ROBERT BROWNING AND PAINTING:

PROLEGOMENA TO A READING OF BROWNING'S POETRY

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ABSTRACT

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Browning's poetry is notable for the number and importance of its references to other arts. This thesis attempts to assess the influence of painting and painterly ideas on Browning's poetry, with special reference to his contacts with painting in the early part of his life. His father's taste for and knowledge of painting are discussed, and connections are made between them and formal or technical details of Browning's style. His father's own artistic abilities and his interest in engraving are also considered in this light. This entails some consideration of the methodology of comparison between painting and poetry, both as Browning would have known it and, with reference to my own explorations, in a modern context. Stress is laid on the fact that Browning's father's taste provided the poet with an alternative set of artistic models to those Romantic literary ones which are usually assumed to be of primary importance to his art. Specific comparison is made between features of Browning's work and Hogarth's, who was his father's favourite artist. This leads into a consideration of Browning's use of irony, based on principles shared with visual art. The final chapter deals with aspects of Browning's artistic relationship with his friend, Lord Leighton. Throughout, the comparisons of particular poems with paintings are intended rather as examples of Browning's usage than as claims of specific and confined borrowing or influence.
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INTRODUCTION

In the light of modern psychological knowledge, it would be foolish indeed for a person who was searching to understand the influences which may have affected a given writer to ignore that writer's early life at home. However, since the relevance, and the interest, of those influences would be expressed in the writer's works, a purely psychological approach will not, in all likelihood, serve the critic. The critic must decide how to assess the psychological implications of the facts in the context of the writer's art. He may choose to discard as irrelevant facts which have repercussions in the writer's life but not ostensibly in his art; or he may choose to interpret as vital a stray piece of information which the writer himself, if it were possible to question him, might find hard to recall and assess. The biographer plainly does not have this degree of freedom in approaching his subject. The biographer is likely to assess the early influences in the light of the writer's character, of which he will attempt some understanding. He is not at liberty to ignore events, and his duty is to assess their importance to the writer personally. Unless these distinctions are observed by the critic and the biographer, a confusion is likely to arise about the way in which the writer himself related to his art; for if the critic is prepared to accept biographical likelihood as a critical criterion for an interpretation, or if the biographer is willing to view the writer's works as direct evidence about his life, the implication is inevitable that the writer had no art, that he wrote his own history merely.

That the critical use of biographical details need not carry such implication however is amply shown by such a writer as Rudolph Wittkower in his Gian Lorenzo Bernini, Phaidon 1955. For him, biographical details
usually serve to confirm or clarify observations on the nature of
Bernini's art; and even where influences on his art are under discus-
sion, the critic refrains from any simplistic interpretation of the art
in terms of the life, and gives precedence to critical insight, using
biographical fact or probability as auxiliary:

"Such an intensity of realistic penetration, such verisimili-
tude and psychological analysis, had no parallel in Italian
sculpture. Before the Anima Dannata, works by Carravaggio
come to mind such as the Medusa, the Boy Bitten by a Lizard,
or the head of Isaac in the Sacrifice of Abraham. The two
latter were in the Villa Borghese and therefore probably well
known to Bernini. Although the Carravaggio heads appear re-
strained and almost conventional in comparison with the Anima
Dannata, they may well have stimulated Bernini's interest in
rendering the expression of terror, for the open mouth with
the meticulous representation of the tongue and teeth, is a
characteristic 'emblem' of Carravaggio's imagery..." (pp2-3)

In this book, in fact, Wittkower almost creates a 'life-story' for Bernini
out of a subtle reading of the visible development in his sculpture.

In contrast with this approach, consider these brief extracts from
Pottle, working from some known facts of Browning's life, seeks to create
a character for him first, and then to interpret his poetry purely in the
light of that character:

"If we could catch (Browning) at the time he was an
aetheist and vegetarian, we should find him startlingly
like the Shelley of the Queen Mab days..."

"If we had the verse he wrote ... we should find it
startlingly Shelleyan..." (p3)
The confusion which Pottle shows about the nature of his job as a critic arises because he is not content to say merely that he, critically, finds important affinities between Browning and Shelley. In his preface, he mentions both as favourite poets of his own, but goes no further. As the title of the book suggests, he is partially intent on establishing biographical data with accuracy, rather than on setting out a critical thesis, but he does not separate the two tasks. The criteria by which he skilfully sifts the false reports of Browning's first copy of Shelley from the true - historical detective work - are used, inappropriately I would argue, to decide on problems of emphasis in the text of *Pauline*. The result inevitably is that the poem appears to be purely autobiographical, and the care the writer took to give it form and independent life - his art - is ignored.

These two examples are meant to do no more than illustrate a general difference of approach, and one which is perhaps common between critics of the visual arts and those of literature. The difference may reflect the simple fact that, since words are everyday tools which we use to deal with the world rather than to imitate it, when words are used in this latter function, it is all too easy to treat them as if they were intended to be significant in the same way as in ordinary speech; whereas most of the colour, depth and form we see does not represent our 'thinking aloud' or serve us ordinarily for communications. It may tax our imaginations more heavily to consider Browning's *Pauline* as an example of his art, rather than as a slice of his life; we don't face the same undermining choice as we look at Bernini's *Anima Dannata*.

Nevertheless, there is reason for the literary critic to concern himself with the events of a writer's life. As I began by suggesting, the impact of modern psychological knowledge upon the critics' methods has been considerable. The development of ideas about perception, and the
inerradicability of the early set of the mind, mean that information which previously should have concerned the biographer is open to different exploitation by the critic. His task is not, however, to assess how early environment or events affected the character of his author, but how ideas about art, its laws and purposes, may have been sown in the author's mind before he realised enough about it to accept or reject their influence deliberately. For example, though it may be conceivable that the impulse to paint pictures is the result of unusually sensitive vision, it is very hard to postulate any inherent reason why a man should choose to write poetry instead of prose, except that he has rubbed up against the idea that poetry was superior— the more serious mode, or the more expressive, perhaps, or the more aesthetic. Biographically, it is unlikely to be possible to arrive at the facts about where and when this occurred, though a description of the writer's parents, environment and so on, would obviously be both possible and useful. Critically, however, considerably more positive use can surely be made of the various details which may be available: just as Wittkower can cite the existence of the Carravaggio heads as of definite importance to the kind of art of which Bernini now seems the finest practitioner so details which may only serve the biographer as hints upon which to generalize about the character of his subject (as Pottle, from Browning's atheism and vegetarianism, deduces that he had a Shelleyan enthusiasm of character) may serve the critic as evidence for aspects of his art.

Thus a critical study of the influences upon a writer, or any artist, though it presupposes a knowledge of the subject's biography, needs to relate to the artist's individual talent rather than to his personality, and to establish a critical framework within which to assess both the importance of particular influences on his art, and of the artist's own idea of his art—his awareness of his 'place', his conscious commitment to certain standards or models, and his sense of style.
It is necessary to draw out the underlying implication of what has so far been said, that a critical method can usefully cross the borders usually assumed to exist between diverse arts. Comparison between the arts of painting and poetry has frequently been undertaken for its own sake, with results which as often proclaim the sensibilities of the critic as the intentions of the arts he compares. For example, the poet Wallace Stevens frankly sees painting as useful to literature:

"No poet can have failed to recognise how often a detail, a propos or remark, in respect to painting, applies also to poetry... I suppose that it would be possible to study poetry by studying painting or that one could become a painter after one had been a poet..."

The point Stevens is making is probably that a thorough and practical education in the one art may equip you to take up the other - but it must be admitted that he seems to regard painting as an extension of literary awareness. With more apparent objectivity, Jean Seznec sets out:

"to rebuild the writer's private gallery, his personal Musée Imaginaire - a museum made not of dreams and fancies, but of concrete, identifiable pictures..."

but since he decides that

"what the writers sought in a picture was an incentive; what they valued was its power of suggestion..."

his comparison turns out to be over-personal with regard to "suggestion" and restricted by his assumption that the writers would respond illustratively to the paintings that they knew, or not at all. The same problematic assumption makes Laurence Binyon's lecture on English Poetry and its Relation to Painting and the Other Arts equally over-personal and he tends to equate visual imagery in poetry with painted images because of co-
incident subject matter. Such limitations are sharply castigated by René Wellek: 6

"I should like to argue that the current methods for comparison of the arts are of little value. They are based either on vague similarities of emotional effects or on a community of intentions, theories and slogans which may not be very concretely related to the actual work of art ... the mysterious unifying 'time spirit' is usually little more than a vague abstraction or empty formula ..."

Displaying his personal bias as clearly as Binyon or Stevens, he concludes that: 7

"The approximation among the arts which would lead to concrete possibilities of comparison might be sought in an attempt to reduce all the arts to branches of semiology, or to so many systems of signs ..."

This "reduction" however is sensibly criticised by G. Giovanni: 8

"Reducing the arts to a sign of some kind of reality external or internal to the artist is a simplification subjecting the arts to a confusion with reality itself ... The fine arts ... are one in their freedom from the obligation to reality which governs science, history and philosophy ..."

However, he too concludes rather revealingly that the important function of comparison between the arts is 9

"to distinguish between what is actually given and is an affinity, and what is not given but suggested; and further, to distinguish between what is suggested by way of analogy and is analysable, and what is the by-product of perception, or of mood, and is irrelevant ..."
He seems to be assuming, as much as Binyon or Seznec, that the relation between the arts is bound to be illustrative, since he implies that the "analysable" qualities of analogy are valid where other forms of comparison are "irrelevant". Like Wellek, he is apparently advocating a closer study of the particular works to be compared, but in fact both of them call only for new systems, which, because of their very ubiquity of application, would be more likely to become ends in themselves than useful indicators of particular influences between the arts.

Nevertheless, it is plainly possible that a writer or painter may believe that there are valid general comparisons between the arts, such as those made under the heading of 'Ut Pictura Poesis', (see Chapter 4) and that such a belief could provide a useful critical entry into such an artist's work. Even without belief in a useful general set of comparisons, he might be tempted to use insights gained into the nature of aesthetic form in the one art to experiment in the formal qualities of the other. In short, it seems to me to be critically useful to investigate the interests of a writer or painter in arts other than his own.

The category of factual material which is available to the biographer of a writer which most readily shows that his approach to his subject will not thoroughly cover his subject's art, is the evidence of the early knowledge of art in his subject. Even the excellent biography of Robert Browning by William Irvine and Park Honan, The Book, the Ring and the Poet, 1975, is sprinkled with quite startlingly dull critical pronouncements on this basis. For example, after noting that Browning read The Art of Painting by Gérard de Lairesse, the influence the book may have had on his poetry is traced thus:
Their (Browning's and Lairesse's) landscapes are strikingly similar. Browning's military actions tend to occur at dawn, his tragedies by torchlight. Pauline and many other poems are beautiful with trees and vistas, Child's Roland and many others ugly and repulsive with sharp hills, muddy brooks and deformed men..."11

The comparison, so far as it goes, is merely that the recommendations for paintings have some echoes in the 'pictures' in Browning's poems. Yet the biographer continues:

"Through the spectacles fashioned by Lairesse ... Robert looked at ... Camberwell ..."

Plainly, the biographer's instinct, to form and describe a credible character based on fact, cannot really handle this kind of information to advantage. But here, using this information, the critic can surely find a method which is so specific in its relation to the artist's work as to fulfill the criteria desired by Wellek and Giovanni, of a properly objective method based on evidence in the works rather than the critic's intuition.

In his recent book, Romantic Landscape Vision,12 Karl Kroebber has made what is both a highly systematic and highly idiosyncratic series of comparisons between particular poems by Wordsworth and paintings by Constable.

"I thought to study simultaneously landscape poetry and landscape painting in Britain during the first years of the nineteenth century. Disparate and autonomous arts discourage generalizing about consistency; limited subject matter compels attention to alien specificities in particular art works. My contrapuntal analyses cannot define ... what Romanticism was, but they may embody, however idiosyncratically, a significance two-century-old art retains ..." (p4).
Professor Kroeber has not formulated his method as such, and in no way seeks to justify his choice of a few particular examples as a basis on which to arrive at an understanding of Romantic Landscape Vision. The value of the book, as the vagueness of his conclusion suggests, is in its process rather than in its theses. It doesn't provide an interpretative system as Professor Wellek would wish, nor part of the history of landscape art (though very thorough and interesting in this regard so far as the actual examples discussed require) such as might satisfy the imaginary biographer; but it is an extended, logical and explicit examination of painting and poetry as artistic expressions of a period.

Inevitably this has required Professor Kroeber to decide which kinds of comparison between poetry and painting are critically useful to him, and to reject the others. He has rejected, for instance, the kind of comparison which assumes that a particular image can have the same symbolic intention in the works of various artists. This would seem a very reasonable rejection. Even more unlikely than that two poets might share a symbolic system is the idea that such a system could be extended between the arts. Nevertheless, if the subject of our study were to be a poet who was openly pre-occupied with understanding and re-exploring the symbolic system of a painter, even this apparently unhopeful kind of comparison might prove useful. An example might be Browning's *Fra Lippo Lippi*; or, in the reverse direction, Blake's drawings of Dante's *Inferno*. In either case, the artist is using ideas not his own to create works which are very much his own. Professor Kroeber has felt no need to suggest that any relationship exists between Constable and Wordsworth except in their dates and the critical use he can make of them to define some aspects of Romanticism. If there had been a relationship between them however, where they discussed their arts and a record existed of their discussion, it might not be necessary to exclude it. In short, it would probably be futile to use Professor Kroeber's methods for different ends from his own, but the fact that he has a method, one which is highly specialised and discriminating, with no elements of accidental insight, shows that comparison between painting and poetry need not be vague or esoteric. By being consistent in the use he makes of his examples and by establishing logical grounds for discussing that slippery term, Romanticism, he has shown that there is more community between the arts than is often talked of. He has accepted the burden of supplying both critical and historical reasons to support his idea, and he has still managed to avoid any implication that the artists he deals with were other than profoundly original and independent. For him, there is no simple correlation between the 'time spirit' (as Wellek calls it) and the art produced, but he leaves you in no doubt that there is some relation. In fact, he has avoided all the pitfalls which Wellek anticipates for a work of this sort, as well as
those which would attend Wellek’s own approach of reducing ‘the arts to branches of semiology.’

One of the most obvious features of Browning’s poetry is the number of analogies and parallels between the arts which occur within it. Not only are there many poems in which the speaker is an artist other than a poet himself – Andrea del Sarto, Fra Lippo Lippi, Abt Vogler – but even in those where the speaker has no necessary connection with Art, the character as realised by Browning is ready to make use of a painting, a poem or a piece of music to illustrate – and complicate – what he is saying. Thus, for example, Caponsacchi uses Raphael’s name to indicate a certain sublimity, and Don Juan in Fifine at the Fair specifically names and describes Schumann’s Carnival to give form to part of his argument. Browning uses analogies and references to the other arts at every level, from naming, in passing, the character’s habituated taste, to the displaying at length a character’s involvement with a particular work or artist. It can be the most condensed way of evoking a character, as it is in Bishop Blougram’s Apology:

“And Parma’s pride, the Jerome, let us add!
’Twere pleasant could Correggio’s fleeting glow
Hang full in face of one where’er one roams... ”

Or it can involve the whole substance of the poem, as the struggle between Andrea’s intense admiration for Raphael and his offence at the arm being ‘wrongly put’ actually underlies a large part of the poem dramatically, and represents a discussion about Art and fidelity to nature which is both arguably more important than Andrea himself and potentially infinitely dull.

In the references Browning makes to music, there is perhaps less complexity. The music is generally translated into poetry, into visual imagery or into an ideal world which words are competent to deal with. For example, in Saul, or A Toccata by Galuppi, in Master Hugo of Saxe-Gotha, or Abt Vogler, there is a continual translation of sound into subject. The statement of the motivating idea is stronger, more urgent, than any imitation of the form. The fugue that ‘glares like a gorgon’; Abt Vogler’s ‘Beautiful building’ of sound; Galuppi’s ‘Dust and ashes’; or David’s song which almost tangibly ‘made proffer of good to console’ Saul out of the ordinary life of his people; in each case, Browning has found a complete verbal equivalent for the experience of the music to the protagonist. Indeed, Browning himself dismissed the idea of interpreting music in his poetry in any other way. In a letter to Mr. Spaulding, critic on the Boston Transcript, who had published a complimentary article about Browning’s musical knowledge, Browning wrote:
"All this will show that I have given much attention to "music proper" - I believe to the detriment of what people take for "music" in poetry, when I had to consider that quality. For the first effect of apprehending real musicality was to make me abjure the sing-song which, in my early days, was taken for it..."

The letter was reprinted at the end of an article by H.E. Greene, called 'Browning's Knowledge of Music', PMLA 1947, pl099.

This is not, however, the case with Browning's references to painting. Instead of seeking to translate into words the experience of a given painting's subject, he openly describes the painting, sometimes allows his poem to take its shape, and may even rely too heavily upon it for the good of his poem. (See Chapter Six, on Browning and Leighton.) One might argue that the painting of Andrea del Sarto and his Wife which Browning saw in the Pitti Palace in Florence had an influence on the shape of his poem at least as importantly as the reference to Andrea which Browning knew from Vasari. Thus, instead of translating the idea of the picture (as it was in words in Vasari) into his poem, he has re-created the experience of mournful dependency, constant and complex marital reproach and self-reproach which it would not be fanciful to assume the picture itself could suggest.

To illustrate the point from a different angle: imagine that someone who had never heard a fugue read Master Hugues of Saxe-Gotha. He would surely know pretty well what the idea of a fugue is, having read it. No reader could have heard the ineffable song David sang to Saul, but every reader finishes the poem with the idea of David's song firmly in his mind. On the other hand, for a reader who has never seen a painting by Andrea to read the poem it would be impossible to form any distinct and accurate visual idea of his work. The complaint has been made that in Pauline, Browning's description of Polidoro da Caravaggio's Andromeda is not adequate to paint the picture in the mind of the reader. He can identify what the poem describes when he sees the picture, but the poetry alone does not give the idea. The snatches of poetry which Browning wrote to accompany Lord Leighton's paintings have just the same quality. This is simply because these poems are not intended to substitute for the paintings in the reader's experience. Browning seems to expect the reader to know enough about painting to catch his meaning. His references to music on the whole contrast with this. It has frequently been pointed out that there is no Toccata extant by Galuppi; Abt Vogler's improvisation too is by its very nature outside any possible experience the reader could have, as is David's song (- as music, of course; the Psalms give a fair
idea of the fashion of his words.). In these cases, Browning is the only source the reader has, and thus a different responsibility devolves upon him: instead of a critical and comparative one, he has here the onus of providing actual information.

There are two cases where his use of music is not like this, and where he tries to use music in his poetry as he has always used painting. Interestingly, both were written quite late in his life. The first is in his Parleying with Charles Avison. In this case, Browning tries to parallel Avison's art with his own, but resorts to printing the actual notes of the melody to which he is referring at the end of the poem, as if he realised the impossibility of arriving at an equivalent in words. The other example is to be found in Fifine at the Fair. Here Browning has chosen a specific and well-known piece of music, Schumann's Carnival, so the problem of establishing simultaneously an idea about the work and the work itself does not arise. Instead, his speaker, Don Juan, rushes into an emotional analysis of the music which is intended to throw light upon his character, and which leads directly, and most interestingly, to the substitution of a dream, expressed visually, for the music. Through the dream, Don Juan refers back to the music, but it seems to me that the only aspect of himself which it specifically clarifies is that of his abstract feelings; to convert this into ideas from which to argue, he is forced into more tangible imagery.

Browning is obviously one artist whose works invite examination from an inter-artistic point of view because of his frequent references to arts other than poetry and his manifest avoidance of the specific 'beauties of language' for which some of his contemporary poets were notable, such as their musicality. The purpose of my perhaps rather hasty dismissal of music in this context is however practical, since the dangers of a comparative approach must multiply in proportion to the number of different things to be compared. More significantly, I believe that Browning's understanding of and love for painting was an explicit activity for him in a way that his love of music never could be, and that the many pieces of biographical evidence which point to this conclusion may validly give rise to a critical approach which is intended to be specific to the poet's individual talent and forms of expression. Thus this work is not intended to provide an interpretative reading of Browning's poetry, nor to clear up textual problems associated with interpretations; neither is it seeking for a direct parallelism between Browning's poetry and particular paintings, though obviously specific poems and paintings must
be discussed, and their choice is not arbitrary. It is intended to refine the context of his work so that the reader may go back to the poems with a clearer sense of their mechanisms for achieving meaning. Specific aspects of Browning's interest in painting will be related to specific qualities in his poetry in an attempt to make the operation of the poetry more lucid, and hence, I hope, its meaning, though that I leave to the reader. Covertly perhaps, the suggestion is also intended that the pictorialist approach to the comparison of poetry and painting is not really adequate to deal with underlying formal influence, and that the iconographic relation of subjects in painting to those in poetry may be found to be superficial for similar reasons. In fact, I am not seeking obviously visual qualities in Browning's poetry, but endeavouring to borrow the lucid qualities of painterly organisation to clarify his forms and the peculiarly specific nature of his imagery and vocabulary, the kind of realism which he practised. His interest in painting was consistently intense enough for me to believe that these qualities in his poetry were directly due to his knowledge of the sister art, but that may perhaps remain a question of opinion. I hope that the presentation of his work in this different light, as stemming from other than directly Romantic and literary influences, will send my reader back to his poetry with renewed interest.

There is a very strong critical tradition which classes Browning as a Romantic poet, and assumes that the most important influences upon him were Romantic literary ones. While I should not wish to dispute that there is evidence of influence of this sort, especially in Browning's early poetry, I believe that it was never of the primary and exclusive importance which it is most often given, in the development of his genius. I would even go further and claim that in spirit Browning was, as Paul de Roul described him as early as 1825, in his lectures on The Art and Thought of Robert Browning, "very anti-romantic". As is very plain in, for example, Harold Bloom's interpretation of Childe Roland to the Dark Tower Care in his book, The Ringers in the Tower, 1971, the critic who sees Browning as a Romantic poet necessarily sees his poetry as the 'objective correlative' of his personal feelings and/or morality:

"Mrs. Miller in particular reads Childe Roland in the context of the denial, as a poem of retribution appropriate to Browning's own sin in murdering his earlier, Shelleyan self as a sacrifice to his Oedipal anxieties, to his love for his evangelical mother... Mrs. Miller's view seems to me the indispensable entry into Browning's darkest and most powerful romance..." (p. 159)
Without setting forth the biographical data, George Santayana had made similar assumptions seventy years before in his famous essay on The Poetry of Barbarism, 1900:

"(Browning's) art is all self-expression, or satire. For the most part his hero... is himself,... masked in all sorts of romantic and historical finery..."

Though infinitely more sensitive in his approach and interpretation, the same assumption leads Robert Langbaum, in his book The Poetry of Experience, 1957, to consider that the power of Browning's poetry is based upon a paradox:

"On the one hand, the speaker is characterized as an articulated personality engaged in moral action, as distinctly other than ourselves and to be judged. On the other hand, he is "characterized" (if the word can be used) as sheer consciousness, as the primordial unarticulated self-justifying life which we share with him and in fact supply... the speaker has one foot inside the poem and one foot outside... The speaker's paradoxical particularity universalizes him...." (p. 204)

Langbaum is consistently emphatic that romantic sympathy is the key to understanding Browning's art, and even argues therefore that the Duke of Ferrara in My Last Duchess is an overwhelmingly "attractive" figure whose human qualities somehow transcend the horrible facts/information which Browning gives us about him. I feel that Langbaum's commitment to the theory of Romantic poetry has here distorted his approach to the poem, and it is this kind of distortion which I hope, in my work, to avoid by emphasising definitively unromantic influences upon and aspects of Browning's art. I wish to draw out what is implied by many critics in the language they choose, even those who unequivocally see Browning as a Romantic, that the realism of his approach has important features in common with realistic painting. For example, in his Literary Essays, 1896, R.H. Hutton consistently uses analogies of painting to explain his feelings about Browning's poems. Of Bishop Blougram's Apology, he says:

"the marvellous minuteness and fidelity of this Denner-like painting of every wrinkle on the ecclesiastic's conscience..." and he criticises Browning for having his "soul too much in his eyes".

Paul de Reul, in The Art and Thought of Robert Browning, 1925, even goes so far as to claim:

"We can even determine to what special school of painting he belongs: not to the impressionists, not to the school of Turnierian and Shelleyan fluidities, but to the school pre-occupied with what the critic Berenson called tactile values..."
Or again, he says:

="He paints with the minuteness of a Dutch painter..."

These insights seem to me to lead to a different assessment of the direction of Browning's art from that which has been assumed by the critics who class him as a Romantic poet, and I wish to explore that direction, linking it with the influence I believe that painting had on Browning.

I should say here, however, that I do not intend to base my exploration on the poems of Browning's which are specifically about painters or pictures. It seems to me that Browning's technique in these poems is not fundamentally different from that he uses to describe other kinds of artist, or thinkers, or villains. I may even seem to be avoiding these poems, because I wish to stress that the kind of influence I claim painting to have had on Browning's art is profound and formal, and inhabits all his work equally. Still, I feel that there is no contradiction between the influence I claim to perceive and the open and explicit interest in painting as such which Browning often displays in his poems - Fra Lippo Lippi, Andrea del Sarto, Old Pictures in Florence, Pictor Ignotus, and the Parleyings with Gérard De Lairesse and Francis Furini, for instance, - and very few of his poems and none of his long poems are devoid of mention of painting. In these poems, the relation between the subject matter discussed and the technique of the poet is not in principle different from that in the poems whose subjects are music, or religion, for example. It is my contention that the early influence of painterly ideas on Browning's mind was so completely basic to his later development as a poet that he himself in all likelihood would not have considered it as a particular debt. In short, I believe that it influenced his idea of what Art is, and that he never later defined Art in any way which does not include and to some extent imply the mental and aesthetic processes common in realistic painting. Thus the painter-poems do not seem to me to embody uniquely the truth about the influence of painting on Browning. In this I consciously
differ from several other critics who have written of it, such as J.B. Bullen, Johnstone Ferr, A.C. Dooley, M.H.Bright, L. Ormond (see Bibliography). They tend to assume a direct influence, such as is evident in Browning's use of Vasari or Baldinucci, or at most, an analogical interest in particular paintings. My approach is radically different from this, since I seek to explore Browning's poetic habits of mind, rather than to classify his subject matter. I believe that this admittedly abstract and complex approach is necessary when dealing with Browning, a poet who is intensely conscious of his art, and who is intent upon absenting his prosaic self from it, as he repeatedly stated himself to be. Thus the painter-poems are not more significant in my argument than any other of his poems, and I felt it might be misleading to centre upon them precisely because of their subject matter. My approach does not, I believe, contradict that of those critics who do trace Browning's interest in painting in the painter-poems, but I would suggest that there is room for a less concrete definition of influence in this case.
NOTES

1. Not always; for example see Thomas Munro, The Arts and Their Inter-relations 1949. He states: "There is no such thing as an art, in the traditional sense of a distinct, permanent, integral realm of human activity..." (p.520)


4. Ibid p12.


7. Ibid p63.

8. C. Giovanni "Literature and its Relation to the Other Fine Arts" Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism VIII 1950 pp187-8

9. Ibid p193

10. Painters may be better served: see R. Paulson Hogarth His Life Art and Times 1971, who carefully assesses both the development of Hogarth's mind and his visual awareness. See also the Introduction to Joseph Burke and C. Caldwell Complete Engravings of Hogarth 1968.

Both Paulson and Burke owe a debt to Hogarth himself in this regard, who, in his autobiographical notes was careful to explain his early system of visual mnemonics, etc. (Anecdotes of William Hogarth Written by Himself 1833; facsimile edition published by Commarket Press London 1970)

11. It needs no profound knowledge of Browning's poetry to recognise the irrelevance of most of these comparisons: landscape is not Browning's interest, and it is hard to call to mind many "military actions" "tending" to occur at dawn. The suggestion that Browning merely adopted Lairesse's ideas, is simplistic in the way that Pottle's approach is: that is, it implies that Browning in fact had no art, merely gave out in poetic form what was put in as the facts of his life.

13. That this is not the only way in which music and poetry can be paralleled, a glance at Tennyson will demonstrate.

"Blow, bugle, blow, set the wild echoes flying,
Answer, echoes, dying, dying, dying..."

is a ready example of a completely different idea: his words actually convince the reader because they are imitating the sounds they describe, not because they contain a translation of the idea behind the making of the sound.

14. See 'Illustrations to Browning's Poems' *Notes of The Browning Society* 1882

15. Vasari *Le Vite de' nni eccellenti pittori, scultori ed architettori* (Lives of the Painters, Sculptors and Architects.)
First published 1550, revised 1568.

16. See H. C. Duffin *Amphibian: A reconsideration of Browning* 1956 for reproduction of this engraving. Also reproduced in J. Maynard, *Browning's Youth* 1977

17. See Chapter 6.


for a more sympathetic reading of Browning's musical awareness. However, I think it is fair to say here that Browning's own opinion of his musical sensibilities was higher than that of some of his contemporaries.

Charles Villiers Stanford, a distinguished English composer, wrote in his *Pages from an Unwritten Diary* 1914

"The one of the party who talked most and knew least about the subject (Beethoven's last quartets) was, curiously enough, Browning... 'Sliding by semitones till I sink to the minor' (Abt Vogler) is indeed the refuge of a destitute amateur improviser..."

In *Browning and Music* *Writers and their Background: Browning* London 1974, Penelope Gay has examined the subject carefully, and I think on the whole would allow my conclusion.

19. See J. Hollander op cit

20. For instance, he uses highly technical vocabulary in order to give his reader the exact nature of his image and not its "general feeling" - Pippa's flower is a "martagon" (Turk's cap lily) in
Fippa Passes, the organist uses the "Hodie Palestina" in Master Princen ofaze Cotten, etc. It is interesting to compare this specificity with, for instance Wordsworth's powerful vagueness - "blank misgivings of a creature/ Moving about in worlds not realized..." (Ode on the Intimations of Immortality)

21. I refer in particular to the American "New Critical" school, which has been strongly influential on critical writing on Browning, examples being Robert Langbaum's The Poetry of Experience (1957) and Harold Bloom's The Ringers in the Tower (1971).
"I am getting to love painting as I did once - do you know I was a young wonder (as are eleven out of the dozen of us) at drawing? My father had faith in me - and over yonder in a drawer of mine lies, I well know, a certain cottage and rocks in lead pencil and black currant jam-juice (paint being rank poison as they said when I sucked my brushes) - with his (my father's) note in one corner 'RB aetat two years three months' ..."

Letter from Robert Browning to Fanny Haworth, ca Dec 30 1841

It is not, perhaps unusual for parents to be over-impressed by the early signs of talent which their infants show, and the fact that Browning still possessed his infant scrawl when he was nearly thirty may in itself be nothing remarkable. If, however, we place this short extract in the context of Browning's life, its real significance should become plain. At the time of writing this letter, Browning was 29 years old and still living under his father's roof, totally dependent upon him for support, and he showed no signs of taking up any career which would alter this situation. His father was not a wealthy man. Almost all his life, he worked as a clerk in the Bank of England to support his family, a job which his son knew he found miserably frustrating.

"My father ... had the intention of devoting himself to art, for which he had many qualifications and abundant love; but the quarrel with his father ... induced him
to go at once and consume his life after a fashion he always detested ... 2

The drudgery of this work does not seem to have soured Browning's father, nor to have prevented him from becoming very knowledgeable about art, even if he could not practise it professionally. His taste in painting has been described both by Robert Browning 3 and by Dante Gabriel Rossetti 4 who said that he had "a real genius for drawing — but caring for nothing in the least except Dutch boors."

Rossetti's comment is particularly interesting, as it shows so clearly the gap in taste between the generations. By the middle of the nineteenth century, when Rossetti met him, no doubt the taste of the formative years of Browning's father's life, which had been for Dutch genre pictures, would have seemed very dull to the rising young mystical painter. 5

In pursuit of his profound interest in painting, Browning's father often took his young son to the only public gallery which was accessible to them from Camberwell: the Dulwich Gallery. Browning later described it as "the gallery I so love and am so grateful to, having been used to go there when a child far under the age (fourteen) allowed by the regulations." 6 It is perhaps difficult for us now to appreciate the effect that the opening of this Gallery 7 must have had on art-lovers like Browning's father, who were not wealthy enough to buy pictures and whose knowledge of great paintings must largely have been derived from the black-and-white engraved illustrations in books on the subject. In this form, which may well seem ludicrously inadequate to us, who have abundant colour prints and many public galleries, the art lover in the early nineteenth century would gain familiarity with paintings, and observe them in ways quite foreign to us now. Plainly, light and shade effects, which can so subtly be rendered in engravings, would be
more discussed and considered than colour composition, so nakedly apparent in black and white, more than painterly technique. The opening of the Dulwich Gallery could not have altered this overnight, nor would it have caused its visitors instantly to become dissatisfied with their prints. More likely, it would have enriched and enlarged the appetite so whetted.

The collection at Dulwich contains a great many paintings which would obviously have suited Browning's father's taste, as it is notable for the large number of Dutch paintings it contains. An examination of some of these pictures will, however, show that this taste need not have been limited or monotonous. Even today, the visitor to Dulwich must be taken with the diversity of talents which can be assembled under the epithet 'Dutch'. All kinds of painting are excellently represented: there are splendid portraits (by Rembrandt for instance), landscapes and scenes of ordinary life (genre), pictures on 'Historical' subjects both Biblical and Classical (by Rubens among others), animal and flower paintings, marine pictures, and some whose main theme is architecture. It seems unnecessary to assume that a taste for Dutch painting is a narrow one, or that Browning did not share his father's enthusiasm for it, at least in his youth. His early contact with art must have been controlled by his father - the books in the house were bought by him and Browning read them with his father's guidance or connivance, and the chief person with whom he could discuss what he read and saw must have been his father. Again, it may be difficult for a modern person to realize how vastly different the world of a child must have been in the early nineteenth century in terms of his awareness of the world outside his home. Not only was there no radio or TV, no magazines with glossy pictures, but even travel was far more restricted and school did
not have to begin until considerably later. 9 The initial education which Browning received was undoubtedly from his father. 10 I see no reason to assume, as Griffin and Minchin do, that Browning formed an independent taste from an early age. They describe an imaginary scene like this: 11

"If, however, Browning himself ever came under the influence of the Dutch school, even for caricatures, it was but for a time; and one would imagine him even as a boy marching resolutely past the Dutch pictures in the first two rooms of the Dulwich Gallery to sit before the paintings he mentioned to Miss Barrett in 1846 - 'those two Guidos, the wonderful Rembrandt's Jacob's Vision, such a Watteau, the three triumphant Murillo pictures, a Giorgione music-lesson group, all the Poussins with the Armida and Jupiter's Nursing..." 11

The assumptions that an influence felt in early youth can pass utterly out of a man's art, and that Browning at ten necessarily had a similar view of painting to that he held when he was thirty-four both seem to me to be incorrect. The effect of his early intimacy with the paintings in the Dulwich Collection continued to be felt for the rest of his life; 12 and the fact that it was his gentle and loving father who introduced him to, and guided him through the collection initially can only mean that painting assumed for him, from the earliest age, the pleasantest associations possible. It was probably responsible for his earliest thoughts about Art.

It is worth spending some time considering what the Dulwich Gallery would have been like when Browning first knew it. The Collection was opened to the public in 1814 in the building which houses it today and which was specifically designed by Soane for the purpose. The pictures would have been hung in a far more cramped and crowded way then, and many would have been dirtier than they are now. It is exceptionally fortunate that William Hazlitt wrote an article 13 about the Gallery shortly after it was opened to the public.
"A fine gallery of pictures is a sort of illustration of Berkeley's Theory of Matter and Spirit. It is like a palace of thought - another universe, built of air, of shadows, of colours. Everything seems 'palpable to feeling as to sight'. Substances turn to shadows by the painter's arch-chemic touch; shadows harden into substances. 'The eye is made the fool of the other senses, or else worth all the rest.' The material is in some sense embodied in the immaterial, or at least we see all things in a sort of intellectual mirror. The world of art is an enchanting deception. We discover distance in a glazed surface; a province is contained in a foot of canvas; a thin evanescent tint gives the form and pressure of rocks and trees; an inert shape has life and motion in it. Time stands still, and the dead re-appear by means of this 'so potent art!' Look at the Cuyp next the door . . ."

In the rest of the essay, Hazlitt expands each of the ideas which he raised here: the quotations from Hamlet, all taken from the part of the play where Hamlet sees his father's ghost, are entirely appropriate to the idea expressed by Hazlitt of the 'deception' of painting. His idea that painting is an 'intellectual mirror' is quite different from the sensual or experiential appreciation of a modern critic, and lends a different emphasis to his discussion of technique. For example, he says:

"It is almost needless to point out that the cattle and figures in the foreground, like dark, transparent spots, give an immense relief to the perspective . . ."14

His suggestion that 'the dead re-appear' he discusses almost literally with regard to the Holbein portraits:
"He has left faces behind him that we would give the
world to have seen, and here they are -!"15

and again, the quotations from Shakespeare are relevant. He measures
each picture he discusses by its ability to arouse in him the right
idea of its meaning, its relation to reality:

"It looks like a picture (an exquisite one, indeed)
but Raphael's looks like the divine reality itself!"16

or again:

"Is this not a sad anti-climax from Jacob's Dream to a
picture of a Water Mill? We do not know; and we should
care as little, could we but paint either of the pictures...
If a picture is excellent in its kind, we do not give our­selves much trouble about the subject ..."17

At the same time, he is very far from construing this into a narrow,
photographic idea of 'reality'; when the subject is ideal or imaginary,
he readily accepts the painter's right to atmospheric presentation:

"This picture makes one thirsty to look at it - the
colouring even is dry and dust. It is true history
in the technical phrase, that is to say true poetry
in the vulgate ..."18

When the subject is everyday, he still reflects upon the artist's handl­ing -

"Nature is scarcely more faithful to itself than this
delightfully unmannered, unaffected picture is to it ..."19

and he reads from this the meaning of the picture.

It is difficult to understand what he - and other writers of the
period - mean exactly by 'truth' in painting. To a modern reader, the
word may seem over-weighty when used, for example, like this:20
"The pig, just poking his head out of his sty and crunching a carrot in the piggish manner, is equally fine and true ..."

whereas it is quite acceptable when used by the same writer thus:

"It offers, in fact, a singular specimen of truth of detail producing no truth whatever of general effect ...

The same scale of meaning is apparent in Hazlitt's essay as well, from the enigmatic:

"Truth seems to hold the pencil, and elegance to guide it", to this lucid comment:

"Dress a figure in what costume you please (however fantastic, however barbarous), but add the expression which is common to all faces, the properties that are common to all, drapery in its elemental principles, and the picture will belong to all times and places. It is not the addition of individual circumstances, but the omission of general truth, that makes the little, the deformed, the short-lived in art."

On the one hand, 'truth' seems to refer to realism (in modern terms) and on the other, to a highly abstract but apparently immediately recognizable general meaning in the work. The idea of truth was at least as much an aesthetic as a moral one. In fact, one of the main principles of Hazlitt's criticism is to examine the balance between these two 'truths' and from his sense of that balance to arrive at a judicious placement of the picture:

"a Mater Dolorosa by Carlo Dolci is a very good specimen of this master, but the expression has too
great a mixture of piety and pauperism in it. It is
not altogether spiritual."

In short, in this critical language a painting can be 'true' without
in any sense pointing a moral or even being great. This is a far
more relative and flexible idea of the value of a work of art than
it might at first seem.

I have discussed this essay of Hazlitt's at some length in order
to establish not just some of the contents and effects of the Dulwich
Gallery in the 1820's, but also the kind of critical response which its
paintings elicited. Hazlitt, though so lucid and elegant a critic, was
not inventive in this aspect of his writings at least. He has in­
nherited certain features of his taste from the earlier generation, and
critically still accepts many of Sir Joshua Reynolds' standards.

Reynolds wrote that 'the imagination is here the residence of truth',
which corresponds exactly to what Hazlitt calls the 'general truth'.

Interestingly enough, Reynolds is here arguing against the Platonic
notion that the representation of reality in painting is a form of
deception. By re-introducing the Aristotelian idea of the truth of
the imagination as a controlling factor on realistic (or illusionistic)
representation, Reynolds has laid the foundation for Hazlitt's critical
language. There was a continuum in taste and standards in painting
from the eighteenth century into the early nineteenth century
(Browning's formative years) which was largely absent in literature.

Browning's father's taste in painting, though it seemed rusty to Dante
Gabriel Rossetti thirty years later, probably had much in common with
Hazlitt's and it is likely that he regarded some of the same criteria
as useful. Unlike Rossetti, Hazlitt has a great deal of time and
attention for Dutch painting, and finds significant qualities there.
Since Browning was 'far under the age' of fourteen when he started to go to Dulwich with his father, it is reasonable to assume that he spent time looking at his father's favourite pictures with him. There are three fine pictures by David Teniers the Younger, for example, which were probably given great attention: *Sow and Litter*, mentioned earlier, (146); a *Winter Scene*, (112); and a picture with a Breughel-like air called *The Seven Acts of Mercy*, (614). The first of these would appeal to any child - it shows a most convincing sow with five piglets. Behind her stands a rough-looking man with a whip in his hand. He is in the darkest area of the picture and his eyes, staring out from under the shadow of his hat's brim, seem distinctly piggish. The corner of his hat's brim sticks out against the sky in a shape which echoes the sow's pale ear against the dark entrance to her sty. The appeal is realistic and direct.

Because the sow and her family are so credible, it is impossible not to wonder what the man with the whip is going to do to her, or why he is there. Perhaps the bowl of food in which she has her nose is forbidden. The farm looks untidy enough, with a clog and a broom lying neglected at the front of the picture. It would be wrong to suggest that the picture tells a story, in the sense that William Holman Hunt's *The Awakening Conscience* does, but it would appeal to any child because it immediately involves the viewer in what's going on. It is full of clues. The viewer is tempted to read the clues for himself - and at this point, he is guided by the very clever technique of Teniers. For instance, there is a vast range of texture in this painting - a highly-glazed jug hangs on the wall of the sty, a semi-glazed bowl is on the ground; wood grain, thatch and mud are clearly distinguished; and the greatest contrast of all, the pig's light and supple high receives delicate chiaroscuro paintwork whereas the man's dark clothes muffle his shape, and his hand,
Teuniers Sow and Litter  Dulwich Gallery

In parallel might be traced in the place he loved, a young Alsatian mother and child, looking after pigs. The piglets were the prey of the farmer's wife, and the farmer's wife is the amounted as an education in ignorance.
which holds the whip, seems grubby and coarse compared to the little pale piglets. The eye of the viewer is intrigued by this variety and experiences the pleasure of recognition as it interprets the clever paintwork. The areas of light and shade also lead the eye, in a receding diagonal along the light piglets' backs up to the dark and dominant figure of the man, who is thrown into relief by the light landscape and sky behind. This picture is considerably less busy than the other two by Teniers which I mentioned, but even there the viewer is encouraged to 'read' the paint, to involve himself in the painting in either a narrative or a descriptive way. The Winter Scene, although it is dominated by a snowy sky and houses, has numerous groups of figures so busily engaged in skating or chatting that it too invites the viewer to involve himself as if the scene were actual. The Seven Acts of Mercy, which is attributed now to the Studio of Teniers, is even busier, for although its subject is allegorical, the figures in the scene are very ordinary peasants and the seven acts are going on simultaneously, giving the effect of a scene observed rather than one composed. Any of these paintings is so accomplished that it would provide a fine starting-point for a life-long interest in art, not only because the realism of the subjects is likely to be interesting to a youngster, but equally because the technical tricks of the trade - like the chiaroscuro, clever arrangement of shapes or highlights to give glossy effects, etc. - provide constant visual challenges to discover their meaning.

(A parallel might be found in the elaborate and very adult style in which Kipling couches his children's stories - the subjects are at the level a youngster can sympathise with, and the language in which they are conveyed is an education in itself!)
The Brouwer painting of the Interior of an Ale House (103), perhaps a picture to which Browning's father might have turned in preference to the Sistine, is so vivid that Hazlitt thought it 'might almost give one a sick headache'. Here, perhaps even more than in the Teniers pictures, the cunning and skill of the painter is directed towards involving his viewer: the scene is indoors, and a good deal of the strong atmosphere which Hazlitt noticed is generated by the claustrophobic use of perspective. The beams on the smoky ceiling close down onto the walls, making the picture space feel very confined. The room is not so much crowded - containing only ten figures - as noisy and smelly. There seems to be no way out. A small hooded figure waits patiently by the door, presumably for father to come along home, and effectively blocks it. There is no window in the room. The light falls into the picture from where the viewer is, a device which very cleverly suggests that the viewer is in the picture space too. This feeling is re-inforced by the direct gaze of one of the men in the room, who sits back enjoying a puff on his pipe and seems with his eyes to question the viewer, at whom he seems to be staring regardless of where the viewer actually stands. The strength of the atmosphere in this picture is quite remarkable, as Hazlitt noted. If this was the kind of painting with which Browning was first acquainted, it is little wonder that painting remained for him synonymous with vivid impressions, or that his idea of good technique in all art was that it should be a means and not an end in itself. In a letter to Ruskin many years later, he defended himself in terms so specific to painting that they seem to me to be more than metaphorical. He seems to be describing his poetry as if he painted it:

"I know that I don't make out my conception by my language, all poetry being a putting the infinite within the finite. You would have me paint it all plain out, which can't be;
Brouwer  Interior of an Ale House  Dulwich Gallery
but by various artifices I try to make shift with touches
and bits of outlines which succeed if they bear the con-
ception from me to you..."
The idea that the image is employed to bear a meaning is most important;
it is uttered in various forms by Browning throughout his poetry, most
notably perhaps in this passage from The Ring and the Book:
"It is the glory and the good of Art
That Art remains the one way possible
Of speaking truth, to mouths like mine, at least..." 33
He uses the word 'truth', not 'The truth', with that same ambivalence
and balance which is implied in Hazlitt's essay; on the one hand, the
facts have been brought to life (of the Roman murder story) and so there
is one sort of truth; and on the other, the truth which could not be
written down but only suggested by the pattern of the specific truths
told, is also achieved. The balance between them is represented by art -
the 'one way'.

But this basic idea of how art achieves its meaning is not all he
could have learned at Dulwich. If we 'read' further into this Brouwer,
it becomes evident that, alien though this picture may be in subject to
Italian painting, its skilled technique owes much to Italian late Renai-
sance and early Baroque painting. In particular, the strong use of chiaros-
curo and the pyramidal construction of the picture suggest this influence.
The three figures at the front of the picture space are in strong belief
against the duskier background, and the faces of the figures further
back are also picked out in light, giving them dramatic emphasis as
Carravaggio does, for instance, in The Calling of St. Matthew. 34 In
Brouwer's picture, even the face of the wench in the white hood at the
back of the picture space is strongly lit — not necessarily an effect observable in nature. This light area helps to form the triangular construction, the apex of which is — most significantly — a picture on the wall above the hearth. It is suggested by Wilenski that this is likely to be a portrait drawing done by Brouwer himself and pinned up on the wall. The triangle slopes from the picture plane to the back wall of the room, where the picture is, and the eye of the viewer inevitably travels along its sides: up the crouched white back of the foremost man filling his pipe to the face of the man who stares out at you, across the tilled head and beer-crock of the drinker by the hearth to the picture; or, by a movement equally inevitable, back from the man pissing against the post, across the bright area of the woman’s face and hood and up to the picture. The raised arm of the man singing is balanced by the raised arm leaning on the post. Even the three glazed pots in the foreground are triangularly arranged. The centre of the picture space is a curiously empty expanse of floor, which acts almost like a vacuum in that the viewer’s eye seems to rush through it — again, to stop at the picture. This picture, so significantly placed, seems to be a portrait of an elderly woman, certainly an ordinary and ugly person. It is as if Brouwer were suggesting his own involvement not merely by painting this low scene, but by making his art belong there too. His painting has plain and conscious links to the ‘high’ art of Italy which so rapidly influenced all kinds of Dutch painting, but is nevertheless at home in a peasant pub.

These influences are perhaps more marked still in the third of the artists whom Browning mentions as favourites of his father’s, Ostade. In Ostade’s works, the triangular construction is almost monotonously present as a formal control and his chiaroscuro is naturalistically informative where in Brouwer it is dramatic. His works have nonetheless benefitted
from these polished technical ideas, as Tenier's Cows and Litter has
done.

Wilenski points out that

"Van Ostade... had a picture-space concept which can be
compared with that of the intellectual picturesque
painters on the one hand, and that of Rembrandt on the
other - but of course, even in Van Ostade's pictures the
social description provides the jumping-off point and
remains the central preoccupation..." 38

He finds Ostade's works "profoundly depressing, because there is no
revolt or protest in (the people portrayed) and no revolt in the painter's
attitude of mind", but I think that it is arguable that this lack of
painterly didacticism is in fact one of the most interesting and attrac-
tive features of the works. The object of these pictures is descriptive,
and the painter's art is therefore under a continual discipline of
"truth" to its own subject matter. But this does not mean, for Ostade
any more than for his fellow-pupil of Frenz Hals, Brouwer, that the
aesthetic impulse of the work is hampered; in fact their paintwork is
a continual revelation of meaning and form in the commonest and most
neglected of visible objects.

At Dulwich, Browning could have seen two little portraits by Ostade,
one of an elderly man who is lighting his pipe from a coal, and the other
of a woman with a jug and glass (nos.113 and 93) which admirably show
these qualities: the painting of the face and clothes, of the objects
in the foreground in each of these is highly efficient - the contrast
of the textures of the glass and jug, for instance - but the backgrounds
are vague, showing that the painter is deliberately selective in his
detail and handling, and even more important, that such selectivity need
not represent a comment on the subject matter. The two faces are not
remotely intended to inspire love of beauty, or pity, or awe, - they convince the viewer in their own right simply. Yet there is, to my eye at least, a profoundly tolerant humanity in their portrayal which explains and makes expressive the artist's care. This concern for humanity as such, this ability to find it interesting and worth describing in its own right, seems to me to be one more kind of influence which the young Browning could have absorbed from his father's love of Dutch Boors, even before he came to appreciate an apposite line from his father's favourite poet, Pope -

"The proper study of mankind is man"

(Pope's Essay on Man)

It should be realized that in many ways the Dutch painters of the seventeenth century could provide an excellent introduction to Italian painting of the Renaissance and early Baroque. If Browning examined the pictures discussed above with his father in detail, as we have every reason to think he did, he would have been introduced to ideas of construction and handling through subjects which would be far more likely to attract any child, I submit, than the fine allegorical figure and complex references of Italian painting. At the same time, from these 'Dutch Boors' he could have learnt enough about painterly technique as such to be in a good position to appreciate the Italians' works when he was forming an independent taste. He never lost his appreciation of the illusionistic or naturalistic effects of the early Baroque, which he had learnt to understand so early at Dulwich, as is evident from the fact that he chose to have his son trained at Antwerp, later, and his intense interest in Victorian Academy Art.

Furthermore, the wide ranging freedom of the subjects portrayed in these Dutch paintings may well have influenced Browning's own ideas about the aims and limits of art. He could never regard it as purely
concerned with 'noble' ideas, if he had once appreciated Brower. It
seems likely that his characteristic interest in real life, often real
people from history, may well have been partly formed at least by an
early appreciation of the naturalistic paintings which his father
loved.

Every naturalistic, or illusionistic, picture poses the viewer
with a question which is completely alien to non-naturalistic art,
and which seems to underlie Browning's thought in his poems: the
question of what point of view the artist took. It is initially a
literal problem. Wilenski suggests that a number of Dutch painters
(and others) actually used mirrors or other visual contraptions to
achieve a viewpoint when they painted. 40 Gerard Dou is actually
credited with the invention of one such aid to illusionism, and there
is a fine example of his work at Dulwich in a polished little picture
called A Lady Playing on the Clavichord (No. 56). The viewer almost
seems to have surprised the lady, for she turns from the instrument
to look at him through the archway which is the entry to the room.
Every other meticulously realized detail in the picture is nevertheless
so managed that the viewer can never step into that room, but stays
where the lady's eyes fix him; hence the viewer senses the very
illusionism of the picture as an alienating formal device, which drives
him to realize the painter's control as surely as the most fanciful
distortion could ever do. The very naturalism clearly represents a
series of choices about what to include in order to force the viewer
to 'read' the picture. Even where the artists used no devices as such,
their very naturalism represents a series of choices about what to in-
clude in their paintings which could similarly be 'read' by the viewer.

Browning's method of construction in many of his shorter poems is
reminiscent of this process. In My Last Duchess for example, the delib-
erate choice of point of view from which to describe the events, is contained not merely in the character of the Duke of Ferrara, but also in the fact that he is talking to an inferior. Browning reserves and places his details as if he were working within a set space, a picture box almost: as one reads the poem, details are introduced not merely to highlight an underlying theme but to embody it. The Duke's possessions and his attitude to them actually describe him, and so Browning brings them in as naturalistically as possible, just as the realism of the figures in Brouwer's Alehouse perfectly expresses the reason why they have a place in his art.

The Duke's drawing aside the curtain which covers the portrait of his last Duchess may have echoes in Browning's mind of the composed way in which Dou drew back the curtain to reveal the young lady at the clavichord. Indeed, throughout the poem Browning as artist seems to be far nearer to the Duke than to the reader, speaking only through the Duke, never needing to step outside him and comment. The same is obviously true of a naturalistically presented painting, though the artist's attitude can be discerned through his choice of what to show, as Browning's attitude to the Duke is pretty plain. It is not, however, a question of taking the reader, or viewer, into his confidence, but one of controlling detail and subject matter. Thus when the Duke points out 'Neptune, though,/Taming a sea-horse, thought a rarity,/Which Claus of Innsbruck cast in bronze for me.', the effect is as unselfconsciously revealing as the stare of Don's young lady or Brouwer's pipe smoker.

There is a sense in which this kind of presentation can be called 'dramatic', in Brouwer as well as in Browning. The picture or the poem invites you to 'suspend your disbelief' because it appeals to your
ordinance sense of reality very strongly. But both Browning and Brouwer lack other qualities which belong to the theatre such as the sense of event or action. They represent states, or as Browning calls them, 'modifications of passion' or 'mood'. It seems possible that, since painting was probably discussed by Browning with his father at a very early age, he founded some aspects of his mature idea of Art specifically on the kind of painting he was then familiar with. (See later chapters on theatrical/dramatic qualities in Hogarth, ch. 4, and in Leighton, ch. 6.)

The Dulwich Gallery also contained a great many works by very different painters from the 'Dutch Boors'. Though these may not have been favourites with Browning's father, it is ridiculous to suppose that he and his little son would have ignored them. Browning's father took an extremely serious interest in painting, collected many books on the subject, and would obviously have been both knowledgeable about and interested in very many of the Dulwich pictures. As pointed out earlier, there was a considerable number of Dutch paintings which were not of the low-life or genre type. Notable among these to the young Browning would probably have been three small paintings which were then attributed to Gérard de Lairesse, whose book on The Art of Painting he had read and loved. (Two of these pictures are now attributed to G. Hoet - Pan and Syrinx (179) and Apollo and Daphne (176) - and one to Filippo Lauri - Apollo Flaying Marsyas (164).) These paintings probably seem unremarkable to a modern viewer, but they would have provided a fine introduction to Poussin, the painter whom de Lairesse most admired and imitated. They are all of classical subjects which have strong literary appeal and Browning would certainly have known the myths to which they referred from his father. Like Poussin, they seek to attain the timeless quality of the tales they represent, eschewing all references to particular
period. The figures with their monotonously fine physique, are clad
in Greekish draperies. The landscapes in the background are generalized.
Even the trees and shrubs which crop up near the front of the picture
space are formalized out of resemblance to any particular species. The
two metamorphoses represent subjects in which it is categorically
impossible to 'believe', in the way that the Dutch genre painters can
be believed. But though in all three the part of the story chosen by
the painter is the climax of the action and the figures are posed dramat­
ically, the pictures are monumentally still, all movement being confined
to the formal factors which guide the viewer's eye over the canvas. In
the genre pictures discussed earlier, the stillness of the figures is
completely incidental, a mere necessity of their being painted at all;
they are, one feels, able to go on with their business next moment.
But in these pictures which Browning would have believed were painted
by de Lairesse, the artificial stillness is so deliberate that it must
have struck him by contrast. It represents an opposite approach to the
problem of overcoming the time factor in painting. On the one hand
Brouwer and Ostade suggest that the mere passage of time cannot alter
the 'truth' of their vision, since the moments they choose to represent
suggest dramatically both their precedent and pursuivant moments too.
On the other hand, de Lairesse and Poussin suggest that they have an
artistic prerogative to seize the merest split second out of a train of
events and charge it with the 'truth' about the entire story.

The Dulwich Gallery is especially well-endowed with Poussins.
Browning later wrote admiringly of *Rinaldo and Armida* (238) and *The
Nurture of Jupiter* (234) to Elizabeth Barrett. Both of these display
this split-second quality. In *Rinaldo and Armida* the sleeping Rinaldo
is not more static than the figure of his mistress as she crouches over him with her dagger. The Cupid who plucks at her arm completes the gentle oval motion the eye is encouraged to take across the picture. The very blade of the dagger itself is a line of light which directs the eye in this movement, as does the curve of the lady's fair arm and wrist. It is a moment so fraught with danger that this may seem to be a ludicrously relaxed handling. Yet it is the very stillness of this picture which arrests the viewer. It achieves a magnificent visual suspense: the main figures, so self-contained in their oval configuration, float on the canvas like a bubble. Armida's billowing garment emphasises this feeling, as does the dazzle on Rinaldo's armour. Such people exist nowhere but in Art, the canvas seems to claim. They are a monument to thought, not to experience as such.

In his later years, Browning himself became increasingly involved in the meaning of such classical moments and tried to cast them into poetic form, as his friend, Leighton, (who seems to owe much to Poussin) did in painting (see Chapter 6). But even when attempting purely classical subjects, Browning never could achieve this marble stillness, and this sort of 'truth' remained for him most useful as the Platonic ideal towards which his artists like Andrea del Sarto and Abt Vogler struggle, and his thinkers like Karashish and Don Juan yearn.

Though the low-life genre of the Dutch and the classical ideals of Poussin represent two opposite poles of artistic achievement, they do share a common set of painterly techniques. The person who could 'read' the space in an Ostade interior would not find Poussin's picture-spaces impossibly deep, nor his chiaroscuro baffling. His colour would no doubt seem harsh and unreal (even if the pictures were dirtier in Browning's day than now), but his general rules of
composition would be accessible. The pictures are closed-in and box-like in their space as the Dutch ones are, and similar guidance is
given to the viewer about how to 'read' the picture. Light areas and
the gestures of the figures are significant in both. I don't wish to
suggest any further similarity, certainly, but it seems to me that if
Browning were familiar with Teniers, Ostade and Brouwer when he was a
child, Poussin would present problems of content rather than form as
his taste developed. He would be intrigued by the direction of
Poussin's effort to refine upon reality though maintaining naturalistic
or illusionistic techniques. This is arguably the best way to tackle
a painter who can so easily seem to be over-academic. In short,
even Poussin can be 'read' if the 'language' of his technique is
familiar.

(This is not to be confused with the idea that pictures tell a
story. Browning speaks disapprovingly of this approach in his letters
to Elizabeth Barrett: "My father and I have not one taste in common,
one artistic taste. In pictures, he goes 'souls away' in music
he desiderates a tune 'that has a story connected with it'...
'My Polidoro's perfect Andromeda along with Boors Carousing by
Ostade - where I found her - my own father's doing, or I would say
more..." His disagreeing with his father's taste by the age of
thirty-four is not surprising. More important, I believe, is the
familiarity he plainly has with his father's taste, and freedom to
rummage through all his father's prints and books. But plainly he
looks for more painterly qualities than the story a picture embodies.)

If Poussin and the 'Dutch Boors' mark the widest limits of taste
which Browning would have experienced at Dulwich, there are plenty of
beautiful pictures which fall within these limits which were also to
be seen there. He mentions several to Elizabeth Barrett:

'.. those two Guidos, the wonderful Rembrandt of Jacob's Vision, such a Watteau, the triumphant three Murillo pictures, a Giorgione music group...'

This list savours distinctly of the taste of the times. Ruskin had only just begun his relentless attack on Guido and Murillo, and as Wilenski points out, Rembrandt was seen as 'sublime'. Yet it also represents a reasonably understandable development of taste in this middle field between Brouwer's commitment to base reality and Poussin's intellectual escape from it. Guido's sprawling St. John (262) is a male nude of fine physique placed in a shallow picture space, who gestures with conscious symbolic intent. The colouring in this painting is unearthly and striking, though not pleasing to my modern eye at least. It shares much common ground with a Poussinesque idea of Art, and is indeed contemporary with it. Murillo's peasants, though so slick and patronizing to a modern viewer, share in subject matter with Ostade. The new discredited 'Rembrandt' relates plainly to the Carravaggiesque lighting discussed earlier (see note 34). It would be interesting to know which of the two paintings which were then thought to be by Watteau Browning is referring to: the Fête Champêtre so admired by Hazlitt (167) is now attributed to Lancret, but both it and the Bal Champêtre have a 'dust and ashes' quality as the figures are dwarfed, even threatened, by their surroundings and their gaiety does not reach out to the viewer but is as arranged as in Dou's picture. The Giorgiones too is artificial and alienating in atmosphere. But in assessing this list, it is important to remember that Browning was writing to Elizabeth Barrett who had little or no knowledge of painting had scarcely ever seen any pictures and who had specifically asked Browning to teach her about it. Naturally, he would be concerned in this case to present her with ideas which were
generally current rather than with the more obscure or unfashionable aspects of his own taste. That he was still capable of idiosyncratic reactions appears in another letter he wrote to her in February, 1846.56

'By the way, yesterday, I went to Dulwich to see some pictures, by old Teniers, Murillo, Gainsborough, Raffaello! then twenty names about, and last but one, as if just thought of— "Correggio"— The whole collection, including a "divine picture by Murillo" and Titian's Daughter (hitherto supposed to be in the Louvre) the whole I would, I think, have cheerfully given a pound or two for the privilege of not possessing— so execrable as sign-paintings even! Are there worse poets in their way than painters? Yet the melancholy business is here— that the bad poet goes out of his way, writes verses in a language he learned in order to do a hundred other things with it, all of which we can go on and do afterwards— but the painter has spent the best of his life in learning how to produce such monstrosities as these, and to what other good do his acquisitions go? This short minute of our life one chance, an eternity on either side! and a man does not walk whistling and ruddy by the side of hawthorn hedges in spring, but shuts himself up and comes out after a dozen years with "Titian's Daughter" and there, gone is his life, let somebody else try!

I have tried— my trial is made too— ...'

The curiously perverse mood of this letter, with its twisted expression and rejection of the whole list of great painters, should not blind us to the strong and evidently natural comparison which Browning is making between painting and poetry. This comparison is far from crude; he is plainly not seeking literary attributes or equivalences in the pictures.
But equally it is plain that he sees one function of painting as being to "signal" a meaning. He is objecting that the "language" which the painter acquires, at such cost, is only capable of one kind of usage, and preferring words which at least have common currency, and therefore do not confine the artist's talent in the same way. Plainly this vehemently expressed opinion does not arise purely from within Browning's correspondence with EBB; it sounds as if it has roots in other discussions, probably with his father who himself wished to be a painter, or perhaps with the young painters like Egg and Maclise whom he met in Dickens' circle (see Part 2 Chapter I). But both the idea that the painter works in "signs", and that words essentially can refer to the same, even personal, realities as do painterly "signs", underlie not only this fit of petulance against the "gallery he so loved", but also his poetry about painters. The little passage also reveals Browning's feeling of "possessing" the works at Dulwich, which I suggest is an indication of a great deal of familiarity with the Collection.

Another interesting touch in this letter is that, although Browning sounds so unequivocally disgusted with painting as "sign-painting even", and opts so firmly for verbal poetry, he concludes by implying that his own poetic efforts have been at least as vain as those of the painter of Titian's Daughter.

By 1846, Browning had some reason to be dissatisfied with his career so far:

- His plays had petered out and his friendship with Macready had proved to be less advantageous than it had promised.
- His poems were still under the cloud which Sordello had produced six years earlier. He was still dependent upon his father and had no means of supporting Elizabeth Barrett even if he could rescue her.
from Wimpole Street, though he spoke bravely of being able to translate books from French into English to earn their bread. He had opted to be a poet, though at the age of twenty he had believed he could have chosen any artistic career, but he was perhaps still unsure fourteen years later that this decision had been just.

The importance of Browning's early familiarity with the paintings at Dulwich cannot, I think, be overstressed. Not only was he fortunate in having his enthusiastic and knowledgeable father for his guide, but also in the variety and high quality of the collection itself. I have dealt specifically with two aspects of it, the Dutch genre painters and the school of Poussin to which de Lairesse can be said to belong. I have restricted my comments to these two because they seem to me to reflect the limits which Browning sets to his idea of Art, and because neither kind of painting is so concentratedly available to him after this early period of his life, though other kinds of art which are also represented at Dulwich became so.
   The quarrel mentioned by Browning is interesting. Browning's paternal grandfather married twice, Browning's father being a child of the first marriage, and the grandfather seems to have had very ambivalent feelings towards him. The grandfather consequently sent Browning's father to manage his West Indian Estate. Browning's father was so horrified by the slave system he saw there that he returned home, quarrelled violently with his father, and took the Bank of England job to be independent. See W. H. Griffin & E. C. Minchin, *Life of Robert Browning* 1938 p3, W. Irvine and P. Honan *The Book, The Ring and The Poet* 1975
3. Griffin & Minchin op cit. p 12: "'Brouwer, Ostade, Teniers - he would turn from the Sistine altar-piece to these,' said his son."
4. Ibid p12
6. Griffin & Minchin op cit p11
7. Dulwich College Picture Gallery opened in 1814, in the Soane Building which still houses the collection (see later)
9. "From the age of eight or nine until he was fourteen, Robert went to school at Peckham..." Irvine & Honan op.cit. p5
10. Griffin & Minchin op.cit.p30
11. Ibid p13. The same disparity of taste is assumed by Irvine & Honan op.cit p9, but no new reasons given. On the other hand John Maynard in *Browning's Youth*, op cit shows that the poet drew in a very similar style to his father's (p80) and shared his tastes (p75)
12. Irvine & Honan op cit p9
14. Ibid p669 (y it lives)
15. Ibid p 675
16. Ibid p477
17. Ibid p673
18. Ibid p675
19. Ibid p668
20. The Painting of the Dulwich Picture Gallery 1824, p35
21. Ibid p33 re Ryman and benches
22. Hazlitt op. cit. re Vandyke Horrors and Delights (96)
23. Ibid re Crespi A school of Girls at Work
24. Ibid p1101
25. Roy Park Hazlitt and The Spirit of the Age 1771 p93
27. Hazlitt, 'Pleasure of Painting' London Magazine, December 1820

20. The Dulwich Gallery and the taste it represents were important to Victorian painting altogether, in a way not acknowledged by Eli's dismissive comment. John Ruskin spent a lot of time there when he was young and later rebelled explicitly against the critical language current in his youth: "Look at the large Cuyp in the Dulwich Gallery which Mr. Hazlitt considers 'the finest Cuyp in the world' and of which he very complacently says 'The tender green of the vallies, the glimmering lake, the purple light of the hills, have an effect like the nectarine with an unripe nectarine'!

I ought to have apologised before now, for not having studied sufficiently in Covent Garden to be provided with terms of correct and classical criticism. One of my friends begged me to observe the other day, that Claude was 'juicy'; another added the yet more gratifying information that he was 'juicy'; and now it is happily discovered that Cuyp is 'gloomy'. How I dare say that the sky of this first rate Cuyp is very like an unripe nectarine: all that I have to say about it is that it is exceedingly unlike a sky..."


29. A colour reproduction of this painting is on 31 of Artists of the Victorian Age by Basil Taylor, published by the BBC, 1975. In it, the clue is verbal; essential to understanding the picture is the fact that the music on the piano is 'Oft in the Stilly Night' made so deliberately legible by the artist.
30. Browning's father wrote a monograph on Brouwer (Baylor Browning Library) - see Maynard op cit p406. It is important to remember that Browning's father never actually saw the Sistine altar-piece, and Browning's remark sounds hyperbolic, not literal. He might be excused, I feel, for preferring the real paint of Brouwer to the engraved copies of Michaelangelo he might have seen.


33. The Ring and the Book Book XII lines 376 - 40 p 305 Oxford edition 1912

34. For a colour print of this painting, see H. W. Janson Art through the Ages NY 1962 pl. 49

It will be noticed that Caravaggio commonly lights his pictures from one side: in this case, the faces of the figures are lit so that their individual expressions give atmosphere to the work, and the pointing hands of Christ and (?) Peter and Matthew, which emphasize the event, are also strongly lit.

Another fine example of this dramatic lighting would of course be Rembrandt's Night Watch (Janson p 426) Brouwer's work is earlier than Rembrandt's which was painted in 1642. Wilenski op cit. comments (p153) 'Brouwer died before Rembrandt had built the foundations of romantic art, and he was able... to remain... impersonal... free from the romantic attitude that would have given a different complexion to his art.' He also comments (p211) that Brouwer's works 'appealed mainly in his lifetime to artists and dilettanti as they do today' and that Rembrandt and Rubens owned works by him.

35. E. H. Wilenski Dutch Painting op. cit p151. However, in his authoritative book on Adrian Brouwer (1962) Gerrad Knitel points out that "One cannot therefore identify him with the people he liked to paint", p 15 (translated by J. C. Talbot - Schilthuis and R. Preston)

36. If this is so, it has an interesting bearing on Hogarth's use of his own pictures within his compositions - see ch.4
Throughout the book he comments on the fact that Dutch painters went to Italy and that those who stayed in Holland were flooded with Italian drawings and engravings of Italian paintings. He traces many direct 'borrowings'. See especially Part I Foreign Influences pp 29-34.

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45. G. de Lairesse The Art of Painting Trans. J. P. Fritschi 1938
46. Since the pictures at Dulwich are no longer attributed to de Lairesse, I suggest Wilenski op cit p 64 (1929 ed.) Farnham for an accredited example of this artist's work. It is strikingly like Poussin in composition. See also the section on de Lairesse pp 162-165.
47. Letters ed Kintner I p509 Browning possessed a print of Audan's engraving of Rinaldo & Armida which he dated 'Nov. 18, 1835' and kept all his life (A N L Munby Sale Catalogues of the Libraries of Eminent Persons Vol.6 1971)
48. It seems likely to me that this painting is a direct source for the reference to Rinaldo and Armida in The Ring and the Book, 12 1411-1418, though Browning doubtless knew Tasso's Jerusalem Delivered from which Poussin drew the tale. He may possibly also have known Lulli's opera 'Armide' which was first performed in 1698, the year of Pompilia's murder. But there is in the Poussin painting a strength which is almost masculine in the face of Armida which may well have remained with Browning and underlie his reference: '... that soprano Rome went made about/Last week... dressed up like Armida, though a man/ And painted to look pretty...'
49. For example, see H. W. Janson op cit pp 440-441: 'Venetian qualities have been consciously suppressed for the severe discipline of an intellectual style... the beholder must be able to 'read' the exact emotions of each figure, and relate them to the given event...'
50. Letters ed Kintner pp 960 and 27
51. Letters ed Kintner p509
52. Now attributed to A de Gelder (126)
53. Ruskin Works ed Cook and Wedderburn 3 p670
'...It puts me in a desperate rage when I hear of Eastlake buying Guido for the National Gallery... I hope you do all you can to put a stop to this buying of Guidos and Rubenses. Rubens may teach us much of mere art, but there is plenty of him in this country, and for Guido there is not even this excuse... I intend sometime in my life to have a general conflagration of Murillos, by-the bye... ' Letter to the Rev. H. G. Liddell, Oct. 1844.

56. Letters ed Kintner op cit p.300

57. In July he wrote thus to Netty: ... "But here is, without effect then, the reason why I have gone on so far although succes..." I felt so instinctively from the beginning that unless I tumbled out the dozen more or less of conceptions, I should hear them about for ever, and year by year got stiffer and stiffer in those horrible cross-bones with a long none, and at last parturition would be the curse indeed. Mine was the better way, I do coldly believe, for at this moment I feel, as everybody does who has worked "in vain"? no matter, if the work was real..." BB to Alfred Barrett ed. F. C. Kenyon 1906, p. 126.

58. Letters ed Kintner p.300

59. "The following poem (Pauline) was written in pursuance of a foolish plan which occupied me nightly for a time, and which had for its object the enabling me to assume and realize I knew not how many different characters: ... meanwhile the world was never to guess that 'Brown, Smith, Jones and Robinson' (as the spelling books have it) the respective authors of this poem, the other novel, such an opera, such a speech, etc., etc., were no other than one and the same individual. The present abortion was the first work of the poet of the batch, who would have been more legitimately myself than most of the others: but I surrounded him with all manner of (to my then notion) poetical accessories, and had planned quite a delightful life for him.

Only this one remains of the shapely Tree of Life in this Neil's Paradise of mine - A3'. A note inserted by Browning in his own copy of Pauline. See Griffin & Minchin pp56-7

W. C. de Vane A Beginning Unbroken 1955, p. 41
Besides introducing his son to painting at an early and impressionable age, Robert Browning the Elder was himself a skilled caricaturist. He used his talent for 'lightning' sketches to amuse his friends, and would produce dozens to entertain any children he was with.¹ Pen Browning, the poet's son, reports —

"My Grandfather used to draw generally in the evening for the amusement of friends and young people, of whom he was particularly fond. These drawings were produced with extraordinary rapidity, and to realise this one must have seen them done: the table would be covered with them in a very short time! He never studied Art, but drew for simple amusement up to the last days of his life; heads and figures generally, using old pencil ends and scraps of paper - even pebbles on the seashore! He never pretended to be an artist, although he knew all the bones and muscles of the human body, their form as well as their names, by heart. He was fond of drawing skeletons and skulls."²

Pen Browning was a trained artist himself,³ and his comments on his grandfather's anatomical skill may well reflect wonder that a layman should have acquired, out of independent interest, the detailed knowledge a realistic painter required. It will be seen from what he says that the sketches were done in the spirit of a game to amuse the children, and Browning's father kept very few of them himself, though his friends saved some.⁴ Probably he entertained his own children in this way too when they were young. It is easy to see that such a talent would be popular - his drawings are not sophisticated exaggerations
for satirical ends, but genial and genuinely comical representations of 'characters'. I think it is not too much to suggest that Browning's exclusive concern with human nature in his poetry may well have been founded upon the early influence of his father about what subjects were suitable for Art: neither father nor son evinced much desire to portray landscapes, for instance, or the ideally 'beautiful' figures which are familiar cyphers for Humanity in High Art. At Dulwich, Browning Senior was attracted to genre paintings; at home, he produced sketches of heads and figures which proclaimed their types and classes by their appearances. Very early, Browning must have learnt to construe pictorial details in terms of personality. He must have learnt not only how to "read" the meanings of lines, colours and shapes, but also that a complete meaning could be expressed in so succinct a form as to be almost a mere visual shorthand.

The series of heads by Robert Browning the Elder which is reproduced in the Art Journal of 1896 illustrates this point. In each study of an expression, the simplest lines, squiggles and shades are made to suggest not only a human face, but a face expressive of a whole character. The skill of the artist to suggest so completely lies not in making the faces realistic but in restricting the 'vocabulary' of his sketches so that the slightest stroke of his pen will be 'read' by the viewer as an indication of expression. Thus, if you examine the use he makes of lines at the corner of the mouth in his characters, you will see that the slightest variation of curve or positioning in relation to the rest of the face can transform the effect. In the first on the left, they show exaggerated joviality, and in the second from the right they seem to give the mouth an almost snarling expression. The raised eyes and eyebrows of the former combined with his smile produce a fawning effect; the frown of the latter informs the viewer which interpretation to put on the expressions of his mouth. The two short lines on the brow of
Studies of Expression.

By Robert Browning, the Elder.
the central face are in fact similar to those of the extreme R.H. face, but they produce an entirely different effect in context.

Browning's father seems to have been using his own version of the kind of system worked out by Francis Grose in his book *Caricatures*. This was a system of symbols which could be slightly varied or combined in novel ways to produce 'caricaturas', and his illustrations are fascinating because they do actually work - the combination of a frowning brow with an ingratiating mouth does produce an effect of caricature and not simply one of incongruity. Even if Browning's father did not know Grose's book, I think it is safe to assume that, among amateurs interested in art, this kind of visual mnemonic system was popular at the time when Grose published. Grose claimed a lineage running through Porta, Le Brun and Hogarth, whose works were known to Browning's father, and he also claimed that the art of caricature was useful to the serious portrait painter, and thus dignified it.

One of the most interesting things about such mnemonic systems as are used in caricatures and cartoons is that they do consist of a basic 'vocabulary' of signs (which could conceivably be shared by many artists as Grose's handbook suggests) but that this does not seem to restrict the originality of the appearance of the final works. Hogarth, it is true, claimed to have invented his own mnemonic system entirely, but even the sketches by Browning's father have a definite style of their own, though they obviously derive from the work of other caricaturists. F.G. Kitton compares them to works by Rowlandson and the final illustration in his article (Guide to the Public Funds) has noticeable similarities in theme and visual handling to Hogarth's charming illustration to J.Clubbe's pamphlet *Physiognomie* (1763) a copy of which Browning's father owned. Skill in this kind of art seems to depend both upon a highly artificial code of symbols and an
ability to combine the code with personal observations to form a style of one's own.

In his book, *The Romantic Rebellion*, Sir Kenneth Clark comments:

"Nothing is easier than to copy an Ingres portrait drawing, and nothing is more difficult to do from nature, because consistently to render all tone and colour as line without lapsing into formalism is an almost impossible feat..."^{10}

It is true that caricature is a highly formalistic type of art, but the distinction which Clark is drawing between mere copying and the ability to create within a style is relevant to the talent which Browning's father possessed. In order to produce a sketch such as the one of three peasants,^{11} a good deal of original observation was required. This sketch is more suggestive of a preliminary sketch for a Dutch interior than a caricature; but the figures are not actually drawn very differently from those in the portraits of the Whig and the Tory.^{12} The fact is that the intention of this sketch is plainly different from that which informs the others reproduced in this article. The figures are loosely drawn but carefully posed so that they create an impression of being involved in their own world, discussing the paper which the seated man is holding. The three are not separated from each other by being obvious caricatures in their own right, as are the poor man and the doctor on p55 (who require words to explain their relevance to each other). Instead they all three have a pictorial dependence upon each other, in a way that could be reminiscent of a Brouwer or an Ostade. The purpose of this sketch was not merely to entertain children or friends, but to fulfill an imaginative pictorial inspiration felt by the artist and carried out in this incomplete form only. Here the artist's idea found expression not through a change of formal system but by adapting the system to express a different
Drawings by Robert Browning, Senior V & A Museum
intention. This cannot be done by mere copying of anyone else's works. Thus though Browning's father produced sketches which fit so neatly into a line of cartoonists in which he himself has no importance as an artist, he did possess enough talent to be able to make its language serve his own ends.

Although, as Sir Kenneth Clark implies, slavish copying of a model is the death of art, I think it is equally true to say that, without influence or at least suggestion from other art or artists, no art could exist at all. Browning's father learned not to draw what he 'saw' or even what he imagined, but to employ a system of signs to express what he saw or imagined—a very different thing. He inherited the system, but without it he probably could not have expressed his vision or his ideas at all. The system also provided him with a very useful way of analysing as well as expressing them; the ability to reduce a face (and personality) mentally to a series of lines and marks which could be rapidly transferred to paper and thus communicated, was the result. The actual analysis of any given character may not have been very profound psychologically, but the process involved in analysing may well have influenced the poet. It required not merely that should be 'read' as a smile or as an eye, but that the relation of one such sign to another should be as complex and variable (in whatever way the artist chose) as the artist could perceive his subject to be. In Browning's poetry there is typically a highly complex pattern of relationships between the details of his portraits, and it is essential that the reader grasps this as well as the meanings of the actual details themselves. The overall pattern is in fact as important to understanding his speakers as is the overall recognition of the caricaturists' squiggles as faces to understanding their people. For instance, in Karshish it is
essential to understand the character's vocation as a healer to credit his wonder and appreciation at the ultimate triumph of healing, to raise a man from the dead.

Browning's father was very keen that his son should paint (providing him with paper, brushes and black-currant juice when he was only two) as well as anxious to amuse him. Most probably Browning learnt some of his father's skill: he claimed to have been thought a 'young wonder at drawing'. Even if he did not, he must often have watched his father produce a face out of a few lines, and then a personality out of that face. The visual shorthand this required must have been something he could read. A touch here or there would be sufficient to alter the entire expression, so all must be observed. On the other hand, it was also part of the artist's skill to present as complete a picture as possible with the smallest number of lines. There is no room in the art of the caricaturist for lyrical passages where he may indulge his fondness for attractive lines: it is pared down to the minimum consistent with meaning. Among the visual arts, it is supremely the one which requires to be 'read'.

The same kind of mental agility as is required to understand those squiggles is actually demanded by Browning of his reader in a letter to Ruskin. (See Note 32, Ch 1.)

"...by various artifices I try to make shift with touches and bits of outlines which succeed if they bear the conception from me to you..."

He does not intend his art to be descriptive of its subject, but evocative; to excite the image in the mind of the reader rather than to present it to his eye. The poem to which Ruskin raised objections, Popularity, is a fine example of this technique though it is certainly not being used for caricature:

"Stand still, true poet that you are!
I know you; let me try to draw you..."
Browning explains to Ruskin, who objects to the 'shorthand':

"...and so you begin 'Stand still - why?' For the reason indicated in the verse to be sure - to let me draw him - and because he is at present going his way and fancying nobody notices him - and moreover 'going on' (as we say) against the injustice of that, - and lastly inasmuch as one night he'll fail us, as a star is apt to drop out of heaven, in authentic astronomic records, and I want to make the most of my time. So much may be in 'Stand still'..."¹⁶

Most of the detail which Browning gives Ruskin is effectively amplifying the narrative of the poem: obviously he was not unaware that he had left it out of the poem, but had in fact deliberately done so, which is why he now gives it in answer to Ruskin's question. In the poem, however, the lack of this detail draws the reader's attention to the speaker, instead of the poet.

The murex in the poem is one kind of sign, the one which he uses to 'draw' his poet with; in fact, his picture is not of the poet nor even of the fisherman who stands for him symbolically, but of the wonderful effect of the poet's art, or discovery, on

"Raw silk the merchant sells"

or ordinary verse-writers who are made rich by cribbing. Angrily he demands:

"Who fished the murex up?"

and expects that this hint of his purpose in the poem will inform his reader fully about the credit due to the 'true poet' whom he has not (realistically) drawn at all, so that the final line -

"What porridge has John Keats?"

can have meaning. Hobbs, Nobbs, Nokes and Stokes are the equivalent of little contemptuous dashes of the pen, insignificant except in an ironic sense beside the authority of the real name.
The energetic utterance of the poem is also comparable with the apparently careless strokes used in caricature - exaggerations which the reader or viewer is intended to assess for their meaning and not to construe too literally. Grose believed that exaggeration was the essence of caricature, but the somewhat irascible tone of Browning's speaker is not an indication of personality so much as of the intention of his art. Nevertheless I think it is fair to say that, insofar as techniques can be compared between the arts, Browning's in this poem is reminiscent of the caricaturists' methods.

At one stage, Browning's father did consider publishing a volume of his sketches, some of which friends had kept and some which he had by him. The volume which was seen by F.G. Kitton and was the subject of his article in the Art Journal of 1896 was prepared for this purpose apparently, but the publication never took place. He also did illustrations to his son's poems, which Browning took delightedly along to amuse Elizabeth Barrett during their courtship, and perhaps he hoped that his son might publish them, but he never did. He continued to illustrate his son's poems, even producing a whole series on Mr. Sludge the Medium, but his drawings include not only caricatures and cartoons, but parodies, for instance, of Holbein and Rembrandt, which suggest an interest in style as such which again may well have influenced his son.
1. See also Hermann Corbinen, Caricature A. I, 1962, ch 2 and Anne
Ritchie Hobbs, Art, Literature and Drawing 1592 p190 ff.
See also J Heynd, Drawings of Youth op cit p75

2. P. C. Kittin, Robert Browning the Elder as a Caricaturist!
The Art Journal 1956

3. See Bibliog. for Ken Drury as an artist

4. "Some of his drawings are still in the Clerks' Library and his
friends' homes at the time." p35 P. C. Kittin op cit.

5. There are a few landscape sketches extant by each, however: see Heynd,
Drawings of Youth op cit.

6. Francis Grese, Caricatures: Rules for Drawing Caricatures with
an Essay on Comic Printing 1791. This book was apparently well
known and it is possible that Browning's father knew it.
See also E. H. Combrinck, Art and Illusion 1960 pp350-351 (Illust)

7. See E. H. Combrinck, Art and Illusion p 349
See also Neumark, Anecdotes of Himself op cit.

8. The Art Journal 1956 op cit

1771 Vol 6

10. Sir Kenneth Clark, The Romantic Tradition: Classic Versus Romantic
1973 p183

11. The Art Journal 1956 p97 see Illustration. See also Portrait Collection
fols 17-56 and 57-93 (V. O. A)

12. The Art Journal 1956 p56 see Illustration

13. E H Combrinck, Art and Illusion p395
"The artist who wants to 'represent' a real (or imagined) thing does
not start by opening his eyes and looking about, but by taking
colours and forms and building up the required image..."

14. See John Heynd, Drawings of Youth Harvard 1977 p 80. He notes the
similarity between Browning's drawings and his father's.

15. Heynd boasts of being able to reduce complete scenes to a few lines
and Bernini and Amabile Carracci (who was credited with inventing
caricature) developed brain-teasers or visual jokes where two lines
were made to express, for instance, a man with a stick going through
a door.
See Ernst Kris, Psychoanalytic Prolongations in Art 1953
E H Combrinck & Ernst Kris, Caricature 1949
E H Combrinck, Art and Illusion 1960 ch 10
The sculptors of ancient Greece seem to have diligently observed the forms and proportions constituting the European ideas of beauty; and upon them to have formed their statues. These measures are to be met within many drawing books; a slight deviation from them, by the predominance of any feature, constitutes what is called character, and serves to discriminate the one from the other, and to fix the idea of identity. "This deviation, or peculiarity exaggerated, forms Caricature..."

"At night (my father) sits studying my works - illustrating them (I will bring you drawings to make you laugh) - and yesterday I picked up a crumpled bit of paper..." His notion of what a critic on this last number ought to be - none, that have appeared, satisfying him!"

16. Ruskin Works ed Cook & Wedderburn Vol 18 p xxxiv
17. Francis Grose Caricaturas 1791 p6
18. "At night (my father) sits studying my works - illustrating them (I will bring you drawings to make you laugh) - and yesterday I picked up a crumpled bit of paper..." His notion of what a critic on this last number ought to be - none, that have appeared, satisfying him!"
19. See Faynard op cit p55
20. Ibid p146
Chapter 3

HIS FATHER'S INTEREST IN ENGRAVING

Valuable though access to the Dulwich Picture Gallery must have been to Browning's early knowledge of art, this can only represent, as was pointed out earlier, contact with a small number of paintings and those of a very marked taste. Browning's father collected engraved prints of paintings, and the portfolios of these, along with the engraved illustrations in books, would have formed a more wide-ranging resource for the boy who was so fond of reading his father's books. In a number of the books on art which were most probably in Browning's father's library, engraving is itself discussed seriously as a form of art, though in most cases it primarily performed the function of giving an intelligent visual synopsis of a painting. Browning's favourite author, Gérard de Lairesse, devoted the final book of his treatise on The Art of Painting to engraving, and describes it thus:

"It represents Painting as Painting does Nature ...

It keeps an eternal Register of everything that is praise-worthy; and as the entire Welfare even Happiness or Unhappiness of a good Painter depends on the certainty or uncertainty of the engraver .... his work must be like a clear looking glass...."^2

Having thus defined the representational nature of engraving (and painting, incidentally) he goes on to discuss the uses of the engraver's techniques, like hatching and stippling, and mezzo-tint, making no bones of the fact that these are purely functional in representing the more diverse techniques of the painter. He requires the print-maker to achieve an 'elegant' effect, but never expects him to produce a print which will stand on its own as an original work of art. This is perhaps one of the more difficult aspects of this kind of art for a modern person to grasp,
as representation as such has virtually ceased to be a problem or a
criterion by which to judge any art. Yet Lairesse does see engraving
as a slightly 'lower' art than painting itself and sees its nature as
similarly representational.

He discusses the engraver's 'signs' for arousing visual recognition
in the viewer with the same end in mind as when he talked of perspective
or light and shade in painting. In short, though engravings may perforce
have served an informative function, as photographic prints do today, they
were actually considered as an art-form in their own right in a way our
reproductions cannot be. They merely ranked lower than paintings because
they involved less creative effort.

Browning was obviously very impressed by the illustrations in
Lairesse's book, giving them special mention in his note, in his own copy
of the book. At the opening of each chapter, Lairesse placed an original
engraved Emblem expressing the subject of the chapter. The emblems are
monuments of complexity, a fact which seems to have been recognised by
the writer as he accompanies each with a verbal explication or key. The
same complicated approach is evident in the plates, most of which are
merely visual explanations of the words they illustrate - hardly the kind
of picture to attract a child, one would think. But plainly they did
impress Browning strongly; so much so that he recalled them nearly sixty
years later and even left a note for posterity - a most uncharacteristic
thing for him to do - to say so.

Here it is useful to consider John Evelyn's description of engraving:
his book Sculptura, was another which it is reasonable to assume that the
elder Browning had in his library when the poet was young. 'An Art', he
calls engraving, "which takes away all that is superfluous of the subject
matter, reducing it to that form or body which was designed in the idea of
the artist." Put another way, this might be a sort of short-hand for the
actual painting represented - the seminal idea expressed, as it were,
without the art of the painter. Under this aspect, it is perhaps easier
to understand why the theoretical illustrations in Lairesse could appeal
to Browning: maybe he saw them as barely-realized ideas, part of whose
charm was the liberty which their incomplete form still permitted to the
imagination of the viewer. If we take Evelyn's idea to a logical con­
clusion, an engraving could be seen as communicating the artist's idea
to the viewer, thereby leaving the viewer the artist's task (in his mind's
eye) of realizing the idea fully into a picture. Browning may have
seen in Lairesse's absurdly complicated emblemism, a precious means of
understatement, not a conundrum. The ability to see Lairesse's emblems
and illustrations in this light, however, would have to be founded on
acceptance that the function of art is representational, because ideas
bear a different relation to reality from that between art and reality.
Art in any form is not just an idea, as Evelyn implies by his careful
wording. Art may therefore represent not only a real object or event,
but an idea - which is a natural step for Lairesse, who sees no harm in
'Improving' upon reality in a painting in order to portray the ideal
Nature which is the idea informing the reality. His 'improvement' may
be seen as a sort of summary of the reasoning behind the image portrayed;

"The Life may sometimes be seen on a handsome side;
which, in an ill-chosen picture, we can never expect:
whence it is natural for one who has a defect or a
blemish in Eye or Cheek, always to turn the best side
to the light; in short, we do not desire to do any
thing, walk, sit, stand, talk, but with a becoming air
.... If Nature acts so, how can such defects please
in a picture?"\(^5\)

Thus the criteria related to representation as such were in no sense
a denial of the viewer's imaginative involvement, but the means to
ensure it, because they suggest the viewer will be rewarded by discovering
ideas. Thus also, engraving could be seen as an art, related generically
to painting, and not as a mere substitute or copy.
A third book which Browning's father possessed provides evidence that the argument that engraving was indeed an art in its own right interested him. His copy of John Landseer's carefully titled *Lectures on the Art of Engraving* was heavily annotated and even provided with a short personal index by Browning's father. It is very possible that Browning Senior attended the actual lectures in 1806. He had recently returned from the hated slave-plantations of the West Indies, with high hopes of becoming an artist himself. These hopes were rapidly dashed by his father's anger, and, it will be recalled, he took the post of clerk at the Bank of England which he held for the rest of his working life. But this was obviously not the end of his interest in Art. Landseer's Lectures were highly controversial. He claimed that engravers should be admitted to the Royal Academy as full members, and not merely Associates, and that engraving should be given as high a status as painting or sculpture in the hierarchy of Arts established by the Royal Academy. His argument, developed especially in the third lecture, is that engraving cannot copy painting; but that it can and does translate it -

"Now Engraving is no more an art of copying Painting, than the English language is an art of copying Greek or Latin. Engraving is a distinct language of Art; and though it may bear such resemblance to Painting in the construction of its grammar, as grammars of languages bear to each other, yet its alphabet and idiom, or mode of expression, are totally different .... If Engraving be made a vehicle of the same thoughts which have previously been imparted to us by painting, it affords the means of affecting our minds in the same manner: this similar affection of the mind, has led to the mistake .... A Statue is to be looked at as being a Statue - not a real figure. A picture
not as a portion of actual Nature; A Print not as a copy of a painting .... not copies, but translations from one language of Art into another language of Art ...."

It will quickly be noticed that this is fundamentally similar to the view which Evelyn takes, as both assume the function of Art to be the conveying of the artist's idea; and that the idea could be expressed differently, in another form or medium, without being radically altered. Lairesse also seems to accept that this is the nature of engraving, though he doesn't really develop a theoretical argument about it. The complement to this view is that painting bears a similar relation to ideas. Both Landseer's third Lecture and his Preface, which put forward this claim quite aggressively, have been heavily marked by Browning's father. The only other chapter which bears a lot of marks is the fourth Lecture, which deals with various notable engravers such as Dürer, and criticises various prints in detail. As Browning's father probably collected most of the eighty portfolios of engravings and prints which were sold in the Browning auction of 1913, his interest in these commentaries is not surprising.

The important thing about the keen interest which Browning Senior took in engravings, both as reproductions of paintings and as objects of art in their own right, is that it may well have a bearing on the peculiarly complicated manner of approach which Browning adopted in his poetry. In looking at an engraving of a painting - or, for that matter, at an original engraving of a landscape such as Turner produced, - the effort of the viewer is in some ways creative. The degree to which the black and white lines, areas, patterns, insist upon interpretation is unique among Arts, but it is not of the kind to which random patterns, like inkblots, lend themselves. The interpretation is directed so that the viewer is indeed given access to the artist's own
view: he learns the specificities of the 'language' the engraver used, which limit and inform his response. Engraving is not, I venture to suggest, a medium suitable for involving the passion of the viewer, for sweeping him off his feet by a display of beauty which is irresistible, - which is certainly one of the qualities which a viewer can seek and find in some paintings. It is instead intriguing and challenging, memorable ultimately because of the viewer's effort and the reward of understanding it. In this sense, it bears a fascinating relation to our response to the printed word, as opposed to spoken or sung words: there are kinds of poetry which the eye alone can hardly appreciate, and one might loosely class them with those paintings or sculptures whose appeal is so direct as to seem instinctual. (Caliban's shout of rejoicing at his freedom against Ariel's refined song.)

This kind of distinction was certainly current to Browning, as he comments several times on his inability to give vent to this kind of utterance. He wrote to Elizabeth Barrett:

"You speak out, you - I only make men and women speak - give you truth broken into prismatic hues, and fear the pure white light, even if it is in me ...."11

Again, very much later in their courtship, he wrote of this inability:

"The feelings must remain unwritten - unsung too, I fear. I very often fancy that if I had never before resorted to that mode of expression, to singing - poetry - now I should resort to it, discover it! Whereas now - my very use and experience of it deters me - if one phrase of mine should seem "Poetical" in Mrs. Proctor's sense - a conscious exaggeration - put in for effect!"12

He fears that the reader may take a very critical attitude to words coldly printed upon a page, and thereby make the feelings
so expressed seem ridiculous or clichéd, even though he plainly wishes he could write love poetry to her. In *One Word More*, the same sort of idea is expressed: his work has to form a tribute to his lady rather than an expression of his own love.

"Take them, Love, the book and me together:

Where the heart lies, let the brain lie also."

Yet it is unjust to suggest that Browning was intent upon hiding his feelings - what is seen by the reader as an 'effect', or a cliché, is of no use to the reader: what will he learn from something he critically despises? Browning saw his art as capable of involving the reader's faculties in such a way that the very process of thought required in following his words would inform and involve the reader, give him matter for further thought. In this aspect his approach is like that of the fine engraver - the strokes of his burin are controlled by his need to imitate a given painting, but the huge difference between his form and that of the painter leaves him immense liberty to improvise, as well as presenting him with problems of translation. John Landseer's son, Tom, followed his father as an engraver and was infinitely admired for the delicate way he could portray mist. A moment's thought will show that, though this is relatively straightforward for a painter (especially after Turner), it is diabolically difficult for an engraver. In his late years, Tom Landseer brought himself equal disfavour for 'mistifying' every subject he engraved: the very originality and creativity he brought to his trade led him into self-parody when he no longer bothered to keep in mind the real object of his art, which was imitation. In seeking to attain that object, though, the engraver is limited not only by lack of colour, but by the fact that lines are considerably more ambivalent as a means of conveying visual forms than the simpler chiaroscuro effects of mezzo-tint or even ordinary drawing. For a viewer to be sure what each stroke
means, the engraver has got to have not only his own 'language'
at command, but also the painter's. He must not be betrayed into
portraying tiny details because they suit his medium, when the painter
has only used them as part of a stronger general effect. If the
painting he is imitating is very light, or dark, he must adapt his
range of strokes, or he will reduce the picture's general tone too
draconically and destroy its effect. This kind of adjustment requires
a fine sensibility to the painter's intentions as well as a technical
understanding of painterly effects, and perhaps shows the truth of
Evelyn's view of engraving.

What makes a good engraver is a similar fidelity to his subject
as he sees it (not as he interprets it) to that which makes Teniers,
Ostade, Dou or even Brouwer, good painters: all the complexity of
their art is lavished on the realism of its effect, so that they always
seem to be 'translating' visual form even where they radically alter
the terms (or 'language') which express that form.

To return to Browning's insistence that he 'only' makes men and
women speak: this may seem incompatible with the fact that very
many of his people are fictitious, but it is one of the few indications
he gave about the inspiration of his works. It shows that he felt
as if he were interpreting these people, drawing the poetry out of
their personalities, and not actually 'creating' it in the direct
modern sense. He was translating them, by his skill, into poems.
He was creating imitations of them. The fact that some of the actual
figures he uses are fictitious is simply irrelevant: his view of the
real, historical characters he wrote about, such as Fra Lippo Lippi
or Andrea del Sarto, is no different from the one he takes of the
Unknown Painter in Pictor Ignotus, or Bishop Blougram,
or James Lee's Wife. In every case, his concern is with the transla-
tion of human character into poetry; and his understanding of a
character invented by himself to express his intimate and peculiar
knowledge of a situation is no less positive than that with which he approached, through further historical research, the details of an actual historical character. Both are equally his mental pictures. More interesting are the necessities which this approach placed upon his art. The first of these is that he never presents his people as puppets of his own making.

I do not wish to suggest that this is purely the result of his knowledge of engraving as an art and his appreciation of its discipline, but if we compare this self-restraint with regard to his subject with the restraint imposed upon the engraver faced with another man's painting, the result may help to illuminate the view which Browning held of Art.

Landseer described the task of the engraver as being the translation 'from one language of Art into another'. He even goes so far with this metaphor as to describe the process of viewing a print properly as 'reading'. When faced with, let's say, a painting by Poussin, the engraver has to restrict himself to effects suitable to rendering Poussin's particular style and intentions in the given work. His own intentions have got to be directed purely to these ends: if Poussin portrays a coldly indifferent landscape to highlight the fate of Phocion, the engraver must make his 'vocabulary' echo not only the shapes and tones, but the irony of the landscape. Practically, this means that he must not just copy the forms, but re-work them so that he maintains their relationship to each other and not just their individual characteristics. The splendidly cold architecture of Athens which lies behind the poor bier on which Phocion is carried, must not be overworked - Poussin's accurate paint must not be translated into fussy lines by the engraver, or the moral of the painting is lost. The good engraver thus, does genuinely maintain an aesthetic control which, though dictated to him by his subject, requires exact judgement and sensitive handling as much as any other art. Browning
seems to have approached his people in a similar spirit. His imitations of them work primarily through the successful, that is to say the faithful, transpositions of the relations between their awareness and their real situations, their aspirations and their abilities, their crimes and their self-images, and so on, from the (sometimes historical) reality he knew into the poetic entity which he felt to be a permanent and refined statement of their values. Thus it is not necessary to develop their personal backgrounds, or their particular accents: that would be the equivalent, in his poetic view, of adding the details of the column capitals to an engraving of Poussin's Athens when the painter has left them vaguely suggested. Such details would inevitably distort the relation of the building to the landscape, to the whole structure of the painting, and hence to the subject. If Browning, for instance, had given rough accents to the two Halves of Rome in the *Ring and the Book*, this would have destroyed the relationship of their testimony to that of the other speakers. *Fra Lippo sings snatches of songs not because Vasari portrays him as a singing monk but because the snatches of song express, in Browning's poetic vocabulary, a certain outpouring of spirit, the same quality as he sees in the uninhibited paintings Lippo produced*. *Mr. Sludge doesn't have to drop his aitches (or speak with an American accent) to show his kind of coarseness: in fact, dropping aitches is the kind of cliched characterisation which often prevents the reader from being seriously involved with the person the author is writing about.* There is good reason for all Browning's people to talk like Browning, as various critics carp: only within his own poetic language can he maintain the extremely subtle contrasts, illogicalities, forms of thought, which the poetry of his people requires. If he were to import ready-made speech or analyses into his forms, it would destroy their balance, their logic. Landseer in his Lectures made the comment:

"... to colour a legitimate engraving ... is not
less palpably absurd to an eye of tasteful discernment
than it would be to colour a diamond."\(^{19}\)

Though this may be arguable, it shows that in his view at least a constant ingredient in art was the accepting of formal restraints. I would suggest that it was also essential to Browning's view of his poetry.

Another necessity which Browning seems to have worked under and which may be compared with those of the engraver, is that of the development of a language (for translation) which though capable of subtlety, even ambivalence, is not ambiguous. E.H. Gombrich maintains that it is impossible to hold two conflicting views of the same sign simultaneously,\(^{20}\) which means that ambiguity as such is not useful to the artist who intends the audience to understand him.\(^{21}\) A moment's consideration will show that ambiguity is a constant danger to an engraver: how easily a cloud-effect could become tangled with the leaves of a tree, how hard it is to portray water, even more so, reflections - he must give the viewer a reliable vocabulary of signs by which to understand the meaning of his lines and patterns. For instance, in the engraving of a lost painting by Poussin, Venus and Cupid, by Etienne Baudet,\(^{22}\) both water and sky are represented by parallel horizontal lines, but no part of the sky is so dark as the water, as its horizontal lines are more widely spaced and finer. Thus the engraver has sufficiently distinguished the two signs visually for the viewer to read correctly. Even more complicated, but equally clear, is the distinction between the bank on which Venus reclines and the reflection of that bank in the water. The reflected images are blurred and contained within the general pattern of horizontal lines which express the water, whereas the forms on land are allowed strokes in many other directions, and are crisp. It seems to me that Browning developed an equally complicated system.
of expressive signs by which his reader may judge the force of his words. For example, he explains one such private language of his speaker in *A Likeness*. Here the length of the lines and the style of rhyming both indicate the alterations in the speaker's tone:

"All that I own is a print,
An etching, a mezzotint ...."

contrasts with:

"The fool! would he try a flight further and say
He never saw, never before today,
What was able to take his breath away,
A face to lose youth for, to occupy age
With the dream of, meet death with - why, I'll not engage
But that, half in a rapture, half in a rage,
I should toss him the things' self - " 'Tis only a duplicate,
A thing of no value! Take it, I supplicate""

where the increasing length of line indicates not just the extra complexity of ideas, but also the tangle of the speaker's feelings. His rhymes can express all sorts of undertones, from betraying tenderness in the old bachelor who is speaking -

"But hearts, after leaps, ache ....... Keepsake..."

to displaying his wit -

"And the debt of wonder my crony owes
Is paid to my Marc Antonios..."

his scorn for the man who rhymes 'Chabliais' with 'Rabelais' or in

"That's not so bad, where the gloss is,
But they've made the girl's nose a proboscis;
Jane Lamb, that we danced with at Vichy!
What, is not she Jane? Then, who is she?"

his cynicism, rhyming 'salary' with 'National Portrait Gallery' so glibly.

In short, in constructing this poem, Browning has relied not just on the expressed ideas of the speaker to display his character
to the reader (which might be compared to the actual subject which
provided the basis of the engraver's imitation) but also on a manner
of expression which is a sign-language for the reader to confirm the
relation of the ideas to the personality and to each other. The
speaker's love for prints and his cruel comments on the portrait in
oils thus are not just information about his taste, but signs of the
way he involves himself with life, reasons why he is an old bachelor
without the romantic illusions about 'Jane Lamb' which he despises in
other old bachelors. But it is not possible to judge Browning's
rhymes - for instance 'trace of' with 'face of' - as musical devices,
any more than it is to criticise the hatching on the dark area of
Venus' leg in Baudet's engraving as if it were an original abstract
design: they are means to ends, signs to meanings. If they are
beautiful, it is because they express beauty. If they are absurd
or outrageous they intend to reflect some such quality in the ideas
expressed. They do not intend to move you in their own behalf, but
belong within a general meaning, framework, pattern. 23

There is one more point which it may be useful to describe as
a comparison between engraving and Browning's art. The engraver
has all the ambivalence of artistic role that the translator
has, or perhaps the performer in music or drama. He cannot simply
'copy' his master because the result will certainly lack the effect
of the original. He has a very complex responsibility towards his
audience, for he is not speaking in his own behalf or even from his
own convictions, yet he owes allegiance to his own art and to that
of his master. I want to stress, his duty is toward art. But his
effect, as Landseer notes, 24 is not confined to producing aesthetic
emotion. 25 He surely cannot ignore the thoughts which his subject
will arouse; but since the subject is not his own, how can he be
responsible for them? Browning constantly trades upon this problem,
by allowing his people apparently to speak their own cases, as if defending themselves in court, and by refusing to point the morals of his poems. He has even retreated largely from story-telling as such, since traditionally the narrative ending is a moral give-away. But, like the engraver, even in allowing his subjects to speak for themselves, he has to recast their language into his own; the illusion of their independence must be sustained by art. This means that the audience is faced with accepting the unification of that art with the aims of the subject, in order to understand the objective meaning of that subject. This sounds more complicated than it is in fact. In looking at an efficient engraving of a painting which one knows, one is not offended by the changes which the form necessitates. One appreciates both the reminder of the exact qualities of the painting which the engraver has successfully transposed, and the new insights which this metamorphosed view affords, such as the enhanced clarity of composition and chiaroscuro. The substitution of the engraver's language for the painter's can in fact prove to be the key to qualities within the painting which were hidden until then. Similarly, the characters of Browning's people are transposed from their muddy and arguable nature in the real world into the dramatic clarity of his poetry. Mr. Sludge is an excellent example of this kind of metamorphosis. It is easy to forget, reading Browning's poem, that many of his friends (even his wife) rejected Browning's view of Home's behaviour. A dispassionate reader, judging the facts of Home's conduct, would be forced to take Browning's view, I venture to believe; but at the time of the séances, Browning found that his logical objections were by no means so convincing to the friends he sought to disillusion as Home's hocus-pocus. The realisation of Home's plausibility is transformed into one of the most subtle successes of the medium whom Browning created in Mr. Sludge. One
could almost say that it is Browning's respect for Home's talent which gives the poignantly abhorrent quality to Sludge.

I do not wish to imply that Browning is consciously modelling his approach on that which, from his father's interests, books and prints, we may assume he knew engraving to require. Rather, I wish to suggest that the early contact he had both with paintings at Dulwich and engravings of those paintings, 27 and with engravings and other prints whose originals he had never seen and which therefore held a different charm, could have laid the foundations of his idea of the way in which Art works: that it should imitate, that it should be capable of being 'read', and that its virtues were complex, not simple, and therefore required both complex subject matter and complex appreciation.
1. This seems likely in the cases which follow because these books
which were in the estate of Browning's son Pen auctioned at Sotheby's
in 1913, are on subjects which it is not fanciful to consider conform
to Browning's father's reported tastes and bear publication dates
which are sufficiently early for them to have been in Browning's
father's collection during the poet's childhood.
See A N L Munby, Sale Catalogues of the Libraries of Eminent Persons
Vol. 6, 1971.

This was the edition which Browning's father owned. In the front
of this copy, Browning noted when he was an old man: "I read this
book more often and with greater delight, when I was a child, than
any other: and still remember the main of it most gratefully for the
good I seem to have got by the prints and wondrous text."
Robert Browning Feb 13 '74

3. For example, this is the explanation which accompanies the Emblem
for Book VII Of Portraiture:
"Echtes: Nature, with her many breasts, is in a sitting
posture. Near her stands a child, lifting her garment off
her shoulders. On her other side stands Truth, holding a
Mirror before her, wherein she views herself down to the
middle and is seemingly surprised at it. On the Frame of
this Glass are seen, a gilt Pallet and Pencils. Truth
has a Book and a Palm branch in her hand."
It was traditional, however, to use complex emblems, by this stage.
c.f. 'Quatres and Witheries', both of which Browning read when quite
young.

4. John Evelyn, Sculpture or the History and Art of Chalcography and
Engraving on Copper, ch i, 1755.

5. Book VII Of Portraiture, ch ii.

6. John Landseer, Lectures on the Art of Engraving, delivered at the
Royal Institution of Great Britain, London 1807.

7. Complete information about Browning Senior's notes is provided by
Albert Foster Butler, Robert Browning's Father, His Way With a Book,
1969. Mr. Butler actually discovered this book in a second-hand
bookshop in Philadelphia, U.S.A. and verified that the signature
in the front was that of the poet’s father. His pamphlet is invaluable help in confirming other sources with regard to Browning’s father’s interests in Art.

8. Landseer’s Lectures seem to me to owe a lot to Evelyn’s Sculptura. Landseer does mention Sculptura, but only on the subject of etching. However, the general approach he takes - historical, and including details of the techniques of coin-making and printing as such - is remarkably similar.

9. Landseer’s Lectures were stopped by the Royal Academy. He published the complete set the following year and for several years was most vociferous about the injustice, as he saw it, of not admitting engravers to full RA membership. For an account of his struggle and opinions, see Campbell Lennie, Landseer the Victorian Engraver 1976 pp 3-7 (The book is about Sir Edwin, the engraver’s youngest son.)

The RA did not admit the engravers’ case; they claimed - ".... the relative pre-eminence of the Arts has ever been estimated accordingly as they more or less abound in those intellectual qualities of Invention and Composition, which Painting, Sculpture and Architecture so eminently possess, but of which Engraving is wholly devoid; its greatest praise consisting in translating with as little loss as possible the beauties of those original Arts of Design..." From the General Assembly minutes of RA Vol. III pp95-7. For a fuller account of the RA’s case, see Sidney C. Hutchinson, The History of the Royal Academy London 1966, pp 89-90.


where the bee sucks ... 5.1.88

11. Letters ed Kintner p7 Vol I (Letter dated Jan 13, 1845)

12. Letters ed Kintner p 623 Vol. II

13. See Campbell Lennie op cit (note 9)

14. It is extremely interesting to compare Edward Burne-Jones’ design drawings with the finished plates - the softness, as well as much of the detail, of the drawings is entirely lost in the prints. Both are on view at the William Morris Gallery in Walthamstow. For example, his illustrations to Morris’s
The material is so fine that it is difficult to be transferred to woodcuts.

15. As if to prove the point, the 'Unknown Painter' has recently been convincingly identified as Fra Bartolomeo in an article by J. B. Sullen, "Brownin's Ignatius and Vasari's Life of Fra Bartolomeo" in Review of Lit. Studies 25 (1972).

16. See Albert Ciner p222


18. In fact, this destruction can even occur when a poet's words, quoted out of context, become cliché in their own right. "God's in his heaven, all's right with the world", possibly Browning's most famous words, can hardly be seen in their true context of faith in God (in Piers Introduction II) and without the ugly companionship which has come to attach to them. Behave similar problems, I believe, with appreciating some Victorian paintings.

19. Paradoxically, it is essential to the Surrealist painter, like Lali, but I think it is arguable that once both interpretations of the painted illusions have been seen, the paintings lose a great deal of their effect. The late exhibition of Miró's in the Tate Gallery, it intended I suppose to balance visually on the edge between the two forms of Narcissus; but even here, the eye cannot regain the innocence with which it first saw the painting as one thing or the other. Thus it seems as if there is an element of sheer deception in the painting, which is destructive of the normal relationship between an artist and his audience.

20. K. H. Chirnocks 'Intellectual Illusion' p10, 'Babbit or Down?'

21. Plainly ambiguity is essential to the Surrealist painter, like Lali, but I think it is arguable that once both interpretations of the painted illusions have been seen, the paintings lose a great deal of their effect. The late exhibition of Miró's in the Tate Gallery, it intended I suppose to balance visually on the edge between the two forms of Narcissus; but even here, the eye cannot regain the innocence with which it first saw the painting as one thing or the other. Thus it seems as if there is an element of sheer deception in the painting, which is destructive of the normal relationship between an artist and his audience.

22. Hunt op cit Plate 255.

23. That this is by no means necessarily the case in poetry is easily demonstrated by a glance at Browning's friend and contemporary, Tennyson, whose poetry seems at every point to assert its own beauty beyond all other meaning.
"Now sleeps the crimson petal, now the white;  
Nor waves the cypress in the palace walk;  
Nor winks the gold fin in the porphyry font;  
The firefly wakens: when thou waketh me..." — The Princess

24. "If engraving be made the vehicle of the same thoughts 
which have previously been imparted to us by painting, 
it affords the sense of affecting our minds in the same 
manner..." — Landseer: Lectures p 177

25. I am indebted for this valuable phrase to Ronald Upton, the 
Australian artist and sculptor. It seems so clear as to be 
irreproducible.


"In vanity, color, and subtle knavery, the figure 
(of Algyne) is reminiscent of Chaucer's Pardoner".

The similarity between Browning's Algyne and Chaucer's 
goes deep, I think — Chaucer rarely speaks in his own 
behalf, constantly repeats that he 'follows his author' in his 
Parliamentary Crisseyde.

W. C. Bender was probably the first to comment on this 
aspect of Browning's talent, in his Sonnet to Browning:

"... Browning! Since Chaucer was alive and hale, 
To win hath walked along our roads with step 
So active, so enquiring eye, a tongue 
So varied in discourse..."
Chapter 4

THE INFLUENCE OF HOGARTH ON BROWNING

Introduction to the Method of Analysis

Ever since Horace coined the phrase "Ut pictura poesis" (As is painting, so is poetry\(^1\)) in his essay *On the Art of Poetry*, analogies have been drawn between the two arts, by practitioners of either as well as by critics and connoisseurs, which have been intended to clarify the nature of the works under discussion. Discoveries have been made of 'Poetic' qualities in pictures and 'Word-painting' in poems: John Ruskin even went so far with these metaphors as to suggest the ideas were interchangeable, when he described Landseer's painting of *The Old Shepherd's Chief Mourner* as "One of the most perfect poems or pictures... that modern times have seen."\(^2\)

Many more specific uses of these metaphors occur: in his *Lectures to the Royal Academy* in 1807 (published 1809) John Opie talked of the art of Colouring in this way: "Like sound in Poetry, Colouring in Painting should always be an echo to the sense."\(^3\) Earlier, Poussin himself had described a similar idea, at once more specific and more convincing: "Colours in painting are as allurements for persuading the eyes as the sweetness of meter is in poetry."\(^4\) Or again, a variation of the same notion is expressed later by Delacroix thus: "I see in painters, prose writers or poets. Rhyme, measure and the turning of verses... are analogous to the hidden symmetry... which governs the meeting or separation of lines and spaces, the echoes of colour, etc...."\(^5\) In each case, the writer, in drawing his analogy, is appealing to a purely metaphorical relation between the two arts, suggesting in effect that a part of one art could be imaginatively exchanged for a similar part of the other. The metaphor 'stands in' for its counterpart in the other
half of the comparison, and it is in fact this substitution which provides the interest of the analogy. For instance, in Poussin's version, the substitution is made within a strictly-controlled context of aesthetic principle: all art uses 'allurements' to 'persuade' its audience, and therefore it is possible to form parallels between the various charms of the particular arts. This deep mental discipline is plainly lacking in Opie's statement, which is dogmatic ('should') and ornate in expression, suggesting that he was rehearsing a received idea rather than actually searching for a new one. Delacroix, on the other hand, is as consistent as Poussin, but with a completely different idea of art: he operates the analogy by force of his "I", and the richness and freshness of expression which springs from his own involvement with that analogy. In each case, the substitutive action of the analogy provides not only a form of insight into the subject under discussion, but also, by the same process, into the commitment of the writer.

The process of the metaphor may be even more dominant than this in a given work of art, or in typical work of a particular school. Its use is typical of symbolist and allegorical work for instance, where the audience or critic is obviously intended to complete the work by substituting the 'meaning' of the images for their forms. All religious art necessarily functions like this, since it must be impossible to represent beliefs except by analogy or metaphor. It is therefore quite possible to approach these works by searching for their meanings, by articulating in a more ordinary or simpler language the general idea 'behind' (as we say) the work, as distinct from the kind of 'reading' described earlier. In this sense, the comparative method of expressing a congruence between one art and another is entirely on a par with a great many other branches of critical pre-occupation which also seek to express one kind of perception in
terms of another. In this sense also, the idea that such a thing as a 'meaning' can be ascribed to a work is another example of the operation of metaphor, since the 'meaning' substitutes, in its own context, for part of the original work in its own context, and that part therefore can be seen as a metaphor.

However, the metaphoric is by no means the only process either of art or of understanding art. In his essay on the Two-Fold Character of Language Roman Jakobson used the word metonomy to express the polar opposite of metaphor, and insisted that it was only in the light of both processes that language can be understood:

"... it is generally realized that romanticism is strongly linked with metaphor, whereas the equally intimate ties of realism with metonymy usually remain unnoticed. Not only the tool (analysis) of the observer but also the object of observation is responsible for the preponderance of metaphor over metonymy in scholarship.... The actual bipolarity has been artificially replaced in these studies by an amputated, unipolar scheme...."

This idea is thoroughly endorsed by Roland Barthes in Elements of Semiology:

"Let us note, following a remark by Jakobson, that the analyst... is better equipped to speak about metaphor than about metonymy, because the meta-language in which he must conduct his analysis is itself metaphorical, and consequently homogenous with the metaphor which is its object: and indeed there is abundant literature on metaphor but next to nothing on metonymy...."

For both these writers, there is an essential difference of process between the two devices: Barthes describes the metaphoric
as one "in which the associations by substitution predominate", and the metonymic as one "in which the syntagmatic associations predominate"; Jakobson calls metaphor "a principle of similarity" while metonymy is one of "contiguity".

It seems to me that one of the critical benefits which may accrue from a comparison of painting with another art, for instance, with poetry, is that such a comparison will be forced to take the metonymic process of 'reading' a painting into account. Since a painting does not depend upon the dimension of time for its impression, the effect of the contiguity of the elements within it is both more striking and more important than in arts which require the passage of time for their accomplishment. For example, consider the effect of that common and instantly-recognizable painterly device, the halo: it is an image which cannot maintain its meaning if it is removed from the relevant position in a picture and it is one which makes no reference to the real world; but it operates with great efficiency when properly placed. There is no such 'short-hand' which comes readily to mind in poetry, because the chronological unravelling of the poem precludes the establishment of one which relies, as a halo does, merely on its placement for significance. Plainly, painting need not operate on an exclusively metonymous system, and it may have access to exactly the same symbols as poetic imagery, but the predominant effect of a painting is achieved thus, I venture to claim, and not through "association by substitution".

The method proposed here for studying the relationship between Browning's poetry and the paintings which he undoubtedly knew intimately is therefore one which seeks to redress the imbalance which Barthes and Jakobson noted, and which imports procedures and standards from painting in order to do so. It is noticeable that in most of the comparisons which occur between painting and poetry (ut pictura poesis), it is assumed that the techniques
of poetry are somehow more lucid than those of painting - an assumption which arises (naturally, as Barthes might conceive) from the fact that the comparison itself shares the 'language' of words with poetry, and is alienated from the 'language' of painting. Notwithstanding this difficulty, the emphasis of my method will be in the opposite direction, arguing from the logic of a painting to clarify that of a poem. The process is still inadequate - it is still too close to analogy, which is metaphorical in emphasis - but this seems to be an essential problem with critical endeavour, that it is forced to use a 'meta-language', which irresistibly involves it in substitutive processes.

However, this is not meant in any sense to be a synaesthetic approach: no suggestion that there are immutable relationships of meaning or form between the elements discussed of painting and poetry is intended. In Barthes' words, "This relation concerns objects which belong to different categories, and this is why it is not one of equality but one of equivalence." Hence it seems to me that René Wellek seriously misinterpreted the function of a semi-logical approach when he called for "The reduction of all the arts to branches of semiology, or to so many systems of signs." (See Intro.) In so doing, he implied that the signs could in fact be a critical substitute for the works of art; whereas Barthes is scrupulously careful to avoid this implication and, with a far more truly scientific spirit, calls for the method to be infinitely mutable to suit the object of its interest. This throws up a slightly different aspect of the two 'poles' discussed earlier: for Wellek., the buck has to stop somewhere, there must be a resolution, a 'meaning' to justify the critical process by suggesting that, without it, the work of art would not accomplish 'meaningfulness'. He is so far enmeshed in the metaphorical process of substitution that he seems in the end to prefer
a putative "system of signs" not only above all other criticism but
even, as the 'answer', to works of art themselves, since to him the
relevance of the system embraces them, not they it. But Barthes,
with what seems to me far greater perspicacity, refuses to commit
himself even to a system, and chooses to perform a series of balancing
acts, demonstrations of his method, (or even, of his style) which are
punctuated by discoveries of meaning, not in themselves the object of
the exercises. What he achieves, therefore, is not an analysis nor a
theory, but a concentration on process, which is in fact his nearest
approach to a stated aim. He accepts that the signs or 'language'
of the various arts can be related to each other in a great number of
ways, and he opts for several which suit him, calling to mind Karl
Kroeber's approach as discussed in the Introduction.
It can be no surprise to learn that Browning's father was an eager collector of prints by William Hogarth,\(^{15}\) and that he owned a larger number of books about this artist than about any other.\(^{16}\)

A marked preference for Hogarth is absolutely consistent with all that we know of his taste, since the elements of art which he loved in other works are all to be found in Hogarth's. Low-life subjects here are handled with an intensity comparable to Brouwer's and yet also with a wit and humour which rivals that of Pope or Swift.

Throughout Hogarth's works there are constant references to themes of 'High Art', made often with complete irreverence and as comments on the pretensions of 'High Art', but which also have a visual function beyond that of parody as they perform satisfactorily in both an aesthetic and a connotative sense in the context of the painting. An example of this is the figure of the English boy crying over his broken plate of food in *Noon*, which Lichtenberg claims is "taken from a picture by Poussin",\(^{17}\) but which functions perfectly as a contrast, in its healthy, upright howling attitude with the complacent, over-dressed deformity of the French boy on crutches at the other corner of the picture. Another example is the two little 'devils' in *Strolling Actresses* who parody a group in Raphael's cartoon of *The Sacrifice at Lystra*.\(^{18}\)

Such references would obviously appeal to Browning's father who was well-versed in the 'High' as well as the 'Low' art. The fact that Hogarth was himself an engraver and that his plates therefore were of even more interest than other engravings since they represented both the creative and transcriptive sides of that art and not merely the latter, must have appealed to him. We can be sure, then, that Hogarth must have been among the artists with whose works his son would be early acquainted.
Hogarth is commonly described as being a 'literary' painter. Nowadays this epithet has a derogatory ring and commentators and critics protest against his being so labelled, but it seems to go right back to Hogarth's own attitude:

"At this stage of his career (1720's), he thought of himself as artist-writer, a satirist in the tradition of the great Augustans..."\(^{20}\)

Certainly, Horace Walpole called him —

"rather... a writer of comedy with a pencil, than a painter."\(^ {21}\)

Perhaps most famous of the remarks on this theme is that made by Charles Lamb in his essay on The Genius and Character of Hogarth, where he enthusiastically claims that Hogarth is nearly as rich a source of stimulation as Shakespeare.

"His graphic representations are indeed books; they have the teeming, fruitful, suggestive meaning of words. Other pictures we look at — his prints we read."

He goes on to compare The Rake's Progress first with Timon of Athens and then with King Lear, which indicates something of the serious veneration with which he makes this statement.\(^ {22}\) The fact is that, not only do Hogarth's works make numerous literary references and use actual 'poetic devices' to make their points, but they are uniquely open to 'translation' into words, as witness the large number of commentaries which have been written about them.\(^ {24}\) It is interesting that most of these commentaries actually 'tell the story' of the pictures, 'translating' the visual moment of Hogarth's conceptions into narratives or arguments, in their search for their meaning. The fact that almost any writer on Hogarth seems to get involved in doing this suggests to me that Hogarth does not actually tell you the story himself. If he really did so, the exercise would be unnecessary, as it is unnecessary to explain, for instance, the 'story'
of Benjamin West's *Death of General Wolfe*; there, the moment does really sum it all up, tell it all. But in Hogarth's pictures, the 'story' is a device of the viewer or commentator which is designed to serve hermeneutic purposes. This is not to say that the various interpreters do not agree about the stories or that their tales are unrelated to the pictures, but the pictures are actually far too detailed to be formed into neat or effective narratives and the events shown in them are generally in such a state of transition that the commentator has got to create a wider time-structure than Hogarth has himself in order to encompass them in a logical fashion. A typical example of this is Lichtenberg's delightful hypothesis on the spinster in *Morning*:

"She is on her way to Church, and at a time of day and year when even the decision to do so proclaims a sanctity which was never imparted to a wholly sinful heart; and how much does she not care for her neighbour! For to be sure she would not doll herself up like that for her own benefit. She must have started already at four o'clock that morning."

Charming though this is, and helpful though I personally find Lichtenberg's commentaries in conjunction with the plates, it cannot be denied that this is pure invention on his part: it is no nearer to Hogarth than the psychological identikit of the prosecuting lawyer in the courtroom to the truth behind the crime - it is a functional hypothesis, but the function is Lichtenberg's rather than Hogarth's.

Yet it cannot be denied that Hogarth's prints tempt the viewer into this kind of hypothesising. He purposely includes visual details which almost force the viewer to extrapolate. I do not mean details which have become difficult to understand simply with the passage of time, such as the portraits he includes in the
Rake's Levee or the seducers in *The Harlot's Progress*, or the relevance of the sign-board "White's" in the plate of the *Rake's Arrest*: these obviously must be explained to a modern viewer if he is to understand them. However, he includes objects and persons who are in the midst of falling - the sprawling soldier in the foreground of *Midnight Modern Conversation*; Sarah Young's basket in the *Arrest of the Rake*; the leg of mutton in *Noon*; the teaset in the *Harlot's Tea Party*; the dying husband in *Marriage à la Mode* - the anticipation of their crashing falls is unbearable and we cannot resist seeking mentally to understand where they were before gravity became too much for them and the reasons why they must have succumbed. But, when we respond to this visual pressure by inventing time sequences of events which are not actually shown to us by the artist, we are in fact substituting a chronological literary form for the momentary visual one and formalizing the element which in the visual presentation is completely creative, the element of change, the metamorphosis.

This element is very different from that force or power which Kenneth Clark calls "energy" in his book *The Nude*, and which achieves images which are satisfactorily static, though the viewer recognises action in them. Like the figures in *The Death of General Wolfe*, who are all intensely busy and active yet each caught as a static symbol of the real action they are presumed to be performing, Clark's energetic nudes would go on doing the same thing if given real time to exist within because their actions display their essential forms: Hogarth's people would hit the floor, his dishes would shatter, his houses would burn down.

But the metamorphosis in a Hogarth print is not achieved; it is actually happening. The action of the narrative, the literary form, is to present a pattern which is open to metaphorical interpretation; when "the good end happily and the bad unhappily", one has only to wait, to understand - the end will show the 'meaning'. Even where
the good come to sticky ends as well as the bad, the pattern of events when achieved will allow the reader to interpret the whole according to what code best pleases him because the pattern is essentially abstract and can be transferred in this way. But in a Hogarth picture, the crashes have not come yet; even in the Bathos the dead Apollo with his dead horses has not yet fallen out of the sky. This is not a chink for optimism: it is actually anti-narrative, it defies the urge to transfer a time-pattern metaphorically.\footnote{27}

Hogarth's pictures do not condense ordinary time; they actually create their own time in a way which I believe must have been conscious because it is so consistently a point of reference in his works. The vision of something in the act of falling is so arresting to the viewer in itself that it directs his mind into Hogarth's Painterly Time, and to a realization that it is within this new dimension that he can explore and understand the painting. Thus it is important to Hogarth that the viewer suffers the anticipation of the crash, but not that he should see it. In Hogarth's Time, one is free to understand a change of state without the event being achieved.

In his book \textit{Self Consuming Artefacts},\footnote{28} Stanley Fish has developed an heuristic approach to Metaphysical Poetry in which he insists that:

"For the questions, 'what is this work about?' and 'what does it say?' I tend to substitute the question 'what is happening?' and to answer it by tracing out the shape of the reading experience, that is by focusing on the mind in the act of making sense, rather than on the sense it finally (and often reductively) makes..."

and that:

"... most methods of analysis operate at so high a level of abstraction that the basic data of the meaning experience is slighted and/or obscured..."
In essence, this is the same complaint against analytical methods as is made by Barthes and Jakobson, for the process of metaphorical substitution which they believe can only elucidate half a given work, is plainly highly abstract and requires a curiously specialized approach on the part of the critic as well as a language which is suitably abstruse. The question 'what is happening?' which Fish uses to achieve a satisfactory understanding of a work is also related to the neglected other half of perception which Barthes and Jakobson call metonymy - the assessment of relationships of contiguity, not substitution. I think Fish is less clear in his method and aims than the two philosophical structuralists, but essentially all of them protest that the appreciation of art is hampered by the exclusive search for meaning or meaningful form therein. If it is permitted to take a leap of two centuries, I might suggest that Hogarth himself had already 'told them so', for in the Preface to The Analysis of Beauty he says:

"It is no wonder that this subject (Beauty) should so long have been thought inexplicable, since the nature of many parts of it cannot possibly come within the reach of mere men of letters; otherwise these ingenious gentlemen who have lately published treatises upon it ... would not so soon have been bewildered in their accounts of it, and obliged so suddenly to turn into the broad and more beaten path of Moral Beauty."

Indeed throughout his book, Hogarth constantly insists on the act of viewing his (or any painter's) works, so that his ideas have the same kind of pausing quality as his pictures: the analysis itself is never achieved, but a framework for looking certainly is. His chapter titles, even, confirm that this is his approach:
Chapter XII - Of Light and Shade, and the manner in which objects are explained to the eye by them; Chapter II - Of Variety; Chapter V - of Intricacy, and so on. He defines beauty in an astonishingly original way, not as an ideal, or even an idea, but as a function - (p14)

"when a vessel sails well, the sailors always call her a beauty; the two ideas have such a connection!" - which is nonetheless to be assessed by the eye. Richard Woodfield comments:31

"As for the hallowed doctrine of proportion, this he quite rightly saw as subject to the demands of decorum and the needs of the eye..." Hogarth wants the eye of the beholder to be led -

"a wanton kind of chace, and from the pleasure that gives the mind, intitles it (intricacy of line) to the name of Beautiful.."

He categorically insists that his works should involve the viewer's imagination - (pp38 - 9)

"The serpentine line, by its waving and winding at the same time different ways, leads the eye in a pleasing manner along the continuity of variety, if I may be allowed the expression; and which, by its twisting so many different ways may be said to enclose (though but a single line) varied contents and therefore all its variety cannot be expressed on paper by one continued line without the assistance of the imagination..."

Or again (p36)

"But when (the body) is artfully clothed and decorated, the mind at every turn resumes its imaginary pursuits concerning it..."
He plainly expects the viewer to be directed by the picture, and in following the images, to understand. This expectation is profoundly consistent with Hogarth's stated aim which is to reflect nature:

(Introduction p2)

"And in this light I hope my prints will be consider'd, and that the figures referred to in them will never be imagin'd to be placed there by me as examples themselves, of beauty or grace, but only to point out to the reader what sorts of objects he is to look for and examine in nature, or in the works of the greatest masters..."

(He obviously equates these two alternatives at this point.) For he wishes the viewer to adopt a method of looking at his paintings which is only a refined or concentrated version of his normal perception of the world. Several commentators on Hogarth have remarked that his pictures can seem noisy or full of smells, and this is, I feel, a reflection of the power of Hogarth's method to compel not just attention, but complete co-operation from his viewers. They accept Hogarth's Painterly Time as the element within which to understand the pictures and mobilise their four other senses in the service of their sight so that Hogarth's 'wanton chace' is not only performed by the eye, but also by the mind, of the beholder.

In talking about a Hogarth print, therefore, it seems natural to substitute the literary narrative or analogical forms for Hogarth's painterly ones, because it is very difficult to find real equivalences between verbal and visual forms - and yet Hogarth's world is so involving that one must talk about it. But it would nonetheless be truer to Hogarth - if it were possible - to use a different literary equivalent, which I shall call Psychological Time. (In the two hundred years since Hogarth, literature has developed such a thing, though not strictly for the purpose of commenting on painting, in "stream of
Consciousness" writing.) Psychological Time need not necessarily
operate within one mind only: it can be said to operate in Macbeth,
for instance, or Antony and Cleopatra. Macbeth's crime seems to take
all night to commit, though actually the work of minutes, so important
is the detail of the experience in the context of the play. (Poor
Banquo gets disposed of far more quickly!) And the pace of the play
when Antony is absent from Cleopatra is completely different from,
for instance, battle scenes, as the actual poetry reflects: battle
scenes can be as short as four lines — Cleopatra's idle fishing
stretches to infinity, as does her contemplation of death which so
strangely lacks urgency that she has to encourage herself with a coyly
jealous fancy. But the great operator of this literary mode in
poetry is Robert Browning. To demonstrate the equivalence (not same­
ness) of Hogarth's Painterly Time with Browning's Psychological Time,
I shall examine and compare time as a formative element in works by each:
Hogarth's Strolling Actresses Dressing in a Barn and Southwark Fair
and Browning's Fifine at the Fair. These works are not arbitrarily
chosen — they have much in common in theme and motivation, I believe,
though I would not wish to suggest that the influence of the Hogarth
prints on Browning's poem was direct or particularized. However,
there is no doubt that Browning had long been familiar with both of
these prints from books owned and studied by his father, and which had
detailed commentaries about all their plates. Now there is one
certain effect of reading any Hogarth commentary, be it imaginative
or dull, arty or moralistic, and that is to draw the reader into a
form of consecutive interpretation of detail, to make his eye travel
slowly and intricately around the picture space and his brain seek
links and double-entendres in the ostensibly innocent record of the
scene. Here is an example of this delightful game from Lichtenberg's
comments on Strolling Actresses:
"On the extreme left sits obviously Juno, the Queen of Heaven... She is studying her part, and to utilize the time thoroughly she stretches out her immortal leg upon an overturned wheelbarrow and lets the Goddess of Night... darn her eternal stockings. That goddess has, out of respect, extinguished her lamp and set it beside her. How kind and considerate of Hogarth - and Night! Holes in the stockings of a Juno should not be brought into the light..."

This approach entirely accords with Hogarth's intention to "lead the eye a wanton kind of chase," and thus give pleasure to the mind.

In other words, Hogarth was intentionally involving his audience in a process which would take time to work through: his Painterly Time (as shown on the canvas/paper) was to become the viewer's Psychological Time, and this was how an understanding of the work could be reached - not otherwise. The experience of this method must have been familiar to Browning, and I should argue that it is a seminal influence on his sense of form.

To understand a Hogarth print, it is essential to allow devices such as juxtaposition and proximity to be of more significance than the symbolic connotations of particular images: the same proviso applies to all of Browning's work, and represents a guiding principle in reading his poems. For example, as Paulson points out, the three major female figures in *Strolling Actresses* do establish a standard of beauty which rests upon the individual graces of each, not upon some ideal set of ingredients. Hogarth makes them stand in the light, and form an attractive triangle which is part of the intricate geometry of the picture. This 'geometry' is therefore very far from being a cold or abstruse form of organisation, since it embodies the standards upon which the whole work rests. Yet
Hogarth  
*Strolling Actresses Dressing in a Barn*
were one to stick this Juno among the repetitive nymphs of Lely for instance, her value - and probably, her 'beauty' - would evanescce. In Fifine at the Fair Browning attempts in words a similar galaxy of beauty, where each woman he describes acquires grace and charm from her contrast with the next - and between them, they form an essential and articulate feminine force, to push against Don Juan's masculine one. His parade of attraction centres on Helen of Troy (backed up by Venus), Cleopatra and a Saint ("Fish! Whatever Saint you please..."); is flanked by Fifine and Elvire who represent the outer limits of the whole structure, and is laced with various transitory moons, such as Eidothee and Columbine and the peasant women celebrating the 'Druid' stone. The motions of Don Juan's thoughts and intentions over this 'geometry' establish standards by which his own personality becomes positively identifiable, and he becomes recognisable. Just so, the form of Strolling Actresses is recognisable and memorable after one has pursued Hogarth's 'wanton chace' and stamped its emphases on one's mind. In each case there is 'reading time' allowed, but it is not like narrative time or argumentative time and I believe it is unlike musical time. In both cases, the 'reading time', or Psychological Time, is purely hermeneutic: in both, the method prescribed for the audience is a sort of mental promenade, or stroll, around the mental space defined by the print or poem. In Fifine at the Fair, this stroll is actually taken by Don Juan, accompanied by his ghostly Elvire, as if the Pornio village were his garden, laid out to inspire thought as one followed the path, by change and contrast and new views of familiar places. Hogarth's 'wanton chace' is performed by his commentators, perhaps most effectively by Mr. Paulson in his Hogarth: His Life, Art and Times. In both, the underlying as well as the overt theme is one of metamorphosis.

For instance, Juan's purpose in his first description of the Fair appears to be quite simple (I - VII): he uses the gypsies
to symbolise freedom and plainly lets his wife know how tied he feels in his relation with her. The sexual and sentimental sides of his character underlie this usage; but much less obviously Browning has inserted such ideas as "Human beauty" by which the Don likes to align his tastes with highly exalted ideas. However, when the Fair is again described much later (CXVI), the use the Don makes of the same details is quite different. Now the flag is a symbol of Art, the girl drummer, part of the "raree show", the stalls, allegories for History, Morality, Painting, Music and Poetry. (This latter description is an especially interesting parallel to Hogarth's Southwark Fair, where the stalls and activities of the show people do indeed form a "wonderful life picture", as Sala called it.)

The metamorphosis of the image from one characteristic function to another is highly informative to the reader, who recognises the image itself - thanks partly to Browning's allowing the Don to use the same phrases in both descriptions - and who can thus assess not just the pattern of the Don's ideas, but also the mood or tone of the references, and adjust the balance of the ingredients of his character accordingly. In fact, the image has remained - the Don has even returned physically to the Fair after his stroll - in something the same way as the images in Hogarth remain, though the viewer mentally 'strolls' through the picture - the plates and pates remain unbroken, though the viewer has mentally explored the time before and after their moments of depiction.

It is interesting that both Browning and Hogarth were, in a sense, dramatists manques. Browning's eight plays, all of which were fairly unsuccessful, nonetheless represent a determined effort on his part to come to terms with Shakespeare's medium and to bring poetry to a public audience very different from the cozy privacy of the writer with the reader of slim volumes of poems. His last play, In a Balcony, was published in 1855 when he was forty-three, so it would be wrong
to call his plays mere youthful errors. They were, perhaps, experiments
in his search for a suitably complex form to express his idea of Art,
and they are noticeably less suitable for this purpose than his poems
whose dramatic qualities are so independent of event. From these
'experiments', he refined his dramatic sensibility to the point where
it relied on handling and composition rather than narrative. A similar
distinction is commented on by Mr. Paulson with regard to Hogarth:

"If Hogarth never used the term 'read' (although he
frequently calls himself 'author') it is probably because
he thought of his pictures in terms of stage representations -
a succession of scenes, with characters speaking lines and
gesturing - rather than a book..."

And Hogarth himself wrote:

"I... wished to compose pictures on canvas, similar
to representations on the stage; and further hope
that they will be tried by the same test, and criticized
by the same criterion... let the figures in either
pictures or prints be considered as players...
I have endeavoured to treat my subject as a dramatic
writer..."

For both Browning and Hogarth then, the theatre provided a gamut
of images which were complex enough to be used to embody their ideas
of Art and Nature. Both probably were indebted for this sense of
the potential of theatrical imagery to Shakespeare and Dryden; yet
in both it is the achievement of a stasis which is really important
because it is through stasis that the metonymous relations of the
images and their attendant ideas can be realized.

In Fifine at the Fair the potential of this imagery, with its
being-and-seeming paradoxes which are hinted at in the prologue, Amphibian,
is exploited to a degree unprecedented in any of Browning's other
poems. He opens with a quotation from Molière's Don Juan which he translates in a peculiarly amplified way, giving Elvire her only chance in the whole work to speak for herself, and yet providing by this means the basic materials for the Elvire of the Don's monologue in the main body of the poem. This direct clue about the theatrical nature of the main character is essential to any understanding of this poem: Browning is consciously mobilizing all the force of the Don Juan mythology to inform his monologue, drawing on the resources of the type to create his particular character, as Hogarth uses the emblems of the Maiden Huntress, Diana,\(^46\) to flatter, confirm and even metamorphose his central Strolling Actress. In the quotation from Molière, Don Juan says just: 'Madame, à vous dire la vérité...\(^\) (Browning translates this quite closely into: 'Madam, if needs I must declare the truth, - in short...\(^\) before he is cut off by Elvire's mockery though she has asked him to explain; and the point is of course that she has no time for his truth, though she certainly had time for his manhood.\(^47\) It is fundamentally their sexual relationship which has proved inadequate. This is why she cannot appear in the poem: she can only be suggested; like the face of the Peeping Tom (whom Lichtenberg likens to Actaeon)\(^48\) in Strolling Actresses, her brief appearance defines a particular attitude to the main body of the work which it is completely unnecessary for the audience thereafter to take.

We need not be - we must not be - voyeuristic in looking at the Actresses; we need not and must not be moralistic in understanding Don Juan. This subtle technique of steering his reader is common in Browning: we are in judicious roles towards Mr. Sludge or Bishop Blougram or The Ring and the Book; inferiors to the Duke of Ferrara or the Bishop of St. Praxed's; a confidant of Prince Hohenstiel Schwangau's or Andrea del Sarto's - in each case, some prejudice or preconception may be disarmed by this direction of the reader.

Hogarth too, and I think indeed most painters, direct the viewer in
a similar fashion; a landscape painter enforces on you how far you are away from the objects of his vision, a history painter chooses your moment, a portrait painter presents you with tones which colour the mood of the whole face - and Hogarth lets the face in the roof relieve you of being voyeuristic and conducts you around the picture space with one ingenious eye-catcher after another. Thus Browning's Don Juan, we realize, is in fact justifying himself all the way around Pornio not to Elvire but to the reader. Elvire, like the other ladies in his monologue, is a 'property' in the drama of his personality.

I have already spoken of the 'geometry' of Strolling Actresses through which the viewer's eye wanders. This geometry has its boundaries at the edges of the picture. Obvious though this is in a painting, it is less easy to be definite about the 'edges' of a poem, especially since so many lyric forms of poetry have their origins in musical or dance forms, which need not depend upon subject matter for such demarcations. Hogarth is especially cunning about where he cuts off his pictures, both in terms of the actual edges of the canvas and of the degree to which forms overlap each other and obscure each other within the picture space. Strolling Actresses is slightly unusual among Hogarth's crowded scenes in that no-one is cut off by the frame - highly appropriate to a stage crowd which is inevitably more economical in its effect than a real crowd would be. One might be viewing them through the proscenium arch, indeed; Diana has her eyes fixed on the audience and is 'declaiming', though semi-clad. The Prologue and Epilogue to Fifine at the Fair represent Browning's response to an urge to define his subject matter in the same sense as the picture-frame does: the Amphibian and the Householder represent the two poles of Don Juan's personality between which the main poem is going to move in a genuinely dialectic way, forming a geometry of
stresses with the two polar opposites of womankind, Fifine and Elvire. In *Strolling Actresses*, the eye perceives just this kind of geometry between the dark and the light, the lovely and the ugly, and the mind follows the points this linear travel raises as if a discussion were going on between the various parts of the picture. Thus, having established the standard of beauty in the light—the three lovely faces in their triangular relation—one realizes that the sun is being outshone by the moon, Apollo with his back to us is actually shadowed by Diana; or that the socks and underwear are all in heaven (on the washing line) and the symbols of power, the crown, the mitre, the helmet, are all on the floor: and so the very motion of the eye and brain together compose the web of understanding which eventually seems to fill the picture space. The bounds which Browning sets in the *Amphibian* and the *Householder* are most important to the rest of the poem, if it is not to overlap into our (the readers') preconceptions and become muddled. They mark the limits of Juan's courage, his manliness: his swim only gains savour from contrast with 'Land the solid and safe—To welcome again'; and in the Householder, he is actually begging his wife to take him away from himself, to protect him against himself by forgiving him again, re-claiming him. The sense in which he 'ends where he began' should be plain now, and also that it cannot represent a solution to the poem: as in *The Statue* and the *Bust*, the subject limits itself (himself).

However, a considerable accumulation of detailed knowledge and thought is present by the time one recognizes, in the self-pitying Householder, the sentimental idealist of *Amphibian*; and here again there is a similarity with Hogarth's method, for, if we take the central figure of *Strolling Actresses*, we see her beauty and glamour at a glance, but we do not appreciate it until her individuality has been so thoroughly stamped on our minds by her contrast with every
other figure, with Medusa on the shield, with the Negress and the devils and so on, that we can no longer class or stereotype her, because our understanding of her grace has required the whole picture to inform it. She likewise serves the other figures in the print.

I have stressed this seemingly obvious point because it is typically important in forms of art where a genuine bi-polarity of process exists, between the metaphoric and metonymic uses of language. What I have described as a mental stroll around the work can be seen as a metonymic exploration and it is important to stress that in both Browning and Hogarth, this mode seems to me to be formative and the metaphoric to be incidental. That Fifine at the Fair is not essentially symbolic or argumentative was noticed by at least one critic very shortly after its publication. C.C. Everett wrote:

"Some critics of high authority and usually clear insight have pronounced it, in effect, to contain Browning's views of the higher realities. How unfortunate and absurd such a statement is appears from the fact that it is really Don Juan's defence of his own fickleness and wide-ranging affections ... The genius of Browning is, however, fundamentally dramatic, he seems to shrink from uttering himself. This poem seems to us as rigidly dramatic as any other. The hero is left utterly to himself... Finally the reader must remember that this is poetry, not prose. He must not expect an argument that will follow its heads like a sermon."

Browning described this poem as "the most metaphysical and coldest he had written since Sordello", and that he wrote it with very great care is apparent from the "heavily corrected and interlined manuscript at Balliol". The fact that Browning referred back across the whole span of his career to Sordello (never his favourite topic) is significant: it suggests that he had deliberately
reviewed his work so far and that Fifine was written in the light of his sense of the direction of his art. The complex maturity of the poem itself suggests the same thing. Thus, the method of this poem can in some senses be taken as consummate. That it is the 'boldest' he ever wrote is true in a number of ways: its subject matter is openly sexual and its 'hero' is a reprobate; it fearlessly juxtaposes sacrosanct ideas with positively immoral ones, which so perplexes critics; it uncompromisingly uses detail for description, not analysis, which is an almost painterly approach. It is more difficult to know exactly what Browning means by 'metaphysical'; this word, though as far back as Sordello, it always had connotations of the disapprobation of the public, he seems to persist in finding desirable. The same criticism was made of Elizabeth Barrett's work, but it is very hard indeed for a modern reader to understand how the concerns of his poetry could be likened to hers. Here is genuinely topical, and the 'poetry' is the garb of her thought: the reverse could be said of her husband, for whom it would seem that thought and subject-matter are always the material for Art. However, I think that he probably intends, by 'metaphysical' in the context of Fifine, that his poem is meant to display the philosophy of mind of the monologuist. This excludes the need to describe him physically, or to mimic his mannerisms of speech; it is character study in the sense which Hogarth would have approved -

"I have ever considered the knowledge of character, either high or low, to be the most sublime part of the art of painting or sculpture; and caricatura the lowest ... I have often thought that much of this confusion (between character and caricature) might be done away by referring to the three branches of the drama, and considering the difference between Comedy, Tragedy and Farce. Dramatic dialogue, which represents nature as it really is,
though neither in the most elevated nor yet in the most familiar style may fairly be denominated Comedy: for every incident introduced there might have happened...

Tragedy is made up of more extraordinary events...

Every feature of its character is so much above common nature that, were people off stage to act, speak, or dress in a similar style, they would be thought fit for Bedlam... it may be a nobler species of entertainment than Comedy... As to farce... I have no objection to its being called caricature..."^62

As Hogarth suggests, there is no reason why the 'most sublime' art should not be concerned with low subjects,^63 not by elevating them to superior positions in some moral hierarchy, but by the force of the art itself. This is an exceedingly unromantic approach, and I should like to mention again that it is the influence of the eighteenth century, through Browning's father, which is most formative in Browning's art.

I mentioned earlier that I considered both Fifine at the Fair and Strolling Actresses to be works in which the theme could be described as metamorphosis. The puzzle with metamorphosis is, of course, which is the real thing - is the caterpillar more real than the butterfly, or marble than limestone? They are plainly not the same thing. This problem is clearly described by Gombrich:^64

"We can see the picture as either a rabbit or a duck.

It is easy to discover both readings. It is less easy to describe what happens when we switch from one interpretation to the other... To answer this question, we are compelled to look for what is 'really there', to see the shape apart from its interpretation, and this, we soon discover, is not really possible... Illusion, we will find, is
hard to describe or analyse, for though we may be intellectually aware that any given experience must be an illusion, we cannot, strictly speaking, watch ourselves having an illusion."

This highlights one of the most subtle controls which both Hogarth and Browning exercise over their subjects: Don Juan cannot be as conscious of himself as we are of him (and as Browning is of him); and similarly, to themselves the Actresses cannot be goddesses though we (and Hogarth) can have the illusion of their being so. How different this is from portraiture, where the painter or writer must fix a permanent, unshifting impression of the sitter for the viewer. 65

In Fifine or Strolling Actresses, the process, not the image, is the key to the art. A portrait can be served by biographical knowledge of the sitter, for instance, so portrait painters have traditionally displayed this man's favourite horse, the other's country house, a third in his library.

The comparison with Hogarth's approach should be obvious - variety and intricacy were his standards, not any fixed general principle or ideal form. His debt to Dutch low-life painting is as great as Browning's. As Roland Barthes remarked, 66 such pictures depend upon a view of the world in which humanity itself is the only real subject.

In both Strolling Actresses and Fifine, the constant motion of the mind from one point intricately to the next is the essential vehicle for understanding. This does defy translation into another medium precisely because it will not stand still long enough for a satisfactory parallel to be discovered. Barthes describes the manner of looking at a Dutch painting thus: 67

"The only way to find out what is going on in a Dutch painting is to look at every detail, one after another, from side to side and from top to bottom, as if it were an accountant's report, making sure not to over-
look... (any)... perfectly rendered object representing
still another item in the patiently compiled sum of things
owned or used by man..."

In looking at Strolling Actresses, it is unnecessary for the viewer
to find 'the right' path around the picture: maybe I should start
with the triangle of beauty and you with Ganymede's toothache, but
we could not thus disturb the relation which each part of the picture
has to the rest and therefore we should 'add up' the details coherently.

In Fifine, Browning has tried to establish relations between the
various parts of his poem which would provide a similarly unmistakable
structure: he repeats lines or phrases or even ideas so that they
punctuate the progress of the poem as the figures punctuate the space
in Hogarth's print. Loosely, these repetitions are best seen as links,
spatial or structural in effect, rather than iterations: they are not
to be confused with lyrical repetitions of harmonious sounds such as
we might find in Tennyson. The first few lines of Fifine are
repeated nearly word for word in LXXVII, not because they are signalling
a new start but because they are the verbal sign of a mental habit
of the Don's. The second time, as the first, the reader is required
to comprehend the logic of the words, not to take them as read. The
fact that he has read them before acts as a stabilizer to his picture
of the Don, as the return of the eye to Diana's face is in the Hogarth
after an excursion to take in the peeping Tom or the monkey. These
repetitions are completely different from the dance-like, mood-
creating echoes of lyric verse: instead of belonging primarily to
the form of the work (as the repeated lines of a villanelle or rondeau
do), they are entirely concerned with the subject-matter of the poem
and the understanding of that subject. They are completely unlike the
return of a theme in music. Their reiteration is very like the return
of the eye to Diana's face, for instance: the face has been there all
the time, and the fact that the viewer now chooses to go back to it
indicates his own advance through the matter of the picture. Just so does the repetition of Don Juan's "like husband and like wife", a phrase which only partly alerts the reader's sense to the force of the word 'like' when it occurs first in the first section of the poem, acquire far more specific meaning when Browning causes him to repeat it in section LXXXVII. In this latter section, the phrase is integrated into a discussion of the value of falsity - Juan claims that only through pretence can the real and true be perceived; thus when he reminds Elvire of the phrase, it has the effect of recalling the original force of it, and qualifying it by the far richer context of knowledge about his character than could be possible at the beginning of the poem. Further, it now represents a feature of his argument as well: he has just argued that appearances can only be "false", since only essences are "true", and therefore his own married state ("like husband and like wife") must be part of the seeming world from which the truth needs to be interpreted. Yet from the reader's point of view, it has a third function, beside those of showing his character and the nature of his argument: it succinctly displays the logical flaw in both, for he argues backwards as well as forwards. Thus, he argues that truth is to be gleaned from false appearances; but that is not logical in reverse, which is how he uses it, claiming that the truth is therefore contained only in the false. Similarly, he claims and maybe believes that his wife's virtue can only be proven by intimate comparison with those of other women: which seems in practice to mean that he ignores his wife in order to search out comparisons. Thus, as Hogarth both identifies the central figure in Strolling Actresses as a player and gives her attributes of a goddess, thereby complicating her relation with her context to the point of paradox; so Browning casts doubt on Juan's veracity at the same time as the ostensible aim of his monologue is to prove it. For each artist, the busy and intricate relation of the matters within the work is the prime instrument by which the reader/viewer may understand.
Fifine at the Fair is arguably the most "difficult" poem in all Browning's oeuvre, capable of inspiring the most divergent interpretations from critics who find a deal of common ground when discussing his other poems. The major difficulty of interpretation lies in the intense originality of the form of the poem, coupled with its abstraction of expression. Both of these features stem from the adoption of a method which is common in painting, namely, that the poem has a sequence which is not related to the apparent chronology of the poem. For clarification, I shall again refer to Strolling Actresses. In this picture, the question of whether all the events shown were 'really' simultaneous cannot arise because they are related by a more important formal control which determines their relevance to each other. Thus, the fact that Apollo is definitely dimmed by Diana is so important to the ironic mythology of the work that one does not protest - "But he is standing on her petticoat!" In short, the reason for the juxtaposition is so plain and so befits the rest of the picture that the consideration of 'realistic' likelihood does not obtrude. Or, to put it another way, the reality of the picture is stronger than the viewer's desire to see his own world mirrored. This is the effect which Browning seeks to create in Don Juan's monologue. The interior reality of Don Juan's mind is open for inspection, but cannot be understood by general reference outside the poem. Only his data are available as references as are Hogarth's for his picture. Browning has adopted the figure of Don Juan, as Hogarth has the mythological ones, completely. With this premise, there is no question of sympathy for Don Juan: he is, by definition, one of the few among us who gets all his pleasures here and now, faithfully following his own desires. But for Browning, perhaps, for Hogarth too, the stereotype is capable of individual embodiment in a totally credible and understandable human being. Thus instead of writing about this villainous character in order to provide the reader with reasons to condemn
him, Browning accepts from the start that he is a villain, and the interest begins there, with the question of what it is like to be thus. As the poem progresses, the question is answered, but no further moral directive is given beyond that contained in the original stereotype. Our understanding of Don Juan does not reconcile us to his character or his behaviour: but it does assure us that he is not stupid and that he cannot be dismissed in the sense that arriving at a judgement of him implies. Even this quite specific feature of the poem has an echo in Strolling Actresses; for the document lying on the bed informs us that this is the actresses’ last performance, their profession on the eve of being banned: the judgement has already been pronounced, and the picture, neither protesting against nor supporting the ban in any way, can therefore exist in that narrativeless, meditative space where judgement is unnecessary.

If we isolate for a moment the 'plot' of the poem, its irrelevance to the real substance will quickly appear. The story is that Don Juan, a wealthy, cultivated inhabitant of Pornic, watches a caravan arrive for the fair the following day. Next day, he takes a swim in the sea, and in the late afternoon takes his wife, Elvire, to see the fair, though his real concern is to give the acrobat, Fifine, enough money to ensure she will give him her favours later. He may even have arranged matters with her the night before, as they seem well-acquainted, but if so, the poem gives no 'evidence' of it. Having paid Fifine, he takes his wife for a long walk which leads past the village cemetery, along the beach, and up to a prehistoric monument; and then they return to their house on the outskirts of the town, where Fifine is hanging about expectantly, and the Don disappears into the dusk with her. This sequence, however, is entirely irrelevant to the real flow of the poem: what I have strung together as a 'story' is merely a series of fragments which in the poem itself are completely integrated into the
course of the Don's speech. The events, which I singled out to make
the story, are in fact of no importance or meaning at all unless seen
in the context of the Don's arguments before and after they occur.
Thus, his giving the gold to Fifine is, in context, a completely ambiv-
alent action, because it fits in so pat with his argument about how wild
gypsy folk still need to steal bits and bobs from civilized householders
like himself and Elvire. He then surmises how Fifine will give the coin
to her husband, the strong-man, who is, Juan claims, a real man in Fifine's
eyes, unlike himself. Yet apparently Elvire weeps. She notes his action
rather than his words, and the fact that she does so absolves us from
doing the same - unless we wish to side only with the ghostly wife. In
this way, the poem merely uses events as a painter might use highlights -
to throw into sharp relief what would be less well-lit, though not obscure,
without them.

Even more is wrong, however, with the habitual seeking of direction
from the course of the narrative when it comes to this poem. This
unsuitability is obvious from the way Elvire just disappears when the
Don is not thinking of her: at the end of the poem, for instance, or
during the long passages where the Don is working out his arguments
about the contrasting natures of men and women, or from his dream.
At one point during the early part of his monologue though he is
apparently addressing her, he tells the addressee:

"Stay start of quick moustache" (XI)

Obviously, Elvire is not, even at this early stage, really or solidly
present in the Don's monologue or mind. She is given no fixed reality
for the reader to grasp. The effect of this is to heighten the
phoniness, not of the Don's arguments, but of his awareness of the world
around him. His views do not reflect events, though he uses all manner
of phenomena to illustrate his ideas. In the unfolding of his person-
ality to the reader, only one thing is required - the focus of his ego.
His actions provide no real information which is not there in his own
view of himself. All his imagery works towards himself, not outwards.

If we consider the way in which a picture is organized, we may arrive at a better method for reading Don Juan's excogitations. Reynolds remarked that, in contrast with poetry, "what painting does it does at one blow". He did not imply by this that one glance is sufficient for a mind to understand a painting, but that the parts of the picture bear a constant relation to each other, so that the viewer may return from one to another without the actual time taken for comprehending being relevant to the relation. The picture can establish a complete pattern on the mind instantly, though the meaning of the work can only emerge after this pattern has been examined part by part. This latter process, of examination part by part of an object whose basic proportions are established by a glance, but not yet understood, seems to me to illuminate Browning's method in this difficult poem, and to be of relevance throughout his work. Instead of an initial pattern established by a glance, which plainly can have no real verbal or aural equivalent, he takes a figure with a legend of its own as his basic fixed point of reference and then moves around the character of this figure in his imagination as a painter would move (or his viewer follow his moves) around his canvas. Thus the fair, let's say, is placed in a central position initially, and the artist's (Browning's) hand then moves over to the beach at the left and completes that part of the background, moving occasionally back to add a touch to the figure of Fifine at the fair, to adjust the colour of her garb where it is necessary as the whole tone of the picture develops under his brush. He moves over his images, time after time, with new tints to enrich and control their already-formed shapes. At one moment, as he works to portray her pain, yet keep it as no more than an element in the whole, Elvire seems to him like a lily: but no sooner has the essential feminity of that idea
moved him than he realizes that Fifine has a touch of the lily about her too, so back goes the mental brush to tone down her scarlet and refine it with reflections of the pure white. Browning directs his reader about the foreground and background nature of these details by the Don's way of putting them:

"Yet still her (Fifine's) phantom stays
Opposite, where you stand: as steady 'neath our gaze -
The live Elvire's and mine - though fancy-stuff and mere Illusion, to be judged, - dream-figures - without fear Or favour, those the false, by you and me the true..."

(XXVI)

Ironically, yet logically, after pretending it is Fifine who will be judged, he turns to 'judge' Elvire in the beauty contest, and not Fifine. The Don's words repeatedly direct the reader towards this overall view: his own images are always fragmentary and would be unsatisfactory if they were intended to be 'word-painting' in the usual meaning of the phrase. They are individually as roughly portrayed as the objects strewn on the floor of Strolling Actresses, and for the same aesthetic reason: Don Juan's grub-into-butterfly, his bubblefish, tulip, skiff or brook, like Hogarth's mitre, helmet, chamber pot or lyre, are intended not as studies in themselves but as subordinate parts of the main idea of the whole work. Their technique relates entirely to their context.

This technique is fundamentally metonymous, since proximity and adjacency are the real dictators of relevance and meaning within the works. The problem with Fifine seems to be that this method will not provide an 'answer' for the reader to take away with him. When dealing with a picture, this problem is not usual, perhaps because we more readily accept an aesthetic idea instead of a moral one as the nearest way of expressing the work's intention, or possibly because its visual format is a much more memorable way of presenting
specifically aesthetic values. However this may be, it seems to me that Browning's intentions in Fifine are poetic and not moral, in the same way as Hogarth's Strolling Actresses might be considered more poetic in tone than Industry and Idleness. It may well be more than coincidental that, for such a work, both Hogarth and Browning should choose the theatrical business as subject matter in order to work out a series of paradoxes or illusions about being and seeming.

If then, Fifine is to be read so that the metonymic structure controls the effects of its imagery and hence its meaning, what effect does this have on a reading of the poem? Firstly, it dispenses with the need for a story-line, the irrelevance of which was described earlier. Secondly it dispenses with symbolic reading of the imagery beyond those symbolic intentions indicated by the speaker: thus, his original image of the butterfly in Amphibian (Prologue) is not allowed to pass as a rather fey symbol for the soul throughout the poem, as Fifine and the fair are commonly described with the same image. The result of this dual application - apparently so contradictory - is to debunk Don Juan's habit of mind. On closer reading of the Amphibian Prologue, the idea even as Don Juan first expresses it is inconsistent and degenerates into mere language-manipulation, rather than thought, for he specifically sees himself as relaxed, content and alive as he swims, and this 'soul' of a butterfly as endangered, pitying him or suffering on his account, for what he is plainly enjoying. Thus even at the very beginning, Browning has so clear an idea of Don Juan's personality as to be able half to con his reader by his subject's eloquence, while sowing the seeds of scepticism even in the very image which seems so virtuous until we meet it a second time. The second time, the butterfly is so irretrievably connected with the grub that from then on, the whole emphasis of Don Juan's 'ideal' thoughts sounds hollow! In short, this is not working by the force of the metaphor:
the metaphor is a trick of Don Juan's to exploit the natural desire of whatever woman he is addressing to 'improve' him. If goodness talks in metaphors and possibly euphemisms, Don Juan is quite capable of using the very vague potency of those words to turn its ideas upside down, and 'prove' as he does to Elvire, that he loves her more because he runs after Fifine, while her role (and Fifine's) is just to serve his ego. All the images he uses flatter his thoughts. At one point, he can't even go on with his 'argument' without some handy symbol to use to give his intention a form (the bubblefish), and yet even at that moment he rejects the reality of the fish for his own demonstrable idea of it:

"I wish some wind would waft this way a glassy bubblefish
0' the kind the sea inflates, and show you, once detached
From wave....

...... or no, the event is better told than watched." (my italics)
(LXXII)

Or again:

".....there frisk
In shoal there - porpoises? Dolphins, they shall and must
Cut through the freshening clear - dolphins, my instance just!" (my italics)
(LXXVIII)

The process he prefers is so verbal that the metaphysical impact he can have is nil: he can't operate the abstractions he needs to excuse himself and his behaviour without borrowing imagery, sometimes even cliché, from the world around him. His diatribe on the phallic symbol has precisely the effect of de-bunking his other diatribes on the respective roles of women and men, on how to carve a Michaelangelo, or how to perform the judgement of Paris and end up preferring your own most neglected possession (wife) to Helen of Troy or any saint one pleases to name. When this finally ludicrous argument is performed by him on the subject not just of a phallic symbol, but on the subject of a phallic symbol which is tamely lying hid, the phoniness of the
arguments must be plain. Just as, with Strolling Actresses, even at
the very moment one is enjoying Hogarth's wit in juxtaposing the
symbols of divinity which might 'convince' you in a play, the real impact
of the scene is the humble, workaday ordinariness of it all.

Yet this is not to say that such a poem as Fifine can merely be
appreciated at the level of its power to describe and analyse Browning's
figure of Don Juan. The arguments which the Don uses are in themselves
not only interesting, but at times are suspiciously convincing - but
where conviction comes so glibly surely we should suspect that the
thing which convinces is a bit familiar. When Juan argues that only by
experience can the truth be learned and that the truth has no other real
embodiment than that which living experiences provide, it is hard not
to feel that he has a point. Mrs. Orr's method of boiling down
the Don's arguments into such abstract expressions as might well suit
a cultivated and liberal gentleman, is bound to present him not just in
the best light but in a false one, and yet what other method of analysis
is available? The real bite of this poem lies not just in its clever
portrayal of a personality, but in its power to deceive - its illusory
quality. Earlier, I quoted Gombrich's observation that we cannot watch
ourselves having an illusion. This is a precise description of the
major critical problem with this poem. It is not turgid or uncontrolled,
as one might argue Sordello was; it gives the reader very clearly the
impression that it knows what it's talking about, yet no really satisfac-
tory critical (as opposed to biographical - and Browning himself
was very opposed to any biographical reading of this poem, hardly sur-
prisingly) explicator has been found, precisely because no criticism
yet has succeeded in realizing that it has two functions to perform
instead of one - of being both critic and criticized. All Don Juan's
persuasiveness stems from a lack of self-knowledge in his hearer.
Elvire's blindly possessive love, which reclaims him so depressingly
in the last line of *The Householder*, must provide no help in the Don's search for himself, since it implies that his real value is that he is here. Her long agony is great for proving what a saint she is, but no help in finding out what he is, and it is explicitly his passion in life to do so. Just so, the reader or critic who seeks in Don Juan's arguments reflections of his or her own ideas is bound to be deceived by him, at least in part. Elvire cannot conceive that he is not loveable since she loves him - but he is so, nonetheless. And for the reader to suspect his own ideas and conclusions because they find vent through Don Juan's mouth, the usual process of reading would have to be reversed, and the reader would have to learn to accept that he is not seeing a familiar world through Don Juan's eyes, but is perusing a completely alien landscape where familiar, acceptable ideas become nightmarish imitations of themselves. Once he has realized this, however, the poem loses its bewildering quality: the ideas, like the images, are counters in Don Juan's game, not in themselves true or false. So we do need to watch ourselves having an illusion, because at the same time as allowing our minds to become the vehicles of Don Juan's speech, we have to observe ourselves reacting.

This process sounds more complicated than it is. As we look at *Strolling Actresses*, we carry out both functions quite easily because the image is so stable. We see an eagle feeding a child but we criticize our perception and see an actress dressed up as an eagle - yet the original impact is retained, so that the image is enriched by our 'double take'. It is more complicated to do this with a poem, but the real trouble is in the poverty of our critical language which has no way of expressing total ambivalence or illusion. Browning's comment, written in Greek on the manuscript of *Fifine*, after the extremely unfavourable reception of the poem was:
"To what words are you turned, for a barbarian nature
would not receive them. For bearing new words to the
Scaeans you would spend them in vain."75

I don't think that the one who was bearing new words was Don Juan,
but Browning himself. It would however have been totally uncharacter-
eristic of Browning's artistry to mean by 'new words' a new moral or
belief which was meant to emerge from the poem. The new words seem
to me to be far more literally intended - a new use of language.
Perhaps a similar thing was meant, in some ways, by the modern artist
who simply painted his entire canvas red - it was an intentional excurs-
sion into the area which even the most 'abstract' painting takes for
granted, that the person looking at the work should be encouraged to
catch himself out in making unnecessary assumptions. For instance,
one might assert that the red rectangle was a symbol of war, relating
the colour to blood and anger - but the very restraint of the work would
have to deny this interpretation! His new use of colour was not to
entertain the viewer with a rehearsal of received ideas, but to make him
aware of the act of viewing. I believe that a similar idea is at least
one of the motives behind all Browning's characterisations, and that it
has been taken to a logical extreme in Fifine.

In his essay on Hamlet, T.S. Eliot argues76 that "qua work of art,
the work of art cannot be interpreted; there is nothing to interpret"
and he later explains art as "an objective correlative" to the emotion
of the artist. Hence, he argues, the grounds for criticism are solely
comparative and the aim of interpretation is purely historical. The
logical, though unexpressed, complement to this approach is that the
aesthetic aspects of a given work cannot be discussed, that they are,
perhaps, idiosyncratic or purely technical, but certainly inscrutable.
Eliot is really seeing the work of art as a metaphoric expression of
some frame of mind in the artist, which can be accounted for in terms
of the tradition in which he worked and the historical facts which involved him. But with works of art like Browning's, where the effort of the poet is specifically not to portray his own frame of mind or his own time, but those of others, any approach on this line must founder. His works must be considered "qua works of art", and if that presents interpretative problems, then the solution is a wider critical aim. All the aspects of mind to which he appeals are merely obscured by the conviction that poetry is of necessity subjective, seeking an objective correlative. Like the painter, Browning stands away from his work to view it; he sets it within limits which are as clear as the edges of a piece of canvas; he appeals primarily to the pleasure the mind may feel in intricate understanding of stasis, not motion; and to make this appeal, his first step is to deceive (illude) the reader about who is talking in the poem.
PIPPA PASSES AND THE HARLOT'S PROGRESS

Fifine at the Fair and Strolling Actresses are both works of their author's maturity, and represent them in most characteristic forms. The direct influence of Hogarth on Fifine is hard to assess or define because the poem is so completely Browningesque, though, as I have argued, the influence of a deep and early knowledge of Hogarth seems to have led Browning to make a number of assumptions about his own personal style and objective which underlie even his most mature works. Now, however, I should like to compare, more briefly, some of his poems with works of Hogarth's to draw out more particular aspects of this deep-seated influence. The comparison is between Pippa Passes and The Harlot's Progress.

In his section on Pippa, W.C. DeVane comments:77

"As an experiment in dramatic form, Pippa Passes follows no tradition... Intensely original as it is, very few sources have been found for the poem as a whole or for the separate episodes..."

The account which Mrs. Orr gives of the poem's genesis is completely baffling, as Browning's 'explanations' tended to be when he was old of his work when young.78

"Mr. Browning was walking alone, in a wood near Dulwich, when the image flashed upon him of someone walking thus alone through life; one apparently too obscure to leave a trace of his or her passage, yet exerting a lasting though unconscious influence at every step of it; and the image shaped itself into the little silk-winder of Asolo, Felippa or Pippa..."

The poem is profoundly original, as DeVane points out, but this very originality is typical of all Browning's good poems, and he evidently scorned to borrow openly from any other writer,79 though necessarily
signs of his reading interests occasionally appear. Borrowing the
idea of a Progress, however, is a very different thing.

Hogarth's invention of the Progress was a beautifully logical
development of his interest in the drama and the portrayal of character.
The Progress however is free from the restricting time-based values which
Browning found rather hard to manage not just in his plays, but, far worse,
in Sordello. Each of the pictures in The Harlot's Progress provides
complete information for the viewer with that simultaneous quality
which was discussed earlier. The Progress therefore does not really
represent a development (understanding from this word the idea of logical,
predetermined, explicable forward movement). Instead it is more like
a journey, which is consistent in purpose, but which presents the
traveller with no evolving, only a successive experience - of land­
scapes, places, incidents, string together by his own purpose and
existence; otherwise arbitrary. And just as it would be daft to blame
the commuters on the train for a breakdown (though one of them conceiv­
ably could have caused it), in The Harlot's Progress the traps which
Holla Hackabout falls into and the scenes in which she appears do not
reflect blame on her so much as they promote knowledge in the viewer
about those traps and scenes. As Mr. Paulson points out, she remains
essentially innocent. A quick mental comparison with Moll Flanders
will highlight this point: Defoe's harlot is cunning, self-seeking and
very sharply-delineated as an individual, whereas Hogarth's is pretty,
passive and pathetic with almost no personality at all, just sufficient
for her to provide a satisfactory focus for each of the pictures. One
could have no interest in her personally beyond them.

Pippa herself is also a curiously flat creation. She is not so
much lacking in personality as overwhelmingly young. Her optimism,
her willingness to play with life and the fact that she is content
to understand none of the scenes we witness, make her a mere focussing
device, as Hogarth's Moll is. Pippa's pretence at 'being' "the happiest four in our Asolo" cannot bring her to realize that not one of them is in fact happy. She unconsciously intrudes upon them with her songs, and awakes in each of them a realization of himself or herself, but certainly this realization is not happy to any of them. To Ottima, it is the realization that there is no 'magnificence in sin'; to Jules, the realization of his own ridiculous pride; Luigi's mother loses her son; and the Monsignor realizes the truth of his own creed that all men sin when a villain whom he finds it easy to despise can tempt him with his own advantage. Pippa, if we look objectively, is completely wrong - and, on this one day at any rate when she has the freedom to enjoy herself, is the only happy one we meet. Hogarth's Harlot too, in the midst of scenes where she appears to be cast in the role of temptress or justly-punished, remains the pale innocent girl from the country, capable of suffering but not of learning, while all the people around her, ostensibly often her betters, in fact exploit her. For, as Mr. Paulson points out, 61 the hemp-beating in Bridewell earned pocket-money for the jailor: the Jewish elderly and the rakish young lovers used her but would not help her when she was in need: and what would the virtuous Gonson, the quarrelsome doctors and the lascivious old parson do without Moll to provide custom for them?

The idea of a Progress in a Hogarthian sense, then, is not a story but a sequence of scenes which illustrate an intellectual theme. The Harlot herself is a focussing device: she determines the aspects of the scenes and provides them with continuity of a purely visual - instantly recognisable and appealing - nature. Pippa cannot obviously fill this latter function, though I think it should be clear that she does the former. Nonetheless there is a parallel, albeit a bit tenuous, between the visual appeal, the prettiness, of Hogarth's Harlot throughout 62 and Pippa's function. Pippa's songs and her enthusiastic description of dawn which opens the poem provide points of definition within
the work of a certain sort of beauty. Browning controls his rhymes, the length of his lines, the style of speech throughout with the referent precision of patterning which an engraver would use, and Pippa's songs are like lyrical, smooth, highlit passages in the prints. Naturally, they attract the audience, for they are areas of high definition which in themselves need little questioning, and which set certain standards for what surrounds them. Thus, for example, the lyric of 'A King Lived Long Ago' plainly expresses a standard to Luigi and he determines to try himself by it. The lyric about 'Kate the Queen' is so plain in its meaning that it can save Jules from even worse pride than that which he takes in his sculpture, and make him realize the need to live up to his 'ideal', not just to profess it. In each instance, Pippa's intrusion of song is in fact the focussing device for every successive scene, bringing it into relevance to the theme of the work as the Harlot does the scenes in her Progress.

W.C.DeVane thinks Pippa's pat intrusions are too co-incidental and finds this to be a major fault in the poem,\(^3\) and if we were to judge this dramatic fragment as if it were a 'slice of life' he might perhaps be right. But the whole structure and point of the poem actually depends upon these moments where the lyrical power of Pippa's voice recalls people to their own ideals - not hers. Co-incidence is of the essence: unless these forces mesh, the observations which the poem makes about its characters have no integrity. This kind of critical misapprehension, of seeing the work as if it were a photograph of life, is also commonly applied to Hogarth, against whom the charge of being over-co-incidental is also raised. Such criticism of works where artificial juxtaposition is part of the essential wittiness of the composition really displays only the critic's unwillingness to 'read' the work before he makes his judgements.
Neither in *Pippa Passes* nor in *The Harlot’s Progress* is the personality of the central figure of much account, yet in both the function of the central figure as a character is vital. There is a distinction to make here between Hogarth’s Rake and his Harlot: the Rake has a developed personality throughout and is capable of being driven mad, whereas the Harlot is continually passive, making no decisions and merely suffering the consequences of weakness and poverty. Similarly, the protagonists in Browning’s pure monologues have developed personalities, but his Pippa does not: her character is completely confined by her dramatic function in the poem. Both the Harlot and Pippa remain curiously isolated from the people around them, failing to relate to them in any active way, and for quite similar aesthetic reasons. Pippa seems to be accepted by the poor girls who compare wishes, but she doesn’t speak to them and indeed seems intimidated by them. She has no knowledge herself that she is Monsignor’s niece, and no revelation is made to her. She functions, in the poem, by simple contrast with her world, not because she has any power in it. There is real originality in this idea for a poem, but it is not hard to imagine it providing a fine picture or series of pictures. D.G. Rossetti was tempted to illustrate *Pippa Passes*.

Following Hogarth’s example, several Victorian painters also tried to create Progresses, and in these too, the essential weakness of the central figure provides each picture with a subtle focus, so that the series amounts not to a story told in pictures but to a vision of a life. For instance, Augustus Egg’s progress of a Fallen Woman, called *Past and Present*, really does not tell the story which is inferred by commentators: the lapse of years between I and II is hard to bind into a story, and the assumption that the destitute woman with the young child under the arches by the Thames in III is the faithless wife from I is almost unnecessary to the point of the painting and the series. William Powell Frith’s more explicit series, *The Road to Ruin*, has been
called "A Victorian Rake's Progress", but this is far too general an application of the title, for whereas Hogarth's Rake is given a complete personality and history of that personality in the first plate — his own cruelty and selfishness as part of the legacy from his miser father — Frith's Ruin is never endowed with personality, only with weakness. All the considerable irony of his progress depends on this, as does that of Hogarth's Moll. Frith has a different debt to Hogarth from Egg, since there is little symbolic detail in his series, and where some seems to occur it can be puzzling in a narrative, though not in a visual, sense. Thus in the final picture of the series, the toys on the floor and the empty cradle speak clearly of the absence of the wife and children, but do not account for it. (Lister p.70: "There is no indication of what has become of his wife and children"). The emphasis of their absence is on the total incapacity of the Ruin to cope by or for himself: it is as irrelevant to wonder where they are as it is to suspect that Jules, Ottima, Luigi and Monsignor will relapse after Pippa has passed. He is, in his own way, as pathetic as Moll Hackabout, moving in a world where all are ready to exploit or blame him — so vividly conjured up by the clutching greedy hands extended towards him, in his white suit, at the races in II — and yet all desert him; whose only aim in life is apparently the destruction of this unsatisfactory self. And Pippa too is exploited, though a spirit of generosity and optimism inhabits her which removes her far from the pathetic roles of the Harlot or the Ruin or the Fallen Woman.

I suggested that this painterly function of a central figure to embody and focus a theme through a progress of pictures requires that the figure should be a character, but not necessarily a personality. I am aware that, for this distinction to be significant, a good deal more definition and illustration is required. The general applications of the two words however will show something of my meaning: 'personality'
is a word which is comparatively modern in emphasis, implying the individuality of the person under discussion, whereas 'character' is of far older application, implying the relation between the particular or individual qualities of the person and some conceivable type which represents a logical combination of qualities. In this sense, then, character can reasonably be inferred even from something so apparently impersonal as role; whereas personality needs to be analysed to be understood, and need not bear any fixed relation to the role it is required to fill.

Character then can well come within the bounds of painting, since role can be shown visually, more easily than personality, since painting is descriptive rather than analytical. The distinction is also useful with regard to many plays, where it would be quite intolerable if every figure the author wished to present has to be fully analysed into a personality: instead, by observing general configurations of qualities, characters can be rapidly suggested quite satisfactorily and the main theme of the play can be concentrated upon.

Hogarth's own interest in the theatre and his desire that his works should be viewed in this light are well known:

"... let the figures in either pictures or prints be considered as players ... I have endeavoured to treat my subjects as a dramatic writer...""88

"... I wished to compose pictures on canvas, similar to representations on the stage; and further hope that they will be tried by the same test, and criticized by the same criterion...""89

"...I have ever considered the knowledge of character, either high or low, to be the most sublime part of the art of painting...""90

Plainly, it was not the dramatic movement of the play which attracted him, but the way in which character was revealed by context and contrast; and the completely integrated structure which such a means
of communicating gave rise to. His paintings of the Beggars’ Opera give evidence of this. Paulson notes that Hogarth had begun to establish ‘psychological’ relationships between the figures in his conversation pieces and that the scene from the Beggars’ Opera was built around the relationship between the actors, stage and an aristocratic audience. In fact, though the interpretation of these relationships may be psychological, they are visual, and I believe as Paulson does, that it was equally visual values to which Hogarth was attracted in the theatre.

This idea of character provides the genesis for Browning’s. The assessment of values through context (rather than assertion), which is typically required of an audience when looking at a Dutch genre painting, or equally while watching a comedy on stage; the process which is accumulative and descriptive, not reductive and analytical; and the sense that a common knowledge of (or belief in) types provides the ground for real understanding of particular cases - all these things are basic in appreciating the creations of Browning’s mind and art, as they are to Hogarth’s. It is, I believe, a mistake to see Browning merely as one who achieved by insight what modern psychology has later confirmed, as this view totally distorts the logic of his development as a poet. This logic depends upon the growth, from roots in the art and tastes of his father’s generation, of an infinitely subtle and original art to study human character; one which remained based however, on ideas of character types whose fundamental correctness could be enriched into truth by the power of the poet’s imagination.

Browning’s father’s favourite poet was Alexander Pope. Through Pope’s translation, he taught his son about Greek mythology before the boy could begin learning Greek. At the same time, he gave the child not just the basis for an interest in Greek to be fulfilled later, but also a key to the magic meaning of so many of the pictures at Dulwich. From seven or eight years of age, he would have been familiar with the themes
of these pictures - the theme and its expression in paint, perhaps, inextricably intertwined. In the Preface to his translation of the Iliad, Pope makes the following point, that "every one (of the characters of the Iliad) has something so singularly his own, that no painter could have distinguished them more by their features, than the poet has by their manners." This, he argues, is part of Homer's pre-eminence in inventive power. The form of Pope's expression however suggests that he sees character as something which a painter can most readily express, and that it is a sign of excellence for a poet to match the suggestive power of paint in describing or evoking character. Pope evidently strove for such excellence in his translation, contrasting the speeches of the heroes with subtle emphasis. In Book III, for instance, where Hector chastises Paris for cowardice and makes him blush, the contrast of tone which Pope has caught in Paris' reply is startling: where Hector blusteringly breaks up his lines with angry exclamations ("Unhappy Paris! But to women brave!... Beauty and youth: in vain to these you trust..."), Paris replies with rather soft humility which finds expression in comparatively tripping, gentle rhythms ("'Tis just, my brother, what your anger speaks... Thy gifts I praise; nor thou despise the charms /With which a lover golden Venus arms..."). The Gods and Heroes of Pope's Homer were also to be found on the walls of the Dulwich Gallery: there Browning as a child would have beheld Rubens' generous, matronly Venus and Poussin's sweet young version of the same lady.95 The contrast between these two representations of the same character is extreme, yet it would be foolish to think that they are mutually exclusive. The character of Venus is remote from both these embodiments of her, and also from Pope's, yet each of these embodiments is convincing as a realization of her type. You would not turn from Rubens' Venus to Poussin's saying that Rubens had her wrong: you might prefer Poussin's smoother, more 'classical' approach, but could not deny Rubens the right to express his Venus otherwise.
In fact there could hardly be two more dissimilar pictures from apparently similar material. Rubens' Venus is wonderfully domestic; she sits credibly indoors, being naked, and her motherly fecundity is symbolized by the fountain of milk from her breast pouring messily into Cupid's mouth. She watches him with tender and contented looks, taken out of herself by the joy of feeding the child. Cupid's arrows and Mars' shield both rest on the floor completely dominated by her figure, and do not disturb the sense of domestic bliss. Mars in his armour merely adds to the feeling of security, since his watchful look suggests that he is prepared to protect the mother and child. In this realization, then, Venus is warm, motherly, free of vanity or selfish desires. Poussin's girlish Venus is almost the reverse; she seems posed, toying elegantly with a trinket in one hand, and her gaze seems not to be engaged with the fight going on before her, but turned inward. She seems to be thinking of herself. Mercury is trying to draw her attention to the fight, his impatient gesture providing as sharp a contrast with her posed relaxation as his muscular torso does with her smoothly rounded form. The shadow which falls so exactly down the centre of her face emphasizes its symmetry, whereas his face is in sharp profile; in every way she seems remote, beautiful, and dangerous - as the squabble at her feet between Cupid and a little Satyr suggests, provoking violence as much as she inspires the music and poetry symbolized by the mandolin and manuscripts on the other side of the foreground. This lady is a power unto herself, not softly in need of protection like Rubens' Venus, but boldly posed under a stormy sky and coldly calm before the effects of her own influence. And yet Pope is right to say that, even in such divergent visions, the character of Venus is more vividly displayed than would easily be achieved in words. His own Venus in the Iliad is both sly and threatening, but is so much involved in moving the plot along that she is less clear as a character than, say, Andromache, whose long speech of agony is a deeply moving expression of her character held in focus by the tragedy of her situation.
Yet each of these characters is entirely without the kind of delineation which we describe as personality. They are not just types, for their detail is as sharp and consistent as if they were being described for their own sake as individuals, but they are held into roles by the context of the work which gives them their existence, and the particular forms which they take therefore relate aesthetically to their surroundings. Browning then, would know who Venus was and what she did in words from Pope's Homer, and would see before him two completely different but equally convincing pictures of her. The result of this diversity would be the realization that basic patterns or types were available to provide themes which the individual talent could use with no loss of its own originality or style. Further, the co-incidence of his knowledge of words and pictures may well have developed in him a tendency to consider that visual representations were clear and lucid above the average power of words. The result is possibly evident in the reliance he places on the mind's eye of the reader to comprehend very quickly the ideas behind sensually-expressed images.

Another remark of Pope's in his Preface to the Iliad seems to me to give an important clue to seminal influences on the direction of Browning's art.

"The speeches are to be considered as they flow from the characters, being perfect or defective as they agree or disagree with the manners of those who utter them.... 'Everything in it has manner' (as Aristotle expresses it), that is, everything is acted or spoken ... In Virgil.... the speeches often consist of general reflections or thoughts which might be equally just in any person's mouth upon the same occasion. As many of his persons have no apparent characters, so many of his speeches escape being applied and judged by the rule of propriety. We often think of the author himself as we read Virgil, than when
we are engaged in Homer... Homer makes us hearers, and

Virgil leaves us readers..."

The implication of these remarks is that the portrayal of character
is not just the prime beauty of Homer's poem but the key to its art: the sign of its 'propriety'. The idea that this exists because of the
manner of utterance of the character, that whatever a character says
must be judged in the context of his character, is really a dramatic one. Hogarth related it to the way a play works in the theatre but,
like Pope, he stressed that its importance was to understand character.
For both of them, as for the Dutch Painters according to Barthes, the function of art is emphatically human. Perhaps in this light,
Browning's comment on Forster makes some real sense:

"The historical decoration was purposely of no more importance than a background requires; and my stress lay on the incidents in the development of a soul; little else is worth study. I, at least, always thought so..... others may one day think so."

Here he is purposely distinguishing between the individual, historical phenomenon which a whole personality would be and the idea of some
typical form embedded in the particularities, which he calls the soul. For him, it is the motivating pattern of the person, and the more
intricate and subtle its realization in the ideal form of a poem, the more various and interesting would be its 'truth'. There is a
similarity in this idea of a human being to the Popean 'ruling passion'; or the explanation which Hogarth gives of his use of the word 'character'
in The Analysis of Beauty:

"But perhaps the word character, as it relates to form, may not be quite understood by everyone, tho' it is so frequently used; nor do I remember to have seen it explained anywhere. Therefore on this account - and also
as it will further show the use of thinking of form and motion together, it will not be improper to observe, - that notwithstanding a character, in this sense, chiefly depends on a figure being remarkable as to its form, either in some particular part, or all together; yet surely no figure, be it ever so singular, can be perfectly conceived as a character, till we find it connected with some remarkable circumstance or cause, - for such particularity of appearance; for instance, a fat bloted person doth not call to mind the character of a Silenus till we have not only joined the idea of voluptuousness with it..."

All these - Browning, Pope and Hogarth - connect form and motion in a similar way to evidence character. From a basic idea of type, they evolve a particular character by a process of moving away from and back to the original form which loses, thus, its vagueness and its predictableness, but which retains the informing logic of the original idea. Thus in Pope's Epistle on the Knowledge and Characters of Men, he comments:

"...the difference is as great between
The optics seeing, as the objects seen.
All Manners take a tincture from our own,
And some discolour'd thro' our Passions shown..."

This complements his idea that Homer's excellence lies in the distinct and complex creation of individual characters in the Iliad. He later explains that the way to know men is to

"Search then the RULING PASSION: There alone
The Wild are constant and the Cunning known..."

and follows his own advice in the portrait he gives of Wharton:

"His Passion, still to covet general praise,
His Life, to forfeit it a thousand ways..."
It is probably more than co- incidental in the first quotation given that Pope uses highly visual imagery in expressing the idea of character, and again, the agreement with his words in the Preface to the Iliad is striking. In his Characters and Caricaturas, it is notable that Hogarth's point of departure for Character is the copying of three very famous heads of Raphael: from this, the logic of the rest of the print develops. This suggests that Hogarth was using these heads as references, so that the 'cloud' of heads which rises to the top of the picture, each displaying an individual character, derives a sense of potential from the known contexts of the three original heads at the base. In these three heads, a condensed form and function is contained. Thus for both Pope and Hogarth, the basic form is characterised through the motion which engages the audience's mind.

This process is also fundamental to Browning's method of evoking character. In Pippa Passes we see the process at work in an untypically naked way, for Browning has reached the point of dispensing with narrator (which he had not yet done when he wrote Pauline, Paracelsus, or Sordello) but has not yet developed the engrossing central figure which becomes his monologuist later. Thus his conception of the way his art can present character as such is newly dominant in Pippa Passes. In his plays, contemporary work, he was finding extraordinary difficulties in making the 'development of the souls' he was writing about co-incide with the development of the plays' actions. Thus in A Blot in the 'Soutcheon (the play which Dickens commended so highly) the ridiculous (to modern eyes) quality of the events of the last act, culminating in Tresham's succumbing to emotion or apoplexy, really stems from the fact that the events are irrelevant to the tragedy, which has already been achieved in the attitudes displayed by the protagonists. It is very wasteful to kill them off as well. In less extreme measure, the same inequality is apparent in Browning's other plays: it seems as if
having the actual characters there to be disposed of at the end is a problem to him, and the resolution of each of his plots adds nothing to, and therefore detracts from, the effectiveness of the play.

What is, however, evident already in these plays is that Browning is engrossed with the study of character as such and that he does not require, even cannot use, dramatic events in the course of that study. Thus in Strafford, though Browning has obviously planned the action with the greatest care, reserving the appearance of the hero until the second act yet directing all the attention towards that appearance, when Strafford finally does appear, he tends to speak essentially like a monologue. The King interrupts a little, but even at this early stage of his work, Browning plainly conceives character in terms of self-display, not of interaction with others. Strafford's affection for the King seems arbitrary and unwise when we witness the King's inability to return and unworthiness to inspire it; and so the very sight of the relationship seems almost to detract from the power of Strafford's speech. If we compare this with the references Andrea del Sarto makes to his wife, we shall see how much more effective Browning is at character display when he has not got to show it theatrically. Andrea's affection for his wife takes its place in our sense of the wholeness of his character, showing his willingness to deceive himself not just about her but about his talent too: whereas the effect of the King's irresponsive and unscrupulous abuse of Strafford's love makes it seem silly for Strafford himself to tell us about it - the events should speak of it, but after this long section of self-display, it is redundant for them to do so. Luria too speaks out his thoughts to reveal his character and his death cannot add to our impression of him in the way that Othello's (his obvious forbear) does. In all these characters, Browning seems to follow Pope's injunction about the propriety of speech with such thoroughness that he finds no use for action.
If we re-cast this idea with a different emphasis, the influence of the Hogarthian idea of how to display character will emerge. If instead of action, which Browning seemed unable to achieve, we look for Hogarth's 'motion' as the adjunct to form, we shall find riches. Though Luria's speeches seem over-explicit when he talks to other characters, if we regard his soliloquy in Act II, we find a far more controlled imagery, a far more interesting and less disjointed flow of ideas, than in the rest of the play. Luria's examination in this soliloquy is of the comparative values to himself of the instinctive and the cultivated; his instinctive trust of Tiburzio contrasted with his admiration for Florentine civilization even when he has evidence of Florentine perfidy. The resolution of the soliloquy which shows how willingly Luria blinds himself to his own danger, gives a genuine completeness to the revelation of his character - his strength and his simplicity of faith being alike alien to and necessary to Florence, yet he himself unable to realize that these very qualities terrify those who do not possess them. Unlike Strafford, Luria does not, here, overlay his speech with disjointed attempts to turn thought into activity on stage. Instead his soliloquy achieves motion in the Hogarthian sense, because it traces the form of his character as Hogarth explains that lines enclose physical form. This traced pattern involves and informs the mind, as Hogarth's lines 'Lead the eye', and this provides the real motion of the passage. Thus, we might say that Browning could find no effective way of transferring his sense of form and motion into a play because this sense actually precluded ordinary dramatic action.

The actual structure of Luria is also an interesting departure from that of his other plays: in all, he strove for some basic unity of action, but in Luria he actually calls the five Acts: 'Morning, Noon, Afternoon, Evening and Night', which is strikingly symbolic of the light in which each act appears, and reminiscent of Hogarth's Four Times of Day.
in that each episode is intended to present a complete mood, suited in some way to the time of day. Paulson describes Morning in Hogarth's series as a vision of coldness, and Evening as one of heat, contrasting the frigid, middle-aged damsel in the former with the lusty matron in the latter. In Luria, the tone is elevated and a bit over-spiritual perhaps, but informed by a related idea as the Morning Act is for hope and ambition, the Noontide for revelation, the Night for despair and self-destruction. This is a structure based on phases rather than events (acts).

There is then, a similar logic behind Browning's sense of structure to that which we find in Hogarth. Though both of them use forms in which dramatic action is precluded, they have both developed their own equivalents, so that neither of them is confined by the stasis in his works. In each case, their equivalents to dramatic action in a play depend upon the audience grasping the motion of the work. Hogarth, for instance, shows a world where objects (or people) are toppling, falling, on the point of shattering; the viewer fills in the motion; Browning with similar effect makes the reader take on the motions of the thought of his characters by providing him with no other entry to the poems. The character of any of his monologuists is achieved just as much by the reader's perceiving, through experiencing, the pattern of his character as the look of any of Hogarth's characters is achieved by the guided passage of the viewer's eye along Hogarth's lines. To Hogarth, it is impossible that the eye should be so engaged without the mind following - a theory which would seem well borne out by Rudolph Arnheim's conclusions in his book, Visual Thinking. Similarly for Browning, the poem's function is to involve the reader's mind, not to induce in him an emotional or spiritual state by mystic or other suggestion.

In Pippa Passes, we have the first real indications of the direction of Browning's talent. In Pauline, Paracelsus and Sordello, the
character of the speaker is not properly identified with what he says, so that in all three the subject matter which the speaker brings up seems to float free in the poem, as if intended to engage the reader at that level, though Browning said many times that this was not the intention. But in *Pippa Passes*, Browning does indeed create a form in which all discussion is relative. The offence which the critic in *The Spectator* felt at the 'moral Tone' shows however the equal ridiculousness of those who see the poem as a homily on humble goodness, for it is just as irrelevant to react to the 'goodness' of Pippa as if this were the only key, as it is to react to the 'evil' of Ottima or Monsignor as if it were. The study of character as such, as we find it in Theophrastus or La Bruyère, Earl or Overbury, in fact precludes such symbolic reading of the function of character, and is far more nearly related to satire. Browning's father gave him a copy of Theophrasus' characters in 1837, and he was already acquainted by that stage of his life with many 'characters' derived from the Theophrastan model, such as are found liberally scattered throughout seventeenth and eighteenth century literature - in Milton, Dryden, Donne, Pope, all of whom Browning knew well. It is likely that he also knew the books of characters, such as Overbury's and Earl's and La Bruyère's, since they link so directly with Theophrastus and since he possessed extracts from the two former writers in a curious anthology called *The Polyanthea; or a Collection of Interesting Fragments*, which might well be described as a book of characters itself since a large proportion of its pieces describe the famous, the bizarre, the unfortunate, the miraculous, and so on. The book seems very well suited to the taste of the young Browning, whom we know to have read avidly such tomes as Nathaniel Wanley's *Wonders of the Little World*, the *Biographie Universelle* and Pilkington's *Dictionary of Painters*. All these books are like dictionaries of character, through which Browning browsed as a child, imbibing I believe not so much particular details as a sense of structure and typical combination. He seems to have loved dictionaries,
and a great deal of his curious vocabulary is actually drawn directly from Johnson's Dictionary which he knew very well, again from quite an early age. 

Even as a child, Browning seems to have shown himself clearly as an accumulator of information and ideas, rather than one who liked a 'good story' or an elegant description. It was the diversity, the multiplicity of things which attracted him and he could be amused by what might seem to us a rather dry kind of book precisely because his own imagination was nourished by the variety of matter he found there.

The way in which this taste complements a knowledge of Dutch genre painting should need little pointing out: the 'adding up' process which Barthes describes as typical of such paintings is also plainly the only logical way to read Wanley or The Polyanthea or Theophrastus. The books have a sprawling and unthematic structure which could not succeed in any painting, but nonetheless they approach the world in a rather similar way, for to their authors, dispassionate observation and consistency of selection are the standards, as they are for Teniers or Ostade. Similarly too, their subject matter is exclusively not 'Human Nature' but people. Theophrastus had in fact invented a literary form where the description of a typical individual had the effect of calling to the reader's mind various real individuals of his own acquaintance - the reverse process of symbolism. Instead of 'believing in' the existence of the thing described and so passing through it to the 'deeper meaning' (i.e. the more general meaning) the reader of Theophrastus takes the general recognisable pattern from him and supplies it with a known reality, which known reality is then clarified or illuminated by the process of his writing. The reader in fact supplies a more specific meaning. This process is described by B. Boyce in Character Sketches in Pope's Poems, where he notes that Pope's character sketches (portraits) were often composed separately and 'incorporated' into the poems later, giving as examples Pope's Atticus and his Chloe. Pope himself puts it this way:
"The fewer still you name, you wound the more;
B-nd is but one; but Harpax is a score..."
(1st Satire, 2nd Book of Horace)

In his introduction, Boyce also remarks that

"The temptation to find living originals and to fall
victim to what is nowadays called the intentional
heresy is more than many readers have been able to
withstand..."

This comment might profitably be considered in relation to Browning's characters too, and it is indeed fundamental to a proper reading of any satirical characterizations. Like the minute realism of a Dutch painting, the actual portraits in satire are the means and not the end of the work. Though we can, with the aid of notes, fill in the blanks which Pope leaves in his poems and which could probably have been filled easily by his contemporaries, there is a very limited point in doing so: Pope's people serve his poetic ends as characters, and the poetic ends do not serve them. The portraits which Hogarth includes in his plates work similarly. Thus there is no real need in any of these cases for the individual personality of the character to be attempted. The point of the portrait is contained within the art. It is as irrelevant to worry over the historical details of Pope's or Hogarth's portraits in such contexts as it would be to undertake to discover the actual tree which Claude used or the particular piece of fruit used in a still life.

Thus it is important to stress that the concern even of realistic artists is with their Art. All the effort they put into creating a convincing picture of the world is a conscious effort at illusion. For their art to work, the audience must accept its forms as complete indicators of reality and must, temporarily at least, forget the artifice. They must not, obviously, say to themselves that: "This is really Gonson, though it looks like any do-gooder disturbing a poor harlot's early cuppa", for that is to say that the art does not take them in -
they see the picture as an intimation of an actual scene which they have missed by an accident of history, and not as a controlled intellectual composition. They must not allow the picture only as a replacement for a missed experience, in short. Plainly they could not see it for itself in this fashion: there is no way in which a square of canvas, a lump of marble, or a page of print can really make the audience 'see' the object it portrays. The audience must realize the picture, sculpture or description with the mind's eye—must in short, see the idea of the picture, sculpture or description—and consciously accept the illusion, just as the artist has laboured consciously to create sufficient stimulus to give that illusion. Gombrich is right in realizing how difficult it is for us "to watch ourselves having an illusion" when there is no real meaning in the squiggle we interpret, but it is the fundamental step of awareness required when we look at a highly finished and completely articulate example of illusionistic or realistic art. The "illusion" is not in this case involuntary, not a mistake of perception, but an opting-in of just the same kind a Coleridge so memorably describes as the act of watching a play—"the willing suspension of disbelief". When we view a Dutch interior or genre painting, just as much as when we view a Monet, we make a decision not to 'disbelieve', not to see just the paint and canvas but to see also the artist's intention. To do this, we must assess its elements not in the light of things we knew before but in the new light of the pattern they form within the work. The painter and the poet here have a similar problem of controlling the viewer's or reader's responses; the painter deals in known symbols for objects in the real world, and the poet uses everybody's language. But this is a genuinely aesthetic problem and a real test therefore of the art of such an artist—to free himself from cliche is part of his job. The artist on the other hand who is not interested in creating with his audience an illusion has no need of the rigorous discipline of detail.
and observation, for the roughest symbol would carry his idea since that idea is not fundamentally dependent upon its particular realization. Nothing could really be cruder than the technique with which Magritte has painted his famous pipe - and the fact that he wrote in words below it "Ce n'est pas une pipe" merely compounds his anti-illusionist trick.

His painting shows how incredibly rapidly the mind searches out a convenient interpretation for shapes and colours, and he is perhaps objecting to the automatic quality of this response. But the painter who wishes to recruit this response in order that his meaning may lie within the reach of the intellectual curiosity of the viewer is likely to take great care in putting down images which will suggest reality. He wishes to draw upon the viewer's complete range of senses, not just to remind him that his work is 'really' just oil and canvas. He wishes the viewer to complete the picture, just as the reader of Theophrastan character draws on his own experience to complete the effect. Thus the essence of illusionistic or realistic art is not the photographic copying of random natural objects, but the recruiting of those senses in the audience which it would normally apply to reality into the service of art. He needs to arrange his images in such a way that the audience does not slither off into interpreting them as individual metaphors. The strongest possible context he can use to this end is the most realistic - there are few people indeed for whom the reality of objects in the world about them is super-charged with metaphorical meaning.

In his book, Visual Thinking, Arnheim argues that we actually perceive in general ways, not like a camera with total specificity. Essentially he takes an Aristotelian line:

"Aristotle asserts that an object is real to us through its true and lasting nature, not through its accidental, changeable properties. Its universal character is directly perceived in it as its essence rather than indirectly collected through the search of common elements in the various specimens of a species or genus..."
If this is accepted, the role of the artist's imagination is not to see through life's experiences to the Truths beyond, since they are innate in his perceptions, but to diversify, enrich, clarify and generally to 'lead the mind a wanton chase', so that his audience's perceptions are sharpened and freed from the tyranny of pre-determined patterns. Whereas a Platonic thinker sees the imitation of reality in art as an attempt to deceive the audience, the Aristotelian makes a basic distinction between aesthetic and moral functions.

"...in Rhetoric, one who acts in accordance with sound arguments, and one who acts in accordance with moral purpose, are both called rhetoricians; but in Dialectic, it is the moral purpose that makes the sophist, the dialectician being one whose arguments rest, not on moral purpose, but on the faculty. (Note) The essence of sophistry consists in the moral purpose, the deliberate use of fallacious arguments. In Dialectic, the dialectician has the power or faculty of making use of them when he pleases; when he does so, he is called a sophist. In Rhetoric, this distinction does not exist; he who uses sound arguments as well as he who uses false ones, are both known as rhetoricians." (My italics)¹²⁷

"Rhetoric may then be defined as the faculty of discovering the possible means of persuasion in reference to any subject whatsoever. This is the function of no other of the arts, each of which is able to instruct and persuade in its own special subject..."¹²⁸

"The function of Rhetoric, then, is to deal with things about which we deliberate, but for which we have no systematic rules."¹²⁹
Theophrastus was a pupil of Aristotle's and it is not difficult to find his brief in *The Art of Rhetoric*, but it is a brief which was even better filled by Browning and Pope:

"Rhetoric will not consider what seems probable in each individual case,... but that which seems probable to this or that class of persons..."\(^{130}\)

Theophrastus' characters thus are not moral examples, nor portraits, but follow Aristotle's precept in displaying ideas which we have no rules for dealing with. In action, these characters could become moral forces, perhaps, but in his actual sketches they have purely aesthetic significance. Paulson remarks that this is also true of Pope's characterizations, since no matter what moral he wishes to point, the primary consideration in his shaping of his satire is still his art.\(^{131}\) He creates a rhetorical role for himself in his poems by directing them against some character which he evokes, as Paulson remarks, with great firmness -

"The other who appears in Pope's satires, is, however, always external and concrete ... Pope's procedure is almost the reverse of Socratic; the opponent elicits the response from the poet himself. The form is far less a dialogue than a speech of his own, and the adversarius' function is to provoke... the poet to the intensity of response that raises the poem above mere exposition... The values of the adversarius (whether friend or foe) are questioned and shown to break down under their load of internal contradictions. ... It is as if Pope has at every step to prove his own position to himself by provoking it from something existent... This is related to the neoclassical stance of seeing reality as a relationship to something already understood, something ontologically and epistemologically secure ... drawing out or discovery of meaning in an existent, rather than creation of a new, object or identity..."\(^{132}\)
Pope then developed the character from being a kind of end in itself, as in Theophrastus or La Bruyère, into a device through which he could focus his own ideas and even his own identity as an artist. In this, he uses character as Hogarth does, and as Browning does, and the obvious and massive differences between their effects can fairly be said not to interfere with this resemblance since each of these highly individual artists has his own aesthetic ends to pursue.

It should be obvious now that character is by no means the same as personality. Let us return briefly to Pippa Passes and the Harlot's Progress to draw the argument into some kind of tautness.

I mentioned that both Pippa and the Harlot are singularly lacking in personality, though both perform quite satisfactorily as characters in their respective dramas, and in fact provide the focus for them. Pippa's holiday gives her the chance to escape from the drudgery of her normal role and to take over, in her mind, any role she chooses:

"For am I not this day

whate'er I please?"

Her songs in the course of the day are not expressions of herself as Pippa the silkwinder, but of this fluid or even blank quality for they reflect entirely upon the situations of 'The Happiest Four in Asolo'. Her character, like the Harlot's, is that of a catalyst - something which causes change and yet remains itself. The Harlot's pretty face is never disfigured by the pox, though that of her servant is, and Pippa's lyrical spirit remains unconscious of the machinations around it. The characters and the situations which surround them in fact provide the themes of both works, and there is a certain arbitrariness about this method of linking these diverse scenes which relieves them from narrative conventions. We do not expect Ottima to come and confess to Monsignor in the last scene any more than we would expect to see the clergyman from Plate I of The Harlot's Progress appear beside her coffin. Pippa and the Harlot however are
both quite convincing enough to engage the audience and they will both do (though other more psychological portraits do it better in both Browning's and Hogarth's other works) to draw the mind of the reader or viewer into the illusion. Neither of them is, in short, a symbol for goodness or innocence or beauty or whatever. If either were intended to act as a symbol, the whole of the rest of the work would have to turn towards her for its logic, whereas in fact both these girls require their contexts to provide them with aesthetic logic. Pippa's imagination is of no value to her on all the other days of the year, but on that one day it turns outwards and feeds on the local life around it. The Harlot would no doubt have led a safe life in provincial York, but in London her vanity and weakness of character lead her to rely on flatterers and deceivers, so that she too turns out from herself, and has no power to control the direction of her life. Aesthetically, they both serve the scenes for which they ostensibly provide the reason.

This idea of character, then, which Browning seems to owe to his father's favourites, Hogarth and Pope, is that character is a form of expression, a shape of thought, a propriety of style, not just (and not foremost) a question of mimicking people around you. It is mimetic and realistic in that it aims to encourage the reader or viewer to 'suspend his disbelief' in it for the purposes of the work, and so it strives to create the illusion that the character actually exists, by addressing him or portraying him or finally, in Browning's idea, by being him. It conforms with considerable accuracy to the Aristotelian formula for rhetoric, though it may rather stem from Theophrastus.

"...there are three kinds of rhetorical speeches, deliberative (future), forensic (past) and epideictic (self-display)."

"...it is not only necessary to consider how to make the
speech itself demonstrative and convincing, but also that
the speaker should show himself to be of a certain character
and should know how to put the judge into a certain frame of
mind..."

And most important of all, perhaps, this idea of character in art
is like Aristotle's of Rhetoric in that it specifically lacks a
moral interest in its own outcome. It is a technical device which
can be properly used in any cause, or for none, which is to say that
the responsibility for interpretation rests squarely with the audience.
The Rhetorician, or the character, uses all his skill to make the
audience accept his views as their own for the duration of his speech.
He, like the realistic painter, wants his world to become, temporarily
and within defined limits, the audience's world. Thus Pippa herself
is a marvellous device for persuading us to enter the logic of Asolo's
"world" because her very blankness of personality and intensely sensually
aware character are so easy to identify with. It is easy to see through
her eyes, as her first monologue encourages us to do, and so it is easy
to enter the illusion of her world. Yet because her character is not
an end in itself, not the main object of study in the poem, our
identification with her point of view in fact enables us, as it were,
to use her senses to perceive the poetic reality of Asolo which
Browning is seeking to create. Pippa is in a sense a surrogate for
the poet himself in this way, not so that she can express his views
or opinions, but so that he can explore her world.

There is a parallel here too with the method of a realistic painter.
Since the painter is intentionally showing the viewer something
which he, in a general sense, recognises, a good deal of the intended
emphasis of that view will come from his angle on it. In Gin Lane,
Hogarth deliberately takes a view from below the main figures in
the scene, and thus creates a toppling effect in all that is going
on, and dramatically increases the horror of the child's fall. In Beer Street, on the other hand, even the chap on the ladder appears safe and secure partly because the actual point of view of the artist is much higher in relation to his scene. Thus the function of viewpoint is to ensure that the apparent 'reality' shown is seen literally in the right way, and all the logic of the composition may be considered as flowing from it. It is immediately striking to the viewer and ensures 'at a blow' that his attention is engaged with the right aspects of the objects or scene for the artist's intentions. Browning's characters, whose fundamental organisations are according to types, are equally recognisable and are intended, I believe, to provide the right perspective for the subject matter they raise and the attitudes they display. Thus the figure of Don Juan casts a lurid light over the intelligently discursive person we meet: and Mr. Sludge's initial 'Now, don't, sir! Don't expose me! Just this once!' gives us his hypocrisy instantly and from then on we may start to understand him. Even in The Ring and the Book, Browning takes the greatest trouble to present the basic characters to the reader as their actions show them before they get chance to speak to the reader for themselves. And thus, through his viewpoints, it is possible for the reader of Browning's monologues to pick up the character of the person speaking as an individual as well as realizing him/her rapidly as a type. The perception of type establishes the illusion - it matches a pattern we can quickly grasp - and so from there the poet is free to probe and question not just his subject but our responses to his subject, because bounds have been set and a pattern established within which we can add up our perceptions. Again, in a way similar to Barthes' view of Dutch painting, Browning's method is accumulative and metonymic, relies on relationships which develop the agreed assumptions of the author with his audience.
Before I leave this area of comparison between Browning's method and Hogarth's, I should like to demonstrate that a dramatic monologue need not be written in the way I have described as Browning's. My emphasis in this comparison, between Browning's James Lee's Wife and Tennyson's Maud, will be to show how Browning's use of imagery is never illustrative but always intended to carry the complete meaning of the poem along, and the kind of discipline which results from this; and how his sense of form is largely a-chronological, or rather, that time and coincidence, the major source of progress and irony in Tennyson's work, are mere details in complex but static visions for Browning. This is not to say that Browning organised his poems so that the reader would get a picture of his characters, but that the kind of unity of meaning and shape which we find in many realistic paintings (and especially in Hogarth's) is there too in Browning's poetry. In Hogarth's Bathos, our ideas of the meaning of the picture can go no further than the visual images it presents; we are bound to the paradoxes of the picture's stasis, so that the End of Time is released from all narrative significance. The horses of the sun will never fall, though they are falling, and Chronos cannot die for Time dead is no longer Time. 

Both Guido's second monologue and the Pope's, in The Ring and the Book, have a comparable intensity based on the same artistic ploy, which is stasis granted to a form which is on the point of extinction. Guido, the Pope, Chronos, are not reprieved, but the reality of their crises is held in stable, though paradoxical, forms.

There can be no preamble, getting the viewer into the mood, for The Bathos, and neither can Hogarth represent two distinct points of view as you may have with a narrator and protagonists in a poem. Containment is essential, and the whole of his effect derives from the reader's perception of the integrity of what is contained; thus it is almost misleading to describe his characters and places as 'images'.
because they are intended for the actualities of viewing. They do not illustrate his ideas, they are them. In the same way, Browning's characters' words are complete indicators, relying on their context to be unravelled metonymously.

The comparison by which I propose to show the special 'painterlike' qualities of Browning's organisation is between his poem, *James Lee's Wife*, and Tennyson's *Maud*. Browning's relationship to his contemporary artists is something with which I shall deal more fully in the following section of this work, but it is worth noticing here that *Maud* was written about a decade before *James Lee's Wife*, and that Browning had heard *Maud* first read aloud by Tennyson in a way described by Elizabeth Barrett Browning as being: "In a voice like an organ, rather music than speech." The sequence of short lyrics which forms Browning's poem must, I think, owe something to the powerful example of Tennyson's work, though it is very important to remember that the lapse of nearly ten years between their writing means that Browning had most thoroughly digested any such influence — a process which is unvarying in his mature works where no one influence is ever crudely obvious. De Vane suggests that Browning may have been influenced by Meredith's sequence, *Modern Love*, which was published in 1862, shortly before Browning probably put the major effort into *James Lee's Wife*; but apart from a certain clear contrast of subject matter, I think there is little evidence in the poem of Browning's admiration for *Modern Love*. Both *Maud* and *James Lee's Wife* were very carefully worked by their authors and both were experimental. For Tennyson, the confiding of the whole complex matter to the voice of an admittedly poetic madman is an experiment in controlling the power of his own language without the access to a commentary which a narrator can afford, and the radical expressiveness of its lyrical bursts of new form represents a consummation of aspects
of his art. For Browning on the other hand, the sequential form picks up some of the Progress elements of *Pippa Passes* whilst still concentrating entirely on one character, as his other *Men and Women* did, so that his lyrical forms reflect states of mind in the speaker as in *Maud*, but the overall impression has entirely definite edges. It is almost as if Browning's experience of *Maud* had forced him to reconsider the lyrical element in his own art. He had always tended to take it for granted that he could manage words:

"...everybody knows I beat the world that way - can tie
and untie English as a Roman girl a tame serpent's tail...
Do you know I was and am an Improvisatore of the Head -
not the Fort..."  

Perhaps his hearing Tennyson read *Maud* aloud made it clear to him that he differed fundamentally in his idea of how words work from Tennyson. The incantatory effects of Tennyson - "Dead, long dead/
Long dead!" - have no equivalent in Browning's gamut precisely because his characters relate as themselves to the reader, and do not require the reader to experience their feelings empathetically.

Hogarth's comment on tragedy is apposite here:

"Dramatic Dialogue, which represents nature as it really is, though neither in the most elevated nor yet in the most familiar style, may be fairly denominated Comedy: for every incident introduced might have happened thus. Tragedy is made up of more extraordinary events... Every feature of his character is so much above common nature that, were people off stage to act, speak or dress in a similar style, they would be thought fit for Bedlam... it may be a nobler species of entertainment."

The effect of Tennyson's *Maud* relies upon the poet's making the reader forget himself and his world sufficiently to carry back to
that self and that world the imprint of the madman's pain. Thus
the story is filled in, the part of the coast detailed, the crossing
of the Channel specific, not for historical accuracy but because
these will provide the substitute world for the reader. The power of
Tennyson's words does in fact make us - a little - 'fit for Bedlam'.
But Browning seems to find madness too extreme a state of mind,
after his early Madhouse Cells, to attract those normal sensibilities
through which he gets us to believe in his people - not to become
them, nor to share in their world, but to understand them objectively.
Again, I think the observation of Jakobson that romanticism is
linked with metaphor and realism with metonymy is apt: for the effort
of Tennyson's lyric power is directed so that the reader's 'I' shall
become confounded with the poet's in the artifice of the work,
because essentially either being can stand in for the other - the
'I-ness' is the link. But Browning and Hogarth use art to mirror,
rather than to compare, and their job is therefore to describe
rather than to make the audience empathise. Thus we do actually
take Maud 'straight', to understand it, whereas unless we maintain
our detachment we can make little of James Lee's Wife.

Essentially the madman who speaks throughout Maud is the narrator;
he tells the story of the events which precede and which occur during
the poem. From the emotion with which he describes a given scene
or event, the reader can gauge the state of his mind and realize
its morbidity, but he must not withdraw from the speaker his willing-
ness to feel what the speaker feels. It is essential, therefore,
that the moods, or feelings, of the speaker should be very varied
and contrasted with each other, for each is of almost insupportable
intensity, perhaps intended by Tennyson to indicate the sickness of
the speaker's mind. Yet as a method this is not really different
from that which Tennyson uses in In Memoriam, where the sections
reflect the passionate moods of the poet, as in Maud they do of the
"This poem of Maud or the Madness is a little Hamlet, the history of a morbid, poetic soul, under the blighting influence of a recklessly speculative age. He is the heir of madness, an egoist with the makings of a cynic, raised to a pure and holy love which elevates his whole nature, passing from the height of triumph to the lowest depth of misery, driven into madness by the loss of her whom he has loved, and, when he has at length passed through the fiery furnace, and has recovered his reason, giving himself up to work for the good of mankind through the unselfishness born of a great passion. The peculiarity of this poem is that different phases of passion in one person take the place of different characters..."

From this, it is plain that Tennyson did not intend Maud as a character sketch in any sense, and was even prepared to consider the "different phases of passion in one person" as if they were each complete in themselves: maybe even as if they were like characters in a novel contributing to the overall theme which resides not in any of them but in the control of the author shown to his reader. It is possible to enjoy each lyric on its own, as witness the setting of several to music; but it is not possible even in the most fantastical sense to re-arrange them. Since they cover the narrative and conform to a sequence dictated by time, they are not amenable to any other discipline. Thus it seems to me true to say that every new phase supersedes, rather than adds to, the one before: the madman's brooding passion at the beginning can nowhere be repeated as he himself changes with each successive phase, so that our memory of that first mood is in fact only historically
of use to us by the time we read 'Go not, happy day' or meet him setting out for war. The opposite is true of James Lee's Wife. The speaker who reflects upon the wintry field behind the house - "If a magpie alight now it seems an event" - is completely recognisable in the images she chooses throughout, though her mood varies - "Oh, good gigantic smile o' the brown old earth." Each of her pieces contributes to the portrait of her character as if she were a piece of sculpture to be viewed from various angles, yet never losing the wholeness of her form. We do not just remember the first view we have of her, but we use it for a point of reference, whereas "I hate the dreadful Hollow" gives a piece of information relevant only at the stage in the poem at which it is given. James Lee's Wife has neither past nor future and is only created because it is at this point that her painful understanding, so far as it goes, consummates her; but it is plain that Tennyson's madman is intended, through the narrative which he imparts, as an example.

The movement from one part to the next in Maud is controlled by Tennyson's narrative, which is a metaphorical representation of his 'deeper' meaning. One part relates to the next in a purely literary way, or perhaps it might be a musical and literary way; but it could not be painted because it cannot all happen at once. By this, I mean not that it would be unrealistic if it did so, but that the essential vehicle of understanding is the reader's passage into and out of the 'phases of passion'. If we kept the dreadful hollow in the top left hand corner while seeing Maud's garden, I feel the result would be incomprehensible - we must feel what the madman feels at the time. On the other hand, the progress of Mrs.Lee might conceivably be more lucidly realized in a painting. Swinburne's parody of it shows how vainly he has tried to make out its 'story' - "Love me and leave me", he begins, and rapidly indeed does he leave all except the most superficial quirks of Browning's style as he gets carried away by
his own cleverness. Obviously, Swinburne is trying to take the 'moral' of the poem to task, and is interpreting the fact that in the last part Mrs. Lee leaves her husband as a sign that Browning recommends this course of behaviour. Yet Swinburne would be the last to try to interpret a painting of a nude as an incitement to immorality. He wants to identify with the words of the poem so as to understand the poet's meaning, as he could with *Maud*, but this is entirely fruitless with *James Lee's Wife*: the speaker must remain out there for the reader, almost as if she were in a painting. Thus Browning models the form of the poem so that at every point the reader shall be reminded of the woman's otherness from himself; he characterises her; and he even cancels out all significant story in the poem so that the reader is simply unable to put himself in her situation, since her situation is never narratively clear. This uncleanness, and also the fact that Browning was not worried by it, is evident from a letter he wrote to Julia Wedgwood in December 1864:

"You are right in your criticism - since I misled you into thinking the couple were 'prolétaire' - but I meant them for just the opposite - people newly-married, trying to realise a dream of being sufficient to each other, in a foreign land (where you can try such an experiment) and finding it break up - the man being *tired* first - and tired precisely of the love..."

Browning did not alter the poem to correct this misapprehension though he made various other alterations for the 1868 edition. However, though her socio-economic group may not be crystal clear, *James Lee's Wife's* character is: and so are the features of her world to which she relates herself. She is of a romantic nature and sees her moods reflected in the natural world around her, even with a touch of Byronic self-indulgence:
"Rejoice that man is hurled/From change to change unceasingly."

(VI heading a book under the cliff)\textsuperscript{145}

The reader however is made aware of the indulgence of this attitude, while he appreciates its meaning, by the inconsistency which results from it - the barrenness of the earth in late autumn symbolizes for her first her own barren state of falling out of love; then her husband, who gives so little 'good grain'; the rock which can be glorified by juxtaposition with butterfly wings, and then the rocks which meet the sea - and in her final piece, she is actually afloat at sea, with her feet no longer on the earth at all. This progress is more like that of a mind following an eye over a landscape than one grasping a sequence of events, because the movement from one use of the image to the next relies for meaning on the fixed figure of Jane Lee's Wife.

This may seem a paradox, since I have continually asserted that Browning's art is essentially realistic and it may seem that the pre-requisite to realistic art is that the audience should be equipped to recognise the objects shown and judge their representation by their 'likeness' to the known phenomena. Imitation, which is the foundation of realism, might seem to imply this process. But the unsoundness of this assumption is easy to demonstrate: a portrait is the plainest example of art trying to capture the real look of someone. Yet when we look at portraits of long dead people, do we feel unable to judge their quality because we cannot know how the sitters 'really' looked? In fact, it might with some justice be asserted that the most difficult portraits to judge are those of people we know, because we are more tempted to see them as ersatz reality than we are with portraits of unknown people. When we look at a portrait of someone we don't know, we see it as art, that is as an attempt to convey imaginatively the impression the artist received of the sitter: we do not see it as a less than accurate copy.
Nonetheless we recognise the general form - a human face - and the particularities - Oliver Cromwell’s warts - in such a way that we search the portrait with our eyes as we might search a real stranger’s face, for signs of character. Once we have agreed to the illusion of seeing a face in the mess of pigment and canvas, we proceed with our normal sensibilities merely heightened. This process is required by James Lee’s Wife, but useless for Maud. For Maud, we proceed in the opposite way: instead of wholistic illusion, adding recognised details to form pattern and context, we need to take things apart, analyse, label and move on. The styles of the two poets express these diverse functions perfectly - Tennyson continually detailing and discarding the minutiae of Maud’s world -

"He stood on the path a little aside;
His face, as I grant, in spite of spite,
Has a broad-blown comeliness, red and white,
And six foot two as I think, he stands;
But his essences turned the live air sick,
And barbarous opulence jewel-thick
Sunned itself on his breast and his hands..."
(Pt I xii lines 450-56)

or

"See what a lovely shell/Small and pure as a pearl..."
(Pt II ii Lines 49, 50)

and Browning continually adding and placing and husbanding the motions of his subject’s thought:

"But did one touch of such love for me
Come in a word or a look of yours,
Whose words and looks will, circling, flee
Round and round me while life endures, -
Could I fancy, "As I feel, thus feels He"
"Why, fade you might to a thing like me
And your hair grow these coarse hanks of hair,
And your skin, this bark of a gnarled tree -
You might turn myself: should I know or care
When I should be dead of joy, James Lee?"

(X On Deck)

Thus there is no movement inherent in Tennyson's descriptions, and he uses them therefore to illustrate the movement of his narrative; while for Browning, the whole idea of portrayal depends on the relativity of the parts and this requires the reader to move between them to assess it. Tennyson moves from one view to the next and fulfills each. Browning maintains one point of view in order that the form he achieves should be possessed of movement of its own.

Then perhaps it may be objected that although Browning's portrait of Mrs. Lee achieves a stasis in spite of the fact that she is seen in various places, while Tennyson's Maud which is in no sense a portrait relies on its narrative succession for its form, nonetheless there is 'word-painting' in Tennyson's poem which makes Browning's images seem dry in comparison and that in this sense Tennyson has a more visually satisfying mode, richer in colour than Browning's. It would be foolish to deny this vividness in Tennyson or that Browning's poetry fails to make the reader's ears do the work of his eyes. Nowhere in Browning can I think of a description so rivetingly evocative of the sea as this of Tennyson's:

"...fall/as the crest of some slow-arching wave
Heard in dead night along the table-shore
Drops flat, and after the great waters break
Whitening for half a league, and thin themselves
Far over sands marbled with moon and cloud
From less and less to nothing..."
Though curiously it seems to me that even while I give myself up to enjoy its loveliness, I am forced to object to its application - the man falling from the horse may fall like the wave, but is hardly likely to thin himself to nothing. It is this kind of discrepancy which makes me certain that Tennyson's descriptions give no real justification to the 'word-painting' idea, for no painter could allow an image to overlap its own significance - yet this is common in Tennyson, and in poetry. The point is that the poet narrates the images to his audience as part of his effect, whereas the painter has no other resource than the images on the surface he creates. Thus the poet can revise his own statements, where the painter can only qualify them by context. In my opinion, Browning had opted for the discipline the painter works within.

If we compare a little of the imagery from Maud with some from James Lee's Wife, the idea that if words create a vivid impression they are 'word-painting' will be put to flight. Each section of James Lee's Wife is placed by its title: At the Window: By the Fireside: In the Doorway, etc. - just as if it were a picture. As with a picture, the title creates a frame for the thoughts of the woman and there is a very marked difference between the indoor and the outdoor scenes, as there would necessarily be in paintings. Mrs. Lee appears first framed by the window, looking out. What she says to her husband, begging him to reassure her, gives the reader already the clue about the insupportable quality of her love, its possessiveness and insecurity, and of some semi-awareness in her that she is playing a role -

"For the lake, its swan,
For the dell, its dove,
And for thee - (Oh haste!)"

Me..."
The face at the window is both wistful and afraid, though it insists on its right to charm the viewer. The swan, the dove, are notional and do not trouble the firmness of the image: one might imagine the season from the quality of the light in this picture, giving the face a hint of the pinched quality of winter. Nothing however is happening.

By comparison, Maud explodes upon our senses. The first words, "I hate", provide the key for this movement of its symphony and the first section rushes through a catalogue of hatred, bound together in a hurry only by the common emotion - the dreadful hollow, the villainy, Peace, pickpockets, Mammon, madness, the Hall and Maud - he hates them all. Where do you 'picture' the speaker as being? The dreadful hollow is where I tend to put him, but as I look closely I see this is wrong for the speaker asks if he too must "creep to the hollow". It is just the most vivid of the whirling images the first section presents: our only foothold is in fact in time, for this part of the monologue begins the story of the Madman's love for Maud. No picture is really being presented to us: the language is vivid because it is charged with emotion and not because it describes things in the way a painter would.

"A million emeralds break from the ruby-budded lime
In the little grove where I sit - oh, wherefore cannot I be
Like things of the season gay, like the beautiful season bland,
When the far-off sail is blown by the breeze of a softer clime,
Half-lost in the liquid azure bloom of a crescent of sea,
The silent, sapphire-spangled marriage-ring of the land?"

(IV Pt I)

Surely this is word painting? Here the poet specifies that the vision of the sea is far off, not actually visible, as the speaker sits under the lime. But again there is something entirely at odds
with a painterly idea, and that is that the madman is picturing himself sitting under the tree as well as doing it; and yet instead of being integrated into the scene, he is in control of it as much as he was of the first section. The vision of nature as jewels is his conceit and it depends on his words, could make no sense without them. He sees himself out of harmony with the landscape and heightens this by adding lustre to the natural beauties of the scene in his description - but in this very process he also destroys the credibility of his description, because its function is so strictly limited to his need. Compare this with III, In the Doorway, of James Lee's Wife:

"The swallow has set six young on the rail
And looks seaward:
The water's in stripes like a snake, olive pale
To the leeward, -
On the weather-side, black, spotted white with the wind.
'Good fortune departs, and disaster's behind', -
Hark, the wind with its wants and its infinite wail!

Our fig-tree, that leaned for the saltness, has furled
Her five fingers,
Each leaf like a hand opened wide to the world
Where there lingers
No glint of the gold Summer sent for her sake:
How the vines writhe in rows, each impaled on its stake!
My heart shrivels up and my spirit sinks curled."

Here the opposite process is under way: the speaker's relation to the scene is made clear by her position in the doorway of the house, and, unlike the madman, she describes what she sees before she realizes what she feels. There is no emotional charge in the verse until we reach "like a snake" and even then it is very restrained
for the comparison is primarily visually accurate and only secondarily disconcerting. Even the words with which she approximates her sense of the mood of the wind are carefully separated from the actual scene by speech marks. The speaker does however animate the landscape by her interest - she seems to identify with the fig-tree, calling it feminine and attributing to it a gesture which is ambivalent between generosity and grasping, which neatly exposes and sums up the ambivalence of her love as expressed in the first section. But again, notice that it is not the words alone which enforce this vision: the madman's jewels express his inability to separate the needs of his ego from the actual world outside: but Mrs. Lee keeps her comparison explicit and the words are so full of the poet's intention to describe accurately that they are even slightly too precise to be grasped instantly. The word 'furled' seemed for a moment to contradict the idea of the open hand, until I pictured a fig-leaf and realized that each of the five broad lobes of the leaf would have curled itself up to form a finger, and that the whole leaf thus became far more like a hand. How far this sort of description is from the word-power-based jewel box of Maud's madman: Tennyson drives to the limits our willingness to ride the flux of his words, continually sweeping us through glimpsed scenes where a vivid fleeting impression is sufficient and to linger would be to destroy the lovely form, whereas Browning presents us with a composed picture, expecting us to grasp all the intricate emphasis of its careful composition before we can retain enough of it in our minds to understand the next. It is not the feeling of the images which Browning wishes to impart - it is the forms.

This distinction is one of the basic ones between the realist's intentions and those of the romantic. For the former, the audience must be persuaded to accept the illusion because, as Hogarth puts it, the things shown 'might thus have happened', and the interest
of the work lies beyond that acceptance in the interpretation of
the forms displayed. The chief means of interpretation therefore
lie within the work, in the relation of the elements to each other
and to the whole. This is, in short, our metonymy. The latter artist
does not wish to present an illusion of reality, but to enlist the
empathy of the audience: not to distance, but to involve. His first
step then is to catch the audience by comparing his subject to some­
thing striking or familiar so clearly or so beautifully that the
audience cannot resist it. This is a metaphoric process, since it
relies on the substitution by the artist of his feelings for our own.
Thus the romantic does not have to maintain a fixed point of view
towards his image; he can glide across a landscape because its function
in his work is to express not itself but his feelings. The speaker
in James Lee's Wife is in the centre of the picture, on view as part
of it. The speaker in Maud is inexpressible as a picture for all
his world is a metaphor for himself, and his story.

In his essay on Shelley, Browning makes the same distinction in his
own way. He distinguishes between the objective and the subjective
poet - roughly my realist and romantic - in this way:
The objective poet is "the fashioner - his poetry will of necessity
be substantive, projected from himself and distinct." His example
is Shakespeare, from whom "we learn only what he intended we should
learn by (the)... exercise of his power, - the fact itself, - which,
with its infinite significances, each of us receives for the first
time as a creation, and is hereafter left to deal with, as, in prop­
oration to his own intelligence, he best may..." The slightly aggres­
sive tone of the phrase "in proportion to his own intelligence" is a
strong hint of the sympathy Browning feels on his own behalf with
the objective poet. His argument is that the biography of such a
poet is of no real use to the study of his poetry, as the effort of
his art is not personal. As he puts it: "The man passes, the work
remains. The work speaks for itself, as we say". His own poems literally do this: in very few of them does even a poetic persona intrude between his speaker and the reader, so his poems are people who indeed 'speak for themselves'. Browning was remarkably consistent in his rejection of the imputation of biographical relevance in his work, from his early letters to Fanny Haworth denying that she could understand him through his poetry, to his late insistence to Mrs. Fitzgerald that his poems said everything he intended on the subject and did not require further notes. Like a realistic painter he was presenting the complete picture as an object to the audience and the first necessity for understanding was that they should believe in the completeness of that object. 

Shelley, however, Browning describes as a subjective poet: who "gifted like the objective poet with the fuller perception of nature and man, is impelled to embody the thing he perceives... an ultimate view ever aspired to, if but partially attained, by the poet's own soul... He does not paint pictures and hang them on the walls, but rather carries them on the retina of his own eyes: we must look deep into his human eyes to see those pictures in them. He is rather a seer, accordingly, than a fashioner, and what he reproduces will be less a work than an effluence."

Surely it is important that Browning chooses to say, deliberately, that the subjective poet's work is not like a painting - the implication being perhaps that in his mind at least the objective quality of the opposite kind of poetry was indeed comparable to that of painting. It is also vital to understand that the difference between what he saw as fundamentally opposite kinds of art was not in any sense technical and that he credited both types with the ability to 'awaken' the mind of the audience. The real difference lies, he argues, in the kind of truth
which either can create: the objective poet using his perceptive imagination to enhance the reader's understanding of "the combination of humanity in action", and the subjective imagination on the contrary working "with the primal elements of humanity". The echo of Hogarth's "intricacy and variety" is obvious in the former idea, and its contrariness to the reductive nature of the latter.

With Browning's point in mind, then, it is plain that we cannot understand James Lee's wife by pretending to be her, whereas the effect of *Maud* is precisely to enter us into 'The Madness' of the speaker. The romantic 'I' will not operate for Browning's heroine: the poem is not the result of the poet's effort to generalize her feelings to involve 'humanity' but of his deliberate restriction of feelings within the bounds of her character. Tennyson sees even the madman's love as a good thing in itself and capable of working towards a virtuous end: but Browning shows how love is not a thing in itself, but dependent for every bit of its value upon the actual relationship within which it is engendered and the understanding the protagonists each have of it. This is in fact a continual question in many of his poems: in the *Ring and the Book*, as in *Fifine at the Fair*, the reader is utterly free to disbelieve entirely in every apparent manifestation of love, because all lack potency, except the Pope's. Pompilia's parents, Guido's family, and most of all the complete innocence of the relationship between Pompilia and Caponsacchi which the reader so clearly understands cannot turn to love given the characters of the two involved - at every point, the poem defies any general association of love with an overriding value. Nothing in Pompilia's world is guaranteed success and pre-eminence through its own virtue. Even in his short poems about lovers, like *The Last Ride Together*, *Love in a Life*, *Any Wife to any Husband*, *Two in the Campagna*, Browning never suggests that the lovers are examples exalted by love; rather are they fortunate or unfortunate individuals
realizing part of the potential of their own characters in their relationships. James Lee's wife is in some senses wronged by her husband, but since he never appears in the poem Browning allows us to feel no bitterness towards him even when she does: her bitterness and her overcoming of it simply show her to us. In Maud however we are lashed into hatred of Maud's relations by the associations which the madman calls up to describe them, - or, equally, we are wooed into loving Maud herself by the same power, so that she can stand for positive and external values like goodness and innocence, and thus circularly justify the madman and us together for our reactions to her. The fact that Browning never regards it as necessary to justify the state of affairs which makes James Lee's wife leave her husband has led to some comical perplexity in Mrs.Orr's commentary. She concludes that "we learn from the last two monologues, especially the last, that James Lee's wife was a plain woman. This may throw some light on the situation." This comment in fact only 'sheds light on' the reason why she finds the poem so inconclusive: she plainly feels that James Lee's wife has in some way brought the situation on herself, but because she can find no flaw in the Love the woman bears her husband - she even claims to leave him for his own sake - Mrs.Orr is unable to slough off her habitual assumption that poetry is about morality. Thus since Love is a prime Good in the Poetic Moral Heirarchy, she can't see why she obscurely feels the situation to be the woman's own desert, and falls into an assumption which is so completely conventional - that plain women can't be loved - as to be comical, and which is of staggering superficiality of which Browning is totally incapable. Her mistake highlights the problem of trying to read Browning romantically: if the reader seeks to be taken into a higher, purer, more extreme and general world, he is bound for disappointment: exactly the disappointment
which James Lee's wife herself experiences. She seems to have believed that, so long as love was her motivation, she could ride through life like Britomart - even excusing possessiveness and rank insularity as evidence of the greatness of her love. In Maud, the madman's possessiveness and jealousy express just that greatness: but for Browning, the intolerable strain such qualities put on the relationship is the point. In the third of her monologues, James Lee's wife seems on the verge of realizing that she too is tired of love - even bored with it and certainly bored with the monotony of the life her pursuit of it has led her into. In her fourth, she seems to take account of this, telling her husband to credit her with loving better than he did, and, womanlike, blaming him for her own realization of the sheer dullness of the life she has idealized. Her words reveal that she measured him by standards based on her own romantic picture of herself: since she loved him better than he her, this showed his unworthiness, not her self-delusion. She pushes him to express an approval of her which is based on her decision that he has failed her. Her language is over-emphatic - compare the languid precision of the verse before - and seems to express at the same time a longing to be contradicted and re-assured even while she barricades herself round with criticisms of him. Underlying the attack is her assumption that if she were him, she would know how to respond; that he does not is, to the reader, hardly surprising. From this point on, her husband has no more part in the poem until he is remembered by her at the end, and the poem intensifies itself over her effort to realize and act upon the real necessities of her character, and to discard as phoney the 'ideal' whose collapse has ruined her marriage. I think it is interesting that Browning originally called this poem James Lee, and only altered the title for the 1868 edition, acknowledging it to be, as De Vane comments, "definitely a study in feminine psychology". The original title suggests the
complexity of Browning's approach and his aim: that character expresses itself in the way it relates to other people, ideas, things, and again recalls Hogarth's definition of character. The alteration of the title suggests not a simplifying of the poem's aim but a concession to the unimaginativeness of readers who would quibble with the original title. Further, the original title could be compared with titles occasionally chosen by painter to throw the subject of their representations into relief: *Ce N'est Pas Une Pipe*, or, even more relevant and ten times more subtle, Poussin's *Et In Arcadia Ego*. There is no point in *Maud* where the madman's response to her deviates from being an impulse towards beauty and purity, so that even though he lures her into the garden that night, neither the value of his love (as a virtue) nor of the object beloved (as virtuous) is ever called into question. His tragedy is to lose *Maud*, because she was capable of making him good. James Lee's wife has no tragic fate, but unselfconsciously destroys her own happiness by failing to realize its limitation (her own).

From her fifth monologue, the effort of James Lee's wife's poetry is to realize herself; not her husband, nor even her objective situation. In "On the Cliff", she achieves the ability to see love as a glorious incidental; something whose brightness goes along with its meaningless frailty. The turf and the rock are her real support, and both are for her symbols of death, whereas the insects are alive. She does not lose sight of their smallness and irrelevance to the cliff, but wilfully asserts her right to make them the most meaningful aspects if she so chooses. The very smallness and irrelevance of the conceit:

"No cricket, I'll say/But a warhorse, barded and chanfroned too..." point up the fact that she is desperately continuing with a kind of game, that her imagination alone can re-form the world. She is, in fact, coming out of her fool's paradise her own way. We see and
assess this movement by the fancifulness of the imagery, compared with the weight of the images in 'In the Doorway'. I don't think that anywhere in Maud is the reader expected to perform such an objective exercise: occasionally the madman's imagery achieves a certain irony based on comparison with an earlier instance, but nowhere does the meaning of the flow of the poem depend upon such an awareness in the reader. Indeed, it can be a bit disadvantageous to take the madman too much at his word - his revised opinion of Maud is a case in point, for if we ponder on his suspicious first reactions to her as we are swept into his passion of love for her, the result cannot be useful, only undermining to the real sense of the poem. Thus Browning is basically adding to his original picture, while Tennyson is moving through song after song: the result is that Browning will not state a conclusion, since the whole of his poem is the conclusion (of his thought), and Tennyson must state a conclusion so that the order of his lyrics has retrospectively some meaning - "I am one with my kind, I embrace the purpose of God, and the doom assigned."

'Reading a Book, Under the Cliff' and 'Beside the Drawing Board' bring James Lee's wife in touch with other people's approaches to nature beside her own. The little poem, 'Still Ailing, Wind?', which Browning interpolated, gives her something real outside herself to react to, and her criticism of the egocentricity of the poet gives the reader a delicately accurate gauge of her own growing self-awareness.

"All this, and more, comes from some young man's pride
Of power to see, - in failure and mistake, -
Relinquishment, disgrace on every side, -
Merely examples for his sake." (My italics)
There is something very moving to me in the way this section is achieved: her own age and experience come into focus for her as she tries to understand her own relation to the poem. Her discontent with the glibness of the final image because it 'makes doubly prominent', and hence falsifies, the real feeling from which it sprung: her quick sense of the patronizing tone the young man takes to the moan, the primaeval formless woe, of the noise of the wind –

"Oh, he knows what defeat means, and the rest!

Himself the undefeated that shall be – " (My italics)

and at the same time her absorption in the problems which the poem raises in her mind and her sensibilities, all show her coming out of her bitter despair, precisely through concern with the realities of art. She almost writes her own version of the poem - she keeps its five-lined form, and, like a concerned critic, tries to re-cast the truth which appeals to her in the poem into a new truth which will express her wider (or longer) experience:

"Then when the wind begins among the vines
So low, so low, what shall it mean but this?
Here is the change beginning, Circumscribe beauty, set to bliss
The limit time assigns'...

Her rejection of the young poet's idea that experience leads to an understanding of the order which governs life and is heuristic, is a rejection also of her own romantic idea that one good thing would lead to all others, 'happily ever after'. She pictures to herself the irony of the effort she made to believe life was so simple, and her words for the first time in the poem seem to me to become really moving, as for the first time she sees her own mistake clearly -

"time first washes - ah, the sting!
O'er all he'd sink to save!"
This is moving precisely because it is restrained, the reverse of
the emotion which Tennyson created in his reader. James Lee's wife
actually sees the fact of her pain with a sympathy not for herself
but for anyone whose efforts have been, like hers, "to grave on
his soul's hand's palms one fair, good, wise thing!" The very nar-
rowness of this concept speaks through her image, as does its impos-
sibility, and her sense of such effort being washed away, less than
nothing, is reflected without show or preciousness in her image of
the sea. Again, notice the discipline which Browning puts upon his
forces: the woman is under the cliff by the sea, and the whole sub-
stance of this complex and beautiful section does not require him
to shift her one inch away. His picture of her is as steady as a
landscape with a figure. Again, a brief reference to the Breton
strand in Maud will show how completely unpictorial the organisation
of Tennyson's monologue is compared to this; the imagery roves off,
from the shell, to the ship on the high seas, back to England, and
so on, following faithfully the madman's thoughts. The images which
display James Lee's wife to us follow the calm composing hand of
the poet.

Again in speaking of 'Among the Rocks', I am going to shadow-box
with Mrs. Orr, because her synopsis so clearly demonstrates a romantic
expectation that I feel it will help to clarify my own contrasting
approach. This tiny section, the shortest in the poem, fulfills
the kind of function that an area of sky does in the Chatsworth
Poussin or an area of water in a Constable landscape. In either
case, the sky or the water is not the main focus of the picture;
it is however, a vital point of reference. Poussin's sky gives
the reason for the glow on the peasants' skins, the blackness of
the trunks of the trees, the slightly gilded look of the edges of the tomb. It gives the whole picture its place, its evening.

Constable too, as Karl Kroeber has pointed out, is fond of letting a hint of water add depth to the whole scope of his picture by suggesting transience and conversely the value of the moment, as well as using its colour and texture to connect his hurrying skies to the land visually. This little section in *James Lee's Wife* has a similar effect: the woman, after reacting against the romantic poet's usury of nature, finds pleasure in ceasing to impose a meaning on the scene beyond the fact that she feels at home there. The second stanza shows her reducing herself to "earth", in a way which contrasts with her spitefully calling her husband "mere earth" earlier, as a sky can contrast with water both by recalling it and mimicking it, and by asserting its extreme difference from it simultaneously. But for Mrs. Orr this section has only one meaning and its imagery only one function: to prove that James Lee's wife has morally advanced. She says that "she accepts disappointment as also a purifier of love. A sunny autumn morning is exercising its genial influence, and the courage of self-effacement awakens in her." She seems completely to miss the rhetorical character of James Lee's wife's reaction to the scene; and that it is the reverse of self-effacing. What James Lee's wife is achieving is a rejection of the very idea of love that Mrs. Orr sees her as embracing, because for Mrs. Orr there seems to be no question of understanding the feelings of the woman, but of matching them against a preconceived ideal of romantic love. Thus Mrs. Orr sees Mrs. Lee as humbly accepting 'disappointment' as part of love (though this has already been dealt with in 'Along the Beach'; and could not possibly be prelude to her leaving her husband). She does not see her as capable of questioning the whole idea through experience of its collapse. Mrs. Lee, according to
Mrs. Orr accepts disappointment as a sort of mystical punishment at the shrine of love. Not so Browning, who can clearly see how boring such blind adoration of an ideal can be, how it 'tires' out the man, and leaves the woman to sort out her own truth from the real and intimate pain of the experience. When James Lee's wife says: "Give earth yourself", she has recognised that her assumption about the divine quality of the love she gave her husband was actually wrong - all she gave him, whom she called 'mere earth' was earth too! Notice, this is not Browning saying that was what she 'really' gave, but her own point of recognition; the only way her character can phrase its new understanding is by re-ordering the old value words.

The liberating experience for Mrs. Lee, however, is not that of words - poetry - but that of trying to draw accurately a hand. I think it is most important that this is the mode Browning chooses to clarify James Lee's wife's realization of herself. Again, in passing, it is worth remarking that there is no point in Maud where the visual logic of the imagery is allowed to carry the whole present point of the poem - Maud's beauty is also goodness: "for Maud is as true as Maud is sweet". But in the section 'At the Drawing Board', though no description is ever attempted of the drawing Mrs. Lee has made, her struggle with a truth outside herself is sufficient to put to flight the last inward-looking remnants of her idea of romance.

This section of the poem was greatly added to by Browning for the edition in 1868. He added all of sections II and III. These additions do not however alter the meaning of the section which was sufficiently clear even in 1864, since it was plain even then that the effort towards art - visual art - was the basis of James Lee's wife's "Lesson".

The unspoken contrast is between her romantic and unreal ideal of love and the reality of the hand she tries to draw: in trying to live
up to the former, she has actually destroyed the real human involve-
ment she had with her husband, whereas her 'failure' in trying to
draw a real object leads her to appreciate it for itself more and
more: it does not become material for her egocentric idealism. The
contrast with the whole intention of Maud here must be stark: and
it demonstrates the radical difference between Tennyson's effort and
Browning's. For Browning, the character is an object expressed
relatively - related to ideas, objects, history, art, or whatever,
as it is for Hogarth. For Tennyson, character insofar as he uses
it at all is illustrative of a moral idea which embodies the value
of the poem. The two sections which Browning added to James Lee's
Wife however, do expand and elucidate the point he wishes to make
in this section. The artist's 'failure' is a thing of real value
since it can communicate the effort towards art which he made: his
love of the real is "his art's despair" as well as being the guar­
antee of the worth of his effort. This closely reflects James Lee's
wife's idea of the shape of her own experience, but in this new
context, what was sick and dull has become sane and lucid: her
adoration of the conventional ideal replaced by an attempt to under­
stand and execute her impression of the real. The parallel with
the effort of her marriage and its collapse is plain. What is more
complex is the fact that this parallel works not emotionally but
by pure juxtaposition: the section before this, with its rhetoric
of humility prepares the situation for the placing of this, the first
positive attitude the woman expresses; but the very first section,
where she voiced her outrage that her husband was no longer filling
his role in her conventional vision, displays the same characteristic
manner of construing experience as the section 'At the Drawing Board'.
In both, she tries to make a link between the outer and inner
worlds which expresses her love of form: in drawing the hand, she
turns from the real hand of the little girl who does the housework
for her, to the already-processed hand of a clay cast with an habitual pattern of thought which we observed initially in her impatience for her husband to be her ideal ("Oh, haste!") However in this later section, she catches herself doing it. The attempt to draw the real, individual hand leads her to the cast of a hand where all the work has been done for her. Yet looking at the cast, she realizes that its value lies in the expression of that work, that effort, towards realization. And so, with a cool logicality of which she was incapable when dealing with her own abstract expectations, she can turn back to the real hand for its truth. The relation of this pattern to the statement with which Browning closes The Ring and the Book is plain, and it is important that both works come from the same period of his life. But perhaps through the use of art in this section of James Lee's Wife, the real similarity of Browning's idea of the function of art to that of painters of earlier generations will be apparent. That function is imitative: it is to draw the understanding of the viewer back to the object represented with new truthfulness.

The introduction of Leonardo da Vinci into the sections which Browning added is indicative of the stress he habitually laid on the coherence of visual art. Leonardo can explain, here, what may well elude words and images which the poet may use:

"No beauty bears the test
In this rough peasant hand.... I
Who threw the faulty pencil by
And years instead of hours employed
Learning the veritable use
Of flesh and bone and nerve beneath
Lines and hue of outer sheath
If haply I might reproduce
One motive of the powers profuse.......that make
The poorest coarsest human hand
An object worthy to be scanned
A whole life long for their sole sake..."

Browning must, I think, have read some of Leonardo's notebooks, to summarize so well the principle behind them, and to make his Leonardo express so clearly the idea that art is not confined to being beautiful, and the consequent release of the imagery from being a metaphor for a moral idea. The woman's loss in finding her ideal love fall apart is genuine, but it is the marvellously terse -

"What use survives the beauty?" - Fool!

which closes the argument in this section which expresses without tedium or sententiousness, the impractical and unreal nature of her expectations; and in circumstances like these which Browning creates, impracticality and unreality are signs of deep and wilful blindness and confusion. We find in Andrea's reference to Raphael, the same quality of appealing to a known greatness for definition. Browning seems to use these references as Hogarth does the pictures he places on the walls of his scenes. In Plate II of the Rake's Progress for instance, there is a wonderful combination of pictures on the wall - a Judgement of Paris and two prints of fighting cocks. There is not really any narrative relevance in the Judgement of Paris, though Rakewell is 'choosing' between the varied charms of different instructors, but the implications of Paris' impossible choice provide a beautiful counterpoint to the Rake's situation. Or again, the cocks obviously inform us about his lack of taste for painting and preference for 'low' pursuits - but they too, being symbols of male vanity and aggression, reflect on the scene below and provide it with points of reference. In a similar way, Browning drops the mention of Massaccio into Lippo's monologue to help us to 'place' Lippo's talent, so that we are not tempted to construe the poem as an interpretation purely of Lippo's personality in a historical sense. In
Andrea del Sarto too, the big three whom Andrea believes he could rival if it weren't for his wife, in fact point up his delusion because they stand by their art alone even in his estimation.

In James Lee's Wife, Browning is again using a painter's achievement as a point of reference for the sake of clarity in the idea he is expressing. Leonardo's work represents a genuinely alternative creed to that which underlies Mrs. Lee's romantic love, and in the context of the poem, her realization of this alternative and her imaginary conversation with Leonardo clinch the progress of her character.

There is a most instructive contrast between the closing sections of Maud and James Lee's Wife. The last section of Tennyson's poem presents the modern reader with considerable difficulties, since it is no longer easy for us to accept that "being one with your kind" and going off to fight in the Crimea really represent a moral advance on that cynical mood of hatred with which the poem began. But this is not just a problem of our preconceptions, for in many ways the driving power which has enforced the motion of the earlier parts of the poem becomes slacker as the final episode is reached, as we sense from such details as the inclusion in brackets of "(For I cleaved to a cause that I felt to be pure and true)", and the creaking device of making the spirit of Maud "arise and fly/Far into the North" to show the speaker the way. The assertion of his sanity has necessarily to find a different language from that of his madness, but it is hard not to feel that the former is considerably less interesting than the latter. The imagery is swamped by the intentions it garnishes - "the dreadful-grinning mouths of the fortress" where "flames/The blood-red blossom of war with a heart of fire" is incredibly confused and would only be acceptable imagery so long as we did not expect it to stand for itself, but only to serve the idea. It is not even truly illustrative of the idea, but incidental to it.
The imagery, insofar as it has an effect, directs us to the horror of war - yet it is followed by "We have proved we have hearts in a cause, we are noble still", which seems to pull us away from that sense. The suggested horror was only a bit of embroidery, not intimately connected with the speaker's state of mind as the horror of his father's fate, or of his own murder were earlier in the poem. In short, Tennyson really found himself a bit perplexed as to how to make his highly interesting madman into what he expects a poem to be - a moral form; and he is forced to make the speaker point out his own moral - "I embrace the purpose of God, and the doom assigned" - as he disappears into a world which is entirely alien to us as to him, as if it were somehow a logical answer to his problem in his familiar world. This suggests the paramount importance which Tennyson attaches to the shape of the poem's story: for the love to be proved the good thing which he intended, the story has to have an uplifting ending. The story line is genuinely the controlling metaphor, the logic of the form, the reason for the poem, no matter how deliciously beautiful any part of it may be by itself. This is diametrically opposed to Browning's entirely non-illustrative approach; he is not showing you what something is like, he is fashioning the thing itself, and in this sense he cannot be telling a lie; so the requirement of 'truth' is like that which a realistic painter observes, not necessarily moral. The final section of James Lee's Wife does not decline in complexity, nor does it differ in approach or poetic function from any earlier section. It relates to the rest of the poem in something like the way that the river god in the foreground of Poussin's Et in Arcadia Ego at Chatsworth relates to the rest of the picture: he connects the inscription to the peasants by belonging to both their worlds. He sets the skull which rests on the tomb into a context which is completely unthreatening (and un-Christian). The curious pallor of his flesh, his white hair and his wreath of laurel
all set him apart from the peasants, so that he also enforces the sense that the person whose tomb they are visiting was like them rather than like him: he is deathless. In short, this river-god complicates the picture's time, enriching it so that the discovery of the inscription is not just incidental but logical. The last section of James Lee's wife, where the speaker is finally liberated from her unhappy home, relates to the rest of the poem similarly. She leaves without threat or noise, giving a sort of summary of her state, addressed to her own past, which seems to hang there as the only link between the old life and the new. Her being 'On Deck' expresses exactly the curious and timeless effect of this, her last effort in the poem. She is summarizing in the realistic spirit which she 'understood' from Leonardo, and addressing her husband this time without rancour from the safe position of being no longer with him. She is capable of using the old ideas with a new and realistic meaning; she doesn't think now that to 'love' is a licence to exact love; but she also observes with justice that her commitment to him was unappreciated, that her 'function' in the marriage outlasted his interest in her 'beauty'. She suggests, in her most characteristic way, her conviction that a relationship based on such a 'beautiful' idea really was a mutual illusion, by substituting himself for her. This is characteristic because we have already felt her judging him by what she would do. Here she is really asking if he didn't tire of her because he saw not her but his own idea, as she had done with him.

"Till you saw yourself while you cried 'Tis she!' " Her self-knowledge as she speaks gives an edge to all she says, and her culminating stanza fully expresses the failure of her marriage and its curious, even perverse, value as an attempt, for here she sees her husband as she has come to see herself, 'warts and all', without that bitter sense of betrayal which she displayed when she pretended to accept him as 'mere earth', and she realizes that now
she would not "know or care" (my italics) if he was so. Her 'death of joy' is the only way that she could respond not dead because she loves him, which would surely be an incitement to live, but dead because there is no way to relate to such love - she would be replaced by his idea of her, and she would be an unnecessary to him as he has become to her as she leaves him. She carries what she needs of him with her. Again, it is so plain that this is in no sense a 'solution', it is the character coming to a clear and articulate recognition of herself, though not an objective one - that is left to the reader. The effect is the reverse of illustrative. There is nothing either predictable in the form, like the 'happy ending', nor tragic in her; but her real nature, her true character, has consummated its revelation through the entire process of the poem. The way in which Tennyson has to have Maud's spirit leading the madman in the last section shows his difficulty in giving his poem any other than a narrative form. But the form of James Lee's Wife depends on integral relationships, like Hogarth's; the movement of the mind from one recognised aspect to the next, the reference to and fro, the accumulative process of the form, which means that no single aspect is allowed to override the significance of the others - these organizational traits are very clear in James Lee's Wife, and entirely absent from Maud.

It seems to me that Browning's poetry has an originality which is quite difficult to appreciate from purely literary precedents. The fact that during his early childhood he became familiar with looking at paintings in the light of his father's enthusiastic understanding of them may be a clue however to the form his art later took. I wish to suggest that such an early and radical influence would show itself rather in profound forms, than in abundance of references to particular paintings, or use of particular images which 'remind' us of particular paintings. Therefore I have tried to suggest that Browning fundamentally
sets his art on the side of the realists as opposed to romantics; that in the effort to make art out of 'what could really happen thus' he echoes Hogarth; that the cast of his own imagination is essentially mimetic and that he is free from the desire which haunted so many of his contemporaries to make nature conform to his morality. His own word 'objective' entirely suits him: his poems are intended to be separate from himself and separate from his reader as distinctly as if they were 'framed and put on the wall'. The process his art requires then is interpretative, not empathetic: and its regulation is metonymic, not metaphoric.
3. Joe Campbell: The Victoria Theory 1976 p91
4. Talt from Ruhla's Inter on Visual Society Exhibition, 1977
6. Article in Art from 16th to the 20th Century, compiled and edited by London 1945 p157
7. Ibid (202)
8. Selected Passages: Comparison of Art History through a Vex 1967 p66:
   "As the metaphysics of art, (in which the associations by substitution proceeds), Felix (following to Jocobson) the modern lyrical song, the work of the criticism and of symbolism, impressionist painting."
   Modern Jacobson and Latinville: The Modern Foundation of Language in Jacobson and Madeleine, 1967 p173 "... It is generally realized that the selector is closely linked with metaphor..."
10. Ibid
11. Article cited p66 "... A system is a combination of signs, which has been in support ... and there are derived it and from the opposition to that proceeds and that follows... the analytical activity which applies to the system in that of coming out."
12. The Jacobian: Figures 1960, p112: "... In order for the work to come to utter, but one amount to exhibit..."
   Becker: VII, 115 "... Art is done by painting must be done at a blow..."
13. Further at cit 112 17 3
14. Further at cit 112 17 3
15. Further at cit 112 17 3
16. Further at cit 112 17 3
17. Further at cit 112 17 3
18. Further at cit 112 17 3
19. Further at cit 112 17 3
"Sociology aims to take in any system of signs, whatever their substance and limits; images, gestures, musical signs objects and the complex association of all of these..." (my italics)

It is hard to think of a vaguer form of expression than "aims to take in". For examples of his method, as he operates it, see ".../


They were:

- Catalogue of Drawings by Sir. Ireland 1794 with Plates
- Illustrations of Drawings by S. Ireland 1793
- Illustrations of Drawings by S. Ireland, 1793
- Catalogue of Drawings by Rev J. Trusler Vol 1 with Plates
- Catalogue of Drawings by Sir. Ireland 1793 with Plates
- Catalogue of Drawings by J. Nicholls and C. Stevens Vol 3 1810 with Plates
- Catalogue of Drawings by Sir. Ireland 1793 with Plates

The catalogue is obviously not complete since it says 'etc' and 'and another'.

It is important to notice that Bromley had not disposed of this considerable collection, though he had been forced to sell off a lot of his father's books in 186-7 (see letter to Mr. Fitzgerald, in H. Llirill, Archivo Locker-Lampson: Founain's Letters to J. Llirill, 1926).

17. Lichtentenberg's Gcniocentrms were originally published in German in 1734-56. Lichtentenberg's manuscripts were translated into French and with an Introduction by Innes and Gustav Neuen 1966 p 266.

Lichtentenberg's Genocentrism were originally published in German in 1734-56. He claims that the attitude was 'exemplar' from a child in Poussin's two of the paintings but no comparable figure appears in either version of this subject in Antony Hunt, Painting of Nicholas Poussin, 1967. However, since Lichtentenberg plainly knew well the painting to which he refers, I think it probable that it is no longer attributed to Poussin.
"Because his reasons for invoking literature were misunderstood, Hogarth exposed himself to the charge of being a 'literary' artist."

It is worth noting that though Walpole apparently is dismissive about Hogarth's power as a painter, no other artist has a whole chapter devoted to him.

"Although usually considered verbal, devices such as parallelism, and contrast, analogy, puns, even irony could have been learned from the Bubble Prints as well as from Butler and Dryden and Pope..."

Besides this, there is of course Lichtenberg, who is outstandingly entertaining and claims to approach the plates in a 'poetic spirit', and Lamb, who evidently considers profound moral message to be the essential ingredient of great art and finds it in Hogarth since he had loved his works from his earliest youth. George Augustus Sala, in his book Hogarth - Painter, Engraver and Philosopher, 1866 likewise cannot escape the need to 'tell the story' of the pictures, and even Paulson, whose view of Hogarth is highly sophisticated and who feels no need to justify everything Hogarth ever did in terms of its morality or its artisticality, is also drawn into explaining the general narratives.

"Energy is eternal delight; and from the earliest times human beings have tried to imprison it in some durable hieroglyphic..." (my italics)

He calls this "dramatic time" and opposes
it to "poetic" — "a time when the pictured moment links and blends with the previous and subsequent moments."


Also in Scholar Press Facsimile, 1972, with Introduction by Richard Woodfield.

30. Compare this with Barthes' assertion that the analyst is well equipped to deal with metaphor, but not metonymy, because his own use of language is metaphorical. See note to Introduction.


32. For example: Charles Lamb — "That tumultuous harmony of singers that are roaring out the words... in the third plate of the series called the Four Groups of Heads... when we have done smiling at the deafening distortions..." (p312 op cit)
or Lichtenberg, re Strolling Actresses — "Since we have now studied this picture with our eyes, it may perhaps be quite instructive to apply an ear to it for a moment... the third sense (smell) we shall leave in peace. Alas! Hogarth has once more provided very badly for its rest... I fear the censor, and so will keep silent..." (pp 170-1 op cit)
or George Augustas Sala, William Hogarth, Painter Engraver and Philosopher 1866, Ward Lock Reprints 1970
re Southwark Fair "There is an astonishing impression of sound prevailing in this picture. It is a painted Noise..." (p231)
"The print of The Enraged Musician has been said by many to be capable at most of deafening those who looked upon it..." (p267)

33. R. Arnheim Visual Thinking 1970 pp 34, 87 etc.

34. Act V sc iii line 302: "If she first meet the curled Antony/
He'll make demand of her, and spend that kiss/ Which is my heaven to have..."

35. Lichtenberg op cit p 157

36. The Plate was apparently reversed in the copy Lichtenberg saw - Both Burke and Paulson print it the other way round with Juno on the right.

37. William Hogarth, Analysis of Beauty op cit p25
39. Ronald Paulson, Hogarth his Life Art and Times op cit Vol I p397
40. At Dulwich there is an unusual group of such Ladies by Leley (no555)
   "Three at a Fountain: each might almost be a study from a different angle of the same girl. It is not the similarity of feature, but the way in which painters like Leley 'idealise' their subjects which gives their work a monotony, however, charming, which Hogarth eschewed. This painting at least would have been familiar to Browning, and I think the contrast with Hogarth's method is so strong that it probably contributed to his later sense of painting; that he went 'souls apart' from the Browsers and Catables of his youth suggests this interpretation of his taste.

41. For a direct comparison of a garden with literature, see Ronald Paulson, Fabian and Expression, 1976 p136
   "By the time of 'Christina Francke' publication volume by volume across the 1760's, Capability Brown was ringing his gardens with a pictorial circuit while removing the obelisks, statues and temples, leaving nothing at the centre except rolling landscape. The viewer had a much wider possible range of response..."
   (p1 - "Painters... in fact attempts to replace the linear structure he inherited from the writers of narrative with a spatial, painterly one...")

42. It is interesting to note that "Hogarth's invention may be a glance at a popular ballad opera, Charles Saffey's The Devil to Pay; or the River Water-wolf". Ronald Paulson, Hogarth's Graphic Works Yale U P 1965 Vol I p122

43. Not only did Browning attempt to write history plays, but his Junius has obvious similarities to Chalico. This suggests that he felt that elements of Shakespeare's drama, like elements of Hogarth's prints, were useful to his own art.

44. Paulson, Hogarth his Life Art and Times 1971 Vol I p263


46. Of Lichtenberg op cit p163.
47. Browning sticks to the myth here: Elvire's 'love' for Don Juan is transparently sexual - women are exhorted to love thus even in the marriage service! - and her morality therefore rests in her faithful monogamy. Then the ghostly she in the Householder/Epilogue, answers Juan's indecision - "Do end!..." - with "Love is all and Death is nought!..." it is in this sense she speaks, effectively cancelling the independence her husband has asserted throughout the poem, by claiming him. This may be fair enough, as he obviously regards her as property in his monologue, too. However, the point is, she is not right; she is merely asserting herself in answer to his plea. To believe her statement to be anything but a formal resolution of the poem, referring back to Browning's translation of Kotière's Elvire at the beginning (..."norught in nature can avail/ To separate the two, save that, in stopping breath,/ May peradventure stop devotion likewise - death!") Note how Browning has expanded on Kotière's "rien n'est capable de vous détacher de moi que la mort...") would be like ascribing to one pregnant detail in Strolling Actresses all the meaning of the whole print, and would equally cancel the point of the mental stroll.

48. Lichtenberg op cit pl60 "her present laughing attire seems to have specially distracted the eye of a village Acton who... is peeping through the roof. Mr. Ireland believes the fellow perched there because he has to repair the roof; I believe he sits there for his own benefit; that is how interpreters differ..."

49. Goethe's Theory of Colour - "The chromatic has a strange kind of duplicity and, if I may be permitted such language among ourselves; a kind of double hermaphroditism, a strange claiming, connecting, mingling, neutralizing, nullifying, etc. and furthermore a demand on physiological, pathological, and aesthetical effects, which remains frightening in spite of longstanding acquaintance. And yet it is always so substantial, so material, that one does not know what to think of it..." Quotel in R. Arneheim Visual Thinking Faber 1970 p62. Goethe's Theory of Colour was pub. in London in 1840.

50. Lichtenberg op cit pl23: "no Mariage à la Mode. 'But what has Hogarth done? With unpardonable malice, he has intentionally covered over more than half of his heroine's left leg with the left leg of the Italian. Is that right? Indeed, if to cover over shortcomings in this way is not worse than to discover them, then I do not know the meaning of cover and discover."
52. I do not wish to imply the kind of comparison made by A.F. Antippas in "A Picture and its Icon by D. G. Rossetti" Vict. Poetry 11, 1963. Another example, in Browning's work, is the first and last books of The Ring and the Book called "The Ring and the Book" and "The Book and the Ring", the transposition perhaps being emphatic of the symmetry of the whole structure, rather than of a return, sonata-wise, of a theme which has been developed.
53. It may be objected that Browning can't expect the reader to know the end of the poem before he gets there. However, recall to mind the actual walk Don Juan takes, to "and where he began": all that Browning in fact expects of the reader is to reconstitute the end.
54. I use the word 'language' in the wide sense of any system of signs. See F. Borkerd, Elements of Semiology p30 - "we know the linguistic 'language', but not that of images or that of music...."
55. C. Averett, "Fifine" in Old and New Boston Rev 1872 Vol VI No. 5
56. This approach seems rare among critics of Fifine, who incline on the whole to see the poem as related to the biographical details of Browning's life. e.g. - W. O. Feyn, "Browning's Dark Poem: a Study of Fifine" in Studies in Philology 31 (1934)
57. The Diary of Alfred de Vane 1872-95 ed E. A. Forsman CUP 1953 p52
58. The Book the Ring and the Last Irvine and Noren p452
See also W. C. de Vane A Browning Handbook 1955 pp 364 ff
59. W. C. de Vane op cit p35
60. "that you think it to be is, for the time you think it to be so. For in Fifine, even death is but a word that lies like film over water deeper than consciousness." from C. K. Columbus, "Fifine: A Vue of Sexuality and Death Looking Figures of Expression" in Studies in Browning and His Circle Vol 2 1974 p23
"Re-united to the memory of Elizabeth Barrett, Browning has landed safely back on a respectable Victorian burial-ground, after his rash immersion in the waters of the unconscious ... which need not
surprise us, for Browning was always turning his back on his own conclusions..." B. Helchiori, "Browning's Don Juan" Essays in Crit. Vol. 16 1966 p439

61. Letters Ed Kintner Vol I p51
"People say of you and me, dear Mr. Browning, that we love the darkness and use a sphinxine idiom in our talk - and really you do talk a little like a sphinx in your argument drawn from Vivien Grey. Once I sat up all night to read 'Grey', - but I never drew such an argument from him..." May 1 1845.

62. Anecdotes of William Hogarth written by Himself op cit p66
See also Hogarth's print Characters and Caricatures

63. This is different from Wordsworth's approach, which 'ennobles' the 'low life' by "tracing... the primary laws of our nature" in it, which are better displayed in poor rustic folk than in worldly townies or the rich. See the Preface to the Lyrical Ballads University Paperbacks Methuen, ed Brett and Jones 1965. pp244-6.

64. Gombrich Art and Illusion op cit p5

65. e.g. Hogarth's portrait of Bishop Hoadley in the Tate Gallery, or a Reynolds' portrait.

p 151 ".. objects, in Dutch painting, are always stripped of their generic existence as objects and exist only circumstantially, in relation to man.."
"... Dutch painting, where the possession of attributes is what characterises things, while Man - and Man alone - possesses being..

67. Ibid p153

69. Souriau"Time in The Plastic Arts"op cit. It seems wrong to claim viewing takes "30 seconds to 10 minutes: a longer time would be abnormal" p132

70. Critics seem to agree that Fifine is either a failure or a puzzle: Mrs. Orr Handbook to Browning's Works 1885, rev. 1913 p 150: "Fifine is a defence of inconstancy.. the speaker's implied name of Don Juan sufficiently tells us what we are meant to think of his
...This character is nevertheless a standing puzzle to me. Gorkin's models because that which he condemns in it and that which he does not, are not to be distinguished from each other...."

194. De Value and Illusion on p 569: "Perhaps Don Juan is, of all Marquez's clear myth, the most insidious in his reasoning. He is not to good a care for Don Juan that he persuaded many that he was such a man as the hero...."

74. Marshall McLuhan in Sun: "The effect is to establish the natural beauty of the individual as the unavoidable norm...."

75. De Value and Illusion on p 572.

76. Sun, Sun, Sun, Sun, 1970.


Then other thoughts increas'd, and multiplied by his fruitful invention till he made six different subjects..." (Paulson Vol. I pl41), and even when she is on the point of death in Plate V her face is so charming that the effect is extremely poignant, as is the pretty face of the poor murdered girl in the 3rd stage of 'The Four Stages of Cruelty'.

83. W. C. de Vans Handbook op cit p96 He says that this point was raised by G. K. Chesterton, but I have been unable to find any such remark by Chesterton, who seems to think, on the contrary, that the 'central idea' of Fippa's ignorant influence on people as she 'passes' is 'splendid'. G K Chesterton Robert Browning 1900 p45.


85. It seems curious to me that this woman should be nursing a child of no more than three years old or so, when, judged by the growth of the girls, at least eight or nine years have passed between I & II, if this is "her illegitimate child" as Mr. Lister says. Far more emphatic, it seems to me, is the idea of the destitute woman and child in comparison with the orphaned girls in II simply as visual complements of each other. The moon in II and III suggests that both pictures are of the same night, and the caption the artist appended suggests that the woman under the arches is the same woman as in I; but it seems pedantic to read no more into the pictures than can be put into a story to go with them. Egg, in I, has used Hogarth's trick of highlighting his meaning by visual symbols such as the subjects of the paintings on the wall or the split apple, but surely Mr. Lister is going too far in suggesting that the word "Return" on the of the posters in III gives a "ray of Hope" for the poor mother. The tone of all the readable print on the posters is relevant, but surely not just one detail on one poster. Similarly, it seems almost unnecessary to interpret the first picture so narrowly as the mere symbolic parts of it would suggest. The Expulsion From the Garden of Eden may be the picture on the wall, but the woman has her things already packed, so her prostration is not the result of the first revelation. The room is incredibly stifling, with only a reflection in the mirror of the open door to suggest the possibility of
a way out - a contrast with the pure moonlight of the other two pictures. The subject of the other picture, The Abandoned, suggests also that life in this room may be intolerable for the woman, rather than that she is being banished from it. Her prostrate pose suggests rather that she can't take any more than that she wants to stay. The husband does not appear in the other pictures, except in his mini-portrait on the wall in II, which is carefully put in the shadow of the mirror while the wife's portrait just catches enough light for her face to shine out. There is, in short, far more to these pictures than just their story, and this is truly a legacy from Hogarth: for in this idea of exploring a theme not through its dramatic story but through an examination of static values in juxtaposition, a world of subtlety is opened up.

86. R. Lister *Victorian Narrative Paintings* 1966 plates 16-20 W. P. Frith also wanted to paint a 'Morning, Noon and Night' series. See *A Victorian Canvas Memoirs of W. P. Frith* ed. N. Wallis 1957 pl08

87. This is nothing to do with the idea that the painter's personality can be traced through his art: I am talking about the impossibility of the deliberate portrayal by the painter of a personality as such. Self-portraits indeed provide some of the best evidence for my contention that character, not personality can be shown in a painting. Here, one may be sure that the artist was thoroughly well-acquainted with his subject's personality, but it is impossible for the viewer to read that personality in the painting. Compare Rembrandt's or Reynolds' series of self-portraits: there is mood and character in all, and the features are constantly recognisable, but I protest against any idea that even the personal motivation of the portraits is clear. Elements of vanity or romance (see Dürer's early self-portrait, or Dante Gabriel Rossetti's), or of objective self-disgust (see Goya's with his doctor) provide a sense of the character and role of the sitter, but not of his individual makeup. In short, the effect of these portrayals, even where the subject is most intimately known, is to generalise the detail of the sitter so that the viewer perceives him typically.


89. Ibid p9
"My father was a scholar and knew Greek.
When I was five years old, I asked him once,
'What do you read about?' 'The Siege of Troy'
'What is a siege and what is Troy?'...
It happened, two or three years afterward,
That — I and playmates playing at Troy's Siege —
My Father came upon our make-believe.
'How would you like to read yourself the tale
properly told?...'

Pope, now, would give you the precise account
of what, some day, by dint of scholarship,
You'll hear, — who knows? — from Homer's very mouth...
'Read Pope, by all means!..."

"O wretched husband of a wretched wife!
Born with one fate, to one unhappy life!
For sure one star its baneful beam display'd
On Palin's root, and Hippolaeia's shade.
From different parents, different climes we came
At different periods yet our fate the same..."

The character of Andromache can be described as The Faithful Wife,
and all her lament is entirely consonant with this role. She requires no personality of her own, as her function in the poem is
precisely defined by her role, a contrast with Helen and with Juno,
an assertion of the value and strength of Hector's virtuous married
life.
100. **Analysis of Beauty** Scholar Press Facsimile 1969 p85


102. See Paulson Complete Plays vol I p108

103. 1837 Strofford

104. Mandello

105. Lippa Fanny

106. King Victor and King Charles

107. The Return of the Travels: A List in the *Soutchon*

108. Ophelio's Birthday

109. 1845 Julia; A real's tragedy (Mr. Mrs. Carl's *Landmarks* p566-7

110. See Griffin *Minding op cit* p115

111. "I know nothing; that is so affecting, nothing in any book

112. I have ever read, as Illinois's occurrence is that "I was so

113. I had no mother... I swear it is a tragedy that

114. I'll be played."
Val the wild desert full of fces around,
I should have broken the bread and given the salt

... Yes: I trust Florence: Hain in deceived...

100. Neeveth Analysis of Beauty op cit pp59-61
L.C. "The idea of the wire, retaining thus the shape of the
part it presses over so... of so much consequence, that I would
by no means have it forgot... as it may properly be considered
as one of the limbs (or outlines) of the shell (or external
surface) of the human form... and the frequently returning to it
will assist the imagination in its conceptions of those parts of
it, whose shapes are most intricately varied..." etc.

100. Drowned Complete Threeations pp170-82 and pp.164-7

101. Justice Act V "Snoozle - let the midnight end!
"Is rom approach!... still you answer not?
And we succeed the shadow past away..."

111. W. Zimne; Midnight. Threeaations; Notes; mutated musician


127 "In the perfection of shape lie the beginnings of concept
formation..."

164 "Vision, instead of contending itself with the visible section,
conspires the object..."

167 "Much of what is known about the hidden inside of things pre-
stands itself as a live fife aspect of their outside appearance;
I see the typewriter close as containing my typewriter; I see
the typewriter also put on the shelf an empty. This knowledge is
entirely visual...

168 "... not every line or character now automatically become part
of his visual fife. The Venus Fronale also had no intestines...
Under such conditions, the perceptual inside is not added for
by the outside, as the back side of a ball is called for by the
front."

169 "The paradox of seeing a thing as complete, but incompletely,
is familiar from daily life..." etc.

115. Commentator 17 April 1641 xiv 379 Print in Whitesav and
Surely op cit p70. "or less the moral turn appear to be of the
kind likely to be tolerated on the stage, or approved of anywhere.
In one scene, a young wife and her parasites discuss their loves
and the murder of the 'old husband' needlessly, openly, wantonly,
11. A. G. K. Chesterton, op cit p75 "... the greatest poem ever written with the exception of one or two by Milton, to express the sentiment of the pure love of humanity..."

Griffin & Rhind, op cit p235... the light of God shines about him from the outset - "God's in his heaven, all's right with the world!"..." Irving & Kenyon p36 op cit "Relating several kinds of love... transplanted in the very half-edge of crisis by a girl's vitalistic love of life and of God, he demonstrates the essentially moral religious nature of all love and the possibilities of "only him in the world..."

11. ... It is... op cit.

11. An Anthology of Interesting Moments in Prose
and Verse, consisting of Ovid's anecdotes, biographical sketches, bi-lingual, Letters, Characters, etc., 1901 from a N. L. story, which shows that it still was in a feminine's possession when he died. It contains Aule's "Letter to Hitler"; National Characters; Epitaphs, etc. The book and several others which Irving owned are mentioned in a Bibliography of "Anecdotes and Epitaphs in English" by J. S. French

117. Cited in Griffin & Rhind, op cit p22-23

118. Cited in Irving & Kenyon op cit, p6-10

119. Very few of Aule's anecdotes can be related directly to these books, and the biographical sketches for such relationships have been added by his biographers. Aule himself said to have come from Barley - but since Aule's Letters also been on a point on the same subject, even if that subject comes is a little overwhelming by circumstances! See Griffin & Rhind, p6-7; 22-26; Irving & Kenyon, p7 / 10.

117. "The Elusive Title of Aule's "Difficult' Vocabulary"

111. H. Lyon, "Shakespere's "Riddle" Vocabulary" 1905-1940. H. Lyon believes that Aule's mark "sacrament of language study" and newly invented words, but only unusual words correctly. Aule himself wrote a rather unremarkable letter to San Halvion pointing out his use of Johnson, after an America Lily had consulted with various words of his own and written him from (Letters to San Halvion compiled by J. J. Armstrong 1925 p53).
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121. B. Boyce Character Sketches in Pope's Poems 1962 ch 1

122. Ibid p22 Boyce quotes a letter from Swift to Pope where Swift claims: "twenty miles from London nobody understands hints, initials."

123. "No art" said Degas once, "was ever less spontaneous than mine. What I do is the result of reflection and study of the great masters; of inspiration, spontaneity, temperament - temperament is the word - I know nothing."... "It's all very well," he once said, "to copy what you see, but it is much better to draw what you see in your mind. You reproduce only what strikes you, which is what is necessary..." quoted in Pictures in Britain BBC Publications 1969 pp55-56

124. Gombrich op cit. The person who drew his 'duck or rabbit' should have made it clear if he meant either!

125. Arnheim op cit deals with this painting with barely suppressed rage: "It is, alas, nothing else (but a pipe)" - clearly, if the picture of a pipe is not meant to suggest a pipe, Arnheim's Aristotelian assumptions in the book are questionable (see p12). But I think may be Arnheim credited Magritte with wider ranging intentions than he really possessed in painting this picture: it is essentially a joke at the expense of his viewer and as such is of limited scope. If Magritte had seriously been questioning the representational aspects of painting, and not just his viewer's immediate and hackneyed interpretation of them, I feel he would have taken the trouble to present a more attractive effect than this crudely drawn and drab picture does.

126. Arnheim op cit p12

127. Aristotle The art of Rhetoric with English Trans by J H Freese Loeb Classical Library 1929 I i 14 pl5 (Barthes claims that Rhetoric is the forebear of Structuralism - Science vs Lit Times Lit Supp 28 September 1967 p412)

128. Ibid I ii 1 p15

129. Ibid I ii 12 p23

130. Ibid I ii 11 p23

131. L Paulson and L H Carlson English Satire 1972. Papers read at a Clark Library Seminar, January 15, 1972 p63 "For Pope, there is always a final transformation into art... As a satirist, Pope never loses sight of himself as poet; and in
fact poet rather than satirist sums up the man..."

132. Paulson & Carlson ibid pp99 - 101

133. Examples could be multiplied to illustrate this point: take just one - Velasquez Las Meninas, where the artist appears to be painting the ladies by viewing them in a mirror, since all have their backs to him and face the viewer. From the reflection in a mirror on the wall we see the King and Queen must be standing where we, the viewers, are in fact standing. This viewpoint and its implications create the endlessly fascinating complexities of the scene. In his History of Art (op cit) Janson sees this painting as showing Dutch influence. (p433). It is hard to see how any abstract or non-illusionistic painting could use these complexities.

134. It is perhaps of interest to compare the succinctness of Hogarth's paradox with the rather laboured poem of Swinburne's about the death of time, called A Forfeiten Garden (Oxford Book of Victorian Verse ed Giller-Couch 1912 p597)

"Here now in his triumph where all things falter,
Stretch'd out on the spoils that his own hand spread,
As a god self-slain on his own strange altar,
Death lies dead."

Swinburne, like Tennyson, goes to much trouble to realize the scene which surrounds the garden, but only really to lend credibility of atmosphere to the paradox which is the poem's intended meaning so that the language can bear it. Hogarth and Browning on the other hand, do not arrive at paradoxes as the consummation of their works, but realise them in initial and complete forms so that they are epideictic, self-displaying.

135. Land p 1855; see Kicnan & Irvine p331, and Letters of EBB to her Sister ed Huxley p230. James Lee's life was the first poem in Dramatis Personae pub 1864. See De Vane p 284

136. Letters of 233 ed Kenyon II p215. See also Irvine & Honan p331

137. W C De Vane p285

138. RD to Fanny Haworth April 1839. See Few Letters ed De Vane and Knickerbocker pl5. Note the Aristotelian rhetorical idea which informs Browning's boast.

139. In fact, these two poems are chilling because the madness is so very lucid.

140. Roman Jakobson op cit p175


See also C Ricks: Tennyson 1972 p178
Philip Drew in "Tennyson and the Dramatic Monologue: A Study of " "Tennyson and their Background" (ed D J Palmer 1975), also feels that " Laud cannot be held to operate as a completely successful monodrama... it is... more like In Memoriam than James Lee's Wife". p139

142. I think there is no question that Tennyson intended at least most of Laud to be read realistically, i.e. as if there were a real madman talking because he has been at such pains to transcribe the observations he made at High Beech Asylum - see Ricks op cit - as well as to lavish the full power of his vivid language on the landscapes. There are of course paintings which literally display stories - take Doccicelli's Miracle of St. Zenobius (at Dresden, Gemalde Gallery) where the child Zenobius is simultaneously seen run over, carried as a corpse, and restored to life by the prayer of the old saintly dying bishop in bed on the right. However here the architecture is not allowed to suggest anything other than its normal form: the three times of the painting do not disturb it, since the first is in the courtyard, the second on the steps, and the third in the lobby. Thus the painting still observes the necessary unity which gives its form meaning. Tennyson however desires the opportunity to reintroduce the reader to scenes when the mood has changed; thus "The scream of a madman's beach dragged down by the wave" (line 56) is the same beach topographically as in "Is that enchanted moor only the swell/ Of the long waves that roll in yonder bay?" (lines 660-1) Tennyson in fact can use the reader's realization of this as a gauge of the madman's state.

143. John Jones's Wife, in Kentish in 1360 (though this parody was actually written twelve years earlier, see Randolph Hughes' Commentary on his edition of Lechis Ferdinon 1952, p220)
It is a remarkably long parody, and it might seem as if, in spite of his intention to mock, Winburne was aware that there was a lot more to deal with in James Lee's Wife than he could manage.

144. Robert Browning to Julie Keigh ed Curle op cit p123
See also De Vane Handbook p286

145. Cf Byron's Child Harold Canto IV clxxx p251 Oxford Standard Authors

146. Idylls of the King: The Last Tournament lines 461-66

147. See Jakobsen op cit.
This essay is published in the Browning Society Papers 1881. The essay was written as the introduction to some 'new letters' of Shelley, and published early in 1852. It seems somehow typical of Browning's bad luck as a poet that all except one of the letters were rapidly proved to be fakes! The essay is however of considerable critical interest, besides its interest to Browning scholars, since it argues about fundamental poetic modes and refers to Shelley as an example, rather than centring its thesis on him. The essay also appeared in what I take to be a pirated edition in a little book called The Bibliot Vol VIII in 1902.

To Fanny Haworth, April 1839 " - not you! (Know anything about me)"
pl5 New Letters ed De Vane & Knickerbocker

To EBB. February 11 1845. "What I have printed gives no knowledge of me."
pl7 Letters ed Kintner Vol I

To Miss E. Dickinson West, Jan 4 1876 - "There would seem to be no sort of perception as to what dramatic writing means: my silly friend of the Spectator sees myself speaking my own speech in this and the other character, and blames accordingly." p169 Letters ed Hood

To Mrs. Fitzgerald March 24 1883 - "Once directing your intelligence the simple and straight way - to the substance of whatever poem you do me the honour to read, and not the quite extraneous matter elsewhere - I shall be sure of your understanding - however uncertain I may be of your liking what I write." p158 Learned Lady op cit

The same kind of concession Browning made when he put those curiously unhelpful headings in Bordello.

Magritte op cit. See Blunt Paintings of Poussin - The Arcadian Shepherds, two versions plates 56 and 225. The former is Et In Arcadia Ego in Pictures in Britain op cit

I find something very charming in Browning's letting one of his characters criticize a poem he himself wrote in his early twenties. Browning's reaction against Pauline is often commented upon, but here we see, as it were, the mature talent assessing the power and use of itself when immature: a far more poetically important reaction. Browning did not often include 'old' bits of poetry in his works, whereas it was a constant feature of Tennyson's method to do so,
even writing around the wonderful sounding phrases he had invented apparently without context. See Ricks op cit p1037 ff for details of what he used in Maud. The difference in this matter between the two poets suggests to me the different kinds of reading they need: for Browning, the prime requirement is an understanding of the consistency of the idea - for Tennyson, it is that the words should consummately work in their own right. Hence Tennyson could realize a feeling forever in a phrase -

"An infant crying in the night
An infant crying for the light
And with no language but a cry" (In Memoriam LIV p909)

and Browning could realize no form without its context.

155. Let me point out how visually this is conceived: the 'change beginning' is marked by a 'line' which can 'circumscribe beauty'. The whole point is made as if the eye were reluctant to leave the beautiful painted form - shall we say of a face? - and take in the background - shall we say, cliffs? - while at the same time the implication is that only a line divided them! (think of Leonardo's Madonna of the Rocks)

156. "Wretchedest age since Time began
They cannot even bury a man..."

157. See Introduction

158. E.G. See Pictures in Britain for a colour print of Constable's study for The Leaning Horse (p24)

159. Mrs. Crr Handbook p235

160. See also Enoch Arden, or the characters in Idylls of the King

161. "It is the glory and the good of Art
That Art remains the one way possible
Of speaking truth, to mouths like mine at least." Ring and the Book op cit

Browning himself was seen "in the very early 1860's" by Aitchison modelling a hand in clay at Leighton's studio: see R & L Ormond, Lord Leighton 1975 p93

162. Throughout Leonardo's Notebooks there is a thread of comparison between poetry and painting which Browning seems to be echoing in a way in this section. In the third book On Anatomy, for instance:

"With what words, O writer, can you with like perfection describe the whole arrangement of that of which the design is here?? I counsel you not to cumber yourself with words unless you are speaking to the blind..." (p160)

And in the twenty-eighth Book on Comparison of the Arts:

"The eye, which is called the window of the soul, is the chief means whereby the understanding may most fully and abundantly
appreciate the infinite works of nature... And if you, O poet, represent a story by depicting it with your pen, the painter with his brush will so render it as to be more easily satisfying and less tedious to understand. If you call painting 'dumb poetry', then the painter may say of the poet that his art is 'blind painting'. Consider then which is the more grievous affliction, to be blind or dumb!..."

From the Notebooks of Leonardo Da Vinci, Arranged and Rendered into English and Introduced by Edward MacCurdy 1956 two vols.

Perhaps the section on the anatomy of the hand was also in Browning's mind. I am not suggesting that Browning would necessarily have agreed with Leonardo, but that it seems that throughout his poetry he makes mention of various great painters because he believes that their work has a certain clarity which is required in his argument.

163. Also Caponsacchi's references to Raphael, Don Juan's to Michaelangelo, etc.

164. See also the pictures which Brouwer places in his scenes.

165. *See also the pictures which Brouwer places in his scenes.*

166. There are, however, occasions where Browning's mental pictures seem to me to have a very Hogarthian flavour: for example, his carnival scene in Fifine always recalls Hogarth's Southwark Fair. The booths in Hogarth's print actually seem to have some parallels in Browning's list of 'academies' -

Fifine oxvi - "Here History keeps shop
Tells how past deeds were done so and not otherwise:
"Man! hold truth evermore! Forget early lies!"
There sits Morality, demure behind her stall...
While Art gives flag to breeze, bids drum beat,
trumpet blow..."

However, I do not believe that any fundamental influence could be proved from such a parallel, since it depends upon isolating the images from their artistic contexts in order to compare them.
Chapter 5

BROWNING'S USE OF IRONY

I have been at pains to suggest that a poet of Browning's intelligence and inclinations would be unlikely to flaunt 'influences' upon his thought in an obvious way in his poetry; and that in such a man's work therefore, one needs to look rather for underlying and assumed modes for the betrayal of influence than to overt tendencies. Hence, I have suggested that the influence of his early knowledge, understanding and fondness for painting would show up in assumptions he might make about the way images work, or in specifically timeless forms, or in an accumulative rather than a supersessive approach to detail.

There is however one more general, and generally recognized, aspect of his poetry which I believe betrays the influence of painting on his mind just as noticeably as these; and which becomes itself more comprehensible when considered in conjunction with these other aspects.

Browning's irony, which is not just a pervasive tone but a fundamental technique throughout his work, seems to me to be of a special and original kind in poetry. That irony is very important in his poetry is critically recognised, but it seems to have been assumed that the irony was the tool of other, more didactic, intentions, or that it was even an element of Browning's poetry over which he had insufficient control. I should like to try to be more specific about the kind and use of irony in Browning, because it seems to me to be a consistent and not a paradoxical element in his work. I am a little hampered here, however, because there seems to be no tradition on which I can draw of critical commentary on irony in painting - though many other literary words have been adopted by art critics, such as 'satire' and 'metaphor'. If such a tradition
did exist, it would be easier for me to define the common qualities which I feel there are between Browning's use of irony and similarly inward devices in painting; and this would in turn clarify the exact type of irony which Browning used. However, in the absence of such aid, let me begin on the literary leg of the comparison.

The word 'irony' has been much spread about: it seems to range from a person's meaning the opposite of what he says (which I should call 'sarcasm') to Fate having it in for the hero (as in Schlegel's 'tragic irony'). Plainly neither of these two extremes suits Browning. However, the original word in Greek meant "Dissimulation", and Theophrastus defined an 'eiron' as 'a person who was slippery in his speech, non-committal.' This would certainly suit many of Browning's characters - Mr. Sludge, for instance, or Bishop Blougram who "Believed, say, half he spoke", but it is still a long way from the Theophrastan idea of a primitive sophistry to the specific use of such 'dissimulation' in art for the purpose of 'speaking truth', or to the use of fictions, if you like, for realistic ends. The point is that if the lies relate to each other with sufficient irony, then there is no need to be 'deceived' by them to discover their 'truths': the reality lies in the representation. This is simple to demonstrate with regard to painting: a blade of grass near the picture-plane may be the same number of inches in length as a castle in the background - this 'lie' or 'dissimulation' represents the 'truth' or 'reality' about the relation of the two, that the grass is near and the castle far. This is plainly not an ironic effect in the case I give, but it is similar in operation to several 'size-indicators' which Browning uses; there is, for instance, the inclusion at the end of Cleon of the hint of Christianity, "a doctrine which could be held by no sane man"; or the touch at the end of Porphyria's Lover, "And yet God has not said a word", where the tiny detail suddenly casts a different perspective on what has been said, while not in the least altering its actual pattern. I disagree with
the interpreters who choose to see in this hint in Cleon the 'real meaning' of the poem: rather, as with a meticulous Dürer drawing of grass, I feel here that Cleon has to live on his own scale and with his own values, not to be intruded upon by Paul any more than one expects a human foot to crush Dürer's insects. Yet I appreciate a certain irony in the realization that the world will hear so much more of Paul's 'insanity' than of Cleon with all his talents, just as I appreciate the fine sense of the tiny reality which informs Dürer's dominant tuft of grass with, perhaps, an irony of its own.

This irony of Browning's then is essentially formative, not commentatory; it doesn't turn the speakers' statements into their own opposites, nor does it point to massive intractible forces which they in their ignorance are powerless to understand, but it works between the elements of which their speeches are composed, usually without their realizing its presence. It is, if I might coin a phrase, the irony of stasis which exists within their busy efforts to excuse, extricate, explain or explore themselves. The elements which they consciously choose to display to the reader expose them not because of symbolic meanings already resident in those elements, but because of the way in which they make them relate. Hogarth's love of mnemonics of lines shows his delight in the fact that the mere juxtaposition of lines can make them, inexpressive singly, full of meaning; just so Browning's characters juggle their own attitudes and pretensions into configurations which speak volumes -

'Learned, we found him,

Yes, but we found him bald too!' 'Grammarian's Funeral -

but strictly in their own terms.

This is a very different process from that of tragic irony or dramatic irony: they rely upon some actual piece of knowledge being
given to the viewer and denied to the protagonist, and they therefore require some intermediary to impart this - the Chorus in a Greek tragedy, the element of parody in Waiting for Godot, or the narrator perhaps in a novel or in narrative verse. The instinct towards realism in Browning eschews these commentative means. His irony is based on discrepancy and contrast, as are the other kinds, but his contrasts are always strictly confined within the limits of his poem's action. This is not to say that he has to invent significances, but that he always controls them and they are never intended to carry more weight than the internal evidence within the poem would justify. Thus for instance I regard it as a serious misreading of Browning's intentions to find in Karshish's awestruck: "So the All-Great were the All-Loving too" any more than his personal realization of what the basic humanity of his job - healing people - entails anyway. His mind is already attuned to find an all-loving principle. This is not a poem about conversion. It shows the man's tentative ability to conceive Christianity in his own terms. Therefore if one takes as critical standpoint one's own view that Browning himself was a Christian and must consequently have intended a purely Christian meaning, one seriously distorts the poem's actual shape. But if, on the other hand, one views Karshish's love of explanation with the same ironical detachment throughout the poem - whether it is applied to remedies or to beliefs - in short, if one keeps the whole poem steadily in view instead of seeking its solution in its end, the real, moveless form of the speech will come through. A similar approach is often demanded by a painter. As Gombrich scornfully points out, the idea that there is some set path for the viewer's eye to travel around a picture is palpable nonsense: the process by which the painter does indeed 'lead the eye' of the beholder is through the recognition of points
of contrast - the order of recognition is often of minor importance. A picture does not need 'a beginning, a middle and an end' to accomplish significance, because it can establish both objects and relationships simultaneously. This is a similar effect to that which Browning achieves through his fundamental and static irony.

The main point then about Browning's irony is that it provides the stability of both form and content which so distinguishes his poetry. Let me return to Browning's early love of the Dulwich Gallery, to a painting by Poussin which seems to me to embody a similar technique. Poussin's Roman Road seems to be the embodiment of aesthetic detachment applied in realistic terms. It is unemotional but not in the least arid. Its composition is daring, with the Road plunging straight back into the picture-space at the centre of the canvas. The human figures in the picture seem bound into stillness because the places they occupy in the composition are so utterly logical. The viewer takes them in, not as parts of the landscape, but without that warm sudden interest which Rembrandt's figures always arouse whether they occupy most of the canvas (as in the portraits, or The Night Watch) or not (as in the Man in his Study in the National Gallery). The light which picks Poussin's figures out from their darker surroundings is an indicator to the eye of the logic of the composition, not of the relative importance of the subjects; and this prevents the viewer from performing that illogical or mystic leap which he so readily makes when his sympathy is enlisted, whereby his own feelings, (or even philosophy) become of primary importance to his understanding of the painting. Poussin's composure enforces the viewer's detachment, so that the only way the viewer has of understanding the painting is by assessing the complete pattern's effect. Thus Poussin takes for granted the recognisableness of things, and does not seek to analyse
that quality, the 'meaning' of his painting can only derive from the relationships he establishes between the recognized objects and between the visual elements which form their representation, and not from the emotions or other associations aroused in the viewer by the subject matter he portrays. (The usefulness of the classical mode to this kind of art must be plain. In passing I should like to point out that Browning frequently chose classical characters as his own speakers, not to 'update' or 'make relevant' their experiences, but to achieve the necessary distance between the reader and the speaker so that more purely aesthetic criteria can operate unimpeded. I shall deal with this more fully in discussing Browning's art in comparison with that of his friend, Leighton.) In short, Poussin's Roman Road begins by convincing you that it is complete.

To understand Browning's irony requires equally this awareness of aesthetic completeness. It is unlike passing irony or culminating irony in that it is the result of contrasts continually present within the whole poem and not merely of incidental juxtaposition or of commentary upon the action. For example, if we take a typical but apparently rather unsatisfactory little poem of Browning's - Memorabilia - we shall see how he needs his reader to be detached and even unmoved to achieve any consistent effect by the poem. This little poem seems always to have been considered as a rather trivial tribute to Shelley paid by Browning in his own person; De Vane avoids comment, but his analysis of the poem's genesis certainly suggests that he sees no other depths in the poem; Mrs. Orr is outright certain that the poem shows Browning's personal attitude to Shelley in a good light. Yet it seems to me that this reading seriously distorts the poem's actual sense. As usual, the real light is cast upon the speaker himself, and
as usual the content of his poem/speech serves mainly to betray what kind of person he is. Thus we can't ignore the fact that the chap who really saw and spoke to Shelley laughs at the speaker; or that the speaker is so excessively discriminating in his approach that he can ignore an entire moor (which he has nonetheless to traverse) in favour of some preconceived symbolism about eagles. This is where it is essential to see the poem completely; the poet could hardly push his reader more vigorously to understand this need than by his giveaway last line - "Well, I forget the rest." I am far from claiming this slip of a poem to be a neglected masterpiece, but I do believe that its basic mechanism is usually ignored and that it thus provides a clear example of a besetting confusion in the reading of Browning's poetry. If one knew nothing of the poet's life, the temptation to misread would perhaps be smaller, or if one were not already trained to expect a romantic function of all imagery. Browning very often uses the final lines of his poems to tilt the attention of the reader back into the mass of the poem, and not at all to complete "the story". It is as if he were indicating that the poem's completeness is not really temporal but concerns the whole pattern simultaneously. Very often the effect of this is ironic: Don Juan's return to Fifine; Caliban's abject return to 'worship'; the Contemporary, who "could never write a verse", returns "To the Prado (to) make the most of time"; and Master Hughes' organist admits that he does not "carry the moon in (his) pocket". In these cases the last gesture of the speaker in no sense sums up his excognitions; it juxtaposes another element, possibly one which has been and underlying force throughout - as the innate violence of the Duke of Ferrara is so beautifully expressed in Claus of Innsbruck's statuette - or one which complements the other
attitudes of the speaker and so gives them new force — as in Karshish's sense of the attractiveness of Christianity, or Cleon's of its madness, or as in Caliban's straight reversal of attitude. These completing touches push the mind of the reader towards the rest of the poem, and refuse to operate symbolically, for they are denied independent meaning. In short, you simply cannot understand them unless you assess their relation to the rest. The eagle's feather in Memorabilia (an image so commonplace as a symbol that even a slight acquaintance with the originality, even perversity, of Browning's imagery would make one feel that such a use would be abhorrent to him) is only endowed with meaning by the speaker, not by the poet. The speaker's attitude to the feather is the meaningful element for the poet, just as in Foussin's Roman Road the actual subjects are coldly presented so that it is their pattern and specifically not their content which moves the viewer. In Browning's poetry, the tool which usually achieves this effect is irony, which, like Foussin's coldness, 22 enforces a stability on the whole work.

If viewed as being within the overall pattern of ironic and static formal relationships, many elements of Browning's art which seem confusing can be sorted out. The control of ambivalence is basic to all use of imagery in both painting and poetry and is indeed a primary concern for the realist in either art, because an image is by its very nature available for recognition as well as interpretation. This means that the viewer or reader could always get hold of the wrong end of the stick and mistake the significance of the image because he might interpret according to his own idea of its significance before he became aware of its use in the work. Or on the other hand, he might entirely fail to recognise it as an image at all if he were simply to see it as a cypher to be interpreted. Both these
mistakes would arise from the viewer or reader failing to be arrested by the picture or poem itself, and coming to conclusions therefore which were actually based on preconceptions. The realist chooses to prevent both errors by presenting what I call for want of a better word, opaque images — ones which cannot be 'seen through' or bypassed — which counterfeit some aspect of reality with such power that they stop the viewer or reader from interpreting until he has mastered the pattern and the detail of the work. The actual work is thus the object of attention because it recruits the interpretative faculty of the viewer or reader into comprehending the image itself rather than the significance of the image. The actual surface of the painting, the actual language of the poem, is the object of inquiry, not its 'idea' or 'meaning' at this stage. For this reason, typically complex technical devices are used by the realist, since he wishes to entangle his audience with his presentation. The extreme attention to representing texture, for instance, which is typical of Dutch painting, or the sheer intelligence of the sophistry of some of Browning's speakers (or of the speakers in Dryden's The Hind and the Panther or Milton's Samson Agonistes) are examples of this. The patterns require the audience to pay attention to their metonymy and thus actually divert the audience from generalizing for the time being. I call this complex and technical because I wish to imply that it is not merely complicated, but is of intricate and inward integrity, and to avoid any implication about the subject matter as yet. Now complexity of arrangement can be grasped far more quickly by the eye than by the other senses, it seems to me: one needs a trained ear to hear the detail in music, or to be a gourmet to taste every spice in subtle foods, but at every point in waking life the eye is sorting out distance, light, size, speed, so that the surrounding world seems a
steady and continuous place: to us, and one to whose elements we relate securely on the whole. In this sense then, the presentation 'at a blow' which Reynolds saw as the basic discipline of painting can be a very important discipline upon the poet's imagery too, most especially if he is a realist, because the audience shares most easily the assumptions which the 'images' make about the visual world. Even in poetry whose main formal control is through narrative, the vividness is achieved by the poet's stunning to describe things on the way. The discipline of visual thought can be expressed not just by colours and shapes, which are perhaps its readiest mimics, but also by words, because they can be used, like colours and shapes, as pieces of jigsaw. Like colours, they can be changed by association with other words: as the same red can be warm or cool depending on whether it is placed beside a cool blue or a hot yellow, so words can assume qualities which inform the reader thoroughly about the nature of their context. And since in some rudimentary sense this kind of use could be described as a distortion of the words themselves, that they are bounden into lucid relationships and lose their independence as modules of pure meaning, they can become parts of a language whose function is not just to express meaning, but to express character. In this sense then the arguments of Browning's sophists are indeed imitations: they are indeed dissimulations - not because we are deceived by them but because the speakers themselves are unaware of the real functions of their languages. They discuss all manner of themes but their very choice of words betrays their 'real' selves to the reader.

This is the very opposite of romantic imagery and I believe that Browning intended it to be so. His early rejection of the Shelleyan approach, which is documented in *Pauline*, is much underrated as an
indicator about his art. He continued to wrangle openly in his poems with Byron (in Fifine at the Fair, Le Byron de Nos Jours), and his use of the figure of Wordsworth in The Lost Leader is to crystallize the nature of the speaker rather than to comment on the leader. His speakers are opaque images meant to arrest the reader at their surfaces first. The opposite kind of imagery, against which he was openly in revolt, was primarily illustrative: the image illustrated the poet's idea. In this sense the romantic imagery which Browning was rejecting was both symbolic and transparent, and its reader took a philosophic role as an interpreter of ideas. The beauty of language or of imagery in romantic poetry was imitative in limited ways only - just so far as was necessary to the expression of the poet's idea. Onomatopoeia, alliteration, or a striking metaphor were the poet's direct means of making clear his idea and not the involuntary and characteristic shapes of real things. For Browning, as for Milton in his Satan, or Shakespeare in his Mark Antony, the language is not illustrative, but is the thing itself: we can see Satan or Mark Antony or Mr. Sludge contriving their arguments, and choosing persuasive words so that their ends can be achieved, and thus the reader sees not an idea illustrated by imagery but the form of the speaker's (not the poet's) intentions. The poet's function is therefore dispassionate display, not sympathetic explanation.

Different aesthetic ends require different expressive means and also different kinds of appreciation. Browning's irony is different both in function and scope from the kind of irony we find in Wordsworth or Byron. In them, the ironic touch is a subtle means of enhancing the poet's power of comment on the illustration he is making, but it is passing and contributary and not formative; but in Browning the ironic contrast, sequence or other juxtaposition, is the basic
technique for distancing the reader from the speaker (a quite essential distance, for the reader would get absolutely nowhere who tried imaginatively to be one of Browning's speakers!). The fundamental nature of this irony does not seem to have been critically grasped by many of Browning's commentators. In an essay specifically titled *Some Aspects of Browning's Irony*, F. E. L. Priestley says:

> What is often most difficult to determine is Browning's attitude towards his subject and the attitude he wishes the reader to adopt towards it.

He has plainly recognised that Browning's irony is opaque and yet he still demands it should be seen through, a give-away to the reader, a tip which will tell him what posture to adopt, as it might be in Byron: he therefore decides:

> the fundamental irony is dependent on a constant setting of Browning's theology against Caliban's... this sort of irony is not likely to suggest itself to the reader.

*The poem succeeds without the primary irony.*

In seeking the poem's meaning outside the poem itself he has confounded himself; he can see that the whole portrait of Caliban is full of leering irony, but he can't put his finger on it. He seems not to realise that the effect is created by the total illogicality of Caliban's premise - that Setebos is like himself - from which all the irony of Caliban's meditation flows. Instead, he seriously allows Caliban to compare himself to the deity and seeks in biographical surmises about the nature of Browning's personal faith the cause of the bizarre effect. There is no single point in the poem which justifies this approach, no hint that Browning 'disagrees' with Caliban or disapproves of him, or is using him in any way to make a
theological or even a moral point. In fact, the little excerpt from 
Psalm 50 with which Browning prefaced the poem is quite sufficient as 
a clue for the reader to grasp immediately the intention of irony in 
Caliban's whole monologue. In short there is not really any point in 
looking for Browning the man in Caliban, since he resolutely refuses 
to appear. The irony then must lie within the poem itself and be 
strictly confined in relevance by this frame. 
(Browning himself selected this poem as being "dramatic", a word 
which he had used throughout his life to indicate the completely 
separate entity of his poems from himself.)

Browning's irony is recognised in a much more extended and impor­
tant work on Browning's technique, The Bow and the Lyre, by Roma A. 
King, Jr. 

Browning is inevitably the poet of paradox and irony. 
The deceptiveness of appearances; the co-existence, 
even dual nature, of good and evil, beauty and ugliness; 
man's proclivity for self-deception, and his inability 
to disentangle and order the diversities produced by 
life's paradoxes make the poet an ironist on a cosmic 
scale. In this respect, more than any other, he is 
un-Romantic. His vision lacks the intense concentration, 
the single faith ... characteristic of the Romantics... 

But even here, where Browning's irony is highly valued, the critic 
still seems hidebound by romantic expectations; for imagery to impress 
him as "intense" it needs to stem from a "single faith" and be, therefore, 
transparent, illustrative. In order to give Browning the stature of a 
fine poet he applies words which seem curiously unsuitable: "ironist 
on a cosmic scale" and "Life's paradoxes" seem far too large and vague
to describe Browning's complicated and detailed art, even as culminating points near the end of his book. The generalizations about "man" also seem as irrelevant to the highly individual characters who speak to us in Browning's poems as Browning's personal religion is to his creation, Caliban. The whole power of his art is directed away from generalisation and opinion, and towards the creation of separate men and women, who have, like their readers, intelligence and prejudice with which to generalize and opine, and whose traits are therefore apparent to the reader as themselves and distinctly not as the poet's symbols or cyphers. Like the figures in Poussin's 

Roman Road, they are recognised, placed and appreciated as parts of the complete and particular design which forms the speaker's character.

Thus it will be plain that I disagree with Professor King's calling Browning "inevitably the poet of paradox", because this description depends, just as much as Fristlely's analysis of Caliban, on the critic's having decided that the poetry is somehow incomplete. In Professor King's case, the "cosmic" implications are what need to be supplied if the poetry is to be understood. He calls the poetry paradoxical so that it may be analysed and 'solved', or, to go back to the original semiological problem, so that a hierarchy of meanings may be invoked and, instead of the actual, imitative, realistic and personal language which Browning chose, the critic may substitute a more moralistic and general, and therefore hierarchically higher, language. Thus Professor King uses words like "good and evil" (which he parallels with beauty and ugliness - a very difficult step to justify when dealing with Browning who rarely describes anything in terms of its beauty or ugliness, and even then is adamant against any reading of goodness into beauty or evil into ugliness as such.)
to exalt Browning's deliberately non-committal portraits, but in fact blurs them. This stems from the difficulty of appreciating that Browning's irony is not 'the message' but is really a display technique, an element of rhetoric.

It may be objected that there are some poems in Browning's oeuvre which do not seem imbued with ironic intention, and since my case is that his irony is a basic part of his technique, the objection needs to be met. I have suggested that the irony alienates or causes the audience to take a detached view, and that it is part of the information the audience receives about the way the elements in the poems relate to each other. The organist's angry "Do I carry the moon in my pocket?" at the end of Master Hugues of Sexe-Gotha breaks across the meditation started in the reader by his struggle with the music - and so distances him; and it also pulls in the impotence of the man to balance his powers: both effects are achieved because the juxtaposition of the last with the preceding lines is ironical. But if we take a poem like Saul or Rabbi Ben Ezra, where the speaker is allowed to express himself to the reader through his faith or philosophy, so that his character comes through with a high degree of honesty, even here there is a coolness in the appeal with leaves the reader his independence. Thus the Rabbi's, "Grow old along with me" is not tempting - it is too baldly put. Instead it, too, is epideictic. Rabbi Ben is in fact displaying his cosy philosophy to us, proving in his own terms the wonderful rightness of his own ideas - the forced picture of youth over-indulged with sweetnees, the unselfconscious snobbery of his belief that he has worked out the Almighty's conundrum better than his fellows (whom he calls fools)\(^{3/4}\) the very plagiarism of his chosen imagery ( - if it is plagiarism to pinch from the Bible -) which indicates his willing-
ness to view himself as the meaning of divine texts — the Rabbi's sermon can only be convincing to a reader who beforehand requires convincing. But the detached reader is intrigued at the sleek gloss of the man's spiritual conceit! Browning's omnivorous interest in characters who do thus expose themselves in their credos — the Rabbi; Johannes Agricola; Caliban; Don Juan; Prince Hohenstiel-Schwangau, for example — is reminiscent of Hogarth's love of crowds, 35 whose individuals he portrays with great distinctness so that they each seem to proclaim their right to be there because of their aesthetic variety, which requires highly individuated components. In Hogarth there is definitely an ironic effect achieved by these confident individuals contrasted with each other; in Browning however, the very items of faith which form the detail of the individuals' credos are so expressed that they plainly beg questions, or express merely personal assumptions as if they were universal laws, or even contradict themselves by over-emphatic presentation of consecutive points, not to mention that they often lack logic — all these effects of contrast bring to Browning's presentation of characters an element of Hogarthian variety and irony. In Saul, which is far more beguiling in the philosophy expressed by the protagonist, the presentation may seem to be completely devoid of what I describe as basic technical irony; and indeed, I think the poem's overall effect is not ironic, but I am convinced that some of its method is so. The poem is intensely interesting in many ways: it is fairly atypical in Browning's oeuvre because it was written in two distinct parts, the first nine stanzas being composed seven or eight years before the rest, and published as a fragment. 36 In fact, the first part has a somewhat ambivalent relation to the second: it recounts the vivid living song of the boy David
which draws Saul back to consciousness, and out of his inner struggle with a 'Spirit'. The second section is openly persuasive, not merely descriptive. Whereas the picture of the life of his tribe drew Saul's attention, it is the burning conviction of the value of that life which David feels that draws him to take up his kingly responsibilities again, and thus the focus of the second part is far more exclusively upon David himself — certainly a mark of the development of Browning's own special talent as a poet since the earlier part was written. The first part seems to be conceived simply as a display of 'the power of music' or art, and the artist, David, in his youthfulness, is not characterised to any great extent. In the second part however the force of argument seems to require a forceful character to support it, and David is the centre of the miracle. His vision as he sings it draws Saul to him, and Saul searches his face for the meaning of the song. At the end, David is even released from Saul's presence to make his final point — which is, that he, himself, is now imbued with the faith which he began by expressing merely, and so the whole local world seems to echo his own conclusion. Again in these final few lines, Browning draws his speaker away from the reader: David's insistence on the watertight vision at the end must make the reader aware that the miracle has not actually happened to him, but to David. Browning insists upon David's separate completeness, not upon shared experience with the reader; if the reader is 'converted', that's his own 'poem'. The two parts of the poem complement each other not philosophically nor through faith, but because they display the changed rhetoric of David's self-realization:

Oh Saul, it shall be

A Face like my face that receives thee; a Mah like to me...

a Hand like this hand.... etc.
In short there is an informative contrast between the parts; even, I should claim, a conscious irony in the self-fulfilment which David finds in his miracle and in the fact that his miracle can 'cure' Saul, whose problem, whatever it was, is never actually solved, just bypassed. There is no room for the discussion either of that problem or of the real basis for the extravagant praise — one might say flattery — which David heaps on Saul; it is as if the poem were insisting on David's own individual right to his own miracle, and not as if Browning were even using that miracle as an example. In short, the poem concerns the completeness of David at a given time. Now, that completeness is naturally alien to the reader (who anyway can never be complete to himself) and unconscious in the speaker in just the same sense as Poussin's landscape is alien and unconscious. The result of the accumulated (not sifted) detail of David's words is of intensely complex inner formal relations still creating a plain and understandable pattern of character, and I would claim that among those inner complexities, irony is far from unimportant.

he leaned there awhile
And so sat out my singing... till I touched on the praise
I foresaw from all men in all times, to the man patient there;
And thus ended, the harp falling forward. Then first I was 'ware

That he sat, as I say, with my head just above his vast knees...(XV)

In the telling, there is a shadow of irony in the success of the flattery of Saul, and there is a deep and plain ironic aspect surely to the tiny David between Saul's 'vast knees' charming Saul to live. (Were this a painting, and Browning's presentation at this moment is vivid enough to the mind's eye for it to have some pictorial power, this irony would be glaring.) Or again, the minute verse XVI—
"Then the truth came upon me. No harp more—no song more!

outbroke—"
surely contains an ironic element in Browning's hands: the harp and the song have been the means by which David's power has revealed itself to him, and presumably to Saul also—yet here, at the moment of truth, they are cast aside. The words he uses next I must point out as ironic too—in fact, not in spirit just—

"I have gone the whole round of Creation..."

This, from a shepherd boy whose actual experience is pretty well limited to the scenes he conjures up in the early part of the poem!

In fact, without a sense of the irony of David's impudent effort succeeding on the mighty Saul's behalf, this poem would seem shallow. The point is that the use of irony in Browning's poetry seems to be to control ambivalence and to make lucid the relationships of the various parts of his subjects, not to comment externally nor to undermine the general effect as in satire. This very particular essence seems to me to reflect a kind of organisation, a procedure, which he might well have extrapolated from his 'reading' of paintings. In almost any painting the viewer has to gain his primary sense of proportion from within the canvas, not externally; his view of the actual colours used depends on their combination, and of the visible shapes, on their contrast. In short it is an easy and immediate step for the viewer of a painting to forget the familiar red of a pillarbox when he sees the painter use the same colour; to accept shapes as relatively relevant, not absolutely so; and most important of all, to understand that the composition of the painting is the primary indicator of its possible 'meaning'. Composition in painting (or in poetry) is a great deal more than the assembling into a pattern of elements of meaning. The elements must lose their 'independence', as
I called it, so that, for the space or span of the work, they must impress the viewer/reader only in the intended way. An essential element in the control of ambivalence is the tone of the contrasts which the work encloses. For example, in Rembrandt’s Bathsheba, every item which surrounds the nude is chosen to enhance her beauty - the soft white linen under her hand seems rough compared with her skin; the richly patterned fabric behind her seems dull compared with the rich glimmering quality of her breasts, and her elderly attendant, just managing to poke her nose into the picture to give Bathsheba her pedicure, just catches a glint of light on her neck and ear which emphasises Bathsheba's whiteness, while her face, in shadow, is a foil for Bathsheba's meditative and well-lit countenance. Every part of this painting is composed to control the effect of its central figure, but the technique is common to other aims. For instance, if we take the Brouwer at Dulwich, there is no central figure to carry the meaning of the picture, which is therefore carried by a more varied and complex set of comparisons and contrasts which operate over the whole surface of the picture. The faces and hands of the boors are endowed with the grubby quality of their own clothes and environs, where it is the beer crocks which shine and not their eyes or lips. Their contrasting poses, none of which is 'beautiful', relate to the primitive furniture they sit on. The dead candle end in the centre of the lower half of the picture and the shines upon the crocks provide equal points of visual focus even with the boors' faces. The intensely complex visual relationship of these people to their surroundings is explored and expressed by Brouwer, and the result is that the viewer is always sure of the tone he is taking, just as much as in Rembrandt's contrasting system. That the two artists were born
in the same year\textsuperscript{14} is interesting because it gives a hint of the sheer flexibility of what is nonetheless an identifiable kind of discipline which they shared. Browning's early love of painting would perforce have made him familiar with the operation of this discipline. He would surely have found, looking at his father's favourite Teniers for instance, that it was necessary to add up the detail of the pictures to appreciate them. In The Seven Acts of Mercy\textsuperscript{45}, perhaps, he would have seen first a scene of general charity, but in order to see the relevance of each figure, every individual act of kindness and every individual reception of such an act would have to be weighed and appreciated. The mother who feeds her baby at her breast is herself offered a drink by a child. The old man in poor working clothes receives from the rich old man the necessary loaf of bread. Behind the charitable old man, it is perhaps his son whose charity is moved by the wounds of one his own age. Or again, the trio of figures on the right-hand edge of the picture, where an innkeeper offers rest and refreshment to an elderly traveller and his companion, shows a somewhat different kind of service, which contrasts in meaning with, and so enhances, the central subject. The central act is also placed in the foreground and the ground on which it occurs is darker, far darker, than the receding distance. The configuration of the buildings on the hill behind both serves to round off the scene visually and to concentrate the attention on the charitable table, since it prevents the eye from seeking an infinite background. The little knot of people in the background further encircles the main theme so that 'an almost stage-like effect of focus is achieved. So the viewer must 'add up' the figures in the main group to understand the picture; and thus the handling of every minutely-realised object or face has a momentary importance of its own as the viewer concentrates upon it sufficiently
to assess its contribution. The result is a very different effect from that achieved by Rembrandt's _Bathsheba_ where Rembrandt has cancelled out detail and enforced on the scene he portrays a total unity of purpose, Teniers or Brouwer builds the focus of the painting by intriguing the viewer with each detail in succession. This means that there has to be a thoroughly lucid relation between the details already established in the viewer's eye; otherwise the viewer would be incapable of following, not what the shapes represented, but the significance of those representations. Even - or perhaps, often - in these quiet Dutch pictures, an element of ironic contrast is part of that essential information which the general ('at a blow') structure of the picture has given the viewer initially. An example would be the commercial hospitality of the innkeeper as background to the actual acts of Charity in the Teniers just discussed. Another example, I believe, could be the immobility of De Hooch's figures in their geometric, polished world; or the glitter of silks in Vermeer which quite upsets the viewer's eye in contrast with the dull smooth skins of his girls. In such cases no irony of meaning is necessarily intended as the effect of the whole painting; but included in the apparatus of achieving the painting's wholeness, or integrity, is the element of static, ironic contrast. Its function is similar to that of other kinds of visual contrast and therefore it is usually not separately appreciated but I feel that it has so much in common (analogously!) with Browning's poetic accumulative technique (the process of analysis) that it needs to be dealt with here. Further, it may be a means of tackling various important questions about the finish of works of art which bedevil our modern view of Victorian painting particularly, because it requires a different critical idea of the relation between expression and meaning from the rather romantic one by which we tend to operate for both
painting and poetry.

It is this sense of the lucidity of the relationships between the elements in painting which I believe Browning found so attractive. In a letter to Mrs. Jameson, EBB wrote of her husband:

"It is his way to see things as passionately as other people feel them..." (her italics) (Letters, ed. Kenyon p448)

Her choice of words, juxtaposing "see" with "feel", is intensely interesting. Her idea of passionate sight seems to me exactly suitable to describe not just Browning's approach to subjects (in this case, Christmas Eve and Easter Day) to which other people might bring only feelings and preconceptions, but also the typical detachment of the realist in any art. It is not that the works lack passion, but that the force of their emotions is harnessed by the intellectual ardour for form so that not attitudes but objects/facts are transmitted by the artist to his audience. The primary function of the passion thus becomes to clarify the form; it is not itself the reason for the form. If we momentarily contrast a picture by Leighton with one by Watts, this difference will be clear: Leighton's Clytemnestra with Watts' Ariadne on Naxos. Watts' Ariadne is entirely concerned to find a visual analogue for the mood of its subject; the picture is heavy and almost drowsy with exhausted grief, centred on the figure of Ariadne herself. Her head, turned away from the viewer to gaze hopelessly across the black sea which has transported her Theseus away, has a relaxed but in real life no doubt intensely uncomfortable sideways curve which is expressive of her melancholy lassitude. The messenger who is about to relieve her grief has obviously not yet got his message to sink in, and his dramatically foreshortened gesture of the arm which points back into a vague even void, background is purposely without the kind of expressive power
which Ariadne's limp pink arm possesses. The background is undistinguished in form, but provides a generalized harmony of colour to sustain the expressive pose and colouration of Ariadne; thus the dark green rather formless trees and heavy grey sky provide a sort of visual moan as background to the melodious colouring of her draperies and skin, with their complex crumpled whiteness and its rich living pinks. In contrast with this method, Leighton's is detachment itself. His Clytemnestra is monumentally ugly, in the same sense as Piero Della Francesca's Madonnas. All the visual detail of her draperies expresses not mood, as we, the viewers, could feel it, but the fact that we do not share her mood: she clenches her white robe in her fists, and where the garment covers her breasts, the tense tight little folds seem to be the necessary visual adjunct of her own suspense, not ours. Her face is like a mask, bitter with the effort of the decision she has already made as she awaits Agamemnon. But I maintain that we need not know her story to find this picture impressive, any more than we need to know Ariadne's. Watts enlists our emotions to serve his subject sympathetically, so that his girl would move us even if we did not know her myth. But Leighton employs a different approach. His figure is lucid in itself because the very harshness, the lack of beguiling, the very ugliness of his picture makes all its contents information for the eye, and the threat which his figure offers and the tragic intensity of her own realisation of that threat, are impressed on us not by sympathy but by the inevitable comprehension of detail after detail adding up to that threat. She dominates the whole picture: the city and mountains in the background could not withstand the act she is about to commit. The harsh shadows which fall across the battlements where she stands do not touch her: she seems to be stronger than they are. Her arms and skin do not lack beauty, if one could ignore all else in the painting, but they have no appeal. They are tight with the intention of the woman herself; an
Lord Leighton  Clytemnestra
intention which, though completely unstated, actually endows the whole image with awe. Just to compare her very draperies with those in Watts' picture is to learn a lot about the different approaches of the painters. Ariadne really does not seem to be naked under her draperies, as they do thoroughly express her that her own flesh could do no more. The folds which cling to her ankle and arm seem to be expressions of the way she has bound herself into her grief. The pale pink and mauve tints of the cloth on which she sits make the viewer feel, not that she has spread the rock with cloth to sit on, but that they have flowed around her enclosing her in her solitary mood from feeling the rock on which she sits. And her robe is rather unlikely - it manages to stay covering her breasts and looped on her shoulders in despite of gravity. This is not ridiculous in the picture, but simply an indicator which I feel it would be wrong to ignore of the fact that Watts intended the picture to work as a metaphor for the feelings, and not as a realistic display of the facts which might betray such feelings. Finally, Ariadne's hand could not contrast more sharply in intention with Leighton's Clytemnestra's: it is so vaguely painted that one literally has to guess why Watts painted it so, and to guess, one has to imagine a gesture that would suit one's own imaginary re-creation of Ariadne's mood - one says, if that were me, what would that hand be doing in that mood? Clytemnestra's garment on the other hand seems to clothe her, not to reveal her emotions. No hint of turmoil is apparent except in that delicate tightness over the breasts and the involuntary clenching of the robe in the clenched hands - as if the drape were accidentally caught in the gesture. Even Clytemnestra's hair seems to mask her brow, and the symmetry of her face - which could be so beautiful - very nearly hides her terrible thoughts. The whole image is presented to the viewer as a series of
outsides: things which can be shown to a stranger. It is only the particular combination of the elements which charges the picture with meaning. With Watts, it is the acceptance by the viewer that the picture is an analogue or a metaphor which so charges the image. Now when EBB wrote that Browning "sees things as passionately as other people feel them," I believe she was referring not to his tendency to visualize ideas (though he may well have done so) but to his unfailing objectivity of expression. She assures Mrs. Jameson that Browning has not changed his religion, obviously fearing that his poem Christmas Eve and Easter Day might give her that impression because it explores matters of faith (usually personal) in a way which is perhaps alien to his own personality but the very essence of his poetic talent. Thus she describes him as seeing and not feeling the points of view the poem expresses. His method for maintaining this distinction, which is an absolutely basic one in all his work, I believe, is in some ways very reminiscent of that his father's favourite painters, and later his friend Leighton and his own admired Poussin, all used. Like them, he uses details not as symbols of the idea behind the work, but as clues to the real form of the work, and that form is the fundamental of the work. Thus I feel it is wrong to call him a religious poet or a love poet in the ordinary senses of those words, because his poetry is neither a recounting of his own experience nor does it seek to give the reader insight into generalised experience. Instead, the poetry is about the objective shapes of people, not about their common experiences of the tribe. His lovers never make you wish to emulate them - that delightful parody of The Last Ride Together by J. K. Stephen picks up a real unease the reader feels about the speaker's attitude to his former mistress. In In a Gondola the lovers end up dead. Rudel to the Lady of Trirol sounds sadly unfulfilled, though
faintly smug (as if he thinks it's better to be him unfulfilled than anyone else fulfilled). And even in By the Fireside or Two in the Campagna, poems of intense beauty of feeling, the reader is specifically barred from the experience, which is seen as the particular result of the relationship possible between the given individuals, not as a part­taking in a general ideality. In short, Browning never stopped seeing his protagonists - the very word implies that they are outside himself. They were to him, as he says, like artists' models, and the whole effort of his imagination was not to understand them by imagining himself to be them, but to enable them to display their own beings by maintaining his own separateness and hence his powers of objective observation. He endows them with language. Thus the details of the poems are the characters. They are not metaphors for the ideas of the characters. In this sense then, as in Leighton, vagueness is a very unusual feature; importance cannot be lent to certain aspects by blurring or overshadowing others, since it is only the exact and particular qualities of each aspect which can carry enough information to the reader. Ruskin's praise of The Bishop Orders his Tomb recognised this quality in the method: he saw that the detail of the poem is in no sense background:

"The worst of it is that this kind of concentrated writing needs so much solution before the reader can fairly get the good of it..."

As with Teniers, as with Poussin or Leighton, the reader/viewer must weigh each detail in relation to the others and to the whole, and it is by this accumulative, rather than purely interpretative method that the form of the character emerges. This is perhaps a far cry from the actual irony that Browning uses, but it is the essential environment for it.
In fact, his irony is closely related to Hogarth's, a relation which is made more complex by the fact that some of the influences on Hogarth's own development of irony were also independent influences on Browning himself, so that in a sense, the processes enter his art as doublets. For instance, there is in Browning's work a withdrawal from moral statement as an artistic aim and this seems more akin to Ostade or Brouwer than to Hogarth; but in Browning this is so conscious and insistent a mode that it seems as if he needed to see Hogarth's development of the Dutch influence to work out his own method. In Brouwer or Ostade it is more incidental. Thus an element of realism actually gets weighed twice: in the Dutch the mute characteristic, which is developed by Hogarth into actual subject matter, is converted by Browning — if I may be allowed to follow the idea — so that the absence of such subject matter is more ekphatic than in the older masters but derives from insight into them as well as Hogarth. Browning's irony might also be developed in at least as complex a way as this. Again, the mute contrast which is typical of a Dutch interior — for example, between the ugly old woman who picks over the vegetables and the sumptuous colours and shapes of the vegetables themselves in Teniers' Kitchen Interior — is converted by Hogarth into a subject-based and even moral irony — as in the contrast between the dead goose in the basket and the Harlot herself — and then driven back towards the more formal and inexpressive values in Browning, consciously contrasting with Hogarth — for instance in those closing ironic twists like

"I should be dead of joy, James Lee"

or "And yet God hasn't said a word."

or "Let's to the Prado and make the most of time."
Hogarth is one of the few painters about whom I hope there would be little quarrel over the use of the word irony. Various writers have commented on the 'literariness' of his approach, and Hogarth's own writing suggests this too. Hogarth is commonly accepted to be a satirist and one of the major technical devices of satire is naturally irony. I think it is important to point out that in the case of Hogarth, the use of such literary terms really represents a good deal more than the drawing of an analogy between the two arts: it represents a real link, which the artist himself felt to exist, between his aims and methods and those of contemporary literature. In this sense, it is necessary, in order to understand the link, to delve below the technical applications of the words and to try and focus their mental mechanisms and effects. Thus, although we tend to describe poetic devices, for instance, by their usages, there is a mental process being named which we find hard to express except by example. I see no reason why mental operations as such should not be common to artists in different arts, though the examples they produce in those different arts will plainly be controlled and modified by the particular disciplines associated with the different arts. This kind of link may be critically expressed by using analogies, but it need not necessarily be so if the critic can find a language in which to express those fundamental processes. In this attempt, it seems to me, the critic might be nearing the real form which an influence from another art might have on an artist. It seems unnecessary to assume that the influence a painting might have on a poet would lead the poet to 'illustrate' the painting. It is surely far more plausible that the poet would learn from the process by which he understands the painting to modify the technique of his own art. He would not even need to pick out 'literary' elements in the painting, since the kind of imitation which would be of use to his own
creative urge would be more likely to involve deeper patterns and meanings. It is surely a function of the critic's task to recognise the depth of form, and not merely its superficials; in this area, I believe that analogy need not be his only or even his chief tool, since it suggests a too-simple relationship between the components.

In Hogarth's Frontispiece to Kirby's Perspective, visual irony is at its height. The picture may be seen as satirizing artists who lack skill in perspective, but this approach seems to me to restrict the print's meaning and enjoyableness sadly. For with all its lunatic significance, this picture has a pleasing form: the actual shapes and areas of light and dark make an harmonious effect and 'lead the eye' as pleasingly as in many other of Hogarth's works. The figures are as well-composed, the sky as subtly suggested, the reflections on the water engraved with as much care as ever. But the realism of the picture has gone mad —

"The sheep and trees gradually increasing instead of diminishing in size, the man on the top of the distant hill lighting his pipe at a candle held by a woman in the top storey of the inn in the foreground, the boat sailing onto the bridge, the church of which you see three sides at once, the man shooting a swan which he cannot see, are all admirable illustrations of false perspective..."

This is only a tiny portion of the confusion: each and every detail is fine so long as it is regarded in total isolation, but when placed in context it becomes completely contradictory. The man in the foreground is 'standing on' a pavement, where the reversed perspective of the flags makes the surface seem more vertical than horizontal — yet there he stands, perfectly balanced and as unconcerned as can be. He is quite normally presented himself, as is the 'vast' black crow on the 'distant' tiny tree. It seems to me that Hogarth is actually using a brilliant
Hogarth Frontispiece to Kirby's Perspective
and involved self-mockery here: the viewer does not need to postulate incompetent other artists who make similar 'mistakes' to appreciate this print, since it is totally self-explanatory by the force of its internal irony. This is not to say that it does not require interpretation, but that there is no need to import a standard by which to interpret, since the internal contradictions sufficiently embody one. Meaning is spread from belonging to one shape in itself to existing only in that recognisable shape's relation to the rest of the picture; and where this relationship is actually contradictory, an irony is obviously engendered. Thus it is important, for instance, that the sheep get the perspective wrong whereas the men 'in front of' the bridge are quite acceptably perspective: the picture's meaning derives from the combined force of the recognised objects (the recognition implies that the objects are not themselves empty of meaning) with the art of their juxtaposition. All over the picture, this process has to be followed: thus the inn sign—a moon with lunatic implications, of course!—hangs from mutually incompatible walls, yet it still hangs there, even 'realistically' half-obscured by 'distant' trees. On the opposite side of the print, far less ostentatiously but absolutely balancing the sign, two tree trunks 'cross' in an impossible way, only a shade more absurd than the fact that such sturdy specimens should grow on that rocky bare premontory at all when the fertile hill opposite supports such dwarfs! The barrels in the foreground are not just impossible cyphers, but their very position (with one apparently wedged into a gap which would cause the recumbent one to roll off over the crag or into the river) and the shadows which play on their absurd surfaces serve to contradict the possibility of their own existence. They are thus not illustrations (whose relation to objects would be simple) but assertions by Hogarth of his artist's
right to use them, and your recognition of them, for his own ends. These ends, I submit, are not to 'fool' the viewer, nor even the viewer's eye, but to liberate the pattern of the composition by disciplining its elements to absurdity. If there can be any meaning in this picture, it must be Hogarth's own, since this landscape, though recognisably a landscape, has no other logic than his. Remember that I began by pointing out that the sheer aesthetic control of this print was equal to that in many other of his works. The result is that the picture attracts us, holds us by its comedy, and does not repel us — as no doubt such 'perspective blunders' might in a less consummate artist's work. The artist's skill is devoted here to stopping the viewer dead in his habitual tracks through a painting: the lines the viewer's eye normally relies on to interpret as 'depth', the relationships of size and brightness which serve him usually for 'distance', all fail to provide the expected logic. Instead the viewer is forced to question these techniques and their relevance to the objects they recognisably portray; to do this, to question and understand, he has got to rely only upon Hogarth's composition, since no covert mental comparison with 'reality' is permitted (in spite of the 'realism' apparent).

The juxtaposition of the objects in the picture space is not absurd to us because a 'real' landscape could not look like this, but because we expect the artist's image to be a cypher, and the meaning of the picture to reside in the cypher's metaphoric power.

The tool which is most powerful in this protest of Hogarth's against his being taken for granted, is his visual irony. The 'false perspective' is the chief though not the only vehicle of this irony. For instance, it seems 'picturesque' to laughing point that the two
fishermen should both catch fish at the same moment; that the wind which enables people to sail should not disperse the smoke of the gun or the candle; that the sound of the shot should not have frightened the birds, sheep or horses. In all these cases, the evidence of the picture does not add up to the reader's initial expectation of the 'reality' of the scene presented, and the deficiency is so gross that the expectation is dissolved, not because the viewer's idea of 'reality' is questioned, but because it is not the primary explicator for the work. Thus the very realism of the presentation is used and cast aside: the objects recognised, questioned because they do not relate 'correctly' and then relegated so that they are not metaphors but particles of aesthetic meaning. This process is largely achieved because the irony of the objects' juxtapositions is used by the artist to keep the viewer's attention fixed on the internal logic of the pictures: the whole is so motivated by seeming 'errors' that each individual 'blunder' ceases to be remotely conceivable as a 'mistake' and becomes instead the viewer's real information. The perils of this kind of sophistication are obvious: the rewards of success are also likely to be oversimplified. Although the plate I have chosen to discuss is more blatant in its irony than many of Hogarth's other works, I believe that the same ironic technique - of juxtapositions of mutually suspicious elements within contexts whose aesthetic power is nevertheless lucid and attractive - predominates in most of his works. It is not the function of this irony to destroy its context (as it is in pure satire) but to develop a complex view within a comparatively conventional-seeming shape.

It is for this reason that this kind of irony is completely at home in realism, and differs from the irony available to purely romantic modes. The implication is that the basis of realism is no more the slavish copying of 'nature' than it is in any other style of art.
However, a basic difference is that the components of the realist's world must be recognisable to the audience so that their meanings can be exploited by the superior/stronger meaning of the work itself. Thus the real difference between the realistic and other styles of art is that the objects portrayed by the realist actually lose their independence, and cannot be mere symbols of ideas, because their whole effect is subsumed to the logic of the composition. Their visual aspects, their verbal associations, their musical significance—all aspects become, not meanings in themselves, but mere elements of the artist's order. Now, since irony is in fact a technique by which an unspoken order can nonetheless be instilled into a composition, it is obviously an important tool in art of this kind. Where the artist intends the elements of his composition to act symbolically, and thus illustrate his meaning, irony is necessarily an external force, as the meaning itself is also, existing beyond the actual scope of the work—it stems from destiny or the godlike power an author can wield over his creatures, which are extrinsic to the 'reality' of the world of the work. But where the artist disallows his images' independence, irony is not a tool of imposed meaning but of explicating formal relationships within the work. Thus it is comic that the man in Hogarth's print should light his pipe from the landlady's candle, not because this would be impossible in the real world but because we assume so much more than is necessary about the realistic images he presents us with: the expectation is so far wide of the mark. This is the kind of 'dissimulation' which is so often present in Browning's characters; and as in Hogarth, the real point of the images is only available by means of the artist's context, not by our expectations. But recognition of those images is also essential, leaving the artist with the problem of disposing of the accompanying expectations. Thus the use of irony actually induces the
audience to 'read' the disappointment of its own expectations in order to understand the work. Thus the irony achieves that necessary function of controlling the ambivalence of the images, which can be achieved by external commentary in other forms. I do not mean that the ambivalence is 'corrected' or cancelled out, and a simple meaning put in its place: irony 'tones' the combinations, as colours can 'tone' each other, so that it is their acute balance within the work which remains, and their vagueness is dispersed.

In spite of the temptation to spend a lot of time talking about various of Browning's poems and exploring their complex irony in relation to Hogarth's, I shall limit myself here to dealing with only one poem - Transcendentalism - which is in some ways as extreme in its position in Browning's oeuvre as Hogarth's Perspective is in his. By extreme, I mean that the purity of its formal intentions is as great as Hogarth's in that work, and that its technique is thus as illuminating, whereas in other works of both men, the sheer intellectual complexities involved in the initial recognition of the subject matter itself provide an almost intimidating need for sophisticated handling. In short, in Transcendentalism I feel that in isolating technical qualities I may release some of the meaning, whereas with The Ring and the Book I should really have to approach by sifting meanings as well as sensing the form. One of the reasons for Transcendentalism's lack of charm is that it is very hard for the reader to know 'whose side to be on' - the comments of both Mrs. Orr and W. C. De Vane admit this problem:

"There is a strong vein of humour in the argument, which gives the impression of being consciously overstated. It is nevertheless a genuine piece of criticism." (my italics)
"It is not known that Browning had any particular poet in mind as the author of the imaginary Transcendentalism...

It is worth observing that Browning himself in his later days fell too often into the kind of verse which he here condemns..." [my italics]

In fact this is one of the first poems (1853) in which Browning uses a technique which he developed later and with great ironic effect, the 'two voice' idea, though here only one speaks. The whole poem thus centres on the contrast and not on the consensus, of the material of the imagery: the poet who speaks and the one whom he criticizes in fact hold equal sway though the latter says nothing, and this provides the logic of the apparent volte-face at the end:

"Stop playing, poet!" to "So come, your harp back to your heart again!"

In many later poems, this positive but silent antagonist is present and also provides a major clue to the poems' irony: Gigadibs, Sludge's employer, Elvire, the 'Certain People of Importance in their Day', are like silent Tertium Quids - and in La Saiziaz the implied dialogue is actually allowed to break out in the discussion between Fancy and Reason, within the one mind. Even the curious title, Transcendentalism, a Poem in Twelve Books, is both suggestive and teasing: you expect the twelve books to follow, not a comment on its poet. Yet this kind of juxtaposition is entirely typical of Browning and common enough in Hogarth. In both the 'disappointment' is used to initiate the audience into a more complex approach. It is beautifully indicative, in this case, of the quality of this 'poem in twelve books' that it doesn't get a look in, yet at the same time it arouses the feelings and interest of the speaker. The poem gives one the impression not of an actual confrontation between two different people, but of the meeting-
ground between two talents, the speaker's (who is also a poet) and the writer's. The 'discussion' between them is almost necessarily technical, since the reader accepts that the poet has:

"True thoughts, good thoughts, thoughts fit to treasure up!"

but argues with his presentation of them. The criticisms he makes suggest the handling he might himself give to such material: he would shower the reader with magically evocative words, which invite questioning no more than the difficulties of transcendentalism; would "bury" the reader, who would nevertheless be miraculously restored to youth in contrast with the dessication of the other's approach. The reader would be in neither case expected to bring much to the poem.

It is as if the two poetic assumptions expressed in the poem are both equally alien to that of the real writer; they balance and complement each other so neatly that the appellation 'brother' and the final patronizing:

"You are a poem, though your poem's nought."

are both justified. The final weary image over the 'harp' -

"The cherub at the top
That points to God with his paired half-moon wings..."

is the real ironic twist to the argument of the speaker: it betrays the limitation of his own view of the 'twelve books' as completely as he points out their limitation as poetry. It is a remarkably unpleasant compliment in fact. It reveals so utterly that whatever the twelve books attempted, they have failed to do anything except impress the speaker with a pretty idea of the effort of writing them. The speaker gives away the response which he expects to elicit himself by his own poetry. One must feel that at least those twelve musty books had a more serious intention. At the same time, the comments
of the speaker are made with such obvious concern - they are plainly not intended to mock in any sense - that they do have some weight as criticisms of the unknown poem. Here, as in so many of Browning's poems, the limitations of the speaker's concerns, the tone of his sincerity, characterize him far more clearly than any amount of description could do. How often his speakers effectively damn themselves with faint praise - Andrea's choosing to be less than Raphael; Guido setting such store by noble ancestors to cover his own ignoble nature; Caliban imagining his god in his own image; Pictor Ignitus rejecting the success he cannot help but feel he could deserve because it's so commercial - and so on. The speaker in Transcendentalism can only approach his brother poet's work in the spirit of a reformer, and thus betrays his conviction of his own superiority and lack of realization of his own limitations. This is what colours the final clichéd image: he is really saying, "I see the poetry in you, though what you write is rubbish." That this attitude belongs with the speaker's 'magical' or mystical approach to the power of language in very revealing, and provides in itself an interesting comment on Browning's own refusal to write "prettily".

I want to draw attention to the actual language of Transcendentalism also. It is important to remember that it is a self-proclaimed poet speaking - this leads Browning to commit quite a few 'deliberate mistakes', just as Hogarth dared to mess up the whole perspective of his plate. For instance, in the first two lines, the word 'speak' is used in two half-contradictory ways: the meaning of each usage is clear and does not affect the sense of the other, but the language is uneasily lacking in true self-consciousness. Again, the superficiality of "draping" thoughts in "sights and sounds" is patent, and a direct criticism in itself of the hyperbolic kind of description the speaker
effects. More importantly, it indicates Browning's dissatisfaction with the speaker's poetic method, because it is deliberately couched so that neither of the alternatives he cites seems adequate as poetry: the transcendentalist, one suspects, uses an abstruse and dry language, but his critic, one knows, continually seeks to induce into his reader a credulousness suited to childhood. The revelatory experience of hearing plants talk which the speaker finds ridiculous and which he regards as the key to transcendentalism, is not after all so very different from his idea of the true poetic experience, "the sudden rose herself" conjured up by a magician's words. The loosening of his own language, the freer rhythm and more emphatic meaning, betray his favouring of the 'magic' approach as much as the actual argument does itself. Thus the whole poem in fact contains no overt statement of Browning's poetic creed. Instead it concerns a contrast, ironic because it is also unselfconscious, between two poetic methods, neither of which in fact describes the poem Browning has written. Both these methods are imbued with symbolic intentions: the transcendentalist tries to explain the 'meaning of what roses say' and the speaker uses a more vivid language to impart the same 'meaning' without explanation. Browning's own poem, however, does not seem to me to have similar intentions: I really do not feel that there is any of the proverbial 'deeper meaning' to be excavated. Instead the reader is faced with a tightly-knit form of great inward complexity (as in Hogarth), the contemplation of which leads one more and more to confirm the form, and not to substitute a 'meaning' for it. Thus the meaningful commentary which does indeed form part of one's response to the poem in fact becomes instrumental to the form and does not supersede it. This is why the end of the poem can never contain 'the answer' but must always be held in equipoise with the rest. In Transcendentalism, the reader is
alienated by the fact that the final image is a cliché and that the final thought of the speaker is thoroughly patronizing; in Hogarth similarly the viewer is alienated by the blatantly technical devices which the eye cannot refuse to interpret realistically, but also cannot mistake for reality. The real material of Transcendentalism, and perhaps of Hogarth's Perspective, is a discussion of the technical power of its art, a discussion whose concomitant in both cases is an implicit rejection of that power's arising from symbolism/metaphor.

It should be plain by now that my reasons for using comparison with painting as a major instrument in approaching Browning's poetry are not just biographical, though there seems to be ample evidence of the importance he personally attached to the visual arts, but largely critical. There is a fundamental difference between the intentions and technique of a realistic artist and those of one whose art is his metaphor, and therefore it is not satisfactory to approach the one with the critical paraphernalia expressly suited to the language of the other. Jakobson has pointed out that the two fundamental processes, metaphor and metonymy, are almost always present in language, and that the latter is critically neglected. In fact, this neglect arises from a hierarchical made of thought which insists that judgement as such (the summing up of evidence in order to pronounce upon it) is the most important response to art. This attitude is of profound disservice to much art whose predominant process is metonymic. As I have pointed out, in such art, the use of metaphor is always subservient to the metonymous form itself, but the tendency is for the reader to pick up the metaphors as being full of the 'deeper meaning' of the work, and to ignore the qualitative and ironic processes within the form. Thus for instance, the dead goose in Plate I of the Harlot's Progress can indeed be seen as 'symbolizing' the girl herself, but this judgement of the image's
parallelism cannot be the 'meaning' of the whole picture. In this way, the perception of the metaphoric process is kept subservient to the formal metonymy of the scene. An example of similar control in Browning might be the ring metaphor in The Ring and the Book, which is no more than Browning's tool for imparting understanding of a certain part of that work; it is no kind of 'answer'. Or again, at the end of Gold Hair, Browning purposely limits the metaphoric function of the tale he's told by a rather cryptic explanation:

"Why I deliver this horrible verse?
As the text of a sermon which now I preach;
Evil or good may be better or worse
In the human heart, but the mixture of each
Is a marvel and a curse."

I suggest in fact that Browning purposely restricts the narrative power of those few poems where a real narrative exists precisely because he is aware of the reader's habitual tendency to find a metaphor in the story-line.

Now it should be clear that within this framework, the function of irony is necessarily different from irony in a romantic context. No more than metaphor is the irony allowed to appropriate unto itself the 'meaning' of the work. Like metaphors, irony is itself under the complete discipline of the form. It is however in many ways more useful than metaphor, because its function is to qualify relationships between parts of the whole, or between the whole and its parts, so that it genuinely becomes part of the reader's information. The perception of this kind of irony is like the point Arnheim makes about certain visual perception, that it actually contains an element of interpretation but that the interpretation is not the 'meaning' or point of the perception. Hogarth's idea of the invisible but accepted back of an 'opaque object' which actually makes sense to the viewer and obtrudes itself
as the eye travels over the scene, is similar. The logic of the
'sketch' - the maximum conveyed by the minimum - is also apparent
here: the touches which give meaning do so only by the active func-
tion of their relationship to their surroundings. Browning's idea of
getting his reader to leap from point to point can only work when
each point is immutably relative, and it is to this end that he uses
his irony. In every case it is essential that the basic form of the
work (or character) should be lucid itself so that the details can be
'placed' during the process of 'reading'.

The difference between the realist and the romantic is plainly
not that the latter has no use for realistic imagery; the difference
is in the use they each make of their imagery. For the romantic, the
imagery he uses is at some level necessarily symbolic:

"Not what man sees, but what God sees - the Ideas of Plato,
seeds of creation lying burningly on the Divine Hand - it
is toward these that he struggles. Not with the combina-
tion of humanity in action, but with the primal elements
of humanity he has to do; and he digs where he stands -
preferring to seek them in his own soul..." 84

For the realist on the other hand, the imagery he uses must be under
the primary discipline of its particular realisation within the form
of the given work. No element can take upon itself to provide the
meaning of other elements or of the work; each must be confined by
the web of complex interpretation which is woven in the reader's
mind by the recognition of their relationships.

"We learn only what (the poet) intended we should earn
by that particular exercise of his power, - the fact itself, -
which, with its infinite significances, each of us receives
for the first time as a creation... We are ignorant, and
would fain be otherwise..." 85
Thus it will be plain that what Browning means by 'the fact itself' — or 'speaking truth' — is not the inferring of a general principle (or deeper meaning) which, when learnt, contains the 'value' of the work, not the reducing of experience to its 'meaning', but the realization of the whole shape or form of an alien phenomenon. It is specifically not an extension of himself or his own beliefs; and thus you cannot unravel it to get back to him. Its process is accumulative, not reductive; inwardly comparative, not hierarchic; informative, not instructive — realistic not romantic.
NOTES

1. E.G. see Rona J. King Jr. The Boy and the Lyre, 1964, p. 126 "Browning's mode is ironic, not tragic."
   p. 137 "Browning is inevitably the poet of paradox and irony."


3. Dale Erman, "Character and Theme in Pippa Passes", Victorian Poetry XI 1954 p. 241 (Pippa as an ironic presence, not a vehicle of virtue.)

4. Rona J. King Jr. op cit

5. See Paulson op cit. (Unworth His Life, Art and Times)

6. See Gonbrich Meditations on a Hobby Horse op cit


8. Browning's love of this philosopher has been noted. It continued all his life - see "The Detachment of Browning" Athenæum 4.1.1830 p. 13: "At a tea-table one afternoon, when Theophrastus had just arrived, Browning... seeing a group of girls... began to explain how Theophrastus was a little philosopher fond of definitions of typical persons."

9. See H. Irion (Knapp and Hudson) 1964 p. 92.

10. Bishop Bloxam, Childe Roland, Don Juan, Fra Lippo Lippi, Prince Isenbart-Schwanau

11. Mr. Judge, Guido, James Lee's Life

12. Sison, Death in the Desert, Rabbi Ben Ezra

13. Paulino, Condello, Andrea del Sarto, Saul, Galatan

14. See Paulson op cit

15. See Gonbrich Meditations on a Hobby Horse op cit

16. (A word of explanation perhaps?) The opposite method is symbolic, where the viewer is intended to question his recognition of the visual objects to gain an understanding of the painting: typically used by the Pre-Raphaelites (more discussion later re Browning and Tennyson as well): For example in Byam Shaw's Room 1350 (Birmingham Art Gallery), all the realistic presentation of detail is the skin which covers and indicates by covering (illustrating) the pictorial intention. Thus the figure of the woman in her anxiety is actually made to seem superimposed on the scene, so that the
viewer cannot accept her as a recognised feature simply, as with Poussin's figures. Then the crow, the two red admiral butterflies, the river itself, the dog rose - these 'realistic' images engage the viewer's mind as symbols of her situation and feelings (e.g. crow for sorrow, butterflies for transience, river for death, the very season so vividly pictured is symbolic of the coming harshness).

17. A failure to realize this point has led to various constructions being placed on, for instance, Balzac's adventure, which I really think are alien to the poem.

18. See Blunt, Poussin op cit (Text) p.296

"The contrast with Claude is revealing. His landscapes are based on infinite, not finite space, the eye is not led step by step through a closed space, but induced to gaze over the surface of the sea or the full depth of an unbroken sky."

Please note that completeness in this sense is not to do with finish.

19. See W. C. Be Vane Handbook op cit p.244 "Browning was still full of admiration for the older poet at the time (Shelley)... This is in spite of Browning's own avowed and early rejection of Shelleyan poetics in Pauline.

20. See ibid. Orr Handbook op cit p.295 "Hyperborea shows the perspective of memory in a tribute to the poet Shelley..."

21. By a romantic function, I mean one which operates primarily through empathy - the typical process is not to alienate the reader or viewer but to enlist his feelings and sympathies into the service of the artist's meaning. Such a response to imagery in Browning or Hogarth tends to obscure the strict inner logic of the artist's presentation.

22. The whole of The Beggar's Opera is dominated by cool heavy blues and dark greens.

23. A marvellous example of the use of this lucidity of visual expression is Keats': "I cannot see what flowers are at my feet" where the imagination catches not just the fact that the poet is cut on a dark night but through this visual terminology, the scent of the unseen flowers.

24. The frightening reversall of opinion displayed by the 'betrayed' speaker about the leader, and the horrible possessiveness of his earlier 'loyalty', which re-asserts itself in the last line in a typically ironic touch, are the real matter of this poem, I believe.
De Vane however doubts the ingenuousness of Browning's statements about this poem which seem to me to be most interesting: Browning says, in a letter to Miss Lee, 24.2.1875

"I did, in my buoyant youth, presume to use the great and venerable personality of Wordsworth as a sort of painter's model; one from which this or the other particular feature may be selected and turned to account."

Though written years later, this statement seems to me to indicate how constantly Browning had to struggle against misinterpretation - the idea of using Wordsworth as a painter's model, or even more of using a "personality", in the creation of an independent work is plainly what he meant: the comment on Wordsworth, if it exists, is of historical or biographical but distinctly not of literary or aesthetic relevance. The Follower, not the Leader, is the poem.

25. E.C. see Childe Harold in particular, but the Grecian Urn or Lines written in Detention show the same technique.

26. E.C. Byron in Don Juan

27. C. Tracy ed. Browning's Mind and Art op cit p123

28. Ibid p135

29. See De Vane Handbook pp299 - 302: he summarizes various critical attempts to make Caliban conform to contemporary theological ideas; he remains non-committal, however.

30. Hood Letters op cit p235 Letter to Edmund Gosse 15.3.1885

31. Roma A King Jr The Bow and the Lyre op cit pl37

32. See "the reduction of language to a system of signs" advocated by René Wellek.

33. This is not surprising, since it is rare for people to describe themselves a beautiful or ugly, and one simply does not take Browning's speakers' words for such things about others. However in Colli But, there is a deliberate 'beautification' of the girl - as Browning adopts the tone of her parents towards her. They see her as beautiful and believe her to be good; the poem deliberately upsets this 'symbolism' in its course.

34. v II - V
v XX - XVIII

35. Or even Hogarth in the portrait of his servants in the Tate Gallery.

36. See De Vane Handbook op cit pp255-6. It is interesting that Browning completed Saul and did not leave it as a fragment as he left Antemis Prolocutes.
37. I think a similar juxtaposition and alienation is intended in that curious and difficult poem Christmas Eve and Easter Day where Browning again insists on writing the poem of a character, although that character's revelatory theme is religion.

38. In this, Browning is imaginatively true to his source - as usual. If one considers the Biblical account of the boy, David, it too is imbued with a delightful irony, that such power should be available to such a little lad! (David and Goliath I Samuel 17)

39. For instance, it is almost a habit with Landseer to touch in small areas of red, which seem almost gratuitous when one first notices their prevalence: until one realizes that all his more predominant tones - his blues, greens, browns - are in fact brought to life by these red spots. See The Demon Palling at Kenwood House, etc.

40. For instance, Claude's trees, which though they don't resemble many actual trees, serve perfectly realistically in his paintings!

41. The end of Tennyson's Locksley Hall is a case where this has not been removed: "To part the strong heroic soul away, / And when they buried him, the little part / Had seldom seen a costlier funeral." The near-bathes of this ending was not apparent to Tennyson, who thought that it was "quite necessary to the perfection of the poem and the simplicity of the narrative." (Tennyson's Works pl162 note 211) Perhaps the same is true of Wordsworth's The Narrow Hee (Tennyson's Works pl162 note 211) Perhaps the same is true of Wordsworth's The Narrow Hee, though in both cases the poet's intention is patently obvious: it's the actual expression which 'discomposes' the meaning. Browning found the end of Locksley Hall "ambiguous and unlucky" (Letters to Julia Laidley ed Curle op cit p77)

42. Louvre, Paris

43. See Part I Chapter One

44. 1605. Brouwer lived a comparatively short time however: Brouwer - 1605 - 1639; Rembrandt - 1606 - 1669

45. Dulwich Gallery 614, studio of Teniers the Younger.

46. Letters of JHR ed Knyon 1897 op cit p449 4.5.1850

47. For colour reproduction see . . . Leighton pl14 in the series Victorians in Colour gen. ed. T. Leman Hare

48. For colour reproduction see Jeremy Ass Victorian Painters 1969 p17

49. The same complete divergence is also clear between these two painters if one compares their portraits: e.g. Leighton's Sir Richard Burton or his Mr. Tottenham simply do not beckon the viewer, do not generalize
or romanticize the appeal of the subjects. Watts' portraits of Browning and Tennyson always seem loaded with romantic implications about Watts' own preconceptions of how a poet should look.

50. Baylor Collections; letter to Leighton 17.10.1870 - "I made one of the oddest slips of eye, so to speak - as the whole thing came before me pictorially."

51. That this was the force of Browning's art will be obvious from a brief comparison of his Browning with Matthew Arnold's Dover Ditch; for, where Arnold successfully extends his image of the sea from Dover Beach to embrace the other "seas" of Human Misery and Faith, and even Life, by means of the passionate sincerity with which he presents it, Browning, though apparently undertaking a similar exercise in sincerity, actually produces a character who loudly asserts his love of the "fight" and whose metaphorical Fountain of Life becomes connotative of his own convictions purely and hence is restricted from operating in the universal way Arnold's sea does. This comparison is similar to that I try to draw between Watts' Minima (of Arnold) and Leighton's Interventions (of Browning). Arnold's poem is a metaphor for his meaning; Browning cannot escape from the complexity of his own realism.

52. Letters ed. Hinterme ed. cit 1 p209

53. Leighton, John ed. New Book of London 1969 p129 - The Last Ride Together (from her point of view). That Browning did not object to being parodied is evident from a letter to Mrs. Pattison 15.3.1872 (see University of Toronto quarterly) Jan 1952 - Robert Browning to Mrs. Pattison, some unpublished letters W H G Armitage: "There is a funny parody of my things - four parodies of them, indeed - which might amuse you..."

54. How the world is made for each of us!
How all we perceive and know in it
Tends to some moment's product thus,
Then a soul declares itself...
I am named and known by that hour's feat.
By the Fireside v XLIX and I
Only I discern - infinite passion and the pain
Of finite hearts that year... v XII Two in the Campagna

55. Letters ed Hood op cit p166


57. See the Catalogue to the Fifty-year Jubilee Exhibition at the Queen's Gallery 1977 No. 42. "...brilliantly fresh in the foreground, especially in the virtuoso passage of still-life painting..." i.e. the heap of Vegetables.
58. Plate I, The Harlot's Progress


Robert Moore in Hogarth's Literary Relationships 1943 Gombrich, Lamb, Sala, Etc.

60. Paulson ibid

61. Ibid

62. Paulson Hogarth: The Complete Engravings op cit

63. Indeed it seems to me that such modern painters as Chagall, for instance, employ a similar method to this - of his Paris through the Window (1913) or Over Vitebsk (1914) or The Fiddler (1912) see Jean Cassou Chagall, trans. A. Jaffa, 1965

64. Notes to the Plate in The Works of William Hogarth published by Bell and Daldy, London 1873.

65. See the wonderful description of the picture of a boat in Jane Austen's Persuasion ch XVIII: "Here I am you see, staring at a picture... What queer fellows your fine painters must be, to think anybody would venture their lives in such a shapeless old cockleshell as that??"

66. See also David Hockney by David Hockney ex Nikos Stangos 1976 plate 291 and p294

67. See Roman Jakobson, The Two-fold Character of Language op cit p172

"The constituents of any message are necessarily linked with the code by an internal relation and with the message by an external relation."

68. I believe the comments on irony will be self-evidently applicable when considered along with my earlier observations on Browning's methods.

69. See J. Burke Hogarth and Reynolds: A contrast in art theory CUP 1943 p9. "In the first place, it should be realized that Hogarth's theory derived from a passionate and lifelong study of form. No English writer on aesthetics in the eighteenth century neglected formal values, but Hogarth is unique in giving them first place. With Reynolds, for example, form is the handmaiden of moral and intellectual qualities." Note the word 'passionate'.

70. See Mrs. Orr Handbook p213

71. See De Vane Handbook p275

72. Ibid p273

73. E.G. he changed James Lee to James Lee's Wife because the first was thought to be cryptic.
The Strolling Actresses are shown as Goddesses, etc. It is perhaps worth commenting that this kind of 'enigmatic' or 'teasing' titling is common also in Victorian painting. There is the famous pair of pictures called The Smile and The Frown at the Guildhall, by Thomas Webster. In each case, the viewer has imaginatively to provide the smile or frown to draw the appropriate (pictured) reaction shown on the canvas.

It puzzles me that Mrs. Orr could remotely feel that Browning took the point of view of the speaker. Browning wrote that his poetry was trying "to get people to hear and see" (New Letters ed De Vane and Knickerbocker op cit p78). This was actually written about Men and Women, from which Transcendentalism comes. Again c.f. Hogarth's 'lead the eye a wanton chase'.

This is completely irrelevant, but it's on a par with a man telling a woman who is furious with him that she looks so gorgeous when she's angry!

I'm sure there is no longer any need to argue against the old and thoroughly discredited idea that Browning was a poor workman. The case is well argued, if need be, in W S Peterson's "The Proofs of Browning's Men and Women" in Studies in Browning and His Circle Vol 3 No. 2 1975

I wonder if it is too much to suggest here that Browning is deliberately referring to a Wordsworthian approach. There is surely more than a passing resemblance between

"Objects throng our youth, 'tis true:
We see and hear and do not wonder much" and
"Heaven lies about us in our infancy"
(Ode on the Intimations of Immortality)

As with so much of Browning's mature formal control, the basic influence here is probably Aristotle. The influence of the Greeks on Browning and his friend Leighton will be dealt with subsequently. See also the section on Theophrastus and rhetoric.

"Evil or good may be better or worse"... The deliberate forcing of the sense of this line is typical of Browning's care, so often unnoticed. The normal expression would be to put the 'evil' second so that it applies correspondingly to 'worse'. The placing of 'evil' so that it corresponds to 'better', but is not actually and explicitly meant to do so, pushes the reader to suspect the function of
the 'sermon' - just as the cracks in the Ten Commandments in Hogarth's \textit{Rake's Wedding} have a cryptic and ironic contribution to make to the scene.

81. R. Arnheim \textit{Visual Thinking} op cit. See pp 27, 34-5, 42-4, 87, 105 I ought to point out that I disagree with his conclusion (p138) that it is the abstractness of objects which is being symbolized.

82. Ibid p49 - Arnheim also quotes from Hogarth's \textit{Analysis of Beauty}.

83. See Letter to Ruskin 10,12 1855, Cook and Wedderburn op cit Vol 36 p xxxiv

84. Browning's \textit{Essay on Shelley}. This work is important, not only for the consonnance of the distinction which Browning makes between the creative and subjective poets (roughly my realist and romantic) but also because it was written at a time when (1852) Browning's own powers were at a high point, showing his developing consciousness of his own talent. He is implicitly taking sides in the \textit{Essay} and overtly rejecting the techniques of romantic expression.

85. Browning's \textit{Essay on Shelley}, op cit

86. I shall not be discussing the theory of Romantic Irony, even though there are examples of this kind of irony in Browning's work, for instance in \textit{Sordello} and possibly even in \textit{Pauline}. (E.g. \textit{Sordello} Book III, lines 615-672, and \textit{Pauline}, lines 661-3)

The reason for this omission is that it seems to me that in most of Browning's poetry, especially his later works, the dramatic form of the characters supersedes the normal functions of Romantic Irony, since it puts them at a remove from the poet and thus their forms of expression have a different kind of objectivity from that usually associated with Romantic Irony. The irony of Byron's \textit{Don Juan}, for instance, still does not provide this kind of objectivity for his narrator. I have no doubt that Browning was influenced to some extent by Byron's use of irony, but I think that he later found it unsatisfactory and withdrew himself further from the object of his poem than ever a writer who wished his imagery to function symbolically could afford to do. Hence, in my chapter on Browning's use of irony, I omit this discussion in favour of one which is more formal, even more technical, and which further stresses my idea that Browning was influenced by un-Romantic at least as much as by Romantic models.
BROWNING AND LEIGHTON

The most important artistic friendship of Browning's life was undoubtedly his friendship with Frederick Leighton. This relationship was the only one he formed after he left his father's house which had a direct bearing on his own ideas of art, and it is very significant that Leighton's paintings are the only ones which ever moved Browning to write poetry about them.\(^1\) Towards the end of *Balaustion's Adventure* there is a direct description of Leighton's *Hercules Wrestling with Death for the Body of Alcestis*, which functions as a sort of reminder of the completeness of the tale by Balaustion before she closes; and there are two short pieces, one descriptive of Leighton's *Orpheus and Eurydice*, and the other of his picture of a young girl, 1337. These little poems are unlike the use Browning makes of paintings in other works. In *Bishop Blougram's Apology*, for instance, he carefully uses Cimabue's *St. Jerome* as part of the fabric of irony which the Bishop's own tastes and ideas mobilize against himself; Browning goes to no trouble to describe the picture — "fleeting glow" would hardly convey it to anyone who did not know it — and yet the detail tells vividly in the portrait of the Bishop precisely because it is part of the Bishop's snobbery and worldliness to enjoy the idea of possessing such a famous work\(^2\) as a "pleasant" piece of furniture. He also uses it as a kind of taunt to Gigadibs because he manages to imply that the Church alone can inspire such works and the Church owns them exclusively as well. Lippo's references to his own and other painters' works, or Sarto's, are equally used to build up the character of the speaker and not really to conjure up the actual pictures. But the pieces which Browning has written about Leighton's paintings all direct the reader's attention
to the pictures themselves, in a way which is reminiscent only of Browning's use of Lodigio's *Andromeda* in *Pauline* and which betrays the same decision on the poet's part to do no more than direct his reader's attention so. This shows, I believe, that Browning in these few cases actually shared the impulse which he recognised behind the painting, and that he therefore assumed that the poem and the picture together would convey his meaning. Thus, if one simply reads his lines on Leighton's *Orpheus and Eurydice* (1864), one is left curiously uninformed about the event; but if, as was no doubt intended, one takes the two together, the point of the gasping and unsatisfactory diction becomes clear - Eurydice is clinging round Orpheus' neck with an expression of hurt incomprehension and plucking jealously at his clothes as if to demand his attention, while he strains back away from her with a look of pain which vividly suggests that he can't keep his eyes shut much longer if she will go on begging him to "Look at me!" Both Leighton and Browning rely on the viewer knowing the story and accepting that this is the real moment of the tragedy; and Browning's espousal of the picture's point of view is so complete that his poem is almost literally meaningless without the picture. Yet the poem is wrought with real care: the rhymes are delicately arranged and the flow of the verse is lively and in no way monotonous; the single image - of light and darkness - is carefully accurate to the effect of the picture; the sheer unreasonable-ness of what is being said is actually poignant when it is heard as the pleading of a woman already dead - again, something which is faithful to the picture where the contrast of skin tones between Orpheus and Eurydice is surely more than conventional. But in spite of all this, the poem cannot exist without the picture (though the picture is only enhanced by the poem.) Thus it could not be said that the poem in any sense tries to substitute for the picture; the language does not try to convey the
same picture as the paint, but uses its own necessary differences from
paint to expand the effect of the original expression by creating for
itself a dependent and at the most auxiliar existence. It is not an
'illustration' to the picture, however, incept in the sense in which
Rossetti used the word about his own paintings based on poems, of using
the given subject to create "on one's own hook".

Indeed it is very unlikely that Leighton would have been at all
pleased with 'illustrative' verse about his pictures: at any rate he
did not believe that painting should 'illustrate' poetry in the dull
sense Rossetti calls "killing an idea of the poet's":

"It seems to me that in Literature only those subjects lend
themselves to pictorial representation which stand in the
written word more as suggestion. Subjects perhaps which
are provided in the Bible or in mythology and tradition in
great variety, or are not generally in possession of the
minds of the spectators of living plays (e.g. the Greek
Tragedies). It is for the most part a struggle with the
incomparable, already existing complete — which is quite
intimidating to my capabilities."

Browning's little poems so obviously do not vie with the 'completeness'
of the paintings they accompany that I feel there must have been a con­
sensus on this point between the two men. He has kept strictly to his
own approach, merely seeking to be complementary to Leighton's work.

In their book on Lord Leighton, the Ormonds remark that "none of
Leighton's pictures were inspired by Browning's poems", and this seems
to be an indication that Browning's works possessed for Leighton that
'completeness' which "intimidated" him, or rather, if we shelve his
perhaps over-modest word, which impressed him as belonging so much to
themselves that 'illustration' would be an impertinence. In fact he
almost never illustrated modern poetry, and his approach to his classical subjects seems to have been as much to their visual representations in various ages as to their poetic form. Leighton was one of the very few of Browning's friends who actually seems to have understood his poetic method: in most of Browning's correspondence there is little or no mention of his poetry, and various of his friends openly declared they couldn't understand a word of it. Leighton and Browning however seem to have had a mutual respect for each other's work and a genuine understanding of each other's methods - Leighton wrote perceptively in a letter to Augustus Birrell, to answer the latter's charging Browning with 'obscenity':

"Browning's obscurity hides a shorthand of which he keeps the key in his pocket. A matter of form, not of matter as (Obiter Dicta) hath it. Browning is not abstruse: he is a deep thinker, who therefore requires obscure language; he is a most ingenious dialectician and a subtle analyst; but he is not a great poet on that account - he is a great poet because of his magnificent central heat, and the surface of interests over which he sheds it..."

I think it is subtle of Leighton to have recognised the distinction between the matter and the form of Browning's work and to realise that Browning's method is a kind of shorthand: it suggests that Leighton either shared some of Browning's ideas on the function of art, or more likely perhaps that they had talked with each other long and thoroughly about the subject. Leighton's reference to the "central heat" of Browning's work is also very perceptive and recalls EBB's comment that Browning "sees things as passionately as other people feel them". It is indeed Browning's ability to see the energy of the ego in his characters which makes them so strongly convincing in his portraits, just as it is
the quality of convincing self-hood which makes a good painted portrait, whether it be Reynolds' Dr. Johnson, Rembrandt's Margaretha de Geer, or Leighton's Sir Richard Burton. The ability of Browning's characters to get us to believe in their selves, despite their illogicality, even despite their being caught out, testifies to this most effective element of Browning's art, that it carries the conviction that these people really are as he sees them. The attitude which both men had to illustration as such is in itself a sign of the kind of relationship they saw between art and its subject matter. Since they both felt that it was not the job of one art merely to re-do in its own language the imagery of another, it appears that they felt that any art should always relate primarily to the subject portrayed. Thus Browning's little poem about Leighton's Orpheus and Eurydice does not take it upon itself to re-do Leighton's work, but, accepting Leighton's point of view, chimes in with its own evocation of the 'reality' of the myth. Browning's Eurydice is as particular a woman as the positive physical presence which Leighton conjures up, though she is far less developed as a character than Browning's speakers usually are. Unlike Hughes illustrating Tennyson, he does not rely on the presented imagery for his source but on the reality which the imagery represents. Much the same process has gone on in Leighton's mind before he chose the moment to represent: he has considered, not how to fit all the story in, but how to catch the essential flaw in the beautiful story which makes it culminate so sadly. This moment, faithfully shown, should give the viewer the artist's sense of the substance of the myth, without involving the alien discipline of the narrative or any substitute for it. Browning's Eurydice strives to a similar end. In short, for both men the artefact (poem or painting) supersedes the reality to which it refers, and thus for both the first duty of the artist is the faithful presentation of that reality.
In some ways it also seems likely that the relationship between Leighton and Browning was successful because they shared various tastes. Browning's passion for colour, which expressed itself early not just in his love of painting but in his singling out Etty for his 'worship' and which is expressed in his poems by his extremely careful, almost niggardly precision in its use, may well have made him a good art-companion for Leighton, whose love of colour is expressed in every one of his pictures.

In her novel, *A Week in a French Country House*, Adelaide Sartoris has described a young artist, Mr. Kiowski, who is plainly modelled on her intimate friend, Fred Leighton; she describes his almost ludicrous enthusiasm for the colour of a brick wall over which a Virginia Creeper is growing. In his youth, Leighton spent time copying Titian in the Louvre when he was for a period without any more satisfactory kind of instruction and I believe that many of Leighton's portraits show signs of Titian's influence, not just in their beauty of colour but also in the rich handling of the clothes, for instance. He also copied Veronese and Correggio, and at his death, twenty out of the twenty-seven works by old masters which he owned were attributed to sixteenth century Venetian masters. These were Etty's gods too, and the inspiration for William Page's paintings; Browning's own taste for these two painters as well as his admiration of Leighton's work must indicate, I think, a real understanding of the function of colour and its use by the three. Further, this love of colour in all three is important in their painting of nudes, a subject matter which Browning had loved and understood from his youth, as his admiration for Carravaggio's *Andromeda* shows, and which continued to be of passionate interest for him all his life, as we can tell by the defence he puts up for it in his *Parlaying with Francis Purini*, or by the unabashed lusciousness of his own description of Cleopatra in * Fifine at the Fair*. But more importantly than mere sympathy with colour and subject matter,
this common taste shows an idea of the function of formal expression which 
marks in both Browning's and Leighton's work a conscious departure from the 
romantic use of form.

Leighton, like Browning, almost never composes a work in order to 
'tell a story'. For both, the quality which they strove to catch and which 
they both called 'dramatic' was the reverse of narrative - it was a moment 
which was specifically complete, and did not require either explanation of 
its past (since it contained it) or the forecast of its future (since that 
too was inevitably contained in the moment). The whole process of their 
art involves realizing such moments. In Browning, the passage of time in 
the form of his poems is most often realistic: the stroll of Don Juan and 
Elvire, the period which the Duke of Ferrara allows the envoy to look at 
his dead wife's picture, the after-dinner chat of Bishop Blougram, the time 
of the trial in The Ring and the Book - in almost every case, Browning has 
no use for a narrative form because his sense of the dramatic quality of 
the character speaking excludes the need for either a modified time-scale 
(the simplest use of the narrator) or any explanation to mediate between the 
reader and the speaker. His relation to his subject matter (his characters) 
is strictly imitative in this sense: his choice of the moment at which to 
portray the speaker is his fundamental artistic step, after which his aim 
is synthetic and descriptive, not analytic and explicatory. The same kind 
of process is visible in Leighton's work: he speaks in his notebook\(^{17}\) of a 
"dramatically good design" being "an arrested moment of action containing 
by suggestion what follows and what precedes it..." This may seem a strange 
view of design - one might perhaps expect the word to refer more to the 
placing of visual forms, the proportion of light and shade, or the contrasts 
of colour even in a work. Plainly for Leighton, all the technical considera-
tions of his craft were distinctly secondary to the decision he took about the 
subject itself.
An image which is used as a metaphor must always be somewhat arbitrary because its function is to elucidate something other than itself. The sea for Byron, or the mountains for Wordsworth, always have this kind of function and are strong because they are also slightly vague in meaning (a natural consequence of being 'like' rather than being the thing itself.\(^{18}\)) The drama of their imagery is thus psychological and depends on the narrator's grip on his audience for its power. The 'dramatic' quality which both Leighton and Browning sought was diametrically opposite to this: they tried to realise their subjects for their subjects' sakes and hence to embrace in their realizations the potential and the past which had made them 'so and not otherwise', to abolish vagueness, to present images which were specifically not 'like' their subjects but actually replaced the subjects themselves adequately. Thus their 'dramatic' quality was often nearer, perhaps, to our word 'theatrical', since it referred not to an effect on the audience, a psychological impact, but to a formal quality of arrangement which was intended to display the subject itself rather than to draw upon the subject's capability for symbolism. Leighton's portrayal of the nude, like Etty's, is primarily done for the sake of the human body itself: the almost spurious quality of Etty's titles for the actions of his nudes excuses them from being remotely symbolic of those titles — in fact, the power of his nudes is such that they seem able to overcome even titles like Youth on the Prow and Pleasure at the Helm or Bennisch Slaying two Lionlike Men of Moab.\(^{19}\) Leighton is much more pointed in his titles and yet his nudes too seem far more important and interesting for their own sakes than for any power they have of illustrating a myth. Take, for example, his beautiful Daedalus and Icarus:\(^{20}\) it is quite obvious that the whole point of the myth for Leighton lies in the beauty
of Icarus, whose smooth limbs are so ironically contrasted with the
sinewy ones of his old father - the tragedy of Icarus' loss is already
encapsulated in the old man's tender but (as it turns out) dangerous
care of the boy. Thus the beauty of the nude is not only the visual
point of the picture, as a picture, it is also the intellectual point
of the subject. The quality of 'perfectedness' which the Ormonds point
out in Leighton's work,\textsuperscript{21} is not a stylistic one so much as the result
of Leighton's profoundly-held belief in the need for this kind of com­
pleteness in any work of art - and again, his refusal to 'illustrate'
Browning's works points to his recognition of Browning's also holding
this belief.

Leighton objected specifically to painting (or art) being used as
a moral platform. In his Address to the students of the Royal Academy
on December 10th, 1831,\textsuperscript{22} on the subject of The Relation of Art to
Morals and Religion, he denied that art should be didactic:

"the language of Art is not the appointed vehicle of

ethic truths".

In this, he has completely diverged from his early master, Steinle,
and from the beliefs of the Nazarenes, and has come, as Browning in­
creasingly did, to a view of art which appoints the artefact, be it
picture or poem, a more important and individual role than that of
conveyor or communicator, of ideas, and which therefore insists
primarily on the 'completeness' of the work itself. That Leighton
called Art a 'language'\textsuperscript{23} does not contradict this view: we must
recall that Jakobson says that

"The constituents of any message are necessarily linked
with the code by an internal relation, and with the
message by an external one\textsuperscript{24} (i.e. metonymous and metaphoric
links)."
Now if the function of art is to convey a language without a message, that is to say the reverse of the ordinary relation of everyday usage, then the metonymous functions of that language's structure are plainly the key to its meaning as language. Of course, though the aim of the work may not be to convey a message, no language can be void of meaning; and there is no reason why the meaning of the work should not be complex and original even while the final point of the work as a whole is its art. The point is that in this kind of work, the meaning cannot be of more significance than the form which expresses it, because in that case the metaphoric and not the metonymic function of the language would be paramount. It may seem paradoxical, but it is far more important to realism that the subject should be one with form than it is in any romantic or symbolic kind of art. If the subject were being interpreted rather than displayed/presented by the artistic language, then it would be the meaning of the language and not its form or character which was the point of the work; whereas if the subject is inseparable from its presentation, which is the aim of realism, then the meaning of the artistic language is actually integrated into the form or character of the work, so that the point of the whole work concerns the relation of all its parts equally, and cannot be summarized by analysis of any single constituent, such as its symbolic 'deeper' meaning. Thus the real character of realistic form is that it presents itself as complete, a quality which is readily associated with naturalistic imitation because it is normal to see the objective world as complete in the same sense of the word. In this sense then, Leighton's antique figures are no less realistic than his portraits or than his Lemon Tree, since their primary concern is likewise to impress the viewer with the sense of their objective existence. They depend no more than his careful studies of drapery on a symbolic meaning
for their force - they subsume the referential details of their presenta-
tion to the form of their realization just as much do the bottles and
cloths in Brouwer or the vegetables in Ostade. The basic relation of
the art to its subject matter in all these cases is one of unity and
therefore it requires no explanation such as we find in the analyses of
Wordsworth or Byron, or in the idealized/stylized presentations of
Overbeck or Rossetti (whose visual symbolism is overtly explicatory of
their composed forms.)

Now this kind of integrity, or unity of subject/meaning with form,
is common enough in painting but rather unusual in poetry. Edmund Burke
even went so far as to suggest that it would be a nuisance to a poet if
his language did observe this unity:

"Indeed, so little does poetry depend for its effect on the
power of raising sensible images, that I am convinced it
would lose a very considerable part of its energy, if this
were the necessary result of all description."

"In reality, poetry and rhetoric do not succeed in exact
description so well as painting does; their business is,
to affect rather by sympathy than imitation; ... Hence we
may observe that poetry, taken in its most general sense,
cannot with strict propriety be called an art of imitation.
It is indeed an imitation so far as it describes the manners
and passions of men which their words can express... all
merely dramatic poetry is of that sort..."

Burke's description of the kind of poetry which can be called imitative
so nearly matches Browning's poetry that by implication it would be fair
to say that, according to Burke's categories, his poems may fail of being
sublime precisely because they are much too much like pictures! If we
proceed a little more sedately however, it will be plain that the common
factor which Burke perceives as imitation in dramatic poetry and realistic painting is the lack of vagueness, or imprecision, in the 'language' of either to invite the sympathy of the audience: the completeness or 'perfectedness' of the artefact is in fact hostile to such a feeling. Thus the attention of the audience is engaged by the artefact itself rather than by suggestions which its vague imagery can arouse. For instance, if we compare for a moment the use of the moon in Wordsworth's *Strange Fits of Passion Have I Known* and Browning's *One Word More*, the distinction should be plain. Wordsworth's final verse:

"What strange and wayward thoughts will slide
Into a lover's head -
'Oh mercy,' to myself I cried,
'If Lucy should be dead!'"

can only work if the reader has mentally substituted himself for the poet who, riding towards Lucy's cottage, is plunged into this irrational consternation by the moon's setting behind the cottage. If the reader stands back and refuses to be drawn into the situation, and to feel like Lucy's lover, the ending is totally unsatisfactory: only by empathising in the poet's feelings can he make any sense of the "fond and wayward thought" which is nonetheless quite logical to the lover for whom the source of light and his mistress have become strangely confounded. Browning's use of the moon in *One Word More* operates in quite a different way: it is the very fact that his hearer finds "nothing in the moon note-worthy" that gives him leave to make use of, to juggle with, the idea of it and turn it into a little paradox to display, in a rational and lucid way, the nature of his hope for his own verse, since he has no other language in which to speak to his love. Whatever feelings the
reader may have for the moon are quite irrelevant to this use. Browning describes the moon with care, as he saw it in Italy and now as it is nearly a month later in London—its alteration is a matter of no surprise or significance; but he invokes a story about the moon loving a mortal to say that if she did so, she would have to have another aspect than this ordinary and changeable one to show to her lover. And he describes this other face splendidly, with a bewildering assortment of dazzling images—iceberg, sapphire—but in such a way as to be totally incredible, so that even here he is tied by the known reality of the moon, as his love is tied to his one talent, and the point is delicately made that all the splendour is not just hidden but purely a function of the love of the beholder. Thus he does not actually use the moon as symbol for anything, nor as a means of exciting any feelings in his reader; but as an image from his own experience, which has excited his imagination in a certain way, which the reader has had described to him. In fact, so little do his feelings in the poem use the poem's imagery as vehicles that he even switches over and calls his wife his "moon of poets" and talks of his knowledge of her "hidden face", as if to prove that the image was not symbolic of himself but was simply a convenient form for explaining his process of thought. It is Robert Browning's moon and is only shared with the reader on his terms; thus it is provocingly like the moon which actually doesn't appear in Leighton's Summer Moon which is a study of moonlight—again, sharing the image with the viewer only in a way which forces the viewer to relate to his art, and not to the accreted symbolic power of the poeticized actual moon. Here, as in Browning, the artefactual image actually has to replace the audience's independent knowledge of the object; whereas Wordsworth's image relies heavily on the vague sense of symbolism which he attached
to the actual moon, not to replace it, but to expand the generalized
sense of mysterious meaningfulness to include his own experience. Hence
Browning's moon is specific to the point of being paintable -

"Curving on a sky imbued with colour
Drifted over Fiesole by twilight,
Came she, our new crescent of a hair's breadth..."

and Wordsworth's is vague -

"evening moon" and "descending moon".

A similar comparison might perhaps be drawn between Leighton's way
of handling his subjects and that of Watts or Rossetti; even Leighton's
most (idealized) figures are never vague, and his nudes tend to have
what the Ormonds refer to as a "disturbing physicality", and they also
point out how much less idealized Leighton's nudes are than those of
Albert Moore which he admired for their fidelity to Greek ideals. The
specificity of Leighton's vision is apparent not just in his finished
works, but even in the sketches which he made initially, where the
'studies' are very often so faithful to the model as to be virtually
portraits. Leighton's careful method of approaching a work confirms how
little he left to chance in his desire to use the capacity of his medium
to carry conviction -

"First there was the outline sketch, the result perhaps of
numerous trials; then there was the understudy, and perhaps
a small model of a figure, or a group, twelve or eighteen
inches in height, for the purpose of trying the attitude
from every point of view. These models were as charmingly
finished as tanagra figures ... Then came the drapery study,
and finally the oil sketch in colour. All this was before
the canvas itself was touched... For the Captive Andromache
we found fifty-nine drawings; for the Cymon and Iphigenia
This laborious process could only culminate in a kind of art which had an unassailable hold on its own subject-matter, since it was evidently designed to exclude any mis-representation as well as to cover every possible aspect of the subject's arrangement. That this attitude was not just concerned in the finish of his works is evident from the fact that the oil sketches come so late in the process—they are ravishingly beautiful works where Leighton has used the paint with the freedom of a modern painter, in expressive brush-strokes and without hard outlines to confine the colour. His landscapes too are painted with a freedom of technique which is a breathtaking contrast with the smooth oil of his finished works, but the difference in effect and kind of technique is in no sense a reflection of a different aesthetic intention:

"Leighton's landscapes represent a separate strand in his work, undertaken for the sheer pleasure of analysing and transcribing the visible world..."  

Equally with the detailed work of his finished paintings or his Lemon Tree, they show the same intention to portray the subject for its own visible sake. As Leighton himself expressed it:

"Primarily the source of all Art whatsoever... is the consciousness of emotion in the presence of the phenomena of Life and Nature..."  

This "consciousness" is most important in Leighton's work: for him, there is no need to charge images with meaning, since they are in themselves meaningful, but to portray and compose them with intelligent care so that the finished artefact equally expresses the subject and the care (the image and the art). Similarly in Browning
we find that the finished poem impresses us equally with a sense of the character of the speaker and the skill/care of the poet - neither overrides the other, or carries the other, but they engage on equal terms in the form of the work itself. To endow the subject, whether it be an Odalisque or a Mr. Sludge, with intelligible language so that it may speak for itself, is the function of that 'consciousness' or 'passionate sight'.

If we accept then, that diverse though their styles appear, there are important common elements in the idea both Browning and Leighton held of the function of art, the actual details of their long friendship may be seen as having some relevance to their works. When they met in Rome in 1853, they had both begun to work on subjects from Vasari: Browning was writing Fra Lirpo Lippi and Andrea del Sarto, and Leighton had already painted Cimabue Finding Giotto in the Fields of Florence and The Death of Brunelleschi and had probably begun to work on his famous Cimabue's Madonna is Carried in Procession Through the Streets of Florence. Both men had already acquired considerably more thorough-going knowledge of their subjects than was common. Browning had been acquainted with Vasari from his early years, when he had read the Lives, presumably translated into English, as well as Pilkington's Dictionary of Painters, much of which was adapted from Vasari. When he went to live in Italy, he began a serious study of Vasari, whose reported Lives of the Artists were one of the primary sources in the study of Italian Art. Mrs. Jameson, for instance, used the Lives as the basis for her Memoirs of Early Italian Painters in 1845 which was revised and re-published in 1859. Vasari also provided popular subjects for painters - for instance, there were thirteen pictures shown at the Paris Exhibitions between 1827 and 1843 on the subject of Giotto.
Browning probably wished to acquire knowledge about Italian painting from Vasari, rather than to concentrate (as a modern reader might) on Vasari's own rather idiosyncratic point of view, though I'm sure that Browning would not have ignored this. For him, Vasari was no doubt primarily a source of those 'facts' which he preferred to work with; and it is obvious that those painters who used his Lives as a source of subject matter took a similar attitude. However, Vasari was not Browning's only source for such material; he also used Filippo Baldinucci's Delle Notizie dei Professori del Discorso to verify and in some cases to correct Vasari, and it would be misleading to suggest that Browning simply took Vasari's words as the complete picture (or truth) about his subjects. That he was very capable of distinguishing between factual matter and opinion is shown by his openly critical, not to say downright hostile attitude to the personal opinions of Baldinucci which he vigorously attacked first in Paschierotto - Filippo Baldinucci on the Privilege of Burial, 1876 and again, though without naming him, in his Parleying with Francis Furlani, 1886. His violent hostility towards the man however does not interfere with his using and acknowledging Baldinucci as a source of facts:

"... blockhead Baldinucci's mind, imbued
With monkish morals, bade folk 'Drape the nude
And stop the scandal!' quoth the record prim
I borrow this of: hang his book and him..."

With the facts, he felt he could do as he pleased, however, in something the same way as Leighton, who was also unusually knowledgeable about his sources. During the two years' work on Cimabue's Madonna, his designs showed increasing fidelity to historical accuracy and the finished picture was very fairly described when exhibited in 1855 at Royal Academy as being:
of the truest order of worth: no 'slap-dash' for effect, no 'niggling' labour in vain; it is faithful to a high purpose: the conception is worthy of the theme, and that theme is of the loftiest, for it elevates and honours and perpetuates the glory of the artist and the Art."^43

This reviewer seems to me to be absolutely right to understand that Leighton's intention was to make a serious visual statement about Art, and not to present a popular mish-mash of historicism and sentiment, such as the Royal Academy had often seen in works such as Frederick Goodall's The Warrior Days of Charles I which was exhibited at the same time as Cimabue's Madonna, or E M Ward's Charles II and Nell Gwyn which had been shown the previous year. Leighton's aim is also very far from being historical as such: the accuracy of costume and inclusion of portraits in the procession are signs more of the earnest concern of the artist that his picture should carry conviction than that he wanted accuracy for its own sake. The picture is composed with intense care, and it is quite difficult for the viewer's eye to come to rest for long on any detail of the scene. Thus the 'celebrated Madonna', which one might expect to dominate, is portrayed at such an angle as to be virtually illegible, a fact which emphasises the importance of the action of the crowd in carrying it, even while the value of the Madonna itself is played down to the point of near irrelevance visually. The figure of Cimabue is just fractionally past the centre of the panel, but the face of the young Giotto, turned slightly towards the viewer, is exactly at the centre, so that the painter has achieved with visual delicacy and precision a harmony between the movement of the procession itself and the intended idea of the painting. Leighton has wisely avoided any hint of adopting a 'medieval manner' in his work, but the picture does not look like a 'costume piece' - he has achieved a powerful unity
of effect which completely relieves it from any charge of anachronistic handling. This unity is sustained formally by the strong horizontal of the striped wall and the bright area of the sky behind, which contain the procession so that it too has a sort of organic quality and is not just a collection of nicely-worked studies. Leighton's ability to organise and assimilate completely the forms to which his technique is so unfailingly faithful, is reminiscent of the work of Foussin in whom also the compositional control is the surest indicator of his strong intellectual intentions.46

It may be said then, that when Browning and Leighton met, they had already developed independently an approach to Art which is typified by the use they both made of Vasari: each had studied Vasari deeply to feed the need of his own imagination for objective facts, but facts connected with their most passionate interest which was Art. For each, the material so gained provided a real stimulus to the creative faculty; and for neither did the value he placed on Art itself degenerate into the almost materialistic connoisseurship of valuing the works beyond the personal efforts which produced them. Thus for Browning, it is the characters of Lippo or del Sarto or the Unknown Painter which are the real point of his poems, and not the relics they have left: and for Leighton, Gimbauel's Celebrated Madonna (or equally the Masaccio panel which is let into the wall)47 is obscurely shown whereas the painter himself, his love of the young Giotto, his involvement in the life of his times which enabled him to produce such a work, all this is fully shown. Thus just as the 'facts' which Browning loved to accumulate are never paraded in his work but are always used simply to give precision and conviction to the world of his characters' minds, so for Leighton the meticulous attention to correct realization of his subject is also no more than the tool of his aesthetic intentions. It would not be surprising to find, then, that these two men rapidly found each other very
valuable companions. Leighton did not find it very easy to mix with the community of painters in Rome when he arrived in November 1852, and he took up with Mrs. Sartoris. The Brownings came to Rome the following November and they too were embraced in Mrs. Sartoris' circle of friends and celebrities. Browning took to Leighton very quickly, and later described him as "Loveable" in a letter to Hatty Hosmer, a word which he would not lightly use. Browning was seven years Leighton's senior, and I think it very likely that Leighton must have been impressed with the breadth and thoroughness of Browning's knowledge of art. Certainly the two men discussed the subject, and their friend the sculptor Harriet Hosmer has left an account of a trip to Albano with the Brownings and Leighton when they all talked of the nature of the arts they practised. It is significant that Hatty reports Leighton's contribution thus:

"He eschewed the imponderables and dwelt upon mere practical technicalities, distribution of colour, foreshortening and the like."

I think that, thought Hatty calls the technicalities "mere", Browning and Leighton would have found them equally absorbing and worthy of discussion because to both men the significance of detail in presentation was great, as the form and philosophy of a work could only emerge through the detail. The two ladies of the party, on the other hand, were probably more intent on the "imponderables", to judge from the nature of their own works. On this outing too, Browning was persuaded to read "the whole of his magnificent poem, Saul", which shows how friendly and relaxed the party must have been, for Browning was never one to recite his own poems.

A sign of the community of approach of Browning and Leighton may be seen in the fact that both were deeply interested in anatomy as such.
The function of such knowledge in Leighton's work is immediately apparent, as the human form is almost exclusively his subject matter, but this is only a superficial explanation for a commitment to natural form which is far deeper in fact. Like Etty or Mulready, who still attended the Royal Academy life classes all their lives, Leighton found a continual source of aesthetic instruction in trying to make his colours and lines express what was in fact not a purely visual phenomenon: he studied anatomy with "fascination" not because he merely wanted to 'get it right' in his pictures but because he was intrigued by the fact that mere pose could be expressive of so much about the whole nature of the subject. His painting Clytemnestra is an example of the concentration of effort which he put into making all visible aspects of the human form expressive of the state of the person portrayed; even without its title, this picture would still proclaim long-meditated vengeance and love turned to hatred, simply through the combined effect of the woman's obstinate and repellent beauty with the fixed horror of the purpose in her face and pose. To achieve the conviction in the viewer of the whole (not purely the visible) state of this subject's being requires primarily an acceptance that all the detail, by which that wholeness may be perceived, is accurate, that none has been blurred for the sake of emphasis by the artist, or twisted out of nature so that the idea of the pose and not the pose itself is conveyed. In short, the assurance is required by the viewer in this kind of art that he is being presented as nearly with the facts as it lay in the artist's power to do. Hence the study of anatomy could be endlessly fascinating, as the artist seeks endlessly to discover more and more accurate means of representing his knowledge of the subject in order that his concern with the subject as art should be the better expressed. Leighton's use of his knowledge in Cimabue's Madonna shows this process
and this concern, and I believe that they were both elements which Browning was very likely to recognise and appreciate since his own work shared a similar concern with facts as the raw material of art, rather than ideas or theories. Browning's own interest in anatomy was no doubt inspired by a feeling similar to Leighton's, though without the practical bearing on his own work, that no ideal or formalized representation could begin to match the complex truth which could be sensed through faithful and intelligent adherence to actuality. Thus for both, the elements of the body, or of history, or of the present, or whatever, were given, and the function of the artist was to display the truth about them which it was in his power to perceive, by so arranging the details of their presentation that the 'imitation' became more lucid, more meaningful or truthful, than the real object itself would have been to the reader/viewer. In this endeavour, the form must impress the audience primarily with a sense of its completeness and must be alien to their mere sympathy, and to this end likewise the accuracy of the presentation is materially useful - we are no more tempted to see ourselves as Foussin or Cappuccetti than Guido or Mr. Sludge: and even Leighton's most "disturbingly physical" nudes offer no invitation to voyeurism or embarrassment.\(^5\)

It is important to realize that for neither Browning nor Leighton did the attraction of the Renaissance lie in its quaintness: neither sought to create a 'medieval look' or effect, or even to revive the ideas of the period, as perhaps the Gothic Revivalists and even the Pre-Raphaelites were trying to do in England.\(^5\) Both of them were far more continental in their approach,\(^5\) Leighton because he had lived and been trained abroad and Browning because of the extraordinarily cosmopolitan interests of his youth. The major pre-occupation of neither was with one style as such and for its own sake; the nonetheless individual and particular style which each developed was in a real sense a by-product of the integrity of their main concern with art, just as the characteristic 'coldness' of Foussin's
work is only a by-product of his. There is no favourite 'type' in
the work of either, in contrast with the typical beauty of a Rossetti
or the typical ornate descriptiveness of a poem by Tennyson; their
characteristic effects are purely to do with the handling of their
subject matter, rather than with its selection. The selection of sub­
ject matter represents the result of intellectual activity rather than
taste: the very authenticity of detail in Cimabue's Madonna or Fra
Lippo Lippi suggests that the artist was content to work with highly
specific material, and did not see his originality or creativity threat­
ened by it. The contrast with the Pre-Raphaelite manner must surely be
commented on here: for though they saw 'truth to nature' as an ideal,
they found it hard to reconcile their growing awareness of the necessary
selectivity of the painter with their creed, and naturally enough they
moved away from it.59 For Leighton or Browning, on the other hand, the
use of detail was never an ideal but a practical and formal necessity.
Millais remarked that he could achieve a better visual effect by less
meticulous paintwork: since his aim was to show the appearance, or give
the effect, of what he painted, that was logical. Tennyson's method of
picking out particular details so that the verse becomes crowded without
giving a complete picture,60 is on a similar principle: the viewer or
reader fills in the suggested areas and the work thus creates a satis­
factory effect. But for Browning and Leighton, the main thing about
the desired effect was that it should be precise, they specifically
wished to be in control of all the elements of their works, even to
the point of publishing little factual notes to go with them, such
as Leighton's notes on Cimabue's Madonna or Browning's explanation which
goes with Holy Cross Day.

I am not trying to suggest that Browning and Leighton were only
interested in facts, or literal representations: on the contrary it
was because they did not want their audience to stop at the facts or the appearance that they were so meticulously complete in their presentation of them. They did not want the intrusion of unspecific ideas, however, and sought (the one by finish, the other by volubility) to discourage their audience from believing itself to be the subject of their works. The point is that they saw the business of art as the isolation and presentation of the specifically aesthetic processes of life; and hence their own role as the presentation of the relevant elements in forms made comprehensible by their intellectual and technical skills:

"to reproduce things external (whether the phenomena of the scenic universe, or the manifested action of the human heart and brain) with an immediate reference, in every case, to the common eye and apprehension of his fellow men, assumed capable of receiving and profiting by this reproduction. It has been obtained through the poet's double faculty of seeing external objects more clearly, widely and dearly, than is possible to the average mind... The auditory of such a poet will include... the spirits of a like endowment with his own who, by means of his abstract, can forthwith pass to the reality it was made from."61 (my italics)

The Jartoris group and Leighton were in Paris when the Brownings overwintered therein: 1855-6 and Browning reported to Hatty on "a sudden taste" of Leighton's for "delicious pagan figures". At the same time Leighton was painting his first classical Greek subject:

"Leighton is a better fellow than ever, very loveable really. He's painting a very fine and original picture, life-size, of Orpheus playing Lurdyice out of Hell, full of power and expression..."62
Browning himself had only written one poem on a Greek subject by this time, the fragment *Artemis Froloyzides* (1842), and it seems likely that Leighton's turning to the classics was the major influence in Browning's own later move in that direction. He was quite critical of Leighton's first Greek work however:

"Leighton's picture is done ... There is great merit in it, the expressions are true, the composition is simple, the background good, and the whole one consistent anachronism; a purely modern violin is no more a surprise than the modern faces and figures. But I breathe into your ear that I doubt whether folks won't cry out for more than this truth of expression, and ask for the poetry of this grand old subject. He certainly has not finished the details as completely as I expected; the knee of Orpheus could hardly be better modelled, and his arm (right arm) is covered with the drapery to heart's content; but the careless part seems to me in the figure of the roserpine (right arm good though) and her drapery (from the waist down), not effective in colour or foldings. Observe, all the faces are capitally true, and if you will take all the four heads in a line, and arms too, if you please, for the picture, you get a striking one...."

I feel sure that Browning did not realize quite how much this sounds like damning with faint praise, and that he sincerely admired the parts of the picture which he praised. Nonetheless, that he criticized the picture not just for lack of finish but for its failure to catch 'the poetry' of the subject is very significant, as it indicates an understanding that Leighton was attempting to do more than just compose a visual illustration of the story. Browning obviously expected Leighton to try to catch the meaning and to reveal it in visual form, and this he felt the picture
failed to do. The faces alone, he thought, would provide a "striking picture" - as if to say that the painter had indeed gone most of the way to realizing that "fine and original picture" - and yet he obviously felt that the completed work lacked power. This is interesting, and firmly disposes of any idea that Browning sought simply to 'read' the faces or expressions of the people in the paintings he saw. The real meaning, and the success, of a painting plainly depended for him on the thorough realization not just of all its parts, but of its composition in relation to those parts as well. He could accept the "anachronism" of Leighton's presentation. What he couldn't accept was the lack of "central heat" or of a completely realized "consciousness of emotion", and this would have been a criticism with which Leighton would quite probably have agreed. In spite of his apparent concern with the 'perfectedness' of his works, he did not do copies (as most painters did) and he seems to have repeated himself very little either in composition or in subject matter; nor did he go back and 'improve' his earlier pictures. I have little doubt that he himself would have concurred in Browning's criticisms. It will be remembered that Browning was genuinely moved by Leighton's later handling of the Cymbeline and Eurydice theme, where Leighton took a far more 'Browning-esque' view of the story, seizing on a moment where truth of character was the most important aspect in the realization. Nonetheless, Browning's precise criticism of the picture indicates how seriously he took Leighton's work - it is very rare for him to describe any paintings in his letters, even when such a description would doubtless have been of interest to his reader, as if he drew back, as he does in his poems, from 'word painting' as such.

Browning's disappointment in Leighton's finally-realized Triumph of Music may also be a sign that he felt the relation of the musical subject to the visual form was inadequate. His own Toccata of Galuppi's
and Master Hughes of Saxe Gotha had been published the year before and it seems likely that at least some of the talk between Leighton and Browning concerning the inter-relations of the arts was about music. It was a relationship which did interest Leighton deeply, and he painted various pictures which concern it specifically. He wrote in 1861 to Steinle about his Lieder Ohne Worte:

"It represents a girl, who is resting by a fountain, and listening to the ripple of the water and the song of a bird. The subject is, of course, quite incomplete without colour, as I have endeavoured, both by colour and by flowing delicate forms, to translate to the eye of the spectator something of the pleasure which the child receives through her eyes."

He is careful to say that he wants to "translate" the "pleasure" and he does not imply that he thinks certain colours, tones or forms are aurally suggestive. He is appealing as discriminatingly as Browning to the mind of his audience to perceive the process of his work, and only there to feel the hint of related form in another art. Browning's Toccata and Master Hughes are especially subtle in this respect, and I have no doubt that he felt that Leighton's Triumph of Music was a merely illustrative way of handling the relationship.

The single most obvious parallel between the development of Leighton's work and Browning's is in their interest in Greek subjects. Leighton discovered this area in the 1850's when he made "a thoroughly modern" picture of it, but it was not until the 1860's that he really began to concentrate on it, and in a rather different spirit from his earlier one. Instead of the illustrative intention which seems to have been shown in his Triumph of Music, which made the use of Greek subject matter almost irrelevant to the picture's meaning, and hence set up the jarring tension be-
tween the correctness of the representation and the metaphoric import of the scene which disturbed Browning, he strove in these later Greek subjects to achieve the quality of timeless aesthetic values, which he believed were inevitably connected with "the consciousness of emotion in the presence of the phenomena of life and nature" and which were therefore to be evoked in the viewer by the proper representation of those phenomena. The choice of subject would thus necessarily affect the kind of emotion - "so closely overlaid is the simple aesthetic sensation with elements of ethical or intellectual emotion by these constant and manifold secretions of associated ideas, that it is difficult to conceive of it independently of this precious overgrowth." Yet he had already pointed out that "the language of art is not the appointed vehicle of ethical truths," which leaves the "intellectual secretions" as auxiliaries to the aesthetic effect. This logic is apparent even in the earliest of Leighton's authentically classical subjects, Orpheus and Eurydice (1854) and Helen of Troy (1860). Both these pictures try to capture, in a somewhat dramatic form, a moment in which the subject portrayed is at a point of self-realization which removes the need for any narrative explanation and achieves expressivity simply from its own composition of elements. Helen is shown at the moment when: "in Helen's breast arose fond recollections of her former lord."

The inwardness of her emotion leads to her

"blank, unfocussed expression, which one reviewer found very French in character" and her face, which is in feature symmetrical and comely, has momentarily lost its renowned beauty not because it is sad but because it is blank, turned-in, unresponsive. The lighting in the picture is extraordinary and not at all designed to make Helen a pin-up; the sun seems to be
beating directly down on her, so that her own hair casts a curious shadow over her upper face, whereas the white mantle round her shoulders is blazingly bright and sends reflected light up under her chin which picks out its slightly podgy outline, and the nostrils of her nose, in a way which is reminiscent of those unflattering inventions, footlights. Her two companions are not bare-headed, and their poses are expressive of some lively exchange between them which specifically excludes, or is rejected by, Helen herself. Her bare head stands out boldly and unexpressively against the light sky, and her form is so sheathed in multifarious drapery that, unlike those of her companions, it seems muffled out of all power to express its owner's concerns. Yet she is rivetting, as a great actress can be rivetting before the audience has even an inkling of what she is going to say. The sight of her as unbeautiful, muffled and isolated puts Leighton's picture into a category widely different from the one within which the sculptors in Rome, or Flaxman himself, had worked: for Leighton the subject's first relevance was its realistic human one, not its ideally beautiful one, and his Helen here represents no-one but herself. This moment of the Iliad was also a favourite with Browning, and since he undoubtedly relied on Leighton quite heavily as a friend in at least the first few years after the death of EBB it seems very likely that the two discussed Greek literature in some depth, and the increasing predominance of Greek subjects in Leighton's paintings of the period would indicate that any such discussion would probably include the possibilities of modern handling of such subjects. Certainly Leighton regarded Browning as a superior scholar and sought advice from him about Greek with the free confidence of real friendship. Browning would suggest classical subjects to Leighton, which Leighton responded to with genuine interest, explaining what he saw as the technical problems, as if he felt that Browning was a brother artist who could appreciate them;
"I have misgivings pictorially, about the men huddled, if sufficiently, in the skins of the beasts - but it is full of elements and I will hang it, for the present, gratefully in my memory which you have more than once helped to furnish..."

In the meantime, Browning himself also began to consider using Greek subjects. His first poem after The Ring and the Book was Balaustion's Adventure Including a Transcript from Euripides (1871) and perhaps surprisingly to a modern reader, this work was the most immediately successful he ever wrote. De Vane points out that Browning's new departure into the world of Ancient Greece was partly inspired by his enthusiasm for Euripides, partly by works by various of his contemporaries on Greek subjects such as Arnold's Erodocles (1852), Swinburne's Atalanta in Calydon (1855) and Morris' The Earthly Paradise (1863). It seems to me however, that there must also have been some influence from the progress in this field of his friend Leighton, and a particular stimulus may well have come from Leighton's Hercules Wrestling With Death which was shown at the Royal Academy in 1871, since Browning actually claimed that he wrote Balaustion's Adventure in one month, shortly after the Royal Academy Exhibition opened. Both Browning's and Leighton's works on The Alkestis are very ambitious: they require a fair knowledge of the play from their audience and at the same time demand that the audiences should accept that they are not illustrating the play, but using it as raw material for their own purposes. This is in sharp contrast with Morris' decorative re-telling of the tale, where the characters move in a world in which they have no responsibility and no power. Leighton's realization of the scene is passionate, compared to this, with the figures at the head of the bed in lively contrast with the awful stillness of Alkestis' body and the superhuman struggle of Hercules with Death at the foot of the bed. Browning's idea of the tale too, is full of passionate involvement, since Balaustion is telling it
Lord Leighton  Hercules Wrestling with Death
to save her own life and the lives of her companions, and she endows the tale itself with as much liveliness as possible, as if she were seeing the play before her as she speaks, so that at times it is almost difficult to follow the narrative because her account involves itself so intently with the meaning of a given moment and the necessity of realizing its full significance. She claims that in doing so, she can mobilize the power of the play:

"What's poetry except a power that makes?
And, speaking to one sense, inspires the rest,
Pressing them all into its service; so
That who sees painting, seems to hear as well
The speech that's proper for the painted mouth;
And who hears music, feels his solitude
Peopled at once...
And who receives true verse at eye or ear,
Takes in (with verse) time, place, and persons too,
So, links each sense into its sister-sense,
Grace-like: and what if but one sense of the three
Front you at once? The sidelong pair conceive
Thro' faintest touch of finest finger-tips, -
Hear, see and feel, in faith's simplicity,
Alike, what one was sole recipient of:
Who hears the poem, therefore, sees the play..."34

Leighton's realization of *Hercules Wrestling with Death* is also rather theatrical; the scene is severely contained, as if by a proscenium arch, and the background has that curious quality of rather exaggerated distance which is common in backdrops. The grouping too seems carefully 'blocked' so that each member of the visual cast contributes a characteristic element to the scene. Browning's Balaustion uses the actual speeches of the characters in the play to a similar end. In Leighton's
picture, the placing of the struggle of Hercules with Death is rather idiosyncratic; it is pushed to the far right of the scene, and is somewhat visually puzzling as it does not instantly draw the viewer's attention, which tends to rest on the more expressive elements of Alkestis' deathly tranquillity and the turmoil of the spectator's emotions. Through these, the viewer is directed to the struggle itself. The effect of this visual hesitancy is not necessarily helpful to the picture's impact, even though I believe it was deliberately sought by Leighton in order that the scene might appeal primarily to the understanding of the viewer rather than more simply and directly to his emotions. Again, there is a quality here which Browning's Balaustion also tries to express, of concern for Alkestis' sacrifice which cannot be compensated by the intervention of the demi-god. Both Leighton and Browning see the human importance of the event as more interesting than the display of Hercules' strength, and in this both follow Euripides, though Browning follows him more closely by letting the struggle take place outside the action. It is hard to see how Leighton could have done this - if he wished to bring out the meaning of Alkestis' sacrifice, the intervention of Hercules in the otherwise tragic situation is essential.

For both Leighton and Browning also, the theatrical effect of the play was something of real importance. Neither has tried to extract a moral or a philosophy from the play's matter to repeat to the audience in a different form: both have felt that the dramatic impact of the play's event was itself essential to their own re-creations. Browning's interest in the theatre had not waned, though he no longer wrote plays. and Leighton was actively interested in the theatre all his life. Both were enthusiastic theatre goers, and there was a fine production of Gluck's opera *Alcestis* early in 1871 which they saw and which may well have helped to stimulate them in their works on the *Alkestis* theme. It is significant that Gluck was the first operatic composer to attempt
a kind of naturalism in opera; his *Alcestis* was prefaced by a kind of manifesto when it was published in 1767 (Vienna) which clearly stressed that:

"The music (was) to be secondary to the poetry and drama, not to weaken them by unnecessary ornaments - to be, in fact, something like the addition of colour to drawing, giving more life to the figures without changing their shapes."

His reasons for choosing the subject from Euripides may thus have been, like Browning's or Leighton's, primarily humanistic and naturalistic, for his music attempts to make the characters of the story and their personal feelings come alive for the audience. It is important to mention this aspect of Browning's and Leighton's interest in the subject, because it makes plain the great difference between their use of classical antiquity and the use which earlier neo-classicists had made of it. For Browning and Leighton as for many of the Renaissance artists and philosophers they had studied, the interest of classical antiquity was humanistic and not archaeological, nor even stylistic as it had perhaps been for Flaxman or Smirke. Thus they were not seeking to avoid the pitfalls of modern subject matter when they chose their Greek subjects nor trying to evoke a nostalgia for antique perfection, but giving their own characteristic expression to the "truth" which they sensed in the particular story, and they wished to acknowledge, even while they 're-made' or re-created its aesthetic elements into new works. Thus Browning actually translated Euripides' *Alkestis*, but added a great deal to it, where Balaustion tells her listeners what is going on, and describes the speakers. (This poem is, though written in a bare month, 2705 lines long!) Similarly Leighton is faithful to detail, such as the draperies and the typical Greek pottery by *Alkestis' bier*, and he
uses the nude expressively as Greek sculpture does, yet he too has added from his own genius a controlling element, like Browning’s Balaustion, which makes the work entirely his own. In either case, the function of the control which has been imposed on Euripides’ Alkestis is specifically not moral or didactic, but intended to facilitate the ‘translation’ of the original material from its dramatic form into the new one of the poem or the picture. Thus Browning’s Balaustion, whose character he invents and deliberately adds to the Alkestis, is so lively and personable that her description of the play and her comments on the action (such as her ‘re-doing’ the ending) work in juxtaposition with her own character, so that her choice of words, even, has significance which is rare in a translation. Thus the actual character herself, with her frank enthusiasm and faith in the power of art, is the special ingredient which brings the story into focus, even though in doing so she also awakens an interest in herself which is plainly alien to Euripides’ version. Thus Browning uses her to bring the material within the scope of his own idea of form, which is poetic, and even in faithfully translating the play’s dialogue, Browning’s adoption of Balaustion has enabled him to assimilate that material thoroughly to his own talent. Thus his ‘portrait’ of her, formed through the significance of her individual way of relating Euripides’ play, is the real point of the work, as is indicated by the title - Balaustion’s Adventure.

Leighton too has taken a series of significant decisions about his realisation of the scene. The inclusion of the struggle with Death; the tranquil beauty of Alkestis whose horizontality is in emphatic harmony with the beautiful and tranquil sea and landscape of the background; the severe non-repetitiveness of the members of the groups - all these things are signs of the thought with which Leighton has arranged the material of the story so that it achieves a new entity as a work of his
own. The credence which Leighton desires from his viewer for this picture is not that the story 'really happened' but that the realistic representation should convince the viewer that the 'truth' the artist intends by his compositional meaning is as valid as the immediately acceptable 'truth' of the recognisably represented images. Just as Browning's Balaustion must not be a cypher, because then the story would merely be watered-down Euripides, so Leighton must convince his viewer that his composing elements are of valid integrity and result from an interest in the subject which is not that of a mere translator, or illustrator. Thus I feel that one is quite at liberty to prefer Euripides, and that both Browning and Leighton would probably agree; they are not 'faking' him, nor trying to get the same effect in a different medium, but paying him the kind of homage which both paid to the forms of "nature and life", of accepting his created shapes as part of their own aesthetic vocabulary.

It is important to point out that neither Browning nor Leighton was intent on displaying his knowledge of the ancient world in order to impress his audiences with his erudition. Browning's concern for accuracy of reference reflects the same idea of being faithful to his subject as Leighton's care with the shapes and patterns of Greekish pots, in his Captive Andromache (1833) for example. Browning's next Greek work - Aristophanes' Apology (1875) - was stuffed with references and snatches of translation which require an intensive knowledge not just of Euripides' Herakles (which is translated within it) but a number of far more obscure works. His third one, a Transcription of the Agamemnon of Aeschylus (1877) is the most extreme in its adherence to the literal meaning of the Greek, and Browning explained this in his preface:

"If, because of the immense fame of the following Tragedy,
I wished to acquaint myself with it, and could only do so
by the help of a translator, I should require him to be lit-
eral at every cost save that of absolute violence to our language... Further, if I obtained a mere strict, bald version of thing by thing, or at least word pregnant with thing, I should hardly look for an impossible transmission of the reputed magniloquence and sonority of the Greek; and this with the less regret, inasmuch as there is abundant musicality elsewhere, but nowhere else than in his poem the ideas of the poet... All I can say for the present performance is, that I have done as I would be done by, if need were... annalist Baron de Tesse has not concealed his profound dissatisfaction at old Hoytens' conceit 'to have himself something to do with the work of what ever master of eminence might pass through his hands'. Whence it was, the Baron goes on to deplore - that much detriment was done to that excellent piece The Iliacallion of Achilles by Rubens, through the perversity of Old Hoytens 'who needs must take it on his to beautify every nymph of the twenty by the bestowment of a widened eye and an enlarged mouth'. I at least have left eyes and mouths everywhere as I found them., (October 1st 1877)

This comparison with painting is not merely a lucid analogy for Browning, I believe, but a reflection of his conscious feeling that he took a similar attitude to his subject matter as he conceived a painter could; he owed it primarily an accurate rendition, and from that the 'meaning' of the subject would presumably emerge. His adoption, lock, stock and barrel, of the 'roman murder story' for The Ring and the Book shows the same spirit, the same high value placed on adherence to objective matter and the refusal to curtail any element of his perception of its complexity. Leighton's passion for objective forms
is shown by his meticulous preparations for his final realizations of them in his works. Browning's on the other hand, is shown by the sheer conviction with which he always allows his characters to speak for themselves. His Bishop Blougram and Dr. Sludge are clever men, and are reasonably satisfied with the image of themselves they believe they are projecting. Browning never sneers at his characters, nor catches them at moments of real vulnerability – he shows them in their confidence, often even complacently taking stock of their own achievements: even Fanfilla, wounded to death, has past the moments of raw human fear and pain and is given to us in tranquility. Guido's final ironic cry of "Fanfilla – will you let them murder me?" is the nearest that even he comes to understanding his own objective wickedness, and it is all the more effective because it falls so far short of our knowledge of him. Browning's approach to the _Aememon_ shows the same idea of art: that its function is to reveal, to make lucid, not to preach, and in this he is surely close to his friend Leighton, who would draw the nude form of his model with perfect tenderness and grace, and then clothe it in soft draperies so that its actual shape could achieve expressive qualities which mere pose could only suggest, and who still found the need to compose this beautifully realized form into an intelligently controlled aesthetic context – his _Socratic_ _Inqumache_ is a prime example of this process. Browning's openly putting the highest value on the "ideas of the poet" is surely an indication that his speakers, like Leighton's highly finished composed forms, are intended to convey _themselves_ to his audience, and not to stir us into sympathetic identification.

I have no wish to suggest that these common elements between Browning and Leighton in their handling of Greek subjects were the most important aspects of either artist's use of those subjects.
Leighton plainly was drawn to the world of classical antiquity in many more ways than I have mentioned and drew on it increasingly as his sense of beauty, and the function of the beautiful in his own work, became more settled. But it would be wrong to neglect the completely realistic approach which even his most dreamily atmospheric works - like Hesiod's or Flaming June - still display. His intense admiration for the landscapes of Corot, Millet and Daubigny is reflected in his own landscapes, with their freer handling stemming from the less complex intellectual concern with the subject matter. They provide evidence that his grasp of realism was not technically rigid or philosophically timid, but that realistic form was to him a sign of the order or 'truth' in his work, as it was for Browning. His attachment to 'domestic' subjects set in classical antiquity, such as Greek Girls Playing at Ball (1839) or Finding the Skein (187..) shows that Greek themes were perhaps of more intrinsic charm for him than ever they were to Browning, for all his greater scholarship. The fact that Leighton began his classical subjects before Browning began to take them up and that Leighton increasingly observed standards of beauty in his work which were deeply relative to his knowledge of Greek forms, whereas beauty of any sort was always incidental to thought in Browning, shows that the two men differed widely in their use of Greek subjects and that classical antiquity was more germane to Leighton's idea of art than to Browning's. I would suggest that Browning was encouraged to try them quite largely because of Leighton's example: he wrote of Leighton, concerning his picture Ulysses (1833):

"I find a pityry in that man's work I can find in no other." 

At various points I have drawn attention to the almost theatrical qualities which are to be found in the work of both Browning and Leighton.
In either case, the seminal influence may well be from Hogarth; his ideas about the aesthetic value of theatrical representation complement and to some extent help to elucidate the use which both Browning and Leighton made of the word 'dramatic'. It will be recalled that Hogarth wished his pictures to be seen as if they were play scenes:

"I... wished to compose pictures on canvas, similar to representations on stage; and further hope that they will be tried by the same test, and criticized by the same criterion... let the figures in either pictures or prints be considered as players... I have endeavoured to treat my subjects as a dramatic writer..."

This ties in nicely with Hogarth's idea that it is well-nigh impossible to give the character of a hypocrite "without some adjoining circumstances to discover him..." Fundamental to Hogarth's idea of art is that all the objects portrayed should contribute in their own ways to the effect of the whole picture, and thus that the impact of the picture shall be individuated, not generalized. The stage represented for him not a means of telling a story, but an ideal cadre within which all the presented elements should be meaningful. Thus in his own pictures of The Beggar's Opera, he includes part of the 'audience' with portraits which imply a splendidly complex relation between the actors and the audience and the play. No more commentary is required than the juxtaposition of these elements implies, as they are actually brought into significance by the 'proscenium arch' effect of the shape of the canvas itself. The viewer really does not need to know the sequence of events in the play, for Hogarth has shifted the drama to concern the players and the audience, a theme which was of constant interest to him as can be seen in his 'audience' pictures - The Sleeping Congregation, The Laughing Audience, Scholars at a Lecture, Graduality Superstition and Fanaticism. The quality which he has used
from his sense of the theatre is that of dramatic tension between the elements, which means that they can keep their own individual shapes even while their effect in the play is strictly under control. Hogarth plainly realized that the obvious artifice of theatrical production in no way detracts from the effectiveness of its realism; the criterion by which he wished to be judged, was similarly the effectiveness of his presented relationships rather than the accuracy of imitation of any given part. They needed to be recognizable in order to function in his scenes at all, but the achievement of their realism was not to distract attention from the more important realism of their relationships.

Hogarth's adoption of consciously theatrical ideas in his works was deeply influential on English painting, and it is important to note that even excused members of the Royal Academy throughout the nineteenth century still engaged in scene painting for the theatre, and designed productions. Leighton himself designed costumes for Sir Frank Benson's production of The Tempest. The lighting in various of his paintings, and the grouping in many, seems to owe much to the theatre, but more importantly it demonstrates an idea of the function of imagery within the framework of the paintings which is not very far removed from Hogarth's own. The actual elements were equally expected to come into significance by virtue of their arrangement and relations to each other, and not by any emblematic convention. (Hogarth's rejection of such emblems is often displayed, for instance by the goose flying over the chaired member in The Election instead of the emblematic eagle; or by the reversal of sun and moon roles in Strolling Actresses.) Thus in Leighton's Captive Andromache there is no emblematic representation of her fate: she is presented all the more movingly as a lonely alien with griefs of her own, each of which could be poignantly brought to mind by the common happiness of those
who surround her - the happy family with a baby, the women whose lovely forms and fulfillment of the common domestic task alike show them capable of happy lives, or even the elderly woman spinning who has completed so much of her life. The whole picture is deliberately 'staged' so that the moment of her waiting to draw water is a dramatic realization of her fate. Leighton wrote: 102

"A dramatically good design is an arrested moment of action containing by suggestion what follows and what precedes it.""

The power of "suggestion" is exclusively available to him by means of composition, and it is most significant that he chose deliberately to suggest stage-representations by the way he composed and lit many of his pictures. He rarely chooses moments of great action or even activity, but pregnant pauses in which the actual quality of the visual representation can carry the kind of conviction to the audience which the subject requires. For instance, his Orpheus and Eurydice plainly hovers on the brink of tragedy - those two faces can never smile again, one feels. Or again, his Cymon and Iphigenia, 103 based on a story from Boccaccio, leaves the viewer in no doubt that Cymon is like a man newly-awakened as he gazes with pure admiration on the beautiful girl. Here the lighting is highly significant and totally stagey - the figure of Iphigenia is bathed in a soft light whose source is where the viewer stands - (evident from the light reflected on the brass pot on the right) but the whole scene is full of the strange grey dawn light which proceeds from the sliver of rising sun on the horizon. This double light-source is remarkably theatrical, and used, as lighting in the theatre, both for atmosphere and emphasis. His whole sense of composition plainly owes a lot to the theatre, and at the same time it also reflects the same idea of the integrity of the subject matter as Hogarth used: that it is objective to the artist and is to be displayed by his art. It is,
in a sense, a rhetorical idea of imagery, and in this sense it is extremely relevant also to Browning. The influence of Hogarth's love of the theatre on Browning and his early development has already been discussed, so let it suffice for me to repeat that the semi-dramatic form of Browning's monologues is symptomatic of a similar sense of the function of artistic imagery— that it is primarily ordered, or composed by the artist, and that its significance derives largely from that process. Hence, his Rabbi Ben Ezra's statement of faith is as objectively realized as his bishop Elougram's Apology demonstrating his lack of it, and the process of both their languages is the most succinct expression of their respective 'truths' which it is possible to make. The idea of a person speaking for himself is fundamentally dramatic in the sense that it is a form of rhetorical display in which the listener has no guarantee of the sincerity or even honesty of the speaker, and so is forced to explore the logic, not only of the argument, but of the imagery and the emotion, for himself, in order to "see" the character. Since words are his medium, Browning does not have the painter's problem of introducing into the surrounding elements reflections of the character; the external imagery crops up naturally in the subjects the speaker chooses to discuss. We know a lot about Andrea by the very fact that he chooses to talk about Madonnas and to paint them; his refusal to know his wife is logical. Thus for Browning, the form of the character itself (which I have constantly asserted to be steady and logical in Browning's mind from the outset of any of his poems) is like the area of canvas on which the compositions of his friend Leighton and his mentor Hogarth worked; like them, he saw his art as the 'filling in' of form, not as its reduction to a general outline. Like them, he used detail accumulatively, and metonymically. In his poetry, the metaphorical function of language is never allowed to dominate, any more than Hogarth or Leighton allow the abstract bases of their compositions to be of more importance than the actual images which realize those com-
positions. In both, the metaphorical function of course exists - it is a useful kind of comparison within the given form of the work - but it is the other function, that of particular relationship or metonymy, which is the essential ingredient of their realism. For all three then, the idea behind their use of dramatic imagery and form is that such imagery and form is particularly objective, and hence their adoption of positively theatrical devices in their own works - Browning's notorious "Listen!" or "Look!" as much as Leighton's careful lighting and posing, or Hogarth's way of revealing character.

Thus it seems to me that, different though the works of Browning and Leighton are from each other, the profound friendship between the two men reflected certain shared values in their ideas of the inward and outward functions of art. Neither saw art as a means of propagating his own opinions, nor of exploring his own inner world in a public way. Both believed in the dual responsibility of a work of art to reflect reality truly and to surprise, or 'take' its audience by its own shape or form; and they saw these two functions as in every way complementary. They subscribed to an idea of aesthetic truth which was highly sophisticated and by no means confined to the copying of nature as they saw it, but which derived from a long established tradition of realism on which they both drew with conscious understanding. Much of their art was thus thought-provoked and could be discussed by them in terms both of the history of art which underlay their own practices, and in terms of the function of art in their own time. Both Browning and Leighton were unusually well-read in the history of art, and this must have provided an initial ground for discussion about art between them. The 'literary motive' which Costa comments on as underlying much of Leighton's work must have been of interest to Browning in much the same way as Browning's own 'painterly motive' in his painter poems at least must have
been of interest to Leighton. On this basis, it is hardly surprising to find that the relation between their arts concerns shared values rather than similar styles, and a curiously mutual sense of the tradition in which they both worked rather than similar themes. They had particularly sophisticated ideas of the inter-relations between the arts, and were hardly likely to indulge in 'illustrating' each other. For Leighton, it was only possible to 'illustrate' poetry which was so vaguely realized that it did not dictate a form to him, and clearly Browning's verse was not like this to him, though he called it "magnificent". For Browning, there was "a poetry in (Leighton's) work which I can find in no other", and which meant that Leighton's paintings could actually be used by him in his own poetry because for him they had the same complex reality as the characters he created. The influence which either had on the other was thus in no way out of character with the already-existing talent of either, but harmonized and blended with its natural tendencies. Leighton's cool classicality could have no effect on Browning's language as such, though it might well have a profound effect on the thoughts expressed or on the control behind that expression, because what the two men shared was thought rather than taste, and both put a premium on the quality of thought in their own work. Their mutual admiration is thus the sign of the breadth of their senses of the tradition and not a more pragmatic indication that they thought or felt alike.
NOTES

1. His quatrain mentioned earlier on Keats's "Ode on a Grecian Urn" was written because John Forster "pressed me into committing verse on the instant." (Letter to Fanny Kemble, 30.12.1841, Letters ed Hood p7)

2. The picture was singled out for comment by Sir Thomas Lawrence, for instance:

"How beautiful, how devoid of everything like the handicraft of art it is - the largeness, yet ingenuity of its effect - the purity of its colour - the truth, yet refinement and elegance of the action... and then, a lesson to all high-minded lovers, the patient vigilance with which the whole is linked together, by touches, in some instances small almost as miniature, but like the sparkling of water..."

Letter from Pope 19.2.1828. (Prinsep ed op cit p192)

3. Reproduced in Lord "C" for and Lord Leighton plate 101 (black and white)

4. The lines appeared in the accompanying catalogue when the picture was exhibited at the Royal Academy in 1844:

but give then me, the mouth, the eyes, the brow!
let them once more absorb me! One look now
ill leap me round for ever, not to pass
out of its light, though darkness lies beyond:
hold me but safe again within the band
of one immortal look! All we that was,

forgetten, and all terror that may be,
refined - no past is mine, no future: look at me!

5. Letter to Steeles 3.12.1844 quoted in H.H. Bockford, The Browning and Lord Leighton 1942 p12 note 26. She gives Leighton's Salome (1857) as an example of a Biblical subject, and says that Browning owned a drawing of him on this subject, but there is no trace of such a drawing

6. Lord Leighton op cit p72. Browning has in fact been far less illustrated than Tennyson for instance, probably because his poetry specifically lacks 'suggestiveness'; his detail is bound securely into relevance by its context, and not really available for transposition into another form.

7. Leighton did one picture of this sort of Fisherman and Tyron (1857) from a poem by Goethe, but the Canon's point out that this picture was probably commissioned.
   "I enjoyed (Browning's) friendship to the end of his days, and he
   endeared himself to me especially through the kindness with which he
   forgave my incapacity to understand his poetry - an incapacity which I
   frankly confessed to him more than once..."

See also Browning's correspondence with Mrs. Fitzgerald op cit.
Various friends seemed to like him because he wasn't 'like a poet'
e.g. Jowett and Lockhart!

9. Mrs. Russell Barrington *Life Letters and Works of Lord Leighton*
   1906 Vol II p304 - 5. (Ormond op cit p79) Leighton also spoke
   appreciatively of Browning's work in letters to him e.g. 28.4.1878.

10. That this should be the case is the secret of success in all forms
    of illusionistic art: the mind of the audience must get to work
    on the reality portrayed and accept the artefact. C R Arnheim
    *Visual Thinking* op cit p 36

    "the wrestling with a work of visual art reveals how
    active a taste of shape-building is involved in what
    goes by the simple names of 'seeing' or 'looking'...

11. Adelaide Sartoris *A Week in a French Country House* 1867 p80

12. The *Art Annual 1886 Life and Work of Sir Frederick Leighton Bart
    RA by Mrs. A Ilang p2. See also The Ormonds *Lord Leighton* op cit
    p9

13. A Lys Baldry Leighton op cit plate VI - *A Noble Venetian Lady*
    Ormonds *Lord Leighton* op cit plate 59 *La Donna*

14. Ormonds op cit p29 note 6

15. Published in 1937

16. See, Cleopatra! bared, the entire and sinuous wealth
    C' the shining shape; each orb of indolent ripe health,
    Captured, just where it finds a fellow-orb as fine
    I' the body: traced about by jewels which outline,
    Fire-frame, and keep distinct, perfections - lest they melt
    To soft smooth unity ere half their hold be felt...
    *Fijina at the Fair* XX

17. Quoted p126 Ormonds *Lord Leighton* op cit (R A Notebook XXX)

18. E. Burke *Pracy on The Sublime and the Beautiful* (Bohn's Standard
    Library 1913) p173

    "I find it hard to persuade several that their passions
    are affected by words whence they have no ideas; and yet
harder to convince them, that in the ordinary course of conversation we are sufficiently understood without raising any images of the things concerning which we speak..."

See also J. D. Hunt "Jovianous Deep and Dark: Turner and the Sublime" The Georgia Review Spring 1976 XXX No. 1 p139.


See also from Victorian Painters op cit p14 - "Nudes and still-life painting have never grown strong roots in England: the inheritors of Cromwellian Puritanism have always tended to prefer paintings that depicted events of everyday life, history, and portraiture. Paint, they felt, should never be so vulgar as to draw attention to itself; it should merely be a vehicle for constructing symbols of the visible world. The painting of nudes and still-life tend to break this taboo, and to revel luxuriantly in luscious textural harmonies, which might be all right for the frivolous French or the materialistic Bóch, but not for plain John Bull..."

20. Chanzop cit plate 112

21. Ibid p76

22. Lord Leighton Addresses to the Royal Academy ed Mrs. Cutheland Orr, 2nd edition 1897 p55. The Commons make the point that Leighton was the first to since Reynolds to consider it his duty to give such addresses (p112)

23. Ibid. op cit Dec 10 1877 p15; Dec 10 1881 p55; etc.

24. Helen Jakobson op cit p172

25. See Lew Tanschewich Vegetal Theory and Language trans E. Kanffmann and G. Walker 1942 p5 - "...meaning is an inalienable part of a word as such, and thus it belongs in the realm of language as much as in the realm of thought..."


27. Perhaps it might be this "loss of energy" which makes Browning seem 'obscure' to readers who are used to romantic imagery? In Browning each image has to be formed, weighed, its place assessed and finally it must be put back whole into the accumulating clutch of images through which the process of the speaker's mind is apparent.

28. Chanzop op cit p63. Leighton owned two works by Moore and was instrumental in having Moore's Venus hung in the RA Exhibition 1869.
29. **Drawings and Studies in Pencil, Chalk and Other Media by the late Lord Leighton of Stratton PHA** Fine Art Society 1898 with introduction by S Pepys-Cockerell (an old friend of Leighton's)

30. There are many of these on display at Leighton House. See also Ormonds colour plates I - IV

31. ibid p10

32. Addresses op cit December 10 1879 p13

33. De Vane Handbook pp216 and 245

34. Ormonds op cit Catalogue pp 149, 150. See also p17

35. Irvine and Honan p10

36. W.C. De Vane Brownings Farleyns 1927 p169

37. Ormonds op cit p27

38. De Vane Farleyins op cit pp167-176

39. ibid pp177-8

40. **Aelando "Beatrice Signorelli" lines 21-4 (1889)**

41. Ormonds op cit p23 "unlike most Vasari illustrators, Leighton had studied his sources thoroughly."

42. ibid p23

43. The Art Journal 1855 p169. The phrase of the reviewer 'Glory of Art' is curiously reminiscent of Browning's own 'Glory and the good of art' (Din. and Book)

44. Geant Painting in Britain 1800-1900 op cit p59 plate 35

45. G. Reynolds Victorian Painting op cit p59 plate 35

46. Antony Blunt Nicholas Poussin 1967 p219-20

"Poussin's views on painting... are inspired by a passionate belief in reason as the source of all beauty... it is characteristic if his approach that in his letters the words reason and judgment occur constantly, the word imaginative is not found at all... This does not mean that for Poussin art is a mechanical activity: reason is itself creative and absorbs the functions usually attributed to the imagination. On the other hand, Poussin's conscious concentration on the reasonable aspects of art leads to his painting being at first sight cold and unemotional. It is only when we come to know it well that its deeply moving qualities become apparent... The fact that painting is fundamentally a rational activity means that it is controlled by the mind of the artist and appeals to the mind of the spectator. In this conception of painting, the eye is
only a channel to the mind... Since, however, to follow reason and to follow nature are for Poussin the same thing, painting as a rational activity will be an imitation of nature."

47. Crmonds op cit p28
48. Ibid pp20-22
49. Irvine and Ionan pp317-8
51. N. Hitchford The Brompton and Lord Leighton op cit Letter from Leighton to his mother: "Cornelius said, 'there was not another man in England that could paint such a picture as my Cimabue threatens to be', and the name was unhesitatingly asserted by Robert Browning who is also a connoisseur."
52. Harriet Homnor Letters and Memories op cit p109 (May 1854)
53. Ibid p112.
54. The contrast between his attitude in this and Tennyson's is brought out in various accounts of the two men - e.g. see W. Rossetti Portrait of Browning The Magazine of Art 1890: "Tennyson... has well described his own eloquent - "nothing but his hollow i's and a's"... his rapid deep voice sways over all in a long-drawn chant... Browning's voice, which was at once rich and peculiar, took much less account of the poem as a rhetorical whole; his delivery had more affinity to that of an actor, laying stress upon all the light and shade of the composition - its touches of character, its conversational points, its dramatic give and take..."
55. Wilfred Reynell Minor Memoirs of Lord Leighton English Illustrated Magazine XIV 1926 p577: "The study of physiology, he found, was a study which he described as "fascinating"..."
See letter from EBB to Penny Lworth Home Autumn 1860, Letters of EBB op cit Vol II p111
56. That this is not necessarily the case may be seen by the curiously embittering effect (quite deliberate, I'm sure) of Edward Burn's portrait where the form of the naked girl is uncomfortably unable to express the self which burns defiantly out of her eyes. See Art of Nineteenth Century Women Artists 1879 p162
57. "C. A M Fugia's Comment or a Parallel between the Noble Edifices of the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Centuries and Similar Buildings of the Present Day 1835. In 1860 Fugia said of himself: 'I am... the
scholar and representative of those Glorious Catholic Architects who lived in antient days and to whom the merit of all our present performances are in justice to be referred. I am continually studying and working in their principles. I seek antiquity and not novelty. I strive to revive not invent..." (Phoebe Stanton Pugin 1971 pl1)

Ruskin Lectures on Architecture and Painting 1854 - On Pre-Raphaelitism:

"...consists mainly in the assertion that the principles on which art has been taught for these three hundred years back are essentially wrong, and that the principles which ought to guide us are those which prevailed before the time of Raphael..."

See D G Rossetti The Cry of the P B B (Artists on Art op cit p337)

50. Kenneth Clark's Introduction to The Gothic Revival 1926, remarks:

"the Gothic Revival was an English movement, perhaps the one purely English movement in the plastic arts..."

59. This is especially true of Millais, but is visible in Rossetti too. An inability to move away from the 'idea' ruined John Brett!

60. E.G. Barning's Essay on Shelley 1851 (my italics)

61. Kenneth Clark’s Introduction to The Gothic Revival 1926, remarks:

"the Gothic Revival was an English movement, perhaps the one purely English movement in the plastic arts..."


63. Ibid p66

64. Browning had a talent for inept compliments. EBB commented on this:

"He said the other day to Mrs. Story: 'I had a delightful evening yesterday at your house. I never spoke to you once...!'"

Letter to Isa Blagden, Letters of EBB op cit II p309

65. Leighton seems often to have been dissatisfied with his own work.

Meynell (op cit) says of him:

"Seldom pleased with the result of his pictures, he had nevertheless great pleasure in producing them, especially in the processes of making little clay models for his figures and for his draperies..." (p587)

66. Both men were intensely musical, as is shown by the pleasure they both took in it in later years in London. Kallé speaks of Browning as an excellent listener (unlike Tennyson who irritated him by talking through his performance!) and an exception to his rule that painters are musical and poets are not! (Autobiography op cit pl34)
67. 1856 Triumph of Music; 1860 Lieder Ohne Worte; 1861 Rustic Music; Duet; 1863 Salome Dancing; 1864 Golden Hours; 1865 Music; 1874 The Daphnephoria; 1877 Music Lesson; 1880 Idyll; 1883 Music Frieze.

68. Ormond's op cit p60

69. Of the rather silly comparison P G Stephens makes between LGR's Blue Power and music - "sharp accents of the scarlet and green seem to go with the sound of the bell; the softer crimson, purple and white accord with the throbbing notes of the lute and the clavi-chord."

P G Stephens op cit p42.

70. The work was generally 'panned' by the critics and Browning was loyal to Leighton - see Ormonds op cit pp37-8 and 77.

71. 1866 Eurydice and Orpheus; 1864 Orpheus and Eurydice; 1865 Helen of Troy; 1866 Syracusan Trick; 1867 Venus Disrobing; Greek Girl Dancing, Knucklebone Player; 1868 Ariadne; Actae; 1869 Helios and Rhodos; Daedalus and Icarus; Electra; etc. (see Ormonds op cit catalogue)

72. Leighton Addresses op cit pp13, 56 and 55.

73. A black and white reproduction appears in Alice Corkran Frederick Leighton 1903 to face p31. See Ormonds for reproduction of Orpheus and Eurydice plate 101.

74. Ormonds op cit p26

75. That Leighton was very conscious of the responsive quality which makes a human face lovely is amply shown by his superb portrait of May Dartoris; her features are almost unrecognizable, but her face is brimming with genuine responsiveness and this makes her portrait really attractive. His blank faces, like Helen's or Clytemnestra's, are beautiful and repellent.

76. De Vana Handbook p560. Pope's translation runs thus:

"This said, the many-coloured maid inspires
Her husband's love, and wakes her former fires;
Her country, parents, all that once were dear,
Rush to her thought and force a tender tear.
O'er her fair face a snowy veil she threw,
And, softly sighing, from the loom withdrew.
Her handmaids, Clymene and Acteia, wait
Her silent footsteps (in Leighton's picture she is barefoot) to the Ocean Gate..." Book III Iliad.

Browning used this section of the Iliad himself in Helen's Tower.
1870 (printed in Sonnets of the Century ed Wm Sharp 1886 p31)
Who hears of Helen's Tower, may dream perchance
How the Greek beauty from the Scaean Gate
Gazed on old friends unanimous in hate,
Death-doomed because of her fair countenance...” The similarity
to Leighton's handling of the subject is obvious.

E.G. Browning went to model clay at Leighton's studio at this
period - see Ormonds op cit p93; Corkran op cit p59

As William Gaunt remarks: "Was it less reasonable for a late-
Victorian to paint The Return of Persephone than for Titian to
paint Bacchus and Ariadne?" (Victorian Olympus revised edition
1975 p164)

Ormonds op cit p77

Letter from Leighton to Browning Baylor L2-174, 29.8.1870

De Vane Handbook p357

Morris' version of the myth does not allow Alkestis to return to
life. This is significant, as in Euripides' version, the prophecy
of Apollo that Hercules with wrestle with and overcome Death comes
very early in the play and removes the 'sting' of the narrative
-Morris' intention was plainly narrative where Euripides' was not.
That Browning did not admire Morris' poetry is plain from a letter
to Isa Blagden (Letters ed Hood pl34, letter 19.1.70)
"Morris is sweet, pictorial, clever always - but a weariness to me
by this time. The lyrics were the 'first sprightly runnings' -
this that follows (The Earthly Paradise) is a laboured brew with
the old flavour but not body..."

It may seem odd to see 'passion' in any work of Leighton's but I
am not alone in doing so: George Meredith found his Paolo and
Francesca (1861) "the sole English picture exhibiting passion"
(Letter to Janet Ross, 17.5.61, Letters of G. Meredith ed C. L.
Clive 1970)

Palestine's Adventure

Ormonds op cit p90

Ormonds op cit p37: "French theatre, with its qualities of high
drama and high style, can have appealed to Leighton no less strongly
than contemporary French art... Both contributed to the transforma-
tion of his creative imagination..." p 125: "the gulf in sensibility
and taste that separates the modern theatre from its late Victorian
counterpart is a gulf that extends equally to painting. There is
an instinctive resistance to many of the aesthetic and pictorial qualities of Leighton's art for this very reason..."

87. Croond op cit pp64-78

"his gods and men were living, active and feeling, not lay figures with voices..."

89. Smirke wrote "as the moral character is corrupted by luxury, so is art vitiated by the exuberance of its ornaments... An excess of ornament is the symptom of a vulgar and degenerate taste..." (quoted in Minkelman's Writings on Art ed D Irwin 1972 p24)

90. Schiller's Der Götter Griechenlands -
Schone Welt, wo bist du? Keine wieder
Pallies Flutenhalter der Natur! (Lovely world, where are you? / come again, fair flowering age of nature!)

91. This is particularly noticeable if one compares Browning's translation of rapid dialogue with, for example, Philip Yellacott's (Penguin 1955) translation - e.g.

Browning
Put the God sighed - "have courage! All my arms
This time are simple justice and fair words."
Then each plied each with rapid interchange:
"What need of bow, were justice arms enough?"
"War it is my wont to hear the bow."
"Ay, and with bow, not justice, help this house!"

Yellacott
Apollo: Be calm: I have right and reason on my side.
Death: Right, do you say? Then what are your weapons for?
Apollo: It is my custom always to carry them.
Death: And to show unjust favours to this house.

92. Be Vase Handbook p562 - Browning was rather taken aback at the hostile reception of Aristophanes' Apology (1875) but "he would not hear of explanatory notes: he said it could not be helped, but that he was not likely to try anything of the kind again."

T L Hood Browning's Ancient Classical Sources Ibid XXXIII 1922 pp79ff

94. Croonds op cit plates 169, 170, 172 and colour plate VIII

95. Croonds op cit p34 "The classical world no longer represented an abstract of perfection but a picturesque reality."
96. Ibid pp35: "Leighton's landscapes belong to the progressive tradition of French naturalism, and they are quite distinct from conventional English landscapes as they are from the obsessively microscopic vision of the Pre-Raphaelites."
See also Five Great Painters of the Victorian Era Sir W Baylis 1902 p35 "Looking at (his landscapes) with me, Leighton has told me that his passion has always been for landscape, and that he still hoped to paint an English Cottage before he died."

97. Letter from Leighton to J.W. Carr 27.11.1873, quoted in Some Eminent Victorians J.W.C. Carr 1906: "By degrees, however, my growing love for Form made me intolerant of the restraint and exigencies of costume, and led me more and more, finally, to a class of subjects, or more accurately, to a set of conditions, in which supreme scope is left to pure artistic qualities... These conditions classic subjects afford, and as vehicles, therefore, of abstract form, which is a thing not of one time, but of all time, these subjects can never be obsolete..."

99. Ormond, op. cit p30, quoting from Mrs. Russell Barrington II p29

100. Analysis of Beauty op cit p126 Ch XV 'Of the Face'.

101. This kind of order is essential to a successful play, where the playwright must manage to keep the audience interested in the main characters without making the rest of the cast cyphers - Lear's tragedy has got to overwhelm the putting out of Gloucester's eyes.

102. Ormond, op. cit p126
103. Ibid colour plate VII
104. Giovanni Costa 'Notes on Lord Leighton' Cornhill Magazine 1897
105. Costa, op. cit p302 "His art was often inspired by a literary motive as it were baptizing his picture before it was born. This also influenced his work to the exclusion of the unforeseen (imprévu)."

106. In a letter to Browning, Leighton calls Phædriades "magnificent" 20.4.1878 (Baylor L2-265)
107. Ormond, op. cit p30, 1932 re Wedded
The kind of influence on Browning's poetry which I have described in this work necessarily differs from the later interest which Browning always showed in painting, though there are some interesting parallels to be drawn between, for instance, the Dutch influence on early Victorian painting and that I have shown on Browning's poetry, or between his interest in the Nude as a painterly subject and several attempts he made to use the Nude as a theme in poetry (notably in Pauline and in the Parleying with Francis Purini). Browning did continue to cultivate his knowledge of painting and sought the society of painters throughout his life, both in Italy and in England. However, these aspects of his interest could do no more than help to confirm my case and are not of direct relevance. The reader will find them covered in the Bibliography.
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