



# Networking the Nation: British and American Women's Poetry and Italy, 1840-1870

*Alison Chapman*

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How did nineteenth-century women's poetry shift from the poetess poetry of lyric effusion and hyper-femininity to the muscular epic of Elizabeth Barrett Browning's *Aurora Leigh*? *Networking the Nation* re-writes women's poetic traditions by demonstrating the debt that Barrett Browning's revolutionary poetics owed to a circle of American and British women poets living in Florence and campaigning in their poetry and in their salons for Italian Unification. These women poets--Isa Blagden, Elizabeth Kinney, Eliza Ogilvy, and Theodosia Garrow Trollope--formed with Barrett Browning a network of poetry, sociability, and politics, which was devoted to the mission of campaigning for Italy as an independent nation state.

In their poetic experiments with the active lyric voice, in their forging of a transnational persona through the periodical press, in their salons and spiritualist seances, the women poets formed a network that attempted to assert and perform an independent unified Italy in their work. *Networking the Nation* maps the careers of these expatriate women poets who were based in Florence in the key years of Risorgimento politics, racing their transnational social and print communities, and the problematic but schismatic shift in their poetry from the conventional sphere of the poetess. In the fraught and thrilling engagement with their adopted nation's revolutionary turmoil, and in their experiments with different types of writing agency, the women poets in this book offer revolutions of other kinds: revolutions of women's poetry and the very act of writing.

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