

This is an Open Access document downloaded from ORCA, Cardiff University's institutional repository: <https://orca.cardiff.ac.uk/id/eprint/114007/>

This is the author's version of a work that was submitted to / accepted for publication.

Citation for final published version:

Stainthorp, Clare 2018. On the discovery of a sequence of Constance Naden's notebooks: Finding her voice, 1875-79. *Victorian Poetry* 56 (3) , pp. 233-263. 10.1353/vp.2018.0015

Publishers page: <https://doi.org/10.1353/vp.2018.0015>

Please note:

Changes made as a result of publishing processes such as copy-editing, formatting and page numbers may not be reflected in this version. For the definitive version of this publication, please refer to the published source. You are advised to consult the publisher's version if you wish to cite this paper.

This version is being made available in accordance with publisher policies. See <http://orca.cf.ac.uk/policies.html> for usage policies. Copyright and moral rights for publications made available in ORCA are retained by the copyright holders.



**UNCORRECTED POST-PRINT**

**On the Discovery of a Sequence of Constance Naden's Notebooks:**

**Finding her Voice, 1875-79**

Abstract: The recent discovery of Constance Naden's notebooks – three volumes dating from between 1875 and 1879 – provides new insights into her adolescent intellectual life. They comprise two small fair-copy notebooks containing over one hundred unpublished poems and translations, and a ninety-one-page book of notes principally on religion, philosophy, and science as well as drafts of further poems. This important discovery provides unprecedented insight into Naden's formative years and necessitates a reassessment of her life and works. This article describes the context, form, and contents of the three notebooks. It explores how these writings, the first manuscript materials attributable to Naden, enable a deeper understanding of her poetic process and the way in which she conceived the figure of the poet. The article demonstrates how the development of her poetic voice occurred in dialogue with Romantic ideals of the poet genius and indicates how, even during her adolescence, Naden's characteristic comic style illuminated her (often cutting) perspective upon the role of poets and the position of women in society. The concluding section turns to consider the biographical insights that these notebooks provide, opening up a previously unknown facet of Naden's young life.

1  
Oh for the poet's glorious thought,  
The painter's gift divine!  
Why for their semblance have I sought,  
When they can ne'er be mine?

2  
Though I can copy, line for line,  
The fairest flowers that blow,  
Though I can write, as thousands do,  
In lines that softly flow,

3  
Though all of this, & more, is mine  
Yet vainly I aspire,  
To draw a stroke, to write a line,  
That glows with living fire.

4  
For all my childhood's dreams are fled,  
And I may plainly see  
The wreath that crowns the poet's head  
Shall ne'er be twined for me.

5  
Ye will not visit me again,  
Sweet simple thoughts of fame,  
Fond hopes, by pencil & by pen,  
To win a lasting name.

6  
Yet will I write my simple lays  
My pencil shall not rest,  
For it is sweet to win the praise  
Of those I love the best.<sup>1</sup>

It is thus that Constance Naden (1858-89) conceived her artistic ambitions in a newly discovered notebook titled "Poems; by Constance C. W. Naden. 1875-6-7." Naden went on to publish two well-received volumes of poems during the 1880s, but here she lacks confidence in her poetic ability: she may have common skill, but she does not possess the flame of genius. Titled "A Lament," this poem also demonstrates Naden's worries about being derivative – she is aware of her youthful tendency to copy rather than create. This familiar stage in a person's writing career is "natural," Christine Alexander asserts; she goes on to argue that "young writers will experiment by impersonating different voices and imitating

different genres” and this “major characteristic of youthful writing [...] is often misunderstood.”<sup>2</sup>

Imitation was an acknowledged part of the development of the poet during the nineteenth century. For example, in *Aurora Leigh* Elizabeth Barrett Browning has Aurora explain:

And so, like most young poets, in a flush  
Of individual life, I poured myself  
Along the veins of others, and achieved  
Mere lifeless imitations of verse.<sup>3</sup>

This is a rather negative portrayal of the process that led Naden to test many different poetic forms and genres and to try on a variety of voices. While not her most innovative or uniformly successful works, the previously unknown poems in *Poems 1875*, *Poems 1875-6-7*, and *Untitled Notebook 1878-79* demonstrate both Naden’s range – from Petrarchan blazon to extended medieval narrative, testing the conventions of common meter to those of comic verse – and her burgeoning skill.<sup>4</sup>

The first section of this article describes in detail the context, form, and contents of these three notebooks. I then explore the impact of this discovery upon our understanding of Naden’s life and works, beginning with new insights into her approach to composition and paying attention to moments that reveal her poetic process. Building upon my discussion of “A Lament,” I consider how Naden conceived the figure of the poet, showing how the development of her poetic voice occurs in dialogue with Romantic ideals of the poet genius. The article proceeds by indicating how Naden’s characteristic comic style, familiar from the “Evolutional Erotics,” runs through these newly discovered writings and illuminates her (often cutting) perspective upon the role of poets and the position of women in society. I conclude by turning to the biographical insights that these notebooks provide, showing how these open up a previously unknown facet of Naden’s young life.

### **Situating Naden's Notebooks**

During the 1880s, Naden established herself as a poet, philosopher, and student of science. Critics have primarily discussed her work in terms of women's literary engagement with Darwin and the wider scientific culture of the late nineteenth century; however, more recent research attests to a wealth of published poetry and prose that is more wide ranging and multifaceted than earlier scholarship might suggest.<sup>5</sup> Into this critical landscape now come new manuscript materials that broaden and deepen our understanding of Naden's life and works. They stretch back into her late adolescence and indicate, for the first time, elements of her voice prior to editorial intervention or posthumous recollection.

Naden published two volumes of poetry – *Songs and Sonnets of Springtime* (1881) and *A Modern Apostle; The Elixir of Life; The Story of Clarice; and other poems* (1887) – and a large quantity of essays and letters across the 1880s, which focused primarily upon her freethinking philosophy and social evolution. She concurrently undertook her studies at the Mason College of Science (which became the University of Birmingham in 1900). Here she developed a deep knowledge of a variety of scientific disciplines and became the first female Associate of the college in 1888. Apart from six poems published in periodicals in 1877-78, the entirety of her publication record comes from the 1880s. As a result, while we have some sense of her activities in the 1870s through the posthumous *Memoir* written by four friends, it has not been possible for scholars trace the development of her poetic or philosophical endeavour prior to 1881 with any specificity.<sup>6</sup>

These three notebooks belonging to Naden that date from the 1870s are therefore of great scholarly interest and importance. Prior to this discovery, the only documented manuscript

material belonging to Naden was a single letter to Edith Cooper within the Bodleian's archive of Michael Field's letters.<sup>7</sup> This correspondence, alongside a facsimile letter dated 1889 (printed as the frontispiece to a posthumous essay collection, *Further Reliques of Constance Naden*), confirms that the notebooks in question are undoubtedly in Naden's hand.<sup>8</sup> The notebooks were in the possession of Naden's indirect descendants (Julian Rees and Margaret Mary Hall, her half-sister's grandchildren), and have now been deposited in the Cadbury Research Library at the University of Birmingham. Some further materials relating to Naden remain with the family, including a previously undocumented full-length photograph of Naden, from the same 1887 sitting for Henry Whitlock as the head-and-torso image reproduced in *Further Reliques* and elsewhere, and one of her watercolours. While we know that Naden was a prolific painter, this undated painting of a periwinkle is the first to be publicly attributed to her in the twentieth century. The unexpectedness of this discovery is underscored by a 1993 letter from James Moore to Marion Thain that categorically states that while the Rees family owned a letter from Oscar Wilde to Naden – reproduced as an appendix to Moore's "Re-membering Constance Naden" – and "a bound autograph diary of her trip to India" (which is not currently in the public domain) they otherwise "knew of no Naden archive."<sup>9</sup>

The first notebook, with "Poems; by Constance C. W. Naden. 1875" written on the front page, consists of pages numbered 1 to 164, although one leaf has been removed so pages numbered 143 and 144 are not present.<sup>10</sup> It is 17.5 x 11 x 1.2cm and bound with blue embossed cloth boards. It contains fifty-two fair-copy poems: of the thirty-six original poems, thirty-one were unpublished, the remaining five subsequently appearing in the 1881 volume *Songs and Sonnets* ("Sir Lancelot's Bride," "The Abbot," "Maiden Meditations," "The Lady Doctor," "The Two Artists"). These drafts all match the published versions very closely,

although there are some potentially telling word substitutions. In addition, there are sixteen English translations of French poems (by Constant Dubos, J. B. Rousseau, De Vigny, Halevy, Victor Hugo, Delille, Florian, Rosset, Chênedollé, Reboul, Béranger, and De Saint-Victor). While we knew Naden to be fluent in French, these are the first examples of her translating French poetry into English, since her only translations of German poems were subsequently published.

The second notebook, titled “Poems; by Constance C. W. Naden. 1875-6-7,” consists of 187 numbered pages; the -7 on the front page is written in pencil, presumably added later (although still in Naden’s handwriting). It is 17.5 x 11 x 1.5cm and bound with black embossed cloth boards; there is evidence that paper with writing on it was once pasted over the front and back covers, but this has been removed and nothing remains legible on the small scraps of paper that remain adhered. The notebook contains fifty-seven fair-copy poems, which includes thirty-five original poems that were not published, and one that later appeared in *Songs and Sonnets* (“Old Love Letters”). Interspersed among these there are nine English translations of French poems (by Lamartine, La Fontaine, De Loy, Legouv  , Hugo, Delacroix, Mourier, Madame Tastu, and Andr   Chenier), ten unpublished English translations of German poems (by Goethe, Schiller, Krummacher, K  rner, J. Kerner, and Matthisson), and two English translations of poems by Schiller, versions of which were later included in *Songs and Sonnets* (“The Maiden’s Complaint” and “The Knight of Toggenburg”). The marked progression from French to German, whereby translations from the former language stop abruptly and are replaced by those from the latter, supports the posthumous observation by W. R. Hughes that during the period after leaving school she “devoted herself to the systematic study of languages, mastering *in turn* French, German, Latin, and the elements of Greek” (*Memoir*, p. 16, my emphasis).

In both of these notebooks the poems are revised versions rather than drafts, although some further revisions are visible, particularly to the translations. It may be noted that neither of the *Poems* notebooks are the “MS. collection entitled ‘Songs of the Heart and Mind’,” referred to in the *Memoir*, which contained “Night” and “Morning” and is said to have been written “when the authoress was scarcely twenty-one” (*Memoir*, p. 39); this volume remains untraced.

The third notebook is bound in tan-coloured embossed cloth boards, and measures 17.5 x 11 x 1cm.<sup>11</sup> It is untitled, and the ninety-one numbered pages of writing date from approximately November 1878 to August 1879. While the date of composition of each entry is not certain – only a small proportion of the notes include a date or can be dated through context – “Nov<sup>r</sup> 20<sup>th</sup> 1878” is inscribed on the inside cover, the first page is headed “November,” and the second-to-last entry concerns Professor George Allman’s British Association for the Advancement of Science presidential address, given in Sheffield on 20 August 1879 (N78-9, pp. 1, 85).<sup>12</sup> The sixty-four entries are numbered 83 to 147 consecutively, indicating that this notebook is one of a series. The entries vary greatly in length and cover Naden’s often contentious thoughts on religion, philosophy, science, and literature. Although outside the purview of this article, this prose opens up several lines of inquiry into the development of Naden’s philosophical and scientific thinking.<sup>13</sup> In addition, there are eighteen entries in verse; these range from complete drafts of poems to a pair of lines. Of these, two were published in *Songs and Sonnets* (“The Pantheist’s Song of Immortality,” of which there are two versions, and “The Letter” – both significantly revised) and one in *A Modern Apostle* (“Song,” the published version of which is identical to the notebook draft), although these are all untitled in the notebook. The presence of “Song” is particularly striking because it



confirms that at least one of the poems in Naden's later volume predates *Songs and Sonnets*. This inclusion troubles the linear narrative of development that her contemporaries and modern critics have applied to her body of work. The entries are primarily written in English, but there are several paragraphs in French and German (Sütterlin), as well as one poem composed in German and a transliteration of a poem into the Greek alphabet.

The contents of the three notebooks amounts to 114 unpublished poems and translations, almost doubling Naden's corpus; her *Complete Poetical Works* contain a total of 120 poems and translations, and there are four further uncollected poems.<sup>14</sup> In addition, the third notebook provides an unprecedented insight into Naden's intellectual life at the age of twenty to twenty-one. These notebooks remain, of course, only snapshots of a six-year period, and it is not possible to extrapolate the entire course of Naden's development from precocious school girl to independent, freethinking young woman on the basis of them alone. Nonetheless, this discovery necessitates a reassessment of Naden's trajectory as a poet. In the following sections I consider the development of Naden's poetic persona and comic voice, in the awareness that there is significantly more material on the foxed pages within these three cloth-bound covers than can possibly be covered in a single article.

### **Poetic Process**

Based on Naden's published work it would be reasonable to have four key expectations for her newly discovered poems. One is that they would include reflective sonnets, the touchstone of *Songs and Sonnets* and an important aspect of *A Modern Apostle*. Another is an engagement with the natural world, which comes to the fore in the 1881 year-in-sonnets sequence that charts the changing seasons in a Wordsworthian vein. A third is comic turns, as demonstrated by her most widely anthologized and analysed poems, the "Evolutional

Erotics,” that read human relationships through the lens of Darwinian sexual selection. The fourth is character-driven explorations of human drives, primarily through dramatic monologues and the longer narrative poems that characterize the volume *A Modern Apostle*.

The latter three types of poetry all appear in her unpublished work, but the notebooks do not contain a single sonnet. This is a surprise because well over a third of the poems that Naden published in her lifetime were sonnets, and this form was a popular way for budding poets to develop their craft by working within defined parameters of rhyme and metre.<sup>15</sup> Many of the poems recorded in the notebooks do indicate the attention to form that typifies Naden’s talent for a well-crafted poem. Some, though, do seem laboured and heavy-handed in this regard. Rhymes such as “As a flood of sunshine golden / Streaming o’er a picture olden” (*P75*, p. 19, ll. 1-2), the opening lines to “The Old Man’s Song about his daughter,” do not have the lightness of touch and comic awareness that she demonstrates in the polysyllabic rhyming that characterizes, for example, “We from near and far win” with “Pin your faith to Darwin” in “The New Orthodoxy” a decade later (*CPW*, p. 313, ll. 44, 48). Nonetheless, other notebook poems, such as the unexpected “Lay of the Brecon & Merthyr Tydfil Debenture holder,” do demonstrate Naden’s desire to choose unexpected subjects for poetry and render them humorous, as she lampoons the financial woes of shareholders through a litany of puns (see fig. 1). Two representative stanzas run:

5

All things conspire my woe to mock,  
That round my home are seen,  
The gardener says he’s planting “stock,”  
What can the scoundrel mean?

6

My grief the very sparrows know,  
The finches & the daws,  
Or why should each so gaily show  
Her little bill & claws?(clause) (*P75*, p. 28, ll. 17-24)

The parenthesis explains and undermines the humour of the last line, indicating Naden's uncertainty as to the best way of including such wordplay. Although it is the only example of this type of self-conscious editing in the fair-copy notebooks, it demonstrates that while Naden's ear for pun and rhyme was well developed even in 1875, she was nonetheless actively grappling with form and style.

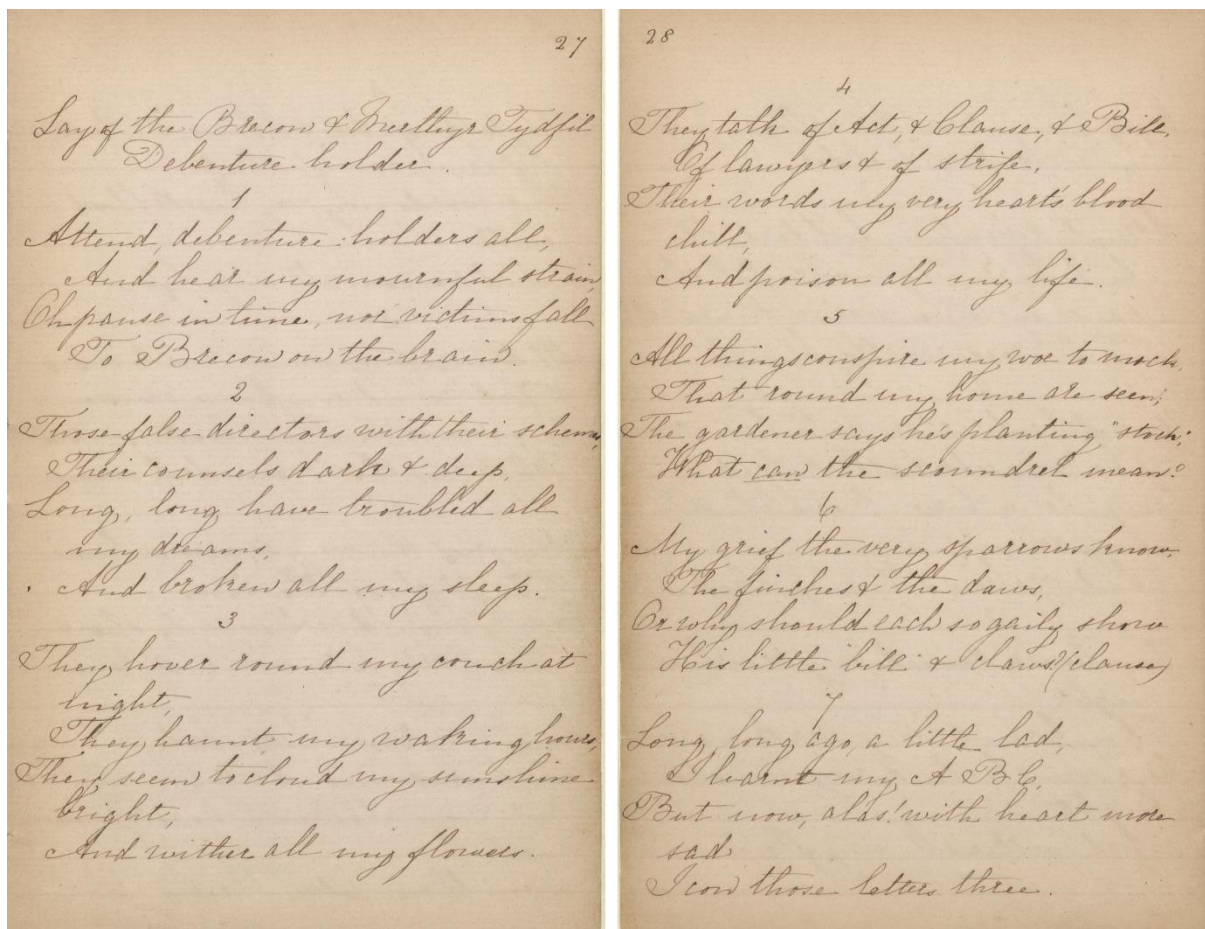


Figure 1. "Lay of the Brecon & Merthyr Tydfil Debenture holder," P75, pp. 27-28.

This discovery also provides, for the first time, access to Naden's drafting process. In the two earlier notebooks, there are some deletions and insertions, largely to her translations. These materials therefore offer, among other things, evidence of her developing facility with French and German. In addition, minor differences between the notebook and published versions of several poems open up the potential for new readings of Naden's work. Of even greater

interest regarding her poetic process are the fragments and whole poems that are included between prose entries of *Notebook 1878-9*. These include two different versions of “The Pantheist’s Song of Immortality.”

This poem was consistently lauded by her contemporaries: in 1890 William Gladstone called it “a short but singularly powerful production,” and soon after Naden’s death the *Mason College Magazine* suggested that it was “probably the best known of her poetical works.”<sup>16</sup> Both drafts date from March 1879, and neither match the final version, since they are missing published stanzas four, five, and seven. Textual developments are most clearly observable in what was to become stanza eight in *Songs and Sonnets*:

Ah, wherefore grieve, although the form & fashion  
Of what thou ~~art~~ seemest, like these ~~white~~ flowers must fade?  
The workings of the knowledge & thy passion  
Through all eternity shall not be stayed. (*N78-9*, p. 28, ll. 13-16)

Ah, wherefore grieve, although the form & fashion  
Of what thou seemest, fades like sunset flame?  
The uncreated source of toil and passion,  
Through everlasting change abides the same. (*N78-9*, p. 36, ll. 21-24)

Ah, wherefore weep, although the form and fashion  
Of what thou seemest, fades like sunset flame?  
The uncreated Source of toil and passion,  
Through everlasting change abides the same. (*CPW*, p. 44, ll. 29-32)

The cyclical “fades like sunset flame” is absent in the earliest draft, the alternative phrasing being “like these flowers must fade.” Naden therefore shifts the imagery from evoking the biological cycle of plant life and death (which is closer to the physical reality of our own bodies) to a more powerful simile predicated upon the sun’s eternal cycle. And yet, instead of providing a comforting image of renewal there is an apocalyptic undertone to the sun fading, rather than setting, undermining that in which we place so much faith. The third and fourth lines of this stanza also change between the two drafts, with the second version sharing the

lines of the published poem. The earlier draft does not speak to changeful yet changeless nature in the same way, offering a more overtly atheist perspective. Furthermore, we discover that the capitalisation of “Source” only appears in the published poem. This decision reflects much Victorian agnostic writing that transforms an uncountable noun into a proper noun to suggest some adherence to a deity figure (a notable contemporary example being Herbert Spencer’s “Unknown”). The redrafting process indicates Naden’s rapidly shifting views regarding different theological and philosophical positions. Thus, we may observe in practice Naden’s assertion that writing was an essential part of her thought process; as she is recorded as having described in a letter from May 1889, “ideas have an uncomfortable habit of developing as one writes, and of requiring alterations in their clothing” (*Memoir*, p. 48).

### **Figuring the Poet**

Although the notebook poems were largely unpublished, those in the two earlier volumes were written to be read by others. The thirty-two line “Introduction” to *Poems 1875-6-7* indicates that she shared her work with friends and family: “And yet my humble ray, though seen by few / Shall glow contented in its narrow sphere” (*P75-6-7*, p. 3, ll. 24-25) gestures towards the domestic context of its production and consumption.<sup>17</sup> Indeed, the *Poems* notebooks’ fair-copy format suggests that these could be presentation copies. If Naden was writing with such an audience in mind it may explain the conventionality of many of these poems. It is notable that this attitude contrast with the outspoken defiance found in the 1878-79 notebook. While this may be accounted for by the passage of time – the period 1876-81 was pivotal for her intellectual development (“Critical Overview,” pp. 2-3) – several factors suggest that the later notebook’s entries were initially written for personal reflection and private consumption: the handwriting is messier and less legible than that of *Poems* or her extant letters, the tone is more unselfconscious and reflective, there are addenda and notes to

self, and (as discussed in the final section of this article) in one instance Naden uses cipher.<sup>18</sup>

It is therefore in the earlier notebooks that Naden's writing is more performative, and in these she actively situates herself in relation to poetic tradition.

"The Poets' Mountain" opens *Poems 1875* and it is reproduced below in full. Through it we encounter Naden's perception of the poet as a cultural force, and how she relates to this figure.

1  
Within fair Fancy's empire blest  
A wondrous mountain stands  
All brilliant shines its awful crest  
And lights the neighbouring lands.

2  
This is the spot where poets dwell,  
None else those rocks may climb,  
For they alone may break the spell  
That guards the mount sublime.

3  
Scarce to the base may some attain,  
Some climb with footsteps bold,  
But few the crowning heights may gain,  
That shines like burnished gold.

4  
And those, like me, who dare not hope,  
The flaming crags to scale,  
May safely tread the gentle slope  
That rises from the vale.

5  
Though to the poet's awful height  
My feet shall never climb,  
I yet may roam, with footsteps light  
The humble paths of Rhyme. (*P75*, pp. 1-2)

Naden delineates the relationship she perceives between disciplines, for the "neighbouring lands" illuminated by the heights of poetry are conceivably those of science and philosophy.

While constructing an entirely positive view of poetry's highest achievements, these

technically-assured but self-deprecating stanzas nevertheless claim that her subsequent poems are not worthy of the name, they are mere “Rhyme.”

The stress placed upon “never” in the final stanza instils a sense of conclusion. Naden does not envisage herself to be undertaking a poetic apprenticeship, rather, she offers a finalised view of what she hopes to achieve in the realm of poetic composition. By pre-empting criticism of her work, and her position as a young woman seeking to engage with this rarefied pursuit, Naden concedes to the Romantic idea of the inspired poetic genius, an invariably male figure with whom she struggles to identify. R. W. Dale recalled in his memorial essay to Naden that, rather than having an enthusiasm for other Victorian poets, “She felt far more deeply the charm of Keats and of Shelley, and she was strongly drawn to Wordsworth.”<sup>19</sup> I argue that this gender-based anxiety has a strong influence on Naden’s unwillingness to define herself as “poet.” To do so would open her up to potentially being categorised as a “poetess,” a term with which she never identifies. By downgrading her poetry to “humble [...] Rhyme” she rejects both halves of this binary, removing any necessity for identifying with either gender explicitly and providing Naden with the flexibility of having an indeterminately-gendered poetic voice.

Similar comments about her writing abilities found in “A Lament,” “Introduction,” and “Pebbles and Diamonds” establish the sincerity of such remarks (*P75-7*, pp. 73-74, 1-3, 164-165); this is not false modesty. It is fruitful to compare these to Keats’s early poems, in which his self-critique strikes a similar note to Naden’s. There is a key difference, however, for Keats nevertheless aspires to achieve the role of poet. For example, in “Sleep and Poetry” he writes:

O Poesy! For thee I hold my pen  
That am not yet a glorious denizen

Of thy wide heaven [...] <sup>20</sup>

For Keats, there is a sense of deferral in his assertion that he is simply “not yet” a poet, in contrast to Naden’s deflection of the label, she “dare not hope.” Naden’s position contrasts too with the sense of entitlement that is found in Wordsworth’s oeuvre where he inserts himself into the pantheon of poets with regularity. One instance occurs in “Resolution and Independence”: “We Poets in our youth begin in gladness” (here he refers specifically to the “deified” Chatterton).<sup>21</sup> The phrase “like me” is therefore crucial in “The Poets’ Mountain,” since the self-deprecation inherent in the phrase is symptomatic of how Naden characterises herself within her unpublished poetry. The subordinate clause both emphasises her place in the hierarchy she outlines and indicates her peripheral position.

### **A Comic Sensibility**

The points at which Naden’s mature poetic voice come to the fore in her notebooks are those poems with a comic or ironic sensibility. There are clear parallels here with her later works. For example, the wryly observant tone of “The Fair One with the Golden Locks. An Unsolved Problem” (*P75-7*, pp. 6-8) is shared by “The Two Artists” in *Songs and Sonnets*, each passing humorous comment on women’s use of cosmetics. Furthermore, the knowing, teasing perspective on romance that became her calling-card through the “Evolutional Erotics” has clear precursors in “‘Love’s Labour Lost.’ A Tale of the Year 1900” (*P75*, pp. 44-46) and “Angelina” (*P75-7*, pp. 88-89), as well as “Love *Versus* Learning” that was first published in 1877. Naden’s most sharply-observed early poetry directs humour at the expectations surrounding the act of “versifying,” however. Particularly notable are “The Juvenile Rhymer,” “The Rhyming Dictionary,” and “The Poetaster,” all of which appear in *Poems 1875-6-7*. Naden employs a removed perspective, choosing not to identify directly with the writers she describes, although combined with this sense of detachment and critique



is a rueful commentary on her own early attempts at poetic composition. These three poems address the issues of inspiration and influence, both of which are central to developing a personal writing style.

The subject of Naden's forty-line poem "The Rhyming Dictionary" is the use and abuse of John Walker's *Rhyming Dictionary of the English Language*, first published in 1775 and revised and reissued throughout the nineteenth century.<sup>22</sup> Gillian Beer observes that "Nothing brings out the phonic grotesque in rhymes more than rhyming dictionaries," and as such Naden embraces an opportunity to experiment with the interplay between rhyme, humour, and expectations in a manner that is more fully elaborated out in her 1887 narrative poem in *ottava rima* "A Modern Apostle."<sup>23</sup> The first stanza of Naden's poem clearly draws on Walker when choosing rhyme words:

Oh blame me not, because I look  
In Walker for my rhymes,  
I tell you it is just the book  
For these enlightened times,  
When all the philosophic brains  
Have come to this decision,  
That every part of labour gains  
By orderly division.  
So I & Walker both may claim  
A share in every line;  
The drudgery was his:— the fame  
Of course is wholly mine. (*P75-7*, p. 169, ll. 1-12)

This claim of co-authorship with the popular reference work, and suggestion that the true hard work of composition lies with Walker rather than the poet, undermines the Romantic ideal of an inspired, lyric voice. At the outset it might seem that Naden is writing in a confessional mode, but it soon becomes clear that this is not the case. While many of the rhyme words in the poem are to be found in Walker's dictionary, Naden's use of polysyllabic rhyme phrases – "need her" / "cedar," "denied him" / "supplied him" (*P75-7*, p. 170, ll. 26,

28, 34, 36) – undermines this connection, pushing against the formal boundaries that such a reference work seems to impose.

The speaker links the task of composition with developments in industry, suggesting that “in this great mechanic age / When saving labour’s all the rage” (*P75-7*, p. 169, ll. 13-14) dividing the task of writing poetry is an obvious decision. While most would consider poetry a solitary pursuit, and therefore assume that the subversion in this poem lies in the division of this labour, the speaker claims that this is not a new situation, for “’Twas easy in the ancient days, / When all Olympus aided” (*P75-7*, p. 170, ll. 21-22). The rhyming dictionary has thus become a necessity because the classical muses have left the poet to his own devices:

The Nymphs have left the river-bed,  
Apollo’s lyre is stringless,  
The Graces three have long been dead,  
And Cupid’s old & wingless.  
Then let the bard who bravely sings,  
With heavenly help denied him  
Rejoice that though he can’t have wings  
A walking stick’s supplied him! (*P75-7*, p. 170, ll. 29-36)

The idea of a creative crutch, one so closely linked to Walker that it engenders a pun, would not ordinarily be deemed positive. Certainly, Naden’s refusal to use the rhyming dictionary to source her line endings indicates her desire to mock this approach to composition. And yet, invariably Naden employs a clear rhyme scheme, and the repetitiveness of some of the rhyme words in the notebooks – “mien,” “golden,” and “foeman” appear often – suggest that she did not always turn to Walker’s dictionary when she might have done to diversify her vocabulary. The question of inspiration is therefore a vexed one, and it is arguable that Naden’s reluctance to embrace the label “poet” stems from her acceptance of a Romantic model of genius, and her awareness that she had not been visited by the muse. Poetry was a

skill that was not absolutely indwelling, instead it needed to be learned: she saw herself not as an artist but as an artisan.

The issue of an absent muse and the search for substitutes is expanded upon in “The Juvenile Rhymer” (printed in full below); over its eight quatrains the question of influence and imitation is pushed to the extreme. Having introduced “our ambitious young hero” who has the determination to write poetry but not a talent for invention, Naden describes his unorthodox approach to writing through a litany of witticisms about the men of letters who were her contemporaries:

1  
That a bard should excel in creation  
Is an error, as all must confess,  
Many poets, by strict imitation  
Have achieved an unmingled success.

2  
I have heard of a juvenile rhymer  
Who to writing was strongly inclined,  
And who thought himself ten times sublimer  
Than our two greatest poets combined.

3  
No particular secrets revealing  
He was elegant, lively, & terse,  
Though he sacrificed beauty & feeling  
To the jingle of anapæst verse.

4  
But alas, our ambitious young hero  
Found his powers, after all, were but slight  
His invention was almost at zero  
Yet he still was determined to write.

5  
Then he read & he copied each poet,  
But he copied much more than he read.  
He was Tennyson once, & to know it,  
You had only to glance at his head,

6  
With the help of Rossetti’s emotions,  
Many poems he managed to write,

And from Arnold he borrowed some notions  
But he left out the “sweetness & light”.

7

Mr. Swinburne must look to his laurels  
And our hero’s effusions regard,  
For in all things, from metre to morals  
He has followed that sceptical bard.

8

Now the Muse all his efforts is crowning,  
And how *can* the dear charmer do less,  
The obscurity common in Browning,  
He has copied with perfect success. (P75-7, pp. 108-109)

Naden therefore acknowledges and accepts the often-imitative qualities of juvenilia. Her skewering rhetoric focuses on the reason for the youth’s approach – his unwarranted self-confidence – rather than the act of impersonation itself. The inversion in the final stanza, whereby “the Muse” is described as crowning, rather than inspiring, the rhymer implies a sceptical view of divine inspiration.

This poem also provides potential insights into Naden’s own views of her contemporaries, whom she rarely references elsewhere. However, one should proceed with caution in this regard, since the purpose served by these brief sketches is closer to that of *Punch* cartoons than genuine criticism, inflating the most obvious trope to a level of reductive absurdity. It is nonetheless notable that Naden’s litany of poets tend towards those closely associated with dramatic monologues.<sup>24</sup> Given that she came to publish many poems in this mode, her attention to male purveyors of the form indicate an awareness of the gendered basis of this genre too. Furthermore, that Naden focuses “The Juvenile Rhymer” on the poets’ works is particularly noteworthy when set against Barrett Browning’s juvenile “A Vision of Poets,” for example. This poem also lists poets, assigning each a few lines to sum up their attributes, but Barrett Browning focuses on their physical selves and biographies: “Shelley, in his white ideal,” “Keats the real / Adonis.”<sup>25</sup> While Barrett Browning has a different, less comic,

purpose, a comparison of these two poems nevertheless indicates Naden's desire to emulate (or otherwise) poetry rather than focusing on literary celebrity.

The idea of poetic composition as a utilitarian process is expanded upon in "The Poetaster."

Here Naden describes a figure whose writing process is the opposite of that which

Wordsworth so famously describes in his preface to the *Lyrical Ballads*:

all good poetry is the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings: but though this be true, Poems to which any value can be attached, were never produced on any variety of subjects but by a man who, being possessed of more than usual organic sensibility, had also thought long and deeply.<sup>26</sup>

In contrast, Naden's poetaster is described thus:

His rapid pen can lightly skim  
O'er Life & Death, o'er Space & Time,  
And Love & Hate are but to him  
The pegs whereon to hang his rhyme.  
[...]  
His puny soul has never sought  
Beyond its narrow bounds to reach,  
He has no high & noble thought,  
That will not bend to human speech. (*P75-7*, pp. 173-174, ll. 1-4, 17-20)

In comparison with the two poems already discussed, in which humour clearly tempers the critique, Naden holds "The Poetaster" – of whom it can be said "His mark was low, he reached it well" (*P75-7*, p. 174, l. 30) – in disdain. Thus, the contours of Naden's view of the writing process come into focus. When describing an unwillingness to wait for inspiration there is a note of recognition: in "The Juvenile Rhymer" the adolescent Naden writes that "he sacrificed beauty & feeling / To the jingle of anapæst verse" (*P75-7*, p. 108, ll. 11-12) in said anapæstic metre. In contrast, the poetaster's disregard for seeking higher knowledge is scorned. The final two lines of the nine-stanza poem – "He is that lowest thing on earth – / A man contented with himself" (*P75-7*, p. 175, ll. 27-28) – demonstrate Naden's disgust at a

professed poet who is not driven by an urge to strive upwards towards some form of enlightenment.

### **Gender and Genre**

Naden's interest in Arthurian legends and the Victorian medieval revival is revealed by her unpublished poems. The following list of the titles from the notebooks attest to Naden's sustained interest in such narratives: "The Earl & the Yeoman," "The Maiden's Command," "The Captive Knight," "After the Tournament," "The Poet-Warrior," "The Minstrel's Knell," "Sir Hubert's Adventure," "The Dungeon of the Castle," and "The Baron's Death-blow" (*P75*, pp. 50-52, 90-94, 104-114, 159-164; *P75-7*, pp. 19-32, 70-72, 75-81, 117-132, 133-140).

Given Naden's engagement with Romantic poetry that I have already outlined, the stamp of the Romantics might be sought within Naden's chivalric poems. However, there are few direct parallels in form and style to be drawn upon. Faint threads might be followed; for example, the character Bertha in "After the Tournament" might recall Bertha in "The Eve of St Mark," since both are described as "fair." This usage is nonetheless entirely conventional, and the pious character in Keats's unfinished narrative has little in common with the "queenly figure" that takes pity on a gallant but lonely knight in Naden's poem (*P75*, pp. 160, 161, ll. 25, 46). Nor does Naden's youthful poetry work towards the later, more emancipated medieval tradition that Natalie Joy Woodall has observed in women poets of the 1880-90s, whereby "the damsel has not only rejected her reliance on a protective knight, but has also adopted several of the knight's less discussed, unsavoury qualities."<sup>27</sup> Naden's attempts to create an inner life for the women who wait for their knight's safe return in these poems do not ultimately overturn stereotypes of generic characterisation. To take one instance, in "The

Crimson Banner,” despite the heroine Hilda’s rejection of traditional feminine traits at the beginning, by the end she has become helpmeet to knights, by whom she is “deemed an angel came from heaven to soothe their pain” (*P75-7*, p. 155, III, l. 6).

Dorothy Mermin has proposed that in some poems of this genre a secondary narrative of empowerment is realised, arguing that Victorian women writers’ revisions of medieval balladry “skeptically examine [...] the virtues of self-repression and self-sacrifice they seem to affirm.”<sup>28</sup> In Naden’s juvenilia, however, this scepticism is largely absent; instead, she works within the conventions of chivalric narratives in her poems of this genre. It is in her unpublished comic poems set in the present day, such as “‘Love’s Labour Lost.’ A Tale of the Year 1900,” “A Warning,” and “The Bribe,” that she confronts and undermines social stereotypes surrounding gender (*P75*, pp. 44-46, 154-155; *P75-7*, pp. 41-47). Striking blows to the sociocultural restrictions that women faced, Naden weighs in upon the marriage market and the position of women through assured character-based humour. The approach taken in the latter two poems can be aligned with the “travesty of femininity, in order that it can be made an object of investigation” that Isobel Armstrong has identified as a feature of Victorian women’s poetry.<sup>29</sup> Naden is holding stereotypical feminine wiles up to account. It was largely those notebook poems in the comic mode that came to be published – “Maiden Meditations,” “The Lady Doctor,” “The Two Artists,” and “Old Love Letters” (*P75*, pp. 41-43, 133-137, 148-150; *P75-7*, pp. 177-179) – while “Sir Lancelot’s Bride” (*P75*, pp. 14-18), the single medieval narrative to appear in print, was far more heavily revised than other poems for which an unpublished version survives. This pattern is indicative of Naden’s awareness of the unmistakable interplay between gender and genre.

In “‘Love’s Labour Lost.’ A Tale of the Year 1900,” reproduced here in full, an outspoken young woman rejects her sighing suitor:

1  
She was a maiden tall & fair  
Just twenty-five years old  
Her eyes were azure, & her hair  
Shone bright as burnished gold.

2  
He was a youth of noble mien,  
But now on earth he knelt,  
Tears on his manly cheek were seen  
That told the grief he felt.

3  
“Sweet Adeline” (thus he spake)  
I sigh for thee alone,  
But soon this faithful heart must break  
If thus unheard I moan.

4  
“Oh, cruel fair one! mark this tear,  
And this despairing sigh,  
Wilt thou not deign my love to hear,  
And listen, ere I die?”

5  
She slightly tossed her haughty head,  
She smiled in high disdain,  
“I will not marry you,” she said  
“So cease your prattle vain.

6  
“I practise as a lawyer now,  
For love I do not care,  
Go, with your foolish “thee” & “thou”  
And woo some weaker fair.

7  
“I know you’re rich, & handsome too,  
And wear a stylish coat,  
But, if I were to marry you,  
Why, I should lose my vote!”

8  
She heeded not her lover’s groan,  
No softer word she said,  
And ere another week had flown,  
That hapless youth was dead. (*P75*, pp. 45-47)



There is a clear line to be traced from Adeline, a self-possessed and highly-educated woman asserting her right to education and liberation from gender expectations, to those female students described in “Love *Versus* Learning” and “The New Orthodoxy” (*CPW*, pp. 88-90, 311-315). This poem indicates how, in the 1870s before she had begun to fully inhabit the role of emancipated woman through her educational and lifestyle choices, Naden already had a clear sense of the failings inherent in society’s status quo. Furthermore, this poem provides an insight into Naden’s view of women’s roles in society. On this evidence, during her formative years she was clearly attuned to the politics of the early suffrage movement and the campaigning that led to the passing of the 1882 Married Women’s Property Act.

“Love’s Labour Lost” is a comic rejection of the chivalric mode of courtship and courtly vernacular. It is also a celebration of female potential to break out of the roles assigned to women in both the public and private spheres. Through this poem Naden demonstrates the incongruence of reviving medieval ideals within a nineteenth-century society, as was perpetuated by Romantic and Pre-Raphaelite modes, as well as her optimistic belief that the perpetuation of a power imbalance between men and women will soon become obsolete. Therefore, while Naden wrote seemingly earnest poems in the chivalric mode, she also had the self-awareness to invert such tropes in alternative modes as she built her distinctive poetic voice that was so well-attuned to humour.

The interrogative tone struck by Naden’s published and unpublished poems when writing about romantic relationships indicates her resistance to accepting the gender roles dictated by nineteenth-century society. Her engagement with the question of women’s place in society and gender expectations has been the subject of much existing scholarship, with focus placed

on how the “Evolutional Erotics” play with and subvert these.<sup>30</sup> The medieval revivalist leanings of Naden’s unpublished poems somewhat undercut this narrative, since her female characters are frequently passive and fulfil traditional gender roles as they wait for their betrothed to return from battle. However, having written many youthful poems in the chivalric mode Naden actively turns on them. The untitled poem written in a slightly different ink on the final page of *Poems 1875-6-7* suggests that Naden returned to this volume after a period of absence, potentially aligning with the “-7” on the title page. It runs:

1  
Farewell to you, scarf-giving beauty,  
Farewell to you, lance-bearing knight,  
Well up in each chivalrous duty  
With helmet all polished & bright.

2  
I’ve done with your spick & span armour,  
I’ve done with your ribbons of blue;  
You graceful & golden-haired charmer,  
I’ve finished entirely with you.

3  
I’m tired of the well-equipped dandy,  
Whose charger must caper & prance,  
Whose manner is sweeter than candy,  
Though sharper than mustard his lance.

4  
Another must sing of his splendour,  
Another his troubles must tell;  
Ye phantoms so true & so tender,  
Ye knights & ye ladies, farewell! (*P75-7*, p. 187)

The first line references Keats’s 1817 poem “On receiving a curious Shell, and a copy of Verses, from the same Ladies,” which asks “What is it that hangs from thy shoulder, so brave, / [...] / Is it a scarf that thy fair lady gave?”.<sup>31</sup> Although Naden did not obviously work within the terms of chivalric poetry developed by Keats, here she is nonetheless acknowledging his influence upon her adolescent attachment to the genre. This poem is both an emotionally-charged moment of self-reflection *and* a comic riposte to a poetic tradition

that does not serve women well. She thus signals how the passage of time could lead to a shift in perspective; the adolescent obsession with medieval tales is usurped by the philosophical turn that comes to characterize *Notebook 1878-9* and the comic poetic persona that shines through her published works.

### Opening Up

Naden's published works do not readily yield insights into the poet's personal life. It is only through obituary essays that the twenty-first-century reader can gain a sense of her personality, as opposed to her projected public persona. We know little about Naden's friendships beyond respectful (though tantalising) anecdotes peppered through obituary essays and the *Memoir*, and nothing posthumous indicates that she had specific romantic attachments. Nor is it possible to extrapolate any such details from her published poems, for such relationships are described by her in a comic, almost anthropological, manner (see, again, the "Evolutional Erotics," *CPW*, pp. 307-319). In general, references to love that appear outside this schema adopt a detached tone, far more philosophical than personal. See, for example, 1881's "The Mystery of Light" – "Love, silent king of heart, and mind, and will, / In lustrous mystery his power conceals" (*CPW*, p. 133, ll. 3-4) – and her 1887 sonnet "Andrew Marvell's 'Definition of Love'" (*CPW*, p. 331).

The two earliest notebooks are similarly lacking in intimations of romantic relationships. However, *Notebook 1878-9* implies something more amorous. On the opening page is a coded poem which substitutes Greek for Roman characters (see fig. 2); it is not written in Classical Greek, despite Naden having learned to read and translate the language fluently by the beginning of the 1880s (*Memoir*, p. 18), and it is the only example of her writing in this

way. When transliterated it reveals one of Naden's least sophisticated poems. However, its context and contents indicate a previously unknown facet of her life. In full, it runs:

No dainty phrases will I bring  
My friend to you  
Though simple is the tune I sing  
The notes are true

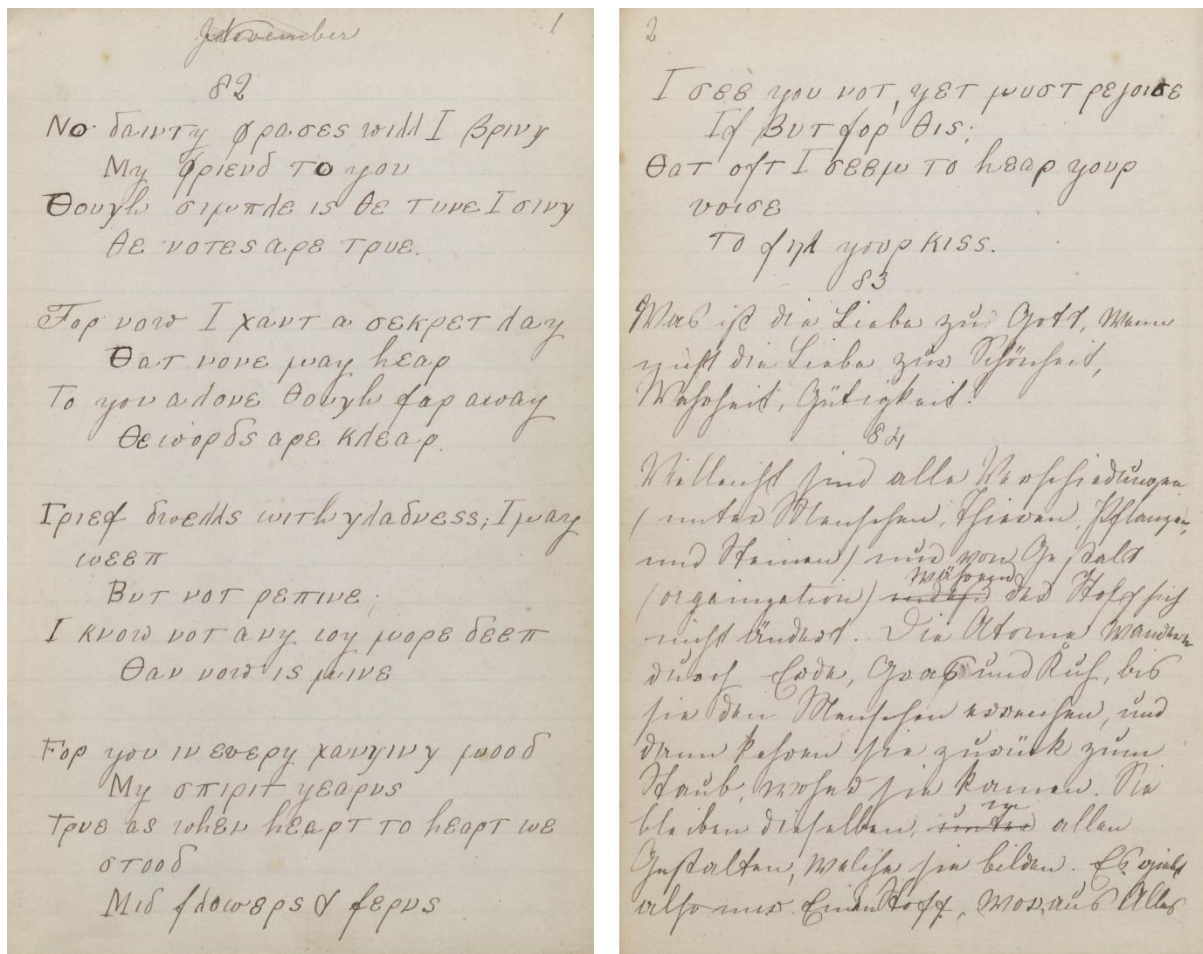
For now I chant a secret lay  
That none may hear  
To you alone though far away  
The words are clear

Grief dwells with gladness; I may weep  
But not repine  
I know not any joy more deep  
Than now is mine

For you in every changing mood  
My spirit yearns  
True as when heart to heart we stood  
Mid flowers & ferns.

I see you not, yet must rejoice  
If but for this;  
That oft I seem to hear your voice  
To feel your kiss. (N78-9, pp. 1-2, transliteration from Greek alphabet)

The somewhat clumsy attempt to hide the meaning of this poem with a cipher indicates a desire to keep the writing private. It also suggests a level of authenticity to the personal feelings expressed that is not attributable to other extant poems by Naden. It may be significant, too, that this poem is addressed to an ungendered "you" with no identifying features to speak of, thus occluding the gender of the subject.<sup>32</sup> This notebook entry nevertheless sheds new light upon Naden's romantic psyche, bringing nuance and texture to otherwise largely unverifiable assertions in the *Memoir*, such as "of all women, Constance Naden was the most romantic" (described as "a standing joke" between her and her geology professor Charles Lapworth's wife, *Memoir*, p. xvi).



**Figure 2. “Entry 82” (untitled poem written in Greek alphabet), followed by “Entry 83,” and extract from “Entry 84” (both written in Sütterlin), N78-9, pp. 1-2.**

This poem also primes us to read later entries in the 1878-79 notebook in the same vein.

Specifically, two entries encourage a reinterpretation of “A Letter,” which appeared in *Songs and Sonnets* (1881). The published version begins “Only a woman’s letter, brown with age” and then reiterates “Only a letter, treasured by the dead” (CPW, p. 34), emphasizing a narrative context that distances the lyric “I” of the following stanzas from the voice of the young poet. The power of this framing device is demonstrated when the poem is encountered in a different context. Entries 118 and 120 of *Notebook 1878-9* are drafts of the two-stanza “letter” portion of this poem, with few further edits having occurred prior to publication

(N78-9, pp. 48-49). Upon reading them interpolated between Naden's impassioned statements about her developing philosophical stance, it becomes tempting to read these stanzas as a confessional lyric, containing as they do a lover's plea – "Take my one treasure, & ever keep / My whole heart's love" – and eroticized imagery – "Alas not these I bring; yet I can twine / Amid your mellow fruit my virgin flowers'" (N78-9, p. 48). These latter lines are scored out and the second draft rewrites the second stanza: "Wherefore I will not grieve, but gladly twine / Amid your mellow fruit my virgin flowers" (N78-9, p. 49).<sup>33</sup>

This reading is compounded by the coded love poem on the first page of the notebook, which sets up an expectation of encountering further personal, confessional lyrics. Indeed, upon reading the drafts today, the opening stanza of the published poem takes on a particularly poignant resonance for the scholar wishing to uncover the contours of Naden's private life.

For the writing on the paper "brown with age" is said to be,

Voiceful, yet ever powerless to impart  
Its hidden melodies to any heart  
Alien from hers who wrote, from his who read; (CPW, p. 34)

While a number of narratives might be moulded around this poem's impassioned lines, as is the case with the Greek cipher, it is not possible draw biographical conclusions from these poems alone. No additional material has yet been uncovered that shines additional light upon her relationships during these formative years. What is clear, however, is Naden's awareness of how such a poem may have been interpreted by the reading public were "A Letter" to conform to a standard lyric structure without the narrative frame. In the published poem, the lyric "I" is submerged and effectively disassociated from any expectations of gaining insight into the poet's emotional life. This shift is indicative of Naden's motivations when communicating through the means of poetry: she wished to reveal larger human truths, rather than offer personal revelations.

## Conclusion

We are left to ask why Naden chose not to publish more of these poems, and why the notebooks were kept by her father's side of the family, unknown to those studying her life and work until now. It is likely that Naden (and her friends and family) considered the poems juvenilia, and the prose notes unfit for public consumption. Their contents do not entirely align with the public self that was crafted by Naden through her published works and cemented by her friends in their posthumous recollections. In these notebooks Naden is less self-assured. This is a transitional period, in which ideas were not stable and her philosophical stance not fixed. Furthermore, we know that Naden was a private person. As I have argued elsewhere, she regularly used distancing and masking techniques in her published poetry – rejecting the lyric “I” and substituting it with a universal “we,” embracing dramatic narrative voices, and employing the comic register – which ensure that the reader rarely feels that they are accessing her personal thoughts and feelings (“These seemingly rival spheres,” pp. 275-305). Naden is not a confessional poet, and yet in these early unpublished poems the mask can slip. In a sometimes clumsy or overwrought way, we get glimpses of a young woman finding her place in the world.

These three notebooks therefore offer a unique opportunity to chart the development of Naden's poetic voice and sense of self during this pivotal adolescent period. They indicate the first attempts and missteps of a young woman who was to develop into a uniquely positioned Victorian thinker whose work spanned poetry, philosophy, and science. We learn that Naden's relationship with poetry was more complex and multi-faceted than her published work and the *Memoir* perhaps suggest. Although the notebook poems may not be as consistently technically assured as Naden later proved herself capable of writing, their

discovery necessitates a reconsideration of her corpus in light of the unexpectedness and variety of these newly accessible poems. In this article, I have explored some of the ways that these unpublished notebooks shed new light on Naden. I have drawn out aspects of this fascinating material in relation to how she positioned herself within poetic traditions and her contemporary society while pointing towards further avenues of research opened up by their discovery. The 1870s notebooks mark a watershed moment in research into Constance Naden, and their contents emphasise her value to scholars of Victorian poetry, particularly in terms of the diversity of women's voices, the comic mode, and the legacy of Romantic discourses in the late nineteenth century.

---

#### Notes

<sup>1</sup> *Poems*; by Constance C. W. Naden. 1875-6-7, Birmingham, Cadbury Research Library, USS 115, pp. 73-74.

Hereafter cited parenthetically as *P75-7*. All material from the three notebooks reproduced in this article has been done so with the kind permission of Julian Rees, Margaret Mary Hall, and the Cadbury Research Library.

<sup>2</sup> Christine Alexander, "Defining and representing literary juvenilia," in *The Child Writer from Austen to Woolf*, ed. Christine Alexander and Juliet McMaster, 70-97 (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 2005), pp. 78, 77.

<sup>3</sup> Elizabeth Barrett Browning, *Aurora Leigh* (Oxford: Oxford World Classics, 1998), p. 32 (I, ll. 971-974).

<sup>4</sup> The earliest two unpublished notebooks can be classified as juvenilia because Naden wrote them before the age of twenty, the definition used by the Juvenilia Press. This precedent is followed by Lesley Peterson and Leslie Robertson, "An Annotated Bibliography of Nineteenth-Century Juvenilia," in Alexander and McMaster, *Child Writer*, 269-303, p. 270.

<sup>5</sup> For trends in scholarship on Naden, see Clare Stainthorp, "Constance Naden: A Critical Overview," *Literature Compass* 14.8 (2017), doi:10.1111/lic3.12401.

<sup>6</sup> William Richard Hughes, with Charles Lapworth, William Tilden, and Robert Lewins, *Constance Naden: A Memoir* (London & Birmingham: Bickers and Son, 1890). Hereafter cited parenthetically as *Memoir*.

<sup>7</sup> Naden and Cooper were friends through a relationship between their respective mothers; alongside pleasantries the letter, dated 14 July 1889, principally concerns Naden's response to the verse-plays published by Michael Field in 1885. Oxford, Bodleian Special Collection, Eng.lett.e.33 fols 57r-60r.

<sup>8</sup> *Further Reliques of Constance Naden: Being Essays and Tracts for our Time* (London: Bickers and Son, 1891), frontis.

<sup>9</sup> James Moore, "Re-membering Constance Naden: Feminist Erotics and the Philosophy of Science in Late-Victorian England." c.1986. Birmingham, Cadbury Research Library, rpq PR 5102.N2, Appendix 17-18n80. James Moore, "Letter to the Author (1 December 1993)" in Marion Thain, "Constance Naden and a Feminist Poetics" (M.Phil thesis, Univ. of Birmingham, 1995), p. 152.



---

<sup>10</sup> Birmingham, Cadbury Research Library, USS 115. Hereafter cited parenthetically as *P75*.

<sup>11</sup> Birmingham, Cadbury Research Library, USS 115. Hereafter cited parenthetically as *N78-9*.

<sup>12</sup> It is unclear whether Naden attended this event or learned of it through newspaper reports. For an analysis of this notebook entry, see Clare Stainthorp, "[T]hese seemingly rival spheres constitute but one Cosmos': Constance Naden as Scientist, Philosopher, and Poet." (PhD thesis, Univ. of Birmingham, 2016), pp. 43-45.

<sup>13</sup> Several of these entries are discussed at length in Clare Stainthorp, *Constance Naden: Scientist, Philosopher, Poet* (Oxford: Peter Lang, forthcoming 2019).

<sup>14</sup> *The Complete Poetical Works of Constance Naden*, (London: Bickers and Son, 1894). Subsequent quotations from Naden's published poems are from this volume, hereafter cited parenthetically as *CPW*. C. C. W. Naden, "The Poet of Nature," *St. James's Magazine*, August 1877, 152; Constance Naden, "Rest," *Woman's World*, March 1888, 218; C. C. W. N., "Freethought in the Laboratory," *Mason College Magazine*, June 1885, 83-84. An additional poem attributed to Naden was printed in the *Agnostic Annual* after her death: "Early Verse of Constance Naden (circa April 1879). Communicated by Dr. Lewins," *Agnostic Annual*, ed. Charles Watts (London: H. Cattell, 1892), 15.

<sup>15</sup> See William T. Going's description of the Tennysons and the Rossettis as "sonneteering families" who challenged each other with bouts-rimés and other poetic exercises involving the composition of sonnets. *Scanty Plot of Ground: Studies in the Victorian Sonnet* (Paris: Mouton, 1976), pp. 40-43.

<sup>16</sup> W. E. Gladstone, "British Poetry of the Nineteenth Century," *Speaker*, 11 January 1890, 34-35; "Review," *Mason College Magazine* 12 (1894): 48.

<sup>17</sup> In addition, the "Dedication" to her grandparents that opens *Songs and Sonnets* states that they "treasure yet / Quaint sayings, sketches rude, and childish lays" (*CPW*, p. xxiii, ll. 10-11), implying that Naden shared her unpublished poetry with them.

<sup>18</sup> *Notebook* was, nonetheless, later sent to someone else. On the inside cover is written:

There is very little here that is was not in substance contained in my letters during the past year: but as you miss the "red book," you may perhaps like to see this. I will write soon, & this shall supply the place of an extra letter. I have sent the L. D. to Miss H. (*N78-9*, n.p.)

There are several unknowns here: the intended recipient, the identity of the "red book," the meaning of "L. D.," and the identity of "Miss. H." What is clear, however, is that this notebook was at some point shared, which likely accounts for its preservation. One interpretation is that it was used in the preparation of a pamphlet comprising several edited letters from Robert Lewins to Naden dating from November 1878 to February 1879 (i.e. the period covered by the notebook) with an introductory essay by Naden: *Humanism versus Theism; or Solipsism (Egoism) = Atheism* (London: Freethought Publishing Company, 1887). W. H. Hughes informs us that Naden selected the letters for inclusion (*Memoir*, p. 76).

<sup>19</sup> R. W. Dale, "Constance Naden," *Further Reliques*, 217-236, pp. 225-226.

<sup>20</sup> John Keats, "Sleep and Poetry," *The Complete Works of John Keats*, ed. H. Buxton Forman (New York: Thomas Y. Crowell, 1895), p. 53 (ll. 47-49).

<sup>21</sup> William Wordsworth, "Resolution and Independence," *The Major Works, including 'The Prelude'*, ed. Stephen Gill (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 2008), p. 262 (ll. 48, 47, 43).

<sup>22</sup> Lawrence H. Dawson, "Preface," in *Walker's Rhyming Dictionary of the English Language*, by John Walker, revised and enlarged by Lawrence H. Dawson, supplement compiled by Michael Freeman (Abingdon:

---

Routledge, 2001). Dawson notes the dictionary's popularity with poets "from Byron downwards" (p. v), and Valentine Cunningham discusses Tennyson's use of Walker's book in *Victorian Poetry Now: Poets, Poems, Poetics* (Hoboken NJ: Wiley-Blackwell, 2011), pp. 117-118.

<sup>23</sup> Gillian Beer, "Rhyming as Comedy: Body, Ghost, and Banquet," in *English Comedy*, ed. Michael Corder, Peter Holland, and John Kerrigan, 180-196 (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1994), p. 182. Beer suggests that such dictionaries expose "the ordinary caution of poets, their tendency to stay within tightly chosen parameters of rhyme [...] Rhyming rare words, as in Byron and Browning, is usually understood as the very type of comic rhyme" (p. 183). For Naden's use of *ottava rima*, see Charles LaPorte, "Atheist Prophecy: Mathilde Blind, Constance Naden, and the Victorian Poetess," *Victorian Literature and Culture* 34 (2006): 427-441, and Stainthorp, "[T]hese seemingly rival spheres," pp. 295-298.

<sup>24</sup> I am grateful to Michelle Boswell for this observation.

<sup>25</sup> Quoted in Peter McDonald, *Sound Intentions: The Workings of Rhyme in Nineteenth-Century Poetry* (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 2012), p. 315.

<sup>26</sup> Wordsworth, "Preface," *The Major Works*, p. 598.

<sup>27</sup> Natalie Joy Woodall, "'Women are knights-errant to the last': Nineteenth-century Women Writers Reinvent the Medieval Literary Damsel," in *Reinventing the Middle Age and the Renaissance: Construction of the Medieval and Early Modern*, ed. William F. Gentrup, 201-222 (Turnhout: Brepols, 1998), p. 201.

<sup>28</sup> Marjorie Stone, "A Cinderella Among the Muses," *Victorian Literature and Culture* 21 (1993): 233-268, 257.

<sup>29</sup> Isobel Armstrong, *Victorian Poetry: Poetry, Poetics and Politics* (London: Routledge, 1993), p. 325.

<sup>30</sup> See Marion Thain, "'Scientific Wooing': Constance Naden's Marriage of Science and Poetry," *Victorian Poetry* 41 (2003): 151-169; Patricia Murphy, "Fated Marginalization: Women and Science in the Poetry of Constance Naden," *Victorian Poetry* 40 (2002): 107-130; Andrea Kaston Tange, "Constance Naden and the Erotics of Evolution: Mating the Woman of Letters with the Man of Science," *Nineteenth Century Literature* 61 (2006): 200-240; John Holmes, *Darwin's Bards: British and American Poetry in the Age of Evolution* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh Univ. Press, 2009), pp. 189-197.

<sup>31</sup> Keats, *Complete Poetical Works*, p. 20.

<sup>32</sup> That the poem is written in Greek characters also opens it up to an interpretation that draws links between this lyric and the Victorian preoccupation with Sappho.

<sup>33</sup> In *Songs and Sonnets*, these lines are rendered "Take my one treasure: take, and ever keep / My whole heart's love" and "I will not grieve, but gladly twine / Amid your mellow fruit my virgin flowers" (CPW, p. 35, ll. 13-14; 34, ll. 27-28).