism and her choice of English for the writing and publishing of poetry. To her friend, Eliah Burritt, she writes in 1867: “I cannot tell you how dear the Italian language is to me, so dear that I will not attempt to compare it with my native English: only as I think in English I have naturally written in it also; indeed I am a very imperfect Italian scholar, not a ‘scholar’ at all, but a warm admirer merely.”<sup>30</sup> This letter appears to suggest that she compartmentalized her bilingualism into intellect (English) and affect (Italian). But the letter also intimates that she may have rationalized her image as an English poet: her English verse is more scholarly than her Italian, the language of the heart (“bella lingua,” as she would call it).<sup>31</sup>

The date of this letter is interesting because in that same year, 1867, her cousin, Teodorico Pietrocòla Rossetti, published his translation into Italian of *Goblin Market* (*Il mercato de' folletti*).<sup>32</sup> Translation was a Rossetti tradition and a family obsession. During the late 1860s, Rossetti began to think more theoretically about translation. It is worth dwelling

here on her extraordinary essay “Dante, an English Classic,” a review of Cayley’s translation of *La Divina Commedia*, because, instead of discussing translation as a linguistic exploration or even as a literary genre, she writes about translation as citizenship. She starts the essay by making the remarkable statement that one’s nationality should be a literary matter. If such a thing was possible, she writes, the best option in her time is to be Italian:

Viewing the matter of nationality exclusively as one of literary interest, now in this nineteenth century when it is impossible to be born an ancient Greek, a wise man might choose not unwisely to be born an Italian, thus securing Dante as his elder brother, and the “Divina Commedia” as his birthright.<sup>33</sup>

She may be thinking of Dante, but her views on translation are clearly related to her own family history: the Rossettis were aliens in nineteenth-century Britain. She writes:

we at least in nineteenth century England, happier in so far than our forefathers, owe (let us hope, pay) the unburdensome debt of gratitude to more than one admirable translator who has felt that to reanimate the venerable father of modern poetry as a fellow-citizen amongst sometime aliens is a nobler achievement than to bring before the world a new and lesser man.<sup>34</sup>

The sentence is intentionally ambiguous. She is both radically arguing that translation effectively transforms an alien into a fellow-citizen, but also that translation is a noble act because it “reanimates” Dante for fellow aliens. By re-appraising Dante, it enacts family ties between cultures, making Dante the father of English poetry. Indeed, translation has made of “Dante an English classic,” as the title of her essay goes. In other words, translation has naturalized Dante into an English poet.

As early as 1863, for example, her friend, the poet Dora Greenwell, had invited Rossetti to collaborate with her in translating German poetry into English. But Rossetti turned the proposal down, noting:

How I wish I could hope to work with you in the German translation you mention: but I am so ignorant of German, having never proceeded beyond the outmost threshold of that language,—and have hitherto been so unsuccessful in my one or two attempts at translation,—that I fear I should prove on trial far from available: indeed I ~~cannot~~ could scarcely think of proposing myself for such work even in Italian, my half-native tongue.<sup>35</sup>

When she tried to translate her own book of verse *Sing Song* (1872), she found herself doing “imitations.” She writes to Dante Gabriel Rossetti in 1878: “[m]y versions are so free & easy that I must dub them not translations but imitations.”<sup>36</sup> Her brother liked them very much, but she remained doubtful of her competence: “I was charmed at the good success of my Sing Songs with you. But it would indeed need a better Italian than I to translate the whole series: think of my writhing helpless before ‘Heartease in my garden bed’ or ‘In the meadow’!!”<sup>37</sup> In the end, her cousin Teodorico took over the task, but the results did not altogether please her. She writes again to her brother in January 1879:

Some are what I have done, & some not: some (truth to tell!) I like better of mine, ~~others~~ but his no. 5. beats me hollow. 7,9,10,11,12,13,15, he only has tackled: 12 is charming. Of course I only venture to prefer my own in case their Italian could pass muster, - & very likely it could not, which make all the difference.<sup>38</sup>

How rigorous she was as a linguist can be appreciated in a letter she sent to her nephew, Gabriel Arthur Rossetti, to whom she was teaching Italian. In response to one of his exercises she writes: “By what I have heard – for my eyes never saw – the blue of the Mediterranean is *turquoise*: the Hastings blue that I recollect is rather *sapphire*. So we must compare English sea with English, not with Italian.”<sup>39</sup> One cannot compare one language with another because it creates otherness and contrast. Instead, a translation must speak likeness.

In *Monna Innominata* Rossetti proposes a different model.<sup>40</sup> As in *Ill Rossegiar*, it represents a feminist challenge to the lyric. To do so, however, Rossetti builds upon her previous experiments to set up a complex translingual system. For example, the epigraph of her essay “Dante, An English Classic” had been “Onorate l’altissimo poeta” (“All Honor to Highest Poet”). Rossetti starts the Preface to *Monna Innominata* by completing the previously unfinished quote, which she had taken from Dante’s *La Divina Commedia*: “Beatrice, Immortalized by ‘altissimo poeta ... contanto amante’” (“Highest Poet ... Such a Lover”). This move across her works through a quote in Italian is telling. The first part of the quotation, “altissimo poeta”, comes from Canto IV. The “altissimo poeta” is Virgil and the words are heard as Virgil and Dante enter the Inferno and see emerging shadows of other male poets, including Homer. The second part of the quote, “contanto amante”, comes towards the end of Canto V. Significantly, these words are spoken by Francesca de Polenta. Rossetti chooses the moment when de Polenta recounts the first time she and her lover, Paolo Malasteta, were sexually intimate. Reading together about Lancelot’s love in troubadour literature provoked their sexual passion.<sup>41</sup> Rossetti thus manipulates Dante’s Italian to upset the expected dynamic of the male lyric tradition, both in Italian and in English poetry. Unless readers are significantly conversant with Dante, they would not be aware that Rossetti has taken them on a short part from Canto IV to Canto V, and in doing so she has turned the “altissimo poeta” into a lover. More to the point, by bypassing large sections of *La Divina Commedia*, Rossetti makes the male poet re-emerge as an Italian female poet.

Furthermore, she links *Ill Rossegiar* to *Monna Innominata* in intricate ways. *Monna Innominata* is seemingly bilingual: quotes from *La Divina Commedia* are embedded in Rossetti’s Preface and Italian quotes by Dante and Petrarch appear at the beginning of each of the sonnets. The chosen epigraphs cross-reference many of the poems from *Il Rossegiar*. For example, the epigraphs for Sonnet 1 are: “Era già l’ora che volge il desio” [“Since

morning I have said Adieu to darling friends”] (Dante) and “Amor, con quanto sforzo oggi mi vinci!.” [“Love, with what force though does me now o’erthrow”] (Petrarca).<sup>42</sup> These two quotations go back to Poem 1 in *Il Rosseggiar*, of which the first line is “Addio, diletto amico” [Adieu, beloved friend]. In other words, Rossetti has layered *Monna Innominata* upon *Il Rosseggiar*. To give a further example: Poems 1 and 2 from *Il Rosseggiar* “Amore Dormente?” (“Love Sleeping?”) and “Amore Si Sveglia?” (“Are you Awake, Love?”) are this time reflected upon Poem 3 of *Monna Innominata* (“I dream of you to wake: would that I might/Dream of you and not wake but slumber on”). In this we see her bold innovative translingual ecology at work, as she weaves her Italian poems into new poems in English.

In her well-known Preface, Rossetti demands for women poets “their world-wide fame.” And she does so, as scholars have often highlighted, in various ways. For example, she deconstructs the sonnet, and makes a sequence out of it, a sonnet of sonnets. The poem is entitled “*Monna Innominata*” in the singular, but the sonnet embeds plurality. Her *Monna Innominata* is in fact one poet of many poets (“*donne innominate*,” as Rossetti insinuates in the Preface). And it matters that the title is in Italian. Rossetti’s feminism is too the product of her translingual vision for poetry.

The sonnets follow the Petrarchan or Italian form of octave and sestet. Just as in “Dante, An English Classic,” Rossetti provocatively uses the English language to naturalize Italian prosody. Moreover, epigraphs in Italian by Dante and Petrarch open each of Rossetti’s fourteen sonnets, sonnets which are inspired by those epigraphs. As William Whitla notes, Rossetti does not tell us from which works the epigraphs come.<sup>43</sup> Through this strategy, she decontextualizes Dante and Petrarch and re-signifies them as just quotations. By contrast, she frames the Italian “*Monna Innominata*” as *the* leading poet. A key word in Rossetti’s Preface to the sequence is “mutual,” which she uses twice: “one can imagine many a lady as sharing her lover’s poetic aptitude, while the barrier between them might be one held sacred

by both, yet not such as to render mutual love incompatible with mutual honour.” The translingual poetics of *Monna Innominata* successfully places Italian and English, male and female, in a relationship of mutuality, poetically and politically.

## II. Thresholds

So far, I have focused on Christina Rossetti’s translingual strategies. I now turn to Sarojini Naidu (1879-1949), as I focus on her 1905 book of poems, *The Golden Threshold*. In my assessment of her translingual poetics, I argue that Naidu’s poetry works in two interconnected ways. The first, and perhaps the most crucial, is that her poetry extricates from English its reference to England. This strategy has one important effect: English gets re-signified as Naidu molds it to incorporate a new aesthetic and political imaginary, at times based in Persian, Sanskrit, and Urdu traditions. Secondly, by introducing the languages of India into her verse, her poetry produced a new decadent symbology; words became thresholds to a new literary and political world.

Sarojini Naidu was a global author who gained worldwide fame for the publication of three books of poetry: *The Golden Threshold* (1905), *The Bird of Time* (1912) and *The Broken Wing* (1917). Yet, criticism has often negated or, at least, has been blind to Naidu’s decadent project. Derided in India for what was perceived as her romanticization of Indian scenes, any analysis of her poetry has hinged on her political enactment of independence and Indianness. Either too authentic, or not real enough, too English or too “Oriental,” the reception of her work has suffered from a lack of engagement with her poetry, thus obscuring her experimentalism and originality. Recent criticism has begun to unmake these dialectical imperatives, bringing new attention to Naidu’s extraordinary works. Sheshalatha Reddy (2010) has paved the way to new scholarship by illuminating Naidu’s work from a cosmopolitan perspective. Mary Ellis Gibson (2011) has argued that one way of unlocking

current issues of authenticity in Anglo-Indian fin-de-siècle writing is to read it from the perspective of “shadowed mutuality” and “hospitality.” As Gibson notes, “by the beginning of the twentieth century, more Indian writers than ever before had begun to cross the actual thresholds of London’s literary drawing rooms. Among them were those who established relations of reciprocal hospitality, mutuality, and even friendship.”<sup>44</sup> Gibson discusses Naidu’s poetry in shadow mutuality with Arthur Symons by focusing on the poets’ writings on dance. In a similar vein, Anna Snaith (2014) speaks of cross-cultural modernist collaborations between Naidu and the poets of the 1890s as well as of modernism, including Symons and W. B. Yeats.

I want to go back to Naidu’s choice of English. In a powerful discussion on Indian poetry in English, Vidyan Ravinthiran speaks of the pressure poets feel “to perform a stereotyped identity”. He proposes a return to form and aesthetics and to a poetics of close reading that accommodates the postcolonial.<sup>45</sup> He writes it is unjust to neglect authors “who saw themselves as artistic innovators.”<sup>46</sup> Naidu is one poet that needs to be re-assessed in this way, for her translingual poetry was endlessly innovative, presenting a global decadent imaginary that worked as thresholds across languages and cultures. She made Indian poetry global through English, while her poetry endowed decadence with a global frame.

Naidu was born into a multi-lingual home. Padmini Sengupta notes that her mother, poet Varada Sundari, and father, “Aghorenath, spoke to each other in Bengali but to the children in Hindustani and the servants in Telegu.”<sup>47</sup> Naidu’s eldest brother Virendranath spoke sixteen languages. Naidu’s father insisted she learnt English, as it was the *lingua franca* of the Empire. She recounts that she “refused to speak it” and, because of this, “one day when I was nine years old my father punished me – the only time I was ever punished – by shutting me in a room alone for a whole day.”<sup>48</sup> Though a child prodigy, perhaps she exaggerated when she said that she came out of her room as a “full-blown linguist.”<sup>49</sup> Yet the



story sums up how what began as a patriarchal and colonial imposition resulted in Naidu's adoption of English as her main language, and the language with which she would fight colonization and demand India's independence. She claims that, after the punishment, she refused to speak in "any other language" to her father or mother, though her mother continued speaking to Naidu in Hindustani. Unconsciously or deliberately, Naidu built her poetic persona in English around this moment. At the age of 13, she published *Mehir Muneer. A Poem in Three Cantos by a Brahmin Girl*, a 1,300-line Persian poem in English. *Poems by S. Chattopadhyaya*, a collection of juvenilia composed between 1892 and 1896 and privately printed by her father in 1896, was also in English.

In 1895, at sixteen years old, Naidu arrived in England with the intention of becoming an English poet. She was passionate about English poetry and eager to enter decadent poetry salons in London. She admired particularly the Romantic and decadent schools: Lord Byron, Edmund Gosse, John Keats, Thomas Moore, William Morris, Percy Bysshe Shelley, Walter Scott, James Thompson, Algernon Charles Swinburne, Arthur Symons, William Watson and William Wordsworth. In England, she began to read and admire the work of Mathilde Blind, Ernest Dowson, Alice Meynell and Olive Schreiner among others. Much has been written on Gosse's problematic critique of Naidu's early English verses which, he suggested, she should throw into "the waste-paper basket". In his "Introduction" to her second volume of verse, *The Bird of Time*, he explains he disliked them because they were written in a "falsely English vein." It was "the note of the mocking-bird with a vengeance."<sup>50</sup> With a view to publication, he advised her that what "we wished to receive was, not a réchauffé of Anglo-Saxon sentiment in an Anglo-Saxon setting, but some revelation of the heart of India." His critique picked and energized her writing, but his Orientalism problematized her position and her poetry from then on. As Meenakshi Mukherjee puts it, Gosse's critique "determined her aesthetic and ideological position, poem after poem conjuring up romantic and colourful

moments in a resplendent pageantry, intended presumably to ‘introduce’ readers like Edmund Gosse to a ‘voluptuous and unfamiliar territory’.<sup>51</sup> Indeed in a letter to Gosse from India in 1905, as she was preparing *The Golden Threshold* for publication, she writes “you were really the very first and encouraged me to write – to add my little exotic flower to the glorious garland of English verse.”<sup>52</sup>

In my view, Naidu’s politics have been easier to read than her poetry. In a comment that historicizes our own Black Lives Matter movement, when asked in a newspaper interview what should be done with the statues of Queen Victoria once India had gained independence, her response was: “Cut off their heads, of course ... and put mine in their place.”<sup>53</sup> Not mimicry but a symbolic decapitation. Symons’s and Gosse’s Orientalizing introductory essays to her poetry volumes and the respectful tone of her letters to both authors, extracts of which they included in those introductions, have had a detrimental effect on how she has been positioned both in Indian and English literature. As Paranjape writes: “Ironically, the passage which has meant to illustrate the end of her imitativeness is often quoted to prove its continuance.”<sup>54</sup> As I see it, in some of those letters she was not writing as herself but had adopted a persona. One might even argue that she occupied that position to advance her career as a poet: she was sixteen and required access to the publishing world of the metropolis. She writes to her soon-to-be husband Govindarajulu Naidu how “Everybody, of course, here as elsewhere [...] makes a pet of me – you see I am far the youngest and a curiosity – so I shan’t be long to myself!”<sup>55</sup> In her letters there are moments when she is clearly having the upper hand and criticizing heavily the male decadent poets. Yet, these moments tend to be overlooked in scholarship. She writes to Symons, for instance, after reading the proof sheets of *Silhouettes* that he had sent her for comments in July 1896:

But there will be divine heretics to whom your poems will come with a strange power and loveliness; there will be hearts deepened by sorrow and strengthened by tears that

will vibrate in “every little nerve” to your heart’s expression – I have felt too in “every little nerve” the strength of beauty of these poems: go on, dear poet, you have given us what is very beautiful and strong: but it is not yet your best.<sup>56</sup>

Naidu’s critics have often complained that her poetry obscures the social realities of India. Even when her poetry was anti-colonial, it was not political enough. But she wanted to be a Symbolist, not a realist poet. Beautiful language was the source of her political claims. She writes in an early letter to Gosse how she found legends “more real than realities.”<sup>57</sup> In another letter to Gopal Krishna Gokale, leader of the moderates in the Congress Party and Gandhi’s political guru, she declares herself to be “a dreamer of dreams.”<sup>58</sup> When *The Bird of Time* came out, first on her list of authors to be sent copies was Maurice Maeterlinck, the leading poet of Symbolism.<sup>59</sup> Arthur Symons’s definition of Symbolism is helpful to locate Naidu’s decadent project. For Symons, Symbolism was “a revolt against exteriority, against rhetoric, against a materialistic tradition.” Symbolism embodied the freedom of literature: “Literature bowed down by so many burdens, may at last attain liberty, and its authentic speech.”<sup>60</sup> W. B. Yeats likewise saw in Symbolism a way of experiencing unconsciousness, the possibility of liberating emotions and dreams.<sup>61</sup>

Naidu was clearly eager to make a name for herself in English poetry, but she was conscious of the fact that the English language was a colonial instrument. It is not completely accurate to say that it was Gosse who made her turn to India in her poetry. As P. V. Rajyalakshmi writes, Naidu was brought up “on Persian and Urdu poetry of the Deccani school.”<sup>62</sup> From the onset of her poetic career, as a child, she had published Persian literature in English. In England, she continued to work with those languages and meld them into English. “Leili,” a nocturne, whose title means “dark” in Persian, was published in *King’s College Magazine* and it symbolizes the night, “caste-mark” as an Indian woman.<sup>63</sup> In England, she continued to experiment more consciously with Indian languages by writing

them into English. In a letter to Gosse, she writes that “The Serenade and the Lullaby are mere experiments in Eastern rhythms – the first of Persian, the second of Bengalee.”<sup>64</sup>

On her return from England, she continued to work in a translingual manner. She was reading intensely the work of Persian women poets, which she catalogued as if they were Symbolist poets. Of lesser poets, she writes to Gosse (rather unkindly) that their names are at times more “delicious” than their verses, listing their names together with the English translation: “Scent of Jasmine” (Yasman bu [?]), “Rose bodied” (Gulbadan Begum [1523-1603]), “Heart delight” (Dilshād Khātūn) and “Ornament of the world” (Jahanara Begum [1616-1681]). In her view, their “ghazals and rubayats are full merely of an imitative sweetness – a flowing river of music rambling through gardens of conceits.”<sup>65</sup> She was by contrast captivated by the life and writings of Fatemeh Baraghani (1814-1852), poet, theologian, and activist of the Bábí faith in Iran. Stunned by Baraghani’s political charisma, Naidu presents her as a role model, observing that she “had an enormous following in Persia,” and that the “fierce ecstasy and occult beauty of her verses madden them like new wine.”<sup>66</sup>

But her poetic models were Nur-Jahan (1577-1645) and the sufi poet Zeb-Un-Nissa (1638-1701), whose pen name was Makhfi, “the hidden one.” Naidu pronounces their poetry as already decadent, observing that they write “with a personal sincerity of rendition, fullness of music and freshness of literary magic.” She explains it is “impossible to render into English their lyrics.” In verse she explains that “their lyrics are / Like poppies spread / You seize the flower the bloom is dead.” Their fine artistic temperament clearly inspired Naidu who, in the same letter, tells Gosse that her “unconsciousness” was “evolving” “a hundred poems that must come to life sooner or later.”<sup>67</sup> In the *Golden Threshold*, Naidu will produce several decadent poems based on these women poets’ writings. “The Song of Princess Zeb-Un-Nissa In Praise of Her Own Beauty (From the Persian)” is a re-invention of a poem by

Zeb-Un-Nissa. It appears that a suitor called Nasir Ali asked the poet to lift her veil so that he may see her beauty. The poet refused, responding with the poem “I will not lift my veil.”<sup>68</sup> At first reading, Naidu’s “The Song of the Princess” may seem to be a simple ode to beauty. But in fact the poem is a symbol of Naidu’s own resistance to be read, emphasizing her refusal to conform to what is expected of her. Like Zeb-Un-Nissa, she has been asked to “lift her veil,” because they want to recognize her as an authentic Indian (and not an English) poet. In praising her own beauty, Zeb-Un-Nissa takes command: she is poet, muse and reader. She tells us that roses wither and turn pale, honeyed hyacinths complain and languish, and that nightingales strain their souls into quivering song when they see her beauty.<sup>69</sup> Nature cannot compete with her or with her beautiful writing. Yet in responding to her beauty, nature turns beautifully decadent.

In England she was expected to be “authentic” but in India she was under extraordinary pressure to support and lead the cause of the Indian nationalist movement. She writes to Gosse: “It was a great awakening for me [...] My public was waiting for me – no, not for me, so much as for a poet, a national poet [...]. I shall indeed produce something worthy to be offered to my nation as a gift.”<sup>70</sup> Another letter, also from 1905, further explains: “There is a tacit understanding that all talents and enthusiasms should concentrate themselves on some practical end for the immediate and obvious good of the nation.”<sup>71</sup> After listing religious reform, social progress, editorships of political journals, female education, and the setting up of a Home for Hindu Widows, she admits how all these tasks have been placed on her shoulders, she who is “unfitted to do more than sing with the birds in the forest of lilies and nut palms!”<sup>72</sup>

For her 1905 book of poems, *The Golden Threshold*, Naidu chose an architectural symbol to challenge colonial imperatives. As a liminal space, *The Golden Threshold* presents a translingual world beyond borders. With its architectural anti-colonial symbology, the book

re-appreciated poetry as the space of the in-between: between self and world, consciousness and unconsciousness, the imaginary and the dream. (In “To my Fairy Fancies” speaks of “wind-inwoven spaces.”) The book’s title was also a symbol of Naidu, the poet. She had written those poems in “The Golden Threshold,” which was the name she had given to her own home in Hyderabad. Symbolism thus enabled Naidu to develop a highly personal and feminist aesthetic, while deliberately decontextualizing English and re-inscribing decadence as Indian. In a letter to Symons, she firmly re-signified decadence thus: “France they say is the land of movements, but Modern India I think their ‘cradle and home and their bier’”.<sup>73</sup> She completely bypassed England when considering Symbolism on a global scale.

A key poem in the collection is “The Wandering Singers.” The first stanza of the poem reads:

Where the voice of the wind calls our wondering feet,  
Through echoing forest and echoing street,  
With lutes in our hands ever-singing we roam,  
All men are our kindred, the world is our home.<sup>74</sup>

The poem is a testament to Naidu’s cosmopolitan vision: “all men are our kindred, the world is our home” runs her verse. Naidu’s “wandering singers” flaneur across forests and streets in a symbolic landscape. They roam freely as they follow the wind, a symbol of liberty, poetry, and the natural world. The poem evokes the urban decadence of Baudelaire’s *Les Fleurs du Mal* (1857), of James Thomson’s *The City of Dreadful Night* (1880), of Amy Levy’s “A March Day in London” (1889), and of Rosamund Marriott Watson’s “The City of Dreams” (1895). Indeed, the expression “wandering feet” appears in both Naidu’s and Watson’s poems. Yet, in the second stanza, the urban image dissolves as those wondering feet take us to another world and another time, to cities of the past. “Our lays are of cities whose lustre is shed” is the first line of the second stanza, conjuring decadent ideals of ancient cities. At a

linguistic level, the line effectively re-conditions the poem's language, recontextualizing those singers as the singers of India. The poem's last stanza reads:

What hope shall we gather, what dreams shall we sow?

Where the wind calls our wondering footsteps we go.

No love bids us tarry, no joy bids us wait:

The voice of the wind is the voice of our fate.

In India's past, and not in its colonial present, lays its future. In the context of anti-colonial politics, Makarand Paranjape writes that the poem "is an expression of the deeper conflict within the poet between the modern India of the future that she was fighting to bring into being as a national leader and the decadent Hyderabad of her childhood which appealed to her aesthetically." In 1919, addressing the Kanya Mahavidyalaya in Jullundur, Naidu would offer a direct reading of the poem, identifying herself clearly as one of India's wandering singers:

You have seen in your cities, it is a very common sight in India, the wandering singer with a stick on his shoulder with two bundles tied up on its each end, going from city to city singing songs. I stand before you today as a wandering singer like that with all my possessions carried in my two bundles – one a little bundle of dreams and another growing bundle of hopes. These are the only two things which I have in this world.<sup>75</sup>

In fact, many of the poems in this collection engage with city life, as in "Nightfall in the City of Hyderabad" (in which, as Reddy argues, Naidu melded Urdu poetry and Symbolism) or "Street Cries." The latter is a response to Christina Rossetti's *Goblin Market*, which, as Eleonora Sasso contends, is a parable of sisterhood "mapped on to the stories of the three sisters of Baghdad in *The Arabian Nights*." As Sasso points out, "the goblins selling fruits to Lizzie and assaulting her with animal-like violence seem to recall the Oriental merchants in the *Arabian Nights*."<sup>76</sup> Naidu's poem by contrast turns the market into the daily

life of any Indian city. Instead of a life being sequestered by the enticing, luxurious wares of the East, in Rossetti's famous "Come buy, come buy," ("Our grapes fresh from the vine/ Pomegranates full and fine,/ Dates and sharp bullaces/... Figs to fill your mouth/ Citrons from the South), Naidu paints a working day of laborers that never stop.<sup>77</sup> From morning to evening, the street sellers in the gay bazaars adjust their wares to the needs of the day. To the "fasting men" who go forth on hurrying feet they cry: "*buy bread, buy bread.*" In the afternoon, in the heat, to the "thirsting blood in languid throats" they cry "*buy fruit, buy fruit.*" In the twilight, to lovers sitting "drinking together of life's poignant sweet," they cry: "*buy flowers, buy flowers.*"<sup>78</sup> Naidu, in other words, de-Orientalizes the English of this Pre-Raphaelite poem while transforming the market into a symbol of the everyday in Indian life.

In all these poems, the English language gets disembodied, yet it gets used almost euphuistically to symbolize Indian decadence. As the collection progresses, in her struggle to free English from the colonial stereotyping of India, Naidu starts mixing English with other Indian languages. One key poem much discussed (and criticized) is "Village-Song." In manuscript form, its title was "A Folk Song of the Deccan," a reference to her home in Hyderabad, in the region of the Deccan.<sup>79</sup> The change in title to "Village-Song" illuminates Naidu's linguistic challenge to English. Its title invokes the English pastoral, with images of an idealized England. But, as with "Wandering Singers," Naidu un-weaves the English language from England. As we see in the second stanza, she creates a fantastical world that emerges out of the Indian landscape through etymology. She uses Hindi words derived from the Sanskrit such as *champa* (which is also a Bengali word) and *köil* (which can also be found in Urdu) to reveal an Indian ecosystem:

Honey, child, honey, child, wither are you going?

Would you cast your jewels all to the breezes blowing?

Would you leave the mother who on golden grain has fed you?



Would you grieve the lover who is riding forth to wed you?

Mother mine, to the wild forest I am going,

Where upon the champa boughs the champa buds are blowing;

To the *köil*-haunted river-isles where lotus lilies glisten

The voices of the fairy-folk are calling me: O listen!

Honey, child, honey, child, the world is full of pleasure,

Of bridal-songs and cradle-songs and sandal-scented leisure.

Your bridal robes are in the loom, silver and saffron glowing,

Your bridal cakes are on the hearth: O wither are you going?

The bridal-songs and cradle-songs have cadences of sorrow,

The laughter of the sun today, the wind of death tomorrow.

Far sweeter sound the forest-notes where forest-streams are falling;

O mother mine, I cannot stay, the fairy-folk are calling.<sup>80</sup>

In intense connection with nature, the girl hears the fairy-folk's call to poetry. Its ecosystem is symbolic and enacts a move towards freedom and liberation, from both England and the constraints of patriarchal India. The champa is a beautifully fragrant flower from India, and the *köil* is a type of cuckoo. Hindi operates here as a threshold to a world beyond. It may be worth comparing the poem to Rudyard Kipling's "In Springtime" (1890), where he used the same term, *köil*, to express a longing for England:

But the garland of the sacrifice this wealth of rose and peach is;

Ah! *köil*, little *köil* singing on the siris bough,

In my ears the knell of exile your ceaseless bell-like speech is –

Can you tell me aught of England and of Spring in England now?<sup>81</sup>

In a letter to Symons in which she is not explicitly discussing this poem, Naidu nonetheless gives the key to its symbolism:

Come and share my exquisite March morning with me: this sumptuous blaze of gold and sapphire sky; these scarlet lilies that adore the sunshine; the voluptuous scents of neem and champak [sic] and serisha that beat upon the languid air with their implacable sweetness; [...] And, do you know that the scarlet lilies are woven petal by petal from my heart's blood, these quivering birds are my soul made incarnate music, these heavy perfumes are my emotions dissolved into aerial essence, this flaming blue and gold sky is the "very me."<sup>82</sup>

Most of these plants and flowers in fact appear in *The Golden Threshold*. While Naidu's invitation clearly starts in the real world, the letter shows that the Indian's ecosystem is a symbol of her poetic selfhood. Returning to the poem, Hindi is the threshold of this translingual poem, in which we see how the symbolic landscape of her home in India expresses her poetic voice.

The examples in this section show that Naidu's multilingualism was intrinsic to her innovations as a poet. They highlight how she worked across languages and linguistic heritages, challenging and maneuvering their political capital for her own political and aesthetic ends. A close reading of her works has thus helped to liberate her poetry of expected readings while restating the aesthetic and the postcolonial. Naidu would continue to use fruitfully these translingual techniques in her other books of poetry, engaging with Indian poetry, and using words in Hindi, Persian, Sanskrit and Urdu to disrobe English of its context.

## Some Conclusions

The 1947 Hindi version of the Tamil film *Meera* (1945), a biopic about the life of the feminist sixteenth-century Indian poet Meera (c.1498-c.1546), included an on-screen introduction in English by Sarojini Naidu. Praising the artistry of the female Carnatic singer of South India M.S. Subbulakshmi, who starred as the eponymous poet, Naidu declares that “Meera rightly belongs to the North [of India] though she belongs indeed to the whole world”. In a hint to her own *Golden Threshold*, she speaks thus of the wonders of Subbulakshmi’s performance: “it may not be known to many that that golden voice is an instrument of great causes.” Naidu clarifies that she is “speaking not in Hindi but in English of set purpose, because I want my words of commendation to reach the whole world.” She wants the world to pay attention to Meera: “the princess poetess of India has no equal, no sequel rather, in any part of the world...Santa Theresa, Saint Cecilia, were great lovers of the mystic and had communion with Christ. Meera, she was one with her beloved Krishna.”<sup>83</sup> We see in this vivid speech that languages were political tools for Naidu. Her English was ‘of set purpose’ because she wanted the film to travel across cultures in India and beyond, so that the poetry of this sixteenth-century Indian female poet could be heard in Hindi through the beautiful voice of Subbulakshmi across the globe. Naidu’s introduction to what is now considered a Bollywood classic once more records the politics of her linguistic choices as a decadent poet, de-politizing English to ensure the works of Indian women poets reach a global audience.

In this article I have brought together the poetries of Christina Rossetti and Sarojini Naidu to highlight how two very distinct poets used their multilingualism to challenge the dominance of English as the language of patriarchy and the empire. I have shown how their formulation of decadence is rooted in their experimentations with modern languages, which they incorporated within the fabric of their poetry. By considering their work in this light, this

essay has aimed to restore to these poets the full linguistic complexity of their poetics. One of the outcomes of this methodology is that it shows how successfully they metamorphosed English into a language decontextualized of its politics. Another perhaps more fundamental outcome is the recognition that in their experimentation with modern languages, decadent women poets were intensely transnational.

My aim here has been to begin to articulate and place greater attention on a larger cultural and literary history of a multilingual decadence that remains to be written by scholars working across many languages and many cultures. By placing Rossetti alongside Naidu, this article has shown the need for further scholarly investigations and appreciations of how translingual poetry is inherent to the politics of decadence. If, as I have shown here, their poetry consistently moves across modern languages, then we must reconsider to what extent is “English” decadence by women poets just “English”. D.G. Rossetti called his sister “the Dante in our family.”<sup>84</sup> In addition, it is worth noting that no other decadent poet ever achieved Naidu’s overarching political power or global recognition as a poet politician. As we continue to re-position decadence within a longer history affecting larger linguistic and transnational communities, we must continue to consider how modern languages affected and inflected new political aesthetics with a particular feminist angle.

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#### Notes on contributor

Ana Parejo Vadillo is a Reader in Nineteenth-Century Literature and Culture at Birkbeck College, University of London. Her scholarly publications include *Women Poets and Urban*

*Aestheticism; Michael Field, Decadent Moderns, 1884-1914; and the edition Michael Field, The Poet. Published and Unpublished Materials.*

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## Notes

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<sup>1</sup> Prins, *Lady's Greek*, 242.

<sup>2</sup> Casanova, *The World Republic*, 119.

<sup>3</sup> See Casanova, *La Langue Mondiale*, 19, regarding the prestige and legitimation of dominant languages. "Ce n'est pas une simple 'naturalisation' (au sens d'un changement de nationalité et de langue), c'est aussi l'obtention d'un certificate de légitimité."

<sup>4</sup> Levy, "The Poetry of Christina Rossetti," 178.

<sup>5</sup> Garnett, "Memoir," p. 23. William Sharp writes: "Nothing ever so disconcerted or even offended her as the imputation that she spoke or wrote English marvelously well for a German. Though an accomplished linguist, she never availed herself of her native language, either with the tongue or the pen, when she could possibly avoid doing so" (quoted in Diedrick, *Mathilde Blind*, 253).

<sup>6</sup> "In all her letters, written in exquisite English prose, but with an ardent imagery and a vehement sincerity of emotion which make them, like the poems, indeed almost more directly un-English, Oriental" (Symons, "Introduction," 19).

<sup>7</sup> Nietzsche, *Gay Science*, 340.

<sup>8</sup> Steven G. Kellman, *The Translingual Imagination*, ix.

<sup>9</sup> See for example, Vincent Sherry, *Modernism and the Reinvention of Decadence*. For Sherry, however, this trajectory is clearly male. I disagree with his men-only genealogy.

<sup>10</sup> Levy, "The Poetry of Christina Rossetti," 178.

<sup>11</sup> Pater, "Dante Gabriel Rossetti," 212-13.

<sup>12</sup> Levy, "The Poetry of Christina Rossetti," 180.

<sup>13</sup> Gosse, *Critical Kit-Kats*, 139.

<sup>14</sup> See William Michael Rossetti, "Notes" in Rossetti, *New Poems*, 392.

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- <sup>15</sup> Rossetti, "Italian Poems" in *New Poems*, 269-304.
- <sup>16</sup> These were translated as "Ninna-Nanna. Traduzioni dal Singsong Sognando," in Rossetti, *New Poems*, 288-301.
- <sup>17</sup> Rosenblum, *Christina Rossetti*, 51.
- <sup>18</sup> Enjoubault, *Mélody*. "L'Italie au miroir."
- <sup>19</sup> Rossetti, *New Poems*, 272-286
- <sup>20</sup> Rossetti, "Monna Innominata," in *A Pageant*, 44-58.
- <sup>21</sup> Marsh, *Christina Rossetti*, 290-91. Cayley's essay was published in Emily Faithfull's periodical *A Welcome: Original Contributions in Poetry and Prose* in 1863.
- <sup>22</sup> Rossetti, William Michael. "Notes" in Rossetti, *New Poems*, 393.
- <sup>23</sup> Chapman. "Christina Rossetti and the Aesthetics of the Feminine," 318. Chapman includes a literal translation of the poetic sequence.
- <sup>24</sup> Marsh, *Christina Rossetti*, 370.
- <sup>25</sup> Dennman and Smith, "Christina Rossetti's Copy," 315-38.
- <sup>26</sup> Tinkler-Villani "Christina Rossetti's Italian Poems," 39.
- <sup>27</sup> Rossetti, *New Poems*, 274.
- <sup>28</sup> Rossetti, *New Poems*, 272-73. For a modern study of the cantigas, see Maria Lima Schantz, *A Feminist Interpretation*.
- <sup>29</sup> Monaci, *Il cazoniere portoghese*, 428.
- <sup>30</sup> Quoted in D'Alessandro, *Christina Georgina Rossetti*, p. 30.
- <sup>31</sup> Rossetti, *The Letters of Christina Rossetti*. June 1887.
- <sup>32</sup> Rossetti, *Il mercato de' folleti* (Goblin Market). He would also translate Lewis Carroll's *Alice in Wonderland*. Lewis Carroll as *Le avventure d'Alice nel paese delle meraviglie*, published by Macmillan in 1872.

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<sup>33</sup> Rossetti, "Dante, An English Classic," 200. Charles Bagot Cayley's translation of Dante's *Divine Comedy* in five volumes was published in 1851–55 by Longman, Brown, Green and Longmans.

<sup>34</sup> Rossetti, "Dante, An English Classic," 200.

<sup>35</sup> Rossetti, *The Letters of Christina Rossetti*. October 1863.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, August 1878.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, September 1878.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, January 1879.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, June 1887.

<sup>40</sup> The date of composition for *Monna Innominata* is listed by Crump as "unknown." See Rossetti, *The Complete Poems of Christina Rossetti*, 2: 373-4. According to Linda Schofield, an early version of at least part of the sequence can be found in the 1870 holograph manuscript of "By Way of Remembrance." See Schofield, "Displaced and Absent Texts," 39.

<sup>41</sup> The Dante Lab, a Customizable, Digital Workspace for Scholarly Analysis of Dante Alighieri's *Divine Comedy*. See <http://dantelab.dartmouth.edu/>

<sup>42</sup> Translations are by Charles Bagot Cayley. See Whitla, "Questioning the Convention", 98.

<sup>43</sup> Whitla, "Questioning the Convention," 100-01.

<sup>44</sup> Gibson, *Indian Angles*, 230.

<sup>45</sup> Ravinthiran "(Indian) Verse," 647

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, 654.

<sup>47</sup> Sengupta, *Sarojini Naidu*, 20

<sup>47</sup> Kipling, "In Springtime." *Departmental Ditties*, 243-44.

<sup>48</sup> Symons, "Introduction," *Golden Threshold*, 11.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*, 11.

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- <sup>50</sup> Gosse, "Introduction," *The Bird of Time*, 4.
- <sup>51</sup> Mukherjee, *The Perishable Empire*, 104.
- <sup>52</sup> Naidu, *Selected Letters*, 46
- <sup>53</sup> Navarane, *Sarojini Naidu*, 150-151
- <sup>54</sup> Paranjape, *Sarojini Naidu*, 10.
- <sup>55</sup> Naidu, *Selected Letters*, 30.
- <sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*, 22-23.
- <sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*, 28.
- <sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*, 52.
- <sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*, 80.
- <sup>60</sup> Symons, *The Symbolist Movement in Literature*, 10.
- <sup>61</sup> See for example W. B. Yeats, "The Symbolism of Poetry" and "The Symbolism of Poetry."
- <sup>62</sup> Rajyalakshmi, *The Lyric Spring*, 251.
- <sup>63</sup> Naidu, "Leili," *King's College Magazine, Ladies' Department*, K/SE1/170. Rpt. in Naidu, *The Golden Threshold*, 62.
- <sup>64</sup> Naidu, *Her Way with Words*, 125.
- <sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*, 140.
- <sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*, 140.
- <sup>67</sup> *Ibid.*, 141 and *passim*.
- <sup>68</sup> Zeb-Un-Nissa, *The Diwan of Zeb-Un-Nissa, The First Fifty Ghazals*. Translated by Magan Lal and Jessie Duncan Westbrook. 11-12. London: John Murray, 1913.
- <sup>69</sup> Naidu, *The Golden Threshold*, 70.
- <sup>70</sup> Naidu, *Selected Letters*, 45
- <sup>71</sup> *Ibid.*, 47-48.

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<sup>72</sup> Ibid., 47-48.

<sup>73</sup> Ibid., 47-48.

<sup>74</sup> Naidu, *Golden Threshold*, 28.

<sup>75</sup> Naidu, *Speeches and Writings*, 206.

<sup>76</sup> Sasso, *The Pre-Raphaelites and Orientalism*, 182.

<sup>77</sup> Christina Rossetti, *Goblin Market*, 2.

<sup>78</sup> Naidu, *Golden Threshold*, 92-93.

<sup>79</sup> Paranjape, *Sarojini Naidu. Selected Poetry and Prose*, 213. For more on this region, see

J.D.B. Gribble, *A History of the Deccan. In Two Volumes*. London: Luzac & Co. Publishers to the India Office, 1896. See also B. Cohen, *Kingship and Colonialism in India's Deccan 1850-1948*. Houndsmill: Palgrave, 2007.

<sup>80</sup> Naidu, *Golden Threshold*, 37-38.

<sup>81</sup> Kipling, *Departmental Ditties*, 243-44.

<sup>82</sup> Quoted in Symons, "Introduction," *The Golden Threshold*, 18.

<sup>83</sup> A transcription of her speech can be found here:

<https://sites.google.com/site/homage2mssubbulakshmi/home/0-sarojini-naidu-on-m-s>

<sup>84</sup> Qtd. in Chapman "Christina Rossetti and the Aesthetics of the Feminine," 121.