NOTES

Abbreviations

BIS  Browning Institute Studies
CE   College English
DeVane, Handbook A Browning Handbook
Domett Robert Browning and Alfred Domett
Griffin and Minchin The Life of Robert Browning
Hood, Letters Letters of Robert Browning Collected by Thomas J. Wise
Irvine and Honan The Book, the Ring, & the Poet
Kintner The Letters of Robert Browning and Elizabeth Barrett Barrett, 1845–1846
New Letters New Letters of Robert Browning
NLH  New Literary History
Orr, Handbook A Handbook of the Works of Robert Browning
Orr, Life Life and Letters of Robert Browning
PBSA Publications of the Bibliographical Society of America
PQ   Philological Quarterly
RES  Review of English Studies
SBHC Studies in Browning and His Circle
SiR  Studies in Romanticism
SP   Studies in Philology
TSLL Texas Studies in Literature and Language
UTQ  University of Toronto Quarterly
VNL Victorian Newsletter
VP   Victorian Poetry
VS   Victorian Studies
Yes Yearbook of English Studies

Introduction

1. For a concise statement of the traditional view of Shelley’s influence on the young Browning, see William Clyde DeVane, A Browning Handbook, pp. 9–10; hereafter cited in the text as DeVane, Handbook. Recent studies argue for the ironic nature of Romantic discourse and the Romantics’ acceptance of doubt and disharmony. The most recent of these are David Simpson, Irony and Authority in Romantic Poetry (Towtowa, N.J.: Rowman and Littlefield, 1979); Anne K. Mellor, English Romantic Irony; and Tilottama Rajan, Dark Interpreter: The Discourse of Romanticism (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1980).

2. A more detailed consideration of philosophical irony may be found in Mellor, English Romantic Irony, pp. 7–14.

3. “Irony is,” said Schlegel, “a clear consciousness of an eternal agility, of the infinitely abundant chaos.” Athenaeum Fragment No. 69, in Friedrich Schlegel, Dialogue on Poetry and Literary Aphorisms, p. 155; hereafter cited in the text by journal and fragment number.
4. The terms were popularized in Germany at the end of the eighteenth century and imported into England during the second decade of the nineteenth century. For an account of their use in English critical vocabulary, see M. H. Abrams, The Mirror and the Lamp.

5. Elizabeth Barrett remarked to Browning early in their correspondence: "You have in your vision two worlds—or to use the language of the schools of the day, you are both subjective & objective in the habits of your mind." The Letters of Robert Browning and Elizabeth Barrett Barrett, 1:9; hereafter cited in the text as Kintner.

6. Speaking of Browning's religious opinions, Mrs. Sutherland Orr observed: "No one felt more strongly than he the contradictions involved in any conceivable system of Divine creation and government. No one knew better that every act and motive which we attribute to a Supreme Being is virtual negation of His existence. He believed nevertheless that such a Being exists." Further, "The Evangelical Christian and the subjective idealist philosopher were curiously blended in his composition." Mrs. Sutherland Orr, Life and Letters of Robert Browning, pp. 436, 374; hereafter cited in the text as Orr, Life.

7. For a brief account of the three Victorian poets' reactions to the notion of their age as one of transition, see Patricia Ball, The Central Self, pp. 198-99.


Chapter One

1. The earliest reviewers were of the same opinion. For example, the reviewer for the Atlas, 14 April 1833, said that the "author is in the confessional." This view of the poem has led critics to formulate a theory of Browning's poetical development to the effect that, stung by adverse comments of the reviewers and especially by John Stuart Mill's marginal comments in his copy of Pauline, which Browning saw, the young poet turned from the confessional to the dramatic mode. The most recent critic to classify Pauline as a confessional lyric is Eleanor Cook in her book Browning's Lyrics, pp. 12-13. For revised estimates of Browning's reactions to Mill's comments, see Masao Miyoshi, "Mill and Pauline: The Myth and Some Facts," VS 9 (1965): 154-63; O. P. Govil, "A Note on Mill and Browning's Pauline," VP 4 (1966): 287-91; Michael A. Burr, "Browning's Note to Forster," VP 12 (1974): 343-49.


3. Most commentators claim that Alastor was the model for Pauline. "Even the casual reader can now see that Alastor is the poetic model upon which Browning's poem was formed" (DeVane, Handbook, p. 44). Ian Jack, Browning's Major Poetry, p. 20, suggests Epipsychidion as the model, as does William H. Gilbert in his doctoral dissertation "Browning's Pauline: The Case for Shelley's Influence" (Duke University, 1975).

4. Browning's friend Joseph Arnould, writing to their mutual friend Alfred Domett in New Zealand, called Pauline "a strange, wild (in parts singularly magnificent) poet-biography: his own early life as it presented itself to his own soul viewed poetically: in fact, psychologically speaking, his 'Sartor Resartus.'" Robert Browning and Alfred Domett, p. 141; hereafter cited in the text as Domett.

5. Why is the woman named Pauline? H.-L. Hovelaque, La Jeunesse de Browning
(Paris: Presses Modernes, 1932), pp. 121–25, suggests a parallel between Pauline and Balzac's Louis Lambert, which has a character called Pauline. Another possibility is that the name was intended to suggest the speaker's "conversion," St. Paul's being the archetype. Moreover, we know that Browning conceived the poem after seeing a performance of Richard III. In the play Richard habitually swears by St. Paul, an oath not found elsewhere in Shakespeare. See Geoffrey Carnall, "Shakespeare's Richard III and St. Paul," Shakespeare Quarterly 14 (1963): 186–88.

6. "I believe that in what follows he alludes to a certain examination of the soul, or rather his own soul, which he formerly carried out so as to discover the series of objectives that he could possibly attain."


8. For the latest and best account of Browning's formative years, see John Maynard, Browning's Youth. Maynard's book is not, however, a biography in the usual sense; it focuses on such matters as Browning's reading, his assimilation of what he read, what he gained from family relationships. For a more usual kind of biography relating the facts of the subject's life, see William Irvine and Park Honan, The Book, The Ring, and the Poet; hereafter cited as Irvine and Honan.


10. Morse Peckham places Pauline in its relation to Romantic tradition in his essay "Browning and Romanticism."


13. The best study of the dynamics of Browning's psychological response to Shelley may be found in Herbert F. Tucker's Browning's Beginnings. The story of Browning's discovery of Shelley's poetry is most authoritatively treated in Frederick A. Pottle, Shelley and Browning. Negative views of Browning's revision of Shelley's poetry may be found in Roland A. Duerksen. Shelleyan Ideas in Victorian Literature (The Hague: Mouton, 1966), chapter 2, and in Bloom's The Anxiety of Influence, p. 69. Richard C. Keenan, "Browning and Shelley," BIS 1 (1973): 119–45, provides a brief survey of Browning's changing later views on Shelley. Keenan is careful to point out that Browning's revised estimate of Shelley the man did not obviate his continued admiration for Shelley's poetry. C. Willard Smith studies the poet's star imagery in Browning's Star-Imagery (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1941) but reaches conclusions different from mine.

14. The final revised text of 1888–89 is perhaps clearer on the relationship between self-love and love for Pauline: "Why else have I sought refuge in myself, / But from the woes I saw and could not stay? / Love! is not this to love thee, my Pauline?" (687–89).

15. The near-tautology suggests the speaker's haziness and lack of conviction.

16. The poet's father gave him a copy of Mandeville's The Fable of the Bees, which apparently had been in the Browning household for some time, on 1 February 1833, less than a month after Pauline was completed. Mandeville's book is an "edition" of a poem, "The Grumbling Hive," surrounded by all sorts of editorial paraphernalia. I think it probable that Browning took The Fable as his model. See Maynard, Browning's Youth, pp. 330–33.

17. The note in French has evoked a number of adverse critical comments. Some
regard it as an excrescence; others see it as a safety device, a disclaimer on the part of
the poet of all that is weak or extravagant in the confession. W. J. Fox, in his review
of Pauline in the Monthly Repository for April 1833, thought the note "the chief blem­
ish" on the poem. J. S. Mill crossed it out in his copy as an excrescence. Pottle, Shelley
and Browning, p. 41, says that the note "certainly does not serve the purpose for which
it is ostensibly inserted; that of making the poem easier to understand." Mrs. Suther­
(Hereafter this work is cited in the text as Orr, Handbook.) Park Honan sees the note
as an artistic safety device that "provides Browning with a perfect excuse for
weakness and, at least theoretically, makes Pauline virtually invulnerable to critical
the note, "for all its ironic spirit, is the author's disclaimer." K. W. Grandsen, "The
Uses of Personae," in Browning's Mind and Art, ed. Clarence Tracy (Edinburgh: Oliver
and Boyd, 1968), p. 52, regards the note as "a curious attempt at dissociation from
what is clearly a very personal poem." I have not discovered anyone who regards the
note as an essential part of the work.

18. I am aware that I have not made mention of the letters "V.A.XX." which come
just before the beginning of the poem. Browning later explained these as follows:
"V.A.XX. is the Latin abbreviation of Vixi Annos—'I was twenty years old'—that is,
the imaginary subject of the poem was of that age" (Letters of Robert Browning Col­
lected by Thomas J. Wise, p. 256). If we did not have Browning's explanation, we
would doubtless regard these letters as referring to the speaker of the confession, per­
haps his initials. (Hereafter the letters collected by Wise will be cited in the text as
Hood, Letters.)

20. See A. Dwight Culler, "Monodrama and the Dramatic Monologue." For a con­
sideration of Pauline as a monodrama, see Robert Preyer, "Robert Browning: A
Reading of the Early Narratives."
21. In a penciled note in a copy of Pauline once in the possession of John Stuart
Mill and now in the Forster and Dyce Collection in the Victoria and Albert Museum.
The full note may most conveniently be found transcribed in DeVane, Handbook, p.
41. For a full account of Mill's comments, see William S. Peterson and Fred L. Stand­
ley, "The J. S. Mill Marginalia in Robert Browning's Pauline: A History and Tran­

Chapter Two

1. See Joseph W. Donahue, Dramatic Character in the English Romantic Age, for a
discussion of early nineteenth-century acting styles.
2. A. W. Schlegel, A Course of Lectures on Dramatic Art and Literature, quoted by
Terry Otten, The Deserted Stage, p. 5.
3. Lectures of 1818, quoted by Otten, p. 7.
(Boston: Ginn, 1891), p. 2.
5. Donahue, p. 345.
6. Table Talk (27 April 1823), in The Complete Works of Samuel Taylor Coleridge,
13. Writing to John Kenyon on 1 October 1855, Browning expressed his belief that "lyric is the oldest, most natural, most poetical of poetry, and I would always get it if I could: but I find in these latter days that one has a great deal to say, and try and get attended to, which is out of the lyrical element and capability—and I am forced to take the nearest way to it: and then it is undeniable that the common reader is susceptible to plot, story, and the simplest form of putting a matter 'Said I,' 'Said He' & so on." The letter is in the Houghton Library, Harvard University. I am quoting from Eleanor Cook, *Browning's Lyrics*, p. xv.
16. In his note Browning says that when someone styled him "Luther alter," Paracelsus replied, "And why not?"
17. A passage inserted later into the text makes this clearer. Paracelsus says to Festus:
   
   You and I, wandering over the world wide,
   Chance to set foot upon a desert coast,
   Just as we cry, "No human voice before
   Broke the inveterate silence of these rocks!"
   —Their querulous echo startles us; we turn:
   What ravaged structure still looks o'er the sea?
   Some characters remain, too! While we read,
   The sharp salt wind, impatient for the last
   Of even this record, wistfully comes and goes,
   Or sings what we recover, mocking it.

   (4. 439-48)
18. Mark D. Hawthorne, "*Paracelsus* Once Again: A Study in Imagery," *BIS* 3 (1975): 57, observes that Paracelsus failed because "he wanted a static end without taking the dynamic means into consideration."
22. Gerald L. Bruns, "The Formal Nature of Victorian Thinking," maintains that it is specifically the appeal to time that sets off Victorian meaning-making from that of the Romantics.
23. Evaluation of *Paracelsus* has varied widely over the near century and a half since its first publication. At the end of the last century, Edward Berdoe, whom some regarded as "the greatest authority on Browning we have" (Raymond Blathwayt, "Browning and His Teaching: A Talk with Dr. Edward Berdoe," *Great Thoughts from Master Minds* 41 [1904]: 312), was of the opinion that *Paracelsus* is "the work that posterity will probably estimate as Browning's greatest" (Edward Berdoe, *The Browning Cyclopaedia*, 7th ed. [Lincoln, England: George Allen, 1912], p. 322). In this cen-
tury, on the other hand, critics reviewing Browning’s career have by and large rushed hastily past it to get to the dramatic monologues of the 1840s and 50s.

Chapter Three

2. Ibid. 1:362, 355.
5. For a study of Browning as an ironic dramatist, see Arthur E. Dubois, “Robert Browning, Dramatist.” H. B. Charlton, “Browning as Dramatist,” considers Browning’s dramatic failures when dealing with men in groups.
7. Connop Thirlwall, “On the Irony of Sophocles,” pp. 489–90. I can find no reference to Thirlwall’s essay in Browning’s published correspondence. Browning may have been acquainted with this particular issue of the Philological Museum because it contained an Imaginary Conversation by Landor, the writer who had an enormous influence on the young poet (“Robert always said that he owed more as writer to Landor than to any contemporary,” reported his wife [The Letters of Elizabeth Barrett Browning, ed. F.G. Kenyon (New York and London: Macmillan, 1897), 2:354]). The first volume of the Museum (1832) also contained one of Landor’s Imaginary Conversations.
8. Cf. Irvine and Honan, p. 71: “Pym and Strafford suggest not so much a political rivalry as the high-flown estrangements and cross-purposes of conventional romantic love.”
9. One must not, however, overlook the demands that W. C. Macready placed on Browning for an actable play with as wide appeal as possible. He may well have insisted on a larger role for Lady Carlisle. Certainly Helen Faucit, who acted the part of Carlisle, objected during rehearsal (and revision of the text) to the poverty of her part. See The Diaries of William Charles Macready, 1833–51, vol. 1, entries for October 1836 to May 1837.
10. Just before writing Strafford, Browning had satirized Calvinistic doctrines of election and reprobation in “Johannes Agricola in Meditation,” published in Monthly Repository, N. S., 10 (1836): 45. It is salutary to remember this fact because it is often said that Browning’s sympathies in the play are with Pym and the Puritans. See, for example, DeVane, Handbook, pp. 70–71.

Chapter Four

1. I can discover only three commentators who have previously associated Browning’s name with Romantic Irony. C. N. Wenger, The Aesthetics of Robert Browning, p. 128, says that Browning “in his theory usually supports part of the romantic irony theory” that holds the world to be an expression of the self in that the poet creates it out of his imagination and bodies it forth in his art. Browning “frequently
supports the whole ironical attitude of the extreme romanticists such as Friedrich Schlegel." Michael Mason, "The Importance of Sordello, p. 148, says: "Closely connected with this [view of poetry as an act of cooperation between poet and audience] is a fascinating notion that the poet who 'looks forth' to his audience in this way is somehow dispassionate, aloof from his work, this being a mere chance reflection of the underlying context of the poet's whole life. This is a view that echoes so-called 'romantic irony,' but Browning seems to be original in voicing it in this country." In "Robert Browning's Paracelsus: A Study in Romantic Irony," Northwest Missouri State College Studies 33 (1972): 1-33, Charles Leo Rivers associates Romantic Irony with Browning's practice in Paracelsus. This discursive essay is reprinted in Rivers's Robert Browning's Theory of the Poet, 1833-1841, Salzburg Studies in English Literature, No. 58 (Salzburg: At the University Press, 1976). Rivers says (p. 73 of the book) that Browning "shows himself to be a romantic ironist by assuming towards his subject ideas and an impartial, detached attitude similar to God's." Although she does not speak specifically of Browning as a Romantic Ironist, E. S. Shaffer in her book "Kubla Khan" and The Fall of Jerusalem: The Mythological School in Biblical Criticism and Secular Literature, 1770-1880 (Cambridge: At the Cambridge University Press, 1975) discusses the relationship between Browning's "A Death in the Desert" and the Higher Criticism, which is, she maintains, a form of Romantic Irony (pp. 8, 191-224).

2. The most masterful studies in English of Romantic Irony are D. C. Muecke, The Compass of Irony, and Anne K. Mellor, English Romantic Irony, which discusses Romantic Irony in relation to works by Byron, Keats, Carlyle, Coleridge, and Carroll. Part of Mellor's book was published as "On Romantic Irony, Symbolism, and Allegory" in Criticism 21 (1979): 217-29. Janice L. Haney studies the nature of Romantic Irony in English literature particularly as it relates to Sartor Resartus in "'Shadow-Hunting' " Leonard P. Wessell, Jr. studies the metaphysics of Schlegel's irony in "The Antinomic Structure of Friedrich Schlegel's Romanticism." I gratefully acknowledge my indebtedness to all four. I have drawn most liberally on Janice Haney's splendid essay, not only in this chapter but in the book as a whole.


5. Characterizing Romantic Irony, Alan R. Thompson says: "To combine extreme objectivity and immanence is to resemble God Himself. And this state of godlike self-division and self-consciousness is Romantic irony" (The Dry Mock: A Study of Irony in Drama [Berkeley: University of California Press, 1948], p. 64).


12. See New Letters of Robert Browning, pp. 11, 57; hereafter cited in the text as New Letters. For the German Romantics' appreciation of Don Quixote, see Robert Wagner, Romanticism and the Romantic School in Germany (New York: Appleton, 1910), and Lussky, p. 133.


14. J. Hillis Miller, "Narrative Middle," p. 386, maintains: "Schlegel's theory of irony as 'permanent parabasis' suspends, interrupts, and pulverizes the narrative line altogether. It abolishes any conceivable center, finite or infinite, visible or invisible. If irony is parabasis, it is the one master trope which cannot be graphed as a line. . All irony in narrative is one form or another of that doubling in the storytelling which makes its meaning undecidable, indecipherable, unreadable, unreadable even as the 'allegory of unreadability.' All narrative is therefore the linear demonstration of the impossibility of linear coherence."


17. But he also indicates his distance from the narrator when, in the revised edition of the poem, he has the narrator interrupt the poet's musings to chide: "Only, do finish something!" (3.731).

18. Paul Elmer More observed that "the narrative is in reality a long confession of Sordello to himself who is conscious of a hostile power without" ("Why Is Browning Popular?" [1905], reprinted in The Browning Critics, ed. Boyd Litzinger and K. L. Knickerbocker [Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 1967], p. 107). Alan J. Chaffer, "Dialogue and Dialectic in Browning's Sordello," treats the poem as psychoanalytic discourse, the narrator being the analyst and Sordello the analysand.


20. Barbara Herrnstein Smith, Poetic Closure, pp. 140-41, notes how "poetry cannot attempt to be faithful to the minutiae of interior verbalization—not if it is to be poetry. The fact that our thoughts are not intended for any audience—that they do not seek to instruct or delight anyone, or even to express anything—is reflected in the very structure of thinking. But the structure of a poem, at least when it functions as art, is controlled at every point by its ultimately expressive design: its effect, that is, upon the potential reader."

21. For accounts of Browning's reading, see Maynard, Browning's Youth, and John Woolford, "Sources and Resources in Browning's Early Reading."


23. Speaking of Sordello, Michael Mason says: "The concept of 'Genius' is most persistently deflated in the person of the hero. The most important constituent of this new, unideal figure of the poet is reliance on his audience; poetry is not the effusion of genius, but a dynamic co-operation of audience and poet; gone is the old notion of poetry as the overheard solitary audience, still expressed by Mill in 1833" "The Importance of Sordello," p. 148.

24. "Epoist," "analyst," and "synthetist" are the designations Browning provided in the headnotes for the 1863 edition of Sordello.

26. The last half of the second line is quoted from the 1863 edition. In 1840 the words following the ellipsis are “but enough!” In the quotation above I have retained the 1840 reading in the first line.

27. The term “Maker-see” is a complex pun. Such a poet is, to use Browning’s own designations in the *Essay on Shelley*, both a fashioner—that is, a maker—and a seer. He sees and he shapes what he sees so as to cause others to see what he has seen. Such a poet is, then, both “objective” and “subjective.”


30. *Complete Works of Robert Browning*, 2: 326. Stewart Walker Holmes, “Browning’s *Sordello* and Jung: Browning’s *Sordello* in the Light of Jung’s Theory of Types,” *PMLA* 56 (1941): 783, 786, sees Palma as “passion’s votaress” who is displaced by the beggar-maid, the symbol of humanity. Columbus and Kemper, “*Sordello* and the Speaker,” p. 261, say that when Sordello most needs her, Palma “prates about how best to use Sordello in the political arena. Love there is deaf; it too fails Sordello.”

31. See W. O. Raymond, *The Infinite Moment and Other Essays in Robert Browning*, chapter 3, for a discussion of the interplay between love and power in *Paracelsus*.

32. Guralnick, “Archimagical Fireworks,” pp. 121–22, says of him: Salinguerra “is defined by the very light of truth and wholeness he would seem to scorn. Indeed, one senses that had the soldier ever freed himself from the Romano cause in which he loses his identity, he might well have approached Sordello’s near impossible ambition to become a star; for this is a man unique in his potential brilliance.”

33. Browning explained to Edward Dowden that Sordello’s character was “energized” by the impulse to “thrust in time eternity’s concern”: “This is indicated in the passage where these words occur, and the rest of the poem is an example of the same” (Hood, *Letters*, p. 92).

34. Cf. this passage from Hegel: “Consciousness seems to be unable to determine the purpose of its action before action has taken place; but before action occurs it must, in virtue of being consciousness, have the act in front of itself as entirely its own, i.e. as a purpose. The individual, therefore, who is going to act seems to find himself in a circle, where each moment already presupposes the others, and hence seems unable to find a beginning, because it only gets to know its own original nature, the nature which is to be its purpose beforehand” (G. W. F. Hegel, *The Phenomenology of Mind*, trans. J. B. Baillie [New York: Harper and Row, 1967], p. 422). For a study of the problem of action in nineteenth-century British literature, see my essay “The Nineteenth-Century Cult of Inaction,” *TSL* 4 (1959): 51–61.

35. Browning wrote to Elizabeth Barrett in December 1845: “Yesterday I was reading the ‘Purgatorio’ and the first speech of the group of which Sordello makes one struck me with a new significance, as well describing the man and his purpose and fate in my poem.” He then quotes a passage from Dante, which, he says, “is just my
Sordello's story" and which he then translates: "And sinners were we to the extreme hour; / Then, light from heaven fell, making us aware, / So that, repenting us and pardoned, out / Of life we passed to God, at peace with Him / Who fills the heart with yearning Him to see" (Kintner, 1: 336).

36. There are many different interpretations of the passage on Power and Love. See, for example, Holmes, "Browning's Sordello and Jung"; Earl Hilton, "Browning's Sordello as a Study of the Will," PMLA 69 (1954): 1127-34; Thomas J. Collins, Robert Browning's Moral-Aesthetic Theory, 1833-1855, p. 60; Lawrence Poston III, "Browning's Career to 1841." Tucker, Browning's Beginnings, p. 90, writes: "The substantive identities of the powers must remain in doubt because Browning's interest lies not in substances but in dynamics of relationship. Both powers are invoked at 'need' and are needed at a point of failure where love is 'descried': 'Or may failure here be success also when induced by love?' (headnotes, 6.569, 598). The 'divine' first power is 'still' with a fixity like Shelley's in Pauline and 'incomprehensible' like Festus' 'inscrutable' God. The 'Human' second power is a totally distinct, deputized mediator. Despite its apparent secondariness, however, this mediating power is an indispensable go-between. The two powers taken together prescribe for the soul the single course of salvation through deferment; and they do so through a Browningesque play of mutual dependence in which each needs the other and the first and last in importance tend to change places."


38. I have borrowed a number of ideas in this paragraph from Bourgeois and from Ingrid Strohschneider-Kohrs, Die romantische Ironie in Theorie und Gestaltung.

39. Although not addressing himself to the question of Romantic Irony, what Geoffrey Hartman has to say in his essay "Romanticism and 'Anti-Self-Consciousness,'" in Romanticism and Consciousness, ed. Harold Bloom (New York: Oxford University Press, 1970), pp. 46-56, is pertinent. Hartman speaks of art as the only means by which the nineteenth-century poet could bridge the gap between the self and the external world. Browning himself was to speak more directly of art as serving this function in the last book of The Ring and the Book.

40. See Bourgeois, pp. 34-35.


42. See Ong, Interfaces of the Word, p. 297.


44. See Mason, "The Importance of Sordello," p. 137.


46. For example, Thomas J. Collins, "The Poetry of Robert Browning," p. 333, writes that "there can be no question that the reviews of Sordello led him, as it were, to pull in his poetic horns." In this essay Collins is more sympathetic to Browning's aims and accomplishments in Sordello than he earlier was in Browning's Moral-Aesthetic Theory.

47. Poetry 10 (1917): 113.

48. Isobel Armstrong, in her essay "Browning and the 'Grotesque Style'," has some excellent comments on the style of Sordello. She notes Browning's ability to render "the structure of experience as a fluid, unfinished process on which we continually try
to impose a shape, an order" (p. 97) and observes how the "grammar, assisted by the breaks in the lines, constantly creates and dispels illusions of meaning and relationship and requires a continuous reorientation and adjustment to its direction" (p. 102).

49. Irvine and Honan use the term to apply to the dramatic monologues. To them it means "techniques which present description, narration, or reflection from the point of view of a limited, individual consciousness" (p. 117). The term has a long history in Browning criticism. Stopford A. Brooke, The Poetry of Robert Browning (London: Ibister, 1902), p. 10, said, for example, that Browning "was impressionist long before Impressionism arrived."


Chapter Five

1. Thomas J. Collins advances the idea that "Pippa represents the creation of an ideal poet-figure, the chastened and romantic version of a poet who can do all things for all men" (Robert Browning's Moral-Aesthetic Theory, 1833–1855, p. 86). As will soon become evident, though I agree with Collins that Pippa represents a poet-figure, I espouse a different idea concerning the effectiveness of her function.

2. Only in the collected edition of 1849, for which Browning made many changes in the text, was Pippa subtitled "A Drama."

3. Irvine and Honan, p. 95, find Pippa's description of the dawn "as so many different things at once—a cauldron of boiling light that overflows the world with divine love, a breast that flickers, a chalice to be drunk—that one gives up consistency in despair."

4. Pippa is the same age as Phene, who has just married, and only a year younger than Luigi, who rushes off to commit regicide. Pippa's views of life are not, therefore, to be attributed to extreme youth, as a number of commentators suggest the case to be.

5. The marble statue of Canova's that Jules so adores is the Psiche fanciulla, which represents Psyche as a young girl with a butterfly. In treating Phene in this new fashion, he will be adding the butterfly, an image of the soul occurring frequently in Browning, to the girl whom he has already idolized as Psyche-come-to-life. During the interlude preceding the Jules-Phene episode, the art students talk of one of their number who was in love with himself and had a woman fall in love with him, too, whereupon he takes himself and the poem he is writing off to Trieste "out of pure jealousy." About the poem Bluphocks writes an epitaph: "Here a mammoth-poem lies, / Fouled to death by butterflies" (1. 293–300). It is in such seemingly casual but important ways that Browning interweaves the images in his poem to underscore meaning without resorting to a chorus figure.

6. The idea of love and bondage is suggested in this episode by Italy's political bondage to Austria and Luigi's love of his country because of her enslavement. See 3. 39–50.

7. The outcome of this episode is left unclear. Is the Monsignor to return to Pippa her rightful inheritance, or is he to keep Maffeo gagged and thus unable to tell about Pippa's existence so that the Church will receive the money?

8. A number of commentators have addressed the problem whether Pippa's New Year's hymn represents the poet's own thoughts. Indeed, for years it was held that Pippa's "God's in his heaven— / All's right with the world!" represented the height of Victorian optimism. By now this view is seldom advanced, at least in print. Looking at
the New Year's hymn from another angle, Margaret Eleanor Glen [Cook] maintains nonetheless that the hymn provides the theme of the whole poem: “God is working out His purposes as He wills through men whether they strive for or against these purposes. Men are in the hands of God, be they conscious or unconscious of it.” Thus Mrs. Cook concludes that the poem portrays “the irony of God’s ways when regarded from man’s point of view” (“The Meaning and Structure of Pippa Passes,” UTQ 24 [1955]: 412, 426). This position has been questioned, correctly in my estimation, by E. Warwick Slinn, who asks which character in the play represents man’s view and how the reader can know that he is seeing God’s ways from God’s point of view. Slinn argues that the notion that all are God’s puppets is ironic because the characters seem to be the puppets of their own views of themselves (“‘God a Tame Confederate.’”) For other views see Dale Kramer, “Character and Theme in Pippa Passes,” VP 2 (1964): 241-49; Jacob Korg, “A Reading of Pippa Passes,” VP 6 (1968): 5-19; and Marvin P. Garrett, “Language and Design in Pippa Passes,” VP 13 (1975): 47-60.

9. There are intriguing hints of an episode, which exists only in germ, concerning Bluphocks and Pippa. The girls on the street in the interlude between episodes three and four have been employed to pass Bluphocks off as a rich Englishman in love with Pippa. That Pippa is clearly fascinated is shown in the epilogue when she says, “it had done me / surely no such mightly hurt / To learn his name”—that foreigner “with blue eyes and thick rings / Of English-coloured hair” (4. 256-61). If Bluphocks’s design had succeeded, Pippa would have proved the natural “slave” in the relationship. The idea of Pippa—pure innocence, a highly manipulable puppet—being joined to Bluphocks—pure evil, the arch-manipulator—must have been for Browning a tempting one to develop, and, of course, one he did develop in The Ring and the Book.

10. In his revisions of the poem, Browning emphasized the notion that men assume that they can know God’s ways and that their actions are in accord with his will. Slinn deals at length with the characters’ self-conceived ideas of themselves working God’s ways as they are displayed in the revised text.

11. Slinn, “‘God a Tame Confederate,’” p. 171, writes: “In drawing attention to itself through its use of excessive coincidence, the design makes the work both a totality and an obvious artifice: as totality, the design embraces the ironies in private illusion and social intrigue, and as artifice it sustains the reader’s detachment, reminding him of his own participation as an ironic observer.” Roma A. King, Jr., The Focusing Artifice, p. 53, remarks that the play’s movement is “continuous and circular rather than horizontal.”


13. In a later poem, Balaustion’s Adventure (1871), Browning has his protagonist explicitly declare that “poetry is power” (line 236). This is repeated in the poem devoted to “Balaustion’s Last Adventure,” Aristophanes’ Apology (1875; line 5582). Critics have frequently noted that Browning’s plays deal with power, political power. Herbert Tucker is the first, however, to suggest that in Browning political power may be taken as a figuration of poetic power.

14. Browning himself said in February 1845 that he liked Pippa better than anything he had yet done (Kintner, 1: 27). Reviewers at the time, however, cared little for it.

15. Browning does not, however, provide a historical background. He chose the subject not for its historical interest—as he says in the Advertisement, it was an “event without consequences”—but for, apparently, its possibilities for psychological investigation.
16. In the Advertisement, Browning in fact speaks of "the fiery and audacious temper, unscrupulous selfishness, profound dissimulation, and singular fertility in resources, of Victor" in contrast to "the extreme and painful sensibility, prolonged immaturity of powers, earnest good purpose and vacillating will, of Charles."

17. J. Hillis Miller, *The Disappearance of God*, pp. 130–31, observes that "the plays study the question of power, political rather than magical or poetical power, but still power."

18. Mary Rose Sullivan, "Browning's Plays: Prologue to *Men and Women*," *BIS* 3 (1975): 18, in tracing the theme of illusion and false ideals in Browning's plays, notes: "His protagonists invariably refuse to accept the fact of betrayal: blinding themselves to the irrefutable evidence, they cling stubbornly to the idol, rather than admit his human imperfection."

Chapter Six


5. Most critics have paid little attention to Browning's repeated rearrangement of his poems. Ian Jack, however, in his book *Browning's Major Poetry*, finds the classifications useful guides and discusses the poems under such headings. See also Lawrence Poston III, "Browning Rearranges Browning."


8. There is a sprawl of critical opinions on the poem. I shall mention only two of the more recherché: B. R. Jerman, "Browning's Witless Duke," *PMLA* 72 (1957): 488–93, sees the duke as a stupid nobleman who in speaking of a second-rate realistic picture of a photogenic woman gives himself away to his auditor; Thomas J. Assad, "Browning's 'My Last Duchess'," *Tulane Studies in English* 10 (1960): 117–28, sees the duke as a tough-minded realist who has had to deal with a silly sentimental woman who could not make distinctions between men and mules or men and trees.

9. Langbaum, pp. 82–85; Rader, pp. 138–39. In his study of prose fiction, Wolfgang Iser speaks of the reader as two persons: "the alien 'me'," the one who involves himself imaginatively in the fiction, and "the real 'me'," the one who is firmly rooted in the present and in his own sense of himself as a person (*The Implied Reader* [Balti-
more: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1974], p. 293). As I understand Iser, these two aspects of reading pretty much correspond to what Langbaum calls sympathy and judgment. G. G. Sedgewick maintains that all forms of drama involve both the sympathy and the judgment (or detachment) of the viewer or listener and that this makes for an ironic situation that he calls "general dramatic irony": "The very theatre itself is a sort of ironic convention whereby a spectator occupying a good seat, as it were, in the real world is enabled to look into a world of illusion and so to get 'a view of life from on high.' The peculiar pleasure of the theatre, then, is the spectacle of a life in which, it is true, we do not interfere but over which we exercise the control of knowledge. And this spectacle, when it pleases or holds us, we do not view with the 'swelling or pride' of superiority but with a sort of paradoxical sympathy; for, though it is sympathy, it is likewise detached. The whole attitude of the interested spectator is ironic; by the very fact that he is such a spectator, he is an ironist" (Of Irony, Especially in Drama, 2d ed. [Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1948], pp. 32-33.)

10. "Through the Metidja to Abd-el-Kadr," "Waring," and "The Pied Piper" were written in 1842 (Griffin and Minchin, p. 128).


12. Dorothy M. Mermin, "Speaker and Auditor in Browning's Dramatic Monologues," UTQ, 45 (1976): 139, observes of the characters in Browning's plays: "Their obsessive concern with what they have or haven't said, will or won't say, generally retards the action and is often the centre of the plot."

13. Ian Jack, on the other hand, finds that "the whole tone of the poem" indicates that "the only lie the Countess tells occurs when she fibs about the subject of her conversation." Jack says that her children have been playing in the distance as she tells her story and then "mother-like, she changes the subject when the younger of her children comes running up" (Browning's Major Poetry, p. 88).

14. William Cadbury, "Lyric and Anti-Lyric Forms: A Method for Judging Browning," UTQ 34 (1964-65): 49-67, maintains that the poem fails because we cannot catch in the speaker's tone a proof of personality clear enough to let us judge her or her story. "We are, then, convinced of her innocence, not through knowledge of her character, but through Gauthier's admission of guilt, which is a result of the narrative of the poem, not of its drama" (p. 53).

15. C. H. Herford, Robert Browning, p. 136, observes that Browning's "intellectual thirst for the problematic, and his ethical thirst for the incomplete, combined to hurry him away to moments of suspense, big with undecided or unfulfilled fate." In similar vein Patricia Ball, The Central Self, p. 219, says: "Browning's sense of climax is commonly a point of unfulfilled expectation or speculation."

16. The echo of the last scene of Othello is probably intentional and ironic: the serenader is in effect his own murderer.

17. See, for example, Irvine and Honan, pp. 119-20. Santayana perceived the steamy eroticism of the last speech but then commented: "We are not allowed to regard these expressions as the cries of souls blinded by the agony of passion and lust. Browning unmistakably adopts them as expressing his own highest intuitions" (George Santayana, "The Poetry of Barbarism," in Interpretations of Poetry and Religion [New York: Scribner's, 1900], p. 194). How "we are not allowed" and how we know that "Browning unmistakably adopts them" as his own we are not informed.
18. I have discovered subsequent to writing this that a club is also the setting envisioned by Philip Drew, *The Poetry of Browning*, p. 286.


20. Clyde S. Kilby, "Browning's Cristina," *Explicator* 2 (November 1943): item 16, has also questioned the truth of the speaker's statement. Marylyn J. Parins, "Browning's 'Cristina': The Woman, the Look, and the Speaker," *SBHC* 7 (1979): 33, finds the speaker "naive, idealistic, impetuous, and probably foolish."

21. Alice Chandler, "'The Eve of St. Agnes' and 'Porphyria's Lover'," *VP* 3 (1965): 273–74, notes similarities in plot, phrasing, and theme. These may result from an unconscious influence or they may be intentional, Browning aiming "to take one of the archetypal works of the romantic imagination and, as a conscious experiment, use physical realism and psychological insight to re-explore its possibilities" (p. 274). As my text should suggest, I believe that Browning uses a romantic situation, which he may well have got from Keats, to show it up for what it is (or what he felt it is): namely, the reality of "romantic" love is madness and death.


### Chapter Seven


2. Honan, *Browning's Characters*, pp. 66–67, shows how Browning attempted to differentiate the speech of the Europeans from that of the Druses and to combine the two styles in Djabal's speech.

3. In the nineteenth as well as in the seventeenth century, the spectacle of heroic drama was part of its appeal. In *The Return of the Druses*, there are crowd scenes, exotic costumes, violent action, frequent entrances and exits, all doubtless designed to make the play more appealing on the stage. H. B. Charlton, "Browning as Dramatist," pp. 48–49, applauds the spectacular scenes but finds the tragedy of the chief characters poorly integrated into the political concern of the play. I believe, however, that we misconceive Browning's purpose in his plays if we see them as plays about politics. For a healthy antidote to Charlton's views of the dramas, see Lawrence Poston III, "Browning's Political Skepticism."

4. For an account of the quarrel between the two, see Joseph W. Reed, "Browning and Macready."

5. Macready's lack of sympathy with Browning's dramatic efforts is suggested by the many changes that he made in the text of *A Blot*. The manuscript of the play, showing the excisions and revisions proposed by Macready, is in the Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library at Yale University. Details are given by Reed, "Browning and Macready."

6. Opinions of the play are widely varied. I here offer three. Dickens was given the
play to read in manuscript by John Forster, who apparently showed Dickens's remarks to Macready but, surprisingly, not to Browning. Dickens wrote: "Browning's play has thrown me into a perfect passion of sorrow. To say that there is anything in its subject save what is lovely, true, deeply affecting, full of the best emotion, the most earnest feeling, and the most true and tender source of interest, is to say that there is no light in the sun, and no heat in blood. It is full of genius, natural and great thoughts, profound and yet simple and beautiful in its vigour. I know nothing that is so affecting, nothing in any book I have ever read, as Mildred's recurrence to that 'I was so young—I had no mother.' I know no love like it, no passion like it, no moulding of a splendid thing after its conception, like it. And I swear it is a tragedy that MUST be played: and must be played, moreover, by Macready" (quoted in John Forster, *Life of Charles Dickens* [London: Chapman and Hall, 1872-74], 2:25).

As to Dickens's opinion of the play and why Forster never showed it to Browning, see Gertrude Reese, "Browning and *A Blot," *MLN* 63 (1948): 237-40; and Harry Stone, "Dickens, Browning, and the Mysterious Letter," *Pacific Coast Philology* 1 (1966): 42-47. Percy Lubbock was of the opinion that "the sombre beauty of the treatment only exposes pitilessly the hopeless absurdity of the plot" ("Robert Browning," *The Quarterly Review* 217 [1912]: 445). A more recent and representative opinion is the following: "It is difficult to imagine how the fastidious author of these plays [prior to *A Blot* and *Dramatic Lyrics* could have descended so low" (F. E. Halliday, Robert Browning: *His Life and Work* [London: Jupiter Books, 1975], p. 59).


8. For a consideration of the melodramatic element in the play that Browning attempted to shape into a tragedy, see Donald S. Hair, *Browning’s Experiments with Genre*, pp. 57-65.

9. Tresham also sees others in terms of roles. For example, when he apprehends Mertoun, he says that the young man bears himself "exactly as in curious dreams I've had / How felons, this wide earth is full of, look / When they’re detected " (3. 1. 59-61).

10. The word *name* occurs seventeen times in the play, significantly more than in any other work earlier than *The Ring and the Book*.

11. "Oh, thought's absurd," he says in soliloquy. Better to "yield my reason up" (2. 80,86).

12. Tresham has taught his code of honor even to his servants. If Gerard had cared a bit less about "the pitifullest thing / That touched the House's honor"—"that this was right, nor that was wrong" (1. 1. 85-92)—he would have kept his mouth shut and so averted the tragedy.

13. The play is so lacking in focus that to many modern readers it is not even evident that Tresham is the protagonist. Donald Hair, for example, feels it necessary to show that it is not the deaths of the two lovers but Tresham's suffering which "could alone make the play worthy of such a name" as tragedy (*Browning’s Experiments with Genre*, p. 59). Dickens apparently saw the play as the tragedy of Mildred and Mertoun. See his letter to Forster quoted in note 6, above.

14. The song he sings is even less integrated into the play than the child's song in the last act of *Strafford*. Furthermore, it is verse as poor as any Browning ever wrote.

15. One could multiply the questions concerning what Lounsbury calls "the untruthfulness of the play as a representation of real life" (Thomas R. Lounsbury, *The Early Literary Career of Robert Browning* [London: Fisher Unwin, 1912], p. 141).
16. The hardships of the "hungry forties" are almost certainly reflected in the sufferings of the workers at Cleves.

17. I am, of course, excluding *Pippa* from consideration as a "theatrical piece."

18. In *King Victor and King Charles*, Polyxena was "to serve in place / Of monarch, minister and mistress" (1. 1. 70–71) till Charles was confirmed as King.

19. For example:

   *Valence.*
   
   she no whit depends
   On circumstance; as she adorns a throne
   She had adorned.

   *Berthold.*
   
   ...A hovel—in which book
   Have I read that of every queen that lived?

20. Possibly the name "Valence" is meant to suggest decisiveness in contrast to Guibert's ambivalence.

21. Counterpart to Guibert in insight and ironic detachment among the prince's retinue is Melchior, although he is not so well integrated into the action of the play as Guibert.

22. For Valence the agent for the conclusion of the conflict is, of course, Colombe. In lines that Browning added in 1849, doubtless influenced by his marriage some three years earlier, Valence sees woman as the mediatrix between God and man:

   There is a vision in the heart of each
   Of justice, mercy, wisdom, tenderness
   To wrong and pain, and knowledge of its cure:
   And these embodied in a woman's form
   That best transmits them, pure as first received,
   From God above her, to mankind below.

   In these lines there seems to be a resolution to the conflict, power incarnating itself (in woman) as love.

*Chapter Eight*

1. Elizabeth Barrett's letters to Browning are full of remarks about the poems of the 1845 volume. In addition, she wrote fifty-six manuscript pages about them and the two plays that were to follow. A somewhat inaccurate transcription is printed in *New Poems by Robert Browning and Elizabeth Barrett Browning*, and reprinted in the Macmillan Edition of Browning's works, *The Complete Poetical Works of Robert Browning, New Edition with Additional Poems First Published in 1914*. Eleven of the fifty-six pages were inexplicably omitted and have never been printed. See Kintner, 1: 134 n. 1.


3. They are "The Italian in England," "The Englishman in Italy," "The Flight of the Duchess," "The Boy and the Angel," "Time's Revenges," and "The Glove." "Pictor Ignotus" and "The Bishop Orders His Tomb at St. Praxed's Church" were subsumed by the heading "Men and Women." The rest were classified as "Dramatic Lyrics."

4. DeVane believes that the poem embodies a cultural-historical type: it is Browning's conception of how the unknown painters "of those pale, formal, monastic series—Virgin, Babe, and Saint—might defend themselves in the face of the great vogue for the newer, more vulgar, painters who depict the expressions of contempo-
rary human beings” (Handbook, p. 155). This was first questioned by Paul F. Jamieson, “Browning’s ‘Pictor Ignotus, Florence, 15—,’ ” Explicator 11 (1952): item 8. Jamieson sees the speaker not as a type but as a failed painter who would have liked fame but found exposure to the crowd and to criticism unendurable. Jamieson suggests that “the youth” is Raphael. J. B. Bullen, “Browning’s ‘Pictor Ignotus’ and Vasari’s ‘Life of Fra Bartolommeo di San Marco,’” RES 23 (1972): 313–19, identifies the speaker of the poem as Fra Bartolommeo, whose history Browning learned from Vasari’s Lives of the Painters and who was a painter of great talent but limited achievement. Michael H. Bright, “Browning’s Celebrated Pictor Ignotus,” ELN 13 (1976): 192–94, argues that Bullen has missed “the central point Browning is making. The whole idea of the poem, as the title makes clear, is that the painter is unknown” (p. 194). In a later essay, “Browning’s ‘Pictor Ignotus’: An Interpretation,” SBHC 4 (1976): 53–61, Bright admits that the speaker could have done all he says but that the true reasons for his forswearing fame were his fear of idolatry and his less justifiable fear of unsympathetic criticism. In contrast to Bullen and Bright, Richard D. Altick, “‘Andrea del Sarto’: The Kingdom of Hell Is Within,” in Browning’s Mind and Art, ed. Clarence Tracy (Edinburgh: Oliver and Boyd, 1968), pp. 18, 24, maintains that the unknown painter’s claim to artistic talent is unsupported and that the painter is thus rationalizing to his own satisfaction his refusal to compete.


8. James F. Loucks, “The Dating of Browning’s ‘Here’s to Nelson’s Memory,’” SBHC 4 (1976): 71–72, suggests that the poem was prompted by the recent donation of the coat Nelson wore when he was wounded at Trafalgar to the Greenwich Hospital. Loucks says that the poem could have been written so late as the autumn of 1845, when the poet was readying the volume for publication.


10. Sec, for example, Robert Felgar, “Browning’s Narrative Art,” SBHC 3 (1975): 82, who says that Browning uses a dramatically imagined participant or onlooker in this poem to give the reader “a sense of immediacy, of almost being there.”


12. Mrs. Orr, Handbook, p. 276, says of the narrator: “He is a jovial, matter-of-fact person, in spite of the vein of sentiment which runs through him; and the imaginative part of his narrative was more probably the result of a huntsman’s breakfast which found its way into his brain.” Here as elsewhere Mrs. Orr is more perspicacious than many of Browning’s commentators who belittle her.
13. The technique is reminiscent of Tennyson, particularly of such poems as “Oenone,” in which the opening lines descriptive of the landscape prefigure, in their suggestive detail, the action of the poem. For Browning’s love of Tennyson’s early poems, see Domett, pp. 40-41, and the many references to Tennyson in Kintner.

14. Mrs. Orr, Handbook, p. 293, also notes the close relationship of the two lyrics: “The words: ‘love me for ever,’ appeal to us from a tombstone which records how Spring garlands are severed by the hand of June.

15. Browning said that he intended the refrain to be “a mournful comment on the short duration of the conventional ‘For Ever’” (quoted in Macmillan Edition, p. 1350).

16. Browning said that the man is the speaker in both parts of the poem and that “it is his confession of how fleeting is the belief (implied in the first part) that such raptures are self-sufficient and enduring—as for the time they appear” (quoted in Macmillan Edition, pp. 1350-51).


20. Cadbury, “Lyric and Anti-Lyric Forms: A Method for Judging Browning,” p. 52, contends that the speaker of the poem “has no interest in lying to us, and so we can question what he says only by asking his relationship to it. Why, we ask, does he remain in a court, the depravity of which he sees so clearly? He remains precisely because of the operation of the humorous irony which is the tone of the poem. His defence against depravity, his ironic wit, makes particularly vivid the necessity for less ironic souls to get out.” David Sonstroem, “‘Fine Speeches Like Gold,’ in Browning’s ‘The Glove’,” VP 15 (1977): 85-90, maintains that Ronsard’s substitution of buffoonery for a lofty style is for the sake of deflation of the court, showing its pretensions and trivialities.

21. Ronsard also sums up the moral of his story in a Latin tag.

22. The historical Ronsard and Marot were bitterly divided on the subject of religion. During the religious wars Ronsard was committed to an extreme royalist and Catholic position. He was noted for attacking his opponents, especially in his Discours, whom he dismissed as traitors and hypocrites. Marot, on the other hand, was a Protestant who was imprisoned for his beliefs and who finally fled from France. If we apply this biographical information to the poem, then the action becomes doubly ironic.

23. George Saintsbury, “Browning,” reprinted in The Browning Critics, ed. Litzinger and Knickerbocker, p. 28, agrees that “the moral is mainly rubbish” and, in addition, that “Marot was a poet.”

claims that by the theorbo Browning meant to refer to DeLorge's two actions infetching the gloves for the two different ladies.

25. Mrs. Orr, Handbook, p. 306 n., says that Mazzini told Browning how he had read the poem to his fellow exiles in England to show how an Englishman could sympathize with them.

Chapter Nine

1. Robert Brainard Pearsall, Robert Browning (New York: Twayne, 1974), p. 45, maintains that the play is based on Greek models. Like them Luria observes the dramatic unities, has no action on stage, "and the emphasis is firmly placed on the Greek values of stagecraft, solitude, and irony."

2. Browning's lack of interest in the characters other than Luria is suggested by the fact that he does not even supply certain narrative details about them that the audience finds necessary. For example: How does Domizia function in the camp? Why is she supposed to be there? Is she Luria's mistress?

3. Irvine and Honan, p. 186, find the influence of Carlyle clearly discernible in the play.

4. In Sordello, 3. 819–33, Browning had spoken out plainly on the matter in reference to poets.

5. The language in which he speaks of Florence is highly erotic, especially in the passage 1. 321–30.

6. Browning to Miss Barrett: "Luria is a Moor, of Othello's country, and devotes himself to something he thinks Florence, and the old fortune follows" (Kintner, 1:26).

7. Taking Browning's characterization of the style of the play, "high fantastical," as his point of departure, Donald S. Hair, Browning's Experiments with Genre, pp. 69–70, says: "Fantasy may either be presented entirely for its own sake , or to serve a didactic intention. If fantasy is presented entirely for its own sake, it is free from moral instruction, or is at least morally neutral. If fantasy is used for a didactic purpose, the poet is anything but neutral. It can be shown, I think, that Browning tried to have it both ways; that as an artist he used fantasy with didactic intention, but that as a man he remained uncommitted to his own conceptions. This discrepancy between the artist and the man reflected the uncertainty of Browning's beliefs in 1845, and in particular the uncertainty of his attitude toward Christianity.

8. In May 1842 Browning wrote to Domett that he would soon print The Return of the Druses and "finish a wise metaphysical play (about a great mind and soul turning to ill)" (Domett, p. 36). DeVane, Handbook, p. 190, believes this unfinished play to be A Soul's Tragedy, and others have followed DeVane—for example, Ian Jack, Browning's Major Poetry, p. 69. I personally see no indication anywhere of Chiappino as either a great mind or a great soul. His name, I feel certain, derives from the diminutive of the obsolete Italian word chiappo, which means "unexpected advantage."

9. Mary Rose Sullivan, "Browning's Plays: Prologue to Men and Women," p. 33, takes a contrary view of the role of language in the play: Browning here "abandoned action almost entirely to concentrate on the final stage of moral degeneration, the
flight into rhetoric. Returning to a central idea of *Pippa Passes*, that only words used lyrically, to express felt experience, can be trusted, he exhibits a morally ruined man using rhetoric to corrupt others."

10. In Italian his name means something like "every good."

11. Browning was aware of his own tendency toward special pleading and the seeming amorality of his views. He wrote to Miss Barrett that he could easily be misunderstood: "I seemed to speak against; and only seemed—because that is a way of mine which you must have observed; that foolish concentrating of thought and feeling, for a moment, on some one little spot of a character or anything else indeed, and—in the attempt to do justice and develop whatever may seem ordinarily to be overlooked in it,—that over vehement insisting on, and giving an undue prominence to, the same—which has the effect of taking away from the importance of the rest of the related objects which, in truth, are not considered at all" (Kintner, 1: 343).

12. As to her influence on the play, see Kintner, 2:576, 580.

13. Irvine and Honan's remarks are representative: "Browning was fascinated by motives, but seemed scarcely interested in how motives produced action or how one action must be linked logically and psychologically with another. He could depict character in isolation—even at a moment of crisis—but he could not easily bring one character into dynamic relation with another. In short, he understood the private drama of passions and ideas occurring in the mind, but not the public drama of men acting and conflicting in the great world of politics and business" (p. 71). Paul de Reul, *L'Art et la pensée de Robert Browning* (Brussels: Maurice Lamertin, 1929), p. 71, speaks more specifically about Browning's concentration on one character: "Le poète se projette avec une belle force pénétrante dans les consciences [de ses caractères], mais il n'explore qu'une âme à la fois, trop profondément pour saisir l'action des âmes entre elles ou le choc des âmes et des événements." Further (p. 299) he says that "Browning, comme Sordello, parvient à s'oublier dans ses personnages, mais à mesure qu'il pénètre en chacun d'eux, il perd contact avec leur vie collective."

14. A. W. Schlegel found it impossible to relate the ironic and the tragic: "No doubt, wherever the proper tragic enters everything like irony immediately ceases; the subjection of mortal beings to an inevitable destiny demands the highest degree of seriousness" (*Lectures on Dramatic Art and Literature*, quoted by D. C. Muecke, *Irony*, p. 19). In his essay "De l'essence du rire," Baudelaire insists that irony is always accompanied by "le sentiment du comique."

15. See Muecke, *Irony*, pp. 33–36. In *Joseph the Provider*, chapter six, Thomas Mann has Joseph speak of the necessity for serenity when one confronts the ambiguities and paradoxes of existence: "It is all too exciting and solemn for words! And just because it is so solemn it must be treated with a light touch. For lightness, flippancy, the artful jest, that is God's very best gift to man, the profoundest knowledge we have of that complex, questionable thing we call life. God gave it to humanity, that life's terribly serious face might be forced to wear a smile" (H. T. Lowe-Porter translation, quoted by Muecke, pp. 35–36).


*Afterword*


2. So far as I can discover, Francis R. Duckworth, *Browning: Background and Conflict* (London: Ernest Benn, 1931), pp. 183–213, is the first to advance this theory. Betty Miller pretty much builds her whole biography of the poet (*Robert Browning: A*
Portrait) around the theory. J. Hillis Miller, in his chapter on Browning in The Disappearance of God, argues that the poet uses the dramatic mode to conceal an inner vacuity. Irvine and Honan, Browning's latest biographers, are more guarded in their speculations, but they too seem to subscribe to the theory that Browning turned to the dramatic mode in order to conceal something about himself; see especially p. 32.


5. Friedrich Schlegel observes: “As long as the artist invents and is inspired, he remains in a constrained state of mind, at least for the purpose of communication. He then wants to say everything, which is the wrong tendency of young geniuses. . . Thus, he fails to recognize the value and dignity of self-restraint, which is indeed for both the artist and the man the first and the last, the most necessary and the highest goal. The most necessary: for wherever we do not restrain ourselves, the world will restrain us; and thus we will become its slave. The highest: for we can restrain ourselves only in those points and aspects where we have infinite power, in self-creation and self-destruction” (Lyceum Fragment No. 37).

6. In her book The Central Self, Patricia Ball studies the dual impulses of the egotistical sublime and negative capability in works of the major Romantic and Victorian poets; she is not, however, concerned with the ironic implications. The section dealing with Browning may be found on pp. 198–220. E. Warwick Slinn, “‘God A Tame Confederate,’” considers the ironies of the egotistical sublime in Pippa.


8. Browning said that “all the arts are mediators, between the soul and the infinite.” They are “Mediators, messengers, projected from the soul to go and feel for Her, out there” (quoted by C. N. Wenger, The Aesthetics of Browning, pp. 163, 217).


10. See especially the reviews of Tennyson’s Poems, Chiefly Lyrical by W. J. Fox in the Westminster Review for January 1831 and by Arthur Henry Hallam in the Englishman’s Magazine for August 1831. Fox writes: “The most important department in which metaphysical science has been a pioneer for poetry is in the analysis of particular states of mind.” Hallam says: “These expressions of character are brief and coherent. They are like summaries of mighty dramas.”


12. Letter to John Kenyon, 1 October 1855, in Houghton Library, Harvard University; quoted by Eleanor Cook, Browning’s Lyrics, p. xv.

13. Browning frequently referred to his poems as though they were plays in which he himself acted. See, for example, “One Word More” and the prefatory note to the 1888 edition of Pauline, in which he refers to the work as the “first of my performances.”

14. Robert Preyer, “Two Styles in the Verse of Robert Browning,” ELH 32 (1965): 79, observes: “The poems have the look of constantly being on the point of overlapping their formal structure.” Wenger, The Aesthetics of Robert Browning, p. 163, notes that for Browning “the truths of art are never represented as though contented and at home in their forms, but rather as though projecting out of, overflowing, and transcending their mediums. Accordingly, the reconciliations he would have discoverable in art are those sufficient only to indicate the necessity of life in forms while the spirit makes its progress toward an eventual escape.”

in considering the accomplishments of the Romantics and the problems that they left
to their successors, writes: "Thus the romantic poets themselves confronted for the
first time and left to their followers the problem of attaining the scope and diversity of
a major expression within an essentially lyrical habit of mind and for an audience
that—by the later nineteenth century—had come to expect, and still expects,
lyricism."

16. It is worthwhile recalling that when Browning refers to artistic form and literary
history he more often than not employs the metaphor of the machine, as for example
in books 2, 3, and 5 of Sordello and in the Essay on Shelley.


18. Walter Bagehot, "Wordsworth, Tennyson, and Browning; or Pure, Ornate, and
Grotesque Art in English Poetry" (1864), reprinted in Literary Studies (London:
Longmans, 1879), ed. Richard Holt Hutton, 2:375, says of Browning's "grotesque" art:
"It takes the type, so to say, in difficulties. It gives representation to it in its mini­
imum development, amid the circumstances least favourable to it, just while it is strug­
gling with obstacles, just where it is encumbered with incongruities."

19. Quoted in Maisie Ward, Robert Browning and His World: Two Robert Brown­


21. Harold Orel, "Browning's Use of Historical Sources in Strafford" in Six Studies
of Nineteenth-Century English Literature and Thought, ed. Harold Orel and George J.
Worth, University of Kansas Humanistic Studies, No. 35 (Lawrence: University of
Kansas Publications, 1962), p. 36, notes "the irritating mannerism whereby one
speaker finishes the sentence of an earlier speaker, and in turn has his sentence fin­
ished for him by a third speaker."

22. In Shelley's Prose: or, The Trumphet of Prophecy, ed. David Lee Clark (Albu­

(London: Horace Marshall and Son, 1898), p. 85: "His creed as thinker and his gov­
erning conception as poet are the same—real idealism. No man holds more deeply
and no poet has given more forcible expression to a conviction of the higher issues of
life—to the belief in the reality of a life and order more perfect and more beautiful
than the actual world. But the way to it is through the realities of this world and not
through dreams and fine sentiments." In somewhat similar vein G. Wilson Knight,
Neglected Powers: Essays on Nineteenth and Twentieth Century Literature (London:
what the Romantics, apart from Byron, lacked, while lacking what they offer. Brown­
ing gives us humanity with comparatively little emphasis on either nature or on
the transcendent, except in so far as it can be felt to flower from human instincts, pas­
sions and purposes."

24. Learned Lady: Letters from Robert Browning to Mrs. Thomas FitzGerald, 1876–
152. Haakon M. Chevalier, The Ironic Temper: Anatole France and His Time (New
York: Oxford University Press, 1932), p. 79, says that irony "characterizes the attitude
of one who, when confronted with the choice of two things that are mutually exclu­sive,
chooses both. Which is but another way of saying he chooses neither. He cannot
bring himself to give up one for the other, and he gives up both. But he reserves the
right to derive from each the greatest possible passive enjoyment. And this enjoyment is Irony.


27. Thomas J. Collins, "The Poetry of Robert Browning," argues that the dramatic monologues of the 1840s, 1850s, and 1860s were a deviation from the path marked out by Browning in *Sordello* and that he resumed the route he had intended to follow in *The Ring and the Book* and the later poems.

28. C. N. Wenger, *The Aesthetics of Robert Browning*, p. 240, notes that Browning requires that the functioning of art among men generally must always be only a secondary end for the artist, for unless the artist works primarily towards his own development and salvation, he is soon equalled by those who benefit by his services and so ceases to be of further use or significance. It is for this reason that the poet puts his stress in aesthetics so much more upon the artist and his work than upon the appreciation and effects of art.


30. In the second letter that she ever wrote to him, Elizabeth Barrett stated that the most salient characteristic of Browning's art was his ability to be both subjective and objective: "You have in your vision two worlds—or to use the language of the schools of the day, you are both subjective and objective in the habits of your mind. Thus, you have an immense grasp in Art; and no one at all accustomed to consider the usual forms of it, could help regarding with reverence and gladness the gradual expansion of your powers" (Kintner, 1:9). For an account of modern or Romantic Irony as the necessary combination of subjective and objective elements, see D. C. Muecke, *The Compass of Irony*, chapter 7, especially pp. 196–97, 211–12. In a later book, *Irony*, p. 78, Muecke says of Romantic Irony: "Ironic literature is literature in which there is a constant interplay of objectivity and subjectivity, freedom and necessity, the appearance of life and the reality of art, the author immanent in every part of his work as its creative vivifying principle and transcending his work as its objective 'presenter.'" Michael Mason, "The Importance of Sordello," p. 149, says that "Browning, in effect, made the historical concept of objective and subjective poetry, in a revised form, a live issue, not a long-solved one. In this way he was perhaps the only writer at the time who, by taking his stand firmly on the actual nature of poetic composition, was able to relate the exhilaration of a new psychological poetry to the chastening fact of a climate of moral uncertainty."