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“PAULINE”—A STUDY

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PREFACE

In adding one book more to the already voluminous literature on Browning, my hope is to contribute, however meagrely, to that objective and systematic study of his works which is called for in the much-needed revaluation of his poetry. The distance of more than a century since the publication of the poet's first work leaves us unfettered alike by the wild adulation and violent prejudice that so long alternated in Browning criticism, and the appearance during the last two decades of the works of W. C. DeVane, W. O. Raymond, Paul de Reul, and F. R. G. Duckworth and the collections of the poet's letters by T. L. Hood, A. J. Armstrong, and Richard Curle, bring the chances of a reorientation of Browning criticism within the bounds of possibility. The charge of obscurity, so much of a bugbear with the readers of the nineteenth century and after, no longer troubles the reader of today familiar with the protean oddities of modernist poetry ; nor is the 'philosophy' regarded as either so complex, or so integral and absolute a feature of Browning's poetry as the learned members of the Browning Society once assumed. If the critic of an earlier generation saw in him an apostle of overweening optimism, he is found by the present-day reader to possess the 'saving grace of pessimism' emphasising in his most ambitious work

This lesson that our human speech is naught,
Our human testimony is false, our fame
And human estimation words and wind.

His poetry, rich with a prescience of modern psychology, can hardly be regarded as merely the poetry of barbarism ; its grotesquerie lures us on by a bold and unfaltering realism. The Nineteen-Twenties made far too much of the middle-aged, bourgeois Browning, the nightly diner-out who looked perilously like a puffing solicitor. That a poet should look and act every

inch a poet is a diehard Victorian expectation, reinforced by memories of the Parnassian personality of Tennyson.

Much of the misinterpretation of Browning's poetry has been due, as Duckworth has argued, to an anomaly ensuing from a deep-seated spiritual conflict, the conflict, namely, between the poet and the bourgeois, the mystic and the poet of action. Years of careful study have convinced me that the misunderstanding of Browning in great part, arises no less from an overlooking of a certain feature of his poetic purpose. In the Shelley-essay, Browning considers the possibility of a simultaneous presence of the subjective and the objective approaches to poetry, as he understood them, in the same work of the same poet. Judging by certain letters to and from Elizabeth Barrett and a careful observation of his poetic evolution, Browning's own poetic aim appears to have been to achieve a coalescence between the 'subjective' and the 'objective'. With Browning, the world of objective art is enveloped, as it were, even permeated through and through, by an inextricable subjectivity; the men and women whom he creates, interest him because they appeal to some primal sensibilities of his spirit. He lacked that profound and penetrating power of the imagination whereby such a coalescence can be raised to the heights of great art, and his poetry is at its best when the two strands are kept apart,—the poem being the creation of either a dramatic conception or an urgent lyricism. Perhaps Browning himself realised that the attainment of such a coalescence was beyond his powers, and after *The Ring And The Book*, the utmost achievement in the language in the form of the dramatic monologue, he went in more and more for poetry of a frankly personal character until the growing lyricism of his last decade reached its peak in the *Asolando* volume. The dramatic monologue, offering him a potent instrument for character-analysis, is but a broken arc of his rounded view of poetry.

A part of my endeavour in this monograph has been to show that this bifocal character of Browning's poetic purpose and imaginative energy is present even in his earliest

publication. Standing at the head of half a century's productions, *Pauline* opens up for the reader a vista of dim possibilities of poetic development. The scantiness of biographical material for Browning's early life enhances the value of a careful examination of this adolescent work as a key to the poet's growing mind and art. Methods of psycho-analysis may offer us new interpretations of this the earliest work of the poet, but the results obtained so far have not been quite encouraging, and I have therefore had recourse to the traditional methods of criticism. In the interpretative commentary of the second chapter, a running analysis of the poem emphasises the continuity of the thought-content and endeavours to correct a number of misconstructions put on the text by N. Hardy Wallis in his edition of the poem. The third chapter has been devoted to an examination of Browning's experiment in the craft of poetry, relating his performance here to his own later achievements and further to the traditions he had received from the poets of the preceding generation, while the fourth considers the tendencies of the youthful poet's mind.

To Dr. S. N. Ray, Head of the Department of English at the University of Dacca, and Miss J. J. Mackay, Lecturer and my colleague in the same Department, who have kindly read through the manuscript and offered valuable suggestions, I am particularly indebted. I am also obliged to Mr. M. Guha of the Asutosh Press, and Mr. S. C. Das of the General Printers and Publishers Ltd., for their tolerance of my authorial vagaries.

August, 1944.

A. BOSE.

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“PAULINE”—A STUDY

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ABBREVIATIONS

Letters of Robert Browning, Collected by F. J. Wise, and edited by T. L. Hood, 1933, John Murray. (*Letters*)

Life and Letters of Robert Browning, Mrs. Sutherland Orr, 1891, John Murray, (Orr, *Life*)

Life of Robert Browning, William Sharp, Walter Scott, London, undated. (Sharp, *Life*)

Life of Robert Browning, W. H. Griffin, and H. C. Minchin, 1910, Methuen, (Griffin, *Life*).

The Letters of Robert Browning and Elizabeth Barrett Barrett, John Murray, (*The Browning Love Letters*).

A Browning Cyclopaedia, Edward Berdoe, George Allen and Unwin, London, Second Edition, 1931. (Berdoe *Cyclopaedia*).

A Browning Handbook, W. C. DeVane, John Murray, (DeVane, *Handbook*).

Pauline by Robert Browning, Edited with an Introduction and Notes by N. Hardy Wallis, University of London Press, 1931 (Wallis).

CHAPTER ONE

PAULINE was the first published work of Robert Browning. That he was given to writing poems long before the publication of *Pauline* is evident from his letter to Richard Henry Horne, dated Florence, December 3, 1848 :

When I got older, perhaps at twelve or thirteen, I wrote a book of verses which Eliza read and wrote to me about..... then in a few months (for one grows fast at that age) I saw the proper way, and put my blessed 'poems' in the fire... ..One day Eliza told me to my amazement and discomfort, that she had 'still by her somewhere, safe' all the letters I had written to her—'never being used to destroy a scrap of any such thing'—moreover producing on some occasion or other, a sort of album-book in which were entered 'poem' this or 'poem' the other, duly transcribed from my delectable collection aforesaid.

After the death of the two sisters, Miss Eliza Flower and Mrs Sarah Adams, Browning recovered these poems through Mrs Bridell-Fox, daughter of W. J. Fox, and perhaps those were the poems which Browning at one time intended for a volume to be called *Incondita*, and which T. J. Wise was horrified to see being flung into fire by the poet in 1884.

Pauline was composed between October 22, 1832,—the day on which Browning was inspired by Edmund Kean's performance in Shakespeare's *Richard III* to an ambitious poetical project,—and the unknown date in January 1833 on which he inscribed "London, January 1833" below the prefatory quotation from Cornelius Agrippa's Latin. At this time, Browning was 20 years 6 months old, and lived with his parents in their house near Camberwell Green. The oem appeared anonymously in March 1833. The young

poet's aunt, Mrs Silverthorne gave him thirty pounds towards the expenses of the edition. £ 26-5-0 went on paper and printing, £ 3-15-0 on advertising. The book did not sell at all¹; It "is now one of the most valuable of modern books; a copy sold recently for 16,000 dollars. There are only 21 copies known."²

A second edition³, no longer anonymous, headed the collected works of Browning in 1868; the third edition came out in 1888. The title-page of the first edition runs thus :

PAULINE;/ A/ Fragment of a confession./ Plus ne suis
ce que j'ai été,/ Et ne le scaurois jamais être./ Marot./
London :/ Saunders and Otley, Conduit Street./ 1833./

Browning had read Clement Marot in his boyhood with his French tutor, M. Loradoux; the French poet is mentioned again in *The Glove*. The quotation means: "I am no longer—I could never be again—what I was." The second page of the edition is a blank; the third page contains an extract from De Occult. Phil. of H. Cor. Agrippa⁴. The most important sentence of the paragraph, "Nam et ego vobis illa non probo, sed narro" is printed in capital letters. The paragraph has been translated thus⁵ :

I have no doubt that the title of our book may by its unusual character entice very many to read it, and that among

1. "To the best of my belief no single copy of the original edition of *Pauline* found a buyer; the book was undoubtedly still-born." Letter to T. J. Wise, 1886, *Letters*, p. 251.

2. W. L. Phelps in *MLN*, May 1932, p. 292.

3. See Appendix i.

4. Re. Browning's interest in Cornelius Agrippa, Griffin (*Life*, p. 22) writes; "In Wanley's *Wonders of the Little World*, Browning as a boy, had read how the magician Agrippa could cause an evil spirit to enter into the body of a dead man. When he found among his father's books a little octavo volume lettered *H. Corn. Agrippa. Opera*, he doubtless pounced upon it eagerly; nor would his interest be lessened by the fact that his father had made a note on the fly-leaf to say that the book had once formed part of the library of.....Sir Kenelm Digby".

5. By Professor F. A. Pottle; quoted by DeVane, *Handbook*, p. 30,

them some of biased opinions, with weak minds—many even hostile and churlish—will attack our genius, who in the rashness of their ignorance will cry out, almost before they have read the title, that we are teaching forbidden things, are scattering the seeds of heresies, that we are an annoyance to righteous ears, to enlightened minds an object of offense... To these I now give counsel not to read our book, neither to understand it nor remember it ; for it is harmful, poisonous ; the gate of Hell is in this book.....On the other hand, if you find things which do not please, pass over them and make no use of them. FOR I DO NOT RECOMMEND THESE THINGS TO YOU : I MERELY TELL YOU OF THEM. Yet do not on that account reject the rest. Therefore if anything has been said rather freely, forgive my youth ; I wrote this work when I was less than a youth.

On this prefatory note, the poet's comment in the 1888 edition is : "This introduction would appear less absurdly pretentious did it apply, as was intended, to a completed structure of which the poem was meant for only a beginning and remains a fragment." On the left corner at the bottom of the first page occur the words,

London, January, 1833.

V. A. XX.

V. A. XX has been explained by Browning as "the Latin abbreviation of *Vixi Annos*—'I was twenty years old'—that is, the imaginary subject of the poem was of that age."⁶ The fourth page is a blank, but in the copy which is at the Dyce and Forster Library at the Victoria and Albert Museum, Kensington, the following holograph occurs on this page.

The following Poem was written in pursuance of a foolish plan which occupied me mightily for a time, and which had for its object the enabling me to assume and realize I know 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 &c. &c.

6. To T. J. Wise, *Letters*, p. 256.

were no other than one and the same individual. The present abortion was the first work of the *Poet* of the batch, who could 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 crab remains of the shapely Tree of Life in this Fool's Paradise of mine.

"R.B."

This self-criticism, written' probably not long after the publication of *Pauline* testifies to the young poet's astonishing capacity for detachment from his work, the *primum opus* at that, and marks, moreover, the poet's progress beyond his earliest poetical conception.

At the end, the poem is dated Richmond, October 22, 1832, indicating not the date of composition but the date of conception of the poem. On that day, Browning had visited Richmond to see Kean's performance of Richard III. The occasion roused him to so deep a sense of drama that the idea of presenting several characters in different roles came to him and he quickly set to work out the first instalment of the idea in *Pauline*.

Kean was acting there : I saw him in Richard III that night, and conceived the childish scheme already mentioned. There is an allusion to Kean, p. 47. I don't know whether I had not made up my mind to *act*, as well as to make verse, music, and God knows what—*que de chateaux en Espagne* !

(Notes to *Letters*, p. 366)

Lines 669-675 of the poem refer to Kean :

I will be gifted with a wond'rous soul,
Yet sunk by error to men's sympathy,
And in the wane of life, yet only so
As to call up their fears, and there shall come
A time requiring youth's best energies ;
And strait I fling age, sorrow, sickness off, .
And I rise triumphing over my decay.

Although the book failed commercially, it drew the attention of two important men of letters of the day, W. J. Fox and John Stuart Mill. Fox was a friend of the Flowers; Browning met him one day at their house and thenceforward the veteran critic became a sort of guardian-angel to the budding poet. The main points of his review⁸ may be thus summarised :—

The most interesting adventures are those of the spirit. The formation and the working of the mind are eminently suitable a subject for poetical exhibition. The annals of a poet's mind are poetry. A poet's productions are emanations of his essence. He himself is all that he poetically describes. The poetry of Wordsworth, Coleridge, Byron, illustrate the truth that in relation to his creations, the poet is the omnific spirit in whom they have their being.

These thoughts have been suggested by the work before us which, though evidently a hasty and imperfect sketch, has truth and life in it, which gave us the thrill and laid hold of us with the power, the sensation of what has never failed us as a test of genius. Whoever the anonymous author may be, he is a poet. A claimant of poetic honours may be appreciated by a few pages, for if they be poetry, he is a poet. We felt certain of Tennyson before we saw the book, by a few verses which straggled into a newspaper; we are not less certain of the author of *Pauline*.

8. Fox's review is available in *Famous Reviews*, Ed. R. Brimley Johnson (Pitman & Sons, London, 1914), pp. 489-492. The review was originally published in *The Monthly Repository*, new series, vol. vii, pp. 252-262. Fox had already in January 1833, written in praise of Tennyson in the same journal. The *Pauline* article appeared in the April issue.

T. L. Hood, editor of *Letters of R. B.* states (notes to *Letters*, p. 341) that the review appeared in *The Monthly Magazine*, new series, vol. ii, 1835, pp. 254-262. He is in error about the name of the journal, the number of the volume and the date.

In the confessions of *Pauline*, the external world is only reflected in the faintest shades. We have never read anything more purely confessional. The whole composition is of the spirit, spiritual. The scenery is in the chambers of thought ; the agencies are powers and passions ; the events are transitions from one state of spiritual existence to another.

(Here follows an analysis of the main ideas of the poem.) The poet analyses his spiritual constitution, refers to his intense self-consciousness, the spirit of restlessness which dominates him ; of this essential self, imagination is the characteristic quality, a yearning after God has saved him from dissipation. The young man shows a mere perception of the beautiful, the perception being felt more precious than its object.

When he arrives at the goal (Fox thinks that the goal is Religion), he hankers after human sympathies and affections. He is purified *for* love. The poem is addressed to Pauline ; with her it begins, and ends ; her presence is felt throughout.

The author cannot expect such a poem to be popular. In some respects the poet resembles Tennyson. Whatever inspiration the poet may have received from Shelley, the mysticism of the original has happily been avoided. His poem stands alone.

Coming from a critic of Fox's eminence, the review gladdened the heart of the poetical debutant. In a letter to Miss Haworth,⁹ Browning spoke of the "inexpressible delight" he felt on reading the review. To Fox, he wrote : "I can only say, that I am very proud to feel as grateful as I do.....I shall never write a line without thinking of the source of my first praise."¹⁰ In the *Athenaeum*, April 6, 1833, Allan Cunningham noticed the poem favourably : "We open the book at random ; but fine things abound ; there is no difficulty in finding passages to vindicate our praise.....To one who sings so naturally,

9. Orr, *Life*, p. 102.

10. *Ibid*, p. 57.

poetry must be as easy as music is to a bird." There were two more contemporary notices, one of four unfavourable lines in the *Literary Gazette*¹¹ of March 23, and another in the *Tait's Edinburgh Magazine* of August, describing the poem as "a piece of pure bewilderment." It is noticeable that some of the views on Browning's poetry that became commonplaces of later criticism, viz., Browning's obscurity, his bias for psychological analysis, the influence of Shelley, appear already in these early reviews.

John Stuart Mill received one of a set of twelve copies of *Pauline* from Fox to whom the poet himself had sent the books. He read the poem four times through and prepared a notice for publication in one or other of the several journals to which he usually contributed. But the *Examiner* refused to insert the notice; *Tait's* was too overwhelmed with verses to afford more space than a flippant line by another reviewer. Till the end, Mill's criticism,¹² by far the most important statement on the poem, remained unpublished, even uncoordinated into a complete article. To F. J. Furnivall, Browning wrote in 1881 :

The pencil notes of John Mill which he meant to construct an article upon—till he found he had been forestalled by a flippant line in the Review (*Tait's Magazine*) which he was accustomed at the time to write for—are at the end of the copy of *Pauline* in Forster's Library at Kensington.

The subtle points of Mill's criticism will be discussed in later chapters; here the general estimate of the critic may be indicated.

With considerable poetic power, this writer seems to me possessed with a more intense and morbid self-consciousness

11. Orr, *Life*, p. 60n : "somewhat mystical, somewhat poetical, somewhat sensual, and not a little unintelligible,—this is a dreamy volume, without an object, and unfit for publication."

12. Mill's jottings have not been published in full. T. L. Hood in *Letters*, p. 366, quotes the long, continuous criticism of Mill. For the short, marginal comments, I have depended upon W. L. Phelps' "Notes on Browning's *Pauline*", MLN, May, 1932, pp. 297-98, which, according to DeVane, gives the fullest list of Mill's notes.

than I ever knew in any sane human being.....A cento of most beautiful passages might be made from this poem—and the psychological history of himself is powerful and truthful, truth-like certainly all but the last stage.

Years after the publication of *Pauline*, when the public had forgotten the poem and the poet had allowed the dust of anonymity to settle upon it, he one day received a letter from Dante Gabriel Rossetti whom he did not know at the time. Rossetti had come upon the book in the British Museum, read it through and copied the whole of it, guessed it to be Browning's work, and wrote to the poet for confirmation of his guess. Regarding this letter of Rossetti,¹³ Browning wrote to William Sharp from France in 1883 :

Rossetti's *Pauline* letter was addressed to me at Florence more than thirty years ago. I have preserved it, but even were I at home, should be unable to find it without troublesome searching. It was to the effect that the writer, personally and altogether unknown to me, had come upon a poem in the British Museum, which he copied the whole of, from its being not otherwise procurable—that he judged it to be mine, but could not be sure, and wished me to pronounce on the matter—which I did.

Two years after this correspondence, sometime between June and October, 1852, when the Brownings had returned to London for a while, they were visited at their 58, Welbeck Street home by "Mr. Allingham and a friend—who proved to be Rossetti."¹⁴ Relations between the two poets grew friendly as the letters of Browning to Rossetti dated Oct. 29, 1855, and

13. W. M. Rossetti gives the date of this letter as 1850 in *Dante Gabriel Rossetti, Letters and Memoir*, I, p. 115. This letter seems to be lost ; at least I have been unable to trace it anywhere in the records of Browning and Rossetti. References to this letter—all almost identically phrased—occur in (i) letter to William [Sharp, *Letters*, p. 220 ; (ii) W. M. Rossetti's *Some Reminiscences*, pp. 233-34 ; (iii) the *Memoir* letter, p. 115. Browning in the letter to Sharp remembers that the Rossetti-letter was addressed to him at Florence, while W. M. Rossetti says that Browning was then at Venice.

14. *Letters*, p. 320.

April 9, 1871, show ; but unfortunately, the publication of *Fifine At The Fair* in which Browning was alleged to have cast a fling at Rossetti's treatment in *Jenny* of the public-woman theme, made the younger poet so angry as to cut off the relations altogether.

Seldom has any author's distaste for his first work been so severe as Browning's for *Pauline*. The last sentence in his autograph note appended to the Forster copy of *Pauline* speaks eloquently of his early disillusion : "Only this crab remains of the shapely Tree of Life in this Fool's Paradise of mine." The distaste was so keen that even to Miss Barrett he was unwilling to show the work. The first mention of the poem by name in the Browning love letters is in Elizabeth's letter dated January 10, 1846, exactly a year after Robert wrote his first letter to her. Before this date, on February 26, 1845, Browning had, *en passant*, referred to the poem : "...is there not somewhere the little book I first printed when a boy..." In her reply, Miss Barrett enquires : "And was the little book written with Mr. Mill, pure metaphysics, or what?" The query remains unanswered, and there is no mention of *Pauline* until Elizabeth's letter referred to above : "Then I shall have '*Pauline*' in a day or two—yes, I shall and must, and will." Presumably, they had had a talk about the book, but Browning is unwilling to show it to her. The correspondence goes thus :

(R. B. to E. B. B., Jan. 12, 1846) Must you see '*Pauline*' ?

At least then let me wait a few days ; to correct the misprints which affect the sense, and to write you the history of it ; what is necessary you should know before you see it.

(E. B. B. to R. B., Jan. 14, '46) For '*Pauline*'—when I had named it to you I was on the point of sending for the book to the booksellers—then suddenly I thought to myself that I should wait and hear whether you very very much would dislike my reading it.....And now, because I may, I *must* read it'.

(R. B. to E. B. B., Jan. 15. '46) Will you, and must you have '*Pauline*' ? If I could pray you to revoke that decision !

For it is altogether foolish and *not* boylike—and I shall, I confess, hate the notion of running over it—yet commented it must be ; more than mere correction ! I was unluckily *precocious*—but I had rather you *saw* real infantine efforts (verses at six years old, and drawings still earlier) than this ambiguous, feverish—Why not wait ?

(E. B. B. to R. B., Jan. 17, '46) Only, 'Pauline', I must have *some day*—why not without the emendations ? But if you insist on them, I will agree to wait a little—if you promise *at last* to let me see the book, which I will not show.

(R. B. to E. B. B., Jan. '46) 'Pauline' is altogether of a different sort of precocity—you shall see it when I can master resolution to transcribe the explanation which I know is on the fly-leaf of a copy here.

(E. B. B. to R. B., Jan. 22, '46) And for 'Pauline'.....I am satisfied with the promise to see it some day....I seem to understand that you would really rather wish me not to see it now.

When three and a half decades after the first publication, *Pauline* was permitted by the poet to appear in a second edition in 1868, the poet's rooted aversion was unconcealed in the introductory note :

The first piece in the series, I acknowledge and retain with extreme repugnance, indeed purely of necessity ; for not long ago, I inspected one, and am certified of the existence of other transcripts, intended sooner or later to be published abroad : by forestalling these, I can at least correct some misprints (no syllable is changed) and introduce a boyish work by an exculpatory word. The thing was my earliest attempt at "poetry always dramatic in principle, and so many utterances of so many imaginary persons, not mine" which I have since written according to a scheme less extravagant and a scale less impracticable than were ventured upon in this crude preliminary sketch—a sketch that, on reviewal, appears not altogether wide of some hint of the characteristic features of that particular *dramatis persona* it would fain have reproduced : good draughtsmanship, however, and right handling were far beyond the artist at that time,

The same tone—at once punitory and apologetic—is audible in the introductory note to the 1888 edition.

Twenty years' endurance of an eyesore seems more than sufficient : my faults remain, duly recorded against me, and I claim permission to somewhat diminish these, so far as style is concerned, in the present and final edition where 'Pauline' must needs, first of my performances, confront the reader. I have simply removed solecisms, mended the metre a little, and endeavoured to strengthen the phraseology—experience helping, in some degree, the helplessness of juvenile haste and heat in their untried adventure long ago.

A type facsimile reprint of the first edition, limited to four hundred copies, was produced by T. J. Wise in 1886 for the members of the Browning Society. The Oxford edition of Standard Authors brings the 1833-text within easy reach of the public ; the 1940 edition, however, gives the 1888-text. N. Hardy Wallis in 1931 brought out an edition of the early text compared with the texts of 1868 and 1888.

The variant readings of the two later editions will be considered in Appendix iii.

CHAPTER TWO

TEXTUAL interpretation is the chief aim of the commentary in this chapter. At the same time, an attempt has been made to relate the thought and technique of *Pauline* with those of Browning's subsequent poetry, especially the poetry of the first phase, and also with the matter and manner of other poets, as for instance, the poets of the Romantic Revival.

The 1833 text has been followed throughout unless otherwise stated. For convenience, the 1833 text has been described as the A-text, the 1868 text as the B-text, and the 1888 text as the C-text.

LI. 1-27 : I must confess to you ; confession before so pure and calm a personality as yours must help me rid myself permanently of the sleepless brood of fancies that disturb me. The purity of your soul will guard you against contamination by these fancies. Unless I can ventilate these fancies, I cannot hope to sing ; Nature will abhor me.

COMMENTS : 3-“loosened hair”—cf. 926-27 ; cf. *Porphyria's Lover*, 18, “And all her yellow hair displaced” ; cf. also, D. G. Rossetti's *The Choice* (1) :

Then loose me, love, and hold
Thy sultry hair up from my face ;

9-“one so watched, so loved and so secured”—cf. *Paracelsus*, I, 635-36 : “so watched/By gentle friends”. 10-“naked”—unaffected. 13-“if”—even if.

20- “her secrets knelt”—cf. 1017, “unknown secrets will be trusted me” ; also, *Par.I*, 364, “earth shall yield her secrets up.”

18-23— ‘It is difficult to see the significance of these lines’ (Wallis, p. 75). The obscurity of the lines is due to the inconsistency of the imagery. The plain meaning stands thus : (If I do not confess) I shall prove myself a fiendish traitor to Nature from whom I received lavish enchantments and of whose

secrets I acquired knowledge (but whom I betrayed by sullyng my being with impure and tortuous fancies). This idea is elaborated by Browning thus: Nature would point at one (Pauline's lover) whose quivering lip was bathed in her (Nature's) enchantments, whose brow burned (confusion of metaphors here; lips are bathed and yet the brow burned) beneath the crown to which her secrets knelt (i. e., to whom, because he was a special favourite of Nature, the secrets of Nature¹⁵ were well-known), who learned the spell which can call up the dead (spell refers to nothing specific; his knowledge of Nature's enchantments is compared in respect of its subtlety to a magical spell that has the power to call up visions of the dead) and then departed like a fiend who has deceived God (an imperfect comparison; the lover's remorseless withdrawal from Nature's blandishments is compared to the hypothetical action of a fiend who deceives God). —Wallis (p. 75) identifies the lover with the fiend; his interpretation is forced and far-fetched.

Mill: 'Nature would point at one'—"Not I think an appropriate image and it throws considerable obscurity over the meaning of the passage".

Ll. 28-38: If I had sat by you from the first, without hiding any thought or hope from you, I would have been spared this shame of a spiritual confusion and the confession thereof.

COMMENTS: 31—"as an earnest of their truth" is obscure. Perhaps the poet meant: I wish I had dwelt with beauty and good, instead of with my dreams (dreams which may be regarded as the earnest of the thing itself) about them.

Mill: 36, 37—"Not even poetically grammatical".

Ll. 39-49: Though my tortuous fancies are past yet ghostly memories remain; but I can at least thoroughly purge

15. Wallis in his *Analytical Notes*, p. 75, asks: 'but what is the "crown" of Nature? Is it the power of the Almighty considered as over ruling natural law?'—I see no need of this metaphysical meaning. The crown, I think, implies the particular glory which is the Poet's because he enjoys the special favour of God.

my mind by an unrestrained confession. You love me ; I shall give you more than love,—faith ; in return, you will (by your graciousness) cover that form (of faith) which will rise to heights of music.

COMMENTS : 41—"lest a worse thing" etc.—If there be no absolutely sincere confession now, a worse state of tortuous fancies may ensue.

43—"thou art to receive not love but faith"—not *only* love but faith also. Faith in Pauline is conceived of as something higher than mere love for her.

44—"That form which music follows like a slave"—What does "that form" refer to ? Wallis (p. 76) would interpret it as referring rather to the poet than to Pauline. This latter interpretation might be admitted if the construction of the sentence were : (You will) veil without a fear the form that follows music like a slave. —But the text gives, "that form which music follows". I see no justification for Wallis' construction since in this poem the object is seldom placed before the verb. I prefer the following interpretation of the existing construction. —You will veil without a fear (protect by your beneficent love) that form (the faith that the lover offers in l.43) which is followed by music, *i.e.*, that purified faith which rises to such heights of poetic impulse that music spontaneously accompanies it¹⁶.

Ll. 50-54 : My present state is aimless, hopeless ; but your beauty has recovered for me some of my old feelings, and now I shall confess before you.

COMMENTS : 53—"The task which was to me what now thou art"—The task of self-analysis used to be a joy to me ;

16. For another reason also Wallis' interpretation is unacceptable. He writes (p. 76) : "He probably has characterised himself as the slave of music, because his love of it was one of the wild dreams in line 30."—L.30 actually runs as "my wild dreams of beauty and of good". We cannot force the line to mean a dream of a love of music.

now thou art the joy.—He has progressed from self-torment to the bliss of love.

- cf. 875— No less I feel that thou hast brought me bliss,
 1004-6 For this song shall remain to tell for ever
 That when I lost all hope of such a change,
 Suddenly Beauty rose on me again.

Ll. 55-88 : You will remember how one spring morning, while walking with you in the bare wood, I made a confession as feelings of my lowliness rushed upon me. Similar feelings have come to-day. Once I had an aim ; I was high, faithful, good ;—now I have fallen low, but gladly would I give up all to recapture my lost state of mind.

COMMENTS : 77-9—“I ne’er sung/But as one entering bright halls, where all/Will rise and shout for him”. cf.

- (1) Thou bethink thee, art
 A guest for queens to social pageantries,

to ply thy part
 Of chief musician. (*Sonnets from the Portuguese*, iii)
- (2) Thou hast thy calling to some palace floor,
 Most gracious singer of high poems ! (*Ibid*, iv)

81-“theirs”—refers to the throng who acclaimed him. Wallis (p. 76) is strangely uncertain about it.

Ll. 89-123 : My soul has become self-centred and has lost its freedom and strength. This ego-centricity caused my ideal to decay. (Browning presents this idea of corruption due to excessive isolationism by means of two images). (i) I was a fiend chained in the darkness of an ocean-cave ; a white swan—symbolizing purity—came to dwell with me ; ages rolled by, till at last, I realised that though to me the swan appeared white as ever, none the less its soft wings must have suffered change from the thick darkness. (ii) I was a witch whose beauty fascinated a god. After we had lived together a long time, the god grew less and less radiant, and one day he declared, “I am still a god to thee”.

COMMENTS : 99-111—The fiend-swan image¹⁷ is full of romantic remoteness and supernatural suggestion. "Fiend" is Browning's favourite ; cf. 18-23.

112-123—The witch-god image is clearer in outline than the previous image. The idea of a beautiful young witch tempting a god to corruption brings to mind Anatole France's Paphnutius-Thais story and Tagore's poem on the Fallen Woman (Patitā). Mill commented : 'A curious idealization of self-worship, very fine, though'.

LI. 124-150 : In laying bare my soul I shall reveal all the weaknesses and wanderings of my career. And if I can get rid of these weaknesses, I shall gladly give up all that I had hitherto gained as one gives up a charm which shuts him out from hope or part or care in humankind. In compensation for this renunciation, I shall be able to enjoy the beauties of Nature. Passing thus from introspection to appreciation of the world outside, I shall cherish better the memory of my early life which did not know the fever and the stir of after years. I could not hope to acquire such a power of enjoyment had I not felt the glow of Shelley's poetry.

COMMENTS : 129-30—How to progress from individualistic isolation to a relation with the world beyond the Self, is the invariable personal problem of every Romantic poet.

140—"The fever and the stir of after years"—cf.

fretful stir

Unprofitable, and the fever of the world. (Wordsworth)

The weariness, the fever and the fret. (Keats)

142—"His"—clearly refers to Shelley¹⁸. Wallis is in doubt : 'To whom does "His" refer' ? His doubt may be on account of

17. In his note on *Calvary* (*Four Plays for Dancers*), Yeats says that certain birds, "especially lonely birds such as the heron, hawk, eagle, and swan, are the natural symbols of subjectivity". With Yeats, the swan is the solitary soul : "the swan has leaped into the desolate heaven". (*Nineteen Hundred and Nineteen in The Tower*).

18. See also Berdoe, *Cyclopaedia*, p 331.

the capital 'H'. Mill also had queried : 'What does this mean' ? Browning wrote under the query : 'The award of fame to him, the late acknowledgement of Shelley's genius'¹⁹.

144-47—Shelley is described as one whom all honour, whose renown springs up like sunlight which will visit the whole world. It is surprising to hear that in 1833, Shelley's renown visited all the world, particularly when we remember what difficulties Browning himself, a few years back, had experienced in procuring a copy of the works of Shelley.

147-48—"some dark spider crawls /From his foul nets"—cf. spider-films", *Par.* III, 79 ; cf. "adventurous spider...shoots her threads", *Sordello*, I, 665.

On the spider image of l.147, Mill commented : 'A bad simile, the spider does not detest or scorn the light'.

Ll. 151-205 : O Shelley, the sun-treader ! life and light be yours for ever. Spring returns, other bards sing, but your incomparable songs have ceased for ever. Now as in the past, I mix creatures of my own fancy with your dim creations. It gave me a joyful surprise to know that you might be worshipped also by others ; at the same time I regretted that I no longer enjoyed the distinction of being your sole worshipper. Ah, Sun-treader, could I but see you in life once !

COMMENTS : Wallis rightly says (p. 77) that this passage is 'refreshing in its directness of diction and clarity of expression'.

164-170—"beautiful' (Mill). 172-180—"most beautiful' (Mill).

202-5—"To have seen thee for a moment as thou art".

cf. Ah, did you once see Shelley plain,

And did he stop and speak to you,

And did you speak to him again ?

How strange it seems and new ! (*Memorabilia*)

Ll. 206-229 : Ah, poet, you can never die ; your spirit lives. Now that your proud renown is out, I find how much lower

19. *MLN*, May, 1932, p. 296

I am than you ; shapes which followed you, avoid me, and foul forms seek me. Nevermore shall I enjoy your melodious imaginings, but I shall worship you from a distance.

COMMENTS : 218—"One gleam still remains"—the gleam of love for Shelley which the poet still retains although he has gone down spiritually.

213-218—"The obscurity of this is the greater fault as the meaning if I can *guess* it right is really poetical' (Mill). There is no obscurity in the idea.—The noble poetic spirit of Shelley used to be attended upon by adoring mystic shapes ; such shapes do not follow me, an admirer of Shelley, but instead, foul forms seek me. They seek me because I possess neither Shelley's excellence in poetry nor his purity of thought ; I am haunted by a "sleepless brood of fancies" (l.6).—There is however, a coalescence of imagery. Shapes *follow*, but foul forms *fasten* on the mind ; he aims not to *catch a tone* of Shelleyan harmonies, but one *gleam* still remains.

221—"Thy sweet imaginings are as an air"—Shelleyan.

227-9—"I am a watcher whose eyes have grown dim/With looking for some star"—cf. 'Then felt I like some watcher of the skies' (Keats). The star²⁰ is a frequent symbol of constancy and transcendental aspiration in Browning. Cf.,

<i>Pauline,</i>	171 :	thou wert as a star to men.
	292 :	But I have always had one lode star,
	14-15 :	some wild thought which, but for me, were kept From out thy soul, as from a sacred star.
	253-5 :	As a lean scholar dies, worn o'er his book, And in the heaven the stars steal out one by one, As hunted men steal to their mountain watch.

20. I regret that owing to war-conditions, I have been unable to see C. Willard Smith's *Browning's Star-imagery*, Princeton Studies in English, 1941, of which I find a review by W. O. Raymond in *MLN*, March, 1943, pp. 237-38.

- 360-1 : My life has not been that of those whose heaven
Was lampless.....
- 371-2 : and they go on
while stars look at them, and winds call to
them,
- 402-3 : as one should wander o'er
The white way for a star.
- 917-8 : And a star left his peers and came with peace
Upon a storm, and all eyes pined for him.
- Paracelsus*, I,66 : As if, where'er you gazed, there stood a star !
- I,527 : But to become a star to men for ever.
- I,557 : What was a speck expands into a star.
- II,425 : ...sapphirine spirit of a twilight star.
- V,746 : here and there a star dispels/The darkness.
- V,889-90 : As from the over-radiant star too mad
To drink the life-springs, beamless thence
itself.
- Strafford*, II,ii : with one star for guide.
- Sordello*, I,174 : as a plunging star,/Agrees to enter for the
kindest ends.
- I,349 : A herald-star I know thou didst absorb...
- My Star* : All that I know
Of a certain star
Is, it can throw
(Like the angled spar)
Now a dart of red,
Now a dart of blue.....
- Popularity* : You rise, remember one man saw you,
Knew you, and named a star !
My star, God's glow-worm !

LI. 230-59 : Autumn has returned. Here am I the scoffer,
the prover of life's vanity, restored to calmness by the sweet
sympathy of Pauline. I shall sing today as fast as fancies
come so that I may be linked more closely to Pauline ; the
verse shall be as rude as the mood it paints.

COMMENTS : 230-31—"Spring returned to us,/Won from her girlishness"—cf., "April, April, laugh thy girlish laughter" (William Watson). "Girlishness" seems to have been a new word formed by Browning²¹. 235—"the old smile"—cf., *Par.*, I,35. 239—"sweet friend"—Pauline.

246-49-

we shall be

But closer linked—two creatures whom the earth
Bears singly—with strange feelings, unrevealed
But to each other ;

This is comparable with the twin-souls idea of *Epipsychidion* ;
cf., also Rossetti's *The Birth-Bond* :

Have you not noted, in some family
Where two were born of a first marriage-bed,

...

...

each

Shall for the other have, in silence speech,
And in a word complete community ?

253—"As a lean scholar dies, worn o'er his book"—cf. the Grammarian ; cf. *Paracelsus*, I,745 : "And men have oft grown old among their books". Browning probably had in mind the story of the German scholar Jacobus Milichius as narrated in Nathaniel Wanley's *Wonders of the Little World*. (W. T. Young's *Select Poems from Browning*, pp. 224-25).

LI. 260-312 : I shall analyse the constituent elements of my mind as they were in the middle of my career. The three chief elements were : (a) an intense and clear idea of consciousness of self ; (b) a principle of restlessness which would be all, have, see, know, taste, feel all ; (c) an imagination which comes not in a fitful vision but is beside me ever and never fails me. A mind constituted of these elements must dissipate itself, but fortunately, I have always been guided by a lode-star, *i.e.*, by my yearning for God. I realise that I can love nothing, but none the less, a sensuous apprehension of the affection of Pauline fills the want of that love.—These are the elements that make my self.

COMMENTS : 260-67—Mill's comment : "This only says you shall see what you shall see—has more prose than poetry".

274—"existing as a centre to all things"—cf. *Par.*, I, 728—"There is an inmost centre in us all".

277—"principle of restlessness"—This the poet-lover considers to be his besetting fault.

284-87—Griffin suggests (*Life*, p. 33) that one of the reasons why Browning hated Mr Ready's school was 'the restraint put upon his imaginative faculties, for Browning was, as a boy, possessed of an imagination which was an "angel" to him.

290—"calling/The dark past up—to quell it regally"—cf, *Alastor*, 629—"images of the majestic past".

291-309—Reference to his yearning for and trust in God. In spite of Browning's effervescent romanticism at this stage of life he does not begin his career with any denial of or indifference to God.

303-4—"I can only lay it to the fruit/Of a sad after-time"—This must be a reference to the period of Shelleyan atheism.

310-12- And I can love nothing—and this dull truth
 Has come the last—but sense supplies a love
 Encircling me and mingling with my life.

—Odd statement this. But there is really no contradiction between this and the previous (ll.1-5) and the forthcoming (l.860) professions of love for Pauline. Here he says that his disturbing experiences have benumbed his soul's capacity for loving ; nevertheless, he has the power to feel sensuously the loving contact of Pauline.

Ll. 313-393 : So these are the elements that govern my being ; an intense consciousness, restlessness, never-failing imagination. I do not know how they came to be associated but ever since my youth I have found them moulding my conduct. I shall now describe what course these elements have taken. (-317) Their influence was palpable even in early youth. My youth was passed with the wisest of ancient books, the classics of Greece. (-335) It is strange that I who dreamed so gloriously with the classics could have stooped so low, but

even when I deviated from the ideals inspired by them, I was aware of a vague sense of their influence. (-343) After this I underwent changes, loathsome changes which caused my mind to turn against itself. There came cunning, envy, falsehood, all worldly wrongs : at length I succeeded in regaining peace. (-356) As peace returned, I sought some pursuit and found it in music. I am not one whose whole interest is concentrated in poesy alone, I know the power of music also. I sang ; I had an impulse for song but no yearning. (-376) At first my songs were thoughtless ; then I sought to know what other minds had achieved. In the compositions of great musicians I found much that accorded with my own ideas ; at the same time I had my original creations in music. (-393)

COMMENTS : 318-319- "my first dawn of life,/ Which passed alone with wisest ancient books"—Browning made excellent use of his father's library. In *Development*, he describes his initiation into classical studies :

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 ?'

Whereat

He piled up chairs and tables for a town,
Set me a-top for Priam, called our cat
—Helen, enticed away from home (he said)
By wicked Paris, who couched somewhere close
Under the footstool, being cowardly,
But whom —since she was worth the pains, poor puss—
Towzer and Tray,—our dogs, the Atreidai,—sought
By taking Troy to get possession of.
—Always when great Achilles ceased to sulk,
(My pony in the stable)—forth would prance
And put to flight Hector—our page-boy's self.
I his taught me who was who and what was what :

Some of the books which Browning read as a boy and a lad, according to Mrs. Orr (*Life*) and Griffin and Minchin (*Life*),

are : Quarles' *Emblems* ; the first edition of *Robinson Crusoe* ; the first edition of Milton's works ; an early copy of Bernard de Mandeville's *Fable of the Bees* ; Walpole's *Letters* ; the letters of Junius ; the works of Voltaire (read with his French tutor M. Loradoux who also introduced the boy to Clement Marot) ; Odes of Horace, translated by Christopher Smart (the book was a gift of Uncle Reuben's) ; *Encheiridion* of Epictetus (Uncle Reuben's gift) ; the 1778 edition of *The Art of Painting in all its Branches* by Gerard de Lairese ; *Lives of the Painters* by Vasari ; Pilkington's *Dictionary of Painters* ; the *Diary* of George Bubb Doddington, the 18th. C. time-server ; Daniel Bartoli's works (Browning's Italian tutor, Angelo Cerutti, prepared an edition of Bartoli's *Simboli*) ; *The Wonders of the Little World* by Nathaniel Wanley, the 17th.C. divine ; *Biographie Universelle*, fifty volumes : "One would almost surmise that he had read its fifty volumes through" (Griffin, *Life*, p. 25) ; *Anacreontis et Supphonis carmina* (the elder Browning's school-book, also bears the son's signature, 1826) ; the *Iliad* ; Pope's *Homer*.

321-325 : *A god wandering after beauty*—'Apollo seeking Daphne' (Berdoe's *Cyclopaedia*, p. 331). *A giant standing vast in the sunset*—'Atlas, one of the Titans, is referred to here'. (*ibid*) *A high-crested.....Tenedos*—Refers to the Greek chiefs among whom was Nestor, who set sail for the island of Tenedos after the fall of Troy (*ibid*). *Old hunter talking with gods*—cf., *Par.*, II, 422-23 : "ancient hunter lifted/Up to the gods by his renown."

—It was perhaps passages of such beauty that evoked the enthusiasm of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood. "We felt Browning to exceed all the others in the dramatic, romantic, and picturesque qualities". (*Some Reminiscences*, W.M. Rossetti, p. 233) Also cf. W. B. Yeats :

Infirm and aged I might stay
In some good company,
I who have always hated work,
Smiling at the sea,

Or demonstrate in my own life
 What Robert Browning meant
 By an old hunter talking with Gods ;
 But I am not content. (*Are You Content in Last Poems*)

330-335- Yet, I say, never morn broke clear as those
 On the dim clustered isles in the blue sea ·
 The deep groves, and white temples, and white caves—
 And nothing ever will surprise me now —
 Who stood beside the naked Swift-footed,
 Who bound my forehead with Proserpine's hair.

The dim clustered...sea—‘the islands of the Aegean sea, east of Greece’./ (Berdoe) *The naked Swift-footed*—‘Hermes, the name of Mercury among the Greeks.’ (*ibid*).

From early youth, Browning was strongly attracted towards Greek life and literature. Three of his longer works are devoted to Greek themes: *Balaustion's Adventure*; *Aristophanes' Apology*; *The Agamemnon of Aeschylus*; but these works are, in the main, translations of an unorthodox kind. His study of Greek tragedians, especially of Euripides, influenced the construction of *The Inn Album*. Yet the major bulk of his poetry gives scant evidence of that absorption in Hellenism which is the prevailing feature of the poetry of Landor and Swinburne. Imagery based upon Greek legends and myths are infrequent in Browning; most of his poems on Greek themes show a deliberately unhellenic treatment of subject-matter. In *Parleying With Gerard de Lairese*, Browning positively advocates the treatment of modern themes in a realistic fashion, and as W. C. DeVane²² plausibly suggests, Browning's latter-day anti-hellenism was perhaps directed against the Pre-Raphaelites (Morris and Swinburne) and Matthew Arnold. Like his own Fra Lippo Lippi who advanced over the Greeks in methods of painting, Browning claims

22. *Browning's Parleyings, The Autobiography of a Mind*; New Haven, 1927, Ch VI. A thorough study of the Greek influence in Browning has been made by T. L. Hood in *Browning's Classical Sources* in "Harvard studies in Classical Philology," 1922.

to have improved upon the fanciful methods of Gerard de Lairese,—his is an advance in realism, and it is an advance upon his own early delight in Greek themes as well :

Bearded experience bears not to be duped
Like boyish fancy...

(*Gerard de Lairese*, 43-44)

The romantic young poet who "stood beside the naked Swift-footed" and "bound his forehead with Proserpine's hair" in *Pauline*, changes into the realistic poet of *Hohenstiel-Schwangau* and *The Inn Album*.

342—"tho' those shadowy times were past"—'What times ? Your own imaginative time ? or the antique times themselves ?' (Mill) Clearly, the poet refers to the shades and times of ancient Greece.

352—"I was restored" -cf. *Par.* II, 138 : "Purging my path".

344-356—These lines refer to the changes that came over Pauline's lover. Browning speaks a good deal of the poet-lover's ailments but nowhere does he give any concrete and precise description or explanation of these changes, restraints, losses, deeds, cleansings. No doubt, the poet is more interested in the development of the soul than in the incidents that contribute to that development ; even so, the result is an undeniable vagueness of effect. Griffin and Minchin comment thus on these lines (p. 32) : "What justification Browning had for his self-accusation, and how far this is to be taken literally, cannot be exactly determined : but it would be a great mistake to dismiss his avowal as wholly due to the play of fancy". They then suggest that the cunning might have consisted of caricatures, epigrams, a theatrical troupe or a visit after sundown to the loved elms on the Camberwell hilltop. With the self-loathing of these lines, compare *Par.*, I, 507-511.

352-56- at length I was restored,
Yet long the influence remained ; and nought
But the still life I led, apart from all,
Which left my soul to seek its old delights,
Could e'er have brought me thus far back to peace.

of the allurements of music. Moreover, if we judge *Pauline* as largely an autobiographical record, the statement that he had "no wish to paint" is not correct. During his school-days, Browning was fond of "making pen-and-ink caricatures, which he did very cleverly", and when reminded of the fact in later years, he remarked that he "had always envied the life of an artist".²⁴

383-88- This early contact with English poets was acquired through the sixty-two volumes of the 1807 edition of Bagster's English Poets.²⁵

390-92- Refer to the imitative period of Browning's poetical career.

Ll. 394-440 : I was outgrowing my boyhood. I dreamed not of restraint but gazed on all things. Schemes and systems went and came. Wandering through the field of philosophy, I attached myself to Plato (-403), not to any particular system. Plato is to mankind as Pauline is to me ; calm as beauty, winning mankind back to peace. The lofty ideals and visions of a new world which went forth from Plato inspired me powerfully ; I felt that men were to be as gods and earth to be as heaven. Ah, I shall go mad if I recall those days (-429). Subsequently, those days deceived me ; but while I lived with Plato I was full of bliss because I thought I had the key to life. I could not content myself with any particular philosophical position.

COMMENTS : 404—"On one, whom praise of mine would not offend,"—It is difficult to say whom Browning means. Is it Shelley or is it Plato ? "To whom does this "one" refer ? Is it another eulogy of Shelley ?" (Wallis, p. 79) Hall Griffin also quotes this passage as indicating how accurately Browning has described the advent of Shelley in his sixteenth year. "And woven with them were words"—*them* referring to *songs* is Shelleyan. The C-text gives "song-inwoven," a compound

24. *Life*, Griffin, p. 12, p. 30.

25. *Ibid*, p. 41.

structurally reminiscent of Shelley's "star-inwrought" (*To Night*). The enthusiastic temper revealed in "I shall go mad, if I recall that time" (l.428) reminds the reader of Wordsworth's lines :

Bliss was it in that dawn to be alive,
But to be young was very heaven ; (*Prelude*, X, 693-4)

Again, ll.425-26,

Men were to be as gods, and earth as heaven,
And I—ah ! what a life was mine to be,

draw their inspiration as much from *Hellas*,

Through the sunset of hope,
Like the shades of a dream,
What paradise islands of glory gleam !
Beneath heaven's cope,
Their shadows more clear float by—
The sound of their oceans, the light of their sky,
The music and fragrance their solitudes breathe,
Burst like morning on dream, or like heaven on death,
Through the walks of our prison.

as from the following lines of *Prelude*,

.....but the whole earth
The beauty wore of promise, that which sets,
To take an image which was felt, no doubt,
Among the bowers of paradise itself,
.....
What temper at the prospect did not wake
To happiness unthought of ? (Book X, 702-8)

Expressions such as "passion's melodies" (410) and "gather every breathing of his songs" (412) make it likely that the reference is to Shelley. I tend nevertheless to believe that Plato is meant, on the following grounds : (a) the trend of thought in these lines differs from that in the Shelley-passage, ll.151-205 ; (b) in l. 435 Plato is named, "who had the key to life", and l.414 speaks of "a key to a new world" ; (c) l.404 (C-text), "Not so much on a system as a man" applies better to Plato than to Shelley ; (d) "the whole of his conceptions dawned on me" (ll.418-419) strengthens the presumption in favour of Plato.

LI.440-468 : Inspired thus by Platonic visions, I began to study mankind's cares, hopes, fears, joys and woes. I sought an end that would comprise every joy. Then I became disillusioned of my dreams. I lost (i) my hopes of perfecting mankind, (ii) faith in perfection, freedom, virtue, (iii) my motives and ends, (iv) human love. In their place came powers of wit, mockery and light-heartedness.

COMMENTS : Regarding this loss of hope, faith, and insight, Stewart Walker Holmes²⁶ points out how Jung also speaks in *Psychological Types* of the introvertive feeling striving after an inner intensity.

443—"so them I left"—one of the rare examples of the object placed before the verb.

448-449- I said, 'twas beautiful,
 Yet but a dream ; and so adieu to it.

—G.R.Elliott²⁷ suggests that Browning probably had this verse in mind when, fifty-six years later, the speaker in *Development* describing how Wolf's *Prolegomena* and its successors had unsettled his boyish attitude towards the Greeks, said :

—though Wolf—ah, Wolf !

Why must he needs come doubting, spoil a dream ?
But then 'No dream's worth waking'—Browning says.

(82-84)

450-51- As some world-wanderer sees in a far meadow
 Strange towers, and walled gardens, thick with trees,

cf. 612-14- Some wide country, where the eye can see
 No end to the far hills and dales bestrewn
 With shining towers and dwellings.

LI.469-504 : I felt my powers had grown greater. In spite of my knowledge of the nothingness of life, the light-heartedness of my spirit stood as the only screen between joy and despair.

COMMENTS : The idea has been presented by means of a long image, 469-487. Mill commented on this : 'This.....is

26. *Browning's Sordello and Jung, PMLA, LVI, p. 773.*

27. *Shakespeare's significance for Browning, Anglia, 1909, p. 76n.*

finely painted, and evidently from experience'. Mill's expression 'evidently from experience' is odd. Surely, he could not have meant actual experience, since it would be absurd to suppose that Browning passed through a temple and saw a troop of shadows kneel to him and experienced all those fantastic things ! If, however, Mill meant imaginative experience, then the comment is superfluous. This passage shows the romantic cast of Browning's youthful imagination. Shadows,—not ghosts or witches, it seems, but demons perhaps,—obeying a man as their king, is an idea that belongs more to Eastern tales than European. I believe this picture of a dark spirit hailed by troops of shadows was inspired by a memory (however dim) of some story that he had read in the Arabian Nights' Tales. Biographical records do not include these tales among the readings of Browning, but it is not too wild to hazard a guess that Browning found them in the strangely-assorted book-collection of his father, and that the boy who read Nathaniel Wanley, the romance of *Renowned History of the Seven Champions of Christendom*, *Palmerin of England*, and other romances, read the famous Eastern tales as well. For another example of this interest in the Arabian romance, see *Paracelsus*, IV, 589-596 :

The serviceable spirits are those, no doubt,
The East produces : lo, the master bids,—
They wake, raise terraces and garden-grounds
In one night's space, and, this done, straight begin
Another century's sleep, to the great praise
Of him that framed them wise and beautiful,
Till a lamp's rubbing, or some chance akin,
Wake them again

479—"As Arab birds float sleeping in the wind"—"This is considered by some to refer to the pelican, by others to the Birds of Paradise'. (Berdoe)

502-3—"Like that morn/Which wasted not a sunbeam"—cf., "Oh, Day, if I squander a wavelet of thee....." (*Pippa Passes*, 13).

LI. 504-559 : The state of the speaker's mind is highly disturbed in this section. Hopes and fears succeed each other violently. The trend of the thought goes thus : Wit, mockery, and happiness ("light-heartedness" in the C-text), referred to in 462-68, have sobered down the transcendental Platonic visions. Now he knows that the life of a man of genius becomes sad when he forsakes the peace and delight of truth for the sake of some purpose which has been evoked by false fancy but which soon proves itself to be vain. He will no longer deal with abstract ideas but will devote himself to the praise and love of men (525), and that will testify to his poetic abilities. In the solitude of night, he thinks that his words will have a tremendous influence on mankind (536) but disillusion comes again with daylight and he knows that sneers will await even this poetry (542). He was foremost in the struggle for poetic fame and glory, wishing to win the prostrate worship of others, but at the same time he knew that the blight of public neglect was the fate of Shelley whom he never dreams of rivalling.

COMMENTS : 515—"But I shall never lose her"—Whom or what does "her" refer to ?—"All joy" (or "truth's peace", C-text) of l. 509 or "delight" (511) ? I think it is "all joy". In the C-text, ll. 506-515²⁸ go thus :

I said, the troubled life	506
Of genius seen so <i>bright</i> when working forth	
Some trusted end, <i>seems</i> sad, when all <i>in</i> vain—	
<i>Most</i> sad, when men have parted with <i>all</i> joy	
For <i>their wild</i> fancy's sake, which waited first,	510
As an obedient spirit, when delight	
Came <i>not with her a'one</i> , but alters soon,	
<i>Coming</i> darkened, seldom, <i>hasting</i> to depart,	
Leaving a heavy darkness and warm tears,	
But I shall never lose her ;.....	515

—The obscurity of these lines arises in the first place from the uncertainty of "which" (510). Does it refer to "all joy" or

28. I have italicised the verbal variations. The 1868-text is the same as the 1833-text except for changes in the punctuation.

to "wild fancy"? In the second place, what is the nominative of "alters" (512)? I think in both cases the answer is "wild fancy". Before the man of genius parts with all joy, this wild fancy waits as an obedient spirit; delight then comes spontaneously without fancy's call. But this obedient behaviour of wild fancy alters soon; it so dominates the mind of man that joy now comes to him darkened, seldom, and at last, departs altogether. The poet-lover resolves not to lose joy, he must act differently from other men.

The C-text runs thus :

I said, 'The troubled life	506
'Of genius, seen so <i>gay</i> when working forth	
'Some trusted end, <i>grows</i> sad when all <i>proves</i> vain—	
' <i>How</i> sad when men have parted with <i>truth's</i> <i>peace</i>	
'For <i>falsest</i> fancy's sake, which waited first	510
'As an obedient spirit when delight	
'Came <i>without</i> <i>fancy's</i> <i>call</i> : but alters soon,	
'Comes darkened, seldom, <i>hastens</i> to depart,	
'Leaving a heavy darkness and warm tears.	
'But I shall never lose her ;...	515

The most significant changes in the later edition are "truth's peace" and "without fancy's call". The epithet "falsest" emphasizes the contrast between truth and false fancy. The idea of truth is not indicated in the earlier text which therefore wants precision.

520-21—"let them fade/Untold—others shall rise as fair"—"them" and "others" refer to "bright sights" of l.519.

522—"The few dim gleams transferred"—gleams of conceptions transferred from my mind to poetic composition.

526- "So"- Browning's use of "so" in this poem deserves notice. It has been used at least 45 times in course of 1031 lines of the poem, and it has borne several meanings. Mill commented, 'This writer seems to use *so* according to the colloquial vulgarism, in the sense of *therefore* or *accordingly*—from which occasionally comes great obscurity and ambiguity'. To this remark, Browning wrote a rejoinder in the Mill-copy

of *Pauline*, 'The recurrence of *so* thus employed is as vulgar as you please : but the usage itself...is perfectly authorized'.²⁹ Some illustrations of the multiple use of "*so*" are :—

(i) in such a manner—

(9) To one so watched, so loved and so secured,

(ii) in such a condition—

(499-500) So a long summer morn/Found me ;

(iii) to such an extent—

(12-13) Thou art so good,/So calm

(iv) therefore—

(71) And so I told thee all,

(258) So I will sing on—fast as fancies come

(287) So, tho' my mind/Forgets not

(v) in order that—

(523-26) that it were well.....to weave such lays...So I should not die utterly—

(608-9) I would have but one/Delight on earth, so it were wholly mine ;

(vi) similar—

(189-90) So/Wert thou to me—and art thou to the world.

(vii) thus—

(487-8) So, I stood there/Smiling

(339) So, as I grew, I rudely shaped my life

(ix) used indefinitely at the beginning of a sentence—

(971-72) So when spring comes,/And sunshine comes again like an old smile,

(777-8) So, at length, a silver thread/It winds,

For some examples of this individual use of "*so*" in *Paracritus*, see Bk. II, 1482 ; III, 46 ; III, 178 ; III, 365 ; III, 476 ; III, 425 ; IV, 278 ; IV, 461 ; IV, 495 ; IV, 632 ; V, 66 ; V, 208 ; V, 549.

526-28- So I should not die utterly—I should bring
One branch from the gold forest, like the knight
Of old tales, witnessing I had been there,

29. Notes to *Letters*, p. 366.

—"Gold forest" is a symbol for poetry which might have had its source in some romantic tale he had read in his father's excellent library. Other lines of a similar romantic flavour are :

Pauline, 1026-7 : For I seem dying, as one going in the dark
To fight a g'ant.

Paracelsus, I, 474-76 : Like some knight traversing a wilderness,
Who, on his way, may chance to free a tribe
Of desert people from their dragon-foe ;

Strafford, II, ii, 174-5 : You need not turn a page of the romance
To learn the Dreadful Giant's fate.

" II, ii, 40-1 : I, soon to rush
Alone upon a giant in the dark,

537-8— but morn
Came and the mockery again laughed out

cf,

Red morning dawned upon his flight,
Shedding the mockery of its vital hues
Upon his cheek of death

(*Alastor*, 237-39)

540-41— And my soul's idol seemed to whisper me
To dwell with him and his unhonoured name—

—Wallis (p. 79) suggests that the soul's idol whispering to the Lover may refer to a vision of fame. But up till now in the poem, the vision of fame has not been described. The phrase "soul's idol", I suggest, must refer to a man, and that man is Shelley. Realising the hollowness and mockery of praise and sneers, the poet-lover desires to give up the pursuit of worldly success. He will secure only one branch from the gold forest of poetry and will then dwell with his "soul's idol" and his unhonoured name. *Sneers* (539) echoes *they who sneered at him* (l. 146—the Shelley passage) ; unhonoured name also clearly alludes to the coldness of the public towards Shelley, referred to in the great Shelley passage, particularly, ll. 157, 168-70. The last

three lines (C-text) of the present section³⁰ are a clinching evidence that the reference is to Shelley :

I to rise and rival him ?
Feed his fame rather from my heart's best blood,
Wither unseen that he may flourish still.

Cf., 202-5 : E'en in my wildest dreams,
I am proud to feel I would have thrown up all
The wreaths of fame which seemed o'erhanging me,
To have seen thee, for a moment, as thou art.

Ll.560-587 : Pauline, before you came, I was defiant of all opinions. I had grown happy because my old delights had come to me, my delight in music and in the lore of mythology. For example, I was nourished by the story of Agamemnon. You loved me, Pauline, and when I tried to choose an early feeling of mine comparable to this passion (love for you), I found that I had been much changed and had lost all my early faith.

COMMENTS :—566-67- old lore/Loved for itself, and all it shows,

cf., (*Endymion*, 22)—All lovely tales that we have heard or read.

567-576—This is the famous Agamemnon passage. Wallis (p. 80) writes : 'The "king" is probably Agamemnon'. It is not merely probable but actually so. Cf. Browning's letter to T. J. Wise, Nov. 5, 1886 :

The 'king' is Agamemnon, in the Tragedy of that name by Aeschylus, whose treading in purple carpets spread before him by his wife, preparatory to his murder, is a notable passage. 'The boy' is Orestes, as described at the end of *Choephori*, by the same Author. (*Letters*, p. 256).

Browning's habit of drawing word-pictures and giving poetic versions of pictures was, I believe, one of the qualities

30. L. 546 speaks of "our idols." This generalisation is continued in the next few lines ; "them, whom" (548), "equal them" (557), "feed their fame" (558). The C-text alters these generalisations into a specific allusion to Shelley by using the third person.

which attracted Dante Rossetti and other Pre-Raphaelites to his poetry. If less finished in outline than Keats' 'pictures', Browning's are eloquent with a greater degree of fervour. The elaborate 'pictures' of *Pauline* compare favourably with the 'pictures' in *Paracelsus* and *Sordello*. It is notable that in the dramatic monologues, where the poetic form requires that pictorial suggestions should be brief and incidental to the human passion, elaborate word-pictures are seldom to be found. But when from the Seventies on, Browning resorted to the narrative and argumentative form of verse, elaborate word-pictures appeared once again. *Fifine At The Fair* and some of the *Parleyings* give emphatic evidence of the poet's pictorial powers. The only poem of the middle period where we have sustained pictures for their own sake, is *Christmas-Eve and Easter-Day*.

W. C. DeVane has argued convincingly³¹ that it was Gerard de Laireesse's book, *The Art of Painting in All its Branches*, that taught Browning "how to create landscapes in imagination." Browning's ideas on the Beautiful and the Horrible can be traced to the same source.

Browning's later theory of Art advanced farther than Laireesse's who "abjures the modern and the realistic, and clings to the emblematic and allegorical".³²

Bearded experience bears not to be duped

Like boyish fancy.....

(*Parleying with Gerard de Laireesse*, 43-4)

A strong sense of actuality stimulated Browning to a realistic conception of Art which has been magnificently presented in *Fra Lippo Lippi*. In *Pauline*, however, our poet is still spell-bound by the theories of Laireesse, and provides us with, not symbolical but ideal, landscapes.

583—"morn-blush"—cf., "even-blush" (*Paracelsus*, I, 109).

31. *Browning's Parleyings*, Ch. VI.

32. *Ibid*, p. 219.

585-87-

I will tell

My state as though 'twere none of mine—despair
 Cannot come near me—thus it is with me.

—He endeavours to attain to a dispassionate, analytical state of mind that does not deal with despair, that does not, in fact, *feel* any emotion at all ; he would rather anatomize the emotion. This introvertive attitude of the mind is one of Browning's contributions to English poetry.

Lt.588-654 : Souls do not alter, and my soul must advance always. I cannot stifle the manifold impulses, tendencies, desires of my soul. My selfishness is insatiable. I wish I could pursue a single aim, one joy that would be wholly mine. Unable to acquire such a singleness of purpose, I fondly hope that in old age at least, when much will be quenched, I shall be able to concentrate upon a single aim. This restlessness of passion takes the form of a craving for knowledge, but I have chained the craving and have submitted myself to old delights, and I am proud that I have chained it. Earthly life cannot be my only sphere ; there is antagonism between my love and reason. Love necessarily must be induced by an earthly object. Reason, on the contrary, is chainless, and therefore, the power of reason is greater than that of love. Though love is of a finer element than reason, yet because of its mundane associations, love fails to acquire truth, while reason succeeds. Hence if love tries to transcend reason, it must fail. At the same time, this deficiency of love warps my personality. Formerly, I could forget myself in friendship, fame, liberty, admiration for mighty minds, but now I have begun to know what hate is. I hate my weaknesses, I hate the weak and ever-wavering will, selfishness, and the still-decaying frame.

COMMENTS : 588—"Souls alter not and mine must progress still"—The essential power of the soul does not change ; at the same time, the condition of the soul is not static or finite, it advances through a series of tendencies, and feelings.

590—"My youth's chief aims"—What these aims are is far from clear. The poet-lover has alluded to aims so often (or rather

has spoken of so many shiftings of aims) without actually explaining them that the reader is reasonably apt to be confounded. I believe, he refers here to the aims and ends mentioned in 458-461, viz., hopes of perfecting mankind, faith in mankind, faith in freedom, in virtue, and finally, love for mankind.

592—"behold the change of all"—He speaks of "change" times without number. These constant references to aims and changes show that he has indeed experienced some spiritual instability and turmoil, but he has not enough intellectual clarity to be able to differentiate the nature of one change from another. It is not, in fact, a series of aims and changes that he would impress upon us but only a few ; he repeats himself so often that there is a superficial impression of many aims and changes.

595- "strange powers and feelings and desires"— The uncertainty in naming the sensation is repeated in l.600 : "some state of life unknown".

606—"To elevate a sect"—this was altered in the C-text to "To elevate an aim". Sectarianism never drew admiration from Browning. Cf. Elizabeth's letter :

I felt unwilling, for my own part, to put on any of the liveries of the sects. The truth, as God sees it, must be something so different from these opinions about truth—these systems which fit different classes of men like their coats, and wear brown at the elbows always !

(*The Browning Love Letters*, II, p. 429)

601-2— My selfishness is satiated not,
 It wears me like a flame ;

—Another Shelleyism.

602-3—"my hunger for/All pleasure, howsoe'er minute, is pain". Cf., *Paracelsus*, II, 388-393 :

I could not curb
My yearnings to possess at once the full
Enjoyment, but neglected all the means
Of realizing even the frailest joy,
Gathering no fragments to appease my want,
Yet nursing up that want till thus I die—

608-9—"I would have but one/Delight on earth, so it were wholly mine"—Cf., "I have made life consist of one idea" (*Paracelsus*, II, 140).

617—"vile form"—the body.

620—"This restlessness of passion"—This is the passion of Paracelsus and Sordello.

621—"A craving for knowledge"—Cf., *Par.* II, 124, "wolfish hunger after knowledge".

622—"is in that power"—'You should make clear what power' (Mill). "Power" evidently refers to the powerful restlessness of passion.

624—"The sleepless harpy, with its budding wings"—Wallis (p. 80) says that "harpy" means "restlessness of passion". I think "harpy" means "craving for knowledge". This harpy has become in ll. 631-33 a chained thing; but the restlessness of passion cannot be chained (see ll. 593-95, 601-2). The craving for knowledge is one of the several "abstractions" (1.608) to which the poet-lover seeks to fix his restless passion. Upon the correct meaning of the phrase "sleepless harpy" depends the meaning of the whole passage which may be interpreted thus: My general conduct is governed by a restless passion which ceaselessly would turn its whole energies to some single end. Now it meets in me a craving for knowledge. This craving is a sleepless harpy. I thought of forgoing all ignorant (emphasis on this adjective) hopes and fears, finding a recompense entirely in the wild eyes of this harpy-craving,—but then I found that I would perish if I dedicated myself exclusively to this craving alone³³.

637-42 & 646-47—Mill's comments, 'self-flattery', and 'inconsistent with what precedes'.

33. DeVane interprets this passage correctly. Comparing Pauline's lover with Paracelsus, he says, "In *Pauline* (ll. 620-9) the speaker had aspired 'to know', yet he knew that he would perish if he pursued that ambition to the exclusion of all others Paracelsus makes this mistake....." *Handbook*, p. 47.

644-654—cf., *Paracelsus*, III, 689-714. Note similar expressions : (*Pauline*) "more warped in this than aught, / For here myself stands out more hideously"; "the still-decaying frame"; (*Paracelsus*) "I felt too warped / And twisted and deformed"; "this wronged body, worthless save when tasked / Under that soul's dominion". Cf, Yeats :

What shall I do with this absurdity—
O heart, O troubled heart—this caricature,
Decrepit age that has been tied to me
As to a dog's tail ?

(*The Tower*)

An aged man is but a paltry thing,
A tattered coat upon a stick, unless
Soul clap its hands and sing, and louder sing
For every tatter in its mortal dress,

(*Sailing to Byzantium*)

644-45— No, what I feel may pass all human love
Yet fall far short of what my love should be.

A statement of what love should be comes from Festus in *Par.*, III, 827 *seqq.*, particularly,

I say, such love is never blind ; but rather
Alive to every the minutest spot
Which mars its object, and which hate (supposed
So vigilant and searching) dreams not of.

LI. 655-75 : From such pains of perplexed introspection, I am relieved by my imaginative flights. The figures of *Andromeda* and *Kean's* impersonation of *Richard III* buoy up my spirits

COMMENTS : 655—"wing"—*ie.*, of imagination. The expression, 'wing of imagination' is common no doubt, yet the idea of a poetic flight on the wings of imagination away from painful thoughts is specially associated with Keats : "But on the viewless wings of Poesy" (*Ode to a Nightingale*); "Perhaps on wing of Poesy upsoar" (*Summer's Eve*).

656-667 : The *Andromeda* passage has justly been admired by all students of Browning. This might have been one of the passages that attracted Dante Rossetti ; at any rate,

in respect of pictorial concreteness, these lines are easily comparable to some of Rossetti's *Sonnets for Pictures*.

The Andromeda passage has a deep personal significance for Browning. From his boyhood, he was familiar with Polidoro di Caravaggio's picture *Andromeda* which inspired him to a permanent faith. W. C. DeVane writes³⁴ :

...here was the symbol of Browning's faith. One remembers from *Pauline* (ll 656 67) the magnificent apostrophe to Andromeda "as she awaits the snake on the wet beach.....quite naked and alone"; and the poet rested in the faith that "some god to save will come in thunder from the stars". He wrote all his first poems, as we know, with Polidoro di Caravaggio's *Andromeda*, "the perfect picture" before him. The idea became the major theme of Browning's poetry and life; it appears notably in *Count Gismond* and *The Ring And The Book*, and elsewhere; it led him, to the rescue of Miss Barrett from Wimpole Street. In the *Parleying* the symbol is used in a different manner, for now Browning and his faith are in the position of Andromeda, and the waste waters of doubt and the blackness of ignorance shut them in on every side, and Browning awaits the deliverer.

669-675—Allude to Edmund Kean.

—The Kean-lines are scarcely less important than the Andromeda-passage for a true understanding of the young Browning's mind. DeVane goes too far when he states that the Andromeda symbolism led Browning to the rescue of Miss Barrett from Wimpole Street; Holmes turns Browning's mind into the psychiatrist's subject. Without rushing to these extreme views, I would consider the passages as each offering Browning a primary principle of the poetic life. The Andromeda myth appeals to his sense of beauty; Kean's acting convinces him of the power of dramatic sympathy. Let us remember the circumstances in which the poet-lover refers to Andromeda and Kean. In ll.646-654, he has regretted the self-warping obtrusion of his personality; formerly, he could forget himself

34. *Handbook*, pp. 463-4; see also Stewart Walker Holmes, *op. cit.*, p. 773.

in friendship, fame, liberty, hero-worship, but now he is a victim to his own self-centred, ever-wavering will. Yet there is solace for him in the transports of imagination. The vision of Andromeda rises before him, changeless and beautiful; the memory of Kean's wonderful capacity for identifying himself with an error-sunk character haunts him. (See also *Par.*, II, 556-60.) Beauty and dramatic sympathy,—these then are the two qualities which a contemplation of the Andromeda-picture and the Kean-incident instil into the poet-lover.

674-75— And lo, I fling age, sorrow, sickness off,
 And rise triumphant, triumph through decay.

Of.—(*Paracelsus*, IV, 272 297)

You look at my grey hair and furrowed brow ?
But I can turn even weakness to account :
Of many tricks I know, 'tis not the least
To push the ruins of my frame, whereon
The fire of vigour trembles scarce alive,
Into a heap, and send the flame aloft.

LI. 676-708 : By such flights of imagination, I link up the chasm between what I am and what I would fain be. But such a self-satisfaction has no permanent value because it is based upon a fear that if I lose these joys of life I shall lose all joys. Again, I think, these imaginative escapes really indicate a juggle with my reason. My old loves and impulses remain, my passion for liberty, love, my belief in poets. Above all, there is my love of England. Pauline, I wish I could break this spell of mental fever. I am prepared ; already, I think, I have lived all vital aspects of life.

COMMENTS : 678-80- 'deeply true' (Mill). Wallis (p. 81) rightly points out the difficulty of these lines. I would interpret them thus. The poet-lover (in true romantic fashion) is aware of the discrepancy between the ideal and the actual. This discrepancy he bridges by flights of imagination (cf., the Andromeda reference). But living entirely in imaginary worlds of beauty would mean the denial of reason and knowledge. Would he not *know* (this is the problem of Paracelsus as well),

would he rather seek salvation only in the dull (*dull*, in the Shelleyan sense of the *material*) joys of life, frantically believing that if he loses these joys he loses everything?—From such a possibility, the poet-lover recoils.

676- "I supply the chasm"—cf., "I would supply all chasms," *Par.*, II, 477.

681- "vile juggle"—cf., "miserable juggle", *Par.*, II, 178.

686- "And sympathy obscured by sophistries."—Mill considered this line to be unintelligible. The meaning is: My sympathy for the down-trodden, the enslaved, was essentially a sophistry, because it was not active but too full of ineffectual professions.

695- "Let me forget it"—This is a sudden ejaculation. The idea goes thus: Do I wish to cherish prejudices in order not to be utterly loveless? Perhaps so; these passions have not helped me to reach that equanimity which I desire. I am in a fever, and wish to break the spell (698). I want to forget all my feverish feelings but not my love of England. The C-text makes sense of l. 698 which in the A-text has the vague reading, "I could do any thing."

700- "I am prepared"—Mill commented, 'He is always talking of being *prepared*—what for?' Browning's counter-comment was, "Why, 'that's tellings', as schoolboys say."

703- "Conjuncture"—cf., *Par.*, V, 848.

Ll. 709-810: These are wild fancies. When I am near you, I feel a childlike joy and confidence. I can live amid plants, gaze drowsily on bees, mount with birds, breathe deep the morning air "like a fish," look serenely at an advancing storm. Come Pauline, we will imagine for ourselves a world out of the common world and be uplifted there. I dream that we two are on a narrow ridge between a river and woods where the moonless night gives an appearance of "giant-ghosts" to the trees. In the morning, we watch the bright sunshine playing upon the cataract. At noon, we dive down, and presently, reach a pool shaded over by tall trees. Through the middle of the wood, there is a small brook which winds

its way until it joins the parent river. Then we leave the woods and enjoy fresh air, thin and searching air, which is the dear breath of God who loves us. Then down the hill we go, and see yonder the muleteers chiming their bells. But I grow sad when I think that I cannot be immortal and enjoy it all for ever.

COMMENTS : 714- "confiding, like the triumph/ Of a child"- an overdone simile.

716-17- "gaze/Drowsily on the bees that flit and play"- Keatsian.

721- "pyramid of leaves" -cf., "The pyramids/Of the tall cedar overarching. ." (*Alastor*, 433-4)

720-26- This unmetaphysical, vigorous desire to share the joys of nature is a common trait in Browning's poetry. William Sharp³⁵ writes how the boy Browning would lie

beside a hedge or deep in meadow grasses, or under a tree...and there give himself up so absolutely to the life of the moment that even shy birds would alight close by and sometimes venturesomely poise themselves on suspicious wings for a brief space upon his recumbent body.³⁶ I have heard him say that his faculty, of observation at that time would not have appeared despicable to a Seminole or a Iroquois : he saw and watched everything.

One is reminded of Keats who, after being long pent up in a city, would sink into some pleasant lair of wavy grass.

727-28- "as a girl would look/On a departing lover—most serene"- an affected simile.

729-31— Pauline, come with me—see how I could build
A home for us, out of the world ; in thought—
I am inspired—come with me, Pauline !

35. *Life*, p. 96.

36. Cf. "And Dwijendranath, Rabindranath's brother, who is a great philosopher. The squirrels come from the boughs and climb on to his knees and the birds alight upon his hands." Yeats' Introduction (p. xi) to Rabindranath Tagore's *Gitanjali*, Macmillan, 1919.

—The desire to build an ideal home far away from human habitation or in an imaginary world is in the best traditions of romantic poetry. Cf,—

Some unsuspected isle in the far seas !
 Like a god going through his world, there stands
 One mountain for a moment in the dusk,
 Whole brotherhoods of cedars on its brow :
 And you are ever by me while I gaze
 —Are in my arms as now—as now—as now !
 Some unsuspected isle in the far seas !
 Some unsuspected isle in far-off seas !

(*Uppa Passes*, II, Jules speaks)

Away, away, from men and towns,
 To the wild woods and the downs—
 To the silent wilderness
 Where the soul need not repress
 Its music,.....

(Shelley, *The Invitation*, 21-25)

732-810- The poet-lover describes the imaginary world of nature where he would build a home. This description of morning, noon, and night, in the perfect realm where the lovers would flee, is conceived after the recommendations of Gerard de Lairese.³⁷

37. *Browning's Parleyings*, p. 213. The influence of Lairese upon Browning's ideas of the Beautiful and the Ugly have been traced also in DeVane's article on "The Landscape of Browning's *Childe Roland*" PMLA, XL, pp. 426-32.

It is to be noted that DeVane is not emphatic in his suggestion that Lairese influenced Browning's descriptions of nature; "he seems to revert", "he seemed to learn"—these are DeVane's qualifications of the suggestion. And qualified and tentative the suggestion ought to be. For some of his ideas about Aesthetics, Browning might well have been indebted to Lairese (and I think DeVane has established that indebtedness plausibly in his thesis); there are some broad similarities in the descriptive methods of the two. Nevertheless, one can hardly admit that even in matters of poetic feeling and technique the poet was indebted to the Dutch theorist. The interest in men and women which distinguishes Browning's later poetic outlook is not yet strong in *Pauline*; an unphilosophical love of nature permeates his being and poetry at this stage, and if literary influences respecting Browning's treatment of nature are to be sought, they may be sought in Shelley.

733-36- The image of tall trees springing into life and looking like giant-ghosts reminds one of the fantastic notions that haunted the boy Shelley. Cf.,

Thy giant brood of pines around thee clinging,
Children of elder time, in whose devotion
The chainless winds still come and ever came.

(Shelley, *Mont Blanc*, 20-2)

739-40- "the panting/Of thy soft breasts"—A sudden expression like this reminds us sharply that Pauline is not entirely an ideal figure ; she is, after all, a woman in flesh and blood.

749-53—

see this our new retreat

Walled in with a sloped mound of matted shrubs,
Dark, tangled, old and green - still sloping down
To a small pool whose waters lie asleep
Amid the trailing boughs turned water-plants

Cf. (*Alastor*, 404-8) :

.....the embowering trees recede and leave
A little space of green expanse, the cove
Is closed by meeting banks, whose yellow
flowers
For ever gaze on their own drooping eyes,
Reflected in the crystal calm.

& (*Endymion*, 79-84) :

Paths there were many,
Winding through palmy fern, and rushes fenny,
And ivy banks ; all leading pleasantly
To a wide lawn, whence one could only see
Stems thronging all around between the swell
Of tuft and slanting branches :

754—"tall trees over-arch"—cf., "The pyramids/Of the tall cedar overarching". (*Alastor*, 433-4)

762—"Where the pale-throated snake reclines his head"—In his boyhood, Browning 'turned his father's garden into a miniature zoo, where efts and frogs were joined by owls, monkeys, hedgehogs, an eagle, "and even a couple of large snakes"³⁸. This interest in snakes is repeated in *Pauline*, 796 ;

Par., I, 444 ; III, 1036. D. H. Lawrence's poem *The Snake* is comparable. Apropos his love of the toad, snails, efts, newts, lizards and other small birds and animals, Browning wrote to Miss Barrett :

I always loved all those wild creatures God '*sets up for themselves*' so independently of us, so successfully, with their strange happy minute inch of a candle, as it were, to light them ; while we run about and against each other with great cressets and fire-pots.

(*The Browning Love Letters*, I, p. 371)

For this feature of Browning's poetry, see also *Par.* V, 672 (chrysalids impatient for the air, shining dorrs, beetles, running along the furrows, ants making their ado, the lark, white fishing-gulls, nested limpets) ; *Sordello*, I, 632 (the great palmer-worm) ; I, 665 (the adventurous spider) ; song from *Paracelsus*, "Thus the Mayne glideth" (glossy kingfisher, shrew-mouse with pale throat, speckled stoat, quick sandpipers, lazy stork) ; *Saul*, vi ; *Caliban upon Setebos*, 45-55.

780—"It joins its parent-river with a shout"—cf., "like childhood laughing as it went". (*Alastor*, 499)

786—"dead whale that white birds pick"—cf., *Par.* II, 455, "the dog-fish tracking/A dead whale".

802—This reference to muleteers locates the poem to some continental country, possibly Southern France or Switzerland. The French note written by Pauline supports France, but ll, 951-54 make out a strong case in favour of Switzerland. Other place-references in the poem are : 696-97 ; 980-1 ; 951-54 ; 959-60.

Ll. 811-859 : O God, where do these struggling aims tend ? I hunger for God. I would know if there be a waking point of the soul, a point that is the crown of life. The soul would be the foremost in all things, but would not command ; the soul desires ultimately to be subordinate to an essence better than itself, *i.e.*, God (821). I want to feel my God as if nothing existed on earth except God and my soul. This I shall feel when creation crumbles about me, and then I shall

know that God is the God of love (830). By nature I am given to adoring ; despite all my rationality, I feel God, I thank Him and pray to Him. O the pale form of Christ, dimly-seen, deep-eyed, save me now if I am erring, take away from me all my powers and pleasures, and let me even die innumerable times so that in return I may see you (854). I, a mortal, sin's familiar friend, avow that I shall engage myself in teaching the humble faith of Christ provided I know that I am not unloved (859).

COMMENTS : 812-14—The idea of life being a sleep of which there is a waking point, a waking point that is also the crown of life, is reminiscent of Shelleyan Platonism. *Sleep* within inverted commas, suggests that Pauline's lover has used the word here in Hamlet's sense : "To die : to sleep."

838-854—Lines to Jesus. This is one of the passages in *Pauline* which should earn for the work the devotion of the Browning-student. Apart from its high poetic beauty, the passage is also the most valuable document we have regarding Browning's early religious position. Biographical records about the formative period of Browning's life are scanty, and many of our surmises have to be built upon suggestions in the text. Here again, a difficulty arises. Is *Pauline* an autobiographical or a dramatic poem ? If it be dramatic, deductions about the poet's personal beliefs would be unwarranted. The fact is, as we shall see afterwards, the scheme of the poem is manifestly dramatic while the treatment is highly personal. In these lines we have a glimpse into the doubt-harassed religious faith of the young poet. A shivering sense of audacious doubts which fill his mind occasionally overpowers the poet ; none the less, amid mazy wanderings of his beliefs, he has clung to Christ always. His religion is based upon a belief in the loving personality of Christ, 'O thou pale form, so dimly seen, deep-eyed !' This belief is beyond the dust and din of rationalism ; it is intuitive, wrung from the inmost soul. It is a testimony to an urgent inner need, the need for love. God is the God of love, and

our poet vows to give all earth's reward, to live in suffering, poverty and shame, only to know that he is not unloved.³⁹

855-59—There are three parts to this statement: (i) I am a sinful mortal; (ii) I avow that I shall believe and humbly teach the faith of Jesus; (iii) but I must also know that I am loved in my turn.—This three-fold statement gives the essence of Browning's religious position; all through his life, he believed what he says here.

811—PAULINE'S FRENCH NOTE (translated into English): I fear very much that my poor friend may not always be perfectly understood in what remains to be read of this strange fragment, but it is less calculated than anything else to clarify what by its very nature can never be other than dream and confusion. Also I am not quite sure if seeking to coordinate better certain parts one would not run the risk of spoiling the only merit to which such a singular production can pretend, that is, to give precision to an idea that is only sketched.

This beginning without any pretension, this flutter of passions which at first goes on increasing and then is pacified by degrees, this vitality of the soul, this sudden return on to oneself, and above all, the characteristic turns of my friend's mind, make any changes almost impossible. The reasons which he has elsewhere urged and other more powerful ones have made this writing find grace in my eyes which otherwise I would have advised him to throw into the fire. I believe in no small measure in the great principle of all composition, in the principle of Shakespeare, Raphael and Beethoven, from which it follows that the concentration of ideas is due more to their conception than to their execution. I have every reason to fear that the first of these qualities is still foreign to my friend, and I strongly doubt whether a repetition of his pains would help him acquire the second.

39. To an Indian reader, this personal attachment to the deity is a familiar religious attitude. It is, in spirit, the same as the Bhakti cult of Vaishnava poetry and the mysticism of the Persian Sufi. Some of

It would have been best to burn this: but what can be done? I believe that in what follows, he has alluded to an examination which he once made before of the soul, or rather of his own soul to discover the sequence of aims which it would be possible for him to attain, and each one of which once obtained, would form a kind of plateau whence one can perceive other aims, other projects, other joys, which in their turn would be overcome. It follows that forgetfulness and sleep would terminate all. This idea which I have not been able to seize completely is perhaps as unintelligible to him as it is to me.

LI. 860-985: My chief gain in this confessional song has been the ventilation of a part of my love, even though in a matter like our love, speech is a mockery. This song indeed is the evidence of my love. If in future, joy leaves me, and such a sorrow moves me that you cannot wipe it, look at this song to know how much I love you. Of late, the state of my mind has been very low, but the poem has proved that a word of love can bring me bliss, and so in future, another word of love may equally bring me bliss. You know, Pauline, I could not think calmly, so overpowered was I by a quick succession of fancies. You said that a perfect poet is one who chronicles all the stages of life, and you asked me to outline this first stage. I have done so, and I feel how life is truth and truth is good. Despite the previous forebodings, I am aware in the dim hush of night that you still are mine. Do not believe all the wild words that have fallen from my lips; I stained myself so as to see you purer than me, to show that you are my breath, my life, a last resource, an extreme want. Had not my love been so, I could not have looked at you; nor could I see my world of good thoughts, the world of undiscovered suns, and far, fair isles clustering in the ocean; nor could I enjoy my crowd of visions, each a part of some grand whole. Words are wild and weak; all that I want to say is that you must not leave me. Sit beside me turning my books or kissing me when I look up. Be to me

that mysterious source of music which sounds the depth of all those abstrusenesses which the mind fails to fathom. Loveless and hopeless I grew through the pedantry of reason, but now I love as much as I hope, and have something to gladden you with. I have had enough of this introspection. I have too much trusted my own lawless wants, my vague intuitions and vain self; in consequence, the fair has been turned into the foul and the foul into the fair. No more of this. Like a child, like love's slave, I shall go hand in hand with you to the land which gave you to me. There amid the manifold charms of nature, I shall listen to your songs or tell you old stories. When spring returns, we shall question life once more till its old sense be renewed and we feel that God loves us and that all error is but a dream that death dissipates. Then it will be possible for me to return to England and calmly view all past follies.

COMMENTS: 870--This line reminds us that the poem is a written confession, not a speech.

877-82—an excellent description of the general character of the poetry in *Pauline*. Cf.,

Youth sighed, 'Which rose make ours,
'Which lily leave and then as best recall ?'

It yearned ‘Nor Jove, nor Mars ;
Mine be some figured flame which blends, transcends
 them all !

(*Rabbi Ben Ezra*, II)

Fancies that broke through language and escaped.

(R. B. E., XXV)

883-4 And then thou said'st a perfect bard was one
Who shadowed out the stages of all life,

—Few poets have cogitated on the problem of the function of poetry (and hence of the poet) so consistently as Browning did. In this his first work he touches upon the problem with which he is afterwards preoccupied in *Sordello*, *How it strikes a contemporary*, *The Two Poets of Croisic*, some of the

Parleyings, and incidentally in many other works including *The Ring And The Book* and *Fifine At The Fair*. "Shadowed out" of the A-text was changed into "chronicled"⁴⁰ in the C-text. With the conception of poetry indicated here, compare :—

But not these alone
Should claim my care ; for common life, its wants
And ways, would I set forth in beauteous hues :
The lowest hind should not possess a hope,
A fear, but I'd be by him, saying better
Than he his own heart's language.

(*Par.*, II., 556-60)

888—"Faintly immortal life, and truth, and good"—This is altered to a more definite statement in the C-text ("Life is truth and truth is good") where Browning tries to improve upon Keats' doctrine of "Beauty is truth, truth beauty".

896-900—another description that relieves the ideality of Pauline and makes a woman of her.

902—"As I might kill her and be loved for it"—cf. *Porphyria's Lover*. The idea of perpetuating the beloved's love by killing her, is peculiar to Browning. This might have been one of the lines recognised by Dante Rossetti to be Browning's.

904-9—These lines strike one as a disconcerting retraction of previous utterances of the speaker. He has indulged quite enough in self-denunciation. He has referred to his "poisoned wound" (11), to "all shapes, and shames" (45); he has confessed "I was low indeed" (69), "I'm fallen" (80). Lest Pauline should run away with the notion that these descriptions indicate a moral lapse, the poet-lover now emphasises

40. A similar use of the word occurs in James Joyce's *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young man* (The Travellers' Library, Cape, 1930), p. 75 : "He chronicled with patience what he saw, detaching himself from it....." The state of Stephen Dedalus' adolescent mind is comparable to the psychology of Pauline's lover : "He (Dedalus) was angry with himself for being young and the prey of restless foolish impulses....."

the wildness and weakness of words which must not be taken literally by her. His explanation for indulging in wild and weak words is, to say the least of it, puerile and a Byronic stunt: "I stained myself/But to behold thee purer by my side".

919-921— And one isle harboured a sea-beaten ship,
And the crew wandered in its bowers, and plucked
Its fruits, and gave up all their hopes for home.

—This is comparable to the theme of Tennyson's *Lotos-Eaters*.

951-954—These lines locate the poem to Switzerland; "nature lies all wild amid her lakes" does not fit France or Spain; "snow-swathed mountains" fits Switzerland better.

955-57—A strange statement this. In the country where Pauline and her lover will live, nature lies all bare, suffering none to view her except "a race/Most stunted and deformed". I cannot understand what point the poet gains by making the beholders stunted or deformed. Also, "the mute dwarfs/Which wait upon a naked Indian queen" is on par with the ignorant orientalism of Southey.

962—"telling me old stories of dead knights"—another example of Browning's romantic interest in tales of chivalry. Cf. *Richard II*, III, ii, 156-7:

For God's sake, let us sit upon the ground,
And tell sad stories of the death of kings:

964—"The fair pale sister, went to her chill grave"—Wallis (p. 82) writes; "The reference in line 964 is possibly to the Balade "Binorie" ". This is an inexplicable error in view of Browning's footnote to the C-text: "Antigone". See also Berdoo's *Cyclopaedia*, p. 332; Phelps, *MLN*, 1932, p. 238.

970—"my mind's cave"—a Platonic image.

974-5—"I shall be/Prepared"—cf. l.700. Mill commented; "He is always talking of being *prepared*". Actually, Browning does not *always* or even often talk of being prepared; ll.700, and 974-5 are the only two instances of his resolve to prepare.

979—"a dream which death will dissipate"—a familiar Shelleyan idea.

980—The poet-lover talks of being an exile from England. Did the exiles of Byron and Shelley, his early heroes, give Browning the idea of making his hero an exile ?

Ll. 986-1031 : Though this calmness may vanish yet this moment's pride is all my own. I always had a lurking fear that my weak resolves might betray me, but I know that these feelings shall not be utterly lost. This song will testify to the fact that when I had lost all hopes, "suddenly Beauty rose on me again". I again go over the tracts of thought, and I live with poets, calmer and purer still each time. Beauteous shapes which had been denied to my wavering moments will come for me to seize. I shall be priest and prophet as of old. Therefore I invoke the name of the Sun-treader once again. I believe in God and truth and love. Having escaped from confusion, I lean on you, Shelley ! Be with me when I am in gloom, and specially when I shall die. Know that my last state is happy, free from doubt and fear.

COMMENTS :

1010-13 : And tho', this weak soul sink, and darkness come,
 Some little word shall light it up again,
 And I shall see all clearer and love better ;
 I shall again go o'er the tracts of thought,

Cf., 236-39 : And here am I the scoffer, who have probed
 Life's vanity, won by a word again
 Into my old life—for one little word
 Of this sweet friend,

Cf , 875 : Thou hast brought me bliss, (A text)
 Song proves one word has brought me bliss, (C-text)

—These extracts are valuable for a correct understanding of the poem. The poem is a confession, as the sub-title states. A confession presupposes (i) a consciousness of guilt ; and (ii) penitence for that guilt, which again, implies spiritual recuperation, however temporary, from that consciousness of guilt. At the time of writing this confession, Pauline's lover has been restored to normality well enough to be able searchingly to review his spiritual life. His degradation had been due to

two main causes: (i) excessive ego-centricity; and (ii) a temporary denial of God. From this spiritual degradation he has been restored by love, Pauline's love for him. He has realised the supreme need of love in human life, as Paracelsus realises too late. This recognition of the need for and power of love in life sends him back to a devotion to the personality of Jesus and thence to revealed Christianity. It is the experience of this same love that recreates in him a zest for life. The extracts above indicate the process of his spiritual rehabilitation. "Some little word", "a word", "one little word" imply the same symbol, viz., the purifying force of love that can restore a tormented soul to normal health.

1016- "beauteous shapes will come to me again"—Contrast the words of Paracelsus:

I cannot feed on beauty for the sake
Of beauty only, nor can drink in balm
From lovely objects for their loveliness. (III, 701-3)

1019- "I shall be priest and lover"—In the C-text, it is "priest and prophet." -Cf., the conclusion of Shelley's *A Defence of Poetry* :

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Poets are the hierophants of an unapprehended inspiration; the mirrors of the gigantic shadows which futurity casts upon the present; the words which express what they understand not; the trumpets which sing to battle and feel not what they inspire; the influence which is moved not, but moves. Poets are the unacknowledged legislators of the world.

1022- "Would bind himself in bands of friends"- cf., *Par.*, I, 633-34:

I would encircle me with love, and raise
A rampart of my fellows;

1026-27— For I seem, dying, as one going in the dark
To fight a giant

Cf., 548-50: whom trustingly
We sent before into Time's yawning gulf,
To face whate'er may lurk in darkness there—

—To Browning, life was essentially a romantic adventure. In later poetry, he often used terms of philosophical abstractions

to present this ideal of life as a chivalric struggle, but to his youthful imagination, it was the romantic suggestiveness of the ideal that appealed most. Harold Golder⁴¹, searching for the sources of *Childe Roland*, suggests that the material of chivalric romance existed in the background of Browning's consciousness in a mass rather than in separate packets each labelled with an author's name. Nevertheless, he suggests, with a good deal of plausibility, that the *Renowned History of the Seven Champions of Christendom*, written or compiled in the reign of James I by Richard Johnson, might have been one of the books which might have provided Browning with romantic imagery, and, in this connection, Golder quotes lines 1026-27 of *Pauline*. It must be admitted, however, that both the images quoted above are so natural for a poet nurtured on the poetry of the Romantic Revival as not to require a source-investigation of this kind.

Richmond: October 22, 1832—This is an actual date; on that day, Browning had gone to Richmond to see Kean's performance of *Richard III*.

41. "Browning's *Childe Roland*", PMLA, XXXIX, pp. 970-1.

CHAPTER THREE

A comparative study of the three editions of *Pauline* does not yield that knowledge of poetic evolution as may be obtained from a similar study of Keats' or Rossetti's poems or of the early works of Tennyson. In the preface to the 1868 edition, Browning writes, "I can at least correct some misprints (no syllable is changed)", and in spite of the hyperbole of the parenthetic assertion, the statement is substantially correct⁴². Nor does the final edition of 1888⁴³ elevate the poem to any appreciably higher level of craftsmanship. This non-evolutionary character of the later editions arises inevitably from the length of the interval between the first and the second editions which was too wide to enable the poet to recapture the youthful mood, a mood, besides, the type of which he had long since abjured within less than a decade of *Pauline*. Furthermore, Browning never was a verbal artist of the tribe of Keats and Rossetti. The kind of investigation which Mr M. R. Ridley has so fruitfully employed in the study of Keats' poems would be barren in a study of Browning's poems. He is not a lover of words for their own sake ; no lure of words leads him to a radical recasting of lines and stanzas. In fact, with the solitary exception of *Sordello*⁴⁴, no important work of Browning underwent that recasting which Tennyson, for instance, brought to bear upon his 1852 poems. In all Browning's writings,—poems and letters,—we have numerous discussions on the subject-matter of poetry and its treatment, but few on the diction. In respect of his attitude to the

42. See Appendix iii.

43. See Appendix iii.

44. *Sordello* kept the poet engaged for seven years and there were four versions of it, each differing in conception and treatment from the others. The earlier versions do not exist, but W. C. DeVane has convincingly argued (*Handbook*, pp. 68-80) that the poem passed through three phases before it reached the final accomplishment.

medium of poetry, Browning is comparable to Byron who treated words as pliable slaves of a gusto of passion, to be put to use for an immediate need and then set aside. That he could never have patience with poetry which is a reverie of words is borne out by the following extracts from two letters⁴⁵ to Isabella Blagden :

As to Swinburne's verses, I agree with you—they are "florid impotence", to my taste—the *minimum* of thought and idea in the *maximum* of words and phraseology. Nothing said and done with, left to stand alone and trust for its effect in its own worth. What a way of writing is that wherein, wanting to say that "a man is sad", you express it as, "he looketh like to one, as one might say, who hath a sadness and is sad indeed, so that beholders think "How sad is he !"

Yes,—I have read Rossetti's poems—and poetical they are,—*scented* with poetry, as it were—like trifles of various sorts you take out of a cedar or sandal-wood box : you know I hate the effiminacy of his school,—the men that dress up like women,—that use obsolete forms, too, and archaic accentuations to seem soft—fancy a man calling it a lily,—*lilies* and so on.

This undervaluing the fragrance of words is as much a feature of his early poetry as of the later. Doubtless, the general character of the diction of *Pauline* is considerably different from that of the later poems, the dramatic lyrics and the dramatic romances ; the primary reason for this difference is that the style of *Pauline* (as also that of *Paracelsus*) springs from a sweep of sentiment and imaginative fervour while the art of the monologues is the outcome of an intellectual approach to the motive-forces behind the actions of men and women. The diction of the monologues is distinguished by a realistic accuracy while much of the diction of *Pauline* sprawls under diffuse feelings. Nevertheless, the poet's attitude to the medium of poetry is the same in *Pauline* as elsewhere. Not an ecstasy of words but an impelling necessity of giving immediate

45. *Letters*, pp. 136, 137.

utterance to his thoughts drives Browning to an unlingering employment of words.

Although the textual changes in the later editions of *Pauline* do not help us to any material extent to understand the development of the poet's mind and art, there are none the less a number of changes that shed interesting light on his later processes of thinking. The poem composed in course of four months and hurriedly, written "on one leg",—"a free and easy sort of thing",⁴⁶—bears signs of hastiness, incontinent speed, and an inability to collect the thoughts together into a coherent, integrated structure. Such a sign is provided by the extravagant use of the dash,—the 302 times in the A-text being reduced to 74 times in the C-text. The main improvement effected by the second edition is in the direction of a more relevant and precise punctuation, the simple comma in many instances replacing the colon or semi-colon or the ubiquitous dash; a more judicious use of the full-stop to mark off a continuous logical statement from another. Some amount of the alleged obscurity of the first edition arises from a telescoping of views and contrary views, feebly separated by the dash, into one run-on paragraph. Consider the following lines (698-706):

Pauline, I could do anything - not now—
 All's fever—but when calm shall come again—
 I am prepared—I have made life my own—
 I would not be content with all the change
 One frame should feel—but I have gone in thought
 Thro' all conjuncture—I have lived all life
 When it is most alive—where strangest fate
 New shapes it past surmise—the tales of men
 Bit by some curse—or in the grasps of doom

The whole paragraph is meant to be a crescendo of emotion climbing along ten dash signs in nine lines, and there is actually an emotional swell audible in the last four lines, but in the

46. Letter to W. J. Fox, Orr, *Life*, p 52.

earlier part, the paragraph tosses the reader from one idea to another. "I could do anything"—the *anything* lacks just that precision which alone could make the assertion convincing. If the telegraphic omission of redundancies were supplied, the sentence would run thus: "I could do anything *but* not now, *because now* all is fever, but *only* when calm shall come again; and for that eventuality I am prepared so thoroughly that I have made my life mine own and I would not be content with all the changes *which* one frame should feel". *Pauline* thus foreshadows that rejection of redundant parts of speech which became a prevailing element of Browning's mature style. On Mrs Orr's authority⁴⁷ we learn the story that a presumptuous letter from a Miss Caroline Fox and John Sterling's dissatisfaction with the "verbosity" of *Paracelsus* led Browning to experiment in *Sordello* on expressional economy based on syntactical compression. But this stylistic compression is not altogether a later growth; in *Pauline*, there is actually no verbal condensation but withal a tendency towards it indicated by the prodigal use of the dash and by his habit of leaving a clause or a sentence suddenly unfinished. In respect of the omission of connecting parts of speech the *Pauline* passage cited above is comparable to these lines from *Rabbi Ben Ezra*, xix :

So, better, age, exempt
From strife, should know, than tempt
Further.

This is a cribbed version of the normal sentence: So, *it is better that age, being now exempt from strife, should know rather than tempt further*".

The abundant use of the dash in Browning's poetry, especially the early poetry, is an index to the intense agility of his mind. The restless energy of his thought-process gives a certain jerky movement to his expression, and, unable to maintain an even, continuous flow, it splits itself into clauses

47. *Handbook*, p. 11.

and parenthetic statements. Such a quality thrives particularly when the form of the poem demands a familiarity of the style. In his letters as also in *Pauline*, a poem which is, as it were, an epistolary monologue, the informal, intimate nature of the utterance gives free scope to the poet's native tendency towards energetic expression, and consequently, the dash abounds. The structural affinity between the following passage from a letter⁴⁸ and the *Pauline* passage quoted above, is beyond question :

Nor am I so selfish, I hope, as that (because my uttermost pride and privilege and glory above all glories would be to live in your sick-room and serve you,—as that, on that account, I would not rather see you in a condition to need none of my service...the next thing to serving you, is to be—what shall I say ?—served by you...loved by you, made happy by you—it is the being an angel, though there might be archangels—

And if *now* you do not understand,—well, I kneel to you, my Ba, and pray you to give yourself to me in deed as in word, the body as the heart and mind,—and *now* !—at any time,—you know what I cannot say, I cannot, I think,—if I know myself—love you more than I do...but I shall always love you *thus*—and *thus*, in any case, happen what God may ordain—

The dash can sometimes be a helpful instrument to the poet, as in the following extracts, adding to the momentum of the passion, the volume of the joy, the cinematographic vividness of the picture :

thou art my breath—my life—a last
Resource—an extreme want : (907-8)

Air, air—fresh life—blood,—thin and searching air—
The clear, dear breath of God, that loveth us : (788-89)

Down the hill—stop—a clump of trees, see, set
On a heap of rocks, which look o'er the far plains, (798-99)

In all these instances, the removal of the dash in the C-text leads to a weakening of the original imaginative impression. The corresponding C-texts go thus :

48. *The Browning Love Letters*, II, pp. 208-209

thou art my breath, my life, a last
Resource, an extreme want :

Air, air, fresh life-blood, thin and searching air,
The clear, dear breath of God that loveth us,

Down the hill ! Stop—a clump of trees, see, set
On a heap of rock, which look o'er the far plain :

What was an accelerating fervour in the A-text has been reduced to a mere catalogue in the C-text. Broadly speaking, when Browning presents things about which his conception is clear and deep,—be they ideas metaphysical or passions lyrical and sensuous,—he has little need to borrow the mechanical assistance of a punctuation mark like the dash.

268-276 : I am made up of an intensest life,
Of a most clear idea of consciousness
Of self—distinct from all its qualities,
From all affections, passions, feelings, powers ;
And thus far it exists, if tracked in all,
But linked in me, to self-supremacy,
Existing as a centre to all things,
Most potent to create, and rule, and call
Upon all things to minister to it ;

791-795 : Water is beautiful, but not like air.
See, where the solid azure waters lie,
Made as of thickened air, and down below,
The fern-ranks, like a forest spread themselves,
As tho' each pore could feel the element ;

While the B-text deals with the punctuation, the C-text attends to diction and metre⁴⁰. The phraseological changes of the final edition may thus be classified and illustrated :

49. Bernice Fox in "Revision in Browning's *Paracelsus*" (MLN, March 1940, pp. 195-197) notes the following classes of textual changes arrived at in the final edition of 1888 :—

(A) Mechanical revisions—punctuation, capitalization, spelling.

(B) Stylistic—(i) condensation, (ii) expansion, (iii) additions of new phrases. In Appendix iii I have dealt with the various changes effected in the subsequent editions of *Pauline*.

(i) improving the grammar :—

237-38 : won by a word again

Into my old life—for (by—C-text) one little word

811 : O God where does this (*do they*—C) tend—these struggling
aims ?

(ii) reducing the subjective tone :—

525 : As would encircle me (*men*—C) with praise and love :

924 : I am very weak (A) Words are wild and weak (C)

(iii) moderating a statement :—

864-65 : I have said

That love which I have ever felt for thee (A)

I have said

Somewhat of love I ever felt for thee (C)

867 : That speech is (*seemed*—C) mockery ;

(iv) heightening a statement :—

626 : All hopes and fears, to live alone with it, (A)

All happy ignorant hopes and fears, to live, (C)

975-77 : we will go and think again,

And all old loves shall come to us but changed

As some sweet thought (A)

we will question life once more.

Till its old sense shall come renewed by chance,

Like some clear thought (C)

(v) lending precision and clarity to the expression :—

508 : Some trusted end, seems sad, when all in vain—(A)

Some trusted end, grows sad when all proves vain—(C)

542-44 : And I well knew my spirit that would be

First in the struggle, and again would make

All bow to it ; and I would sink again. (A)

And I foreknow my spirit, that would press

First in the struggle, fail again to make

All bow enslaved, and I again should sink. (C)

(vi) alteration of the idea :—

687-88 : Why have not I sought refuge in myself,

But for the woes I saw and could not stay—(A)

Why else have I sought refuge in myself.

But from the woes I saw and could not stay ? (C)

- 875 : No less I feel that thou hast brought me bliss ; (A)
 No less song proves one word has brought me bliss, (C)

Perhaps the most interesting verbal change occurs in l.884 where "chronicled" replaces "shadowed out". The two texts are :—

- (A) And then thou said'st a perfect bard was one
 Who shadowed out the stages of all life,
 And so thou badest me tell this my first stage—
 (C) And then thou said'st a perfect bard was one
 Who chronicled the stages of all life,
 And so thou bad'st me shadow this first stage.

DeVane (*Handbook*, p. 38) comments thus on the change : "The difference implied in the single word is great : the earlier version reveals the autobiographical and confessional poet of 1833 ; the later shows the 'dramatic' poet which he strove to become." It is necessary to be more cautious in interpreting this dictional change. A favourite word with Browning, "chronicled" no doubt implies the objective character of poetry. But "shadowed out" of 1833, retained in 1868, has the sense of "setting forth", and bears virtually the same meaning as "chronicled", although it does not imply the same thoroughness of artistic objectivity. "Shadowed out" connotes no autobiographical tendency ; it rather throws a faint suggestion of the *dramatis personae* being marionettes in the hands of the poet. Disliking the effete verb "tell" in l. 886, Browning cancelled it and also "my", and put in "shadow", a verb of two syllables ; next, to avoid repetition, he replaced "shadowed out" of l. 884 by the trisyllabic word "chronicled". The fact that in 1888, Browning did not discard the verb "shadowed out" (the disappearance of which from l. 884 is considered so important by DeVane) but used this verb and "chronicled" as though they are interchangeable, proves that both texts imply the same conception of the function of the Poet.

Unlike his contemporary Tennyson, Browning does not begin his poetical career with experiments in the numerous lyrical metres bequeathed by the poets of the Romantic Revival.

Between *Pauline* and *King Victor and King Charles* (1842), the only poems that are not written in blank verse are *Sordello*, *Porphyria's Lover*, *Johannes Agricola*, *Still ailing*, *wind*, *A Forest Thought*, the songs in *Paracelsus* and *Pippa Passes*, and parts of Pippa's speeches. This sustained adherence to the blank verse shows the poet's ambition and independence; ambition because none but the most difficult and complex metrical pattern in the language would be the adequate receptacle for the ideas that welled up in his young mind; independence inasmuch as his handling of the verse is distinctly original, if not particularly beautiful. In *Pauline*, the blank verse does not attain to that mobile conformity to speech rhythm and the occasional outbursts of imaginative intensity which distinguish the later verse, yet here too, the verse commands our attention. "No *Alastor*, no *Pauline*", says Saintsbury⁵⁰, and truly, if any metrical influence can be traced in *Pauline*, it is the influence of Shelley's rhythm, especially, the rhythm of *Alastor*. Nevertheless, metrically, the two poems are but distant cousins. The feature obviously common to the rhythms of the two poems, is a quality of breathlessness, an urgent impulsion to move forward. But the verse dynamics of the two poems are different in that while Shelley's speed arises from a mighty stir of emotions, Browning's rapidity has its source in the unbalanced contention between surging sentiments on the one hand and the intellectual plan of clarifying a complex psychology. Browning has not that control over his subject matter which Shelley has, and yet he is clamorous for expression,—it is in this fact that the reason for his breathlessness lies. That Browning gives himself up to the sheer rhythm much less than Shelley, is brought out by a study of the use they respectively make of the pause.

	<i>Alastor</i>	<i>Pauline</i>
Run-on lines :	414 out of 720 = 57·5 p.c.	410 out of 1031 = 40 p.c.
Lines without any	46 out of the first 222	20 out of the first 205
pause :	= more than 20 p.c.	= about 10 p.c.

50. *History of English Prosody*, III, p. 218.

Lines with internal pause only	76 in ll.1-222	76 in ll.1-205
Lines with more than one internal pause :	about 7 p.c.	about 13 p.c
Lines with both internal and final pauses :	41 in ll.1-222=18 p.c.	136 in ll.1-205=66 p.c.

The more frequent *enjambment* in Shelley and the fewer pauses contribute an irresistible fluidity to the verse, while the numerous pauses in Browning represent the poet's desire to think out at every step the substance of his poem and constantly to qualify and extend his statements. The result in Browning is a staccato movement which is further helped, as has been already shown, by the dash signs. In the first 205 lines of *Pauline*, masculine lines number 76 (= 37 p.c.) while in the first 105 lines of *Alastor*, there are only 4 lines where the foot-divisions do not break up the syllables of words. In *Alastor*, therefore, the rolling movement of the rhythm refuses to be contained by the semantic agglomeration of syllables. When we talk of the Shelleyan 'breathlessness' of *Pauline*, it is important to know the difference in rhythmic quality between Browning's poem and Shelley's because therein lies the younger poet's metrical originality. The verse of *Pauline* is unusually swift,—the swiftness of *Alastor* must have clung to Browning's memory,—but the swiftness is that of an impatient and restless thinking, not of a joyous surrender to the sheer rhythm. Even in his most emotional poem, Browning betrays by his metrical practice a more insistent habit of thinking than any other poet does.

With this rhythmic speed is associated a ruggedness of sound, although there is much less ruggedness in *Pauline* than in the later blank verse. That this ruggedness is not due to any unusual preponderance of consonants over vowels, as might appear on a superficial estimate, is evident from the following calculations.

(*Pauline*) Shelley passage (ll.151-162)—

158 vowels in a total of 418 letters=38p.c.

Andromeda passage (657-668)—			
	174 vowels in a total of 423 letters=	41p.c.	
Paeon-of-air passage (785-797)—			
	196 " " "	467 " =	42p.c
Analytical passage (344-356)—			
	182 " " "	456 " =	40p.c.
" " (268-280)—			
	160 " " "	410 " =	39p.c.
" " (634-649)—			
	215 " " "	541 " =	40p.c.
Paracelsus, V, 600-650—			
	670 " " "	1665 " =	40p.c.
Sordello, III, 1-20—			
	271 " " "	672 " =	40p.c.
In a Balcony, 1-18—			
	277 " " "	585 =	about 48p.c.
(Shelley) <i>Queen Mab</i> , 1-15 :	159	382	41'6p.c.
<i>Alastor</i> , 1-17 :	235	574	41p.c.
(Keats) <i>I stood tip-toe</i> , 1-16 :	222	554	40p.c.
(Tennyson) <i>The Merman</i> ; 8-20 :	170	400	42'5p.c.
<i>The Ballad of Oriana</i> , 1-27 :	210	466	45p.c.

This comparative table shows that the presence of consonants is so slightly more numerous in *Pauline* than in the other poems that a connection between the consonants and the rhythmic ruggedness would be unwarranted. The fact is that Browning is a traditionalist in regard to the sound-quality of his diction and makes no experiments with it as Gerard Manley Hopkins, for instance, does. The secret of his ruggedness should be sought in his practice of foot-substitution. Trisyllabic feet, especially anapaests, which so frequently introduce a mellowing modulation in the rhythm of Shelley's blank verse, occupy no large place in Browning's foot-scheme. In general, Browning dares not indulge in substitutions in this poem to any large extent ; there are, in the first 205 lines, as many as 105 lines (51p.c.) entirely regular. But when he does resort to substitution, he tends to reverse the ascending rhythm

of the foot so as to produce an energetic accent. In the first 205 lines of the poem, there are only 13 anapaests but 61 trochees, 44 spondees, and 50 pyrrhics, while contiguous pyrrhics and spondees occur 31 times, there being two lines (66 and 188) where the combination is found twice. For trochaic and spondaic substitutions, Browning's fancy grew very strong in the later blank verse and became responsible for the occasionally harsh and always vigorous rhythm with which the poet is associated. In *Pauline*, there is considerably more smoothness due to the influence of Shelley; yet the large number of trochees and spondees succeed in producing an explosive effect that distinguishes this verse from Shelley's. Browning sometimes overdoes the pyrrhic-spondee combination as in line 66 :

To the wind murmuring in the damp copse,

The violent wrench given here to the normal iambic rhythm has not a tithe of the justification which Milton's famous line has :

Rocks, caves, lakes, fens, bogs, dens, and shades of death.

(*P. L.*, II, 621)

Imitative and diffident in his metrical performance, Browning is astonishingly independent in his choice of the poetical form. Rejecting the traditional forms of poetry, he boldly experiments in the novel pattern of the dramatic monologue in his earliest published work. Notwithstanding its novelty, the form is also the gravest defect of the poem. Except the French note by *Pauline*, and the date appended to the poem, there is no evidence, internal or otherwise, to show that it is a written statement. It might as well be a speech. The value of the statement, as a *confession*, would not be materially affected by its form, whether a speech or a manuscript, yet some difference in the technique would arise. A written statement like *A Death in the Desert* or an epistolary monologue like *Cleon* or *Karshish* has a technique

different from that of a speech monologue proper like *Fra Lippo Lippi*. The speech monologue has a way of plunging straight into the theme which the written statement has not. Being a written thing, it is more formal, and requires a prelusive exposition of the situation. If the main theme of *Cleon* be considered a cultured Greek contemporary's view of Christ, and the main theme of *Karshish* a scientifically-minded Semitic's reaction to the story of Christ, then surely these two poems contain much matter that is not strictly germane to the issues. Yet these other items are not superfluities; they create that verisimilitude which is so necessary for a credible presentation of the themes. A speech monologue, on the contrary, begins with a quick hint of the action that forms the immediate cause of the speech. "But do not let us quarrel any more, no my Lucrezia",—thus the speaker opens his statement and we instantly realise the importance of the quarrel as the immediate impetus to Andrea's long self-analysis. The first two lines of *The Bishop Orders His Tomb* make clear the impending death of the speaker and prepare us for a testamentary speech. The first paragraph of *Bishop Blougram* sets the properties, as it were, for the harangue that follows. Thus while the speech monologue is forthright, the written statement⁵¹ is dilatory. But *Pauline* shows neither of these qualities;

51. Epistolary monologues or written statements are few in Browning: besides those mentioned above, there are also the three letters which Browning puts in Book XIII of *The R. & B.*,—the letter of a gay Venetian gentleman, that of Arcangeli to Cencini in Florence, and the other of Bottini. These letters are much more to the point and far less dilatory than *Cleon* or *Karshish*, because they report an exceedingly sensational incident and because the purpose of these letters is not to reveal the personalities of the writers but to represent certain typical points of view. Even so, the first two letters contain a good deal of non-essential comment and gossip. The ancestry of the dramatic monologue has been traced back to the *Mirror for Magistrates*, even to some of the later prologues of the *Canterbury Tales*, for example, that of the Pardoner (cf., *MLN*, 1908, XXIII, pp. 108-111). See also, "The dramatic monologue in the Victorian period", Maccallum, London, 1925.

here, one reads line after line without meeting any description or a dependable hint of a background of actual events. There is no fable in the poem,—that is its chief weakness. In fact, our native curiosity for a fable is roused several times and each time thoughtlessly let down by the poet. In lines 25-27, the poet-lover states that there must be a sad confession first, to be followed by remorse and pardon and renewal of old affiliations. A new paragraph begins at line 28, "I had been spared this shame, if I had sate" etc., and one expects this to begin the explanation of the occasion of the hero's self-disparagement, but the expectation is baffled when from the next line onwards the poet-lover trails off into another long wail for his degenerated state. Line 55 promises a reminiscent narration, "Thou wilt remember one warm morn"; but one searches the succeeding lines in vain for a grain of solid fact. Before one can easefully enter into a spiritual understanding of the speaker's feelings and thoughts, one must be intellectually satisfied as to what sequence of events has led to this mighty pothor of a confession. In a sense every dramatic monologue is a confession, intentional or not; the reader, in any case, can see into the speaker's character. But the confession must have a situational basis, some factual source of the psychology,—a source which is denied to the reader of *Pauline*. This curiosity unsatisfied is easily transposed by the average reader into a conviction of the poem's obscurity. That the speaker is an Englishman, a poet, the lover of a French girl, and a Christian who has had a temporary aberration of religious doubts,—are the only solid facts of the poem. For the rest, we have a great agitation of the soul, but the circumstantial causes of this agitation are not mentioned. The poet-lover speaks of illness, madness and impending death, but these must be moral and not physical, since Pauline in her note does not refer to any such possible calamities.

The fact is, *Pauline* lacks in interior form. There is no inner necessity in the conception to control the form as there is in *Andrea del Sarto*. In *Andrea*, a conflict between the

character and the environment inevitably calls for a dramatic utterance ; the long-felt greyiness of Andrea's mind contributes no less to the utterance than the immediate circumstance of Lucrezia's outing. Macbeth's speech "Tomorrow and tomorrow and tomorrow" results from the impact of the news of Lady Macbeth's death upon a soul wrenched by the anguish of growing disillusion. The harmonious adaptation of the mood to the occasion is the inner compulsion out of which these utterances well up. *Pauline*, having only a mood and no discernible impetus of a background-action, lacks in this harmony, and therefore, lacks in interior form. Nevertheless, Browning's earliest attempt at the presentation of the psychology of a man, *Pauline* shares the supreme artistic worth of all dramatic monologues, namely, character-revelation. In the dramatic monologue, the character is scooped up, as it were, from the stream of consciousness, and analysed at a moment of intense spiritual existence. Undoubtedly, *Pauline* gives us such a moment of intense existence analysed, and this inner dynamics, this quick flow of thoughts and emotions while Time watches motionless, was a novel and immensely promising element in English poetry when *Pauline* was published. In his preface (afterwards discarded) to the first edition of *Paracelsus*, Browning wrote that his attempt was

to reverse the method usually adopted by writers whose aim it is to set forth any phenomenon of the mind or the passions, by the operation of persons and events ; and..... instead of having recourse to an external machinery of incidents to create and evolve the crisis I desire to produce, I have ventured to display somewhat minutely the mood itself in its rise and progress, and have suffered the agency by which it is influenced and determined to be generally discernible in its effects alone...

Browning's is one of the earliest and most notable of pleas for that inward movement in literature which, according

to C. E. Vaughan,⁵² is the distinctive mark of modern literature. By his insistence on the psychological method of literature whereby the cause of a mood or a passion is deduced from the effect, the external machinery of events is reduced to its barest minimum, and all the artistic endeavour of the writer is devoted to a microscopic analysis of the mood in procession, Browning proves himself the pioneer of a long line of modern writers, Henry James, Dorothy Richardson, Virginia Woolf and Aldous Huxley, and the charge of obscurity levelled against Browning is very much like a similar complaint against T. S. Eliot heard some years back, a charge essentially untenable but understandable, in the case of *Pauline*, on the ground of the absolute importance attached to the analysis and almost none to the significant facts. That Browning does not succeed in his method in his first work is because the facts which he has introduced in this poem do not give the pageantry of passions and moods a sufficient *terra firma*. Unrelated to any assured background action, the moods and passions become purely lyrical and fail to be dramatic. The rudiments of the analytical element displayed in *Pauline* move from strength to strength in the later works. *Paracelsus*, written within a year and a half of *Pauline*, is virtually a string of monologues in which stress has been laid on just the amount of factual matter which is necessary to render the hero's introspection convincing. It was not before 1845 (*Dramatic Romances and Lyrics*) that Browning began systematically to express himself through the dramatic monologue. The best pieces in this volume, best as dramatic monologues, are *The Bishop Orders*, *The Laboratory*, and *The Confessional*,—poems in which a sufficient hint of background action occurs. *Johannes Agricola* and *Porphyria's Lover* (both published first in *The Monthly Repository*, N. S., 1836) show that though Browning can conceive a situation, he cannot yet integrate the character to the action so intimately as to make the total effect plausible. The poems are in effect lyrical. In *Pauline*, the lyrical element is stronger still. The lack of

52. *Types of Tragic Drama*, London, 1908.

harmony between the mood and the occasion, a lack due to a total negligence of the significant features of the occasion, leaves the mood to make shift for itself as best it may. The two shorter poems are better works of art because of their greater concentration, but the parallel movements in *Pauline* of a strong emotionalism and an equally urgent desire to analyse and survey the entire field of the poet-lover's inner life, render any concentration impossible. The lyrical surplusage of the early monologues is reduced and a harmonious balance between thought and feeling is struck in the *Men and Women* volume. The interest of the form of *Pauline* lies in the fact that it marks the tentative first stage in Browning's poetry of a brilliant and progressive movement towards the perfection of the dramatic monologue.

Browning's vocabulary, not systematically studied so far⁵³, promises to be a fruitful subject of investigation inasmuch as he, more than any other major serious writer of the period, employs contemporary speech idiom. The idiomatic character grows prominent in the mature poetry where it is aesthetically demanded by the dramatic cast of the poems, but even in *Pauline*, the words used are marked by familiarity. "Rich and rare phraseology—ancient medals, obscure coins, and Spanish pieces of eight"—to use the language of Hazlitt, are admitted in Browning's poetry only after *Pauline*; his first work shows no recourse to unusual and rare words as are to be found in *Paracelsus* and *Sordello*:—genethliac, colibri, purfle, tetter, morpew, furfair, sempiternal, obsidian. Nor is there any coinage like "beseemingness", any Gallicism like "at last" (*Par.*, IV, 574) which is used in the sense of *enfin*, any Elizabethanism like "I have no julep, as men think, / To cheat the grave" (*Par.*, IV, 673-4). The words used in *Pauline*

53. There is a word-collection in *N. & Q.*, vol. 157, pp. 273-292. Many useful observations are scattered throughout A. K. Cook's *Commentary on The Ring and The Book*.

are the stock words of English Romantic poetry, enlivened by the urgent passion of the youthful poet-lover whose confession the poem is. The words which have been used most often are :—

soul-26 times in A-text, 31 times in C (*Paracelsus*, 36 times); wild-20 (*Par.*, 7); dream-18 (*Par.*, 20); strange-16 (*Par.*, 20); dim-12 (*Par.*, 12); wander-11 (*Par.*, 3); bright-10 (*Par.*, 8); dark-9 (*Par.*, 11); beauty-7; fancy-7 (*Par.*, 8); chain-6.

Other favourite words less often used, occurring also in *Paracelsus*, are, *gleam, wondrous, decay, radiant, woods, towers, spirit, giant, struggle*. Some of these, like *struggle, decay, chain, wild, soul*, are no doubt necessitated by the subject-matter of the poem, yet from the very liberal employment of *soul* one gathers the impression as though Browning were obsessed by the word. For his choice of the diction in *Pauline* we cannot hold Browning indebted to any particular poet, since the favourite words, full of characteristically, romantic associations, are among the stock diction of the Romantic Revival⁵⁴. This freedom from dictional discipleship indicates that although the youthful Browning is influenced by the general qualities of the poetry of Keats and Shelley, Shelley in particular, and although there are some echoes of Shelley in

54. Consider, for example, words like *chasm* (676), *emerald* (755), *dark hair, dim* (two frequent adjectives in *Pauline*), *splendour* (frequent in *Paracelsus*), *trackless* (178, & *Par.*, I, 560). John Livingstone Lowes *PMLA*, 1940, pp. 203-206) says that these words which occur also in *The Witch of Atlas* were borrowed by Shelley from *Endymion*. In the same journal, 1941, pp. 479-494, David Lee Clark proves that for these words and many more, Shelley was not certainly indebted to Keats; he suggests that having a keen verbal sense and a retentive memory, Shelley unconsciously drew these words and imagery from a variety of sources among whom may be mentioned Virgil, Euripides, Shakespeare, Spenser, Pliny, Rabelais. I think the occurrence of words of this kind in any poet should not be construed as indebtedness; these belong to the commonwealth of romantic poetic diction.

Pauline, he is independent enough not to imitate the mannerisms of the elder poets. The words employed are not *distingue'* but straightforward, except on occasions where an intellectual inability to cope with the extremely subtle variations of an effervescent mind leads to incoherence or nebulosity of expression.⁵⁵

Browning does not seem to have had that conscious preference for words of any particular philological stock, Latin or Teutonic, which came in the wake of the Romantic Revival and distinguishes the poetry of Coleridge, Scott, Keats, Tennyson, Morris and Swinburne.⁵⁶ In practice, however, his words are masculine, generally Teutonic, and highly monosyllabic. An analysis of some passages gives the following results :

Ll. 1-20 :	87 p.c. of monosyllables	
„ 151-205 :	84 p.c. „	„ (The Shelley passage, ecstatic & lyrical)
„ 403-429 :	87 p.c. „	„ (The Plato passage, ecstatic & lyrical)
„ 588-654 :	79 p.c. „	„ (Analytical & metaphysical)
„ 732-810 :	82 p.c. „	„ (Description of nature)
„ 986-1031 :	90 p.c. „	„ (Lyrical again)

The abundance of monosyllables fell off in later works ; the great penultimate speech of Paracelsus contains 74 p.c. of monosyllables, and the first hundred lines of the sixth book of *Sordello*, about 73 p.c. The only word of five syllables is "companioning" (l.643) and that word too is an insertion of the final edition. To the fluid, forthright movement of the verse the monosyllables contribute in no small measure.

Although in general, Browning's syntax carries more the quality of prose than that of conventional versification, in

55. The C-text removes these "solecisms" in a number of places. See Appendix iii.

56. Otto Jespersen, *Growth and Structure of the English Language*, Oxford, 1935, p. 211.

Pauline as in the later works he shows a predilection for certain poetic words, words that pass current in poetry but are not permissible in prose. Among such words are substantives like "morn" (116), "eve" (569), "orb" (91), "thou" (76), "thee" (47), "aught" (337), "nought" (326); verb-formations like "dost" (959), "hast" (950), "wert" (561), "wilt" (55); adjectives and adverbs like "fain" (81), "ere" (987), "oft" (849), "nigh" (494), "far" in the sense of far-away (450); a conjunction as "betwixt" (496); a pronoun as "whoso" (11); adjectives like "lone" (532), "beauteous" (535), "wondrous" (669). Neither in *Pauline* nor elsewhere in his works does Browning prove himself alive to the poetry of names, the "five sweet symphonies" of Rossetti. Of the four names used in this poem, three occur by virtue of the theme, "Andromeda" (656) and "Olivet" (851); "Tenedos", in the line "Sailing with troops of friends to Tenedos" (325) and "Proserpine" (335) have been introduced for the sheer poetry of the names.

Adjectives—easy snares for a young poet—are sparingly employed by Browning, and where they are used they are mostly employed for the ordinary purpose of amplifying the sense of the noun.

2	thy <i>sweet</i> eyes,
	And <i>loosened</i> hair, and <i>breathing</i> lips,
133	the <i>waving</i> mass
	Of <i>climbing</i> plants, <i>heavy</i> with bloom
350	The wanderings of <i>delirious</i> dreams
749	this our <i>new</i> retreat
	Walled in with a <i>sloped</i> mound of <i>matted</i> shrubs
452	<i>delicious</i> mirth,
	And <i>laughing</i> fairy creatures

In these and in many other instances,—one might say almost generally throughout the poem,—the poet shows little sensitiveness to that suggestive power of qualifying words which transcends their semantic worth, a sensitiveness which so holds the reader's imagination in the early poems of Shelley, Keats'

and Tennyson.⁹⁷ The value of adjectives Browning learnt later, adjectives that are a joy for ever : "cool silver shock of the plunge in a pool's living water", "serpentine beauty", "everlasting wash of air", "fitful sunshine-minutes", "good, gigantic smile of the brown old earth", "silent silver lights". *Pauline*, however, is not altogether lacking in adjectival words signifying more than the mere meaning.

177-8 Some wild bird
Stoop for its freshness from the *trackless* air,⁵⁹
284-6 an imagination.....coming not
In *fitful* visions
570 The *giant* shades of fate
712-3 A slight flower growing alone, and offering
Its *frail* cup of three leaves to the *co'd* sun,
733 Between the *sullen* river and the woods
788 Air, air fresh life-blood,—*thin* and *searching* air—

The emotional tone of these adjectives intensifies the imaginative appeal of the lines. In such instances as,

362-3 a clime, where glittering mountain-tops
And glancing sea, and forests steeped in light,
774-5 thro' their roots long creeping plants stretch out
Their twined hair, steeped and sparkling ;

the poet has chosen epithets primarily for their sound-value. In the first example, the *l* of "clime" recurs in "glittering", *gl* of "glittering" recurs in "glancing", the *t* and *n* sounds of

57. In the first 104 lines of *Queen Mab* we get "lurid blue", "tainted sepulchres", "roseate mornings", "glowing limbs", "stainless pride", "unyielding air", "pearly and pellucid car", "purpureal halo"; in the first 100 lines of *I stood tip-toe upon a little hill*, we find "a little noiseless noise", "crystal air", "dwindled edgings", "jaunty streams", "luxuries bright, milky, soft, and rosy", "lush laburnum", "hurrying freshnesses"; in the first nine stanzas of Tennyson's *Recollections of the Arabian Nights*, "silken sail of infancy", "sheeny summer-morn", "fretted gold", "fragrant, glistening deeps", "braided blooms unmown", "the living airs of middle night".

58. cf. *Par.* I, 560, "I see my way as birds their trackless way."

"glittering" are reinforced in "mountain-tops"; the *c* sound of "glancing" is repeated in "sea". In the second, the consonant *p* is repeated in "creeping" and "plants", while "steeped" and "sparkling" are alliterative.

In other instances, the symbolic associations of certain words are exploited to heighten their obvious logical connotation.

102 came/A *white* swan to remain with me ;

White implies more than the complexion of the swan, it suggests a total purity. Unfortunately, Browning mars this fine suggestion by elaborating it two lines below where he speaks of "the peace of its *pure* wings". Line 651, "To sicken, and to quiver, and grow *white*",—a repetitious elaboration of the Shelleyan kind,—employs the word *white* in a new significance in context with "hate" (650) to which it refers. A more conventional employment of symbolic adjectives is found in "the *green* woods in the *gay* summer time" (l. 369—where too the use of *gay* is a tautology because of *green*) ; "which have made painters *pale*" (371—*pale* has been similarly used in 922, "pale poet's sleep"). In "they leave life's path for the *twilight* world" (373), the adjective is symbolical though not fresh. Browning's later judgment was not always in the right. The change of "her dark eyes" (659) into "her fixed eyes" is a change for the worse in view of the other adjectives already there, "earnest and still", while *dark* of the earlier version is valuable for its suggestion of the colour of Andromeda's eyes. Similarly, there is no gain in the change of "golden spray" (745) into "silver spray". Some of the adjectives, none too arresting, bear a tactual suggestion : "the *solid* azure waters" (792), "the *roughest* swell/of the wind" (738), "the *thick* darkness" (107). *Soft* is repeatedly used to convey a tactual sensation : "thy soft breasts" (740), "soft hair" (196), "soft mouth" (234), "soft eyes" (765). Such a recurrent use of a word,—revitalised on no occasion,—inevitably leads to a pedestrian effect.

wild 14 some wild thought

30 my wild dreams of beauty and of good

315 turning my wild youth

138 my rude songs or my wild imaginings

In the last example, *rude* bears the Miltonic association of "forced fingers rude".

- strange* 98 A strange delight in causing my decay
 191 And I, perchance, half feel a strange regret,
 248 with strange feelings, unrevealed
 595 It has strange powers, and feelings, and desires,
bright 60 Like the bright side of a sorrow
 78 But as one entering bright halls
 161 The air seems bright with thy past presence
 423 What then seemed my bright fate
dim 91 wild dominion into the dim orb,/Of self
 915 And there was a dim crowd
 Of visions, each a part of the dim whole.
 522 the few dim gleams transferred
 164 With all thy dim creations gathered round

All these are beautiful words capable of infinite nuances, but Browning fails to exploit the treasure. *Strange*, for instance, is used to connote anything about the quality of which the poet is either emotionally or intellectually not confident. The use of *dim* is no less indiscriminate, and *wild* is rather wildly used. "Bright" is the poetic word for "alive" '°°; in *Pauline* it carries no such meaning. Not to speak of the startling suggestiveness of "A bracelet of bright hair about the bone" (Donne) or the picturesque paradox of "The bright death quivered at the victim's throat" (Tennyson), the young Browning is incapable of conceiving even the modest colourfulness of "Have you seen but a bright lily grow" (Ben Jonson).

Compound words are rarer in *Pauline* than in *Sordello* or *Paracelsus*, and those that are to be found show no such study of previous poets as may be observed in Tennyson's compounds in the 1830 or the 1832 volume. More than twenty compound epithets have been used in course of 176 lines of the first four pieces of Tennyson's 1830 *Poems*, while in the whole of *Pauline*

less than a score of compound words—not all of which are epithets—meet the eye :—

Sun-treader 1.151 ; new-shapes 705 ; morn-blush 583 ; halo-girt 320 ; heart-wreck 447 ; fruit-flushed 455 ; mind-broken 498 ; giant-ghosts 736 ; hell-dress 831 ; far-flashing sun 364 ; still-decaying frame 654 ; salt-sweeping breeze 660 ; snow-swathed mountains 953 ; pale-throated snake 762 ; high-crested chief 324 ; quick-glancing serpent 796 ; sea-beaten ship 919 ; sun-warm water 725 ;

Of these, “morn-blush,” “heart-wreck,” “mind-broken” and “hell-dress” have little imaginative value. “New-shapes” (hyphenated into a compound in the final edition) is an excellent verb-formation ; “giant-ghosts” testifies to the young poet’s Shelleyan feeling for the supernatural ; “sun-treader”, a marvel of a compound, attests to the poet’s devotion to the poetic god of his youth. Some are alliterative double phrases, alliteration always having an attraction for Browning. “Still-decaying”, “sea-beaten”, “far-flashing” and “high-crested” are merely descriptive, but “pale-throated” and “quick-glancing” are vividly pictorial. “Salt-sweeping” and “sun-warm”, particularly the latter, appeal effectively to the sense of the touch.

We have already noted Browning’s impatience with qualifying parts of speech, adjectives as well as adverbs. With the solitary exception of “quell regally” (290), the adverbs in the poem are tame and entirely utilitarian, as, “cast joyously” (466), “stands out hideously” (647), “leaping airily” (721), “winds noiselessly” (778). The adverb is sometimes extended into a minor simile : “loose as a stag” (433), “it wears me like a flame” (602), (old delights) “had come like birds again” (565), “should move men like a swift wind” (534). Unoriginal and belonging to the repertoire of ordinary poetic diction, such similes attract Browning specially because they imply, what the static imagery of Keats do not, a state of motion. This attraction for physical mobility is equally evident in Browning’s use of verbs. A verb no doubt is a part of speech denoting action, but action may be as much physical as psychological. In *Pauline*, Browning

has a special fancy for verbs connoting physical action. Of the 144 different verbs (without counting the verbs "to be" and "to have" and their numerous inflexions) used in the first hundred and the last hundred lines of the poem taken together, as many as 109 (75p.c. of the total) imply a physical kinesis.⁶⁰ This attraction for actions manifesting a state of muscular energy is closely related to the poet's preference for tactual adjectives and tactual imagery. As a rule, the Browningian image is more tactual than visual (which is the most common form that sensuousness takes) or auditory. Browning does not merely see or smell a thing or hear a sound; he has, as it were, an epidermal sensation of the thing being in a state of muscular energy; the thing strikes his imagination as something palpable and tangible. Tactual imagery⁶¹ grow prominent in Browning's mature poetry, but even in this his earliest work, they are more numerous and no less impressive than the imagery of other categories. The fine paean of air in *Pauline* (788-797), "Air,—air—fresh life-blood,—thin and searching air" does not stand alone as indubitable testimony to the poet's keen power of imaginative touch.

- 1-2 thy *soft* breast/Shall *pant* to mine
 11-12 whoso *sucks* a poisoned wound
 Envenoms his own veins,
 18-19 whose quivering lip
 Was *bathed* in her enchantments—whose brow *burned*
 71-2 the *cool* breast
 I leaned on altered not its *quiet beating* ;
 144-5 whose renown *springs up*
 Like sunlight which will visit all the world ,
 108 Its silver pinjons must be *cramped* and *numbed*

60. In the first 200 lines of *Queen Mab*, 69 p.c. of the verbs denote physical motion; in 107 lines of the speech of the Spirit of the Hour in *Prometheus Unbound*, III, iv, physical verbs are 62.5 p.c.; in 132 lines of Keats' *To C. Cowden Clark*, physical verbs are 61 p.c.

61. See the excellent article on *Touch Images in the poetry of Browning* by J. K. Bonnell, *PMLA*, XXXVII, 1922.

216-18 I am not even to catch a tone
Of all the harmonies which he called up,
So one gleam still remains...

In the first three extracts, the combination of musical tunes of which our experience is auditory, is conceived of as a texture which is liable to the sense of touch : in the fourth and the fifth, the metaphor is that of catching a tone as though the tone were some bodied thing ; the fourth example finds hues in the tune, and the fifth finds gleams. There is a mixture of metaphors in the last two examples, but what is called a mixed metaphor is sometimes no proof of an intellectual confusion but an evidence, on the contrary, of the poet's imaginative transition from one sense-perception to another so as to identify the two perceptions. These brief images are no less valuable witnesses to the sensuous quality of the poet's imagination than the longer and more ambitious similes. The four elaborate similes of the poem, ll. 155-60, 367-74, 450-56, and 469-87, testify to the poet's inchoate romantic fancy. None drawn from the world of actuality, these similes tell us of some Spirit sitting regardless of scorn and neglect from people around him who praise him when he is gone ; of a low voice which calls men to the green woods and fills all the way with dancing shapes leading to the twilight world of the dead ; of a world-wanderer who experiences a mirage-like vision of strange towers and walled gardens where songful merrymaking goes on and fairies laugh ; of a temple in which the seat of God has been usurped by a dark spirit, where troops of shadows kneel before the poet to hail him as their king. In these similes, Browning proves himself as one who has so far lived more in the ethereal world of his fancies built upon his readings in romantic tales, than in the world of men and manners. Imagery based upon experiences of the actual world grow into prominence in his poetry from *Paracelsus* onwards.

Certain words are repeated throughout the poem like varying tunes on the same key and are an index to the tendencies of the poet's mind. The romantic temper, mystery-loving and fanciful,

is manifest in the continual recourse to suggestions of magic, enchantment, and spell.

18-19 Nature would point at one, whose quivering lip
Was bathed in her enchantments—

27 Who learned the spell which can call up the dead,

129-30 As one gives up a charm which shuts him out
From hope, or part, or care, in human kind.

169-70 panting but to hear thy name,
Which I believed a spell to me alone,

846-7 I am knit round
As with a charm, by sin and lust and pride,

997 I felt the witchery that makes mind sleep

Par., V, 200 But now I have forgotten the charm of charms,

The byways of thought and aspiration, of doubt and faith, into which the poet-lover's mind had strayed, suffering almost a sea-change, naturally strike Browning's imagination as the conjurings of the black art. Closely related to the magic-theme is the notion of unearthly shapes and images.

368-70 A low voice calling Fancy, ...

.....

And she fills all the way with dancing shapes,

734-5 for the moonless night
Has shaped them into images of life,

848-9 Yet tho' my wandering dreams have seen all shapes
Of strange delight,

969-70 Over the unshaped images which lie
Within my mind's cave—

Par., V, 732 A shape peeps from the breezy forest-top,

Like the boy Shelley searching for ghosts, 'pursuing hopes of high talk with the departed dead', Pauline's lover thrills to the contemplation of the dead and their twilight world; Line 21, already quoted, reveals the poet's interest in 'calling up the dead', but the line does not stand alone.

373 As they leave life's path for the twilight world,
Where the dead gather.

- 39 the past is in its grave,
 Tho' its ghost haunts us—
- 736 Like the upraising of the giant-ghosts,
 Looking on earth to know how their sons fare.
- 966 Or we will go together, like twin gods
 Of the infernal world, with scented lamp
 Over the dead—to call and to awake—

Par., III, 677 Their faint ghosts sit with me

Giants, among the same romantic-supernatural paraphernalia, occupy the poet's mind with no less emphasis.

- 322 a giant,
 Standing vast in the sunset—
- 570 The giant shades of fate, silently flitting,
- 1026 For I seem dying, as one going in the dark
 To fight a giant—

"Giant-ghosts" in line 736 quoted above, keep company with this supernatural fraternity. More benign than the ghosts and milder than the giants, but more metaphysical than either, are the 'spirits' who flit across the pages of the poem.

- 156 some Spirit there
 Hath sat regardless of neglect and scorn,
 Till its long task completed, it hath risen
 And left us, never to return :
- 472 some dark spirit sitteth in his seat !
- 510 For their wild fancy's sake, which waited first,
 As an obedient spirit,

Tormented by the strenuous effort to recover self-composure and excited by the images of these denizens of a world other than that of mankind, the poet-lover regards his condition as that of fever and sickness.

- 140 The fever and the stir of after years !
- 350 The wanderings of delirious dream ;
- 243 if, indeed I tell the past,
 May'st thou forget it as a sad sick dream ;
- 395 the past was breaking
 Before the coming, and like fever worked.

- 650 I begin to know what thing hate is—
 To sicken, and to quiver, and grow white,
 674 And strait I fling age, sorrow, sickness off,
 699 All's fever—but when calm shall come again –
 817 Commanding for commanding sickens it,
Par, II, 175 I sicken on a dead gulf streaked with light
 „ II, 227 When my sick spirit craved repose a while—

This inner convulsion which is concretized by his imagination as a fever, is due to his inability to find some permanent ideal or principle to which he can fix his inner life. The metaphor for this unattained means to the ideal is "key", a key for which he searches the dominions of thought and feeling.

- 413 woven with them were words, which seemed
 A key to a new world ;
 434 I was full of joy—who lived
 With Plato—and who had the key to life.
 929 Be still to me
 A key to music's mystery, when mind fails,

Sometimes he thinks he may find this key, and at other times he misses it altogether. This alternation between attainment and loss metaphorically appears as sinking or being buoyant.

- 245 my lost soul too soon
 Sinks to itself,
 489 And buoyant and rejoicing was the spirit
 544 And I would sink again.
 670 sunk by error to men's sympathy,
 861 I feel the spirit which has buoyed me up
 Deserting me :
 874 I am sinking fast—yet tho' I sink
 1010 And tho' this weak soul sink,

Moments of spiritual depression are many, moments when his spirits seem to be sinking, or to follow the changing metaphor, when he is encircled by the gathering shades of darkness. Dim, dark, darkness, shades,—these are words strewn throughout the poem.

- 41 lest a worse thing
 Wait for us in the darkness.
 90 my soul had floated from its sphere
 Of wild dominion into its dim orb
 Of self—

- 99 I was a fiend, in darkness chained for ever

(The chain metaphor which is an easy transition from the idea of an uncontrollable, ever-wavering will, occurs frequently, and bears special aptness in ll. 505, 593, 631.)

- 514 Leaving a heavy darkness and warm tears.
 550 To face what e'er may lurk in darkness there—
 867 when dark hours come ;
 886 I feel all dim the shift/ Of thought,
 1010 tho' this weak soul sink, and darkness come,
 1026 as one going in the dark

But the restless, energetic imagination of the young poet would not—to follow once again the shifting metaphors—be ultimately chained, would not sink, would not permit itself to be enveloped by any spiritual darkness. It is no city of dreadful night that Browning visualizes ; his soul is on fire, it is towards visions of light and radiance that his imagination presses on. The most numerous group of imagery in the poem is evoked by the conception of light in its several variations, radiance, spark, flame, glitter, glow, shine, burn.

- 19-20 whose brow burned/Beneath the crown,
 77-8 I ne'er sung/But as one entering bright halls,
 114 I watched his radiant form/Growing less radiant—
 145 Like sunlight which will visit all the world ;
 151 Sun-treader—life and light be thine for ever ;
 161 The air seems bright with thy past presence yet,
 211 There is one spark of love remaining yet,
 218 So one gleam still remains,
 362 as a clime, where glittering mountain-tops,
 And glancing sea, and forests steeped in light,
 Give back reflected the far-flashing sun ;
 392 so much was light
 Lent back by others, yet much was my own.

- 417 Much there ! I felt my own mind had conceived,
 But there living and burning ;
 507 genius seen so bright when working forth
 519 The radiant sights which dazzle me ;
 573 hunting far in the sunshine

(*Sunshine* here has a heightened sense in contrast with the "giant shades of fate" in l. 570.)

- 582 And the late glow of life—changing like clouds,
 602 It wears me like a flame ;
 614 shining towers and dwellings,
 619 let me concentrate the sparks it spares.
 824 my soul's spark/Expands
 841 And burn to see thy calm, pure truths out-flash
 The brightest gleams of earth's philosophy
 863 Yet while its last light waits, I would say much,
 872 Collecting the last gleams to strive to tell
 880 dazzled by my wealth
 1011 Some little word shall light it up again,
 911 There were bright troops of undiscovered suns,
 Each equal in their radiant course.

The long descriptive passage, ll. 732-810, is full of brightness and sunshine : the sun brightens (742) breaking the sunbeams into emerald shafts (755) ; one pond of water gleams (768) ; the river is a silver thread (777) ; it is a glowing day (781), the air is sunny (785), the cloud floats, laden with light (786) ; copses are bright in the sun (805). The light-image⁶² dominates Browning's poetry all through. It is not the unearthly light of Shelley, "the white radiance of Eternity", something "burning

62. How important the idea of light is in Browning's philosophy is revealed in the following extract from Professor Alexander's "Analysis of *Sordello*", quoted in Berdcoe's *Cyclopaedia*, p 568. Professor Alexander gives a summary of axioms on a Theory of Will-Power from the work of an occult writer, Eliphas Levi, whose teaching was largely imbibed by the poet.

Axiom 13. Light is an electric fire, which is placed by man at the disposition of the will ; it illuminates those who know how to make use of it, and burns those who abuse it.

Axiom 14. The empire of the world is the empire of light.

through the inmost veil of Heaven", nor "the light that never was on sea or land"; it is the light of an intellectual certitude and mental vigour, the light of knowledge, that characterises Browning's vision. While Tennyson is fond of 'glimmering', Browning is devoted to 'radiant'. The difference in the two poets' outlooks on life is manifest even in the images employed in their testamentary poems. A poet of half-lights, Tennyson invokes the "Sunset and evening star"; "Browning would "at noonday in the bustle of man's worktime Greet the unseen with a cheer". The most distinctive feature of Browning's life and poetry, this clear and intelligent vision of things inevitably assumes the image of light.

Not merely these recurrent conceptions, certain key-symbols too run throughout the poem, some of them appearing in *Paracelsus* as well. The wide use of the star-imagery has been mentioned in the Commentary.

The panoramic view of distant towers, towns, and dwellings, rouses his imagination to the romantic quest for the land of heart's desire.

450 As some world-wanderer sees in a far meadow
Strange towers, and walled gardens, thick with trees,
Where singing goes on, and delicious mirth,

611 Wild feeling places me in dream afar,
In some wide country, where eye can see
No end to the far hills and dales bestrewn
With shining towers and dwellings.

Without foreshadowing the metaphysical symbolism of Yeats, towers in *Pauline* offer the weary soul an abode of peace and delight. "Isles and islands conjure up a powerful visual picture, and over and above this, they suggest remoteness" ⁶³; the suggestion is heightened in *Pauline* by the clustering together of islands.

330 never morn broke clear as those
On the dim clustered isles in the blue sea :

63. One is reminded of Clough's "ships becalmed at eve".

64 G. H. W. Rylands, *op. cit* , p. 62.

912 There were
 Clusters of far fair isles, which ocean kept
 For his own joy,

919 And one isle harboured a sea-beaten ship,

On a much more stock response is built the symbolism of
 "angel", the symbol for a kindly abstract power.

284 an imagination
 Which has been an angel to me—

414 A key to a new world ; the muttering
 Of angels, of something unguessed by man.

710 As one breathing his weakness to the ear
 Of pitying angel—

Par., I, 430 I will believe an angel ruled me thus,

„ II, 254 I covet not

 An influx of new power, an angel's soul :

„ III, 1014 Man must be fed

 With angels' food,

The agitated soul of Pauline's lover repeatedly yearns for the protection of an encircled area. In the lines below, no single word acts as a key to this symbol of an enviroing benediction, yet the symbolic suggestions are there. The poet-lover would fain seek refuge in love from the warring tendencies of his soul.

4 build up a screen
 To shut me in with thee, and from all fear,

300 I felt as one beloved, and so shut in
 From fear—

311 but sense supplies a love
 Encircling me and mingling with my life.

749 see this our new retreat
 Walled in with a sloped mound of matted shrubs,

The significance of the two elaborately-described symbols in the poem, that of the phoenix-like triumph of Richard III's soul over his decay, and the other of the imperishable beauty of Caravaggio's Andromeda awaiting the advent of some god to rescue her from distress and death, has already been discussed in the Commentary. The Andromeda symbol centres round

a female figure, and it is greatly interesting to note how often the figure of a symbolic woman,—sometimes nude,—occurs in *Pauline* and elsewhere in Browning's early poetry.

- 112 : And then I was a young witch, whose blue eyes,
As she stood naked by the river springs,
Drew down a god—
- 334 : Who stood beside the naked Swift-footed,
Who bound my forehead with Proserpine's hair.
- 946 . As a fair witch turned an old hag at night.
- 623 for I beheld it in its dawn,
The sleepless harpy with its budding wings,
And I considered whether I should yield
All hopes and fears, to live alone with it,
Finding a recompence in its wild eyes ;
- Par.*, II, 224-7 : Was she who glided through my room of nights,
Who laid my head on her soft knees and smoothed
The damp locks,—whose sly soothings just began
When my sick spirit craved repose awhile—
- „ II, 357-8 : Truly, thou hast laboured, hast withstood her lips,
The Siren's !
- „ V, 192 8 : In truth, my delicate witch,
My serpent-queen, you did but well to hide
The juggles I had else detected. Fire
May well run harmless o'er a breast like yours !
The cave was not so darkened by the smoke
But that your white limbs dazzled me · oh, white,
And panting as they twinkled, wildly dancing !
- „ V, 666 : But spring-wind, like a dancing psaltress, passes
- Sordello*, I, 412-27 : shrinking Caryatides
Of just-tinged marble like Eve's liliated flesh
Beneath her maker's finger when the fresh
First pulse of life shot brightening the snow.
The font's edge burthens every shoulder, so
They muse upon the ground, eyelids half closed ;
Some, with meek arms behind their backs disposed,
Some, crossed above their bosoms, some to veil
Their eyes, some, propping chin and cheek so pale,
Some hanging slack an utter helpless length
Dead as a buried vestal whose whole strength
Goes when the grate above shuts heavily.

So dwell these noiseless girls, patient to see,
 Like priestesses because of sin impure
 Penanced for ever, who resigned endure,
 Having that once drunk sweetness to the dregs.

To the adolescent sensuous imagination of the young poet, the idea of some intellectual allurements, unshakable and hurtful, appears in the vivid shape of a seductive female, a siren, a young witch, a harpy, a serpent-queen. Like Coleridge's Geraldine, she is "beautiful exceedingly" but malign in influence, an influence emphasised by her non-human personality and evidenced by the invariably degrading effects to which her companionship leads the victim. What the moral nature abhors, the senses hanker after. When this symbolic female⁶⁵ is a human creature, like Andromeda or Proserpine, rather than possessing any taint of tempting sensuality, she spiritually elevates the adorer. The Caryatides of the *Sordello* passage, in spite of the comparison with Eve's liliated flesh, are no animate beings as the sirens and the harpies; their introduction in the poem attests more to a pleasurable brooding picturesqueness than to any possible symbolic influence, although a suggestion of impurity is conveyed in the image of the priestesses penanced for ever because of their sin impure. Of what 'abysmal deeps of personality' this reiterative recourse to the image of a sensual female may offer us a glimpse, we have no biographical

65. Stewart Walker Holmes (*PMLA*, 1941, pp. 758-796) says that "Browning in his youth probably suffered from a case of 'psycho-neurosis' peculiar to the type of man who may become a prophet-poet, a seer." By psycho-neurosis he means "a departure from what is commonly regarded as 'normal' in evaluational ability. Those who deviate slightly are regarded as 'queer'; we put those in insane asylums who depart radically from our standards of psycho-physical behaviour". He then concedes that "almost certainly Browning's state was not psychotic to the same degree as those states which we find in inmates of mental hospitals". The significance of a symbol in the life of such a man is described in the words of Jung as "something that will take possession of one suffering from a psycho-neurosis and give meaning and form to the confusion of his neurotic mind." This symbol is a woman, and Holmes quotes (i) the young witch image which "would fascinate a psychiatrist", and (ii) the Andromeda lines, and finally says that Pauline, the eponymous character, is the redeeming symbol

materials to know ; on the contrary, whatever scanty records about Browning's early life have come down to us, prove, if anything, his remarkable freedom from inhibitions, even if he be judged, not by Victorian standards of such things but by our modern ones. The mind of the creative artist has not yet lent itself to the psycho-analyst's methods and to attempt to explain the run-away impulses of a poet's unconscious mind on the strength of the imagery that he uses would be an absurd business, at least until the science of psychology develops more accurate apparatuses than it now can command. "Imagery has been conceived by some as an extravagance of nature—a sort of mental appendix—fortunately harmless in the main as well as useless. As a final protest we have the Behaviourist's dismissal of the image with a wave of the hand and the casual remark that psychologists have given up the image."⁶⁶ Indeed, poetic imagery are hardly any definable indices to the origins of human thought. "The investigation of metaphor through whose guidance psychic health will return to Browning.

I appreciate the possibilities of Holmes' novel approach to *Sordello*, but cannot agree with his interpretation of *Pauline*. Not to speak of minor fallacies, the two chief errors which have vitiated his conclusions are : (a) He considers the poem "an attempt at auto-psychoanalysis", but is also doubtful about it ; "if this be sincerely autobiographical, then *Pauline* will be a most valuable source for this part of our study". In the face of Browning's avowed characterization of the poem as his earliest attempt at poetry always dramatic in principle, and so many utterances of so many persons, not his, there is no justification for regarding the poem as autobiographical, although no doubt, in so young a poet's first composition, there naturally is a good deal having personal bearings or analogies with personal tendencies, as I have shown in the Commentary. (b) When Holmes speaks of Browning's neurosis and draws parallels from Jung, he confuses the issues. Jung describes the modern man's neurosis in consequence of a maladjustment with the present course of civilisation. There is no evidence to show that Browning ever suffered from such a maladjustment with his times. Besides, any inner conflict through which Browning might have passed was certainly much less harrowing than the conflicts of some of his contemporaries, Tennyson, Matthew Arnold, the Bronte sisters.

66. J. E. Downy, *Creative Imagination*, Kegan Paul, p 36.

is curiously like the investigation of any of the primary data of consciousness : it cannot be pursued very far without our being led to the borderline of sanity."⁶⁷ Even as all speculation must, in the last analysis, confront an unanalysable First Cause, so too must literary criticism admit that ultimate power of poetry which defies our anatomy. Why a particular combination of words should affect us can never be explained to everybody's perfect satisfaction, yet a careful study of the words and imagery of a poet can help us enter into a sympathetic understanding of the quality of his imagination. The correlation of the woman-symbolism of Browning's early poetry to any probable element of his personal character would be nothing short of a wild goose chase since poetic imagery arise not from the poet's submerged unconscious self but from his conscious perception of the similarity between dissimilars. The quality of imagination which the woman-imagery reveal is the quality of an intensely alert sensuousness. Except the *Sordello* passage, of which the aesthetic value is purely descriptive, in no other passage does Browning betray himself in a state of mindless surrender to the pleasures of the senses ; these sensuous imagery issue fundamentally from some activity of the mind, some metaphysical or dialectical impasse which suddenly resolves itself into the shining exultant figure of a woman.

The imagery we have considered so far, feeble in conception and inadequate in expression though some of them may be, have the larger aesthetic merit of a close and organic inter-relation. Taken alone, any of these images may be a startling revelation of the unity between dissimilars or may fail to make the two hemispheres of the conception cohere. Inevitable in a twenty-year old poet, these occasional failures do not invalidate the worth of his poetic powers. What is far more important than the neatness of individual images is their integration to fundamentally the same poetic spirit. The images coalesce and

67. Middleton Murry, *Countries of the Mind*, second series, O U.P., p. 1.

dissolve into the higher unity of a primal mood which is potently communicated to the reader by the visual or auditory or tactual appeal of the single image. The appreciation of the leading motives of a creative mood is the rich result that the literary critic obtains through a study of the image as Caroline Spurgeon has shown in her analyses of Shakespearean imagery. The imagery of *Pauline* leave us with the knowledge, a knowledge to be broadly qualified as spiritual, of the virile poetic mind of a young man who thinks rapidly and passionately, though not very deeply, who weaves his thoughts into a close-knit texture of imaginative sensibility, loves the undefinable mysteries of a shadowy romantic realm and is impelled at the same time by certain abstract conceptions. His emotions are not those of a purely lyrical temper, nor is his intellect yet powerful enough to subordinate the emotional life to its own suzerain organism. It is a poetic mind not yet certain of its capabilities or preferences, but it is clearly a mind more original than derivative. More than this we cannot deduce from a study of the imagery, for to interpret a poet's personal character on the bases of the imagery he uses may be a perilously misleading process.⁶⁸

68. *PMLA*, LVII, 1942; "Analysis of Imagery: A Critique of Literary Method", Lillian Harlands Hornstein, pp. 638-653.

CHAPTER FOUR

THE sub-title of *Pauline*, "A Fragment of a Confession", has led to some confusion in the estimate of the poem. The confession has been believed to be personal; this belief has been stated by, among others, the five following representative critics⁶⁹ of the poet :—

(J. S. Mill ;written probably in 1833.)

this writer seems to me possessed with a more intense and morbid self-consciousness than I ever knew in any sane human being—I should think it a sincere confession though of a most unlovable state...he should not attempt to show how a person may be *recovered* from this morbid state—for he is hardly convalescent, and 'what should we speak of but that which we know ?'

(Joseph Arnould, Browning's friend of youth; written, Sept. 19, 1847)

did you ever happen upon Browning's "Pauline"? a strange, wild (in parts singularly magnificent) poet-biography : his own early life as it presented itself to his own soul viewed poetically ; in fact, psychologically speaking, his "Sartor Resartus".

(William Sharp ; written, 1890)

"Pauline" has a unique significance because of its autopsychical hints.

(Mrs Orr ; written, 1891)

we may regard the "Confession" as to a great extent his own.

(W. C. DeVane ; written, 1937)

The world has persisted in reading it, however, in the light of its sub-title, "A Fragment of a Confession" and is convinced that the confession is the author's own.

69. Mill's judgment is quoted in *Letters*, p. 366 ; Arnould's in *Robert Browning and Alfred Domett*, ed. F. G. Kenyon, London, 1906, p. 141 ; Sharp's in *Life*, p. 40 ; Mrs Orr's in *Life*, p. 58 ; DeVane's in *Handbook*, p. 45.

As against these opinions, we can set three statements of the poet himself, denying the personal and emphasising the objective character of the poem : (1) the Mill-copy holograph, quoted *ante*, p. 3 ; (2) the Introductory note to the 1868 edition, quoted *ante*, p. 10 ; and (3) a letter⁷⁰ written on Feb. 1, 1867, to Richard Herne Shepherd, in which the poet gives the publisher a provisional permission to bring out an edition of *Pauline*. The sentence relevant to our present purpose goes thus :

I will bring myself to say that...if you will strictly confine yourself to "a few extracts"—and will preface these with mention of the fact that the poem was purely dramatic and intended to head a series of "Men & Women" such as I have afterwards introduced to the world under somewhat better auspices.....in this case, and not otherwise, I give the leave you desire.

In spite of the disillusioned, sarcastic comment in the holograph, Browning's plan in *Pauline* was undoubtedly a fascinating one, befitting a poet whose mature artistic endeavour fulfilled itself in the dramatic representation of characters. The essentials of the theory of the dramatic monologue are here in the holograph, coloured somewhat by the rather juvenile idea of bluffing the public to the belief that the projected confessions were genuine and by different writers. The poet would assume and realize a number of characters drawn from various walks of life, but the public would not know that the confessions of all these characters were in fact the utterances of the objectivised passions of the self-same poet. Whether the public would have proved as gullible as the youthful poet thought they would, is a speculation of some nicety on the trustworthiness of public judgment. The clear fact that emerges from the statements of the poet is that his bold and comprehensive scheme, of which *Pauline* is but a partial and solitary execution, is dramatic. The poet's statements are strongly at variance with the opinions of his critics. A poet

70. *MLN*, May, 1932, p. 295.

no doubt may be wrong in his estimate of his own work, as Browning himself is wrong in his persistent disparagement of *Pauline*, but surely, no reader is entitled to ignoring the plan which a poet tries to work out in a poem. Browning may or may not have succeeded in the execution of his plan, but he knows best what the basic idea of the poem was. To brush aside this avowal of a scheme is to question the veracity of the poet.

This then is a nice dilemma ; on the one hand is the poet's insistence on the dramatic character of the poem, on the other the popular belief in its autobiographical character. The answer to this intriguing contrariety of opinions should be sought in Browning's peculiar conception of the nature of the Poet. In the Shelley-essay, Browning describes the two types of poets, the subjective and the objective. There is no need here to attempt to determine the exact connotations of these two familiar terms which have been progenitors of many cross-purposes in literary criticism ; we shall confine ourselves strictly to the meanings which Browning brings to bear upon them. The objective poet, says Browning, is "one whose endeavour has been 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."⁷¹ There are two parts to this statement : the first describes the source of poetic themes, viz., things external which include both the world of nature and the world of man ; the second states the aim of poetry which is to deal with the common concerns of human life. These ideas are elaborated further on in the essay : "The objective poet, in his appeal to the aggregate human mind, chooses to deal with the doings of men, (the result of which dealing, in its pure form, when even description, as suggesting a describer, is

71. Browning's Essay on Shelley, in "The Percy Reprints", No 3, ed. H. F. B. Brett-Smith, Oxford, 1937, p. 63.

dispensed with, is what we call dramatic poetry)".⁷² Browning thus tells us which particular literary form suits the objective poet best, and how the dramatic work is distinguished by a self-elimination on the author's part. The objective poet appeals to those feelings that are common to humanity, not to any individual idiosyncrasy. Finally, Browning dwells upon the relation between the poet and his poetry: "Such a poet is properly the fashioner; and the thing fashioned, his poetry, will of necessity be substantive, projected from himself and distinct".⁷³ This description of the objective poet excellently fits the poet of *Pippa Passes*, *Men and Women*, *Dramatis Personae*, and *The Ring and the Book*, for Browning chooses to deal with the doings of men and women of a variety wide as the world itself;—lovers happy in the fulfilment of love, lovers crushed by or buoyant despite frustration; a queen by whose order and in whose presence the faithless lover is killed, and a wife who sinks her individuality for the sake of her husband's love; a priest immersed in beatific ecstasy or a priest gurgling in gnarled anger; a young Hebrew visionary or a modern spiritualist impostor; casuists and cowards; poets, painters, and musicians; criminals and sweet angelic creatures. There is no reader but must cry out at the end, "Here's God's plenty, indeed!" This is one Browning, the dramatic and objective poet, whose creations are substantive. Projected from his much-encompassing imagination, these creations yet maintain a distinct life of their own, and that criticism errs which reads Browning's personal character in that of his creatures. He is greater than his creatures; he creates a motley crowd of self-analysing men and women,—and himself, like the Almighty Jove in his Olympic height, beholds the pageant of passions and thoughts surging below.

Consider now Browning's idea of the subjective poet. He "is impelled to embody the thing he perceives, not so much with reference to the many below as to the One above him, the supreme Intelligence which apprehends all things in their,

72. *Ibid*, p. 66.

73. *Ibid*, p. 66.

absolute truth." As regards subject-matter, this poetry differs from the other type by its emphasis not on the thing perceived but on the perceiver, the thing not as it is but as it appears to the poet's special sensibility. What he produces emanates from his inmost personality; it is an "effluence" that "cannot be easily considered in abstraction from his personality,—being indeed the very radiance and aroma of his personality, projected from it but not separated." The subject-matter of this poetry is within the poet and not without. The poet and his work are one. It follows then that the subject-matter in concrete, consists not of the common concerns and acts of men engaged in their everyday pursuits but of the "primal elements of humanity". And why should the poet look within? It is because he conceives of poetry as a means, however imperfect and partial, to the apprehension of the Supreme Intelligence. He appeals "through himself to the absolute Divine". This mystic, almost religious, conception of poetry was natural to a man who had inherited a strongly religious temper from his mother. It is a faith with a hoary history, and in English poetics, runs intermittently from Sidney to Shelley.⁷⁴ Browning consistently holds to this doctrine⁷⁵ of poetry as an instrument of serving the supreme Intelligence. Aprile,

74. As Sidney was Shelley's model in *A Defence of Poetry*, so Shelley must have been Browning's model in the Shelley-essay. Among many sentences of a parallel nature, two only are cited here from Shelley: "the other (a poem) is the creation of actions according to the interchangeable forms of human nature, as existing in the mind of the Creator, which is itself the image of all other minds" (p. 30). "Poetry thus makes immortal all that is best and most beautiful in the world... Poetry redeems from decay the visitations of the divinity in man" (p. 55). Both sentences contain hints of the emphatic Browningian idea of the divine element of Poetry. For the subjective poet's perception, see *A Defence of Poetry*, p. 56, para 1, Brett-Smith's edition.

75. The doctrine is also stated in Browning's letter to Ruskin: "A poet's affair is with God, to whom he is accountable, and of whom is his reward: look elsewhere, and you find misery enough." *The Life and Work of John Ruskin*, W. G. Collingwood, London, 1893, vol I, p. 201.

the phantom-poet of *Paracelsus*, states the same faith when he says,

I would die : preserving so throughout my course
God full on me, as I was full on men : (Par., II, 482-3)

To Miss Barrett he wrote,

the fearless fresh living work you describe, is the *only*
Poem to be undertaken now by you or anyone that *is* a Poem
at all ; the only reality, the only effective piece of service
to be rendered God and man ; it is what I have been a
my life intending to do...

(*The Browning Love Letters*, I, p. 38)

To the secret alchemy of the supreme subjective imagination which "purges from our inward sight the film of familiarity which obscures from us the wonder of our being",⁷⁶ Browning aspires and of this he writes to Miss Barrett :

But then—what I have printed gives no knowledge of
me—it evidences abilities of various kinds, if you will—and
dramatic sympathy with certain modifications of passion...*that*
I think - But I never have begun, even, what I hope I was
born to begin and end—'R. B. a poem'...these scenes are
song-scrapes *are* such mere and very escapes of my inner
power.

(*Ibid*, I, p. 17)

Thus in Browning we witness a remarkable duality of ideals. He believes in the glory of subjective art at the same time that he practises the dramatic technique, trying objectively to analyse human motives. But there is no contrariety in this duality even though sometimes his poetry alternates between the two ideals, the subjective and the objective, the one ideal keeping clear of the other. Miss Barrett's intelligent intuition permits her to interpret Browning's poetic character thus correctly.

You have in your vision two worlds, or to use the language of the schools of the day, you are both subjective and objective in the habits of your mind. You can deal both with abstract thought and with human passion in the most passionate sense. Thus, you have an immense grasp in Art ;

(*Ibid*, I, p. 8)

This duality of Browning's poetic faculty is observed also by Joseph Milsand between whose review of Browning's poetry in the *Revue des Deux Mondes*, August 1851, and the poet's Shelley-essay, there are, as Griffin points out,⁷⁷ close similarities of thought. "In Milsand's estimate of Browning as primarily and most precious an introspective poet, secondarily an artist or 'maker', there lurks the germ of Browning's doctrine that there are two kinds of poetry, the subjective and the objective, of which the first is infinitely the higher." The doctrine of the two types of poets is not so late a growth as 1851 as Griffin suggests, nor need we resume Browning's indebtedness to Milsand in regard to this doctrine. It might as well be that Milsand acquired these ideas from Browning. In any case, the idea of this duality is a commonplace of criticism, and, in the words of Miss Barrett, belongs to the language of the schools of the day. That is far more important than Browning's critical acknowledgment of the dichotomy of the poetic nature is the presence of such a dichotomy within Browning's own poetic self. In the Shelley-essay, he says,

Nor is there any reason why these two modes of poetic faculty may not issue hereafter from the same poet in successive perfect works, examples of which, according to what are now considered the exigences of art, we have hitherto possessed in distinct individuals only.

In Browning's vision of the ideal poetic creation, there is no parallel presence of the two faculties but their perfect coalescence. He states his belief in this vision in the Shelley-essay of 1852, but as we have seen, the idea occurs in his correspondence with Miss Barrett, and occurs also in *Paracelsus* and *Pauline*.

But not these alone

Should claim my care ; for common life, its wants

And ways, would I set forth in beauteous hues :

The lowest hind should not possess a hope,

⁷⁷. *Life*, p. 184. The sentence quoted from Griffin also occurs on this page.

A fear, but I'd be by him, saying better
 Than he his own heart's language, I would live
 For ever in the thoughts I thus explored,
 As a discoverer's memory is attached
 To all he finds ; they should be mine henceforth,
 Imbued with me, though free to all before ;
 For clay, once cast into my soul's rich mine,
 Should come up crusted o'er with gems. Nor this
 Would need a meaner spirit, than the first ;
 Nay, 'twould be but the selfsame spirit, clothed
 In humbler guise, but still the selfsame spirit :

(*Par.*, II, 555-569)

This is Aprile's aim as a poet. He would deal with the wants and ways of common life, and so thoroughly incorporate them within his imaginative self that the clay of common life would be transmuted into rich gems. The treatment of common life would be objective ; in one art-form after another, he would express "every passion sprung from man, conceived by man"; his paintings, architecture, oratory, would be "all filled with men, men everywhere"; "no thought which ever stirred a human breast should be untold".⁷⁸ And as one reads this passionate speech of Aprile, one realizes the identity between Aprile's idea of adopting a number of art-forms to express the same fundamental truth of life, and Browning's scheme expounded in the Mill-copy holograph, according to which, he would assume and realize several personalities. The Kean-passage of *Pauline* records this desire of the poet to identify himself with a character :

I will be gifted with a wond'rous soul,
 Yet sunk by error to men's sympathy, (669-670)

The dramatic, objective approach to the various manifestations of life is also indicated in the lines,

And then thou said'st a perfect bard was one
 Who shadowed out the stages of all life, (883-4)

The dramatic representation of men and women to which Pauline's lover and Aprile both aspire, are ultimately impregnated

78. *Par.*, II, 433, II, 460, II, 465.

y the selfsame poetic personality, are the emanations of the same subjective imagination which holds to the primal elements of humanity in order to apprehend the Supreme Intelligence. Thus Browning's idea of a harmonious combination of the subjective and the objective faculties of poetry, expressed clearly in the Shelley-essay, is present also, in a less defined form, in *Pauline* and *Paracelsus*. Browning partially achieves this combination in his mature poetry. F. L. Lucas⁷⁹ regards Browning as "a creature of contradictions" because he "bared his soul to the world in a hundred transparent disguises and yet denounced, with a peck at Shakespeare, the mere notion that he could unlock his heart". There is really no contradiction in this if we correctly appreciate Browning's poetic purpose and his achievement at their best. Dramatic representations of men and women in moments of psychological crises, the poems are, at the same time, embodiments of the primal elements of humanity, reflexions of the essential personality of the poet who "by his loftier vision", lifts his fellows "with their half-apprehensions, up to his own sphere, by intensifying the import of details and rounding the universal meaning".⁸⁰

In *Pauline*, Browning makes his earliest attempt to combine an objective treatment of life with a basic subjectivity of outlook. The execution is, however, too inadequate for the scheme, and although we should not look upon the poem as an autobiography since autobiographical writing involves a deliberate narration of personal facts,—and if there is a dearth of anything in the poem it is a dearth of facts,—we can easily resume strong affinities of essential personality. Browning himself recognised this affinity when he admitted in the Millipony holograph that "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". That Browning admits no more than a spiritual sympathy and disavows any factual

79. *Eight Victorian Poets*; I quote from "English Critical Essays, twentieth Century", O. U. P., p. 387.

80. *Essay on Shelley*, p. 68.

identity is proved by the latter half of the sentence, "but surrounded him with all manner of (to my then notion) poetical accessories, and had planned quite a delightful life for him". Browning failed in his attempt to harmonise the subjective and the objective faculties in *Pauline* because this spiritual affinity is too powerful to permit a competent dramatic treatment. The innate eager lyricism of the poet, heightened further by his romantic models, frequently bursts through the crust of the dramatic plan. The poem is neither by intention, nor in fact, autobiographical in the sense that the *Prelude* or *Thilde Harold* is autobiographical, and yet the essential personality of the poet, with all its ardour of immature passions and the bewilderment of mutually-clashing ideals, is writ large on the poem. With unerring judgment Mill had fixed upon the poet's intense self-consciousness⁸¹ as his besetting error—consciousness which prevented the poet from reaching his ideal of a harmony of faculties. The confessional mood comes easy to a poet whose ego is urgent for expression. The mighty process of the liberation of the ego early in the 19th century, led to the popularity of an analysis of the poet's inner life as the theme of poetry, and the confessional mood stands out in the works of Wordsworth, Byron and Shelley. *Pauline* is a personal confession in so far as parts of the hero's confessions reveal the primal tendencies of his inner life. It will be unfair and misleading to stretch the parallelism so far as to identify the poet entirely with the hero. We need not, for example, consider the 'shames and shapes' haunting the poet-lover as Browning's own: the 'dissipation', 'the cunning envy', 'falsehood which so long had spotted me', the 'heavy darkness and warm ears', the hate that makes the poet-lover sicken, quiver, and grow white; the sin and lust and pride which knit the hero round,—are all, at the most, dramatic heightenings of the poet's ideological waverings, and cannot be accepted as literal truth. The nature-passages are full of ideal landscape, and the reality

81. That Mill's criticism rankled in Browning's mind for a long time is proved by the numerous references to it in the letters to E.B.B.

of Pauline herself, as we shall see, is a highly questionable matter. But there are a number of features in the poem in which we can trace with more or less definiteness the personality of the poet. Viewed in isolation, none of these features would, perhaps, be regarded as any serious evidence for a personal stamp; in a mass, they render the presumption of such a personal affinity strong.

What are the features of the poem that help us in discerning its personal element? The symbols "V. A. XX" appended to the prefatory Latin quotation were explained by Browning as "the Latin abbreviation of *Vixi Annos*—'I was twenty years old'—that is the imaginary subject of the poem was of that age." The fact that the author also was of exactly the same age cannot be regarded as a simple coincidence but may be interpreted as the author's unconscious self-identification with the hero. Among the textual evidences⁸² strengthening this presumption of identity, are the following :—

(i) the Kean reference ;

(ii) the rhapsody on and the invocation to Shelley ;

(iii) the Plato-passage—For a counterpart in Browning's early life to the poet-lover's devotion to Plato, we have no biographical evidence. But judging by expressions like "my mind's cave" (970) and "a 'waking' point of life" (813), it seems likely that one who admired Shelley was also drawn to the Platonic element in Shelley's works. Browning's mature philosophy is different from Plato's and there are very few traces of Platonism in him.

(iv) love of small creatures ;

(v) love of music and painting ;

(vi) love of books, ancient literature, Greek myths ;

(vii) the Andromeda reference ;

(viii) the long restraint which chained down the spirit of the poet-lover has an analogy in the restrictions under which the boy Browning chafed in Mr Ready's school.

82. These evidences have been discussed in the Commentary.

The influence of Shelley on Browning has been noted by all students of the younger poet. DeVane puts the matter⁸³ succinctly thus :—

Shelley made Browning the poet he was ; he gave him poetical and political ideas, method and technique, and pointed out that the proper subject of poetry is the soul of the poet himself.

Somewhat of an overstatement, this sentence describes one of the most important sources of Browning's thought. In *Pauline*, the influence of Shelley consists mainly in (a) an idealistic and liberal vision of life ; (b) a powerful sway of emotions, and (c) a certain religiosity of temper. Browning's idealism in this his earliest work assumes the shape of "wild dreams of beauty and of good" (80). The hero is "full of hope...trusting in truth and love" (83-88) ; he desires to enjoy a "hope, or part, or care, in human kind" (130) ; long restraint has chained his soul (344) ; "schemes and systems went and came in his life" (399) ; he believes in Plato who "sent forth hopes and longings" (409) ; he was "vowed to liberty, men were to be as gods, and earth as heaven" (424). Shelley's tirade against institutional religion, his anti-commercialism, invectives against the wealth of nations and the trumpery of kingship, his social criticisms in *Queen Mab* and the *Revolt of Islam*, are not in *Pauline*, but the idealistic inspiration is here. The ideas of revolutionary politics, especially the belief in the people's cause, which Browning imbibed from Shelley, bore fruit in Sordello's determination to be "Gate-vein of this heart's blood of Lombardy", to sing of the "warped souls and bodies" of Italian peasants and common men ; in the struggles of Pym and his fellow Parliamentarians against Royalty ; in the patriotic resolve of Luigi to assassinate the Emperor of Austria. In the plays, this political creed of espousing a freedom-movement continues, ending finally in a spirit of disillusionment. The sharp contrast in the characters of King Victor and King Charles ; the father,

83. *Handbook*, p. 11.

a man of a "fiery and audacious temper, unscrupulous selfishness, profound dissimulation, and singular fertility in resources", and the son of "an extreme and painful sensibility, prolonged immaturity of powers, earnest good purpose and vacillating will",⁸⁴ is exhibited against a setting of a tyrannised people. *The Return of the Druses* shows the attempt of a patriot, Djabal, to deliver his people from foreign domination, but his motive is largely mixed up with a fanatical religious self-glorification. Valence's (*Colombe's Birthday*) championship of the common people yields only to his ardour as a lover. The last of the plays, *A Soul's Tragedy*, telling the story of Chiappino's opportunist bid for leadership of the people of Faenza, bespeaks the diminution of the poet's faith in struggles for liberty. The course of Browning's political thought is from a revolutionary ardour to a staid, academic interest in later life. Perhaps the spirit of Victorianism was too strong for him; perhaps his realism and powers of rational analysis showed him too many loopholes in freedom-movements as he studied them,⁸⁵ to support his early romantic faith in liberty. In none of the plays, such a movement as such becomes the main theme; a movement is only a convenient setting for some characters, a Parliamentary leader or a Sardinian prince. The shewing up of the dishonesty of the leader in the last play indicates the cooling off of the poet's revolutionary ardour. The cause of Liberty never inspires Browning to the noble passion of *Prometheus Unbound* or *Hellas*, or the *Songs Before Sunrise* of his younger contemporary. Of his two important later treatments of political themes, *Prince Hohenstiel-Schwangau* is an ironical exposure of the political doctrine of expediency, while the *Parleying with George Bubb Dodington* is a satire on Disraeli's distrust of democracy. It is a far cry from *Pauline* to *Dodington*; the poet of Liberty in the abstract, has turned into the poet-analyst of practical

84. Browning's prefatory note to the play.

85. Consider the different attitudes of Browning and Mrs Browning towards Napoleon III and the underground politics of Italy.

politicians and their protean ways. The beautiful Shelleyan streak of idealism, aglow in *Pauline*, does not endure. Browning parts company with Shelley, outgrows the idealism, and as his sonnet entitled 'Why I am a Liberal' shows, shrinks into complacent whiggism in the Eighties.

It is not possible to measure exactly to what extent we may attribute the emotional fervour of *Pauline* to Shelley's poetry. This fervour is particularly noticeable in the descriptions of nature, in the mythology-passages, in the lines to Shelley, and in those to Jesus. The pulsating sincerity of these passages grows out of the poet's genuine passion for each of these objects of emotional fervour. The general prevalence of an emotional quality in the rest of the poem is largely due to the youthful Browning's natural susceptibility to feelings brought into clear relief by the subject-matter, viz., the study of the mind of a passionate poet-lover. The gusto of the emotion sometimes smothers the progress of the analysis. For instance, in line 89, the poet-lover starts an examination of his soul imprisoned by its self-absorption. This image of the imprisonment of the soul appeals to his emotion so strongly as to interrupt the analysis, and the poet-lover proceeds on to a long, delighted reverie of the image. Occasionally though the emotion and the analysis fuse together (515-559), yet, generally speaking, they tend to remain separate and self-sufficient. In spite of the sweep of sentiments which distinguishes the style of *Pauline* from that of the monologues of the middle period, the intellectual quality of this poem is stronger still than the emotional.⁸⁶ This 'fragment of a confession' shows how the poet-lover tries to *think* of his feelings, to dissect them. In the following passage, for example, this intellectual power is exhibited in its most argumentative form :

86. W. C. DeVane says (*Browning's Parleyings*, p 113) that in *Pauline*, "the lyrical and emotional elements outweigh altogether the intellectual". My impression of the poem is different and I have tried to advance arguments in support of my impression, in this chapter and the previous one.

634-647 : And thus I know this earth is not my sphere,
 For I cannot so narrow me, but that
 I still exceed it ; in their elements
 My love would pass my reason — but since here
 Love must receive its objects from this earth,
 While reason will be chainless, the few truths
 Caught from its wanderings have sufficed to quell
 All love below ; — then what must be that love
 Which, with the object it demands, would quell
 Reason, tho' it soared with the seraphim ?
 No—what I feel may pass all human love,
 Yet fall far short of what my love should be ;
 And yet I seem more warped in this than aught,
 For here myself stands out more hideously.

The poetry of this passage is manifestly born of an argumentative passion, not a passion of sentiment. There are several passages of fine emotional intensity, yet the usual bias of the poet's imagination is in favour of thought and argument. Browning admired Donne at a period when few read the 17th. century 'metaphysical', yet the younger poet's argumentative lyricism has a character different from the elder's. Browning's mature writings are truly 'metaphysical' by virtue of an incorporation of apparently recondite, remote, even esoteric learning, into a quick, sudden motion of the imagination. But the argumentative methods of medieval dialectics which were so favourite a weapon with the 17th. century 'metaphysicals', Browning never employs, except partly in *Fifine*. His arguments have the clarity of commonsense, without resorting to a thesis, an antithesis, and a final synthesis. Illuminating images are employed sometimes, but the passion of the poetry lies essentially in the intellectual activity of the argument. This is brilliantly exemplified in *Saul, Rabbi Ben Ezra, Christmas Eve and Easter Day*, and in some speeches of Paracelsus. That the intellectual character of the poem is more pronounced than the emotional is emphasised not only by the very conception of the scheme, certain features of the style (such as the plethora of punctuation marks and the tactual imagery), the poet's insistent predisposition towards argumenta-

tive passion, but also, in spite of the great beauty of occasional emotionalism, by the generally unconvincing nature of the emotions themselves. Hints of Byronism occur here and there. As the Byronic hero declares,

I've taught me other tongues, and in strange eyes
Have made me not a stranger ;
... .. I twine
my hopes of being remember'd in my line
With my land's language .

(*Childe Harold*, IV, viii, ix)

so too, Browning's poet-lover, also an exile from England, records his love for the motherland :

I cherish most
My love of England—how her name a word
Of her's in a strange tongue makes my heart beat . . (695-97)

The suggestion of the exile betrays an attitudinizing and dilutes the sincerity of the emotion. There appear, besides, hints of *Childe Harold's* "I-have-seen-much-and-suffered-much" philosophy in the poet-lover's repeated admissions of shames and taints and woes. The weakness of the emotions is partly inherent in the form of the poem. As I have argued in the Commentary, a confession (which this poem is,) presupposes (i) a consciousness of guilt, and (ii) a penitence for that guilt. The depth of the confessional passion depends largely upon the sensibility of the mind concerned and the nature of the guilt involved. The intense self-consciousness of the poet-lover was recognised by Mill as Browning's own, and Browning admitted the justice of the criticism when he wrote to Miss Barrett :

I know myself surely—and always have done so, for is there not somewhere the little book I first printed when a boy, with John Mill, the metaphysical head, *his* marginal note that 'the writer possesses a deeper self-consciousness than I ever knew in a sane human being'.

(*The Browning Love Letters*, I, p. 29)

The principle of restlessness to which Pauline's lover confesses, a principle "which would be all, have, see, know,

taste, feel, all", and the self-supremacy of the consciousness which exists "as a centre to all things" and to which may be tracked "all affections, passions, feelings, powers", are the elements of a hyper-sensitive and mobile mind which has only a hydroptic thirst for experience but knows not what it wants.

My sympathies are very wide and general,—always have been— and the natural problem has been the giving unity to their object, concentrating them instead of dispersing.

(*Ibid.*)

Compare what Pauline's lover says :

let me concentrate the sparks it spares. (619)

Such a mind must naturally drift from ideal to ideal and afterwards be penitent for the forsaking of the earlier ideals. An ever-wavering will of this kind, and regrets consequent upon the waverings, are quite usual for a passionate, youthful mind ; but to these, Browning adds an extremely vivid imagination and a ruthless power of analysis. As a result, the mind of the youthful Browning is extraordinarily complex and scarcely amenable to a complete understanding in the absence of fuller details of biography. These complex passions and thoughts have been heightened on account of the dramatic scheme of the poem but not sufficiently supported by background-action. As it happens in the case of Browning himself, so in the case of the poet-lover, we may assume no actual guilt, or moral aberration ; at the most, there is an ideological flux which upsets the mental equanimity of the young man and temporarily distorts his vision of beauty which reappears, once the self-purifying confession has been made : "Suddenly Beauty rose on me again" (1006). But the tremendous self-searching and agitation, unsupported by facts, make the mind of the poet-lover altogether devoid of typicality ; it is so 'morbid' as Mill called it, and the expression of it so intimate that the emotional content fails to convince.

The mature poetry of Browning succeeds in basing an emotional content on facts. At the time of the composition of *Pauline*, Browning had no experience of the world worth the name. As a boy, he was a bookish, precocious young fellow

who had to be withdrawn from his school because he was too far ahead of the other boys. The only son of a family, too small for Victorian standards, he must have been looked upon by his father as the inheritor of his own unfulfilled ambitions. The boy read widely in his father's library, played with his improvised menagerie, admired the beauty of Camberwell Common, and in short, lived a life "apart from all". Till the time of *Pauline* and even later, this solitariness continued. The poet-lover's statement of an aim may be regarded as Browning's own :

(440-43) 'Twas in my plan to look on real life,
Which was all new to me ; my theories
Were firm, so I left them, to look upon
Men, and their cares, and hopes, and fears, and joys ;

When it was suggested that Browning should qualify for the Bar,

He appealed to his father, whether it would not be better for him to see life in its best sense, and cultivate the powers of his mind, than to shackle himself in the very outset of his career by a laborious training foreign to that aim.⁸⁷

The desire for looking on real life was natural, because, as his sister said : "The fact was, poor boy, he had outgrown his social surroundings. They were absolutely good, but they were narrow ; it could not be otherwise ; he chafed under them."⁸⁸ The experience of life, of "men, and their cares, and hopes, and fears, and joys", came with the travel to Russia in 1834, and his association with the theatre in the succeeding years. Judging by the mass of reading that Browning was involved in in *Paracelsus*, *Strafford* and *Sordello*, and the comparative simplicity of the subject-matter in *Pippa Passes* and the dramatic lyrics of the Forties, it may be said that any experience of life valuable for his poetic purposes came to him only after the Italian tour of 1838. At any rate, in *Pauline*, the poet's lack of experience partly accounts for

87. Griffin, *Life*, p. 54.

88. Orr, *Life*, p. 45.

the failure to correlate the emotional content to a convincing background of facts.

In the Shelley-essay, Browning calls Shelley "a man of religious mind, because every audacious negative cast up by him against the Divine, was interpenetrated with a mood of reverence and adoration,—and because I find him everywhere taking for granted some of the capital dogmas of Christianity, while most vehemently denying their historical basement". Written about twenty years after *Pauline*, these words bear a significance, in retrospect, for his first work. The youthful temper is naturally religious; this natural tendency, in Browning's case, was further intensified by the piety of his Evangelical mother. In the fifteenth year of his life, Browning's faith reeled under the shock of Voltaire's atheism and Shelley's anti-clericalism. For a time, the spirit of Shelley governed his thoughts and ideals; he became, "for two years, a practising vegetarian". "This Shelley period of Robert Browning's life—that which intervened between *Incondita* and *Pauline*—remained, nevertheless, one of rebellion and unrest, to which many circumstances may have contributed besides the influence of the one mind".⁸⁹ What those "many circumstances", hinted at by Mrs Orr, might have been, one is curious to know. We would have prized a personal record, poetical for choice, of this rebellion and unrest. What exactly were the obstinate questionings that perplexed the young poet's mind? Did he merely repeat the arguments of Shelley's essay on atheism or did he have any say of his own? A letter of Sarah Flower,⁹⁰ written in November 1827 to W. J. Fox, furnishes the only testimony to this period of *sturm und drang* of Browning's early life:

My mind has been wandering a long time, and now it seems to have lost sight of that only invulnerable hold against the assaults of the warring world, a firm belief in

89. Orr, *Life*, p. 40.

90. Quoted in Griffin, *Life*, p. 46.

the genuineness of the Scriptures...The cloud has come over me gradually, and I did not discover the darkness in which my soul was shrouded until, in seeking to give light to others, my own gloomy state became too settled to admit of doubt. It was in answering Robert Browning that my mind refused to bring forward argument, turned recreant, and sided with the enemy...

The only utterance of this atheistical inclination to be found in *Pauline* is the brief statement "I have denied thee calmly" (839). The tumultuous and rebellious phase of Browning's inner life precedes *Pauline* which records his recovery of faith in Jesus. The intellectual process⁹¹ by which Browning reached across the valley of Doubt to hope and faith, has not been given in the poem. Doubt reveals a man's character more truly than faith. The troubled sections of *In Memoriam* are a truer index to the poet's character than the faith-asserting final sections. In *Pauline*, we have only the penitence for past scoffing, irreverence, doubt, and faithlessness. We cannot be sure whether there was any rational process at all in Browning's religious recovery or whether the restored belief was just as sentimental as the doubt itself. At any rate, whatever rationalisation there is in Browning's religious position, occurs in his poetry long afterwards, in *Christmas Eve and Easter Day*. Rationalized or not, the passage enshrining the poet's soul-wrung surrender to Jesus, gives, along with the nature-passages, the finest poetry in *Pauline*. The passion that throbs beneath the words of devotion to Jesus, the words expressing a sense of sinfulness and penitence, are comparable to some of the sermons of the great Dean of St Paul's, Donne himself. Of all Browning's works, *Pauline* alone offers the reader a sense of sinfulness of profound personal poignancy.

91. It is a remarkable coincidence that *Pauline* was published in the same year as *Sartor Resartus*. There is some spiritual affinity between the turbid truth-searching of Carlyle and Browning's restoration. We know that Browning admired Carlyle. Although Browning's final religious position was far removed from the Scotsman's pessimistic philosophy (see *Bernard de Mandeville*), yet it was not for nothing that Joseph Arnould compared *Pauline* to *Sartor Resartus*.

The nature-passages of *Pauline* are among its abiding beauties. Browning is not usually regarded as a nature-poet, particularly in view of his well-known statement that he cared for nature a great deal, but for human beings a great deal more. With all his brilliant anticipations of Darwinism and occasional interests in scientific phenomena, Browning had not the temper of a naturalist. The authoritative opinion of J. W. Beach is :⁹²

In his general philosophy, Browning had little of the spirit of naturalism. The distinctive mark of naturalism is submission to the natural order as we apprehend it by natural means : joyous acceptance of our place in this order, reconciliation, or at least a disposition to make the most of it as we find it, without recourse to supernatural inspirations.

Again,

The disposition to substitute nature for God is the mark of naturalism, and is more or less present in the most characteristic nature poets.

One who believes in the sovereignty of God's will and power, and the concomitant subordination of every other thing to that will and power, who does not accept the mystic inter-relation between nature and man as the be all and end all of existence, can never be a naturalist. Even Wordsworth, a more thorough-going naturalist in his early poetry than the writers on natural theology, advanced on to the doctrine of God's supremacy over the phenomenal universe. In his great final speech, Paracelsus says how he has felt

what God is, what we are,
What life is—how God tastes an infinite joy
In infinite ways—one everlasting bliss,
From whom all being emanates, all power
Proceeds ; in whom is life for evermore,
Yet whom existence in its lowest form
Includes ; where dwells enjoyment there is he :

⁹². *The Concept of Nature in Nineteenth-Century English Poetry*, New York, 1936, p. 447 ; the sentence quoted next is on p. 6.

With still a flying point of bliss remote,
 A happiness in store afar, a sphere
 Of distant glory in full view ; (V, 642-651)

Evolution tends to mankind, "and, man produced, all has its end thus far".

773 in completed man begins anew
 A tendency to God. Prognostics told
 Man's near approach ; so in man's self arise
 August anticipations, symbols, types
 Of a dim splendour ever on before
 In that eternal circle life pursues,
 For men begin to pass their nature's bound,
 And find new hopes and cares.....
for God is glorified in man,
 And to man's glory vowed I soul and limb.

(Par., V)

Thus natural phenomena occupy but a minor place in the scheme of the universe where God and man are the two protagonists. Browning's metaphysical powers are not concerned with any interpretation of nature ; natural phenomena can, at best, offer man an unceasing source of joy and beauty. It is by a recital of these joys and glories that David tries to buoy up the sunken spirits of King Saul. In our own times, when romantic naturalism has practically gone out of poetry, Browning's unmetaphysical, exuberant enjoyment of the myriad beauties of nature ought to exercise a powerful appeal. The implications of his general philosophy wherewith Browning in his later poetry sometimes coloured his nature-passages, are entirely absent in *Pauline*, and therefore the value of *Pauline* as a store-house of pure nature-poetry is considerable. It has been said ⁹³ that Browning felt no mystery in nature. True of the later poetry, this statement does not apply to *Pauline* where the youthful poet's sensuousness, reinforced by the influence of Shelley and Keats, revels in the wonder of nature's beauties.

93. G R. Elliott, *Anglia*, *op. cit.*, p. 99.

66-68 : the wind murmuring in the damp copse,
Like heavy breathings of some hidden thing
Betrayed by sleep—

181-85 : old woods which will live
But by its banks, untrod of human foot,
Which, when the great sun sinks, lie quivering
In light as some thing lieth half of life
Before God's foot—

733-37 : the woods
Waving and muttering—for the moonless night
Has shaped them into images of life,
Like the upraising of the giant ghosts,
Looking on earth to know how their sons fare,

The image in each of these instances has a film of mystery as its raiment. The mystery has its source in the vitality of the sensuous apprehension, not in any metaphysical supernaturalism. "I can live all the life of plants, and gaze/Drowsily on the bees that flit and play," (716-17). Of this intensely passionate love of nature, Browning writes to Miss Haworth :

I have, you are to know, such a love for flowers and leaves—some leaves—that I every now and then,—in an impatience at being unable to possess myself of them thoroughly, to see them quite, satiate myself with their scent, —bite them to bits.

(*Letters*, p. 1.)

Blended with this passionateness is a power of observation which produces such beautiful expressions as "the night of sounds" (719), "the misty sun-warm water" (725), "breaking the sun-beams into emerald shafts" (75), "tongues of bank go shelving in the waters" (761), "the pale-throated snake" (762), "creeping plants stretch out their twined hair" (774), "great cloud floats, laden with light, like a dead whale that white birds pick" (785). In the other qualities of poetry, the mature Browning left his achievement in *Pauline* far behind, but I doubt, if he ever surpassed the sensitive beauty of these nature-passages. The joyous observation of the aspects of nature is often presented by a method that may be described as cinematographic. It is not things at rest which move Browning as they do Keats ;

the dynamic energy of his imagination must be attracted to things in a state of motion. That this quick, shifting motion of the imagination is imparted to the method of description itself, may be seen from the following extracts :

- 798-99 : Down the hill—stop—a clump of trees, see, set
 On a heap of rocks,
- 748-49 : no, ere the hot noon come
 Dive we down—safe ;—see this our new retreat
- 732-33 : Night, and one single ridge of narrow path
 Between the sullen river and the woods
- 740-41 : we will pass to morning—
 Morning—the rocks, and vallies, and old woods.
- 765-66 : Shut thy soft eyes—now look—still deeper in :
 This is the very heart of the woods—
- 782 : See, they part, like a ruined arch, the sky !

This method Browning continued in his later poetry :

Sordello, I, 10 : Appears /Verona...

„ I, 73-4 . Lo, the past is hurled
 In twain : up-thrust, out-staggering on the world.

Meeting at Night : Then a mile of warm sea-scented beach ;
 Three fields to cross till a farm appears ;
 A tap at the pane, the quick sharp scratch
 And blue spurt of a lighted match.

If the poem is not strictly autobiographical but only bears a personal significance in parts, what is the status of Pauline ? Is she too a figment of fancy, one of the 'poetical accessories' wherewith the poet surrounded his hero to fulfil the plan of a delightful life for him ? Mrs Orr⁹⁴ is inclined to identify Pauline with Eliza Flower ; "If, in spite of his denials, any woman inspired *Pauline*, it can be no other than she". Eliza and Sarah were two talented sisters, daughters of the editor of the *Cambridge Intelligencer*, Benjamin Flower, and wards of W. J. Fox. Eliza was nine years the senior of Robert,

94. *Life*, p. 35 ; Griffin quotes her opinion approvingly on p. 44, *Life*.

and whatever admiration, even a calf love, he might have entertained for her when, as a boy of twelve or thirteen, he met her, might not have endured till the time of *Pauline*. Her own affections became probably engaged", admits Mrs Orr, and we learn from William Sharp, ⁹⁵ who had it "on good authority", that in his nineteenth year, Browning had a more powerful experience of the passion.

He became ardently in love with a girl of rare beauty, a year or two older than himself, but otherwise, possibly, no inappropriate lover for this wooer. Why and when this early passion came to a close, or was rudely interrupted, is not known. What is certain is that it made a deep impression on the poet's mind. It may be that it, of itself, or wrought to a higher emotion by his hunger after ideal beauty, was the source of "Pauline".

It seems possible that this unknown woman, rather than Eliza, was the subject of Browning's passion in his earliest work. There is a freshness and ardour in the passion embodied in the poem which makes one think that the love was a recent one. And yet it is no use at this time of the day to run after the will-o'-the-wisp of the conjectural woman whom Browning had in mind when he wrote *Pauline*; her personality counts woefully little in this poem. Mill went so far as to call Pauline "evidently a mere phantom".

All about her is a pile of inconsistency—he neither loves her nor fancies he loves her, yet insists upon *talking* love to her—if she *existed* and loved him, he treats her most ungenerously and unfeelingly. All his aspirings and sparrings and regrets point to other things, never to her—then he *pays her off* towards the end by a piece of flummery, amounting to the modest request that she will love him and live with him and give herself up to him *without* his *loving her*, *moyennant quoi* he will think her and call her everything that is handsome and he promises her that she shall find it mightily pleasant. Then he leaves off by saying he knows he shall have changed his mind by tomorrow, and despise these intents which seem so fair ! (*Letters*, p. 366.)

95. *Life*, p. 35 ; Mrs Orr (p. 35) seems to refer to the same woman.

Mill's sarcasm on the relation between Pauline and her lover is the facile sarcasm applicable to all expressions of sentiment. A little sympathy in approach, and one can find a good deal of consistency and sincerity in the young man's love for Pauline. There are lines in the poem (739-40, 896-900) which sharply remind us of the flesh and blood reality of Pauline. When excessive self-absorption benumbs his faculty of realising love, love makes a reconquest by spreading the tentacles of sensuous appeal :

311 : sense supplies a love
Encircling me and mingling with my life,

Pauline, then, is not entirely the denizen of an ethereal world of fancy, no "phantom", unless one extends the meaning of the word to the Wordsworthian sense in 'She was a phantom of delight'. Her personality is so elusive a thing because, in the first place, the poem is not primarily a love poem, and in the second, the poet has idealised her. Love is a power beside which despair can never live (75). Faith in the beloved, because of this sovereign capacity of love, is a higher thing than mere love (43). Any deviation from the path of love, love that is a steadying, health-giving force, is certain to bring shame upon the lover.

28 I had been spared this shame, if I had sate
By thee for ever,

Pauline represents this 'naked love' (10), this untrammelled force of a pure, selfless, purgatory love; she is like the Confessor of the Catholic Church who himself remains unsullied the while he receives the outpourings of the sinner.

709 : As one breathing his weakness to the ear
 Of pitying angel

Radiating psychic health to the agony-tossed lover, this sovereign force of love is almost the son-love for the mother ;

947 : we will go hand in hand,
I will go with thee, even as a child,
Looking no further than thy sweet commands.

Time and again, the awareness of the supreme need of such a love in his life, makes the lover implore in quivering tones :

- 47 And I look to thee, and I trust in thee,
689 And love !—do I not love thee, my Pauline ?
903 Love me — love me, Pauline, love nought but me ;
 Leave me not.

Love with Browning is a comprehensive faculty of the human mind of which woman-love is only one, though the most valuable, facet. This love is a sensitive human sympathy which the poet-lover feels for all things of the earth, and because of this very earthliness, this love yields place to Reason which may be interpreted as Knowledge and which "soars with the seraphim" (643). In a vague way, the lover sometimes even feels that love is a super-terrestrial power beyond his reach. In *Paracelsus*, the two types of love are contrasted ; the romantic, transcendental love represented by Aprile, that soars above earthly bonds and is of the spirit spiritual in its every essence ; the other is that advocated by Festus,—and this advocacy patently has the sanction of the poet,—love that stoops to conquer, love that is thoroughly human, covering a wide ground of human experience of the passion, from "love which blends with love, heart answering heart," to love which "spends itself in silent mad idolatry of some pre-eminent mortal."

The metaphysics of love occupy Browning at a later stage than *Pauline*. Speculations as to the nature of love in the abstract which we find in *Epipsychidion*, "True love in this differs from gold and clay, that to divide is not to take away" and the Platonic quest, "In many mortal forms I rashly sought, the shadow of that idol of my thought", scarcely attract the self-searching, feeling-tossed mind of the poet of *Pauline*. He idealises love but does not philosophise on it ; the ideal is no *amor intellectualis dei* of the Dantesque variety, it is simply a spiritual power that holds out the hope of redemption to a soul which poignantly feels "it has been cut off from its moorings. Pauline represents, as it were, the other self of

the poet-lover, the mind-self which dispassionately watches from the shores of calm understanding, the turbid eddies of feelings and ideals of the sentimental romantic self. The note which the poet attributes to Pauline shows that she represents this discerning, analytical, self-possessed faculty of the poet's mind co-existing with the blurred, unquiet aspirations.

The usual labels whereby poems are classified according to subject-matter, cannot be applied to *Pauline*. It is a poem in which love, religion, joy in nature, romantic aspirations, worship of beauty and art, adoration of heroes, are all rolled into one. And this omnigenous character of the subject-matter of the poem is entirely in the fitness of things. For *Pauline* is essentially the introspection of a much-grasping youthful mind. The poet experiences a number of things all at once, and would speak out his feelings and thoughts without pausing for any orderly arrangement of his theme. There is an irresistible urgency in his experience and in the desire for communication thereof; sentiments, like waves, roll over sentiments, emotionalism clashes against ingenuous analysis. These are the "growing pains" of adolescent art. "What would I have?"—the poet asks himself, and the poem is the record of his attempt to standardise and stabilise the conflicting impulses that clamour within his mind. The words⁹⁶ with which Browning pleaded for a truthful and sympathetic approach to the works of Shelley, are eminently applicable to *Pauline*:

Nor will men persist in confounding, any more than God confounds, with genuine infidelity and an atheism of the heart, those passionate, impatient struggles of a boy towards distant truth and love, made in the dark, and ended by one sweep of the natural seas before the full moral sunrise could shine out on him. Crude convictions of boyhood, conveyed in imperfect and inapt forms of speech,—for such things all boys have been pardoned. There are growing pains, accompanied by temporary distortion, of the soul also.

An eloquent plea this. Browning speaks from his own experience of the parturient pains of the creative artist. No

doubt, in the long run, it is the mature and finished work which levies a tribute of admiration from the student of literature, yet the "passionate, impatient struggles of a boy towards distant truth and love", the "crude convictions of boyhood, conveyed in imperfect and inapt forms of speech", elicit more than a "pardon". Our understanding of the mysterious nature of the poetic mind is partly aided by a study of the inchoate visions and tentative technique of a poet's early works. *Pauline*, therefore, takes its place of honour along with *Guilt and Sorrow*, *Queen Mab*, *Endymion* and other early works of other poets as a symbol of the growing poetic mind. The additional interest of *Pauline* lies in the poet's conscious endeavour to analyse these growing pains.

The fine effusions in *Pauline* on liberty and the vision of a brave new world, do not conceal the fact that the poet is utterly untouched by the social conditions of his times. Here is a young poet who seeks to examine all his feelings and thoughts, who talks of wise ancient books, mythological symbols, love, allegiance to Christ, and a host of other things, and yet remains unaffected by the stirring times amidst which he is growing up. "A man born in 1810", says G. M. Young, "entered manhood with the ground rocking under his feet as it had rocked in 1789."⁹⁷ Browning was born in 1812, and his earliest work was published at a time when the July Revolution coloured the European background; at home, the first Reform Bill was just passed, slavery had been abolished, the rumblings of the Chartist agitation were audible. The ground that rocked under the feet of Browning was the ground of private preoccupations far removed from the wider issues of social life. This detachment from the immediate environment, and a total

97. *Early Victorian England*, O. U. P., 1934, II, p. 413.

engrossment in dreams of beauty and love, are signs of the times. "To the age of revolt which runs from Rousseau to Shelley succeeds the age of acquiescence: the Titans are dead, or they have been tamed."⁹⁸ The poetry that reflects the social unrest of the period is the work of minor poets like Ebenezer Elliott and Charles Kingsley. In respect of this preoccupation with private problems, Browning's early poetry is allied to the early poetry of Tennyson who also revels in a perfumed atmosphere of Lilians and Madelines and Claribels. The intellectual poetry of the early Victorian period deals with questions of the Soul and the Ultimate Power, the inter-relation of Love, Knowledge, and Power, the Here and the Hereafter, and such other metaphysical subtleties. In their early poetry, neither Tennyson nor Browning contemplates the immediate question of man's relation to society. Where in their later works they approach a particular problem of society, their attitude shows more of a condescending aloofness than of a direct and moving sympathy. The best poetry of Browning presents men and women belonging to distant times and far-away countries. Even when he chooses topical themes and contemporary figures, Cardinal Wiseman, or Napoleon III, or Home, the spiritualist impostor, or a sensational suicide in Caen, all his interest is concentrated on ingenuous analysis of motives and characters, and none on the social implications of the incident or the social valuation of the person. And yet the eminent suitability of Browning's analytical method in poetry to social studies, has been evident in the works of Eliot and Pound. The great anomaly of Browning's poetry is that while the poetic style conforms to the speech rhythm and the speech vocabulary of the times, and the realistic treatment marks a departure from the romantic absorption in emotions, his intellectual interests reveal little social awareness. The ideological uncertainty of *Pauline* and the unending metaphysics of the later poetry might have been avoided and a great poetry born, had the poet integrated

his passionate analysis to an alert consciousness of the contemporary social environment. In *Pauline*, the poet is yet too far under the spell of romantic traditions to depart from bubbling emotionalism, and the inner convulsions he suffers from, are due to the a-social nature of his intellectual interests. *Pauline* is an evidence of the divorce that has come about in the Victorian period between poetry and life. The function of poetry as a social instrument that prevailed in the 18th century and somewhat feebly even in the early 19th, has now been taken over by the Novel. Poetry has dissociated itself from its long tradition of journalistic affiliations.

APPENDIX I

THE SECOND EDITION OF *PAULINE*.

The second edition of *Pauline* was published in 1868 by Smith Elder & Co, who had succeeded Chapman & Hall after Browning's dissatisfaction with the latter firm (see letter to Isa Blagden, July 19, 1867). With *Paracelsus* and *Strafford*, *Pauline* formed the first volume. It is not known what led Browning to issuing a second edition of the work against which he had a long-standing prejudice. No doubt, some people knew about his authorship of the work,—his close friends, and D. G. Rossetti; and since Rossetti knew, it may be supposed that the Pre-Raphaelite group also knew. But the knowledge was certainly not public. Phelps suggests (*MLN*, 1932, pp. 295—69) that the poet decided on a new edition to avoid unauthorized publication by unscrupulous persons. Phelps quotes in full the poet's letter to Richard Herne Shepherd, dated Feb 1, 1867, in which a permission was given to the publisher to publish 'a few extracts' with Shepherd's preface that 'the poem was purely dramatic.'

Phelps says that something happened between February, 1867 and December 25 of that year (the date of the preface of the second edition). What happened, Phelps does not explain. He says that possibly Shepherd did not reply to Browning's letter and the poet became suspicious. To lend point to Browning's alleged suspicion, Phelps cites some of the 'unscrupulous' doings of Shepherd in 1878, he published Mrs Browning's *Earlier Poems* without the consent of her family; in 1875, he was prevented by a court of law from publishing some of Tennyson's earlier poems. It is to be noted that all these cases of piracy happened several years after the negotiations with Browning. Also, in 1867, Shepherd was a lad of only fifteen! Whatever might have been his later conduct, in 1857 he could not have acquired any reputation likely to have made Browning suspicious. On the other hand, as Phelps admits, Shepherd never did print those extracts. Browning himself, in the letter, emphasises upon two qualities that he has discovered in Shepherd, a sense of justice, and gentlemanliness. In none of the nine letters dated 1867 which have been included in the *Letters*, is there any mention of *Pauline* or Shepherd, not even in the letter to Dowden (Dec 15, '67) where the poet speaks of "the opportunity of correcting my 'works' ". We have no evidence to show that Browning was seriously

worried about any possible unauthorized edition of the poem, by Shepherd or another.

Until further documents on this matter are forthcoming, we may hold that Browning agreed to a second edition because (a) about this time, he might have found his first work not unworthy of him ; (b) his fame as a dramatic poet was so well established that any autobiographical element of the first work could not jeopardise it, and (c) *Pauline* might even be passed off as his earliest attempt in dramatic writing

APPENDIX II

THE DATE OF THE HOLOGRAPH IN THE MILL-COPY *PAULINE*.

The *Pauline* copy bearing Browning's holograph has had a chequered history. Originally one of the dozen copies sent by the poet to W. J. Fox, it went from Fox to Mill. When the publication of his intended review was abandoned, Mill returned the copy to Fox, with his pencilled notes in it. Fox sent the copy back to Browning ; the poet wrote his remarks in reply to Mill ; afterwards, he made a gift of the copy to Forster ; after the death of Forster, the copy was believed to have entered the Forster collection. When on August 29, 1881, Browning wrote to F. J. Furnivall (who was preparing a bibliography of the poet's works) that the Mill-notes were at the end of this particular copy, Furnivall must have looked up the matter in the catalogue of the Forster library, only to find no mention of the copy. On September 15, 1881, Browning wrote to Furnivall (*Letters*, p. 196) :

What you tell me about the copy of "Pauline" interests me much : if "the entry was struck out of the catalogue", I suppose that means—the request I made to the Executor, Mr. Chitty, that the book might be returned to me,—which he promised to attend to, but of which I heard no more, was really complied with *so far*—I shall try if I can recover the copy.

Browning's hope to recover the missing copy (see also *Letters*, p. 253) was not fulfilled during his life-time. After Chitty's death in 1899, the copy which had been in his possession so long, was returned by his son to the Forster and Dyce Collection where it now is.

For us, the interesting question is, when was the holograph written ? Kenyon (Centenary edition, I, ix) says it was written "five years later" than 1832. Phelps, in the *MLN* article (p. 298), wishes he knew 'exactly when Browning wrote his notes in this volume' and quotes

Kenyon's date which is also accepted by DeVane (*Handbook*, p. 39) with the qualification "probably". Hall Griffin gives no date (*Life*, p. 60).

Kenyon gives no reason for his date. I suggest an earlier date than 1837. Browning and Forster met for the first time at Macready's house in 1835 (Griffin, *Life*, p. 75); relations between them quickly ripened to friendship: on Feb. 16, 1836, Forster and Macready spoke to Browning about a proposed play on Narses; on March 1836, Forster wrote a commendatory review of *Paracelsus* in the *New Monthly Magazine*; on May 26, they sat together in a box to witness the first-night show of Talfourd's *Ion*, and the same night joined the supper at 56 Russel Square. Considering these evidences of intimacy between the two, it seems likely that the gift was made not later than 1836.

At whichever date the gift might have been made, the holograph I think, was written in 1833. On his receipt of the Mill-copy in 1833 he must have been provoked by Mill's notes to writing out his replies. On 'Richmond, October 22, 1832', Mill's comment was, "This transition from speaking to Pauline to writing a letter to the public with *place* and *date*, is quite terrible". Browning's counter comment was, "Kean was acting there: I saw him in Richard III that night, and conceived THE CHILDISH SCHEME ALREADY MENTIONED". (Bold type mine). The only document where this scheme has been stated is the holograph. There is nothing in the prefatorial Latin extract or elsewhere to show what Browning's scheme was; the holograph stands alone. The holograph, therefore, must have been written on the copy as soon as the poet had got it back, i.e. in 1833.

APPENDIX III

CHANGES IN THE 1868 EDITION.

The changes deal mostly with the punctuation; the number of dash signs is substantially reduced. The numbers below indicate line-numbers A selection of other changes are:—

(1) *Capital letters reduced*: 55 (Winter-winter), 56 & 230 (Spring-spring), 156 (Spirit-spirit), 250 (Power-power), 368 (Fancy-fancy), 549 (Time-time), 1006 (Beauty-beauty).

(2) *Compounds formed*: "sun treader" (151) becomes a compound in the B-text, but it is already a compound in the A-text in ll.201, 1020. Other new compounds are, 764 (wild mice, wild-mice), 998 (half afraid, half-afraid), 796 (quick glancing, quick-glancing).

(3) *Plural changed to singular and vice versa* : 282 (desires, desire), 309 (resolves, resolve), 501 & 524 (hopes, hope), 921 (fruits, fruit). The singular is changed to the plural in 783 (root, roots).

(4) *Omission of words* : 263, the final 'them' of the line is omitted in the B-text.

(5) *Spelling* : 28 (sate, sat), 215, 287, & 342 (tho', though), 218 (altho', although), 222 (wond'rous, wondrous), 741 (vallies, valleys), 144 & 210, 225 (honor in A & B-texts, but honour in C).

(6) *Typographical* : 460 (motives'-motives,) 336 (an'-and).

(7) *Dictionary* : 403-this incomplete line is completed by the addition of "And my choice fell". The incomplete 1.457, 'Well I remember' is omitted in the B-text.

144 (Him, his) ; 171, 190, 561 (wert, wast), 550 (may, might). All these are grammatical improvements ; 513 (hasting, hastening).

612 (wide, wild), 737 (know, see), 828 (or, nor), 917 (a, one).

CHANGES IN THE 1888 EDITION.

(1) *Metrical* : Some typical cases are given below.

103-adds a syllable that was lacking. 205-The C-text removes the anapaest of the 1st foot of the A-text. 387-C removes extra short syllable at the end. 430-adds a syllable to the monosyllabic last foot of A. 442-C makes the metre regular. 526-A has an extra syllable ; C sets it right by removing "l". 534-A has 12 syllables, C, 10. 631-A has an extra syllable at the end ; C reduces it by changing "ready" to "prompt". 685-C regularises the irregular metre of A. 761-C removes the extra syllable at the end. 818-C makes both the 1st and 2nd ft iambic. 874-C expands the final iambic ft into an anapaest. 953-changes the last spondaic ft into an iamb. 956-C removes the cacophony of the 1st ft 'most stinted' by turning the spondee into an iamb, 'or stinted'. 1008-C regularises the metre. 1012-C regularises.

(2) *Dictional*. For the first 200 lines, dictional changes are few and minor ; the changes are mostly in respect of punctuation. In the following list, only the more interesting and important dictional changes have been shown.

238 : A-for (C-by) one little word. COMMENT—corrects the preposition.
293 : A-wasted/Or progressed (C-halted/Or hastened). COM.—alliterative, more vivid.

- 315 : A-I still find (C-found) them—turning my wild youth (C-mould my wildest youth). COM.-'found' corrects the tense, and 'mould' is the more expressive verb.
- 376 : A-No wish to paint, no yearning – but I sang (C-An impulse but no yearning—only sang). COM.-C avoids the tautology of 'wish' and 'yearning', but 'impulse' is no good substitute.
- 384 : A-What mind had yet achieved. No fear was mine (C-What other minds had achieved. No fear outbroke) COM.-'other minds' makes the idea clearer ; 'outbroke' testifies to the later B's fancy for verbs with the prefix 'out'.
- 393 : A-Lent back by others (C-Lent by the others). COM.-'lent back' was confusing.
- 394 : A-I paused again—a change was coming on, (C-a change was coming – came). COM -more dramatic.
- 397 : A-I first thought on myself—and here my powers (C-I thought on my new self, and all my powers). COM.-'new' gives a sharper edge to the idea ; the vagueness of 'here' is removed.
- 401 : A-wandering o'er them (C-wandering o'er thought's world). COM.—unnecessary complication by the removal of the pronoun ; the introduction of the new phrase raises expectation of a new nuance which is not fulfilled.
- 411 : A set me, as to a sweet task (C-set me, slave of a sweet task), COM.—improves the meaning
- 413 : COM.—C introduces the Shelleyan compound 'song-inwoven'.
- 416 . A-my heart beat (C-leapt). COM.—unnecessary change.
- 417 : A-I felt my own mind (C-soul), COM.—the later B's predilection for 'soul'.
- 418 : A-Soon the whole (C-orb) COM.—introduces a new metaphor.
- 426 : A-what a life was mine to be (C-to prove). COM.—The beautiful use of the verb 'to prove' recalls the similar use of the verb in *Par.*, I, 559, 'I go to prove my soul !', the line which was General Gordon's favourite.
- 434 : A-I was full of joy (C-bliss). COM. —unnecessary change.
- 452 : A-Where singing goes on, (C-song takes shelter), and delicious mirth. COM.—no point.
- 454 : A-he comes to live (C-lie). COM.—no point.
- 455 : A-For ever by (C-'neath) those springs, and trees (C-garden-trees) fruit-flushed/And fairy bowers (C-Sung round by fairies). COM.—no point.

- 459 : A—then freedom in itself/And virtue in itself (C—freedom's self/ And virtue's self). COM.—The possessive of the abstract noun is a special feature of B's later poetry.
- 464 : A—happiness (C—Light-heartedness). COM.—Considerable improvement. 'Happiness' was incongruous with 'wit' and 'mockery' of the previous line.
- 490 : A—end my days (C—end my course). COM.—no point.
- 493 : A—life's vanity (C—life's nothingness). COM.—no gain. The Biblical 'vanity' of A was better.
- 495 : A—this feeling (C—knowledge). COM.—C better, because he means the knowledge of youth & health.
- 496 : A—Betwixt me and despair (C—joy and despair). COM.—C introduces unnecessary abstraction.
- 505 : A—To chain my spirit down, which I had fed/With thoughts of fame (C—which erst I freed/For flights of fame). COM.—Nothing is gained by the twist in the idea.
- 507 : A—of genius seen so bright (C—gay) COM.—'bright' was vague.
- 508 : A—Some trusted end, seems (C—grows) sad, when all in (C—proves) vain. COM.—'grows' is more definite ; 'proves' adds a necessary verb.
- 509 : A— Most sad, when men have parted with all joy
For their wild fancy's sake, which waited first,
C— How sad when men have parted with truth's peace
For falsest fancy's sake, which waited first
COM.—See Commentary, pp. 31-32.
- 512 : A—Came not with her alone, (C—without fancy's call :) but alters soon. COM.—See pp. 31-32.
- 519 : A—The radiant sights (C—Half the bright sights) which dazzle me ; but now/They shall be all mine own (C—Mine shall be all the radiance). COM.—Hardly a gain.
- 524 : A—To leave all shadowy hopes (C—Discarding shadowy hope). COM.—no point.
- 525 : A—As would encircle me with praise and love. C—As straight encircle men). COM.—'straight' is an ineffective adverb ; the change of 'me' to 'men' shows the mature B's attempt to subdue the tone of subjectivity of the poem.
- 530 : A—And all the influence (C—The vaunted influence) poets have o'er men. COM.—gives a sharper edge to the idea.
- 537 : A—the still night brought (C—brings) thoughts like these, but morn/Came (C—comes), and the mockery again laughed (laughs) out.

COM. the change of the tense from the past to the present makes the narration more vivid.

542 : A— And I well knew my spirit, that would be
First in the struggle, and again would make
All bow to it ; and I would sink again.

C— And I foreknow my spirit, that would press
First in the struggle, fail again to make
All bow enslaved, and I again should sink.

COM.—change of tense ; 'foreknow' is closer to the poet's thought ; 'press' is more vivid ; 'fail again' makes the idea clearer ; 'bow enslaved' gains in sound-value, but 'enslaved' introduces an unnecessary new idea.

550 : A—To face whate'er (C-what dread) may lurk. COM.—gains in precision.

556 : A—I gaze on souls (C-him) I'd keep for ever/In beauty—I'd be sad to equal them (C-/Above me ; I to rise and rival him ?)
COM.—C particularizes the hero ; the second Shelley-reference was an afterthought.

560 : A—Pauline, my sweet friend (C-soul's friend). COM.—'sweet' was cheap, but 'soul's friend' over-spiritualises their relations.

587 : A—Cannot come near me (C-us). COM.—the subjective element lessened.

595 : A—It has strange powers, and feelings, and desires, (C-impulse, tendency, desire). COM.—no point.

596 : A—Which I cannot (C-nowise I) account for. COM.—'nowise' a favourite of the later B

606 : A—To elevate a sect, or a pursuit (C-To elevate an aim, pursue success). COM.—'sect' was a false scent ; also, 'success' gives precision.

614 : A—towers and dwellings (C-towers and towns). COM.—The alliterative double phrase became a feature of the later B's style.

617 : A—must remain with this vile form (C-this vile form's slave). COM.—gains precision.

624 : A—That sleepless harpy, with its budding wings (C-with just-budding wings). COM.—The compound enhances the imaginative beauty of the line.

631 : A—So (C-See !) it lies in me a chained thing—still ready (C-prompt). COM.—'see' is vivid and dramatic ; but 'prompt' is pointless.

- 635 : A-For I cannot so narrow me, but that/I still exceed it ; (C-Can I so narrow sense but that in life/Soul still exceeds it ?) COM.—A rhetorical question to indicate a positive idea ; a feature of the later style.
- 637 : A-my love would pass (C-outsoars) my reason—but since here (C-love). COM.—‘outsoars’ is a great improvement ; also ‘here’ was vague.
- 643 : A-Reason, tho’ it soared with (C-Reason companioning) the seraphim. COM.—no gain.
- 648 : A-I can (C-could) forget. COM.—tense corrected.
- 653 : A-All my sad weaknesses, this wavering will, (C-Hate of the weak and ever-wavering will). COM.—‘Hate’ adds point ; ‘ever-wavering’ is a fine alliteration.
- 655 : A-while I can pass (C-whom wing can waft), COM.—conventionally poetical.
- 659 : See *ante*, p. 78.
- 666 : A-that God (C-some god). COM.—C is truer to Greek polytheism.
- 668 :—A-Let it pass—I will call another change. (C-Soul requires another change). COM.—Later B’s emphasis on the ‘soul’ ; also the subjective element lessened.
- 675 : A-And I rise triumphing over my decay (C-And rise triumphant, triumph through decay). COM.—no gain.
- 687 : A—Why have not I sought refuge in myself,
 But for the woes I saw and could not stay—
 And love !—do I not love thee, my Pauline ?
 C—Why else have I sought refuge in myself,
 But from the woes I saw and could not stay ?
 Love ! is not this to love thee, my Pauline ?
 COM.—Altogether changes the idea. In A, the poet-lover shrinks from escaping into his ego ; in C, he makes the escape. Also the sincerity of 1,689 in A is lost in C.
- 736 : A-upraising (C-uprising). COM.—A was clearly a mistake.
- 745 : A-golden spray (C-silver spray). COM.—no gain.
- 761 : A-shelving in the waters (C-the lymph). COM.—‘lymph’ is a beautiful word ; also, the extra syllable of A is removed.
- 74 : A-plants stretch out (C-out-stretch). COM.—Verbal compounds with the prefix ‘out’ are a feature of B’s later style.
- 102 : A-who whistle as they go (C-who whistle on their way). COM.—no gain.

- 811 : A-O God where does this (C do they) tend—these struggling aims ? COM.-corrects grammar.
- 854 : A-witnessing thy bursting from the tomb (C-thine outburst). COM.-the later predilection for verbal compounds with 'out'.
- 864 : A-That love (C-Somewhat of love) which I ever felt. COM.-moderation.
- 867 : A-speech is mockery (C-seemed mockery). COM.-moderation.
- 875 : A-No less I feel that thou hast brought me bliss (C-No less song proves one word has &c) COM.-subjective experience has been moderated into a belief based on proof.
- 884 : See *ante*, p 64.
- 886 : A- even now I feel all dim the shift
 Of thought These are my last thoughts ; I discern
 Faintly immortal life, and truth, and good.
 C- even now I recognize
 The shift, the change from last to past—discern
 Faintly how life is truth and truth is good.
 COM.-A is definitely better. 'From last to past' is obscure. While A rises above the shift of thought, C recognizes it yet. Also, there is the Keatsian identity between truth and good.
- 891 : A-I look thro' (C-love looks through). COM.-subdues the subjective element.
- 901 : A-Standing (C-Stooping) beneath me—looking out to me, (C-looking up—one look). COM.-'Stooping' and 'looking up' at the same time involves difficult acrobatics.
- 914 : A-I am very weak (C-Words are wild and weak). COM.-subdues subjectivity.
- 930 : A- A key to music's mystery, when mind fails,
 A reason, a solution, and a clue.
 C- A help to music's mystery which mind fails
 To fathom, its solution, no mere clue !
 COM.-The phrasing of A was not happy ; a key, a reason, a solution, —virtually tautology ; at the same time, the intensity of A is lost in C.
- 932 : A- You see I have thrown off my prescribed rules :
 I hope in myself—and hope, and pant, and love—
 C- O reason's pedantry, life's rule prescribed !
 I hopeless, I the loveless, hope and love.
 COM.-A is more direct and sincere ; in C, the apostrophic trick of B's later style.

938 : A-I have too trusted to my own wild wants (C-my own law wants). COM -the introduction of 'law' is a concession to Victorian worship of law.

975 : A- we will go and think again,
 And all old loves shall come to us—but changed
 As some sweet thought which harsh words veiled before
 C- we will question life once more,
 Till its old sense shall come renewed by change,
 Like some clear thought which harsh words veiled before
 COM.-heightening of the idea.

981 : A-My own land (C-My England). COM. defines the country.

1012 : A-And I shall see all clearer (C-clearlier see). COM -gram corrected ; but then, why not also 'calmlier' and 'purelier' (1015)

1018 : A-Which were not mine when wavering (C-Which were d the waverer once). COM.-subdues the subjective tone.

As these details of textual changes show, Browning's statement in the introductory note to the 1868 edition is substantially correct. B-text mainly corrects misprints and attends to the punctuation ; dict changes are minor and few. The changes in the C-text are more considerable ; for a classification of these changes, see *ante*. It will be noticed that in a number of cases, the tricks of the printer's later style have crept in. Some of the changes give a different turn to the thought as well.

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