Victorian Poetry, Europe, and the Challenge of Cosmopolitanism
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For Cathy and Ben
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This book would not have been possible without the kind support of many colleagues, friends, and family members. I was fortunate to be able to present portions of my work at a number of collegial and stimulating conferences, including the meeting of the Browning Society on “Our Italians: Anglo-Italian Relationships, 1845–1865,” in Vallombrosa, Italy, in 2005; the NAVSA conference at Purdue University in 2006, where I participated in one of two panels on “Victorian Internationalisms”; and the 2007 NVSA conference at Harvard University on the theme of “Victorian Cosmopolitanisms.” For their suggestions and thoughts on my work, I would like in particular to thank Lauren Goodlad, Tricia Lootens, Julia Saville, Pamela Neville-Sington, Alison Chapman, Marjorie Stone, Scott Lewis, and Elizabeth Woodworth. Special thanks are due as well to Beverly Taylor for her generous advice and encouragement early on in my study of Barrett Browning. Other friends, colleagues, and mentors who deserve my thanks include Paula Backscheider, Barbara Gates, Michael Cotsell, Terry Meyers, Deborah Morse, and Patrick Collier. I would also like to thank Sandy Crooms, my editor at The Ohio State University Press, for her early interest in the project. And, finally, to my wife Cathy Himmelwright, thank you for your advice, support, and encouragement at every step.
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If one were to attempt to compose an Atlas of Victorian Poetry—something to chart its destinations locally, nationally, and abroad—no poet would likely pose a greater logistical challenge than Elizabeth Barrett Browning. It was a problem her contemporaries struggled with as well, one compounded by the complex political attachments she felt to the locations of her poetry. After the great success of *Aurora Leigh* (1856), which crossed multiple national and generic borders, *Poems before Congress* (1860) was widely condemned in the British press as the work of a “denationalized fanatic” who could not see past her devotion to France and Italy.1 The release of Barrett Browning’s posthumous *Last Poems* in February 1862, however, provided her supporters with an opportunity to reassess her legacy. To Andrew Wilson writing in *Macmillan’s Magazine*, Barrett Browning was simply the latest embodiment of a long-standing tradition of English poets who had traveled to the Continent and featured Italian settings and sources in their poetry, a tradition that went as far back as Chaucer. Nor did he ignore the significance of international politics in her work. In fact, what is most intriguing about his commentary is his rather fanciful account of how Barrett Browning’s ideological commitments might live on and continue to inspire a new generation of poets:
Mrs. Browning lived to see Italia all but unita and regenerate. We are so close to that event, that we can scarcely as yet appreciate its magnitude, or fully enjoy its poetical aspects. Perhaps it may be that Italy independent, prosperous, and happy, will lose somewhat of its poetic charm; but the realization of its hopes, and its fulfilment [sic] of the aspiration of so many great minds should only encourage the poet to wander still farther east, and find other lands, whose ideas are still unfulfilled, that will afford him an external life typifying that of his own soul. He may penetrate to the sublime spectacles of the East, and find repose in the conflict of man with the wild-beast world—in the great tragedies which, even in this age, there assert the existence of unmeasured powers—and in the beneficent sway of social organization over teeming myriads of people.2

While Wilson’s account of Barrett Browning’s interest in nation-building is familiar enough—indeed, it is the focus of much recent discussion of her work—his mixture of safari and colonial administration might strike us as an odd destination to arrive at after reviewing her poetic career. Except for a fleeting wish to visit Egypt and Palestine mentioned occasionally in her letters, the poet expressed little desire to venture outside of Europe. And regardless of her interest in or ability to travel great distances, she was clearly troubled with contemporary trends in British geopolitics, supporting neither the Liberal faith in free markets nor the country’s growing acceptance of imperial expansion. “[T]he selfishness & most ignoble narrowness in England sickens me,” she wrote to her sister Arabella in 1859, succinctly and forcefully stating an opinion that remained consistent throughout most of her life: “we have always been selfish & cruel in our foreign policy,—always.”3

Even today, with the benefit of a century and a half of historical hindsight, defining Barrett Browning’s engagement with the wider world would be difficult, and I begin with this predicament to illustrate the larger issues that still face us as critical geographers charting the multiple courses of Victorian poetry. Wilson’s itinerary is not without a certain logic, in fact, and anticipates the turn that epic would begin to take in the mid-to-late nineteenth century, as Herbert F. Tucker recounts in what is probably the closest work we have as yet to an Atlas of Victorian Poetry, Epic: Britain’s Heroic Muse 1790–1910 (2008). As epic penetrated more deeply into Wilson’s ambiguous “East” in the 1860s, it took with it a myth of progress that, Tucker writes, “partially anticipated the ideal condition of modern humanity: categorically Western, presumptively male, emphatically Anglo-Saxon.”4 Although bounded by these imperial and Orientalist frames of reference, such works could nonetheless form the basis of an incipient cosmopolitan-
is, one genuinely curious about and respectful toward unfamiliar cultures. Edwin Arnold’s The Light of Asia (1879) was one such work intended to bring East and West into closer dialogue, even if Arnold sends his Buddha on a “westward migration to a safe home among English readers capable of recognizing their own cherished truths in a distant, imported original.” This kind of “postnationalist outsourcing,” as Tucker reveals, was the culmination of a larger trend that followed the decline of the more patriotic epic efforts of the Napoleonic period. By the 1840s, “emigrant epics” as diverse as Browning’s Sordello (1840) and Macaulay’s Lays of Ancient Rome (1842) “reflected the geographic expansion of empire and subjoined to it a bid for the translatio imperii from Roman, Greek, and more racially Aryan origins.” Epic was a genre that came to the Victorians pre-equipped to travel, in a sense, and it can surprise us with the range of its historical and geographic destinations and the complexity of its ideological commitments.

I would argue still, however, that our Atlas of Victorian Poetry remains incomplete and has not yet adequately mapped the complex geography of Barrett Browning or many of her contemporaries. As my title suggests, this book proposes to strike toward a different heading—not the empire, nor any individual country, but something more abstract, with boundaries that continue to shift and invite controversy. This location is Europe or, more precisely, the ever-impending Europe of the future. It is the Europe that Matthew Arnold describes in “The Function of Criticism at the Present Time” (1864), where he insists that his contemporaries envision “Europe as being, for intellectual and spiritual purposes, one great confederation, bound to a joint action and working to a common result.” For Arnold, Europe embodied a cosmopolitan idea of culture with which England must more closely align itself if its global influence was to be at all redeemable or progressive. He would make similar pleas throughout much of his prose and poetry while attempting to sort through the multifaceted political and cultural affiliations that complicate any notion of cosmopolitanism—just as here Arnold interrupts himself, in a sense, and begins qualifying the “purposes” of this new Europe before he actually finishes his thought.

The key purpose missing from Arnold’s European confederation, of course, is a political one. We can attribute this absence to Arnold’s usual coolness toward more radical programs of social change, but his diminished expectations exemplify as well the kind of critical cosmopolitanism—the recognition of the challenge of cosmopolitanism—that distinguishes the body of poetry I will examine in this book. This is not to say that these poets saw no role for politics in cosmopolitan thinking: as Barrett Browning’s work alone testifies, the rich debate that can erupt between geopolitical and cul-
tural forms of cosmopolitanism gives these poems a vital energy and added relevance to similar debates today. As Arnold reveals, Europe could not be approached with the same sense of cultural proprietorship that characterized more imperial encounters—that right to bestow Wilson’s “beneficent sway of social organization” and versify its “unfulfilled” ideas—the same archival, scholastic impulse that stocked the exhibits of Victorian museums. If the nations of Europe could not surpass England in the global marketplace or threaten it militarily, they were nonetheless still empowered, the joint custodians of the European ideal Arnold gives voice to. These nations included pre-unita Italy, despite the condescension sometimes evident in remarks like Wilson’s. And Barrett Browning, we should remember, always stressed that England’s cultural indebtedness to Italy was the greater one by comparison.

The Victorian idea of Europe was still Eurocentric in that it did not accord the same political rights to Britain’s colonial possessions and thus did not directly challenge imperialist ideology. At the same time, as citizens of the world’s only true superpower in the nineteenth century, many Victorians felt history had charged them with the task to be the stewards of a better global future, one free of the “selfishness & most ignoble narrowness” that had rankled Barrett Browning. Whatever “progress” was, it was not something that was uniquely British or Anglo-Saxon, even if another vocal contingent at the time insisted otherwise. This sense of responsibility in turn fueled a strong intellectual and emotional desire among Barrett Browning, Arnold, and many other artists and intellectuals to embrace the challenge of cosmopolitanism. At its core, this challenge consisted of the need to negotiate national identities and aesthetic traditions within a larger European cultural matrix. But there was another dimension to this challenge, one more unique to Victorian poetry and the historical moment it inhabits: an impulse of self-criticism that guarded against the intoxicating rhetoric of cosmopolitanism itself—its confident faith in its own inevitability. A strong awareness of the difficulties of maintaining genuine, transformative contact between cultures permeates the work of the Victorian poets under consideration here. Thus, at the same time Britain’s empire expanded globally, the encounter with Europe in verse fostered a sustained scrutiny of British national identity that simultaneously guarded against overinvestment in notions of progress—and over-indulgence in poetry’s capacity to effect political and cultural change.

In this way, Victorian poetry anticipates how theorists of cosmopolitanism today, including Bruce Robbins and Kwame Anthony Appiah, have sought to temper the concept’s former adherence to universalistic modes of thinking and give it new purchase as a guide for individual and national conduct. In his introduction to *Cosmopolitics: Thinking and Feeling beyond the*
Nation (1998), Robbins summarizes the kind of critically oriented cosmopolitanism he sees emerging from the volume as a whole: "the authors of these essays conclude that cosmopolitanism is located and embodied, and they go on to measure such critical, normative power as may remain to it. Exploring a range of diverse cosmopolitanisms, they participate in and comment on the term's scaling down, its pluralizing and particularizing." For Arnold too, as we will see, cosmopolitanism was a flexible but durable ideal that must dwell in verse and prose, in the spirit and the intellect. Appiah, in his contribution to Cosmopolitics, speaks of the need to cultivate a "rooted cosmopolitanism" that recognizes the "responsibility to nurture the culture and politics" of one's home while also recognizing that "each local form of human life is the result of long-term and persistent processes of cultural hybridization." To varying extents, the poets I examine here were all self-consciously, even patriotically English and were always well attuned to that intensely Victorian obsession, the Condition of England. At the same time, poets such as Barrett Browning understood the important, even transformative role that poetry could play in reassessing the claims made upon us by local and international attachments, whether in the realms of art, politics, or simple everyday living. Hers was part of an effort that encompassed the whole of the Victorian period and attracted a diverse range of poets. How these poets adapted cosmopolitan thinking to specific European contexts—and how it worked in tandem with their other aesthetic aims—is my overall focus in this book.

In another sense, my aim is to bring poetry into a conversation that has already been underway in Victorian studies more generally, one that has sought to test the applicability of cosmopolitan interpretive frameworks to the period. As Lauren M. E. Goodlad asks in a recent contribution to PMLA, turning the question in the other direction, "Can criticism of nineteenth-century literature illuminate our globalizing world in the first decade of the twenty-first century?" This piece follows a recent special edition of Romanticism and Victorianism on the Net co-edited by Goodlad and Julia M. Wright which speaks of a turn "away from insular nationalist frameworks and toward the embrace of terms such as internationalism, transnationalism, cosmopolitanism, and geopolitics." Amanda Anderson's The Powers of Distance: Cosmopolitanism and the Cultivation of Detachment (2001) played an important role in that turn and perhaps remains the best expression of the rich potential yield of cosmopolitan and cross-channel perspectives when brought to bear on Victorian poetry and, more broadly, "any full consideration of Victorian understandings of race, nation, and empire." She adds, "[w]hile cosmopolitanism in certain key instances can be shown to support nationalism and imperialism, and while its own elitist and narrowly European forms
must be acknowledged, it still often gives voice, within the Victorian context, to a reflective interrogation of cultural norms.”13 As Anderson advises, the goal of this redirected criticism should be not to dismiss the contradictions within Victorian cosmopolitanism but, quite the contrary, to draw attention to the conflicts of interest that arise when authors attempt to look beyond but also become entangled in other more limiting domestic or imperial commitments.14 My aim is not simply to offer a happy, revisionist alternative to postcolonial critiques of Victorian literature pioneered, most notably, in the work of the late Edward Said. Indeed, much of my own theoretical and critical vocabulary borrows from authors such as Said, Homi K. Bhabha, and Mary Louise Pratt for the light they shed on notions of travel, border-crossing, and transnational identity. At the very least, as Pratt reminds us, it is important to remember that “Europe was constructed from the outside in as much as from the inside out.”15

The future of Britain, and of British poetry, was nonetheless, for many, largely to be found in Europe—in the notion of a progressive, cosmopolitan cultural and (more elusively) political domain. Returning specifically to Arnold, my study asks what kind of confederation he was seeking and what role poetry—Arnold’s primary vehicle for “culture”—must play in it.16 To pose a question suggested by the title of Benedict Anderson’s influential study of nationalism, just what kind of “imagined community” did Europe form for Victorian poets and how did their work attempt to manifest that community? It was a multidimensional contact to be sure, encompassing diverse encounters with European places, peoples, politics, and culture. The poets who make up this study—Arthur Hugh Clough, Elizabeth Barrett Browning, Robert Browning, Algernon Charles Swinburne, William Morris, and Thomas Hardy—have been selected precisely because they engage the breadth of collective European futures—and pasts—and participate in complex acts of translation, border-crossing, and hybridization that transact with theorization of these concepts today. Each poet also examines the uncertain relationship that poetry and literariness share with other manifestations of cross-cultural contact, including trade, whether in goods or ideas; personal encounters through travel and diplomacy; and even war, both as an ironic coming-together between nations and as a possible prelude to a more evolved, united Europe. Closer investigation of their works will enrich our ongoing debates about cosmopolitanism and cross-channel, Anglo-European identity.

Despite this promise, and despite the progress Tucker makes specifically with epic, the study of Victorian poetry in the early twenty-first century remains a mostly nation-centered affair. Current handbooks and critical guides on Victorian literature, for instance, include chapters on poetry and
patriotism, poetry and empire, but not poetry and Europe or poetry and cosmopolitanism. This neglect is not without reason, of course. The case for Victorian poetry as a cosmopolitan or widely European genre would seem to be held back by its own constitutive terms “Victorian” and “poetry.” To begin first with the problem of genre, it is notable, for instance, that none of the essays included in “Victorian Internationalisms” and, similarly, a special issue on “Global Formations Past and Present” for Nineteenth-Century Contexts features Victorian poetry or poets in its analysis. Comparably, the one essay on the Victorian period included in the critical anthology The Idea of Europe in Literature (1999) concerns itself with the novel, specifically Charlotte Brontë’s Villette (1853). Anderson’s The Powers of Distance likewise focuses almost exclusively on nonfiction prose and the novel, including Villette. These biases, again, are not without reason: with its Belgian setting, culturally displaced heroine, and broadly European cast, the cosmopolitan reach of Brontë’s novel should be immediately obvious. Anderson also devotes a chapter to George Eliot’s Daniel Deronda (1876), and once more it would be difficult to name another Victorian intellectual, with the possible exception of Arnold, who was more committed to a full reckoning of trends in continental thought and politics than Eliot (and Arnold never attempted anything as rigorous as translating Strauss’s Das Leben Jesu). The marginalization of poetry in these discussions may have something to do with the limitations of poetic form and language vis-à-vis the novel. Poetry simply demands more awareness of diction and rhythm—so much so, perhaps, that “no art is more stubbornly national than poetry,” as T. S. Eliot once observed. That most ubiquitous of novel champions, Mikhail Bakhtin, finds the epic the epitome of a hegemonic “monoglossia” and poetry in general to be shackled by the demands language places on the form: “Even when speaking of alien things, the poet speaks in his own language. To shed light on an alien world, he never resorts to an alien language, even though it might in fact be more adequate to that world.” It would follow that the Victorian novel, less dependent on linguistic subtleties, more multi-vocal, was better suited to imagining cosmopolitan encounters. This observation is true in some contexts: Barrett Browning’s decision to write a novel-poem, Aurora Leigh, as I will argue, did have a significant impact on how the work dramatizes Anglo-European identity. And however overdetermined Bakhtin’s definition of genre may be—Tucker, for instance, demolishes it as effectively as anyone—his arguments can still resonate on an instinctive, practical level. One senses that teachers of world literature today, dealing mostly with monolingual students, tend to opt for novels and short stories in part because more is lost when poetry is translated from one language to another.
What, then, is the case for poetry? Beyond co-opting from the novel, in what ways could it facilitate the kind of complex border-crossing I am attributing to it? It should first be stressed how many Victorian poets—particularly Swinburne and the Brownings—did in fact *translate* elements of foreign language and prosody into their work: diction, structure, and choice of verse form in many cases reflect these poets’ deep familiarity with non-English poetic traditions both ancient and modern (and, one might add, their readers’ familiarity—something that opens poetic cosmopolitanism to charges of elitism, an issue I deal with more fully in my chapter on Browning). More broadly, poets sought to revivify notions of travel, mobility, and transcendence that had always adhered to classical epic poetry and its descendants while readapting this cultural capital to other subgenres including lyric, epistolary verse, and the dramatic monologue. Similarly, the idea of poetry as an archetypal, universal language, articulated strongly earlier in the century by Shelley and Coleridge, continued to find new advocates. Thomas Carlyle’s *Hero as Poet*, for instance, is also, ideally, a “World-Poet.” Drawing an analogy between poetry and Christian ecumenism that reappears in diverse guises all the way up to Hardy, Carlyle further reflects, “May we not call Shakespeare the still more melodious Priest of a *true* Catholicism, the ‘Universal Church’ of the Future and of all times?” Arnold would attempt to express something of this transcendent capacity in his Preface to the First Edition of *Poems* (1853), where he challenges “the opinion which many critics of the present day appear to entertain against subjects chosen from distant times and countries” (1:3). Such cosmopolitanism of range is complimented by the poet’s prerogative, when armed with the right subject, “to appeal to the great primary human affections: to those elementary feelings which subsist permanently in the race, and which are independent of time” (1:4). Poetry thus charged itself with the mission to cross borders and bring different nations and traditions into dialogue. More practically, continental travel offered a way of ensuring the viability of poetry in the literary marketplace by continuing a successful subgenre of poetic travelogue popularized mainly by Byron earlier in the century. Rather than simply adapting the verse travelogue to new settings and historical developments, however, Victorian poets queried their own authority to travel in an age that increasingly questioned the relevance of the form to the great political issues of the day. At the same time, the Victorian cosmopolitan poet would have to resist the temptation to find refuge in the more patriotic and imperial tradition of the kind Wilson had mapped out for Barrett Browning’s successors. In this respect, poetry may have had to work harder than the novel to be cosmopolitan—to do more to escape from narrow nationalistic and self-aggrandizing postures. But
if poetry’s investment in cosmopolitanism came with greater risk, it was one that could pay higher dividends: the kinds of border-crossing fashioned in these poems resonate with a unique complexity and self-scrutiny.

This complexity points to why I have chosen to stay within the historical bounds of “Victorian” poetry rather than broaden my study to encompass the whole of the nineteenth century and begin, for instance, with Byron or Felicia Hemans. The limitations of “Victorian” poetry still deserve close consideration, however. In a recent *Victorian Poetry* forum devoted to the question of the genre’s future, Erik Gray notes that Romanticism, even if its meaning remains the subject of intense debate among scholars, has the advantage of signifying “a European-wide movement in thought and art.” *Victorian* poetry, in contrast, “limits the field it names chronologically, generically, and even nationally.”26 In terms of literary history, we would appear to have an imperial epoch book-ended by two more expansive, international movements: the Romantic period looking outward, the Victorian inward, followed again by a more global modernism. Joseph Bristow reveals how as early as the 1890s, critics had begun to set this pattern, weaving an official imperial history of Victorian poetics that boasted of a standard of assured maturation, in which the 1830s mark the infancy of modern democracy, agnosticism, and evolutionary theory; meanwhile, the 1890s signal the empire’s grown up destiny. . . . [T]he poetic development of the period can be witnessed best through the literary canonization of an exclusive band of poets whose careers advanced in accordance with this escalating chronology.27

Barrett Browning, Bristow notes, has been especially ill-served by this national-imperial account of the genre, which leaves no room, for instance, for the study of her ballads. As he bluntly puts it, “as far as I can see, the epithet ‘victorian’ has no relevance whatsoever to Barrett Browning’s critically recovered oeuvre. She could not embody its epoch” (104), while, one might add, a figure such as Tennyson could.

This critical legacy calls upon us, at the very least, to revise and expand our own sense of what “Victorian” poetry can encompass. I am contending here that “Victorian” poetry remains useful in marking a particular kind of poetic engagement with Europe among English poets whose work was published during or right after the reign of Victoria. At the same time, my aim is not to set off the Victorian period as uniquely cosmopolitan: not the least valuable result of a study of Victorian poetry and Europe would be to restore a sense of continuity between the Romantic period, the Victorian era, and
the twentieth century. The encounter with Europe in Victorian poetry none-
theless reflects specific aesthetic, cultural, and historical factors unique to this
time frame, from roughly mid-century to the dawn of the twentieth century.
As I hope to demonstrate in the discussion of Matthew Arnold that follows,
concepts of a united, cosmopolitan Europe and a Europeanized English verse
gained particular momentum in the wake of the revolutions of 1848, pos-
ing new challenges and opportunities for poets such as Barrett Browning and
Clough. Later in the century, as European geopolitics continued to fluctu-
ate, and as new thinking about evolution, race, and ethnicity gained stronger
traction in the public sphere, Victorian poetry again met this challenge with
complex interventions of its own into the major cultural and political debates
of the time.

Arnold’s career forms a microcosm of the broader movement I study, and
a fuller discussion of his work and its influences will help to illuminate some
of the motives that sent these poets to the Continent. Exploring Arnold’s
eyearly exposure to key German philosophers and writers who sought to artic-
ulate a cosmopolitan idea of Europe will also enable me to establish a set of
theoretical benchmarks against which to assess various Victorian and Brit-
ish modes of internationalism. Some of Arnold’s best known poems, includ-
ing “Dover Beach” and “Stanzas from the Grande Chartreuse,” in which he
forges his own poetic engagement with the Continent, provide added insight
into the different directions assumed by other contemporary poets in Europe.
And even as Arnold turned away from poetry later in his career, his invest-
ment in Anglo-European cultural ideals remained strong. Essays and longer
studies including “The Function of Criticism at the Present Time,” “Hein-
rich Heine,” and Culture and Anarchy in turn aid our understanding of cross-
cultural poetics in Browning and Swinburne especially. Similarly, Arnold’s
attempt to stage the marriage of race and cosmopolitanism in On the Study
of Celtic Literature (1866) would find an unlikely disciple in William Morris.
Arnold also mirrors each of these poets in his struggle to integrate essentially
cultural forms of cosmopolitanism with political and economic ones. If he
tends to reject the more radically progressive ideas of Europe, most of the dif-
ferent aesthetic and ideological directions Europe could take seem to register
with Arnold in some way—as he either embraces or discredits them. The lim-
its of Arnold’s Europeanism, then, are just as telling as its horizons, making
him a fitting springboard into a broader consideration of the encounter with
Europe in Victorian poetry.28

IN ARNOLD we see the convergence of three interrelated ideals—Europe,
cosmopolitanism, and poetry—that evolve over the course of his career with the political and cultural upheavals of the time and the influences of a diverse range of European authors. Three German thinkers in particular would have a strong impact on him, just as they would on numerous subsequent commentators in his time and our own: Immanuel Kant, Johann Gottfried von Herder, and Johann Wolfgang von Goethe. Pinpointing which specific texts or passages would reemerge later in Arnold is not my goal so much as to elucidate some of the primary ideas of Europe and cosmopolitanism at work in the nineteenth century. Following this analysis, I take up how these early influences shaped Arnold’s reactions to the events of 1848.

It was Arnold’s father, Thomas Arnold, who first built up in his son a strong belief in the benefits to be had from travel, multilingualism, and familiarity with a wide range of European authors—a legacy, of course, that he also bestowed on Clough, Arnold’s classmate at Rugby. Rugby was unique at the time in insisting on intensive training in French as a full part of the curriculum, later offering German as well.\(^2\) It should thus come as no surprise that Matthew would gravitate so easily toward the works of French Romantic authors such as George Sand, and, though her, Etienne Pivert de Senancour, whose *Obermann* (1804) engraved itself thoroughly upon his consciousness. As Arnold said in “Stanzas in Memory of the Author of ‘Obermann,’” though a “sadder sage” than Wordsworth or Goethe, Senancour’s “spell” was undeniable: “The hopeless tangle of our age, / Thou too hast scanned it well!” (81–84).\(^3\) Arnold began the poem while visiting Thun in the Swiss Alps in September 1849, a trip undertaken in part as an act of homage to Senancour. In a prefatory note to the same poem, Arnold again touched on the kind of troubled yet hopeful sense of “modernity” that he found in Senancour and was always inseparable from his own encounter with Europe: “The stir of all the main forces, by which modern life is and has been impelled, lives in the letters of *Obermann*; the dissolving agencies of the eighteenth century, the fiery storm of the French Revolution, the first faint promise and dawn of that new world which our own time is but now more fully bringing to light—all these are to be felt, almost to be touched, there” (135–36).

The philosophical prototypes for Arnold’s idea of Europe would be found more among the German authors on his bookshelf, although the concept of an idealized “respublica litteraria” of Europe goes back at least as far as Erasmian humanism and was also a defining characteristic of Enlightenment ideals expressed in works by Montesquieu and Voltaire. Writing from a more political perspective, English authors as well had voiced calls for a federal republic of Europe, including William Penn in the *Present and Future Peace of*
Europe (1693) and Jeremy Bentham in his Plan for an Universal and Perpetual Peace (1786–89). Kant’s “Idea for a Universal History with a Cosmopolitan Intent” (1784) and “Perpetual Peace: A Philosophical Sketch” (1795), however, both of which Arnold may have been familiar with, present the most comprehensive and ambitious conceptual blueprints for a peaceful, cosmopolitan existence for Europe and the world as a whole.31 Kant looked toward an unprecedented “great political body of the future,” the crowning evolutionary achievement of world history:

Although this political body exists for the present only in the roughest of outlines, it nonetheless seems as if a feeling is beginning to stir in all its members, each of which has an interest in maintaining the whole. And this encourages the hope that, after many revolutions, with all their transforming effects, the highest purpose of nature, a universal cosmopolitan existence, will at last be realised as the matrix within which all the original capacities of the human race may develop.32

This idea that the future meant cosmopolitanism—that the movements of world history were assuredly drawing all nations together—would become a powerful one in the nineteenth century. It was a hope shared not just by Arnold but contemporaries as diverse as Victor Hugo, Prince Albert, and Thomas Hardy, whose Immanent Will, while derived mainly from Schopenhauer, morphs into something very close to Kant’s vision by the end of The Dynasts. Likewise, many of the challenges posed by Kant’s ideas—including the uncertain promise of world trade in achieving a balance of power between nations and the easy slide from universalism to Eurocentrism—find their way into the works examined here and continue to challenge attempts to theorize cosmopolitanism today.33

Herder’s place in this account of Arnold’s cosmopolitanism might seem more uncertain, since he is typically identified with a virulently nationalist, inward-looking Volksgeist—a mystical blending of landscape, language, and ethnicity culminating in distinct and pure national units. As James Tully notes, however, Herder’s line of reasoning in his Ideas for the Philosophy of a History of Mankind (1784–89), even more so than Kant’s writing on cosmopolitanism, leads to “the presumption that all cultures are of intrinsic worth and that they have their own histories.”34 Since no particular culture was necessarily superior to or more advanced than another, Herder’s concept of nationhood did not by definition rule out a kind of cooperative internationalism. Overall, Herder presented Arnold with an idea of “culture” that was rich, complex, and dynamic, convincing him of the importance of cross-
cultural analysis and deep exposure to the languages and literatures of other countries. Hence Arnold’s later insistence in “The Function of Criticism” that “every critic should try and possess one great literature, at least, besides his own; and the more unlike his own, the better” (3:284). It was important for the intellectual and artistic elite of each nation, as Goethe would advise as well, to be fully engaged with the cultural output of other nations. The problem with Herder, as we will see, and the kind of “national internationalism” that energized disciples such as Giuseppe Mazzini, was the power it continued to invest in essentialist and easily racialized notions of national identity. In turn, the sense that these intrinsic national identities could not coalesce with other national traditions without becoming “diluted” in the process created suspicion toward more translated, hybridized spaces of culture. As the century progressed, these impressions hardened into an increasingly powerful and dangerous article of faith for some. Arnold found himself arguing against these voices even if, somewhat contradictorily, *Culture and Anarchy* and *On the Study of Celtic Literature* helped to legitimize the belief that race gave individual cultures and literary traditions their essential characteristics and was thus an indispensable interpretive tool for literary criticism.

Goethe, finally, provided Arnold with a model for his mostly belletristic sense of Europe’s cosmopolitan future. Goethe shares Arnold’s openness to other cultures and the idea that poetry, like Kant’s sense of international politics, was moving inevitably toward a broadly inclusive Weltlitteratur. Goethe wrote late in life, “I am more and more convinced that poetry is the universal possession of mankind . . . national literature is now rather an unmeaning term; the epoch of world literature is at hand.” From Goethe Arnold derived an unswerving faith in the ability of art to restore Europe to a sense of common purpose and rehabilitated spirituality. Arnold included Goethe with Byron and Wordsworth in a triumvirate of great European voices in his “Memorial Verses,” written on the occasion of the latter’s death in 1850 (and again it is indicative of Arnold’s expansive literary sights that he chose to lament Wordsworth’s loss as a European event, not just an English one). Goethe had “looked on Europe’s dying hour / Of fitful dream and feverish power” (23–24) and concluded, in Arnold’s mind, “The end is everywhere, / Art still has truth, take refuge there!” (27–28). To some extent, Arnold’s wish to Europeanize English poetics was wrapped up in the continual longing that he shared with Carlyle to find the “next” Goethe. He would remark in *On The Study of Celtic Literature* that “when Goethe came, Europe had lost her basis of spiritual life; she had to find it again; Goethe’s task was,—the inevitable task for the modern poet henceforth is, . . . to interpret human life afresh, and to supply a new spiritual basis to it” (3:381).
In Arnold and in the poets who make up this study, there always remains this vital if diverse and unevenly articulated spiritual component—the hope that poetry can perform the unifying function once fulfilled by Christianity. Carlyle, as we have seen, had already enlisted poetry in the service of this spiritually recharged and nondenominational World Church. Robert and Elizabeth Barrett Browning, the two poets studied here who most closely identified with Christianity, likewise pushed for a broadly ecumenical, non-dogmatic form of Christian cosmopolitanism (and thus one, as they understood it, operating largely outside the auspices of the Catholic Church). It was a religious mission that the arts, of course, had a vital role to play in, as Browning would dramatize in “Fra Lippo Lippi” (1855). In opposition to Church hierarchy, Lippi espouses a freely exercised creativity that invites broad participation and investment by the artist’s audience:

For, don’t you mark? we’re made so that we love
First when we see them painted, things we have passed
Perhaps a hundred times nor cared to see;
And so they are better, painted—better to us,
Which is the same thing. Art was given for that;
God uses us to help each other so,
Lending our minds out. (300–306)38

A world of strangers thus becomes a world of individuals brought together through a divine spirit of recognition: they see God, and themselves, in others. Similarly, the dramatic monologue was a form that created a close if sometimes uncomfortable fellowship between subject, author, and audience. Whether favorable or antagonistic toward the consciousness being portrayed, however, Browning’s ultimate message was always the same: “This world’s no blot for us,” as Lippi puts it, “Nor blank; it means intensely, and it means good: / To find its meaning is my meat and drink” (313–15). For Browning, paying attention to the world around you and getting to know your neighbors, in all of their diversity, were moral, intellectual, and religious imperatives.

Moving from these spiritual and aesthetic varieties of cosmopolitanism to the “People’s Spring” of 1848—the moment, in many ways, when the Victorian poem of Europe first begins to take shape—it becomes clear why Europe’s great international moment seemed to have arrived. Proclamations of an emerging confederation of Europe reached a crescendo the likes of which would not be heard again until late in the century, and then mainly as a way of countering the militaristic nationalism that wouldculminate
in the First World War. The events of 1848, and their fallout over the next
couple of years, would likewise form the political backdrop to Clough’s and
Barrett Browning’s first European poems. Arnold would not return to the
Continent until September of that year, but he followed events closely from
London, and in a letter to his sister Jane, stressed the wider European signifi-
cance of the February 1848 revolution that restored republican government
to France:

How plain it is now, though an attention to the comparative literature for
the last fifty years might have instructed any one of it, that England is in
a certain sense far behind the Continent. In conversation, in the newspa-
pers, one is so struck with the fact of the utter insensibility, one may say, of
people to the number of ideas and schemes now ventilated on the Conti-
nent—not because they have judged them or seen beyond them, but from
sheer habitual want of wide reading and thinking . . . I am not sure but I
agree in Lamartine’s prophecy that 100 years hence the Continent will be
a great united Federal Republic, and England, all her colonies gone, in a
dull steady decay.39

The poet Alphonse de Lamartine was one of the leaders of the provisional
government that had replaced France’s constitutional monarchy, and the
kinds of feelings Arnold attributes to him here, of course, resonated deeply
with Arnold himself, steeped as he was in European literature.40 England
failed to take notice of the Continent at its own peril, Arnold proclaims,
and his fellow citizens had no right to dress imperialism in the language
of “progress” if they were unwilling to engage even their closest European
neighbors. In Europe, newspapers such as the Revue Germanique et Fran-
caise and the Revue des Deux Mondes, a particular favorite of Arnold and
the Brownings, reflected a broad-minded absorption of international trends
in science, philosophy, and literature—the building blocks of the civic life
of the future.41 Arnold’s comments also reveal his mostly intellectual sense
of what “Europe” was: the major concentration of “the best that is known
and thought in the world,” as he would put it in “The Function of Criti-
cism” (3:283). Poetry that was not fully conversant with European books and
ideas simply “did not know enough,” an estimation that diminished Byron’s
achievement in his mind vis-à-vis Goethe’s, left Wordsworth, “profound as
he is, yet so wanting in completeness and variety” (3:262)—and left Arnold
himself, of course, open to charges of gross overstatement. His later battles
against “Philistinism,” however, were as much about how little Britain’s eco-
nomic capital measured up against a more lasting and vital trans-European
intellectual capital—and how little his contemporaries had done to break
down borders of the mind as they had on the front of world trade.

The pan-European sentiments expressed in Arnold’s letter were echoed
widely on the Continent, with many again attempting to establish some kind
of correspondence between the increased flow of trade and that of ideas and
culture. The following summer of 1849 saw the convening of a “Congress of
Peace” in Paris that featured among its proclamations a plan for a “United
States of Europe.” One of the delegates, Victor Hugo, expressed the heady
feelings of the political progressives in attendance: “A day will come when
you France, you Russia, you Italy, you England, you Germany—all of you
nations of the continent will, without losing your distinctive qualities and
your glorious individuality, be blended into a superior unity, and constitute
a European fraternity.”42 Hugo, in many respects, was reinvoking the lost
dream of a Napoleonic “association européenne,” but one decidedly less mar-
tial and aggressive, a future governed more by merchants and artists than
generals. Such sentiments were not entirely unknown in England, despite
Arnold’s sense of its intellectual isolation: free trade messiah Richard Cobden
was an active participant in the Congress—and discussions of a confederated
Europe, then as now, often centered on economic issues. In October of the
same year, Prince Albert, drumming up support for the Great Exhibition of
the Art and Industry of All Nations that would gather two years later at the
Crystal Palace in London, offered a vision of a global village united by trade,
travel, and advances in science and communication technology:

Nobody . . . who has paid any attention to the features of our present
era, will doubt for a moment that we are living at a period of most won-
derful transition which tends rapidly to the accomplishment of that great
end to which, indeed, all history points—the realization of the unity of
mankind. Not a unity which breaks down the limits and levels the pecu-
liar characteristics of the different nations of the earth, but rather a unity,
the result and product of those very national varieties and antagonistic
qualities. The distances which separated the different nations and parts
of the globe are gradually vanishing before the achievements of modern
invention, and we can traverse them with incredible ease; the languages
of all nations are known and their acquirements placed within the reach
of everybody; thought is communicated with the rapidity and even by the
power of lightning.43

How Arnold responded to the kinds of sentiments expressed here—particu-
larly the role of culture versus economics in forming this new Europe—pro-
vides a barometer against which to measure the attempts of other Victorian poets and intellectuals to formulate their own ideas of Europe. Sustaining a role for poetry alongside these sciences and technologies of cosmopolitanism—telegraphs and railroads, but also books, newspapers and the post—the conveyors of “languages . . . and their acquirements”—becomes a particular preoccupation for mid-century poets such as Clough and the Brownings. Was poetry part of this larger movement or should it define itself against these mostly material forms of fellowship? Was “Europe,” in other words, something that should nourish the mind or the body? In what ways could poetry serve as the catalyst for Europe, whatever form it would assume?

As a poet himself, Arnold could not find the immediate answer to these questions, and his own poems of Europe search mostly in vain for the Continent of his dreams. If the more strident internationalism that followed in the direct wake of the 1848 revolutions had faded by the fall of 1851, when Arnold toured France, Switzerland, and Italy on his honeymoon, it was still the year of the Great Exhibition in London, which had opened in May to enormous crowds overwhelmed by the possibility of a world in which all nations would be brought together through peaceful economic exchange. Another international peace conference, again stressing the importance of a future European confederation, was held in Exeter in August. It was, then, a year for reassessing Europe’s progress toward unity, an idea that haunts the two most notable poems to emerge from Arnold’s tour, “Dover Beach” and “Stanzas from the Grande Chartreuse.” Each has important implications for understanding his and the broader Victorian encounter with Europe, and the longing they express maps the direction followed by other poets over the course of the century. Arnold confronts his disillusionment in these poems, to be sure, but we also see the beginnings of the more tempered, critical cosmopolitanism that would continue to evolve in his prose work.

At its core, “Dover Beach” is a poem about failed connections—above all, between humanity and the divine, which the poem tries to compensate for with love between individual human beings. This failure to connect achieves continental proportions as well. The poem begins with England and France in a kind of awkward juxtaposition to each other, both close at hand yet slipping away:

The sea is calm to-night.
The tide is full, the moon lies fair
Upon the straits; on the French coast the light
Gleams and is gone; the cliffs of England stand,
Glimmering and vast, out in the tranquil bay. (1–5)
In this, the first of a series of “self-destructive” metaphors in the poem, as David G. Riede describes them, the two nations appear to recognize each other in fleeting glimmers of light before the more ominous, impenetrable barrier of the cliffs of Dover assumes prominence. These images recall another of Arnold’s great poems of separation and longing from several years earlier, “To Marguerite—Continued,” where the estrangement of lovers again mirrors a more collective divide. “We mortal millions live alone” (4), he declares of an isolation compounded by the feeling that “surely once . . . we were / Parts of a single continent!” (15–16). In “Dover Beach,” the ties of faith that once united Europe and held France and England in closer proximity to each other continue to unravel. The continental drift seems only to have worsened, in fact, an effect Arnold registers aurally as well as visually with the sound of the slowly eroding sea shore, one of the many geological references in the poem:

The Sea of Faith
Was once, too, at the full, and round earth’s shore
Lay like the folds of a bright girdle furled.
But now I only hear
Its melancholy, long, withdrawing roar,
Retreating, to the breath
Of the night-wind, down the vast edges drear
And naked shingles of the world. (21–28)

The poem’s littoral setting, one that Browning would use later to great effect from the French side of the Channel in Red Cotton Night-Cap Country (1873), stresses the simultaneous presence of boundaries and horizons. The poem resonates with feelings of transcendence but also with impassable distance. England and France, so close geographically, may descend finally into the darkness and rivalry of a continent and civilization self-destructing. While the two nations should be, like Arnold and his lover, “true / To one another” (29–30), the poem’s famous closing image leaves the reader “as on a darkling plain / Swept with confused alarms of struggle and flight, / Where ignorant armies clash by night” (35–37). Arnold’s simile is broadly applicable to many forms of spiritual or intellectual crisis, but if we recall its specific international context, it also alludes to the fear that the centuries-long military rivalry between England and France will renew itself. These ignorant armies clashing by night embody a Europe of intense energy—of material progress and competition—but missing a deeper, spiritual component to give it a heading and purpose.
“Stanzas from the Grande Chartreuse” continues Arnold’s pilgrimage into the heart of Europe and further dramatizes his sense of spiritual loss as he uncertainly “[m]ounts up the stony forest-way” (20) to the mountain home of the eleventh-century Carthusian monastery at Isère. Its inmates and their dogged, stern faith invite the kind of nostalgia for pan-European Christendom that Arnold absorbed from Romantic writers such as Novalis. Arnold’s backward spiritual glance, however, was one tempered by an intellectual commitment to the modernity of those “rigorous teachers” who had “seized [his] youth, / And purged its faith” (67–68). Finally arrived at this isolated religious outpost, he asks, “And what am I, that I am here?” (66). Arnold immediately passes from a moment of (literally) high touristic fulfillment—he has traversed a difficult mountain pass and has found what he was looking for largely as he imagined it—to a crisis of travel. This place is indeed a “living tomb” (72), a performance of an idealized past that is now hollow at its core. Arnold thus endures the failure of the Grand Tour as “heritage tourism”—much as Clough had the year before in Italy, as we will see. Arnold’s journey does not strengthen him so much as provide additional grounds for self-indictment. “Wandering between two worlds, one dead, / The other powerless to be born” (85–86), he has discovered little beyond the fact that he is not well situated no matter where he travels in Europe. Indeed, Arnold’s oft-repeated expression of the Victorian crisis of faith is a geographical metaphor not just a temporal one: he cannot locate himself in time or space. Caught between past and future, between England and Europe, Arnold looks with foreboding to a still distant modernity that will bring the sort of integrated identity and landscape he seeks.

Arnold’s subsequent survey of his Romantic predecessors—Byron, Shelley, and Senancour—further expounds this sense of loss and poetry’s unfulfilled task. All had sought out Switzerland and its mountain retreats as the sublime natural center of Europe. Childe Harold, for instance, in a rare moment of peace, floats undisturbed on the waters of Leman, “Which warns me, with its stillness, to forsake / Earth’s troubled waters for a purer spring” (3.799–800). Byron’s escapism, however, as Arnold sees it, becomes a spiritual dead end, a dramatic display of futility:

What helps it now, that Byron bore,
With haughty scorn which mocked the smart,
Through Europe to the Aetolian shore
The pageant of his bleeding heart?
That thousands counted every groan,
And Europe made his woe her own? (133–38)
These lines mark the cultural divide that opens up between the Europe of Byron and the still unborn Europe of the Victorian poem. While largely critical of Byron, Arnold also pays tribute to the confident poetic authority he embodied and his command of the European landscape, both objects of nostalgia for the Victorian poet who traverses a seemingly more confusing, disintegrated space. As Arnold had put it earlier in “Memorial Verses” with the kind of blanket pronouncement more typical of his prose criticism, Byron “taught us little; but our soul / Had felt him like the thunder’s roll” (8–9). Like Byron, Arnold himself succeeds only too well at embodying loss. What was needed was a poet who could do more than write Europe’s epitaph, someone who possessed “Goethe’s sage mind and Byron’s force” (61). This new poetry would integrate England with Europe, as Byron had, while restoring a sense of spirituality and purpose that Arnold felt he had not. It would be smarter and more serious—perhaps a “Don Juan without the mockery & impurity”—as Elizabeth Barrett foreshadowed of the epic novel-poem that would become *Aurora Leigh*.48 Or, not entirely dispensing with mockery and impurity, such a poem might go where Arnold had pointed but feared to tread, where Clough and Swinburne ventured. Whatever form this cultural blockbuster would assume, it would not come from Arnold himself, of course, who largely abandoned poetry after 1851. But from the critical sidelines, Arnold would continue to press poets as he had pressed himself to fashion a more open intellectual engagement with the Continent and to sustain the genre’s relevance to other kinds of border-crossing, whether social, economic, or political. How much they listened, and how much they would attempt to fashion their own encounter with Europe against Arnold, is the subject of the rest of this book.

**Even though** she follows Clough in my study, I want to begin my outline of individual chapters by turning first to Barrett Browning and offering some extended analysis of how she responds to the challenges that Arnold saw facing post-Byronic, Anglo-European poetics. She was, as G. K. Chesterton would declare, “by far the most European of all English poets of that age; all of them, even her own much greater husband, look local beside her.”49 Chesterton generalizes broadly here on several levels, but he is correct to identify an influential, long-standing, and multifaceted engagement with Europe in Barrett Browning’s work, one that certainly rivaled Arnold’s in its depth. They thus make for a revealing juxtaposition. More intensely religious than he, and more boldly political, Barrett Browning would accordingly reformulate Arnold’s spiritual and intellectual mission while still retaining his faith
that conceiving cosmopolitanism was a task best mastered by poets and artists, not scientists or political theorists.

Arnold would give expression to these dueling claims upon modern identity in a March 1848 letter to Clough, where he charged England as a nation with dwelling in the same historical no-man’s-land between past and future that he would find himself in abroad three years later. Simultaneously, he seems to forecast the same way out of this impasse that Barrett Browning would chart more fully in *Casa Guidi Windows* (1851) and later works, including *Aurora Leigh* and *Poems before Congress*—a path that allowed the poet to synthesize powerful spiritual longings with the rationalistic, democratic “spirit” of modern times. Arnold writes, “our weakness [as a nation] is that in an age where all tends to the triumph of the logical absolute reason we neither courageously have thrown ourselves into this movement like the French: nor yet have driven our feet into the solid ground of our individuality, as spiritual, poetic, profound persons. Instead of this we have stood up hesitating: seeming to refuse the first line on the ground that the second is our natural one—yet not taking this.” While not necessarily embracing the free-wheeling rationalism Arnold describes here, Barrett Browning did look to France to take the lead in moving Europe forward politically toward universal republicanism. In her work, this political faith merges with the spiritualized, individualistic advocacy Arnold alludes to, which Barrett Browning locates more in a transnational or trans-Herderian sense of the poet’s ability to give voice to the “souls” of different nations. She thus just as easily finds Arnold’s spiritual “solid ground” in Italy and France as she would in England. In turn, more than any Victorian poet, with the possible exception of Swinburne, she would open herself to charges of repudiating her own nationality.

“Italy and the World,” from *Poems before Congress*, does the most to fuse Barrett Browning’s religious aims with the more political cause of a united Europe, where “civilisation perfected / Is fully developed Christianity” (51–52). She alludes specifically here to St. Paul’s vision of a world united under one church, “No more Jew nor Greek” (46), and thus comes close to advocating what Linda M. Lewis calls “a form of Christian empire,” one with antecedents in Dante’s *De Monarchia*. Barrett Browning’s efforts might be more closely aligned, however, with the kind of religious cosmopolitanism that arose in conjunction with Enlightenment rationalism but has since fallen off our historical radar due to the same “Enlightenment metanarrative which proclaims the birth of modernity in the decline of religion,” as Srinivas Aravamudan argues. In Barrett Browning, Christianity fully developed becomes indistinguishable from the democratic political rejuvenation she identifies as its catalyst—hence revolutionary, progressive France becomes
Europe’s spiritual center rather than the more “Christian” nation, England. Barrett Browning’s New Europe, with Italy now at the center of the struggle for freedom, is a spiritual production—God’s love rechanneled between individuals, a love that redeems and, with its maternal overtones, as we will see, feminizes the public sphere. New Europe is also just as fundamentally a product of this world—a civic body—the rational outgrowth of the natural, political evolution Kant espouses in the “Idea for a Universal History”: “The history of the human race as a whole can be regarded as the realisation of a hidden plan of nature to bring about an internally—and for this purpose also externally—perfect political constitution as the only possible state within which all natural capacities of mankind can be developed completely.”54 Once individual states had achieved ideal forms of representative republican government, the larger world fraternity he had dreamed of would follow. Barrett Browning’s poem patterns a similar kind of logic. The world would witness, after Italy, “one confederate brotherhood planting / One flag only, to mark the advance, / Onward and upward, of all humanity” (48–50). Later, Barrett Browning would find an unlikely co-prophet of sorts in Swinburne, whose *Songs before Sunrise* (1871) looks as well toward a future European confederation that would germinate in Italy. In “The Eve of Revolution,” Swinburne commands his contemporaries to “[b]uild up our one Republic state by state, / England with France, and France with Spain, / And Spain with sovereign Italy strike hands and reign.”55

The more politicized nature of Barrett Browning’s internationalism reveals the limits of how far Arnold was willing to go, outside of the purely literary and intellectual realm, in imagining a confederated Europe. Typically, perhaps, even after Arnold had encouraged Clough in his wish to visit France in 1848 and absorb the flow of new ideas being “ventilated” there, he warned him off politics, reflecting in “To a Republican Friend, 1848,” “when I muse on what life is, I seem / Rather to patience prompted, than that proud / Prospect of hope which France proclaims so loud” (15–17). Arnold was also always ambivalent toward the kind of divinely sanctioned national internationalism celebrated by Mazzini and, with greater circumspection, I would argue, by Barrett Browning in “Italy and the World.” While supportive of the principle of Italian nationhood, and encouraging England to take a more proactive stance toward achieving that goal, Arnold seems to want to close off all political avenues to that end short of diplomacy. In “England and the Italian Question” (1859) he remarks, “The principle of nationality, if acted upon too early, or if pushed too far, would prevent that natural and beneficial union of conterminous or neighbouring territories into one great state, upon which the grandeur of nations and the progress of civilisation depends”
Arnold’s belief seems to be that if Europe proceeds boldly with intellectual and spiritual unity, politics will inevitably take care of itself: his wish, as he detailed later in *Culture and Anarchy*, was for a kind of “smart revolution” from above. Barrett Browning, in contrast, was more willing to sacrifice political stability to achieve higher ends. To his credit, Arnold does point out the blind spot in Mazzini’s larger vision—the assumption that violence practiced on behalf of the nation would be relatively contained and would cease once nations achieved their “natural” borders and sovereignty. If history has proven this belief to have been grossly optimistic, the question remains of whether Europe should be primarily a cultural idea, a group of trading partners, a political federation, or some combination of all three. Europe’s pathway toward Appiah’s “rooted cosmopolitanism”—making nationalism and internationalism work on behalf of each other—was and remains a difficult road to navigate.

Arnold’s pro-Europe comments are never quite so political or religious as Barrett Browning’s, but they do find spiritual common ground with her in their skepticism toward the belief that the task of uniting Europe should be entrusted to the same captains of industry who were driving the engines of Britain’s economic progress. For Arnold, the rhetoric of free trade coalesced all too easily with the aims of a closed-off, profit-seeking middle class that put monetary concerns ahead of spiritual and intellectual enrichment. Barrett Browning likewise stresses the fatal contradiction behind the notion that individual profit seeking would somehow invite international cooperation. *Casa Guidi Windows*, for instance, mocks the Great Exhibition as a thinly veiled exercise in economic one-upmanship: “These corals, will you please,” one nation says to the next, “To match against your oaks?” (2.592–93). Barrett Browning looked toward France to model a more selfless, fraternal kind of foreign policy: Louis Napoleon’s continued failure to live up to that ideal would be a source of ongoing frustration to her, even if she never lost faith that France would eventually fulfill the ideals of the revolutions of 1789 and 1848. “Napoleon III in Italy” (1860) thus directly challenges him at the same time it underscores England’s more egregious political failures. France, she maintains, may yet “[u]nselfishly—shiver a lance / (As the least of her sons may, in fact) / And not for a cause of finance” (375–77).

Barrett Browning’s resistance to marketplace Europe also explains, in part, her aversion to the nascent forms of communism that were also beginning to take hold with some intellectuals on the Continent and influencing Chartist poets back in England (and, one could add, the later, postconversion Morris of *The Pilgrims of Hope*). Here she again finds common ground with Arnold, who likewise appears never to have seriously contemplated the kind
of European union that entailed the radical redistribution of wealth that would also mean the end of national governments, which Marx contended were simply reconstituted forms of class power. The influence of Marx himself had yet to be felt by the time Barrett Browning composed *Aurora Leigh*, but his theoretical precursors—Saint Simonism and Fourierism—come under heavy suspicion in the poem as false political unifiers. Her response to them reveals why communist internationalism could not comfortably coexist with a poetic authority dependent on notions of the spirit and individual creative genius.\(^{56}\) Aurora, in fact, defines poetry against the collectivist, class-oriented internationalism espoused by her would-be suitor Romney. “Without a poet’s individualism / To work your universal,” she warns him, his social schemes will fail:

It takes a soul,
To move a body: it takes a high-souled man,
To move the masses, even to a cleaner stye:
It takes the ideal, to blow a hair’s-breadth off
The dust of the actual.—Ah, your Fouriers failed,
Because not poets enough to understand
That life develops from within. (2.479–85)

In the end, the poem decisively, even violently, discredits Romney’s theories: the model phalanstery into which he had transformed his estate burns down in a riot started by the very inmates he had intended to help, while he himself is blinded, à la Rochester, when the ancestral Leigh home collapses.\(^{57}\) Barrett Browning thereby discredits both the liberal faith in free trade and the socialist insistence on the material and economic bases of history and identity: in her mind, both ideologies share the same roots in an anti-spiritual, anti-aesthetic ethos.

Later a reformed Romney reunites with Aurora in Italy, in keeping with the poem’s movement toward synthesis of body and soul, individual and collective, and art and politics. If not adopting Romney’s more radical political solutions, Aurora does endorse the idea that the poet must become more actively engaged in politics and play a leading role in reinventing Europe. Playing a kind of chorus to Aurora at the end of the poem, Romney pays tribute to the high ideals of her mission:

The world’s old,
But the old world waits the time to be renewed,
Toward which, new hearts in individual growth
Must quicken, and increase to multitude
In new dynasties of the race of men;
Developed whence, shall grow spontaneously
New churches, new economies, new laws
Admitting freedom, new societies
Excluding falsehood: HE shall make all new. (9.941–49)

If not a Marxist vision of the future, Aurora’s would still have been recognizable to Herder or Kant in its gravitational movement from smaller to larger units of identity. Churches, like nations, will give way to a more inclusive collective. Similarly, in the manner of Goethe, Barrett Browning unites under one poetic umbrella the aesthetic, spiritual, and the political—the three governing forces of her larger vision of a “new dynasty” of men (and women). These were grand ambitions, as Barrett Browning was well aware, and if they are easy to critique on practical political grounds, we should recall that she was equally concerned with manifesting cosmopolitanism on a more modest, personal scale that was still revolutionary in its own right. In chapter 3, I examine how Barrett Browning’s own status as a woman traveler prompted new insight into the ways Aurora and her companion Marian Earle could embody a subaltern “cosmopolitanism from below,” one that overturned firmly entrenched assumptions about who held the authority to travel in Victorian society.

Barrett Browning’s political and poetic development did not stop with *Aurora Leigh*, however. In later poems discussed in chapter 3, Barrett Browning continues to hammer out possible affiliations between nationalism and cosmopolitanism, with a stronger eye toward the personal sacrifices involved for women in achieving the kind of vision that closes *Aurora Leigh*. “Mother and Poet,” for instance, emphasizes the hollow victory of national liberation—and women’s political empowerment—if that power comes at the expense of women’s maternal identity, broadly defined to include not just child-rearing but empathy across social and cultural borders. Women thus had a unique inroad toward a rooted, even “domesticated” cosmopolitanism that could speak for the “body” and the “soul” of Europe. If Barrett Browning’s was a cosmopolitanism that could come only from the marginalized position of a woman poet seeking entry into political discourse, it nonetheless would move to the center of the Victorian poetic encounter with Europe—the one that most broadly encompassed the genre’s diverse political, spiritual, and aesthetic ambitions—and the most in tune, in many ways, with attempts to theorize cosmopolitanism today.

My study of individual poets begins not with Barrett Browning, however, but—ironically, perhaps—with Clough: the closest personally to Arnold but the furthest away from him and Barrett Browning in his attempts to bring
Europe into being. Clough made a three-month stay in Paris in the spring of 1848, reporting to Arnold’s brother Tom in New Zealand, among other correspondents, on his disappointment at the failure of the revolution to institute substantial reform and enfranchise the peasantry and working class: “there is no doubt that France’s prospects are dubious and dismal enough, and one is almost inclined to think that the outbreak was premature.” Visiting Rome the following spring, as Mazzini’s newly declared Roman Republic struggled to keep itself intact, Clough continued to write letters, but this time in verse as well. In the process, he would create perhaps the most nuanced and highly self-critical investigation of the ideal of poetic border-crossing to be found in Victorian poetry. Clough’s *Amours de Voyage* (1849; publ. 1858) immerses itself in emerging European networks of transportation and communication—including the post—of which the poem itself, in some sense, is a product. *Amours de Voyage* aims to test Prince Albert’s belief that a more closely knit modern Europe would emerge in the wake of these technologies of cosmopolitanism. In the end, however, even as different European nationalities intermingle with greater ease at the major tourist destinations of Italy, Clough remains a kind of flâneur in crisis. While he criticizes nationalism along with strongly rooted, uncompromising affiliations of any kind, Clough at the same time remains highly attuned to the sorts of class and cultural privilege that inform the seemingly free-floating, uncommitted nature of the traveler as flâneur. A cosmopolitan Europe—one that exists apart from the cash nexus of tourism and aggressive strains of nationalism and imperialism—remains a distant, unrealized prospect for Clough. He instead embraces travel-in-verse as a necessary exercise in destabilizing one’s own cultural and ideological attachments—a cosmopolitanism of negation, perhaps—but one that provided him with a powerful critical tool for exploding false affinities.

With Robert Browning and Swinburne, my study moves toward less directly political interventions in Europe and instead analyzes the poets’ efforts to fashion poetry into an idealized cultural “space-in-between,” to adapt Homi K. Bhabha’s concept, one that balances the idea of travel as personal enrichment with the demands of a more engaged ideal of world citizenship. Bhabha describes this space as an “an interstitial temporality, . . . an endlessly fragmented subject in ‘process,’” an engagement that is essentially “translational” rather than “concentric.” As a postcolonial subject, Bhabha, of course, is forced into this kind of translation, one he seeks to take charge of and transform into a new identity, neither rooted in a more “authentic” and illusory ethnic ideal nor dictated by the lingering intellectual apparatus of colonialism. Browning is a translational subject by choice, but in some sense, he faces the same dilemma as Bhabha. He experiences the rich
rewards offered the well-traveled, well-read intellectual, and values his multiple national affiliations—Italian, French, even Greek and German—while never losing his deep attachment to those “home-thoughts” celebrated (from abroad) in the title of his most famous short lyric. But Browning must also cope with the potential of this ideal to descend into a self-absorbed, privileged cultural elitism. Aijaz Ahmad, for instance, cautions us that “speaking with virtually mindless pleasure of transnational cultural hybridity . . . amounts, in effect, to endorsing the cultural claims of transnational capital itself.”

This is a challenge at the heart of cosmopolitanism as Appiah sees it as well, which has always alternated, he suggests, between a sense of ethical “obligations to others that stretch beyond those to whom we are related by ties of kith or kind” and the celebration—and consumption—of what distances us, “which means taking an interest in the practices and beliefs that lend them significance” and “learn[ing] from our differences.”

Browning’s whole career, one could argue, was an ongoing process of engaging, dramatizing, and learning from those differences. With his earliest short dramatic monologues in *Bells and Pomegranates* (1842), Browning sought to enter into the varieties of European national consciousness, as he mapped out in his section titles—“Italy” for “My Last Duchess,” “France” for “Count Gismond,” and “Cloister (Spanish)” for “Soliloquy of the Spanish Cloister.” These poems, along with *Sordello, Pippa Passes* (1841) and, of course, *The Ring and the Book* (1868–69) all offer suitable case studies for probing Browning’s border-crossing, but I argue that it was in a relatively late poem, one set in modern France, that Browning delved most deeply into the ways travel replicates the same tensions that define his signature form, the dramatic monologue. *Red Cotton Night-Cap Country* is a poem consumed with borders and the urge to transcend them—borders of lyric and drama, England and Europe, culture and politics, and, not least of all, men and women. Browning stages a debate between himself and the poem’s interlocutor, Anne Thackeray, over what it means to travel in Europe and to reinscribe that experience: where does one establish the border between self and other, between home-thoughts and those that can come only from dwelling abroad? Finding himself on both sides of cultural and political divides that begin to open up in the 1860s, Browning likewise forms a borderline or transitional figure in my book as whole. On the one hand, Browning must defend himself from critics such as Charles Kingsley, who berated him for abandoning England in favor of an attenuated cosmopolitanism—and, at that, one fixated on Italy and France rather than on what Kingsley (and Carlyle, among others) increasingly regarded as England’s true racial and cultural peer, Germany. In Kingsley’s mind, Browning failed to turn “all his rugged genial force into
the questions and the struggles of that mother-country to whom and not to Italy at all, he owes all his most valuable characteristics.” On the other hand, Red Cotton Night-Cap Country, even as it champions Anglo-French cultural exchange in the face of such criticism, still reveals Browning’s determination to distance himself from more radically destabilizing kinds of internationalism: politically, the threat posed by class revolution—symbolized in the poem by the Paris Commune of 1870—and, culturally, the sensual “effeminacy” he associates with aestheticism. Browning’s ideal of cosmopolitan engagement with Europe, as we will see, co-evolves with his attempts to sort through the complications of Victorian gender and cultural politics—to create an open, responsive, yet still apparently masculine and heterosexual kind of border-crossing.

Indeed, Swinburne, that most notorious of poetic aesthetes, takes the spiritual and intellectual confederation envisioned by Arnold into radical new territory, recharging the notion of a culturally receptive, cosmopolitan England and in the process revealing that crossing national boundaries involves the testing of other cultural boundaries, including those grounded in sexuality and gender. In another sense, Poems and Ballads (1866) simply executes the more radical if muted of Arnold’s aims in Culture and Anarchy, as Robert J. C. Young describes them: “For Arnold the public functions for culture are all rigorously stabilizing, harmonizing, and reducing all conflict or dissent. But at the same time, culture’s role is also, paradoxically, to destabilize.” Europe was not a destination for Swinburne so much as an object of translation—a discursive entity—which partly explains the paradox of why Victorian England’s most “French” poet spent so little time there, as he revealed to E. C. Stedman in 1875: “I was never in France or Italy for more than a few weeks together, and that not more than three or four times in my life.” Swinburne’s is thus a France of the imagination, a place not as “real” or contemporary as Browning’s, and yet, in another sense, Poems and Ballads seems more deeply immersed in the matter of France—or more thoroughly and troublingly outside England. As one of Swinburne’s fiercest critics, Robert Buchanan, would observe, “no one accuses the author of [Pippa Passes] and of the “Ring and the Book,” of neglecting the body; and yet I do daily homage to the genius of Robert Browning.” Similarly, John Morley, who praised The Ring and the Book for jarring a complacent British public with “a rude inburst of air from the outside welter of human realities,” had unloaded on Swinburne several years before, whom he deemed “all aflame with the feverish carnality of a schoolboy over the dirtiest passages in Lemprière.”

Clearly the frank sexual desire of poems such as “Love and Sleep” was guaranteed to affront many critics, but I argue in chapter 5 that their reac-
tions betray that something more than “good taste” was at stake in the cultural crisis precipitated by the publication of *Poems and Ballads*. To these critics, Swinburne becomes the icon of a dangerously “continental” strain of poetry obsessed with the aesthetic surfaces of the body and language, one that threatens to undermine a stronger, more authentic English verse. Even allies such as William Morris felt a certain unease with Swinburne, complaining once that he “never could really sympathize with Swinburne’s work; it always seemed . . . to be founded on literature, not on nature.” This sense of alienation from oneself and nature in fact reveals how vital *literariness*—as a specific kind of cultural translation—is to cosmopolitanism. For Swinburne, aestheticism becomes a twin process of negotiating culture and negotiating desire. The marriage of England and the Continent mirrors the overriding question in *Poems and Ballads* of what it means for two people to come together and desire each other—with all of the complex feelings of longing, uncertainty, and discomfort that ensue. A literary/cosmopolitan body emerges from the volume whose essence is its very difficulty to translate—to locate in England or France, in the present or in the many historical spaces that the poems occupy. Swinburne’s verse resides at the crossroads of the “natural” and the “literary,” destabilizing both entities in the process and anticipating the radical cross-cultural “poisoning” associated later in the century with Decadence.

The controversy over aestheticism and the fluidity of England’s cultural borders points as well to the greater role that race would play in Victorian discussions of national and European identity. Arnold was again a leading voice in the debate, arguing on behalf of inquiry into the racial history of different European populations while still insisting on the essentially unifying, cosmopolitan fruits of such an investigation. The “English mind,” for instance, as he maintained in *On the Study of Celtic Literature*, embodied a mixture of European racial tendencies that should make it flexible and receptive to the products of many cultures. It was a gift, however, that needed to be understood to be deployed effectively: “so long as we are blindly and ignorantly rolled about by the forces of our nature, their contradiction baffles us and lames us; so soon as we have clearly discerned what they are, and begun to apply to them a law of measure, control, and guidance, they may be made to work for our good and carry us forward” (3:383). Of the poets I study here, William Morris follows Arnold most closely in making the case, through poetry, that to know race is to know England and to know Europe. Assuming a different compass heading than Arnold, Morris turns to the “Northland of old and the undying glory of dreams” (9:125), as he remarked in “Iceland First Seen,” composed during the first of two trips to
Europe’s farthest Atlantic margin. Choosing a geographically and historically remote setting, Morris nonetheless insisted that he had found a lost cultural center, “the first grey dawning of our race” (7:286), as he wrote in the verse prologue to his translation of the Volsunga Saga, which he would render shortly after in an epic poem of his own.

And yet, given this kind of claim, Morris’s epic poetry of the North turns out to be remarkably racially uncharged. Morris aims to redraw the map of European culture, but he never seems to invest as heavily as Arnold in the fruition of poetic racial recovery—that it will somehow “carry us forward.” It is enough that it carries us back. To adapt another of Arnold’s phrases from On the Study of Celtic Literature, Morris writes the poetry of the “science of origins,” one that seeks to meet Norse culture on its own terms, achieving a kind of objective, distanced reverence. “The Lovers of Gudrun,” the longest of the tales from The Earthly Paradise (1868–70), and Sigurd the Volsung (1876) portray the struggles of Europe’s most mobile, sea-oriented culture as it engages with other regions of Europe. Sigurd, with his gestures toward a pan-European community governed by ideals of justice and fairness, embodies Morris’s efforts to balance ideals of rootedness and travel. In the end, it is difficult to cull a clear political or ideological message from Morris concerning race and European identity: what he delivers is a sort of poetic-racial aestheticism. Race for Morris is a powerful component of language and the literary production that grows out of it, but it does not seem to hold much more beyond that for him; race is a given, but one that needs to be understood critically, not glorified. Through Morris, Victorian poetry engages in a cosmopolitan, counterracial discourse even if, at times, it validates the contemporary tendency to view cultural traits as being somehow racially imbedded. Overall, despite his orientation toward Icelandic and Nordic landscapes and literature, Morris is just as prepared to celebrate wider notions of travel, hybridity, and cross-European migration.

Morris is the only poet in these chapters who beats a path away from the central destinations of the Grand Tour, which perhaps raises a question: beyond Italy, France, ancient Greece, and Scandinavia, one could inquire, where is the rest of Europe in this study? I should stress first that my aim is not to provide an encyclopedic overview of Anglo-European poetics, but even so, I admit that there are important destinations that have been passed over. Eliot’s The Spanish Gypsy (1869), for instance, situated at Europe’s westernmost border with the Islamic world, would provide another opportunity for reflection on race and European identity. Elsewhere, the ongoing movements for Greek and Polish independence attracted attention from poets including Barrett Browning but also Walter Savage Landor.
book nonetheless stays within the main geographical boundaries of Victorian “Europe”—the powerful and emergent countries of the western half of the continent—and also the North, so important to specifically Anglo-European notions of identity. My study thus perpetuates a certain Western European geographical bias, but one reflective of the historical moment it concentrates on and one that does not invalidate what was still in many ways a dynamic and multifaceted engagement with Europe in Victorian poetry.

One missing destination in particular, however, merits more explanation in light of its important role in the history and culture of Europe in the nineteenth century. With such a strong philosophical presence in European cosmopolitan thinking and in Victorian intellectual life at large, why was Germany largely “off the map” for poets? One explanation is simply cultural habit: for centuries, Italy and France had always held stronger attraction for literary artists and travelers. Germany, nonetheless, would come to play a significant role in Victorian travel poetry because of its absence—an absence that speaks volumes about how poetic authority had been defined by Arnold, for instance, and re-echoed in the Brownings. Germany could signify any number of things to different Victorian writers and artists, but Arnold’s On the Study of Celtic Literature gives perhaps the best indication of why Germany—Goethe’s efforts aside—was perceived as being antithetical to poetry’s “spiritual” mission. Germany was to be praised for its “industry, well-doing, the patient and steady elaboration of things, the idea of science governing all departments of human activity.” Its culture, however, tended toward a “lack of beauty and distinction in form and feature,” reflected as well in “the slowness and clumsiness of the language” (3:342). Germany was a set of contradictions for Arnold, although never enough so to undermine his faith in the accuracy of these stereotypes in the first place: Germany was spiritual, yet hostile to faith; intelligent, but ploddingly so. Aurora Leigh conveys much the same idea in its presentation of Aurora’s brief encounter with an anti-religious English student studying in Germany, a prototype of sorts for Eliot’s Will Ladislaw in Middlemarch (1871–72). Aurora listens silently at a dinner party as the student condemns Romney’s Christian socialism, boasting, “You’re slow in England. In a month I learnt / At Göttingen enough philosophy / To stock your English schools for fifty years” (5.755–57). Later in the poem, however, she delivers a rebuke meant to capture what’s missing from German intellectual life. Barrett Browning’s specific target is Friedrich Augustus Wolf, who, with his assertion that Homer was an editorial invention, had done to him what the Higher Criticism was now attempting to do to Christianity: “Wolf’s an atheist; / And if the Iliad fell out, as he says, / By mere fortuitous concourse of old songs, / Conclude as much too for the
universe” (5.1254–57). Aurora instead turns towards Italy and France, where she will fashion a more faith-based republicanism that shuns materialist and dryly historicist accounts of cultural identity. Germany becomes the source of an anti-spiritual modernity for her, no longer the benign, largely pastoral home of Goethe and Carlyle’s Romantic idealism. It also did not help that Germany was so closely associated with Austria, the primary obstacle toward the realization of Italy’s freedom. In Part II of Casa Guidi Windows, Austria comes off as a militaristic, spiritually wanting culture, “wearing a smooth olive-leaf / On her brute forehead, while her hoofs outpress / the life from these Italian souls” (2.418–20).

Robert Browning’s stance toward Germany also helps illustrate why the country did not assume a greater, more positive presence in Victorian poetry. He shared Elizabeth’s distrust of the Higher Criticism and attacked Strauss in Christmas-Eve and Easter-Day (1850), where he appears in the guise of an off-putting and vain lecturer who once again hails from “Göttingen,—most likely” and addresses an audience on the “Myth of Christ” (794; 859). Contemporary German intellectual life had little to offer the Victorian poet trying to rehabilitate Christianity and reunify Europe along more spiritual lines. France, of course, had its own set of committed secularists and over-fondness for theory—“[t]oo absolute and earnest, with them all / The idea of a knife cuts real flesh,” as Aurora Leigh opined (6.22–23)—but these forces were counterbalanced by another: a greater dedication to democratic and egalitarian principles and to the arts as a means of advancing them. Browning’s wrath quickened only when these impulses fell out of balance with each other and became extreme, as they had in the case of Léonce Miranda, whom he profiles in Red Cotton Night-Cap Country. Thus Browning’s sometime hostility toward France should not be confused with the kind of High German cheerleading one sees in Carlyle. “That noble, patient, deep, pious, and solid Germany,” Carlyle wrote to The Times at the outbreak of the Franco-Prussian War, “should at length be welded into a Nation, and become Queen of the Continent, instead of vapouring, vainglorious, gesticulating, quarrelsome, restless and oversensitive France seems to me the hopefullest public fact that has occurred in my time.”76 These were adjectives Browning might apply to Louis Napoleon, whom he caricatures in Prince Hohenstein-Schwangau, Saviour of Society (1871), but not to France as a nation. For Browning, the year 1870 did not signal the triumph of Germanic over French culture and principles but was, rather, “folly’s year in France” (3233), when it failed to live up to its own best national standards. Overall, then, in Victorian poetry, Germany fails to resonate as an actual destination but it does provide a vital
source of friction and debate. Even Morris, as we will see, with his preference for the more northern reaches of Europe, was careful to distance the type of cultural work performed by his translations and adaptations of Icelandic sagas from the “Teutonism” on display in Carlyle and, as we saw earlier, Kingsley.

As it moves from Morris to Hardy at the turn of the century, my study also passes over some late-century poets who could conceivably find a viable place in a study of Victorian Anglo-European poetics. I plead the usual limits of time and space, but would also observe that during this era, Victorian poetry, when set abroad, did in some respects take the mostly imperial turn that Wilson anticipated upon the death of Barrett Browning. One thinks, for instance, of Rudyard Kipling’s *Barrack-Room Ballads* (1892) or Robert Louis Stevenson’s “Travel” from *A Child’s Garden of Verses* (1885), where he famously “should like to rise and go / Where the golden apples grow; / Where below another sky / Parrot islands anchored lie” (1–4). By and large, what is missing from Victorian poetry following Morris are what one might term the “big” poems of Europe—whether epic or of epic ambitions or length—that continue the kind of project undertaken by mid-century poets to map Anglo-European space and dramatize its multilayered encounters. (I would include Swinburne’s *Poems and Ballads* among these major efforts even if it is not one continuous narrative or travelogue.) That said, the kinds of cultural translation pioneered in *Poems and Ballads* would indeed continue to flourish and evolve but in different directions after Swinburne—a promising subject for a study concerned with more specifically aesthetic or fin-de-siècle encounters with Europe. Arthur Symons’ *London Nights* (1896), for instance, brings France over to England in ways not ventured by Swinburne, who, despite his admiration for Baudelaire, did not attempt to recreate the specifically urban, contemporary cosmopolitanism of the flâneur, who becomes a much more visible figure in British Decadent verse. Such a study could also explore the ways “Michael Field” (Katherine Bradley and Edith Cooper) combined elements of travel and aesthetic appreciation in *Sight and Song* (1895), which carefully notes the museum “setting” of each of these ekphrastic poems. Like Swinburne’s “Hermaphroditus,” which he situates “Au Musée de Louvre, Mars 1863,” Bradley and Cooper reconfigure the encounter with art in European galleries less as distanced appreciation and more as active interrogation of the cultural and gender borders art puts on display.

The Victorian long poem of Europe would dramatically reassert itself, however, with Thomas Hardy’s *The Dynasts: An Epic-Drama of the War*
with Napoleon (1904–8), the capstone to my investigation and to the Victorian effort to give poetic shape and spirit to Europe. As an author who first encountered Europe through the more local lens of the Wessex novels, Hardy likewise provides an occasion for reexamining basic questions of genre: indeed, in comparison to his historical novel of the same period, The Trumpet-Major (1880), The Dynasts dramatically revises what happens to local identity in the context of a European-wide conflict. The poem’s complex structure and multiple perspectives work to destabilize forms of national and local allegiance while still paying tribute—as Morris had—to the powerful grip they hold over individuals. Hardy’s closest affinity in this study, however, is with Barrett Browning, for he returns in many ways to the same question that confronted her at mid-century: how the quasi-religious devotion that defines the imagined community of the nation could evolve into the intellectual and spiritual confederation of Europe that Arnold had anticipated. Comments from the preliminary notes to The Dynasts echo Barrett Browning’s call in the preface to Poems before Congress, as we will see, to balance patriotic feeling against wider interests: “Patriotism,” he wrote, “if aggressive and at the expense of other countries, is a vice; if in sympathy with them, a virtue.”

For Barrett Browning, poetry becomes the essence of a new spirituality that would expand and promote larger public goals. If Hardy, in contrast, could not re-tailor Christianity into the spiritual fabric that would reunite Europe, the poem is still deeply spiritual in its own way, suggesting there was an essence beyond material reality, a larger web of energy or Will that, though unconscious of itself, weaves its way collectively through each individual mind. As it manifests itself in The Dynasts, the “Immanent Will” bears some affinity to the national will that Barrett Browning wishes to see ignited in Casa Guidi Windows and “Italy and the World.” By the turn of the twentieth century, however, the imperial ambitions of Germany made it much more difficult for Hardy to celebrate emergent European nationalisms. With the benefit of this historical hindsight, Hardy portrays the greatest military conflict of the nineteenth century as a “Clash of Peoples” (4:5) animated by powerful but blind national feeling. During the Battle of Borodino, the “Spirit of the Years” observes,

\[
\text{Thus do the mindless minions of the spell} \\
\text{In mechanized enchantment sway and show} \\
\text{A Will that wills above the will of each,} \\
\text{Yet but the will of all conjunctively;}
\]
When individuals act on behalf of national identity, or think they do, they merely carry out the indifferent energy of the Will. The concept of the Will also notably diminishes the importance of race in calculations of national and European identity: such distinctions seem merely arbitrary and destructive. Only when humans perceive the working of the Will, and the two work in tandem—“Consciousness the Will informing, till It fashion all things fair”—will such collective cosmic energy become the spirit that goes international (III. After Scene.110). In terms of crafting a cohesive spirit of Europe, and, eventually, the entire world, one could say that Hardy and Barrett Browning both finally arrive via different paths at the doors of the same World Church—one centered on the faith that there is some kind of constructive, immaterial force that can bind nations and peoples together. To some degree, they both follow Kant in the belief that war, whether the great European conflict at the beginning of the nineteenth century or later wars for national independence, might finally steer humanity toward a cosmopolitan future: “All wars are accordingly so many attempts (not indeed by the intention of men, but by the intention of nature) to bring about new relations between states, and, by the destruction or at least the dismemberment of old entities, to create new ones.” As *The Dynasts* conveys through its form and content, cosmopolitanism was all about gaining the right critical vantage point on oneself and on the world at large.

Together, the chapters that follow seek to rechart Victorian poetics, establishing the importance of the encounter with Europe to poets across the period, from Arnold to Hardy. Each author affirms that poetry must cross borders and conceive cosmopolitanism in ways not being realized in the political realm or in the culture at large. “Europe wants to be one,” Friedrich Nietzsche would insist in *Beyond Good and Evil* (1886): “The mysterious labour in the souls of all the more profound and far-reaching people of this century has actually been focused on preparing the path to this new *synthesis* and on experimentally anticipating the Europeans of the future.” For many Victorian poets, as for Nietzsche, Europe was always about the future, something that would emerge out of this mysterious soul work in which poetry must play a vital role. From our own perspective in the early twenty-first century, as readers of these poets, Europe served them just as crucially as the testing ground for debating questions not just of international politics, but of religion, economics, sexuality, and gender that still
confront us. By examining their efforts, I hope to reveal the important position Victorian poetry holds in understanding the ongoing British effort to define its place in Europe and in the wider world. At the same time, I hope to revise our understanding of poetry itself, showing its flexibility and adaptiveness to international contexts—its promise as a discourse of critical cosmopolitanism.
8
Conclusion

“Argosies of Magic Sails”:
Cosmopolitan Dreams and Challenges

Throughout my work on this book, which has sought to understand how a diverse range of Victorian poets engaged, critiqued, and in many cases transcended the frameworks of cosmopolitanism available to them in their time, I have been reminded now and then of another, much more visible inheritance from the nineteenth century. Since their revival in Athens in 1896, the Olympic Games have been a recurring feature of global culture, apart from the interruption of two world wars. I have been struck, for instance, by the parallels between the opening ceremony of the Games and *Casa Guidi Windows*, which bears witness to its own Parade of Nations in the streets of Florence:

    Last, the world had sent
    The various children of her teeming flanks—
    Greeks, English, French—as if to a parliament
    Of lovers of her Italy in ranks,
    Each bearing its land’s symbol reverent. (1.511–15)

Representatives from different European nations celebrate Italy but also something larger: the promise of Italy’s future, the beginning of that “advance, / Onward and upward, of all humanity” (49–50), as Barrett Browning would
describe it later in “Italy and the World.” Likewise, the opening ceremony of the Olympics typically celebrates the accomplishments of the host nation before inviting athletes from around the world to march in under their own flags and then to mingle together in the center of the arena—a symbolic representation of national internationalism first devised for the Melbourne games of 1956. Spectators cheer one’s nation but, it is hoped, subsume that self-interest within universal ideals of fellowship and fair play. The Olympics thus attempts to channel the spirit of nationalism into something nobler even as it puts national rivalries on display. For Pierre de Coubertin, the founder of the modern games, “Olympism” was “a religious sentiment transformed and enlarged by the internationalism and democracy that distinguish the modern age.”

_The Dynasts_ and the Olympics may share an even stronger kinship. Both were conceived amidst the political tensions of the fin de siècle when Europe seemed to be gearing up for another great military conflict. By staging his own “drama of nations” within a greater, nobler philosophical framework, Hardy could redeem war, recasting it as part of the movement toward Kant’s perpetual peace and universal, cosmopolitan future. _The Dynasts_ likewise reflects the peculiar blend of ancient and modern that is the Olympics, which gestures back to classical times and stresses its spiritual continuity with Europe’s cultural origins. Hardy dresses his poem in the language and perspectives of a quasi-ancient Greek chorus, who offer a broad philosophical and historical perspective on human events. Ultimately, _Casa Guidi Windows, The Dynasts_, and the Olympic games all strive to redeem patriotism and channel it toward higher ends.

So far I have managed to conduct this study, however, without paying tribute to perhaps the most famous display of cosmopolitan pageantry in all of Victorian poetry. If Alfred Tennyson’s verse exists largely outside of the Anglo-European spaces of identity cultivated by the Brownings or Swinburne, he did flirt briefly and vividly in “Locksley Hall” (1842) with contemporary cosmopolitan thinking. It is only fair, in some sense, to give him his due, since all of the poets I examine here were writing against him to varying extents, or at least the Tennyson of _Idylls of the King_. Tennyson writes,

> For I dipt into the future, far as human eye could see,
> Saw the Vision of the world, and all the wonder that would be;
>
> Saw the heavens fill with commerce, argosies of magic sails,
> Pilots of the purple twilight, dropping down with costly bales;
Heard the heavens fill with shouting, and there rained a ghastly dew
From the nations’ airy navies grappling in the central blue;

Far along the world-wide whisper of the south-wind rushing warm,
With the standards of the peoples plunging thro’ the thunder-storm;

Till the war-drum throb’d no longer, and the battle-flags were furl’d
In the Parliament of man, the Federation of the world. (119–28)²

In an almost psychedelic rerendering of Kant’s “spirit of commerce,” Tennyson, in the space of ten lines, works his way through an era of competitive free trade and global conflict before finally depositing mankind at the threshold of world cooperation and unity. Colorful and dynamic, Tennyson’s effort to represent symbolically the ideals and abstractions of nineteenth-century internationalism could find a place, one imagines, in an Olympic opening ceremony even now (perhaps London in 2012?).

Tennyson’s reflections on internationalism continue in the poem, but before delving more deeply into them, I wanted to cite another Victorian cosmopolitan dream that helps to put Tennyson’s achievement in a wider literary context. And I do mean wide: Philip James Bailey’s Festus, published first in 1839, revised and expanded in 1845, and again in subsequent editions up until 1889, when it reached nearly 40,000 lines, emerged out of the same apocalyptic epic tradition that gave rise to Robert Pollok’s even more popular The Course of Time. Bailey, however, would opt for a much more inclusive final reckoning, one inconceivable under Pollok’s stern Calvinism. Based loosely on Faust, the poem’s protagonist, like Goethe’s, is forlorn in love but espouses a more deeply earnest poetic sensibility. With Lucifer’s assistance, he travels across time, across the globe, even across space to Venus and the Moon, before reconciling his lost loves and paving the way toward world peace—thus bypassing Tennyson’s epoch of free trade entirely. In Bailey’s postmillennial universe, all are saved, Lucifer too, as everyone and everything disappears within the oneness of God:

Time there hath been when only God was all:
And it shall be again. The hour is named,
When seraph, cherub, angel, saint, man, fiend,
Made pure, and unbelievably uplift
Above their present state—drawn up to God,
Like dew into the air—shall be all Heaven;
And all souls shall be in God, and shall be God,
And nothing but God, be.³

Thus what Herbert F. Tucker calls Bailey’s “Big Hug of no-fault apocalypse,” one that typifies how “the spasmodic epic replaces the . . . evangelical atonement of 1820s epic with nicer things like welcome and pardon, all in support of the unobstructed epiphany of self.”⁴ The poem indeed offers an intoxicating vision of poetic power: before this final heavenly consummation, dethroned kings bow before Festus in observance of what Tucker calls a “postnationalist cult of personality.”⁵

It should perhaps come as no surprise, then, that Bailey’s poem was on Matthew Arnold’s mind in the early months of 1848 when, as we saw, events on the political stage seemed to forecast the impending arrival of Europe’s cosmopolitan future. At first Arnold credited Bailey in a letter to Clough with being one of the most technically adept and “promising English verse-writers” of the day.⁶ By the following spring, however, Arnold’s enthusiasm had cooled. Festus had failed the all-important test of Europeanness:

England has fallen intellectually so far behind the continent that we cannot expect to see her assisting to carry on the intellectual work of the world from the point to which it is now arrived: for to what point it is arrived not 20 English people know: so profoundly has activity in this country extirpated reflection. So we may expect to see English people doing things which have long been done, & re-discovering what has been discovered & used up elsewhere, like Faustism.⁷

With respect to the intellectual and spiritual confederation Arnold later called for in “The Function of Criticism,” Festus perhaps fell into the category of being careful what you wish for. However positive-minded and ambitious Bailey’s poem was, however well Bailey could hold the line poetically, the poem’s intellectual appeal could not endure. Festus cast its vision across the cosmos and deep into the future, but in some crucial sense it never even made it across the English Channel.

Arnold’s judgment of Festus brings me back to “Locksley Hall” and the perhaps inevitable tension that can emerge between cosmopolitan dreams and realities. What Arnold made of Tennyson’s poem is not known, but we, at least, should recognize that it has something more to teach to us with respect to cosmopolitanism than Bailey, something beyond the “argosies of magic sails” in the passage already quoted.⁸ Indeed, after juxtaposing that vision with the kind of world the poem imagines later, it becomes clear that
“Locksley Hall” forms a critique of the deceptive, intoxicating rhetoric of the competing global agendas available at the time. Later, in fact, the speaker rejects notions of European-led world progress for a kind of orientalist fantasy: “There methinks would be enjoyment more than in this march of mind, / In the steamship, in the railway, in the thoughts that shake mankind” (165–66). Finally overcoming his disillusionment with Amy, the English woman he imagines betrayed him, he proclaims, “I will take some savage woman, she shall rear my dusky race” (168). The speaker then quickly backs off of this alternative and reaffirms his role in Europe’s march to the future—following up his sexism with one of the more forthright expressions of Eurocentrism to emerge out of the Victorian period: “Thro’ the shadow of the globe we sweep into the younger day; / Better fifty years of Europe than a cycle of Cathay” (183–84).

Determining where Tennyson himself stands on these proclamations is difficult, and attempting to do so in fact diminishes the poem’s rhetorical effectiveness as a dramatic monologue. John Lucas aptly describes the speaker’s thoughts as “the near-hysterical strategies of a man trying to convince himself that he can make sense of himself and therefore of the world out there.” The unusual format of the poem, with its double-spaces between couplets, likewise suggests someone incapable of tying his thoughts together in a more sustained analysis. “I know my words are wild” (173), he concedes in a brief moment of self-containment. Tennyson’s point, in fact, might be just how difficult it was to describe in reasoned, measured tones what motivated the Victorian encounter with the wider world, never mind the future results it would lead to. Self-absorption overlaps with fellow-feeling, universalism slips easily into Eurocentrism—a critique often made of Kant as well, whose cosmopolitan vision entails an indefinite preliminary imperial stage, with Europe, the seat of progress, always pointing the way ahead. The mixed, unstable prophecies of “Locksley Hall” thus may have turned out to be more accurate than the cosmopolitan dreams of many of Tennyson’s contemporaries. The road to European and finally global cosmopolitanism, if that was indeed where the world was headed, would be a confusing one with numerous digressions, one defined by conflict and competition as much as cooperation.

Such a realization, however, begs the question of whether Arnold’s intellectual and spiritual confederation of Europe—along with similar, more global constructs—contains a contradiction at its very heart: can any such attempt to manifest this idea in poetry be spiritual and intellectual at the same time? Or, like the Olympics, is it a performance that, under closer scrutiny, always seems to undermine the cosmopolitan “religious sentiment” that
Coubertin claimed inspired them in the first place? In other words, when it comes to performing cosmopolitanism, does the attempt to “dream big” inevitably entail the abandonment of some key intellectual anchorage and critical awareness? Poetically speaking, Festus, perhaps, stands most open to this charge, but we should recall that *The Dynasts* and *Aurora Leigh* also raked in high stakes as they drew to a close, predicting a better, happier future for the world. The ultimate answer to the intellectual and spiritual question may lie in the recognition that cosmopolitanism, if it is to be performed well, involves taking risks, a recognition that gets to the heart of the challenge of cosmopolitanism as recounted in this book. Cosmopolitanism demands that one look to the future—to have faith in that future regardless of whether some divine agency is driving it or not—while not losing sight of the political realities of the present—the need to test and refine that dream.

Tennyson meets this effort in “Locksley Hall” if only on a smaller scale than each of the poets examined in the preceding chapters, all of whom worked hard, in a sense, to test and refine the cosmopolitan, Anglo-European spaces they invented. Hardy refused to let readers rest comfortably either in nostalgia for early-nineteenth-century Britain or in the belief that the Immanent Will would become aware of itself just by itself, without human intervention. The present-day limitations of Clough’s Europe were also never far from his mind, but it was still a poem that stepped tentatively toward the future in its closing envoi. Clough’s was a cosmopolitanism of negation, as I have called it, but one that in other ways simply posed a greater challenge for the future, insisting we demand more out of love and more out of the political and cultural affiliations that sustain us. We should recall as well how Robert Browning brought the high-flying Miranda down to earth in *Red Cotton Night-Cap Country*, denying him his Festus-like moment of transcendence and instead reminding us that expanding cultural and spiritual horizons meant immersing oneself deeply, and often uncomfortably, within the identities and thoughts of others. Swinburne took this lesson one step further by embracing the sensations of sickness and contamination that have always adhered to the most threatening—and necessary—kinds of cultural crossovers. And Morris’s *Sigurd the Volsung*, so closely tied up with notions of race, concerns itself just as fully with how to assimilate the demands of local identities within larger social and geographic environments. Finally, it was Elizabeth Barrett Browning who took the greatest risks over the course of her career in pursuit of a cosmopolitanism that would inspire readers to a higher, more responsible sense of European and global citizenship. Entry into Barrett Browning’s world church, broad and open as it was, still demanded the kind of political and aesthetic toil that character-
ize the conclusion to *Aurora Leigh* and the deep, unflinching self-interrogation of “Mother and Poet.”

Together, these poets underscore Victorian poetry’s largely unrecognized potential as a form of analytical, critical cosmopolitanism. Throughout this book I have deliberately avoided using cosmopolitanism in a simple laudatory sense that positions works against each other on an idealized scale of cultural receptivity. The encounter with Europe in Victorian poetry took a different conceptual compass heading, one that wrung more out of the concept of cosmopolitanism. This more strategic effort, I think, is the essence of Arnold’s intellectual and spiritual confederation of Europe, one that emerged, we should recall, out of his demand for a smarter, more objective kind of cultural criticism. His “Europe” was always as much a state of mind, a kind of hermeneutic, even, as an actual place.

“Europe,” of course, remains a site of intense philosophical and critical inquiry, as Rodolphe Gasché underscores in *Europe, or the Infinite Task* (2009), his fine analysis of four twentieth-century philosophers’ attempts to grapple with this most elusive of signifiers. As his title indicates, Europe is “a conception that is always only in the making, never closed off, and structurally open to future transformation and change.” If Gasché refuses to pin down more precisely just what “Europe” is and what it is working towards, it is only to capture how fluid its conceptual boundaries have necessarily become. Étienne Balibar makes a similar kind of move when he proposes the intriguing concept that Europe itself is a “border,” a site of continuous exchange and renegotiation: “This is perhaps what all of Europe, and not just its ‘margins,’ ‘marches,’ or ‘outskirts’ must today imagine, for it has become a daily experience. Most of the areas, nations, and regions that constitute Europe had become accustomed to thinking that they had borders, more or less ‘secure and organized,’ but they did not think they were borders.”

Jacques Derrida forms the capstone to Gasché’s investigation, as he inevitably must, having gone farther than anyone in attempting to work critically through ideas of Europe, cosmopolitanism, hospitality, and, late in his career, religion and spirituality. Derrida recognizes that to speak of Europe at all is to engage in a dialogue with the future that is also inextricably bound with past projects undertaken on behalf of specifically Eurocentric notions of progress. “Europe takes itself to be a promontory, an advance,” he writes in *The Other Heading: Reflections on Today’s Europe* (1992), “the avant-garde of geography and history.” However, if Europe must no longer be privileged as the center of world culture, it remains the site of one of the greatest concentrations of different languages and national identities and can still be a model to the rest of the world for negotiating difference. Derrida remarks elsewhere
in *The Other Heading*, “it is necessary to make ourselves the guardians of an idea of Europe, a difference of Europe, *but* of a Europe that consists precisely in not closing itself off in its own identity and in advancing itself in an exemplary way toward what it is not, toward the other heading or the heading of the other.”

Derrida’s Europe is thus one that is carefully reconstructed in light of its volatile history and legacy of colonialism. To simply elide his notion of Europe with Arnold’s has not been my goal in this book, but juxtaposing them with each other does underscore the degree to which, then and now, “Europe” could be a durable, flexible site of critical and aesthetic investigation—one that checked patriotic, self-centered excesses of various kinds. Like Arnold, the other poets I have examined here were citizens of the world’s dominant power at the height of its empire-building, but they knew that that alone did not truly make them citizens of the world. In Europe and beyond, the cosmopolitan idea they gave voice to in their poems remains a possibility. They challenged themselves to become more open to that possibility, and they challenge us as well: to cultivate the same kind of intellectual openness and, not least importantly, to reevaluate Victorian poetry’s capacity to engage meaningfully with the larger geopolitical forces that have shaped history and continue to shape our lives today.
Notes

Chapter 1


5. Tucker, Epic, 495. The Light of Asia was one of the best-selling long poems of the era and could be aligned with other early formulations of what Srinivas Aravamudan calls “Guru English,” a joint production of English colonialism and South Asian religions that evolved into a highly commodifiable form of “transnational religious cosmopolitanism” (Guru English: South Asian Religion in a Cosmopolitan Language [Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006], 7). It is a discourse, he reveals, that historically has taken on diverse forms, from Kipling’s Kim (1900) to the popular self-help manuals today of Deepak Chopra: “The global transmission of Hindu and Buddhist thought eventually led to the rise of the self-proclaimed ethno-religious nationalist as well as the detached and Asian-influenced cosmopolitan” (9). As a form of literary discourse, Guru English reaches its highest form, he suggests, in the works of Sri Aurobindo, especially his epic poem Savitri: A Legend and a Symbol (97–101).

7. The 1850s alone, for instance, produced Kinahan Cornwallis's *Yarra Yarra; or, The Wandering Aborigine* (1858) and Thulia Susannah Henderson's *Olga; or Russia in the Tenth Century* (1855). See Tucker, *Epic*, 372–74. Other recent work on epic, including Simon Dentith's *Epic and Empire in Nineteenth-Century Britain* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006) and Colin Graham's *Nation, Empire and Victorian Epic Poetry* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1998), examine epic in more specifically imperial contexts than Tucker's, but they likewise warn against overemphasizing the genre's nationalistic aims. As Graham observes, the nation "justifies and underlies imperialism, yet imperialism creates a cultural field in which (hegemonous) nationality is forced to confront the paradox of its co-existence and putative equality with other 'nations'" (2).


14. Marjorie Morgan makes a similar claim in her study of how domestic travel shaped notions of Britishness, cautioning us not to neglect the diverse kinds of contact zones through which individual Victorians encountered the wider world: "rather than privileging empire as a context, it seems more meaningful to view empire as one of many contexts in which people from Britain framed their identity" (*National Identities and Travel in Victorian Britain* [Basingstoke and New York: Palgrave, 2001], 7). By insisting on this kind of reorientation, Anderson and Morgan strike a better balance, I think, than another recent criticism of the role of empire in British cultural studies, Bernard Porter's *Absent-Minded Imperialists: Empire, Society, and Culture in Britain* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004). While Porter is correct to remind us that empire was a much less visible component of education and popular culture than one might assume from the amount of attention it receives now, he brushes aside the large body of literary criticism on Victorian imperialism with the observation that "there are almost no 'good' books, poems, paintings, sculptures, musical compositions, or great buildings from the early and middle years of the nineteenth-century that have a significant imperial component to them" (134). Similarly, he omits discussion of any specific flaws in Said's *Culture and Imperialism* (1993), opting instead to repeat the claims of early critics that he reads too much into the works he studies (ix–x).

15. Mary Louise Pratt, *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation* (London: Routledge, 1992), 6. In *Orientalism* (New York: Vintage, 1978), Said writes, “[t]he Orient is not only adjacent to Europe; it is also the place of Europe’s greatest and richest
and oldest colonies, the source of its civilizations and languages, its cultural contestant, and one of its deepest and most recurring images of the Other. In addition, the Orient has helped to define Europe (or the West) as its contrasting image, idea, personality, experience” (1–2).

16. As Arnold remarked in “The Study of Poetry” (1880), “More and more mankind will discover that we have to turn to poetry to interpret life for us, to console us, to sustain us. Without poetry, our science will appear incomplete; and most of what now passes with us for religion and philosophy will be replaced by poetry” (9:161–62).


18. See Lauren M. E. Goodlad and Julia M. Wright, eds., “Victorian Internationalisms,” cited above, and Keith Hanley and Greg Kucich, eds., “Global Formations Past and Present,” Nineteenth-Century Contexts 29, nos. 2–3 (2007). With a broader historical sweep, it should be noted, the Nineteenth-Century Contexts issue does include Adam Komisurak’s “Typologies of the East: Self as Vortex in Don Juan’s Russian Affair” (219–36). Byron’s presence indicates the central place he still holds—and held in the minds of many Victorian poets—as the figure against which their own encounters with Europe must inevitably be juxtaposed.


23. As Tucker observes and his work repeatedly demonstrates, “a great deal of what Lukács [in his 1920 The Theory of the Novel] and Bakhtin say about the prose fiction of the nineteenth century will also find exemplification among the period’s verse epics” (15). Tucker’s claim is borne out as well by previous critics who have turned Bakhtin’s generic labels to Victorian poetry’s advantage. See, for instance, Meg Tasker’s work on


25. Giving us a sense of how travel could enhance a poem’s marketability, Robert Browning attempted to coax Elizabeth abroad in 1846 with the revelation that Smith and Elder had made him an offer to “print any poem about Italy, in any form.” Philip Kelley and Scott Lewis, eds., The Brownings’ Correspondence (Winfield, KS: Wedgestone Press, 1984), 13:308. Hereafter abbreviated BC.


31. There are no specific references to these works in Arnold’s journals or letters that I am aware of, but he did study Kant’s Critique of Pure Reason in 1845 at Oxford and could quite possibly have become aware of other dimensions of Kant’s work during this period or later. See Park Honan, Matthew Arnold: A Life (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1983), 93.


35. Ruth apRoberts offers the most comprehensive assessment of Herder’s influ-
ence on Arnold and concludes that he “carries out the Herderian program with his own breadth of vision, in his comparative-literature, comparative-religion mode. He combats Philistine provincialism everywhere; he will not limit culture to the English tradition, or even the European tradition.” “Matthew Arnold and Herder’s Ideen,” Nineteenth-Century Prose 16, no. 2 (1989): 7.

36. Paul Micahel Lutzeler goes so far as to nominate Goethe “the spiritual father of European efforts toward international cooperation. While Herder stressed the insurmountable differences between the various cultures, Goethe concentrated on what they had in common” (“Goethe and Europe,” South Atlantic Review 65:2 [2000]: 95–113, 95). Lutzeler explores other dimensions of cosmopolitan thinking in Goethe, although he may err, as I explain above, by positioning him in direct opposition to Herder.


40. Cecil Y. Lang, the editor of Arnold’s collected letters, could not trace a specific source for Lamartine’s prophecy (1:99n7), nor could I in my own study of proclamations made by Lamartine’s provisional government in the wake of the February 1848 revolution. Whether misattributed to Lamartine or not, Arnold’s remarks do capture the kind of internationalist Zeitgeist that had overtaken the continent in 1848. In a diplomatic release made public to assuage fears that the French government would embark on a new Napoleonic conquest of Europe, Lamartine stressed, “by the light of its intelligence, and the spectacle of order and peace which it hopes to present to the world, the republic will exercise the only honourable proselytism of esteem and sympathy” (History of the French Revolution of 1848 [London: George Bell, 1888], 98). The Brownings also hopefully trusted in this prediction, according to Elizabeth in a March 1848 letter: “I take up my republicanism, & am cordially glad that the experiment of the most rational & sincere of governments, a pure democracy, should be tried in Europe. Robert & I agree & thoroughly agree in politics as in other things” (Letters to Arabella, 1:155).

41. Two months earlier, Arnold wrote to Clough, “Do you remember your pooh-poohing the revue des deux mondes, & my expostulating that the final expression up to the present time of European opinion, without fantastic individual admixture, was current there: not emergent here & there in a great writer,—but the atmosphere of the commonplace man as well as of the Genius” (March 6, 1848; LMA 1: 89–90).


43. Albert, Prince Consort of Queen Victoria of Great Britain, The Principal Speeches and Addresses of His Royal Highness the Prince Consort (London: Murray, 1862), 110.


45. Arnold visited Thun, Switzerland, in September 1848 and again the following September, when he composed the “Stanzas in Memory of the Author of ‘Obermann’” along with several poems inspired by “Marguerite,” whose identity Arnold’s biographers have never been able to pinpoint precisely. Honan insists that the most likely candidate
is Mary Claude, a close friend of Clough and his sister Anne—someone who, like Arnold, traveled extensively and was deeply schooled in European literature (see Honan, *Matthew Arnold*, 149–50). Whether inspired by Claude or an unknown French woman, “To Marguerite—Continued” underscores the more erotic and personal attractions that intensified Arnold’s longing for some kind of consummation between himself and the Continent. While staying in Paris two years earlier, Arnold developed a similar obsession with the opera singer Rachel. He would later pay tribute to her in “Rachel III” as the embodiment of a pan-European, pan-racial ideal. Essentially, Rachel had done for the stage what Heinrich Heine had for poetry: “Germany, France, Christ, Moses, Athens, Rome. / The strife, the mixture in her soul, are ours. / Her genius and her glory are her own” (12–14). Of the poets studied in this book, Swinburne goes the farthest in illuminating the complex codependence of body and spirit in initiating the desire to cross cultural borders. Clough too would probe these dueling motives in *Amours de Voyage* and *Dipsychus* (1853; publ. 1865) and may in fact have had Arnold’s affair with Mary Claude in mind when he composed the former: the two principal characters of the poem are named “Claude” and “Mary.” Eugene R. August explores this and other possible connections in “Amours de Voyage and Matthew Arnold in Love: An Inquiry,” *Victorian Newsletter* 60 (1981): 15–20.

46. Riede applies this metaphor to Arnold’s language in ways that again invoke the promising but distant sense of Europe conveyed by his poems: “Arnold does indeed assert the saving power of language, but in words that, ironically, are often self-referential and only enclose an empty space. Arnold is at odds with himself—he describes an inspired and almost magically full language, but he describes it with a sadly empty language (4).


48. In one of the earliest references to her ambition to write a major epic-length work, Barrett wrote to Mary Russell Mitford, “I want to write a poem of a new class, in a measure—a Don Juan, without the mockery and impurity, . . under one aspect,—& having unity as a work of art,—& admitting of as much philosophical dreaming & digression (which is in fact a characteristic of the age) as I like to use” (December 30, 1844; *BC* 9:304).


50. Arnold to Arthur Hugh Clough, March 6, 1848 (*LMA* 1:90).

51. References to Barrett Browning poems other than *Casa Guidi Windows* and *Aurora Leigh* are to *The Works of Elizabeth Barrett Browning*, ed. Sandra Donaldson et al. (London: Pickering and Chatto, 2010).


55. Swinburne, *Songs before Sunrise* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1888), 22. Swinburne wrote the volume largely at the suggestion of Mazzini himself, who chastised him, “Don’t lull us to sleep with songs of egotistical love and idolatry of physical beauty: shake us, reproach, encourage, insult, brand the cowards, hail the martyrs, tell us that we have a great Duty to fulfill” (qtd. in Rikky Rooksby, *A. C. Swinburne: A Poet’s Life*).
Songs before Sunrise has been unfairly neglected by critics, as Stephanie Kuduk Weiner has argued, and she explores Swinburne’s achievement in “‘A Sword of a Song’: Swinburne’s Republican Aesthetics in Songs before Sunrise (Victorian Studies 43 [2001]: 253–78) and in Republican Politics and English Poetry, 1789–1874 (Houndsmills: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), 157–76, which juxtaposes Songs before Sunrise with contemporary republican poems by George Meredith and James Thomson. While not seeking to downplay that achievement or send Songs before Sunrise into renewed exile, I do think Mazzini misses the way that Poems and Ballads performs precisely the kind of work he describes, reproaching and insulting on behalf of a revolutionary kind of cosmopolitanism that explores the complex interplay between body and spirit, physical attraction and repulsion, and fear and desire of the Other. In chapter 5, I demonstrate why what remains Swinburne’s signature work merits renewed attention as one of the most complex and dramatic interventions into Victorian debates over cross-cultural exchange.

56. Deirdre David argues compellingly that Barrett Browning’s resistance to communism makes her the purveyor of an essentially patriarchal “sage discourse” in which “[w]oman’s talent is made the attendant of conservative male ideals” (Intellectual Women and Victorian Patriarchy [Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1987], 98). I follow a number of subsequent commentators, however, in emphasizing how Barrett Browning also challenges those ideals—in part through her resistance to patriarchal notions of women’s domestic obligations, on both a personal and a national level. See, for instance, Marjorie Stone, Elizabeth Barrett Browning (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1995), 45–46.

57. Barrett Browning had preordained Romney’s demise, in a sense, in an April 1848 letter expressing concern over the threat to the French provisional government posed by communist revolutionaries in Paris that spring: “I quite tremble to think of the wild, rampant doctrines of some of those communists, which, if carried out, would destroy the individuality of men . . . & blunt the points of all energy & genius. Monastic & conventual institutions are not, as has again & again been proved, favorable to the evolution of great faculties—nor do they make men purer in the mass” (Letters to Arabella, 1:165–66).


62. Carlyle coined the phrase “attenuated cosmopolitanism” in 1828 to describe the state of British poetry in the eighteenth century prior to the emergence of Robert Burns: “Even the English writers, most popular in Burn’s time, were little distinguished for their literary patriotism, in this its best sense. A certain attenuated cosmopolitanism had, in good measure, taken place of the old insular home-feeling; literature was, as it were, without any local environment; was not nourished by the affections which spring from
63. Charles Kingsley, “Mr and Mrs Browning,” Fraser’s Magazine 43 (1851): 175.
68. Quoted in Hyder, Swinburne: The Critical Heritage, 123.
69. Determined to make the study of race coalesce with his other ideals of tolerance, cultural openness, and European unity, Arnold sometimes leads himself into dubious claims. Among the benefits of inquiring into Europe’s racial origins and tendencies, according to Arnold, would be “the strengthening of the feeling in us of Indo-Europeanism” (3:302)—a claim that begs the question of whether anyone, anywhere, has ever “felt” Indo-European. Frederic E. Faverty perhaps best captures Arnold’s achievement and his limitations when it came to the study of race: “Even when his facts are wrong, or his premises unsound, or his conclusions questionable, his animating purpose is usually right. He desires not to divide races or nations, but to bring them together.” Matthew Arnold: The Ethnologist (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1951), 11.
70. Arnold also applied this principle to artists themselves: “And yet just what constitutes special power and genius in a man seems often to be his blending with the basis of his national temperament, some additional gift or grace not proper to that temperament; Shakespeare’s greatness is thus in his blending and openness and flexibility of spirit, not English, with the English basis” (3:358).
72. Tucker, for instance, sees a kind of racial retrenchment at work in Eliot’s poem: “Gypsy and Jew and Christian and Moor alike find their identities and acts biologically foredoomed—and culturally policed, for good measures, within the embattled and racially polarized climate of Eliot’s chosen milieu in late fifteenth-century Spain” (Epic 415).
74. This of course does not mean that there is little to learn from British encounters with Europe’s margins, which is precisely the focus of Brian Dolan’s Exploring European
Frontiers: British Travellers in the Age of Enlightenment (Houndmills: Macmillan, 2000). As he reveals, British encounters with Russia, Eastern Europe, and Scandinavia “helped chart similarities and differences [between cultures] as perceived at the time. These in turn helped define what were considered shared, modern, European values or separate national achievements” (22).

75. In “Heinrich Heine,” commenting on his subject’s capacity to capture the contradictions of the German character, Arnold writes, “Is it possible to touch more delicately and happily both the weakness and strength of Germany;—pedantic, simple, enslaved, free, ridiculous, admirable Germany?” (3:123).

76. “Mr. Carlyle on the War,” The Times, November 18, 1870: 8.

78. Tucker also notes the beginning of a “fallow period” for the production of epic in the 1890s before the genre underwent something of a resurgence in the Edwardian era (Epic 1).

79. Such a study could also devote greater attention than I do here to Swinburne’s contemporaries Dante Gabriel and Christina Rossetti, who were, of course, themselves Anglo-European subjects and were deeply involved in translating between English and European poetic traditions.

80. Thomas Hardy, The Life and Work of Thomas Hardy, ed. Michael Millgate (London: Macmillan, 1984), 450. The book is Millgate’s reedited version of two earlier biographies, The Early Life of Thomas Hardy (1928) and The Later Years of Thomas Hardy (1930), largely written by Hardy himself but published under the name of Hardy’s second wife, Florence Emily Hardy.

81. The Dynasts forms Volume 4 and part of Volume 5 of The Complete Poetical Works of Thomas Hardy, ed. Samuel Hynes (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982–95). Verse passages will be noted by part, act, scene, and line number. Prose passages are cited by volume and page number.

82. Kant, Political Writings, 48

Chapter 2

1. Frederick L. Mulhauser, ed., The Correspondence of Arthur Hugh Clough, 2 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon, 1957). Additional citations of Clough’s letters will be noted in the text; if the recipient or date of the letter is not clear from the context of the quotation, it is given in a note.
2. Clough to J. R. Lowell, January 20, 1858.
3. Clough in various comments on the poem warns against conflating Claude with himself, but clearly he dramatizes many of his own feelings and intellectual dilemmas through Claude. Thus, while it is important to be attuned to moments when Clough could be questioning Claude’s impressions, I do not think it is necessary to qualify Claude’s statements at every step. What Clough creates, in a sense, is an unreliable “unreliable narrator,” a protagonist capable of satirizing himself, attuned to many of his own flaws and biases. Clough in this way adds another layer to the poem’s trademark of
Authoritative instability, a subject E. Warwick Slinn explores in his deconstructive reading of the poem in *The Discourse of Self in Victorian Poetry* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1991). Claude, he argues, “becomes subsumed within a discourse of dynamic, shifting, and textualised process” (91). The line between author and persona, like that between language and truth, is continuously in flux.

4. From a posthumous review in *Macmillan’s Magazine* (August 1862) by David Masson, qtd. in Michael Thorpe, *Clough: The Critical Heritage* (New York: Barnes and Noble, 1972), 150. With regard to the poem’s literary antecedents, J. P. Phelan remarks, “Clough’s employment of the epistolary form for this venture is . . . unique, but might possibly owe something to his small part in helping his friend Richard Monckton Milnes prepare the first edition of Keats’s *Life, Letters, and Literary Remains* in 1848” (introduction to *Amours de Voyage*, in *Clough: Selected Poems*, 77). Clough also might have been familiar with Joseph Addison’s “A Letter from Italy” (1701), which, like his poem, mixes travel with reflections on England’s role in European politics: “‘Tis Britain’s care to watch o’er Europe’s fate, / And hold in balance each contending state; / To threaten bold presumptuous kings with war, / And answer her afflicted neighbour’s pray’r” (*The Poetical Works of Joseph Addison* [London: Cooke, 1796], 59). Matthew Reynolds suggests Thomas Moore’s satirical *The Fudge Family in Paris* (1818) as another possible epistolary precedent (see *The Realms of Verse*, 152).


6. The poem’s epistolary format has received much less attention in comparison to its other distinguishing formal feature—the hexameter. One notable exception is Matthew Reynolds, who, following Habermas, has argued that the epistolarity of *Amours de Voyage* works to emphasize Claude’s inability to bridge public and private selves in meaningful ways: as a series of private letters exposed to the public, they underscore his absence from “the public field of narrative” and his failure to “achieve a sense of continuity between his own life and the processes of world history” (155). In an earlier article on Clough’s divergence from Romantic period Grand Tour poetry, I commented on how the conditions of modern tourism and the post undercut any possibility of a “personal” letter in the poem: “As suggested by Claude’s rapid-fire letters to Eustace, especially as he traces Mary Trevellyn’s footsteps across Italy, the traveler on the continent was now more than ever a correspondent.” In turn, “Trying to sound ‘original’ . . . becomes comically futile in *Amours de Voyage*” (“Beyond Where ‘Byron Used to Ride’: Locating the Victorian Travel Poet in Clough’s *Amours de Voyage* and *Dipsychus*,” *Philological Quarterly* 77, no. 4 [1998]: 385–86). By returning here to this subject, I hope to unpack the more pervasive ways that postal technologies inform notions of cosmopolitanism and identity in the poem.

7. The impact of the telegraph on communications and other aspects of nineteenth-century culture has been widely investigated, notably in Tom Standage’s *The Victorian Internet: The Remarkable Story of the Telegraph and the Nineteenth Century’s On-line Pioneers* (New York: Berkley Books, 1998) and, with greater historical depth, in Laura Otis’s *Networking: Communicating with Bodies and Machines in the Nineteenth Century* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2001). As Otis claims, “Since the late 1840s, electronic communications networks have changed the way we see our bodies, our neighbors, and the world. For a century and a half, these networks have suggested webs, lead-
ing their users to think as though they were part of a net” (2). For all of its undeniable influence, however, the telegraph has perhaps misleadingly eclipsed postal reform in our historical understanding of Victorian communications revolutions. Even if it did not involve wires or electricity, postal reform was largely understood at the time as a technical innovation. In some sense, the telegraph and the penny post became twin technologies in the Victorian imagination, doing the same work of acceleration and consolidation of space. *Household Words,* for instance, in its inaugural issue, ran the first of what would become a series of approving articles on postal reform and the inner workings of the Central London Post Office. In “Valentine’s Day at the Post-Office,” Dickens and a companion follow the path of valentines they mailed earlier in the day: “As the visitors looked round they perceived their coloured envelopes—which were all addressed to Scotland—suddenly emerge from a chaotic heap, and lodge in the division marked ‘general,’ as magically as a conjurer causes any card you may choose to fly out of the whole pack” (Charles Dickens, with W. H. Willis, “Valentine’s Day at the Post-Office,” *Household Words,* 30 March 1850: 8). Around the same time, *Fraser’s Magazine* ran a similar piece that marveled over the Central London Post Office as the epitome of modern organizational technology, an institution where “order, ingenuity, and intelligence reign.” “The Post-Office” 41 (1850): 225.


13. Clough to A. P. Stanley, May 28, 1848.


15. Murray’s *Handbook for Travellers in Central Italy* (London: John Murray, 1843) advises readers, “Foreign letters are despatched on Tuesday, Thursday, and Saturday.” It also suggests, “Letters from England not directed to the care of a banker at Rome should be plainly and legibly directed according to the foreign usage” (250–51).

16. Clough to F. T. Palgrave, August 7, 1849; Clough to Ann Perfect Clough, May 29, 1849.


18. Ibid., 105.


20. Ibid., 14. The popular uproar that ensued in 1844 after it was discovered that the Post Office had been forwarding some of Mazzini’s correspondence to the Home Office for inspection also gives some sense of how highly the privacy of the mails was regarded. See Robinson, *The British Post Office,* 337–52.


23. Ibid., 18.
24. Thomas Babington Macaulay, *Selected Writings*, ed. John Clive and Thomas Pinney (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1972), 304–5. The post does not escape Macaulay’s attention either, as he stresses the evolutionary progress of the Post Office as an institution since 1685 (305–7). As he notes in good statistical fashion, “It is . . . scarcely possible to doubt that the number of letters now conveyed by mail is seventy times the number which was so conveyed at the time of the accession of James the Second” (307).


26. Thomas Shairp to Clough, November 1849.

27. The *Handbook for Travellers in Central Italy* cites Byron far more often than any other British poet. As James Buzard argues, “The abstracting of a Byronic spirit from the political and historical contexts that figured in Byron’s poetry enabled tourists to adopt Byronic gestures without any consideration of what might seem to us now the insistent political character of the verse.” *The Beaten Track: European Tourism, Literature, and the Ways to “Culture” 1800–1900* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993), 123.


30. Shairp seems to have been particularly bothered by this feature of the poem: “Why this superabundance of oaths and other sweary words? They weaken the lines, are in bad taste and not good for yourself, if I may say so” (October 31, 1849; 1:275). In another letter sent shortly after, Shairp reiterated his complaint: “Not that I dislike your roughness, but then it should be more rock-like ruggedness not so slip-slop—not so many Well’s and other monosyllables [sic], and not so many oaths above all” (November 1849; 1:277).

31. In a similar vein, Clough reassured his mother, “We are all quite safe and comfortable, with British flags hanging out of our windows, and Lord Napier, an attaché of the British Embassy at Naples, has been here and is at present I believe at Palo, a fort between this and Civita Vecchia, where the Bull-dog, H.M.S. is lying, and has arranged with Marshal Oudinot that his troops are to behave politely to us” (May 11, 1849; 1:254).

32. Clough’s own experience offers further testimony on this score. Frustrated with the anti-Roman bias shown by French and British newspapers, he decided to compose his own account of the destruction left by the bombardment of 22 June. Clough concluded, sardonically, that “however skillful French generals may be in their ménagement of bombs, I find French journals are still more so in their ménagement of facts” (see Patrick Scott, ed., *Amours de Voyage*, Appendix 2 [St. Lucia: University of Queensland Press, 1974], 79–80). Clough sent the account to Palgrave, and his instructions to him are themselves telling: “do what you will with [it]. Edify a private circle or offer to an obscure corner of an obscure evening print” (July 6, 1849; qtd. in Scott 79 but not included in Mulhauser’s edition of Clough’s letters). Uncertain whether to regard his work as essentially private or public, Clough leaves the decision to his friend (who, apparently, did not attempt to publish it).


35. Ibid., 64.
39. Clough’s essay on foreign trade again anticipates the issue he would attempt to work out in Amours de Voyage. “Commerce has doubtless its benefits: It gives men if not so much in our times the enlarged and capacious mind free from narrow and exclusive prejudice” (207).
41. Clough to Edward Hawkins, February 28, 1849.
43. Martha C. Nussbaum, “Patriotism and Cosmopolitanism,” in For Love of Country, 15. I am also reminded in this context of Amanda Anderson’s insistence that “cosmopolitanism is a flexible term, whose forms of detachment and multiple affiliation can be variously articulated and variously motivated. In general, cosmopolitanism endorses reflective distance from one’s cultural affiliations, a broad understanding of other cultures and customs, and a belief in universal humanity.” “Cosmopolitanism, Universalism, and the Divided Legacies of Modernity,” in Cheah and Robbins, 267.
44. Robert Micklus offers the interesting possibility that Mary and Claude are too devoted to themselves, “too afraid of love—and life—to experience its consummation.” The poem thus ends as it should: “Mary and Claude are too temperamentally alike to make their marriage even desirable” (“A Voyage of Juxtapositions: The Dynamic World of Amours de Voyage,” Victorian Poetry 18 [1980]: 411). What I am suggesting here is that their independence of mind is also what draws them together and makes their final separation so difficult for them to cope with. While it may never reach Werther-like proportions, their uncertain longing for each other persists to the end of the poem.
45. Clough to F. J. Child, April 16, 1858.
46. If this interpretation seems like a stretch, it is worth recalling that Clough made a similar point in Dipsychus with even more suggestive language: “Verses! well they are made, so let them go. / No more, if I can help. This is one way / The procreant heat and fervour of our youth / Escapes, in puff and smoke, and shapeless words / Of mere ejaculation, nothing worth” (2.2.21–25).
47. The poem’s absent auditor, as Dorothy Mermin suggests, in effect allows it to be read as a “dramatic monologue or sequence of monologues” (The Audience in the Poem: Five Victorian Poets. New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1983), 112.

48. Siegert dwells at length on this concept and offers a letter from Franz Kafka as an example of a “letter reflecting on the (im)possibility of writing letters.” Kafka calls letters “an intercourse with ghosts, and not only with the ghost of the recipient but also with one’s own ghost which develops between the lines of the letter one is writing” (4).

49. Alfred, Lord Tennyson, In Memoriam, A. H. H., in Tennyson’s Poetry, 2nd ed., ed. Robert W. Hill (New York: Norton, 1999), 203–91. This passage also includes one of Tennyson’s more notable alterations to the poem—the decision to replace “his” with “the” in line 36 (See Hill, 263–64n7). The original conveys an even stronger sense of personal connection through the letter.

50. Armstrong’s chapter on Clough from her Victorian Poetry: Poetry, Poetics and Politics is entitled “The Radical in Crisis: Clough.” She focuses primarily on Clough’s free-wheeling experimentation with language and form in The Bothie, calling it “a study of the upper-class radical and intellectual” (178).

51. For Baudelaire, the flâneur, like the dandy, “is the last flicker of heroism in decadent ages” (“The Painter of Modern Life,” Baudelaire: Selected Writings on Art and Artists, trans. P. E. Charvet [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1972], 421). Commenting on Baudelaire himself as an example, Chris Jenks writes that the flâneur “walks at will, freely and seemingly without purpose, but simultaneously with an inquisitive wonder and an infinite capacity to absorb the activities of the collective.” “Watching Your Step: The History and Practice of the Flâneur,” in Visual Culture, ed. Chris Jenks (New York: Routledge, 1995), 146.

52. Clough and Shairp exchanged these comments in letters written in October and November 1849.

53. The letter is of uncertain date. Mulhauser suggests August or September 1848.

54. At the beginning of Dipsychus, set in Venice, Clough would return to the same feeling: “The scene is different and the Place, the air / Tastes of the nearer north; the people too / Not perfect southern levity: wherefore then / Should those old verses come into my mind / I made last year at Naples[?]” (1–5).

55. Swinburne’s only published comments on Clough are actually quite negative, although as Michael Thorpe suggests, they are directed more at his admirers than at his poetry, “if, indeed, he had read it” (Clough: The Critical Heritage, 16). In an October 1891 article on “Social Verse” for the Forum, Swinburne remarked, “Literary history will hardly care to remember or to register the fact that there was a bad poet named Clough, whom his friends found it useless to puff: for the public, if dull, has not quite such a skull as belongs to believers in Clough” (qtd. in Thorpe, 340).

56. Fittingly, perhaps, the poem would not see print for a number of years and only then overseas, in the Atlantic Monthly, where it ran in serial from February to May 1858.

57. “The millenium, as Matt says, won’t come this bout,” Clough had written to Tom Arnold in February 1849, summing up their opinion on developments in France. “I am myself much more inclined to be patient and make allowance for existing necessities than I was” (1:243).

58. Arnold to Clough, March 21, 1853 (LMA 1:258).

59. Arnold to Clough, August 2, 1855 (LMA 1:322).

60. Arnold, of course, attempted to pay better tribute to their long-standing and
complex relationship in his elegy on Clough, “Thyrsis” (1866), and their clashes of opinion on poetry, culture, and politics have been variously investigated by biographers and critics. Clough, for instance, strongly identified with the work of Alexander Smith, but as Charles LaPorte suggests, Arnold's condemnation of the spasmodic poet, an opinion reinforced by Clough’s American friends including James Russell Lowell, may have convinced him to abandon writing poetry altogether (“Spasmodic Poetics and Clough’s Apostasies” Victorian Poetry 42, no. 4 [2004]: 532). Other revealing recent studies of their relationship include Joseph Bristow's, “‘Love, Let Us Be True to One Another’: Matthew Arnold, Arthur Hugh Clough, and ‘Our Aqueous Ages,’” Literature and History 4, no. 1 (1995): 27–49, and Joseph Phelan’s, “Clough, Arnold, Béranger, and the Legacy of 1848,” SEL: Studies in English Literature, 1500–1900 46, no. 4 (2006): 833–48.

61. Arnold to Clough, February 12, 1853 (LMA 1:254).

Chapter 3

1. Barrett Browning to Mitford, November 5–8, 1846 (BC 14:38). Additional citations of Barrett Browning’s letters will be noted in the text; if the recipient or date of the letter is not clear from the context of the quotation, it is given in a note.

2. Barrett Browning to Hugh Stuart Boyd, June 9, 1832.


4. Jeanne Moskal quotes the Observer review in her introductory note to Shelley’s Rambles in The Novels and Selected Works of Mary Shelley (London: William Pickering, 1996), 8:53. Barrett Browning later loaned Shelley’s book to Robert, who was critical of it for different reasons, as I discuss in the next chapter. Shelley tentatively laid out her political aims in the preface: “When I reached Italy . . . I found that I could say little of Florence and Rome, as far as regarded the cities themselves, that had not been said so often and so well before, that I was satisfied to select from my letters such portions merely as touched upon subjects that I had not found mentioned elsewhere. It was otherwise as regarded the people, especially in a political point of view; and in treating of them my scope grew more serious” (8:65). Shelley nonetheless felt compelled to reassure readers, “my book does not pretend to be a political history or dissertation” (8:70).


6. Ibid., April 18, 1860, 226.

7. In this way, my study contributes to the ongoing critical discussion of Barrett Browning’s commitment to Italian nationalism, one launched in many ways by Sandra
M. Gilbert’s 1984 essay “From Patria to Matria: Elizabeth Barrett Browning’s Risorgimento,” in *PMLA* 99, no. 2 (1984): 194–211. More recent work includes Matthew Reynolds’s chapter on Barrett Browning in *The Realms of Verse*, which I discuss in relation to *Casa Guidi Windows*, along with other recent essays on the poem. Also noteworthy is Alison Chapman’s “The Expatriate Poetess: Nationhood, Poetics and Politics,” in *Victorian Women Poets* (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2003), ed. Alison Chapman (57–77), which examines Barrett Browning’s work alongside that of other Victorian women poets in Italy, including Eliza Ogilvy and Theodosia Garrow Trollope. Chapman argues that the idea of the poetess in the nineteenth century is itself “predicated on foreignness: while Felicia Hemans and Joanna Baillie are seen as the epitome of the English poetess, her origins are given as the legendary figures of Sappho and Corinne.” Later poets capitalized on this hybrid identity to adopt a more radical stance on Italy’s behalf, with the poetess now “signifying her patriotism paradoxically through devotion to nations not her own” (59). As stated above, my aim here is to look more closely at how Barrett Browning comes to question even this form of exported Anglo-Italian patriotism, pursuing instead a cosmopolitanism that would be less dependent on forms of national allegiance.

8. Scott Malcomson, in “The Varieties of Cosmopolitan Experience” (Cheah and Robbins, 233–45), employs the phrase “actually existing cosmopolitanism” to denote less abstract forms of cosmopolitanism experienced by people whose way of life or economic circumstances compel them to move regularly between borders and cultures. Among such cosmopolites he includes some types of missionaries, merchants, and, above all, immigrants, who tend to show the most concern for negotiating different forms of cultural allegiance (238–39).


10. For another angle on the concept of citizenship in Barrett Browning, see Richard Cronin, “*Casa Guidi Windows*: Elizabeth Barrett Browning, Italy, and the Poetry of Citizenship” (in Chapman and Stabler, 35–50), where he notes that Barrett Browning, unlike most other Victorian poets, wholeheartedly embraced the ideals of the French Revolution and sought to adapt its notions of citizenship and civic responsibility to her own work. In *Casa Guidi Windows*, for example, “citizenship is realised in an unending process of negotiation by means of which the individual defines and redefines her place within the body politic” (41). Cosmopolitanism or “world citizenship,” as I explain above, represents a different kind of civic identity, one that I contend is only partially realized in *Casa Guidi Windows*.


12. As even a casual review of her letters reveals, this textual encounter with Europe had been well underway long before Barrett Browning actually took up residence on the
continent. She was a skilled reader and translator of ancient and modern languages alike, with a particular admiration for contemporary French novels. Once abroad, she continued to develop expertise as a reader of German and Italian and seems to have become relatively fluent in the latter, based on descriptions in her letters. For a fuller account of her reading, the best overall source probably remains Gardner B. Taplin’s biography, *The Life of Elizabeth Barrett Browning* (London: John Murray, 1957).


14. Largely ignored for much of the Barrett Browning revival of the past quarter-century, *Casa Guidi Windows* garnered significant new attention and praise from critics beginning in the 1990s. Steve Dillon and Katherine Frank’s “Defenestrations of the Eye: Flow, Fire, and Sacrifice in *Casa Guidi Windows*” (*Victorian Poetry* 35, no. 4 [1997]: 471–92) was the first of a number of critical investigations into the poem’s sophisticated use of visual metaphors. More recently, Esther Schor has taken up the poem’s melding of artistic and political goals, suggesting that “[b]y means of an analogy between poetic making and the making of Italy, Barrett Browning shrewdly examines the complimentary roles of self-conscious intention and inspiration in the making of both nations and poems” (“The Poetics of Politics: Barrett Browning’s *Casa Guidi Windows*,” *Tulsa Studies in Women’s Literature* 17, no. 2 [1998]: 309–10). Helen Groth, in “A Different Look—Visual Technologies and the Making of History in Elizabeth Barrett Browning’s *Casa Guidi Windows*,” argues that the daguerreotype “provides . . . an important discursive context for the aesthetic and political arguments” of the poem, “structurally and experientially enacting the political argument that Italy must bring past and present together to take possession of herself as a unified nation in the future” (*Textual Practice* 14, no. 1 [2000]: 33). In the latest of these sight-oriented readings of the poem, Isobel Armstrong describes it as an experimental effort to craft “a new genre of urban writing,” adding that “[t]o see a political event through a window is an experience peculiar to nineteenth-century modernity: intrinsic to this modernity is that the very act of looking through the window becomes part of the political experience itself” (“*Casa Guidi Windows*: Spectacle and Politics in 1851,” in Chapman and Stabler, 51).


16. Ibid., 109.

17. It is important that my claim here not be confused with charges made by earlier critics that *Casa Guidi Windows* was politically naive and not carefully conceived. See, for example, William Irvine and Park Honan, who labeled the poem “a signal instance of the way in which the use of verse pumps Elizabeth up beyond any possibility of coherent and rational discussion” (*The Book, the Ring, and the Poet: A Biography of Robert Browning* [New York: McGraw-Hill, 1974], 253–54). Their comments, in some sense, are a reminder of how admirably Barrett Browning has been served since by her defenders, beginning with Julia Markus’s 1977 introduction to the Browning Institute edition of the poem, in which she carefully refutes the charge that Barrett Browning was uninformed about political events of the day. Markus reiterates her defense in *Dared and


22. Martha Westwater quotes Mazzini’s letter to Dobell in The Spasmodic Career of Sydney Dobell (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1992), 62. There is no record of Barrett Browning’s opinion of the poem, although she did write to Mitford, “Have you read a poem called the Roman, which was praised highly in the Athenaeum, but did not seem to Robert to justify the praise in the passages extracted. . . . Have you heard anything about it or seen?” (December 13, 1850; BC 16:246).


28. As Maria Frawley notes, Victorian women travel writers typically denied being motivated by any wish to contribute to more masculinized domains of knowledge such as political philosophy or science: “If perceived as being a means to an end, particularly a published end, then it [travel] attains the status of work—and becomes problematic.” A Wider Range: Travel Writing by Women in Victorian England (Rutherford, NJ: Fairleigh-Dickinson University Press, 1994), 52.


31. Aurora’s mixed identity, of course, is also Barrett Browning’s way of paying homage to Corinne, a debt reexamined more fully by Linda Lewis in Germaine de Staël, George Sand, and the Victorian Woman Artist (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2003). Staël and Sand both provided Barrett Browning with role models of women intellectuals with a broadly European outlook and influence.

32. Barrett Browning’s effort to craft a novel-poem has been the focus of a good deal of critical commentary, most recently Meg Tasker’s “Aurora Leigh: Elizabeth Barrett Browning’s Novel Approach to the Woman Poet” (Tradition and the Poetics of Self in Nineteenth-Century Women’s Poetry, ed. Barbara Garlick [Amsterdam–New York: Rodopi, 2002], 32). While one should always be cautious when deploying Bakhtin’s comparison of the novel and epic, this is one case, as she reveals, where his claim that “the dialogic quality of the novel is a democratic one” bears out, especially in Barrett Browning’s dramatization of Marian.
33. Alison Chapman notes an intriguing echo of this passage in Barrett Browning’s later poem “A Musical Instrument”: “The lily metaphor is clearly that of the water lily, but here, as in ‘A Musical Instrument,’ there is also a reference to the Tuscan civic emblem of the lily, although of a different genus (the iris).” This connection lends an added political significance to the latter poem, with Pan’s careless destruction of lilies (see lines 1–6) being characteristic of “those poets chastised in Barrett Browning’s political poetry for creating an aestheticized nation of out Italy’s grief and pain.” “‘In Our Own Blood Drenched the Pen’: Italy and Sensibility in Elizabeth Barrett Browning’s Last Poems (1862),” Women’s Writing: The Elizabethan to the Victorian Period 10, no. 2 (2003): 278.

34. Buzard, The Beaten Track, 6.

35. Marian, as Joyce Zanona carefully demonstrates, is “a new kind of muse, one who is fully integrated with the poet, a subject in her own right” (“‘The Embodied Muse’: Elizabeth Barrett Browning’s Aurora Leigh and Feminist Poetics,” Tulsa Studies in Women’s Literature 8 [1989]: 243). In some sense, what I am doing here is expanding on Zanona’s insight into how Marian shapes the treatment of gender and class issues in the poem. Marian and Aurora’s status as displaced co-travelers creates an important point of identification between their characters; this shared identity is also what brings them together in terms of the plot, allowing for a seemingly chance encounter that, in reality, confirms the connection they had shared all along. In this way, travel functions as a bridge between two characters sharply separated by class, a bridge that facilitates the integration of poet and subject to which Zanona alludes.


37. Ibid., 108.

38. Review of Aurora Leigh, Literary Gazette (November 1856): 918.

39. Ibid., 917.

40. There is no single source for this objection, since almost every critical analysis of Aurora Leigh at some point attempts to untangle the complex way that the poem resolves itself. The two competing points of view are perhaps best exemplified, first, by Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar’s The Madwoman in the Attic: The Woman Writer and the Nineteenth-Century Literary Imagination (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1979), which stresses how Barrett Browning, in a bow to Victorian patriarchy, undermines Aurora’s authority by making Romney the instigator and voice of her revitalized poetics. At the other end of the spectrum, Herbert F. Tucker argues that Romney, in effect, disappears within Aurora’s vocation as epic poet: “She herself becomes, in heralding its emergence, the dawning New Jerusalem, the city that may be of God and man but that is a woman. It is finally Aurora who ‘makes all new’” (“Aurora Leigh: Epic Solutions to Novel Ends,” in Famous Last Words: Changes in Gender and Narrative Closure, ed. Alison Booth [Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 1993], 70). Jonah Siegel adds another pillar to the argument in support of Aurora’s marriage in Haunted Museum: Longing, Travel, and the Art-Romance Tradition (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005), noting that her union with Romney “may be read as a revision of the commitment to disappointment” that typifies earlier art romances such as Corinne: “by the end of the epic the poet will not only be recognized for her genius; she will be allowed to win the clear commitment and presence of Romney, the man she loves. Indeed, among the simple novelties of the text in the tradition is that Aurora will be allowed to live past the end of the story” (78).


42. I explore these efforts more closely in an earlier article, “‘He Shall Be a ‘Citizen

43. Barrett Browning to Arabella Barrett, April 12, 1858, in *The Letters of Elizabeth Barrett Browning to Her Sister Arabella* (2:347). Editor Scott Lewis directs the reader to other letters expressing similar sentiments, including one to her sister Henrietta avowing that “we must make our boys familiar with living languages . . . an intelligent man mustn’t be simply an Englishman or a Frenchman but a citizen of all countries” (qtd. in *Letters to Arabella*, 2:348n10).

44. As Barrett Browning predicted, and as noted in chapter 1, critics in England greeted the volume with hostility, earning her the label “denationalized fanatic” in the *Saturday Review*. Blackwood’s added, “we regret, for her sake, that she has fallen into the error of publishing anything so ineffably bad, . . . so strangely blind, if we look upon it as a political confession of faith—or so utterly unfair to England and English feeling” (“Poetical Aberrations,” *Blackwood’s Edinburgh Magazine* [April 1860]: 491). These negative reviews were inspired mostly by “A Curse for a Nation,” which many misinterpreted as being directed at England for not assisting Italy more vigorously. Barrett Browning later clarified in a letter to the *Athenaeum* that the poem was targeted more at the slave-holding United States. Like “The Runaway Slave at Pilgrim’s Point,” the poem reminds us that Barrett Browning’s global vision stretched across the Atlantic as well, although I am interested here primarily in Europe as the testing ground for her cosmopolitan poetics. For more on her connection to the transatlantic anti-slavery movement, see Marjorie Stone, “Elizabeth Barrett Browning and the Garrisonians: ‘The Runaway Slave at Pilgrim’s Point,’ the Boston Female Anti-Slavery Society, and Abolitionist Discourse in the Liberty Bell,” in *Victorian Women Poets*, ed. Alison Chapman, 33–55.


47. Barrett Browning to Julia Martin, January 23, 1837.


Chapter 4

1. Browning to Isa Blagden, August 19, 1870, in *Dearest Isa: Robert Browning’s Letters to Isabella Blagden*, ed. Edward C. McAleer (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1951), 342. Further references to Browning letters in this chapter, unless otherwise indicated, are to this source and are cited parenthetically.


4. Examples of this kind of verse abound, but the most notorious in its day might have been John Edmund Reade’s *Italy* (1838), which *Fraser’s Magazine* panned as a “sort of metrical history of his travels. . . . The tourist in rhyme cannot, of course, stoop so low as to say anything about the existing state of society; but a picture or a statue always acts upon him like an extra-infusion of carbonic acid gas into a bottle of beer; he fizzes for a moment internally, and then out goes the cork with a crash!” (Review of *Italy* and *The Deluge*, by John Edmund Reade, *Fraser’s Magazine* 20 [1839]: 760). In a letter to Mary Russell Mitford that reveals her impressions of the *Fraser’s* critique, Barrett Browning, while expressing some sympathy for Reade, noted that he seemed “a phenomenon of unconscious imitation” (August 12, 1843; *BC* 7:279) and in a later letter referred to Reade’s poem sarcastically as the “Grecian column” (October 16, 1844; *BC* 9:188).


7. Gloria Anzaldúa’s *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza*, 3rd ed. (San Francisco: Aunt Lute Books, 2007), theorizes borders in a way that can be helpful for understanding Browning, despite the authors’ different historical and cultural contexts. As she explains, “an Aztec word meaning torn between ways, la mestiza is a product of the
transfer of the cultural and spiritual values of one group to another.” The border subject, culturally speaking, lives in a state of simultaneous opportunity and anxiety: “Like others having or living in more than one culture, we get multiple, often opposing messages. The coming together of two self-consistent but habitually incompatible frames of reference causes *un choque*, a cultural collision” (100). Similarly, in Browning, the most revealing moments of cross-cultural engagement tend to take the form of disruptions—moments that challenge predisposed cultural assumptions and compel the poet to reexamine his own investment in those assumptions.

8. See Claire A. Simmons, *Eyes across the Channel: French Revolutions, Party History, and British Writing, 1830–1882* (Amsterdam: Harwood Academic Publishers, 2000), 199–204. As much as a mile had been dug in each direction before work was abandoned in 1882. Browning was one of a number of prominent figures from across the political and social spectrum who signed an anti-tunnel petition prepared by James Knowles, the editor of *The Nineteenth Century*, which spearheaded opposition to the project (Simmons 204). The specific reasons that led Browning to sign are not clear, but isolationism was not necessarily the root cause of opposition. The staggering costs of the project and the potential for serious accidents were also among the concerns expressed by some. See also my comments on Swinburne’s opposition in the next chapter.

9. Gridley makes the connection to naturalism, suggesting that “in choice of subject, mode of analysis, attribution of motive, and characterization, Browning had created a kind of metrical naturalistic novel” (282). Brendan Kenny’s “Browning as Cultural Critic: Red Cotton Night-Cap Country” (*Browning Institute Studies* 6 [1978]: 137–62) stresses that Browning’s aim was to produce a “radical critique of French culture” (146), and that such a critique is best delivered by an outsider, one capable of “escaping the rigidities of an alien culture because, as an artist, he was consistently involved in fighting against the rigidities of his own” (160).


11. Since “contact zone” may more readily summon to mind the sorts of colonial encounters that form the focus of Pratt’s *Imperial Eyes*, it is worth recalling that she turns to this concept precisely to avoid slipping into the generalization that all such meetings were one-sided or simply coercive. She intends the concept to encompass as well the complex patterns of “copresence, interaction, [and] interlocking understandings” that emerge among travelers and those who inhabit their destinations (7).

12. As Matthew Reynolds reminds us in *The Realms of Verse*, Browning himself once said of his relationship with Italy that “one leans out the more widely over one’s neighbour’s field for being effectually rooted in one’s own garden” (*Browning to His American Friends: Letters between the Brownings, the Storys and James Russell Lowell 1841–1890*, ed. Gertrude Reese Hudson [New York: Barnes and Noble, 1965], 76; qtd. in Reynolds, 157). In glossing this remark, Reynolds suggests that Browning’s Italian poems embody precisely this kind of distancing: “The poems are thought of, not as creations of hybrid nationality, but as images of unmitigated Italianess, which ask English readers, as they incline over Browning’s pages, to lean out over their neighbour’s field” (158). In the France of *Red Cotton Night-Cap Country*, if Browning still does not cultivate a kind of Anglo-French hybridity, he does, I suggest, do more than lean over from a distance. With respect to France, it might be more fitting to imagine Browning standing at the border itself—becoming a part of what he observes, even if he does not undergo complete immersion.

14. Milsand's piece on Browning was one of a three-part survey of contemporary English poetry, “La Poesie Anglaise depuis Byron: II—Browning” (*Revue des Deux Mondes* 11 [1851]: 661–89), with the first part devoted to Tennyson and the third to Barrett Browning. The depth of the Brownings' gratitude is captured in a January 1852 letter Elizabeth sent to Milsand, in which she expressed her hope that he would become their “friend in the good warm sense of that word; the true enduring sense of it.” She added, “For my own part, long before you had been kind to me, I was bound to you as the critic who of all others, in or out of England, had approached my husband's poetry in the most philosophical spirit and with the most ardent comprehension” (*BC* 17:239; qtd. in Bentzon [Blanc-Milsand], 112). For a more extended analysis of Milsand's commentary on Browning, see Philip Drew, *The Poetry of Browning: A Critical Introduction* (London: Methuen, 1970), 375–82.

15. Bentzon [Blanc-Milsand], 117. Browning's letters seldom refer to Milsand without some expression of devotion: “no words can express the love I have for him,” he wrote to Isa Blagden in March 1872, after one of Milsand's many visits to his London residence; “he is increasingly precious to me” (376). Browning also dedicated two works to Milsand: the first reissue of *Sordello*, in 1863, and *Parleyings with Certain People of Importance in the Their Day* (1887), which Browning was completing when news of Milsand's death reached him in September 1886.

16. As Browning's biographers explain, he apparently had refused an offer of marriage from Louisa, Lady Ashburton made while he visited her estate in October of 1871 (see Irvine and Honan, 444–54). For more on Browning's relationship with Thackeray, see Malcolm Hicks, “Anne Thackeray's Novels and Robert Browning's *Red Cotton Night-Cap Country*,” *Studies in Browning and His Circle* 8, no. 2 (1980): 17–45. Hicks points out that Thackeray's *The Village on the Cliff* (1867) is set in Normandy and may explain why Browning cast her as an author prone to sentimentalizing the region (25).


18. On the cultural impact of the Bank Holiday Act, see Lena Lenček and Gideon Bosker, *The Beach: The History of Paradise on Earth* (New York: Viking, 1998), 109. As they note, even before the act's passage, tourism industry pioneers such as Thomas Cook had begun to make visiting the seaside more affordable for people otherwise not used to the idea of vacation (119).

19. Lenček and Bosker, *The Beach*, 95. They add, “Where these Romantic poets led—and died—others followed. It is hard to overestimate the power of their example and their grip on the imagination of their contemporaries” (103).

20. Browning to William Wetmore Story and Edith Story, August 20, 1861, in *Browning to His American Friends*, 76.

21. Brendan Kenny, in “Browning as Cultural Critic,” was the first to give a definitive explanation of the importance of Milsand's presence in the poem, stressing how he complements the kind of outsider authority Browning likewise seeks to establish: “being among the first reviewers to speak out in praise of Browning's poetry, when Browning's countrymen were almost universal in their disapproval, suggests his insight into English culture to be as keen as Browning's into French” (157).

22. Browning was a member of the Cosmopolitan Club from 1863 to 1883, which counted among its regulars influential members from many walks of life, with a par-
ticular emphasis on artists and men of letters such as Browning. Anthony Trollope and Anne Thackeray’s father, William Makepeace Thackeray, were also members. See Martin Garrett, *A Browning Chronology: Elizabeth Barrett and Robert Browning* (Houndmills: Macmillan, 2000), for a brief account of Browning’s membership (130). What made the club “cosmopolitan” initially seems to have been its members’ worldliness and interest in the arts, but as it expanded, the club’s identity became more closely associated with empire, “promoting social intercourse among its members,” as one account describes, “and [affording] a place of occasional resort to gentlemen from the British Colonies, or in the service of the East India Company, or to such other persons not habitually living in London (Sir Algernon West, “The Cosmopolitan Club,” in *One City and Many Men* [London: Smith, Elder, 1908], 161–62). My point in citing Browning’s membership, I should stress, is not to make a simple equation between his poetry and what the Cosmopolitan Club stood for, but more to emphasize the social dimensions of cosmopolitanism as an identity, one that connoted a certain cultural privilege and access to power.


28. In *The Discourse of Self in Victorian Poetry*, for instance, E. Warwick Slinn argues, “There is no separate divine truth in the poem, no dramatised position that corresponds to the position of, for example, Milton’s God in *Paradise Lost*, no moment that escapes discourse. Unity, any singular truth, is deferred. A conclusive telos, towards which all events lead, is neither within nor outside the text; it is simply not available” (120).


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**Chapter 5**

1. Review of *Poems and Ballads*, *London Review*, August 4, 1866: 130–31; repr. in
Swinburne: The Critical Heritage, ed. Clyde K. Hyder (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1970), 35. The reviewer writes that Swinburne “speaks of having been brought up in France” (35), but Hyder notes that this is probably a misinterpretation of Swinburne’s reference to France as “sweet mother-land” (91) in “To Victor Hugo.” Swinburne nonetheless did have close ancestral connections to France: “we were all Catholic and Jacobite rebels and exiles,” he told E. C. Stedman, in response to his request for biographical information (“To E. C. Stedman [A Memoir],” in Major Poems and Selected Prose, ed. Jerome McGann and Charles L. Sligh [New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004], 468). These expatriates included Swinburne’s grandfather Sir John Edward Swinburne (1762–1860), who lived in France until his twenties before inheriting an estate in England. Hence, in “To Victor Hugo,” Swinburne offers his thanks to “fair foster-mother France, that gave / Beyond the pale fleet foam / Help to my sires and home” (75–77).

2. See Uncollected Letters of Algernon Charles Swinburne, ed. Terry L. Meyers (London: Pickering and Chatto, 2005), 3:10n2, on Swinburne’s opposition to the tunnel project. As Parliament took up the subject again in the spring of 1890, Sir Frederick Maurice wrote to Swinburne asking him to reaffirm his opposition by signing a new protest.


4. Notes on Poems and Reviews (1866) offers Swinburne’s most extensive commentary on the need for poetry to probe all dimensions of human experience: “Literature, to be worthy of men, must be large, liberal, sincere; and cannot be chaste if it be prudish. Purity and prudery cannot keep house together. Where free speech and fair play are interdicted, foul hints and evil suggestions are hatched into fetid life. And if literature indeed is not to deal with the full life of man and the whole nature of things, let it be cast aside with the rods and rattles of childhood.” Notes on Poems and Reviews, in Major Poems and Selected Prose, 358.

5. Ibid., 356. “When England has again such a school of poetry . . . as France has now,” he added later in Notes, “when all higher forms of the various arts are included within the larger limits of a stronger race; then, if such a day should ever rise or return upon us, it will be once more remembered that the office of adult art is neither puerile nor feminine, but virile” (359).


8. Lawrence Venuti, “Translation as Cultural Politics: Regimes of Domestication in English,” Textual Practice 7, no. 2 (1993): 210. Saclav Bercovitch also reflects insightfully on translation as a “hermeneutics of nontranscendence,” one that leads potentially to an “insight [that] is problematic, provisional, and nourished by a frustrating sense of boundaries.” The aim of translation, he writes, should be not “to harmonize ‘apparent’ differences . . . but on the contrary to highlight conflicting appearances, so as to explore the substantive differences they imply” (“Discovering America: A Cross-Cultural Perspective,” in The Translatability of Cultures: Figurations of the Space Between, ed. Sanford Budick and Wolfgang Iser [Palo Alto: Stanford University Press, 1996], 150). In applying the tools of translation theory to other kinds of cultural “translations,” I am in part following the lead of David Simpson, who has recently suggested that translation forms the best description for many of the kinds of cross-cultural ex-
changes taking place in the nineteenth century, especially during the Romantic period, on which he focuses. Thomas Moore’s *Lalla Rookh* (1817), for instance, and other “encyclopedic epics,” with their extensive historical and political endnotes, cast readers “out into an unknown world where the balance of familiar and unfamiliar, acceptable and unacceptable, has always to be discovered and can never quite be settled. Reading itself, in its rush to closure, is profitably hobbled by small print” (“The Limits of Cosmopolitanism and the Case for Translation,” *European Romantic Review* 16, no. 2 [2005]: 150). *Poems and Ballads* forms a different kind of reading dynamic and translation, but it still depends upon such disruption—or reading as frustrated, interrupted desire—and configures translation “not as the fantasy of diologism but as the impasse of blocked communication” (151). Like the verse Simpson describes, Swinburne’s *Poems and Ballads* also makes innovative use of notes and other framing devices, some of them written in French, that compel readers into complex acts of interpretation and translation.

9. Angela Flury speaks eloquently toward this notion of Europe as translational space, where “to be outside of one’s national boundaries among others is, in fact, to become European” (“Discovering ‘Europe’ in the Process of Repatriation: Primo Levi’s *La Tregua*,” in Fendler and Wittliner, 67–68). Flury focuses her analysis on the cultural displacements and upheavals that followed the Second World War: “The series of camps that make survival possible for Levi and others map out a European topography that creates possibilities of negotiations on a small scale.” In turn, “The camp emerges as a synecdoche of Europe” (71).

10. To truly appreciate the variety and depth of Swinburne’s dialogue with European poetics, there is no substitute for simply reading *Poems and Ballads* at length. Kenneth Haynes’s detailed annotations for the Penguin edition, often small essays in themselves, provide invaluable insight into Swinburne’s sources and allusions.

11. As Richard Sieburth suggests, what made Swinburne threatening to contemporaries was his “refusal . . . to observe the segregation of high and low, pure and impure, sacred and obscene” in his work (“Poetry and Obscenity: Baudelaire and Swinburne,” *Comparative Literature* 36, no. 4 [1984]: 345). Indeed, one of the tasks Buchanan set for himself, essentially, was to recover the pornographic body from *Poems and Ballads* and display it more openly to the public. Thaïs Morgan has written several important articles exploring transgressions of sexual boundaries in Swinburne, which I cite in reference to her readings of specific poems. Overall, she sees in Swinburne a pattern of “[m]ixed metaphor, mixed genre, mixed gender . . . a threat to the language, the literature, and the social body of England.” “Mixed Metaphor, Mixed Gender: Swinburne and the Victorian Critics,” *Victorian Newsletter* 73 (1988): 18.

12. Buchanan corresponded with Browning on several occasions, complaining in one letter of “that conscienceless & miserable inanity, little Swinburne:—verses which brooded, with a feminine fiendishness, over the prospect of physical suffering & torture to the subject” (December 7, 1870). My source for this letter is Patrick Regan’s fine website devoted to Buchanan’s life and work, which includes Buchanan’s letters to Browning, among other valuable materials. “Robert Williams Buchanan,” http://www.robertbuchanan.co.uk (accessed November 12, 2008).


16. Buchanan intersperses passages from three different Baudelaire poems. The first two lines, which Buchanan slightly misquotes—the original has “res dents” and “te faut”—are from “Tu mettrais l’univers entier dans ta ruelle” (3–4). The three lines cited next, and the last line, are from “Le Serpent qui danse” (13–15, 19). “Le froide majesté...” appears in “Avec ses vêtements ondoyants et nacrés” (14). The exclamation points are Buchanan’s addition. My source for Baudelaire’s poetry is the French–English edition translated and edited by James McGowan (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993).


18. Writing in *The Poetry of the Period* (1870), Austin adds that “Mr. Swinburne’s own real genius is of anything but a classic, and, least of all a Greek turn” (qtd. in Hyder, 103). Austin takes it upon himself to stem the feminine drift he perceives in English poetry. Swinburne performs a “travesty” on his Greek sources “[b]y eliminating all that was masculine—and what a masculine epoch it was!—and intensifying and exaggerating what was not masculine by aid of his modern feminine lens” (97).


21. Ibid., 217.


24. Opening up another revealing way that these poems cross borders of gender and sexuality, Thaïs Morgan argues that Baudelaire and Swinburne establish a proxy space for “male-male desire through the lesbian body” (“Male Lesbian Bodies: The Construction of Alternative Masculinities in Courbet, Baudelaire, and Swinburne,” *Genders* 15 [1992]: 40). While highly transgressive for the time, “male lesbianism,” Morgan cautions us, “may be seen as an attempt on the part of an all-male avant-garde to explore an enlarged range of pleasures and subjectivities without forfeiting the sociocultural privileges long accorded to a masculinity faithful to the hegemonic model for men’s gender and sexuality established by hetero-patriarchy” (41). At the same time, I would caution that we not lose sight of the primary agency of the poems in bringing these identities into being: a male lesbian body is not so much appropriated as invented in a way that initiates border crossing and dialogue that otherwise would not take place. Kathy Alexis Psomiades makes a similar point in *Beauty’s Body: Femininity and Representation in British Aesthetics* (Palo Alto: Stanford University Press, 1997): “Swinburne’s poems often mention details of Beauty’s body—eyelids, breasts, thighs, lips—but these items are seldom subjected to intense visual scrutiny or described in terms of what they look like” (59). She adds that “the sensational eroticism of *Poems and Ballads, First Series*... is never primarily a matter of the gaze” (70).

25. Baudelaire’s poem itself performs this kind of shift in attitude. “Femmes Damnées” is actually two poems, the first ending with the descent into Hell that Swinburne describes and with the author joining in the chorus of damnation: “Make out your dest-niny, you poor disordered souls, / And flee the infinite you carry in yourselves” (103–4). The second “Femmes Damnées,” however, rather than focusing on two specific lovers,
presents a general reflection on forbidden, hidden desires and does more to fuse the author's desire and sympathy with the condemned women. The poem closes with the lines
“Poor sisters, let me pity and approve—. / For all your leaden griefs, for slakeless thirsts, / And for your hearts, great urns that ache with love!” (26–28). The poem envisions a kind of community of “disordered” love that Swinburne readapts in his own way in Poems and Ballads.

26. William Michael Rossetti, Swinburne’s Poems and Ballads: A Criticism (London: John Camden Hotten, 1866); repr. in Hyder, 81.
27. Ibid., 80.
29. Hazard Adams, The Offense of Poetry (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2007), 24. In words that no doubt would have pleased Swinburne—who, incidentally, is not part of Adams’s study—he writes, “I argue that poetry’s main value is, in fact, its offensiveness, that some of the principal or usual characteristics of poetry are in themselves offensive, and that in our time poetry should be defended as offensive” (3).
32. One could also draw an analogy here to the kind of “double vision” Jerome McGann attributes to Swinburne in Swinburne: An Experiment in Criticism (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1972). In the guise of “Mrs. Clara Watts-Dunton,” McGann writes, “His verse is remarkably rich in boundaries—in images, poetic forms, and prosodic devices which can suggest a point of limits” (171). His poetry strives to reveal the “intimate relationships between the many worlds which border each other, because the boundary point is difficult to find and even more difficult to hold” (172). In Swinburne’s landscape poems, Sarah Eron detects a similar tendency to place opposing elements in relation to each other, favoring settings in “On the Cliffs” and “Evening on the Broads” that create the “sensation of being physically in the middle of worlds and two states.” “Circles and the In-Between: Shaping Time, Space, and Paradox in Swinburnian Verse,” Victorian Poetry 44, no. 3 (2006): 295.
33. Richard Dellamora, Masculine Desire: The Sexual Politics of Victorian Aestheticism (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1990), 69. Morgan, as I discuss above in relation to her reading of “Femmes Damnées,” calls Swinburne’s poem “an urgent but finally problematic attempt to create a positive place for male–male desire through the analogy of lesbianism” (“Male Lesbian Bodies” 40). She remains troubled by how Swinburne, like Baudelaire, creates “transgressive female figures that carry the weight of masculine desires, values, and conflicts, while eliding questions about the cultural position of female subjects” (52).
34. Swinburne here reflects the broader “anti-Olympian topos” that Margot Louis detects in Victorian poetry at large, which tends to favor the more connected, anthropomorphic personae of mystery deities such as Dionysus and Proserpine (“Gods and Mysteries: The Revival of Paganism and the Remaking of Mythography through the Nineteenth Century,” Victorian Studies 47 [2005]: 342). The Olympian gods and the Christian deity merge in Swinburne as centers of indifference to human suffering: “separating themselves from mortals, they also force division and separation upon us” (345).
35. In his commentary on Swinburne’s medieval love poetry, Anthony Harrison notes a kind of universalist, transhistorical inclination in Swinburne as regards the complications of human desire: “Finally and most important, for Swinburne, as for his contemporaries, the age of faith was also the age of love literature, and so the poet in his medievalist works could fill out his philosophical vision that held Love—whether erotic, fraternal, or spiritual—to be the presiding albeit fatal impulse in all human lives and the power ultimately governing all activity in the world.” Swinburne’s Medievalism: A Study in Victorian Love Poetry (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1988), 19.


37. Yopie Prins makes a similar argument on behalf of the poem in Victorian Sappho (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999). In his Notes on Poems and Reviews, Swinburne claimed that he had “striven to cast [his] spirit into the mould of hers, to express and represent not the poem but the poet” (351). For Prins, this leads to a unique kind of poetic transference, one where “the Sapphic body emerges in Swinburne’s poetry as a rhythmicized, eroticized form . . . an embodiment of the rhythm of eros itself, a scattering movement too diffuse to be contained within any single body” (112–13).


39. This is the same point that Swinburne makes in his commentary on the strangely passionless affair between Lancelot and Guinevere in Tennyson’s Idylls of the King: “Wishing to make his central figure the noble and perfect symbol of an ideal man, he has removed not merely the excuse but the explanation of the fatal and tragic loves of Launcelot and Guenevere” (Under the Microscope 36). Swinburne adds, “Remove in either case the plea which leaves the heroine less sinned against indeed than sinning, but yet not too base for tragic compassion and interest, and there remains merely the presentation of a vulgar adultress” (37).

40. I have chosen this translation, provided by Cecil Y. Lang in his anthology The Pre-Raphaelites and Their Circle (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1975), because I think it best captures the medieval cadence and tone of Swinburne’s French (521).

41. Harrison sees a more unqualified affirmation of pagan eroticism in the poem: “Tannhäuser’s ‘entrapment’ by Venus is ultimately a mode of self-willed liberation, one that is, during the monologue, merely delayed by temporary lapses of his Venerean faith” (Swinburne’s Medievalism 61)

42. Henry Morley, in an otherwise sympathetic review for the Examiner, September 22, 1866, 597–99; repr. in Hyder, 44.

43. Swinburne, Notes on Poems and Reviews, in Major Poems and Selected Prose, 355.


45. In a later essay, Swinburne opined that “Chaucer borrowed most from abroad, and did most to improve whatever he borrowed. I believe it would be but accurate to admit that in all his poems of serious or tragic narrative we hear a French or Italian tongue speaking with a Teutonic accent through English lips” (The Complete Works, 14:98; qtd. in Harrison, Swinburne’s Medievalism, 12). The description, of course, could also be applied to Swinburne himself, who likewise sought to craft a pan-European voice that critically engaged and adapted other cultures. Note as well the contrast to Buchanan’s more safely unadulterated Chaucer.

47. Ibid., 262.

48. In what could have been one of the great literary hoaxes of the nineteenth century, Swinburne almost got the *Spectator* to publish his 1862 review of “Les Abîmes. Par Ernest Clouët,” whose tone and style anticipated many of the attacks that would later be leveled at Swinburne himself. He is perhaps at his best when he “quotes” a sample of Clouët’s unrestrained flights of decadence: “Le mal a pour moi quelque chose de mystérieux et de saint (evil holds something mysterious and holy for me)” (*New Writings by Swinburne*, ed. Cecil Y. Lang [Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1964], 100; my translation). I am reminded here as well of Dennis Denisoff’s study of the importance of parody to the aesthetic movement overall, whether inflicted self-intentionally or by critics: “Even if they fully believed in essential configurations of human desire and attraction, parodists who turned to a sexualized discourse to undermine aestheticism and the dandy-aesthetes were also catalysts for the denaturalization of gendered and sexual norms” (*Aestheticism and Sexual Parody 1840–1940* [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001], 2). Hence, perhaps, some of the added enjoyment Swinburne seems to derive from parody, as if he were paying tribute to his critics—recognizing the vital role they were playing in drawing attention to the larger cultural stakes in debates over poetic obscenity.


50. Ibid., 59; translation, 61.

51. Swinburne to Matthew Arnold, October 9, 1867, in *Uncollected Letters*, 1:111. Arnold had written earlier to Swinburne, “I am rather proud of my discernment in having grasped and said that you were yourself the French critic; not that the French is not worthy of the best of French critics, but something in the way you brought the quotations in gave me a suspicion” (October 10, 1867; *Swinburne Letters*, 1:169).

Chapter 6

1. Buzard, *Disorienting Fiction*, 304. *News from Nowhere* is likely to remain Morris’s best known work, and, as such, it will perhaps always be a struggle to decouple him from a comforting, pastoral vision of English national identity. As Michelle Weinroth reveals in her study of political efforts to co-opt Morris’s legacy in the twentieth century, many activists on the left, rather than attempting to dispel this image, exploited it toward their own political ends. Morris, in effect, became a “symbolic treasure-house of Englishness” (*Reclaiming William Morris: Englishness, Sublimity, and the Rhetoric of Dissent* [Montreal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1996], 9). Only recently has this perception begun to change, thanks in part to Regenia Gagnier’s plenary lecture at the fiftieth anniversary conference of the William Morris Society in July 2005, published later under the title “Morris’s Ethics, Cosmopolitanism, and Globalisation” (*Journal of William Morris Studies* 16 [2007]: 9–30). Gagnier offers an overview of Morris’s career that argues for his continuing relevance toward theoretical discussions of these issues in our own time. She calls him “the great writer of pilgrims, travellers, and refugees,” and
adds that "his wanderers are asking just this: what do we share, if anything, as human beings distinctly imbedded in thick but always interdependent environments?" (20).


4. John Goode, "William Morris and the Dream of Revolution," in Lucas, 239. Fiona MacCarthy, the author of the most recent major biography of Morris, concurs: "I would not press the claims of Morris's own favourite, Sigurd the Volsung; it is too large, too chant-like." She advises readers unfamiliar with Morris's poetry to turn instead to his "short, spare, edgy narratives of violence and loss." William Morris: A Life for Our Time (New York: Knopf, 1995), ix.


8. Denitch, Epic and Empire in Nineteenth-Century Britain, 75. Denitch argues along the same lines in an earlier essay, "Sigurd the Volsung: Heroic Poetry in an Unheroic Age," in William Morris: Centenary Essays, ed. Peter Faulkner and Peter Preston (Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 1999), 60–70. He notes, for instance, that "the heavily stressed rhythm, predominantly anaplectic before the caesura in each line, goes with a diction that seeks to mark its distance dramatically from the rhythm, not only of prose, but of the more 'natural' English rhythms of the iambic line" (66). Richard Firth stipulates that Morris's prosody gestures toward two types of medievalism: one Ruskinian—committed to accurately re-presenting the unique social and artistic environment of the time—the other aesthetic or Pre-Raphaelite—interested more in "the subversively erotic elements in medieval literature and art" ("The Worship of Courage": William Morris's Sigurd the Volsung and Victorian Medievalism," in Beyond Arthurian Romances: The Reach of Victorian Medievalism, ed. Loretta M. Holloway and Jennifer A. Palmgren [London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005], 118). The poem's meter "proves surprisingly capable of modulation to deal with the varied materials of the story. It also serves, however, to emphasize the antiquity and strangeness of the poem's subject matter" (126).


11. In Dark Vanishings: Discourse on the Extinction of Primitive Races, 1800–1930 (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2003), Patrick Brantlinger writes, "Paradoxically one end point of extinction discourse, from the late nineteenth century on, was widespread anxiety about the degeneration or even extinction of the white race" (15). This concern
was also evident in earlier influential commentaries on race, including Robert Knox’s *The Races of Men* (1850) and his French counterpart the Comte de Gobineau’s *Inequality of Human Races* (1853–55). In Gobineau’s view, as Robert J. C. Young explains in *Colonial Desire*, the “Aryan races are impelled by a civilizing instinct to mix their blood with the very races that will bring about their downfall” (108).


14. Kingsley, for example, writes, “To amalgamate the two races [Roman and Teuton] would have been as impossible as to amalgamate English and Hindoos. The parallel is really tolerably exact. The Goth was very English; and the over-civilized, learned, false, profligate Roman was the very counterpart of the modern Brahmin” (*The Roman and the Teuton: A Series of Lectures Delivered before the University of Cambridge* [London: Macmillan, 1864], 126). In *On the Study of Celtic Literature*, Arnold recalls, “I was taught to think of Celt as separated by an impassable gulf from Teuton; my father, in particular, was never weary of contrasting them; he insisted much oftener on the separation between us and them than on the separation between us and any other race in the world” (3:299–300). These ideas inform his father’s negative view of France in *Introductory Lectures on Modern History* (1845).

15. It is also worth noting, as Amanda Hodgson explores in “The Troy Connection: Myth and History in *Sigurd the Volsung*,” that the myths of Troy and Sigurd were linked under Max Müller’s influential “solar thesis,” which insisted that Sigurd and Achilles showed traces of an early form of sun worship common across Europe (in Faulkner and Preston, 74).

16. Hence Morris’s consciously Chaucerian *The Aeneids of Virgil*, published in 1875, a year before *Sigurd*. The fact that he was working on a translation of this Latin material in the midst of his enthusiastic work on the North warns us again not to read too much into his distinctions between North and South. He drew on classical sources as well for *The Life and Death of Jason* (1867) and, as late as 1887, published a new translation of *The Odyssey*.


22. This exchange typifies how “a warm welcome is used as a marker of a good society” for Morris, according to Marcus Waithe in *William Morris’s Utopia of Strangers: Victorian Medievalism and the Ideal of Hospitality* (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2006), 66.
Hospitality, he argues, is a theme that permeates Morris’s writings and art and is even enshrined in the design of Red House, his home from 1859 to 1865 (34–50). Although Waithe chooses to omit the poem from his analysis, the rights due to host and guest become significant social themes as well in *Sigurd the Volsung*.


25. Jeffrey Skoblow stresses another significant feature of this earlier draft: “The ballad presents itself as a raw object, as if delivered from within its fourteenth-century world, rather than projected back” (*Paradise Dislocated: Morris, Politics, Art* [Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1993], 113). By reframing the ballad as the imagined utterance of an “idle” singer of the nineteenth century, Morris draws more attention to his own creative intervention in the history he depicts.


27. Ibid., 50.

28. In a letter to Swinburne, Morris praised “The Lovers of Gudrun” at the expense of the rest of the volume: “I am delighted to have pleased you with the Gudrun; for the rest I am rather painfully conscious myself that the book would have done me more credit if there had been nothing in it but the Gudrun, though I don’t think the others quite the worst things I have done—yet they are all too long and flabby—damn it!—” (December 21, 1869; in *Collected Letters*, 1:100).


30. Ibid., 110.

31. In the same letter, Morris said of the Volsunga Saga, “it is a wonderful poem, entirely free from any affectation or quaintness, as simple and direct as the finest classical poems” (110). Of “The Lovers of Gudrun,” R. C. Ellison laments that “in trying to give clearer expression to the stark tragedy he evidently felt so deeply Morris loses all that the saga had, without replacing it with anything which carries conviction. The more he strives to express feeling, the emptier and more sentimental it seems” (“The Undying Glory of Dreams: William Morris and the ‘Northland of Old,’” in *Victorian Poetry*, ed. Malcolm Bradbury and David Palmer [London: Edward Arnold, 1972], 164). Andrew Wawn’s recent analysis of the poem is more forgiving of how Morris transforms his source material, although he does at times adopt a biographical angle that perhaps diminishes Morris’s achievement: “It is certainly tempting to look for links between Morris’s domestic woes and the series of sagas about love and romance that he translated.”

32. In the Laxdaela Saga, Gudrun says, “I want to go abroad with you this summer, and that would make up for your hasty decision [made without consulting her]; for I am not happy here in Iceland.” Kiartan quickly overrules this wish: “Your brothers haven’t settled down yet and your father is an old man, and they wouldn’t have anyone to look after them if you leave the country. So wait for me instead for three years” (*Laxdaela Saga*, trans. Magnus Magnusson and Hermann Pálsson [Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1969], 142). In her introduction to the tale, Boos highlights this scene as an example of how Morris’s Kiartan is more prone to “ambivalence and reflection” than his saga prototype (2:282).
33. The saga king is also not quite so tyrannical as he appears in Morris. Kiartan says of him, “The first time I set eyes on the king, I was so impressed by him that I realized at once that he was a man of outstanding qualities, and this has been confirmed on every occasion I have seen him since in public. But never have I been so impressed by him as I was today, and now I am sure that all our welfare depends on our believing that he whom the king proclaims is the true God” (“Laxdaela Saga”, 148).

34. In the original saga, Gudrun’s son Bodli (under the variant spelling Bolli) also travels to Constantinople: “He had not been there long before he joined the Varangian Guard; we have not heard of any other Norseman entering the service of the Byzantine Emperor before Bolli Bollason did. He stayed in Constantinople for several years, and was considered exceptionally valiant in every hazard and was always in the forefront” (“Laxdaela Saga” 227–28).


36. Ibid., 238.

37. Sigurd the Volsung, which I will cite by page number, appears in Volume 12 of the *Collected Works*.


39. In his introduction to the critical anthology *Writing on the Image: Reading William Morris* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2007), Latham also captures, I think, how interdisciplinarity is itself a form of cosmopolitanism, reflective of the same commitment to the value of different modes of expression and critical inquiry in Morris: “it is the interdisciplinary nature of Morris’s work that prohibits anyone from ever reaching the boundaries of Morris’s literature, decorative, book design, politics, etc., ‘et-cetera’ being a word on which I would never end an introduction for any other figure but Morris” (15–16).


42. This is another place where it is important to distinguish between Morris’s enthusiasm for Icelandic sagas and the strongly pro-German sentiments of figures such as Carlyle and Kingsley. As Wawn discusses in *The Victorians and the Vikings*, the subject of how much England owed culturally and racially to Germany, as opposed to Denmark and Scandinavia, was very much open to debate, as was the overall effort to determine what “Anglo-Saxon” actually signified. George Stephens, for example, the translator of the influential *Old Northern Runic Monuments of Scandinavia and England* (1866), insisted that “German nationality is not ours; certainly its faults are not our faults. Their speech is not ours; their body, and mind, and soul, and tendencies are far from being ours, which are altogether cast in the Northern mould, in our opinion one much purer and more noble. . . . [O]ur nearest homeland is Denmark; our furthest kin-land is Germany” (“‘English’ or ‘Anglo-Saxon,’” *Gentleman’s Magazine* 36 [1852]: 475; qtd. in Wawn, 239). For those concerned about Germany’s growing influence in Europe, attempts by German scholars such as the Grimm brothers to establish through linguistics that English and German were part of the same Teutonic race, separate from
Morris’s negative comments on Wagner may betray something of where his own feelings stood, although *Sigurd* in some ways sidesteps this debate by avoiding racial and national monikers altogether and drawing on both the German (*Das Nibelungenlied*) and the Scandinavian (*Volsunga Saga*) sources of the poem.

43. Tompkins offers some additional insight into Regin’s status as a dwarf: “They belong to a life still immersed in nature. They create and enjoy, but have no sense of good or evil, of pity or regret. They are shape-changers” (270). He adds that “Regin, the master-craftsman, moves among men, benefitting them, in their generations, by his inventions. This comes from the restlessness of his mind; his heart is cold and grim. He waits for a hero, whom he can use as his tool, to kill Fafnir and retrieve the gold” (271).

44. Morris’s politicization of Sigurd is indeed dramatic and has been noted by critics going back at least to the mid-twentieth century. For Margaret Grennan in *William Morris: Medievalist and Revolutionary* (New York: King’s Crown Press, 1945), Sigurd stops just short of becoming a socialist: “the concern for his own times is unmistakably present. To call that ‘socialism’ . . . is perhaps premature, unless we are willing to agree with Morris that men of good will have always been socialists at heart. . . . But from *Sigurd the Volsung* on, his impulse to ‘straighten the crooked’ became more difficult for him to deny” (44). Charlotte Oberg also sees Sigurd as a political prophet, the embodiment of a lost golden age preceding the final apocalypse or Ragnarok of Norse mythology: “his words and deeds constitute a guide for mankind in a cosmos where all is ordered by the Norns, or the forces of destiny.” *A Pagan Prophet: William Morris* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1978), 90.


47. Ibid., 176.


49. Ibid.

50. If *Sigurd* lacks high political ambitions, one could argue that this very lack underscores Morris’s conviction that a new narrative of social and political progress was needed. Socialism, therefore, or progressivism of some kind would be the next logical step in his career. Grennan endorses this trajectory, as noted above, as does Goode, for whom *Sigurd* ends in a state of political and artistic impotence, “a sepulchre within which the lost echoes of the values of the past reverberate.” Goode continues, “Socialism enables Morris to envisage its [the creative mind’s] withdrawal not merely as responsive but as capable of becoming a possible social experience” (“William Morris” 246). Boos reminds us that Morris composed the poem as he underwent his first real political awakening, brought on by the “Eastern Question” and the possibility of Britain’s military intervention on behalf of Turkey. While *Sigurd* never raises its head above the violence—“there is something obsessive about its Old-Norse-set-piece-arias of butchery and conflagration”—it is notable that Morris “never again wrote in this vein from 1878 to his death.” “Dystopian Violence: William Morris and the Nineteenth-Century Peace Movement,” *The Journal of Pre-Raphaelite Studies* 14 (2005): 29, 30.
Chapter 7


2. Jason Howard Mezey, “Ireland, Europe, the World, the Universe: Political Geography in *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*,” *Journal of Modern Literature* 22 (1998–99): 135. Mezey argues that Stephen does not as yet see or understand how his status as a colonial subject will shape his future artistic priorities.

3. “Rooted Cosmopolitanism” is the title of the concluding chapter to Appiah’s *The Ethics of Identity* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005). See especially his discussion of the overlap between nationalism and cosmopolitanism as types of imagined community (237–46). Appiah explores some of the same issues in “Cosmopolitan Patriots,” his contribution to *Cosmopolitics*: “the cosmopolitan patriot can entertain the possibility of a world in which everyone is a rooted cosmopolitan, attached to a home of his or her own, with its own cultural particularities, but taking pleasure from the presence of other, different, places that are home to other, different, people” (Cheah and Robbins, 91).

4. The philosophical roots of Hardy’s concept have been variously explored, including Walter F. Wright’s *The Shaping of The Dynasts* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1967), 38–55, and, more recently, G. Glen Wickens’s *Thomas Hardy, Monism, and the Carnival Tradition: The One and the Many in The Dynasts* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2002). J. Hillis Miller’s commentary on the Immanent Will in *Thomas Hardy: Distance and Desire* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1970) for me remains the clearest and most insightful description available, and I offer it here as a sort of working definition for my analysis of the Will in this chapter: “The Immanent Will . . . is a version of the inherent energy of the physical world as seen by nineteenth-century science: an unconscious power working by regular laws of matter in motion. Though what happens is ordained by no divine law-giver, the state of the universe at any one moment leads inevitably to its state at the next moment. Existence is made up of an enormous number of simultaneous energies each doing its bit to make the whole mechanism move. If a man had enough knowledge he could predict exactly what will be the state of the universe ten years from now or ten thousand. All things have been fated from all time” (14). The Immanent Will, then, contains within itself a contradiction that allows for the possibility of progress: history is fated but also predictable. The poem explores the possibilities for achieving this wider knowledge.

5. I explore this subject briefly here and later with respect to *The Trumpet-Major* in order to illustrate the broader, more European perspective Hardy assumes in *The Dynasts*. For a closer investigation into the complexities of location, geography, and regional identity in Hardy’s novels, see Ralph Pite, *Hardy’s Geography: Wessex and the Regional Novel* (Houndmills: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002) and Simon Gatrell, *Thomas Hardy’s Vision of Wessex* (Houndmills: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003).


7. Ibid., 171.

8. Ibid., 167.

10. *The Woodlanders* was published shortly before Hardy’s own first extended tour of the Continent in 1887, an experience that may have convinced him, as a poet, to be less tied to Wessex and more open to the Continent as the focus of future works. During his journey he began work on a travelogue of eleven “Poems of Pilgrimage,” later included with *Poems of the Past and Present* (1901). Especially in “At the Pyramid of Cestius near the Graves of Shelley and Keats” and “Lausanne: In Gibbon’s Old Garden: 11–12 p.m.,” Hardy, one could argue, attempts to negotiate a space for himself among other Anglo-European poets and authors.


12. Ibid., 355. Little Father Time, of course, hails from Australia. As Sue Bridehead reflects after first meeting him, “It is strange, Jude, that these preternaturally old boys almost always come from new countries” (294).


17. Keith Wilson, “‘We Thank You . . . Most of All, Perhaps, for *The Dynasts*: Hardy’s Epic-Drama Re-evaluated,” *Thomas Hardy Journal* 22 (2006): 236. Herbert T. Tucker offers more unqualified praise of Hardy’s poem and, like Isobel Armstrong, gives it pride of place as the capstone to his study of nineteenth-century poetics. Tucker calls it “one of the few masterpieces this long book has been lucky to touch on: a work commensurately vast in original conception, thorough in execution, and pervasive in contemporary relevance” (*Epic* 549). Among other recent commentaries on the poem, Trevor Johnson stresses the importance of grappling with *The Dynasts* if one is to understand the development of some of Hardy’s key concepts, especially his pessimism (“Thomas Hardy Birthday Lecture 2004,” *Thomas Hardy Journal* 20, no. 3 [2004]: 160–76). The poem’s global perspective is taken up by James S. Whitehead, whose essay on “Hardy and Englishness” is the first to feature *The Dynasts*, rather than the Wessex novels, in arriving at a full appreciation of how Hardy understood national identity: “while reflecting Englishness in action,” he notes, the poem nonetheless “is geared towards engagement with contemporary, radical European thought” (*Thomas Hardy Studies*, ed. Phillip Mallett [Houndmills: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004], 214). Whitehead stresses the importance of Hardy’s reading of *War and Peace* as he conceived *The Dynasts* and his support of Tolstoy’s subsequent efforts on behalf of world peace (211–14).


21. Ibid., 5:391.

22. Isobel Armstrong is one exception, arguing in *Victorian Poetry: Poetry, Poetics, and Politics* that the poem’s “technique of montage, fragmentation and juxtaposition
without cupola looks forward to the poetic forms of high modernism” (488). Donald Davie’s groundbreaking Thomas Hardy and British Poetry (London: Routledge, 1973), in contrast, mentions The Dynasts only in passing, calling it “ill-starred and premature” (36). Likewise, Paul Zietlow in Moments of Vision: The Poetry of Thomas Hardy (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1974) diplomatically suggests that Hardy’s “achievement is most evident in his more than nine hundred brief poems” (ix). John Paul Riquelme’s more recent essay, “The Modernity of Hardy’s Poetry,” in The Cambridge Companion to Thomas Hardy, ed. Dale Kramer (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), again mostly bypasses The Dynasts, except to remind readers of Armstrong’s “brief but important” commentary on the poem (211). That Riquelme and Armstrong deal only briefly with The Dynasts is itself telling, perhaps, a sign that the poem clearly bears some affinity to the aims of modernist literature but may offer little to work with for an extended study of the poem along these lines. In fact, The Dynasts may provide more evidence for the kind of anti-modernism Peter Howarth discovers elsewhere in Hardy’s poetry in British Poetry in the Age of Modernism (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005). Hardy’s Immanent Will and fascination with poetic forms and meter betray, he suggests, a vision at odds with the modernist insistence on individual expression and a radical break with aesthetic tradition: “It is almost irresistible to see Hardy’s predetermined forms as an expression of exactly such a determining Will, which acts without regard for the conscious pain or pleasure of its subjects. No matter what shape the material world would take if left to its own devices, the form will have its way, and Hardy’s insistent rhythms, the very arbitrariness of his preplanned verse skeletons, would testify to the casual, blind forces of an Immanent Will in which chance and destiny come to mean the same thing” (157). What the divergent paths taken by these critics finally reveal, I am arguing, is that the poem’s engagement with “the modern,” whether in general or in a specifically literary sense, is inexorably—and deliberately—ambiguous: Hardy engages in a complex effort to look backward and forward, to be ancient and modern, as reflected in the poem’s philosophical underpinnings and in the commentary of its spirit Overworld.

23. John Wain, introduction to The Dynasts, by Thomas Hardy (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1965), x.


25. This is not to say, however, that an enterprising filmmaker should not make an attempt to bring The Dynasts to the screen. In many ways, the technology of filmmaking is only now catching up to Hardy’s poetic cinematography in The Dynasts, with its quick movements between landscapes and slow zooms from celestial points of view to action on the ground. Advances in computer-animated footage could also make filming Hardy’s X-ray exposure of the “will web” much more feasible.

26. Emmanuel, the Count de las Cases, Memoirs of the Life, Exile, and Conversations of the Emperor Napoleon (London: Henry Colburn, 1836), 3:165, 166. In a subsequent conversation with Las Cases, Napoleon continued along the same lines: “Then, perhaps, by the help of the universal diffusion of knowledge, one might have thought of attempting, in the great European family, the application of the American Congress” (4:104). On Hardy’s overall use of Las Cases, see Walter F. Wright, The Shaping of The Dynasts, 267 and 322.

27. Matthew Arnold’s response to Las Cases’s Napoleon is also worth noting here, since it captures some of Hardy’s own efforts to represent him fairly vis-à-vis English
national interests: “The inability of the English of that time in any way to comprehend him, & yet their triumph over him—and the sense of this contrast in his own mind—there lies the point of the tragedy. The number of ideas in his head which ‘were not dreamed of in their philosophy,’ on government and the future of Europe, and yet their crushing him, really with the best intentions—but a total ignorance of him—what a subject!” (Arnold to his mother, Mary Penrose Arnold, May 7, 1849, in LMA 1:148).


30. According to a review of the production in the Times Literary Supplement, “the retreat to Corunna . . . was magnificently done, with all the players not drilled into their parts but drawn into them, inspiring each other to a climax. We have never seen anything so well done by professionals, though the same scene was good enough in London” (‘‘The Dynasts’ at Oxford,” Times Literary Supplement, February 19, 1920: 113). Of the production overall, the review concluded that “at Oxford The Dynasts was received as it was meant, not as a flattery to England past or present, not as a song of victory or a requiem, but as a statement of the truth about England at war. The audience, boys who had fought themselves, saw the truth and welcomed it with laughter or silence or cheers, as was meet” (114).

31. Ibid., 113.

32. H. G. Wells, The War of the Worlds, ed. Martin A. Danahay (Peterborough, ON: Broadview, 2003), 41. Comparing himself to the clergyman, Wells’s narrator remarks, “[W]e had absolutely incompatible dispositions and habits of thought and action, and our danger and isolation only accentuated the incompatibility. At Halliford I had already come to hate his trick of helpless exclamation, his stupid rigidity of mind” (150). Later, the clergyman finally breaks down and charges madly at one of the Martians, shouting, “The word of the lord is upon me! . . . I must bear my witness! I go! It has already been too long delayed” (155).

33. The Immanent Will and natural selection do nonetheless share some affinities, the focus of much of Katherine Kearney Maynard’s discussion of the poem in Thomas Hardy’s Tragic Poetry: The Lyrics and The Dynasts (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 1991): “in Hardy’s mind the development of the will’s consciousness is an evolutionary operation, analogous to the natural processes Darwin describes in his researches. The gradual development of complex life forms would reflect the operation of the will as it achieves greater consciousness of itself” (76). She does, however, warn against simply equating the two concepts, especially as regards the ultimate ends of both forces: “An openness to new ideas and the refusal to accept the doctrinaire, whether religious or scientific, characterized Hardy’s thought throughout his life. In Darwin’s work . . . Hardy primarily found a means to clear away the dogmatic concepts that blind human beings to many realities of existence” (76).

34. Tucker, Epic, 590.


Chapter 8


4. Tucker, *Epic*, 341. See also Michael Wheeler’s *Heaven, Hell, and the Victorians* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 83–109, which analyzes Bailey’s efforts alongside other Victorian poetic visions of apocalypse and judgment, including Pollok’s *The Course of Time* and Browning’s *Christmas Eve and Easter Day*.


8. “Locksley Hall” is not a direct critique of *Festus*, it should be noted, which Tennyson did not read until it appeared in its second edition, several years after Tennyson’s poem was published. Like many contemporaries in the 1840s, Tennyson admired *Festus* more generally, writing to Edward FitzGerald on November 12, 1846, “I have just got *Festus*; order it and read. You will most likely find it a great bore, but there are really very grand things in *Festus*.” *The Letters of Alfred Lord Tennyson*, ed. Cecil Y. Lang and Edgar F. Shannon, Jr. (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1981), 1:265.


10. As Walter D. Mignolo remarks in “The Many Faces of Cosmo-polis: Border Thinking and Critical Cosmopolitanism,” in Breckenridge et al., 157–87, “when Kant thinks in terms of ‘all nations of the earth’ he assumes that the entire planet eventually will be organized by the terms he has envisioned for Western Europe and will be defined by his description of national characters” (173).

11. These concerns were renewed most recently during the Beijing Summer Olympics of 2008, when many skeptics wondered whether China was opening itself to the world or whether its leaders—quick to jail dissidents and cordon off any protest—were merely cloaking their own personal and national self-interests under the guise of international friendship. Readers may also recall that on the opening day of the games, Russia invaded the neighboring republic of Georgia even as Russia’s de facto premier, Vladimir Putin, sat among the foreign dignitaries invited to watch the opening ceremonies.

12. Rodolphe Gasché, *Europe, or the Infinite Task: A Study of a Philosophical Concept* (Palo Alto: Stanford University Press, 2009), 9. Gasché also reveals how competing “intellectual” and “spiritual” visions of European identity continued to evolve in complex ways into the twentieth century. See especially his juxtaposition of Edmund Husserl’s commitment to Europe as the seat of a “universal rational science” with Jan Patočka’s insistence that, beginning with ancient Greece, “the care of the soul” had always been the driving motivation behind European philosophical inquiry (212–13).
15. Ibid., 29.
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