

IMAGERY IN THE POETRY OF

ROBERT BROWNING

A THESIS

SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS

FOR THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF ARTS IN ENGLISH

IN THE GRADUATE DIVISION OF THE

TEXAS STATE COLLEGE FOR WOMEN

DEPARTMENT OF

ENGLISH

BY

VI MARIE TAYLOR, B. A.

DENTON, TEXAS

JUNE, 1951

Texas State College for Women

Denton, Texas

June 1951

We hereby recommend that the thesis prepared under our supervision by Vi Marie Taylor entitled Imagery in the Poetry of Robert Browning

be accepted as fulfilling this part of the requirements for the Degree of Master of Arts.

Committee in Charge of Thesis

Autrey Nell Wiley
Chairman, and Director of Thesis

Constance L. Beach
Mary Hupford

Accepted:

W. H. Stark
Director, Graduate Division

PREFACE

The roses were there before him--real and red and within easy reach. He had only to stretch forth his hand to touch them. But when his hand felt for them, it passed through air only.

Physicists call such a vision a "real image" -- a sight phenomenon caused by a concave mirror, which sets a vision between itself and the viewer--in contrast to a virtual image, which is safely tucked away where no one even tries to grasp it.

Poetic images are, in a sense, "real images." Their point of perception is near the reader, and they are not less real because they are intangible.

I have attempted to grasp and observe some of these "real images" in the poetry of Robert Browning. This thesis is a part and a result of my groping for truth.

The writer wishes to express her appreciation for the guidance and counsel of Professor Autrey Nell Wiley, who has opened new vistas in her seminar in aesthetics, for the background in Robert Browning's poetry afforded by classes and association with Professor Constance Beach, and for inspiration and methods of research suggested in beginning graduate classes under Professor Mary Hufford.

May 23, 1951

Ki Marie Taylor

TABLE OF CONTENTS

PREFACE	iii
CHAPTER	PAGE
I. INTRODUCTION	1
Background of Art	1
Statements on Art	1
Previous Studies of the Problem	2
Approach to the Problem of This Study	3
Values of Imagery	3
Selection of Volume for Study	4
Material Excluded From Study	5
Reasons for Choice of <u>Men and Women</u>	5
Varied Arts in <u>Men and Women</u>	5
Choice of Browning's Mature Poetry	6
Material Included in Study	6
Prose Material Studied	6
Outline of Chapter Contents.	7
II. BROWNING UPON ART.	9
The Aesthetic Approach	9
Allusions to the Arts and to Artists.	9
Scope of Browning's Art Poems	10
Art Men and Women	10
Periods of Art Used	10
Poems Developing the Aesthetic Concept	11

Artists Mentioned by Browning. . . .	12
Use of the Dramatic Monologue. . . .	13
Aesthetic Principles Discussed	13
The Artist in Browning's Aesthetics. . . .	14
The Artist and Other Men.	14
Private Life of the Artist.	16
The Essay on Shelley	16
Browning's Letters.	17
Effect of Art on the Artist	18
The Aesthetic Principle of Beauty Related	
to Soul	19
The Purpose of Beauty	19
The Development of the Soul	19
Ability of Various Arts to Develop	
the Soul	20
The Idea of Failure in Browning's Aesthetics	22
Relationship of Art and Philosophy	22
"Pauline": The First Statement of the	
Theme	22
Echoes: Restatements and Consistency . . .	23
<u>Paracelsus</u> : Success Through Failure . . .	24
"Andrea del Sarto": Failure Through	
Success	25
Andrea's Limited Concept.	25
Andrea's Great Tragedy	26
"Pictor Ignotus": Choice of Failure . . .	27

"Cleon": The Concept of Incompleteness	28
Cleon, Browning, and Christianity.	28
Browning and Positive Christianity	29
"Abt Vogler": The Broken Arc; the Theme	
of Immortality	30
"Rephan": The Struggle	30
"James Lee's Wife": Progressive Change.	31
"Old Pictures in Florence": The Value	
of Evil	32
"Saul": " 'Tis not what man does." . .	32
The Aesthetic Principle of Realism . . .	33
The Soul and Reality	34
Relationship with Other Reality . . .	34
Personality and Background	35
The Creative Process.	37
Motivation: A High Moral Purpose. . .	37
Objections to Didacticism	38
Positive Morality	38
Art and Freedom.	39
III. BROWNING AS ARTIST: SOME PARTIALLY	
EXPLORED ASPECTS OF HIS STYLE.	40
Historical Background of Imagistic Study .	40
Methods of Poetic Analysis to be Employed.	41
Some Studies of Imagery.	41
Classification of Images	41
An Additional Image Classification . . .	42

A Method of Imagistic Analysis	43
The Subjective Element in Analysis.	45
Variation of Images Evoked	45
Variation by Adding Specific	
Meanings.	46
Variation by Changed Application	46
Emotional Content	47
Dominant Senses	47
Some Assumptions to be Examined.	48
Varied Senses Employed by Browning.	48
Other Studies of Browning's Sensory	
Perceptions	49
IV. TYPES OF IMAGERY IN BROWNING'S POETRY	50
Individualized Imagery.	50
Adaptation of Imagery to the Art Form	
Contemplated	50
Musical Poems and Sound Imagery.	50
Art Poems and Visual Imagery.	51
Form and Color.	51
Correlation of Imagery Between	
Poems	52
Adaptation of Imagery to the Artist	
Presented	52
Sources for Individual Treatment	53
Different Treatment of Shelley and	
Keats.	54

Individual Treatment of the Painters	55
Fra Lippo Lippi	55
Andrea del Sarto.	57
Light Imagery.	58
Good and Evil Symbolism	59
Contrast	59
Flashes of Light.	59
Size and Distance	59
Darkness in Terms of Light	60
Man-made Light	61
Treatment of the Grotesque	62 ✓
Other Light References.	62
Synaesthetic Imagery	62
Definitions and Explanation of Use.	62
An Example of Modern Synaesthesia	64
Sight-sound Fusion	64
Sound-motion Fusion.	65
Touch-sight Fusion	65
Visual-tactual Fusion	66
Tactual-auditory Fusion	67
Kinesthetic Fusion	67
Abstract Imagery.	68
Soul Imagery	69
Types of Soul Imagery	70
Mention of Divinity.	70
Variation of Meaning of Soul.	71

Words Symbolizing Basic Truths . . .	72
Time Imagery.	73
Optimistic View of Time	74
Solidness of Time	75
Temporal and Eternal Life . . .	76
The Fourth Dimension	77
Time Imagery as a Type	78
Contrast and Intensity	78
Contrast in "Childe Roland"	79
Contrast to Evoke a Mood.	80
Intensity.	81
An Image Spectrum to Study Intensity.	81
Application of the Image Spectrum. .	83
V. CONCLUSIONS	84
Review of Purposes	84
Results	84
Fulfillment of Second Purpose	84
Fulfillment of First Purpose.	85
Possibilities for Further Study.	85
Personal Implications of the Study. . . .	86
BIBLIOGRAPHY.	101

LIST OF TABLES

TABLE	PAGE
I. Number of Images in Each Poem	87
II. Number of Images to 100 Lines	92
III. Time Imagery in Browning.	98

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

PLATE		PAGE
I.	Applications of Imagistic	
	Analysis to Poem	44
II.	"Galuppi" and "Master	
	Hugues" (facing)	51
III.	"Andrea del Sarto" and	
	"Fra Lippo Lippi". (facing)	52
IV.	"Memorabilia" and	
	"Popularity" (facing)	53
V.	"The Image Spectrum".	82

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Throughout the history of letters, the correlation between the developmental process of literature and that of each of the other fine arts in any culture has been significant. Literary development has both accompanied the growth of the other arts and interpreted the aesthetic principles of those arts, just as all art has accompanied the historical development of a people and interpreted the meaning of such development. Almost without exception the story of the arts has been the story of a people; and, to an extent only recently realized, it is to the extant works of art that subsequent generations turn for an evaluation of earlier cultures.

At the present much is being written by critics regarding the importance of art and artists and their contributions, and it is significant that many of the critics point to the work of one poet, Robert Browning, as furnishing the best statement of these ideas in an art medium. His art poems correlate all the arts and at the same time give explanations of the function and purpose of art, because in his various poems all the major arts are introduced and the problems of the artists, set forth. Poetry itself he considered an art form; therefore, his poems

invite a study of some of the aesthetic aspects of his poetry. To this investigation the author of this thesis addresses herself, analyzing his poems in the light of the criteria which he set up for the art of poetry and in the manner of recently devised methods of poetic analysis.

Two excellent books have been written on the art and aesthetics of Browning's poetry. Professor Pearl Hogrefe, in her book, Browning and the Italian Arts and Artists,¹ has presented an excellent statistical study of the use of art thematically and for background not only in the Italian poems but also in most of the other important poems. The Aesthetics of Robert Browning, by C. N. Wenger,² deals with Browning's theories of composition and those of other modern aestheticians in a scholarly fashion. Two articles also deserving special mention because they develop related ideas are W. Wright Roberts's article, "Music in Browning," which appeared in Music and Letters³ and which shows the soundness of most of Browning's musicianship, and Bernard Groom's study, "Browning," which appeared in the publication of the Society for Pure English.⁴ The latter

¹(Lawrence, Kansas: University of Kansas Press, 1914).

²(Ann Arbor, Michigan: George Wahr, 1924).

³(Volume XVII, 1936), pp. 237-248.

⁴Oxford, England: Clarendon Press, 1939).

offered the significant observation that the word artistry was invented and first used by Browning.

None of these, however, has sought to analyze the method by which Browning achieves his own artistic effects, and it is with such an analysis that this study concerns itself.

As I have already said, Browning was interested in the way in which art is achieved, and he left us ample evidence of some of the particular phases of art in which his interest lay. He gave, for example, a masterful statement of the value of imagery in these lines from "Fra Lippo Lippi":

For, don't you mark, we're made so that we love
First when we see them painted, things we have
 passed
Perhaps a hundred times nor cared to see,
And so they are better, painted--better to us,
Which is the same thing. Art was given for
 that--⁵

Such power is lodged in not only the painter but the artist in words as well, and Browning has Sordello say that the gift of helping others see is one of the highest functions of man:

For the worst of us to say they so have seen;
For the better, what it was they saw; the best
Impart the gift of seeing to the rest.⁶

⁵"Fra Lippo Lippi," ll. 300-304, The Complete Poetic and Dramatic Works of Robert Browning, Cambridge Edition (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1895). Since all quotations from Browning's poetry in this study are taken from this edition, henceforth no mention of this edition will be made.

⁶"Sordello," ll. 299-301.

Sight images are not the only ones that Browning's poetry calls forth; all the so-called five senses, including the muscular sensation that has been labeled "kinesthetic," are called into play by his poems. Imagery has, in the past, been considered chiefly from the standpoint of image-producing figures of speech, but it is my belief that vivid images are often called forth by single words or simple phrases, and it is from this point of view that the present study will approach the subject. No attempt will be made to survey figures of speech in themselves unless the figure contributes directly to the material on images.

Anyone who evaluates an artist's work should, if a selection of a part is to be made, select that part which is most representative of the artist's mature work. Because of the tremendous volume of Browning's output a complete study of the works would be impossible; so it is necessary to select some portion that will be truly representative of his best. A volume which satisfies this requirement is to be found in the 1855 edition of Men and Women, which contains fifty poems and the epilogue, "One Word More."⁷ Most scholars

⁷In the 1863 edition of Browning's collected works the title Men and Women was retained to indicate a division consisting of eight poems and "One Word More" from the first edition and three poems not in the first edition. The play "In a Balcony" was placed in a division of its own, and the remaining forty-two poems from the original edition were divided into Dramatic Lyrics and Dramatic Romances. Although all recent editions follow the arrangement of the 1863 volume, it is to the original edition that scholars usually refer when they name Men and Women as Browning's best work.

concede Men and Women to be Browning's greatest work. In addition to observing, "The poems that make up Men and Women were the gleanings of the best ten years of Browning's life,"⁸ Professor De Vane explained their steady growth in popularity, noting:

. . . . The world has gradually come to see that in Men and Women Browning made a great and lasting contribution to the spirit of English literature. Since 1855 the fifty-one poems of Men and Women have steadily grown in popularity and are now recognized as representing the highest level of Browning's poetic achievement.⁹

Other critics have had much the same opinion. As Berdoo says, "Unquestionably in these works we have the very flower of Mr. Browning's genius. There is not one of them which the world will willingly let die."¹⁰

The fragmentary drama, "In a Balcony," is generally considered with the plays of Browning and will not be included in this study, but the remaining fifty poems fulfill the requirement that the work studied be typical of the poet's best work.

Another reason for the choice of this volume lies in its proportionately large number of poems dealing with the varied arts. Thirteen of the poems deal with arts and artists in a major way, the distribution ranging from poetry

⁸Clyde De Vane, A Browning Handbook (New York: F. S. Crofts Company, 1935), p. 187.

⁹Ibid., p. 191.

¹⁰Edward Berdoo, The Browning Cyclopedica (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1931), p. 272.

to music, painting, and sculpture. Browning's greatest expressions regarding these arts appear in "One Word More," referring to poetry; "A Toccato of Galuppi's," referring to music; "Fra Lippo Lippi" and "Andrea del Sarto," referring to painting; and "The Statue and the Bust," referring to sculpture. Of the very greatest art poems, only "Abt Vogler" and the "Parleying with Charles Avison" are not in this volume.

It should also be noted that by 1855 Browning had ceased writing about the failure of poets. He had become more and more familiar with his poetic medium. Thus experienced, he devoted himself to writing of artists other than poets and to aesthetic principles generally.

His fifty poems in Men and Women, then, will form the basis for the ensuing evaluation of Browning's imagery, following careful reading, noting and marking of images, and charting of the manner in which the images are distributed.¹¹

In addition to the poems which discuss art, Browning's "Essay on Shelley" and his letters are sources of information regarding his ideas and his aesthetic philosophy. A consideration of such sources prepares for a survey and an analysis of the imagery of the poems in one volume, Men and Women, according to certain modern methods of poetic analysis.

¹¹Charts of findings are given in Chapter IV and in the Appendix.

Because imagery is part of both content and technique, this study is closely related to the artistic philosophy of the poet. It begins, therefore, with a study of Browning's aesthetic theories and related philosophical ideas, which are discussed in Chapter II. Chapter III presents the theories of some other aestheticians in regard to one aspect of the aesthetic concept, that of imagery, and some modern methods of approach to the aesthetic. Chapter IV demonstrates the application of aesthetic principles to Browning's poetry, dealing particularly with the following types of imagery: individualized imagery, light imagery, synaesthetic imagery, abstract imagery, and time imagery, and with certain techniques in the use of imagery, with emphasis on contrast and intensity. Based as it is entirely upon my own reactions to the poems, this chapter is of necessity more subjective than the remainder of the study. When a work of art is absorbed by the student, regardless of the method of study, its re-interpretation must of course reflect the interpreter. In this way, Chapter IV becomes personal. In the same way that it becomes personal, perhaps in somewhat the same degree, it becomes of value as a teaching aid. The teacher's task is both to interpret and to present methods by which students may make their own interpretations. This study has certain values inherent in itself, regardless of the methods of

transcription, which give it usefulness to the teacher.

The close association with poetry in preparation for the presentation of material in Chapter IV is one of the most outstanding of these values, in that it suggests to the teacher methods of helping the student make his own interpretations.

Chapter V summarizes the findings and indicates the importance of this study by showing some of the results which may accrue from such imagistic research as is presented herein.

CHAPTER II

BROWNING UPON ART

When making an aesthetic approach to an author, one may examine all his writing, prose as well as poetry, to discover his opinion of his art and his approach to it, or one may analyze the ways in which he achieves his artistic effect through an analysis of the poems and prose works themselves. In the present study of imagery as a phase of the aesthetic approach to Browning, both methods of analysis are appropriate, because Robert Browning not only wrote about art but also practiced various art forms. This chapter, serving as an introduction to subsequent analyses, directs the reader's attention to what Browning said about art in relation to his philosophic ideas.

I. Allusions to the Arts and to Artists

The ensuing chapter will show that Browning did not confine his comments to his own art medium, literature, but that his most mature work concerned itself with all the major arts, with the exception of the dance.¹ During his

¹The art form of the dance is mentioned only once in a minor way. The speaker in "Dis Aliter Visum" in Dramatis Personae tells of the dancer Stephanie, who has sprained her wrist and cannot dance, but he adds,

At any rate she danced, all say,
Vilely; her vogue has had its day.

earliest writing he seemed to be exploring the field of poetry, and it was then that he wrote of the poet and his medium in Pauline and Paracelsus; but as he became more sure of his medium, he turned to the problems of other media.

In Men and Women, nine of his poems deal with other arts as the theme or major background; only four, with poetry.

Approximately one-fourth of Browning's two hundred and twenty-two poems refer to art. Miss Hogrefe found that a total of forty-nine poems deal with art or artists either as a major theme or in a less significant manner.² Most of these refer to Italian arts and artists, the most notable exceptions being the parleying with Charles Avison, the English improviser, and the poem "Saul," in which music is important although underlying. This choice of the Italianate was actually a choice of the Medieval and Renaissance periods. Bagehot contended that this era was the best one for Browning's type of writing, the grotesque, which shows good by contrast with evil. In his comparative essay written in 1864, "Wordsworth, Tennyson, and Browning," he says:

It is very natural that a poet whose wishes incline, or whose genius conducts, him to a grotesque art,

²Op. cit., p. 11.

should be attracted toward mediaeval subjects. There is no age whose legends are so full of grotesque subjects, and no age whose real life was so fit to suggest them. Then, more than at any other time, good principles have been under great hardships. . . . Good elements hidden in horrid accompaniments are the special theme of grotesque art, and these mediaeval life and legends afford more copiously than could have been furnished before Christianity gave its new elements of good, or since modern civilization has removed some few at least of the old elements of destruction. A buried life like the spiritual mediaeval was Mr. Browning's natural element, and he was right to be attracted by it.³

For the purpose of this study, the frequent mention of the various arts and artists will matter little. What will be considered is the group of poems, proportionately few in number, which deal directly with the function of art and the creative process. Of these there are four in each of the fields of sculpture, music, and poetry, and about ten of importance in the field of painting. Miss Hogrefe, in her consideration of the small number of important poems on music and poetry, the two arts about which Browning knew most, suggests that these were arts in which Browning was self-expressive; he wrote poems and played music instead of writing about poetry and music.⁴ This is perhaps a rather accurate appraisal, because although Mrs. Browning recorded that

³Walter Bagehot, "Wordsworth, Tennyson and Browning," Literary Studies (London: Longman's Green, 1898), p. 372.

⁴op. cit., p. 51.

at one time he spent thirteen days in modeling and dabbled in paint from time to time, Browning usually enjoyed these arts by observation rather than by active attempt at creation. It is perhaps significant, too, that although he employed a large number of technical terms in discussing music, most of the very few technical terms used by painters and sculptors which found their way into his poems were, according to W. W. Roberts,⁵ accurately applied.

In considering the characters and background of Browning's poems, one notices the frequent setting in the Italian Renaissance and the use of obscure artists and writers as the protagonists of artistic principles. Although Dante is given homage in seven poems, only "One Word More" can be said to devote much space to his artistic development, and that in relation to his attempt at painting rather than his poetic art. Michael Angelo is mentioned in nine places, Raphael in eight, Da Vinci and his work in six, and Titian and his paintings in seven. All these are used in a minor way, but the excellent but unknown Andrea del Sarto is given a chance to speak for his art. Although Verdi and Rossini are used as the theme of one short poem, only Galuppi and Abt Vogler among musicians receive an extended treatment. An imaginary

⁵Op. cit., p. 239.

composer is the chief character in "Master Hugues of Saxe-Gotha," and David's music is the underlying theme in "Saul." Browning's choice of historical rather than contemporary artists may indicate the common reluctance of any writer to bestow unmitigated praise on a living artist. As Miss Hogrefe points out, however,

With his fondness for out-of-the-way investigations and obscure characters from any nation, Browning has taken some characters from Italian music and has woven their personalities into a few of the best poems on music ever written.⁶

In all these poems, Browning tried to include as much as possible of the character and the character's ideas and philosophy; for this reason he used the dramatic monologue to let the artist himself speak. Only in "One Word More" does he step forth in his own person to plead:

Let me speak this once in my true person,
Not as Lippo, Roland, or Andrea.⁷

In his "true person," Browning was perhaps less interested than any other artist of his century in art for art's sake. Presenting beauty, he shows, is only part of the artist's function. The aesthetic principle of beauty, as conceived by Browning, will be discussed in this chapter. Other aesthetic principles which Browning discussed in detail while speaking in his "true person" include the principles of freedom in art, illusion and

⁶Op. cit., p. 28.

⁷Ll. 137-138.

truth, imitation of nature, art for a moral purpose, and the aesthetic principle of form. All these, plus a consideration of the artist as a person and the underlying theme of his struggle and possible failure, form the basis of the present discussion of Browning's aesthetics.

II. The Artist in Browning's Aesthetics

Basic to an understanding of what Browning says of art is a concept of what he thought about the artist. Since many of Browning's best-drawn characters are artists, we may draw from his poems a rather complete picture of the artist as a man. Placing the artist on the level of common men was frowned on by the leading aestheticians of Browning's day, who "regularly represented the artist as a man apart, endowed with special gifts."⁸ Browning, however, did not so conceive of the artist. To be sure, he believed that the artist had been given a special message to impart and the "faculty of seeing external objects more clearly, widely, and deeply than is possible to the average mind,"⁹ but he found that the artist's greatness usually lies in his being not unlike

⁸C. N. Wenger, The Aesthetics of Robert Browning (Ann Arbor, Michigan: George Wahr, 1924), p. 8.

⁹Browning, "Essay on Shelley," The Complete Poetic and Dramatic Works of Robert Browning, Cambridge Edition, p. 1008.

other men. One of the best expressions of this dual idea is in "How it Strikes a Contemporary," in which the speaker observes the poet as one who is somehow different from his fellow-townsmen, but who is perhaps not so different as the people think. If they could see him in his home, they surely would think him less peculiar, or perhaps they would think him less a poet:

In that new stuccoed third house by the bridge,
 Fresh-painted, rather smart than otherwise!
 The whole street might o'erlook him as he sat
 Leg crossing leg, one foot on the dog's back,
 Playing a decent cribbage with his maid,

 Nine,
 Ten, struck the church clock, straight to bed
 went he.¹⁰

Browning's artist is different from other people, but desiring at some time to be like other people:

Once, and only once, and for one only,
 So to be the man and leave the artist,
 Gain the man's joy, miss the artist's sorrow.¹¹

So, this once, Browning wants to speak in his own person and about himself, but he does not always want to reveal himself thus openly. At another time he compares the self-revelatory type of poetry to a house in which the walls have been destroyed by an earthquake, a house which the people pass, commenting on the furnishings. Yet, it is said that Shakespeare revealed himself in his sonnets, but

¹⁰L1. 79-83, 86-87.

¹¹"One Word More," 11. 70-72.

"Did Shakespeare? If so, the less Shakespeare he."¹²

Other poets of Browning's time showed a strong tendency to reveal the most intimate details of their lives, and these lines were written in protest against the type of poetry that Rossetti wrote in "A House of Life," from which the image of the house is drawn, a type which other poets of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood were emulating. In this respect, however, Browning shows less consistency in life than we might expect from his other activities. He was very careful to destroy all his correspondence, with the exception of the letters from Elizabeth Barrett, and we know that he asked those who received letters from him to do the same. Yet in his essay on Shelley, which was written to introduce a collection of letters accredited to that poet, he discusses the importance of the poet's letters to one who would know about the poet and his works. In speaking of the subjective poet he says:

. . . . He is rather a seer, accordingly, than a fashioner, and what he produces will be less a work than an effluence. That effluence cannot be easily considered in abstraction from his personality, -- being indeed the very radiation and aroma of his personality, projected from it but not separated. Therefore, in our approach to the poetry, we necessarily approach the personality of the poet; in apprehending it we apprehend him, and certainly we cannot love it without loving him. Both for love's and for understanding's sake we desire to know him, and, as readers of his poetry, must be readers of his biography also.¹³

¹²"House," l. 40.

¹³"Essay on Shelley," p. 1009.

Browning classifies himself, however, with the objective poets, and although he acknowledges the interest and the instruction that letters and personal details might offer, he continues:

. . . . we can, if needs be, dispense with them. The man passes, the work remains. The work speaks for itself, as we say; and the biography of the worker is no more necessary to an understanding or enjoyment of it than is a model or anatomy of some tropical tree to the right tasting of the fruit we are familiar with on the market-stall, --or a geologist's map and stratification to the prompt recognition of the hill-top, our landmark of every day.¹⁴

It is not strange, therefore, that Browning should feel that his own letters were not important and should ask that they not be kept, but it is somewhat harder to account for his giving his son the now-famous love letters with permission to do whatever he liked with them after the father's death. Perhaps by that time, near the end of his life, he realized that the objective poet, too, receives the love of those who love his poetry, or perhaps the interest manifest by the Browning Societies had shown him that even the objective poet's work sometimes calls for recourse to the biographical sources.

Browning's letters are not extremely important to a comprehension of his views of art, but they give us a commentary on his activities and family, the things he saw, and the people he wrote to. They do give us a picture of the man, but they do not paint for us the poet in the sense

¹⁴Ibid.

that Browning felt Shelley's did. We cannot wholly judge Browning's letters and say of them, as he said of Shelley's:

. . . . Letters and poems are obviously an act of the same mind, produced by the same law, only differing in the application to the individual or collective understanding. Letters and poems may be used indifferently as the basement of our opinions upon the writer's character; the finished expression of a sentiment in the poems giving light and significance to the rudiments of the same in the letters, and these again, in their incipency and unripeness, authenticating the exalted mood and reattaching it to the personality of the writer. The musician speaks on the note he sings with; there is no change in the scale as he diminishes the volume into familiar intercourse.¹⁵

Browning is interested in what effect art has upon the artist even more than he is interested in the effects the artist makes upon art. The soul of the artist is the concern of "Transcendentalism, a Poem in Twelve Books," the theme being the belief that the artist transcends anything he creates:

"You are a poem, though your poem's naught."¹⁶
If the artist can tell "what it was [he] saw,"¹⁷ one purpose of art has been achieved, whether or not he is able to "impart the gift of seeing to the rest."¹⁸ Imparting the gift is a higher form of art, but the artist receives the soul benefit whether he attains the highest possible form

¹⁵Ibid. p. 1012.

¹⁶L. 47.

¹⁷"Sordello," l. 300.

¹⁸Ibid. l. 301.

of art or one of the less important forms, the ability "to say [he] so has seen."¹⁹

III. The Aesthetic Principle of Beauty Related to Soul

Since the development of personality or the soul was always his first concern, Browning employed art only as it contributed to soul development. One of the clearest statements of this principle of beauty in art is that found in "Fra Lippo Lippi." Beauty is put on earth so that man may, through it, find God. Beauty in poetry must also justify itself by contributions to soul development; one cannot see beauty and be grateful for it without a deepening of his own spiritual life:

Or say there's beauty with no soul at all
(I never saw it--put the case the same--)
If you get simple beauty and nought else,
You get about the best thing God invents--
That's somewhat. And you'll find the soul
you have missed,
Within yourself when you return Him thanks.²⁰

In "Fifine at the Fair," hearing Schumann's piece, "Carnival," induces in the poet a dream of the world as a masque, thus combining for him the art form of the drama with that of music. In this art form he studies all the world's institutions to see what they will afford for the development of the soul. Thus Browning brings into one poem the aesthetic principles of beauty and purpose of art and the philosophic idea of soul development. The close

¹⁹Ibid., l. 299.

²⁰Ll. 215-220.

association of aesthetics and philosophy that is so characteristic of Browning's poetry is here exemplified. Often he treats poetically subjects otherwise left by poets for the consideration of theologians or philosophers, but by skillful use of images Browning makes from this usually non-poetic material good, sometimes great, poetry, as I have pointed out in a subsequent chapter.

The importance of the various forms of art to the development of the soul is attested to in "Parleying with Charles Avison," in which music is accorded the highest place among the arts because it has the greatest power, the poet believes, to search his soul. He first discusses poetry and painting:

. Poetry discerns,
 Painting is 'ware of passion's rise and fall,
 Bursting, subsidence, intermixture--all
 A-seethe within the gulf. Each Art a-strain
 Would stay the apparition, --nor in vain:
 The Poet's word-mesh, Painter's sure and swift
 Color-and-line-throw -- proud the prize they lift!²¹

But music, he believes, can go to greater depths:

. Outdo
 Both of them, Music! Dredging deeper yet,
 Drag into day, --by sound, thy master-net,--
 The abysmal bottom growth, ambiguous thing
 Unbroken of a branch, palpitating
 With limbs' play and life's semblance!²²

Although music has the power of going deep, it is transient in its very existence; indeed, its ephemeral quality has

²¹L1. 216-220.

²²L1. 236-241.

raised many times a question which Browning remarks upon,
wishing music were not subject to the

. . . . chance and change we most abhor!
Give momentary feeling permanence,
.
Could Music rescue thus from Soul's profound,
Give feeling immortality by sound,
Then were she queenliest of Arts! Alas--
As well expect the rainbow not to pass!²³

The same problem of impermanence and passing of good concerns the music improviser in "Abt Vogler":

Well, it is gone at last, the palace
of music I reared;
Gone, and the good tears start, the
praises that come too slow;
.
Never to be again!²⁴

But the loss is not without consolation, for there will be:

. . . . many more of the kind
As good, nay, better perchance. . . .
.
There shall never be one lost good! What
was, shall live as before;
The evil is null, is naught, is silence
implying sound;
What was good shall be good, with, for
evil, so much good more;
On the earth, the broken arcs; in the
heaven, a perfect round.²⁵

This very shortcoming would, according to Browning's philosophy of failure, mean that music is the greatest of the arts, for only that which is incomplete on earth has

²³L1. 244-245, 251-254.

²⁴L1. 49-50, 53.

²⁵Ibid., ll. 53-54, 61-64.

need or hope for eternity. Once again in the image of the broken arcs does Browning strike a note harmonizing the poetic and the philosophic. In imagery is to be found the truest fusion of these two elements, and Browning uses variants of the theme of failure in many of his poems, all centered around the idea that incompleteness on earth lends promise of completion in heaven.

IV. The Idea of Failure in Browning's Aesthetics

Indeed, the theme of failure is present in so many of Browning's poems, the relationship between philosophy and art being here so close, that the development of the theme in all its facets is important to an understanding of Browning's aesthetics. Although Browning seemed to attach a peculiarly aesthetic interpretation to the struggle of the artist to achieve his goal, other poems than those on art are also based on the theme, some of them being of help in interpreting specific phases of the theory.

The idea of failure is one on which Browning began work early, and Pauline, his first published poem, is dedicated to a recital of Pauline's lover's unsuccessful fight for perfection. The theme is that however small the goal, it must be perfectly achieved. Achievement of the finite gives no satisfaction, and the lover at last goes on to seek the unattainable, the infinite. Yet when he falls far short

of his goal, he at last realizes that because he has not been able to do all that should be done, he is forming a prophecy of perfection to come.

Thus in his first poem Browning launched a theme that he was to employ many times in some of his most profound poems later in life. Of the central theme Brooke says:

Out of the same quarry from which "Pauline" was hewn the rest were hewn. They are polished, richly sculptured, hammered into fair form, but the stone is the same. Few have been so consistent as Browning, few so true to their early inspiration. He is among those happy warriors

"Who, when brought
Among the tasks of real life, have wrought
Upon the plan that pleased their boyish thought."²⁶

In this respect, as in many others, he differs from the many poets whose works fall into periods that show great variation in belief. Although Browning does vary his point of view to bring out the truths he is teaching, so that in the various poems he allows his characters to present diametrically opposing beliefs, we feel that Browning's own concepts remain substantially the same throughout his long span of writing. Corson agrees with the suggestions made that Browning's repetition is a form of emphasis:

There are many authors, and great authors, too, the reading of whose collected works gives the impression of their having "tried their hand" at many things. No such impression is derivable from the voluminous poetry of Browning. Wide as is its range, one great and homogeneous spirit pervades and animates it all, from the

²⁶Stopford A. Brooke, The Poetry of Robert Browning (New York: Thomas Y. Crowell, 1902), p. 126.

earliest to the latest. No other living poet gives so decided an assurance of having a burden to deliver.²⁷

The first variations on this theme of failure are to be found in Paracelsus, in which the disciple of knowledge, Paracelsus, and the proponent of love, Aprile, set as their individual goals the achievement of perfection in each one's chosen field, the whole sum of knowledge for Paracelsus and the whole sum of love for Aprile. They do not realize that failure is not ruin, and both think that their aim at perfection was at fault. Aprile has hoarded all the beauty of love, neglecting to give of his store to others; but had he time left, he says, he would give as much as he could and not grieve at failure. Near his death Aprile realizes that he has failed, his failure being inevitable because of his high goal, and that he has, therefore, in a measure, found his goal in the realization that God is the perfect poet, acting in the person of his creations. Realizing this, he understands all:

"I have attained, and now I may depart."²⁸

But Paracelsus still believes that he can attain all by adding love to his knowledge; therefore, he fails to comprehend Aprile's dying advice to seek God:

"'Tis he, the king, you seek. I am not one."²⁹

²⁷Hiram Corson, An Introduction to the Study of Browning's Poetry (Boston: D. C. Heath, 1899), p. 71.

²⁸Paracelsus, Part II, l. 689.

²⁹Ibid., l. 687.

Paracelsus then tries love, but he finds himself hating instead, because he has sought knowledge and love only for their power, and he knows not how

"To trace love's faint beginnings in mankind!"³⁰

He realizes finally, however, that his failure and Aprile's failure point to God, in whom beauty and knowledge, love and power all mingle. God, then, is his goal. If for a time he seems to face failure, Paracelsus knows that he will in the end emerge triumphant:

. . . . If I stoop
 Into a dark tremendous sea of cloud
 It is but for a time. . . .
 I shall emerge one day.³¹

And thus Paracelsus, through failure, finds his goal.

The failures of Paracelsus and Aprile are thus seen to be caused by the attempt of finite minds and hearts to attain the infinite. Their counterpart, failure because of a limited concept, is to be found in many of Browning's artist-creations, notably in the character of Andrea del Sarto, who failed because he accomplished all that he tried to do, failing because his goal was too near and too easily won. This painter's craft, for so Andrea calls it himself, is exact in execution, but it falls short in soul and perception. He can count twenty artists, Andrea says, who would

³⁰Ibid., Part V, l. 3.

³¹Ibid., ll. 928-930, 932.

While I have mine! So--still they overcome
Because there's still Lucrezia, --as I choose.³⁵

With this acknowledgement of defeat by Andrea, Browning contrasts the willing acceptance of obscurity by the unknown painter in "Pictor Ignotus." He, too, has dreamed: he has imagined himself widely known and highly acclaimed, so idealizing his life on earth that he prefers staying here to going to heaven. He has heard an inner voice, reminding him that many will condemn his paintings, and that even those who value them will buy and sell them like mere furniture. Thus the results of high inspiration will be brought down to the common level. He, therefore, chooses to remain unknown, with his pictures subjected to none of the harshness of the world, even when it is accompanied by what men call fame. Nor does he seek fame to live on after him; he is willing to leave fulfillment to heaven.

Perhaps in this respect the unknown painter's philosophy is somewhat like that of Cleon, who thinks that it is mockery for the products of a man's art to live on when the man is dead. His friend has suggested that a man lives on in his artistic creation, but Cleon replies:

Why, if they live still, let them come and take
Thy slave in my despite, drink from thy cup,
Speak in my place. Thou diest while I live?

³⁵Ibid., ll. 261-267.

Say rather that my fate is deadlier still.

When I shall know most, and yet least enjoy --
 When all my works wherein I prove my worth,
 Being present still to mock me in men's mouths,
 Alive still in the phrase of such as thou,
 I, I, the feeling, thinking, acting man,
 The man who loved his life so overmuch,
 Shall sleep in my urn. . . . 36

Cleon's philosophy also holds that the more profound a man's thoughts, the greater will be his concept of the incompleteness around him. Cleon, who is not Christian, has no hope of immortality, and to him failure on earth means complete failure; therefore, his advice is epicurean:

Live long and happy, and in that thought die;
 Glad for what was! 37

In this respect it may be well to consider the assertions by some modern writers that Browning's religion is not Christian in the strict sense of the word. The concept of religion as a center of the striving of mankind is philosophical rather than artistic, but it is so inextricably a part of the striving of the artist that it is perhaps not too remote for consideration here. Margret H. Bates reasons that he is not Christian, and in order to substantiate her statement she names poems such as "Cleon," in which he masterfully presents other religions or shows up Christianity to a disadvantage. One wonders if it is Christianity as such, or individuals who fall short of the Christian ideals,

36"Cleon," ll. 304-307, 316- 322.

37Ibid., ll. 335-336.

with whom Browning is dealing harshly. With respect to Cleon, of whom she says, "Cleon as well as Browning found it hard to be a Christian,"³⁸ we may observe that Cleon is not a Christian. Since he considers the Jews beneath him, he makes no attempt to find out what their religion is. His failure is the more complete because the possible answer to his soul's needs is so near, and he, because of prejudice and apathy, is so far from finding it. We shall not here attempt to answer the question, "Was Browning a Christian?" It is well to remember, however, that the most complete failures that he pictures are the ones who have a chance to adopt Christianity but pass by on the other side.

Further observations reveal that Browning's pictures of Christianity are not negative only. Dowden compares the poet's concept of artistic perfection with a concept which he identifies as Christian:

The glory of Christian art lies in its rejecting a limited perfection, such as that of the art of ancient Greece, the subject of which was finite, and the lesson taught by which was submission, and in its daring to be incomplete and faulty, faulty because its subject was great with finite fears and hopes, and because it must needs teach man not to submit but to aspire.³⁹

To what other poet does this Christian ideal apply so well as to Browning? Closely allied to this concept is Corson's statement that, "Eventual rest in this world is not the

³⁸Browning Critiques (Chicago: Morris Book Shop, 1921), p. 127.

³⁹Edward Dowden, Transcripts and Studies (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, 1888), p. 479.

Christian ideal. Earth-life, whatever its reach, and whatever its grasp, is to the Christian a broken arc, not a perfect round."⁴⁰

The reference here is, of course, to the underlying theme of "Abt Vogler," and echoes the argument that the very incompleteness or life on earth, the fact that we often fail, and the presence in our lives of many things that are dissonant to a complete harmony are all evidences that there is an after life, in which the completeness will be but the more appreciated because of our failures here:

"Why rushed the discords in, but that harmony
should be prized?"⁴¹

By contrast again, "Rephan" tells of the dreariness of life on the star of the god Rephan, where all is harmony, perfection, and changelessness. Then, when the divine spark enters the soul of the star-dweller, so that he becomes restless and yearns to grow, he is sent to earth in order that he may aspire, perhaps to fail, but still to strive and not to rest. Perhaps he, with Rabbi Ben Ezra, can welcome each rebuff which makes life less smooth, if that rebuff causes him to strive and not be content with the present. For let no man, the Rabbi urges, be so content with life on earth that he will not seek heaven, for the present is just machinery which is fashioning the soul.

⁴⁰Op. cit., p. 67.

⁴¹L. 84.

This idea of the incomplete of earth being completed in heaven finds further expression in the series of poems, "James Lee's Wife." The imperfections brought about in the human body by toil receive the attention of James Lee's wife and her assured philosophy:

Shall earth and the cramped moment space
Yield the heavenly crowning grace?
Now the parts and then the whole!⁴²

Not only does this woman echo the completion theme, but she strikes another note as well, the thought that much of our learning comes through failure as the

. . . . kind
Calm years, exacting their accout
Of pain, mature the mind.⁴³

She also repeats the theme of man's not being put on earth to rest; she rejoices that:

Nothing can be as it has been before;
Better, so call it, only not the same.
. . . . Rejoice that man is hurled
From change to change unceasingly,
His soul's wings never furled.⁴⁴

Life, then, is change, and man must adapt himself to it, comforted by the knowledge that change is always forward and upward and that success comes often in the face of foiled desire and defeated endeavor. In this progressive change is one of the promises of life after this life; for, as much as

⁴²"Beside the Drawing Board," Part III, ll. 29-31.

⁴³"Reading a Book, Under a Cliff," ll. 48, 49.

⁴⁴Ibid., ll. 60-61, 67-69.

it holds, this life does not give everything. If it did, what would there be to look forward to?

Experiences should not be rushed through on earth just in order that we may say that they are finished, the poet says again in "Old Pictures in Florence":

What's come to perfection perishes.
Things learned on earth we shall
practice in heaven.

.
Where the strong and the weak, this
world's congeries,
Repeat in large what they practiced
in small,
Through life after life in unlimited series;
Only the scale's to be changed, that's all.⁴⁵

Even in our process of learning the things we are to continue doing in heaven we cannot expect to be free from failure, but we can learn from what is not good as well as from what is good. So a soul may see "by the means of Evil that Good is best."⁴⁶

It is not so much the final goal reached or the artistic perfection achieved; not even the failures are important. It is rather the thing man conceives to be done that marks him for God's service. David realizes this truth as he struggles to help Saul, and recognizing his own slight strength says:

"This;--'tis not what man Does which exalts him,
but what man Would do."⁴⁷

⁴⁵L1. 130-131.

⁴⁶Ibid., ll. 165-168.

⁴⁷"Saul," l. 301.

One of the most optimistic passages in all Browning's poetry on failure comes when David realizes that God can take Saul, the failure, and make of him a willing vassal for the next world. Of the next world David can be sure, for he can feel the pain-throb of its coming. God can and perhaps He may

Interpose at the difficult minute, snatch
 Saul the mistake,
 Saul the failure, the ruin he seems now,--
 and bid him awake
 From the dream, the probation, the prelude,
 to find himself set
 Clear and safe in new light and new life,--
 a new harmony yet
 To be run, and continued, and ended--who
 knows? --or endure!
 The man taught enough by life's dream, of
 the rest to make sure;
 By the pain-throb, triumphantly winning
 intensified bliss,
 And the next world's reward and repose, by
 the struggle in this.⁴⁸

Now we are back again to the idea that our struggles and pain in this world argue for life in another, and thus we have pieced the broken arcs into a golden circle of Browning's philosophy on failure.

V. The Aesthetic Principle of Realism

Lest too great an emphasis on the human soul give the impression that the writer would classify Browning with those whose poetry is far removed from the realities of the world, the question of Browning's realism should be answered:

⁴⁸Ibid., 11. 285-292.

How much realism should the poet strive to achieve? "Fra Lippo Lippi" gives Browning's best discussion of this question. The priests have told Lippi that his paintings have too much of the sensual, too little soul. In answer Lippi says:

A fine way to paint soul, by painting body
 So ill, the eye can't stop there, must go further
 And can't fare worse! Thus, yellow does for white
 When what you put for yellow's simply black.⁴⁹

Here is soul, but it is soul which does not ignore the realities and the beauties that God has put on earth for its enjoyment and pleasure. Brother Lippo would disregard the consequences and paint life as he sees it, for God made life, and made it good, and here, we feel, Browning is speaking plainly in the priest's robes of the painter:

. . . . paint these
 Just as they are, careless what comes of it.
 God's works--paint any one, and count it crime
 To let a truth slip.⁵⁰

There is yet another aspect to consider in the development of realism, and that is relationship with other reality. In this respect, C. Day-Lewis sees the value of imagery:

Certainly the poet must try to see things as they really are; but nothing really is in isolation, pure and self-sufficient; reality involves relationship, and as soon

⁴⁹L1. 198-201.

⁵⁰Ibid., 11. 292-295.

as you have relationship you have, for human beings, emotion; so that the poet cannot see things as they really are, cannot be precise about them, unless he is also precise about the feelings which attach him to them. It is this need for expressing the relationship between things and the relationship between things and feelings, which compels the poet to metaphor; and it is the same need, I suggest, which demands that within the poem the images should be linked by some internal necessity stronger than the mere tendency of words to congregate in patterns.⁵¹

Browning saw things in relationship, particularly in relationship to the human soul. Thus, one never finds in his poetry pure lyrical, descriptive passages, of, for example, nature. Nor, for that matter, is any of the great volume of art subject-matter treated from the standpoint of beauty alone. He did not believe that beauty could be separated from soul, but even if it could be separated, he said in "Fra Lippo Lippi," the soul would be present when we viewed the work and praised God for its creation.⁵² Soul and human interest are almost synonymous in Browning's poetry, and for this reason we think of him as a poet of personality rather than abstractions. Browning's descriptions are always an integral part of the personality he is building, and he shows no patience with any artist's work in which,

. . . . subsidiarily to the human interest of his work, his occasional illustrations from scenic nature are introduced as in the earlier works of the origi-native painters,--men and women filling the foreground

⁵¹The Poetic Image. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1947), pp. 24-25.

⁵²Ll. 215 ff.

with consummate mastery, while mountain, grove, and rivulet show like an anticipatory revenge on that succeeding race of landscape-painters, whose "figures" disturb the perfection of their earth and sky.⁵³

Earth and life should be present as background, Browning believed, but it should furnish the backdrop for social action--a backdrop which would serve the characters in their development rather than for mere ornamentation. He did not attempt, however, to take a personality without his background any more than he attempted to take the background without personality, for

. . . . it is with this world, as starting point and basis alike, that we shall always have to concern ourselves; the world is not to be learned and thrown aside, but reverted to and relearned. . . .⁵⁴

Not only must this world be realistically presented, but life must be real life, not some imagined state. The artist must present real feelings and emotions, not just what he imagines that those feelings and emotions might be. Bad poetry

. . . . shows a thing, not as it is to mankind generally, nor as it is to the particular describer, but as it is supposed to be for some unreal neutral mood, midway between both and of value to neither, and living its brief minute simply through the indolence of whoever accepts it or his incapacity to denounce a cheat.⁵⁵

Poetry, then, may be either general or specific in its reference, but it must be one or the other and it must remain what it sets out to be.

⁵³"Essay on Shelley," p. 1009.

⁵⁴Ibid.

⁵⁵Ibid., p.1010.

IV. The Creative Process

One major aspect of Browning's ideas on art remains: the question as to why the creative process comes to be the chief interest of any artist. The love of power, distinction, fame, triumph over rivals, and vanity in the applause are all given by Browning as possible motivating forces for an artistic career, but none of these is sufficient, he believes; not one compensates for a "life of labor hard, slow, and not sure."⁵⁶ Browning believes that there must be a high moral purpose motivating any great artist, because only such a purpose could lead to the devotion necessary to complete a life's work in art:

. . . . Certainly, in the fact of any conspicuous achievement of genius, philosophy no less than sympathetic instinct warrants our belief in a great moral purpose having mainly inspired even where it does not visibly look out of the same. Greatness in a work suggests an adequate instrumentality; and none of the lower incitements, however they may avail to initiate or even effect many considerable displays of power, simulating the nobler inspirations to which they are mistakenly referred, have been found able, under the ordinary conditions of humanity, to task themselves to the end of so exacting a performance as a poet's complete work.⁵⁷

This high moral purpose will tie the poet's soul to the already mentioned truths and realities, and the combination will give him the ability to interpret his more advanced moral state in terms which will elevate his fellow-man toward eventual blessedness. The results elevate the poet,

⁵⁶Ibid.

⁵⁷Ibid.

also, giving him at last the ability to achieve

. . . . the whole poet's virtue of looking higher than any manifestation yet made of both beauty and good, in order to suggest from the utmost realization of the one a corresponding capability in the other, and out of the calm, purity, and energy of nature to reconstitute and store up, for the forth-coming stage of man's being, a gift in repayment of that former gift in which man's own thought and passion had been lavished by the poet on the else-incompleted magnificence of the sunrise, the else-uninterpreted mystery of the lake,--so drawing out, lifting up, and assimilating this ideal of a future man, thus described as possible, to the present reality of the poet's soul already arrived at the higher state of development, and still aspirant to elevate and extend itself in conformity with its still-improving perceptions of, no longer the eventual human, but the actual Divine.⁵⁸

Yet although he feels that a high moral purpose is necessary for great art, Browning speaks out against mere didacticism. When the priests object that Fra Lippo Lippi's art does not warn against sin, Browning's artist replies:

. . . . Why, for this
What need of art at all? A skull and bones,
Two bits of stick nailed cross-wise, or, what's best,
A bell to chime the hour with, does as well.⁵⁹

Rather than negativistic moral teaching, Browning's poems show positive morality. Lippi credits the form of all art to God in another of Browning's aesthetic presentations, the discussion of form:

The beauty and the wonder and the power,
The shapes of things, their colors, lights and shades,
Changes, surprises, and God made it all!⁶⁰

⁵⁸Ibid., pp. 1010-1011.

⁵⁹"Fra Lippo Lippi," ll. 320-323.

⁶⁰Ibid., ll. 283-285.

The last aesthetic principle which Browning stresses is one which, in its timelessness, is most timely for our day. The question often arises and is yet, as it was in Browning's day, to be answered: Can art exist without freedom of expression? If it cannot, what happens to art under a dictatorial regime? Because we cannot control the first factor, freedom, although believing that lack of freedom means lack of high art, we cannot know the answer to the second question, so that we, too,

Shall ponder, once Freedom [is] restored to
Florence,
How art may return that departed with her.⁶¹

⁶¹"Old Pictures in Florence," ll. 261-262.

CHAPTER III
SOME PARTIALLY EXPLORED ASPECTS
OF HIS STYLE

Most of the adverse criticism of Browning's poetry has referred to what his contemporaries considered a lack of polished style--the apparent carelessness with which he employed rhythm and sound pattern. His critics have given less attention, if any, to the third major element of style in poetry: imagery. Those who have praised his vividness of diction have talked loosely about his imagery without an analysis of the specifics that make for vividness. The reason for this disregard of the image and concentration upon rhythm and sound is that rhythm and sound permit scientific investigation so much more readily than does imagery. Division of poems into lines and lines into feet which may be classified according to accent was inherited by English poetry from its predecessors, and the earliest extant Anglo-Saxon poetry made use of sound, in alliteration and length of line, as the basis for its poetic form and effect. More recently rhyme has been accepted by much of the reading public as one of the chief components of poetry, but, aside from a vivisection of poems to label the component figures of speech, very little emphasis has been placed upon imagery.

Until recently all imagistic studies made were based upon figures of speech. Professor Caroline Spurgeon in her exhaustive study, Shakespeare's Imagery, has set some basic patterns and demonstrated the value of the scientific approach to certain phases of poetic analysis, but her definition of imagery, although it includes

. . . . any and every imaginative picture or other experience, drawn in every kind of way, which may have come to the poet, not only through any of his senses, but through his mind and emotions as well,¹

is actually limited in practice to simile and metaphor.

Many other aestheticians, even the more modern ones such as Mr. C. Day-Lewis, have employed the word imagery as almost synonymous with metaphor or the somewhat broader figure of speech, but Professor Fred B. Millett, in his recent volume, Reading Poetry, has presented a definition that is at once more basic and more closely related to the purely sensuous:

Imagery is the result of the evocation, with varying degrees of clarity, of mental reproductions, representations, or imitations of sense perceptions.²

These "mental reproductions" may be classified as of six types, one for each of the commonly defined five senses and the sixth for the muscular sense called kinaesthesia. This is, perhaps, a rather arbitrary classification, there being an infinite number of combinations and categories formed by these senses, but most of our perceptions can be

¹(New York: The Macmillan Company, 1935), p. 5.

²(New York: Harpers, 1950), p.47.

accounted for by using these, the advantage of their being in the everyday vocabulary outweighing some of their limitations. Professor Millett subdivides images of sight into images relating to color, size, shape, position, and movement. In this respect a sixth seems to me to be necessary to express brilliance--light unrelated to color but rather akin to intensity. For light is one of the poet's chief tools, just as it is one of the tools of the painter. From the poet's viewpoint light is essential, according to Robert P. T. Coffin:

All poets have testified to the substantiality and centrality, the primacy and divinity of light. . . .
 . . . Light is twined around our beginnings and our being.
 For me it is the very essence and heart of poetry. Light is the common language of the universe. It is an uncommon common language.³

Browning's frequent mention of light and shadow shows that he, too, thought of light as a poetic substance.

Often, as is the case with brilliance, Browning uses another image seldom encountered in the work of other poets. Although it will be presented more fully later, it should be mentioned here as the seventh sense, following the kinesthetic, called for the purpose of this study "soul image." I believe that what I call the "soul image," as it is used by Browning, although abstract, is an image and falls into a separate category deserving special mention. For this

³The Substance That Is Poetry (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1942), pp. 139 ff.

reason I have added the soul image to this study.

Professor Millett's method, which is a part of a complete method of analysis that he employs in his experimental classes in literature at Wesleyan University, consists of marking each image-making word or phrase as the image is evoked so that the student and teacher may have a technical vocabulary for idea interchange during class discussion and for clarity of thought in individual poem analyses. He uses a system that calls for naming each image by labeling it with a letter assigned as follows:

- 1a Sight-color
- 1b Sight-size
- 1c Sight-shape
- 1d Sight-position
- 1e Sight-movement(or lack of movement)
- 1f Sight-brilliance⁴
- 2 Sound
- 3 Touch
- 4 Kinesthetic
- 5 Smell
- 6 Taste
- 7 Soul⁴

This system of analysis is shown applied in Plate I. One other change which I have made in the system is the addition of a general visual category which I apply when the image evoked falls about equally into more than two of the sight categories. In this method of analysis there is a basis for a more scientific study of imagery than in any other method yet devised. By giving a vocabulary and a system of objectifying a heretofore subjective field, Millett has opened a

⁴The author of this thesis adds two image definitions, 1f and 7, to satisfy the requirements discussed.

PLATE I

APPLICATION OF IMAGISTIC ANALYSIS TO POEM*

4,1e 4, 1e 1,2
Let us begin and carry up this corpse,

2
Singing together.

1e 1 1
Leave we the common crofts, the vulgar thorpes,

1
Each in its tether

4 1c 1c
Sleeping safe on the bosom of the plain,

4 1, 2 (and time)
Cared-for till cock-crow:

1 1d 1f
Look out if yonder be not day again

1f,1d 1c
Rimming the rock-row!

1
That's the appropriate country; there man's thought,

3 3
Rarer, intenser,

Self-gathered for an outbreak, as it ought,

4,3 1c, 1
Chafes in the censer!

1 1 1
Leave we the unlettered plain its herd and crop;

1, 1c
Seek we sepulture

1b 1b, 1d 1 1d
On a tall mountain, citied to the top.

*Analysis of "A Grammarian's Funeral," ll. 1-15. In presenting the kinesthetic feel of the climb Browning has stressed the kinesthetic to the exclusion of some senses here.

new area to the use of scientific method. An adaptation and use of the method was undertaken in an attempt to discover the feasibility of such an approach to art. Further results of the study are shown in table form in the Appendix and in chart and discussion form in Chapter IV.

II. The Subjective Element in Analysis

It will be observed in an analysis of Plate I that we have not removed the subjective reaction completely. Indeed, even if there were a way to make the survey entirely objective, one is not sure that it would be desirable, from an aesthetic viewpoint, to so objectify it. Some of the expressions are open, therefore, to varied interpretation and assignment. The specific images called forth by a common noun such as man, for example, may vary from one individual to another or even from one time to another for the same individual. Some of this variation may be avoided, Professor Millett points out, if the reader makes an effort to distinguish between the images evoked by the words in a poem and the "images involved in the personal associations those words have for him,"⁵ and if he trains himself to recognize the difference between the images evoked by a word when it stands alone and that suggested by the same word in context. If our man is a poet and the description speaks of "His very

⁵Op. cit., p. 49.

serviceable suit of black,"⁶ we get a very different image of man and a very different meaning for the black suit from what we would receive without the adjective serviceable. Both the word man and the adjective black assume new meanings for us when we read further of the man's

. . . . Scrutinizing hat,
Making a peaked shade blacker than itself.⁷

In the same way images may be enriched by a change in application. Nine and ten would usually call forth a visual image, if repeated separately; but when the poet places them in the right context, such as the following, they become auditory images, simulating the chimes of a clock:

. . . . Nine,
Ten, struck the church clock, straight to bed
went he.⁸

We are not concerned here with the emotional content of the images, but these lines illustrate well the varying emotional moods that the same words may evoke. To the man

⁶Browning, "How it Strikes a Contemporary," l. 5.

⁷Ibid., ll. 16-17. This image became much more understandable to me when I heard an elderly man speak of a character of his childhood who wore a black "peaked" hat. To my question he replied that the hat was old and had lost its band and its shape so that the crown came to a point without a crease. The man who wore it was not a poet, but his dress, too, must have been less important to him than were many other things.

⁸Ibid., ll. 86-87. The nasals of nine and ten seem also to have a certain onomatopoeitic imitation of the sound of chimes which is not present in other numbers. Could the choice of these numbers have reflected an interest in portraying sound as well as conventionality?

awaiting execution at the stroke of twelve the striking of the clock would be ominous; to the party watching for the advent of a new year it would be exciting; here it is merely comfortable and conventional. Emotional content, however, is a broad field of imagery which has not yet been analyzed to the extent that it may be objectively studied. Possibilities, nevertheless, are endless and intriguing.

Because, as I have pointed out, the subjective cannot be entirely removed in the classification of images, it is well to note that psychologists have used the terms "predominantly visual-minded" or "predominantly auditory-minded" to classify people according to their dominant sense. To avoid lapsing into a tendency to favor one type of image over another, when two images are evoked by one word or expression, the writer of this thesis calls attention to both, whether weak or strong. By reading the poems a number of times, in different moods and after various experiences, she has found varying images produced by many words and expressions, and all of these images have been indicated. Probably no one reading could evoke all the images indicated for each poem. Lest we fall into the error of creating a whole new meaning, however, she has indicated an image only when it is actually called forth. In other words, when a word does not evoke an image, no attempt has been made to give it added meaning.

III. Some Assumptions To Be Examined

Studies of the imagery of other poets tend to show that the poet under consideration was predominantly interested in one sense to the exclusion of the others and that he was, therefore, visual minded or auditory minded or kinesthetic minded. In the beginning, my study of Men and Women seemed to indicate that Browning's sensory perceptiveness would fall into one of these categories. The first poem analyzed, "The Grammarian's Funeral," showed a very liberal use of the kinesthetic type of imagery and would have required that Browning be placed in the group of "physical" poets, had a summary been made on the basis of this one poem. The feeling of the climb, of the weight of the corpse, and of the rarified atmosphere is conveyed so vividly that the reader might assume that the poet's only interest lies in such imagery. A study of "Master Hugues of Saxe-Gotha" shows, however, a vast "mountain of sound" so vividly portrayed that all other images are secondary and our "physical" poet becomes auditory minded. Browning is also visual minded, as exemplified in "The Statue and the Bust," in which we are shown a series of clearly sculptured pictures from two viewpoints--the street and the window--in addition to the omniscient viewpoint of the poet as he relates the action.

"hole books and several excellent articles have been written from various approaches to Browning's use of the senses. John Kester Bonnell has done a most sensitively perceptive article titled "Touch in the Poetry of Robert Browning." Although stating that there is not a numerical majority of tactual images in any of the poems, Bonnell uses Browning's delicate sensual perception and awareness of the tactual as a basis for his assertion that Browning is "peculiarly a poet of touch."⁹ Frank Neal Doubleday uses the quotation from "Fra Lippo Lippi," which I have already quoted, page 3, as a basis for a chapter on poetry as a way of seeing.¹⁰ Certain phases of auditory imagery are to be found in Roberts's study of music in Browning's poetry, although the article is not primarily a study of imagery.¹¹ These areas of imagery having been so well presented, I have not attempted to contribute to the scholarship of particular areas of imagery. Rather I attempted to find the areas not already studied and to present the over-all view by showing relationship of imagery from one sensory organism to the imagery of another sensory organism.

⁹Publications of the Modern Language Association, XXXVII (1922), 575.

¹⁰Studies in Poetry (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1940).

¹¹Op. cit.

CHAPTER IV
TYPES OF IMAGERY IN
BROWNING'S POETRY

Observing thus the conclusions and hypotheses advanced by scholars who have studied Browning's sensory perceptions, one asks a question as yet unanswered: Does Browning adapt his imagery to the art form contemplated in each poem? Since I read the poems and marked their imagery before I asked myself this question, my positive answer does not reflect any subconscious "weighting" of the study on my part. There is a very definite indication that Browning's artists speak the images that they use in their art.

Although realism might require that a musician use musical terms, Browning the artist goes a step further, employing noticeably non-musical sounds in his poems about music. This example from the first lines of "Master Hugues of Saxe-Gotha" illustrates this idea:

Hist, but a word, fair and soft!
Forth and be judged, Master Hugues!
Answer the question I've put you so oft--
What do you mean by your mountainous fugues?¹

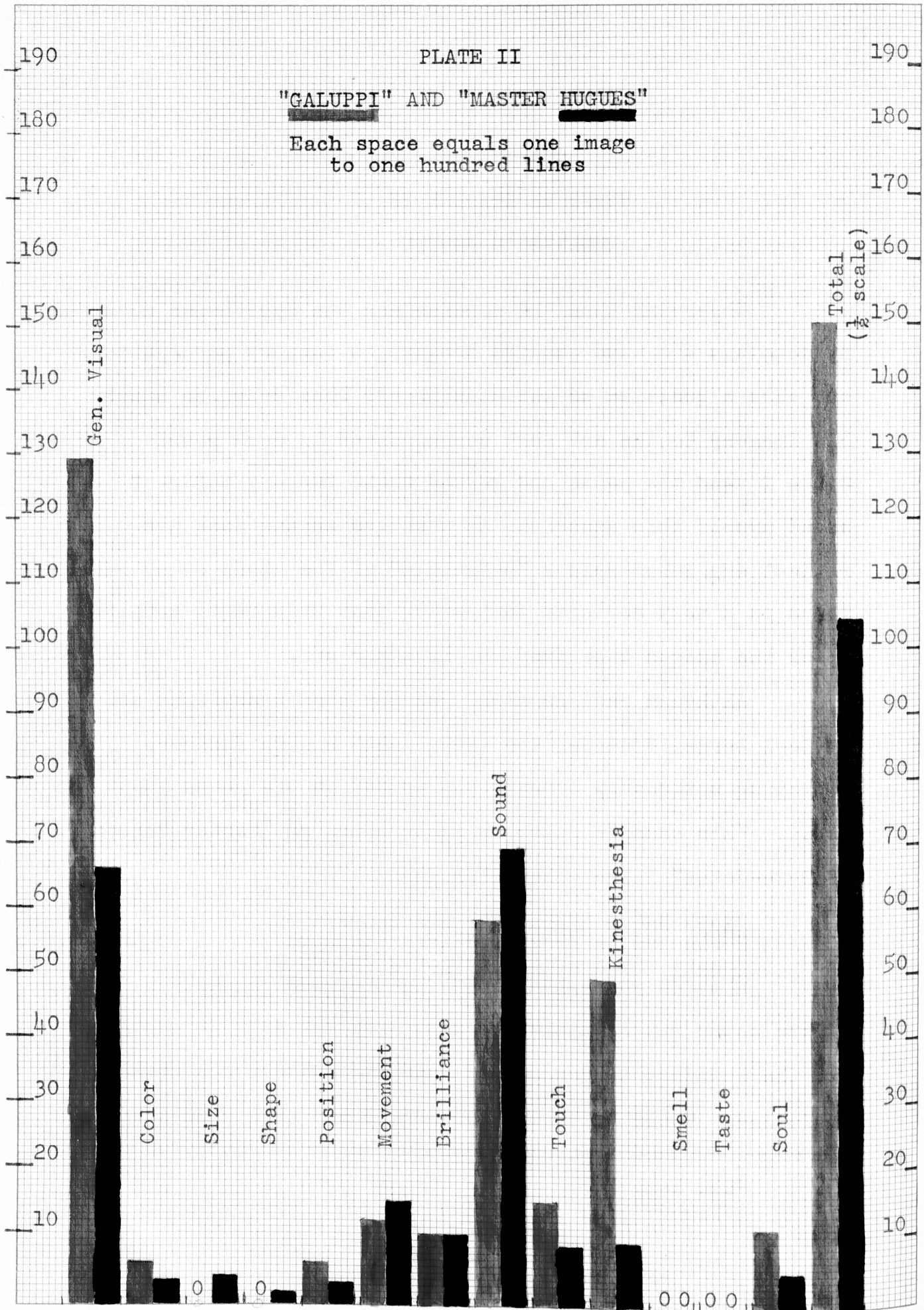
Of the seven images indicated here only the last is musical, but the auditory type of image sets the pattern for what is to follow. Table II in the Appendix shows that this poem

¹L1. 1-4.

PLATE II

"GALUPPI" AND "MASTER HUGUES"

Each space equals one image
to one hundred lines



is richest in sound imagery of all the poems studied, with a ratio of sixty-eight images to the hundred lines. The only other poem with a ratio of more than fifty sound images to the hundred lines is the other music poem, "A Toccato of Galuppi's," which has a ratio of fifty-eight. Plate II, which gives a comparison of the poems, shows a rather high correlation between the two poems in images of color, position, movement, and brilliance, with a wide difference in general visual and kinesthetic imagery, which places "Galuppi" far ahead of "Master Hugues" in the total percentage of imagery.

The painters, Fra Lippo Lippi and Andrea del Sarto, in their monologues make frequent use of visual imagery, particularly images of color and form. Andrea speaks of "fierce bright gold,"² the "grey remainder of the evening,"³ "hair's gold,"⁴ and a "common greyness [which] silvers everything."⁵ Lippi is less specific when he speaks of "the shapes of things, their colours, lights, and shades,"⁶ but he uses colors for his figure of speech:

. . . . Thus, yellow does for white
When what you put for yellow's simply black.⁷

²"Andrea del Sarto," l. 217.

³Ibid., l. 227.

⁴Ibid., l. 175.

⁵Ibid., l. 35.

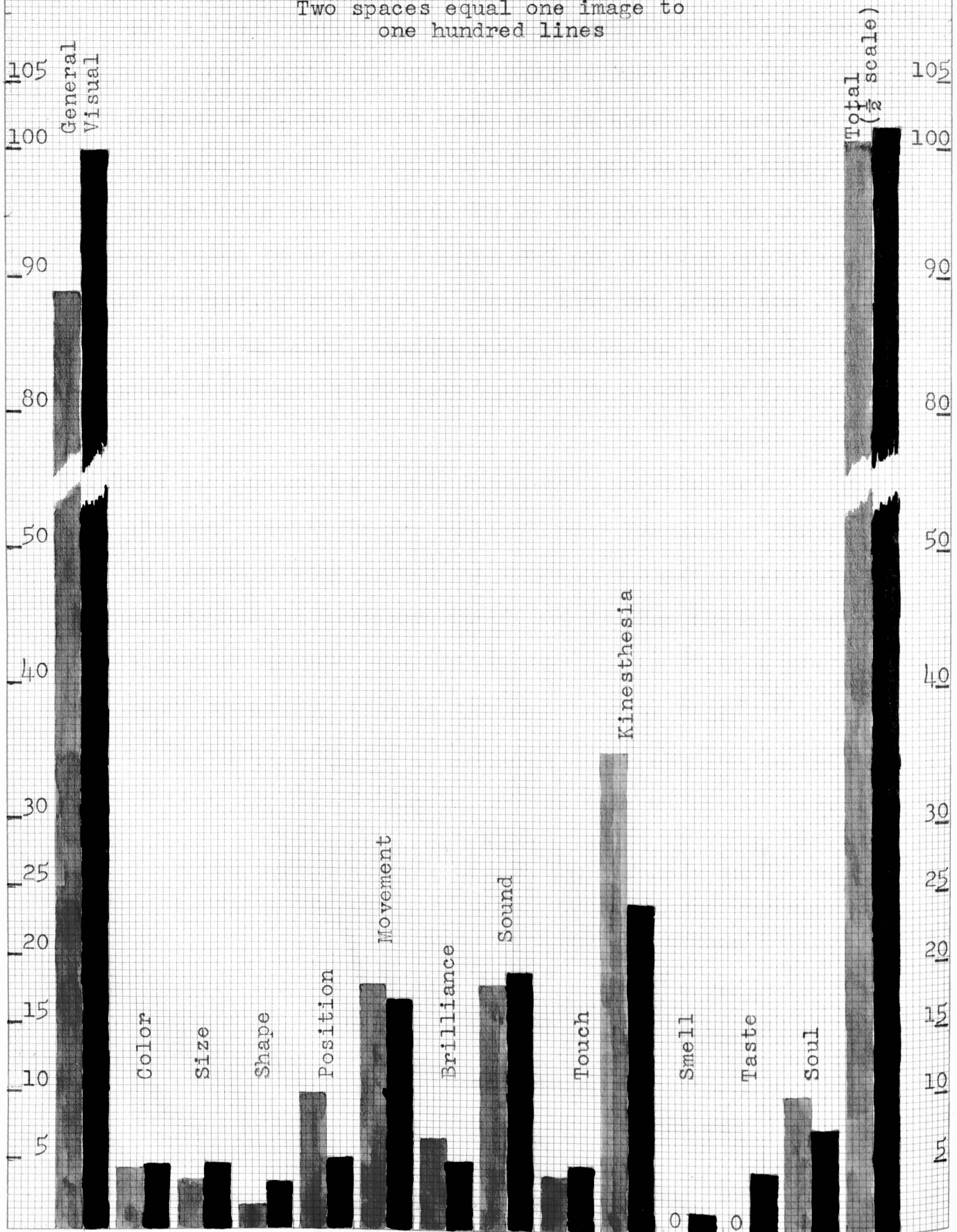
⁶"Fra Lippo Lippi," l. 284.

⁷Ibid., l. 201-202.

PLATE III

"ANDREA DEL SARTO" AND "FRA LIPPO LIPPI"

Two spaces equal one image to
one hundred lines



In both poems form is important. Andrea calls Lucrezia "my serpentine beauty, rounds on rounds,"⁸ and corrects the line of the arm in a Rafael masterpiece: ". . . thus the line should go."⁹ He visualizes Heaven as a

. . . . New Jerusalem
 Meted on each side by the angel's reed.¹⁰

The correlation between the ratio of images of the two poems is very high in almost every category, with the greatest spread coming in the kinesthetic area. Each poem averages slightly more than two images to a line, or a percentage of 202.8 for "Fra Lippo Lippi" and a percentage of 201.5 for "Andrea del Sarto." Almost half these images are classified as general visual: exactly one to a line in "Fra Lippo Lippi" and eighty-nine images to one hundred lines in "Andrea del Sarto." Although some of the other poems have a much higher percentage of general visual images, there are none more consistent than these two art poems in presenting a variety of all the visual images. Plate III shows the similarity of treatment.

If, as the foregoing seems to indicate, Browning consciously uses images appropriate to each art, the next question which occurs is this: Does the style used fit the individual artist as well as his medium? His tributes to

⁸Op. cit., l. 26.

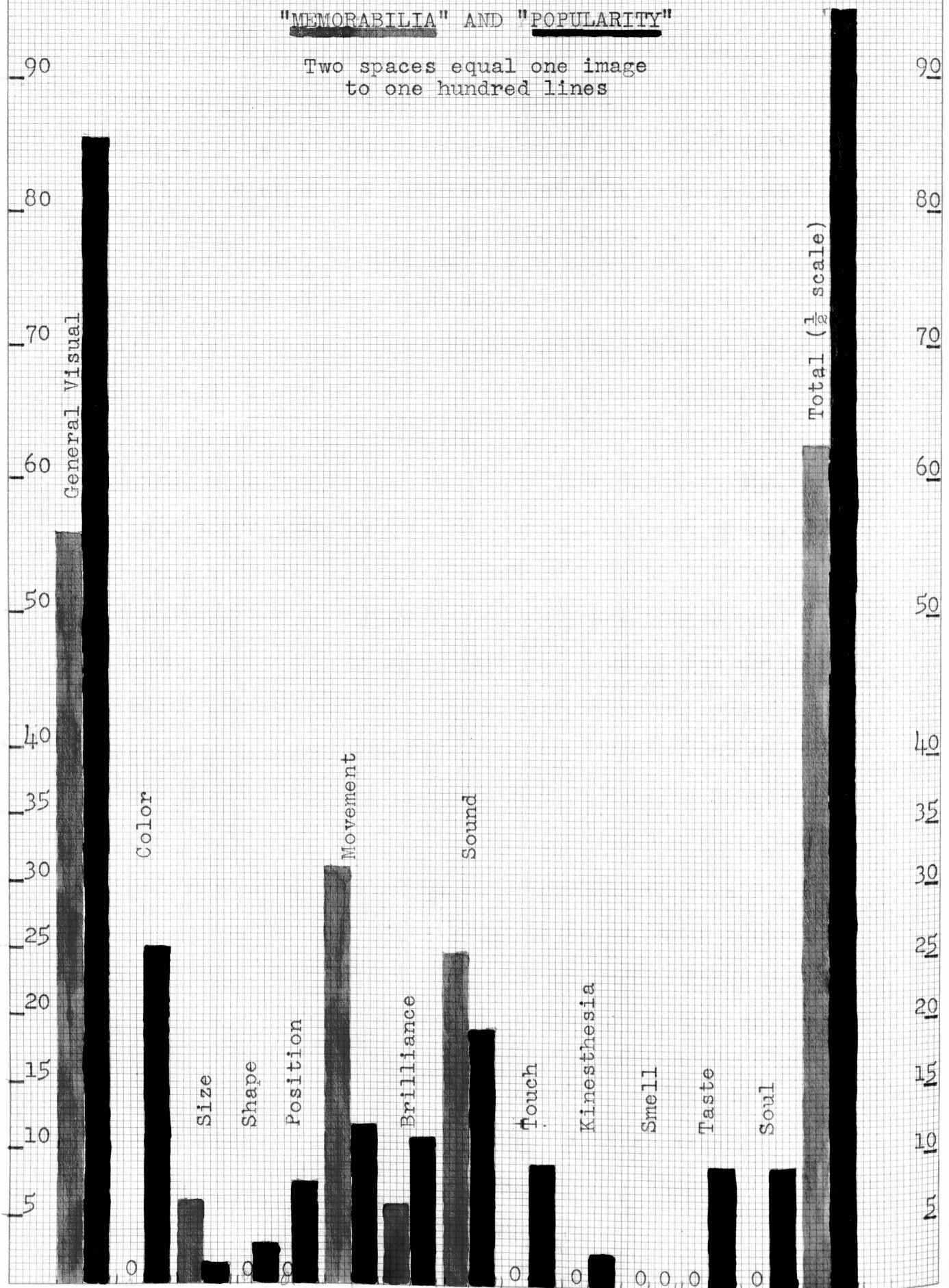
⁹Ibid., l. 196.

¹⁰Ibid., ll. 261-262.

PLATE IV

"MEMORABILIA" AND "POPULARITY"

Two spaces equal one image
to one hundred lines



Shelley and Keats are good tests of this hypothesis. Browning placed these studies together in Men and Women, indicating that he thought them related, and evidently one poet did not greatly outweigh the other in his estimation. Yet in "Memorabilia" there is almost a frugality of images, the images that there are being refined almost to the stage of the symbolic and falling almost outside the purely imagistic classification. Thus, the eagle feather and the moor are not merely images; they are symbols as well. In the entire sixteen lines of the poem there are not half a dozen vivid images. Contrast with this the color and gustatory imagery of the longer "Popularity." Here 124 images, many of them very vivid, occur in sixty-five lines. Much of this difference is shown in Table IV, which does indicate the symbolic as imagistic, however.

In seeking the reason for this difference of treatment of the two poets we may turn to the works of Keats and Shelley themselves. As Richard Fogle points out, Shelley's use of the image tends toward the abstract and the symbolic:

Shelley's poetry strives continually to express by images an absolute truth or beauty beyond the scope of imagery. . . . Instead of finding the subject within the object as does Keats, Shelley often goes directly to the subject itself as a separate and distinct entity. Quite frequently he terminates a rising succession of concrete images with an abstraction, to which he apparently assigns a poetical value identical

with them. . . . Shelley is also abstract in his conscious and consistent use of symbolism.¹¹

Browning dealt with the abstract and symbol minded Shelley on the level of abstractions and symbols rather than on the level of images, but when he paid tribute to Keats, writer of some of the most sensuous poetry in the English language, he employed images of all kinds, from the repeated and intensified image of the blue dye to the auditory images of the sea, "the sea has only just o'er-whispered!"¹² and the "thresh" of the "water's lisp."¹³ Perhaps most Keatsian of the images, however, are those that present the gustatory. In one of these images, in comparing Keats's poetry to the best of good drink, Browning says:

That day, the earth's feast-master's brow
Shall clear, to God the chalice raising;
"Others give best at first, but Thou
Forever set'st our table praising,
Keep'st the good wine till now!"¹⁴

The images of this passage give the effect of a delayed action, saving the total image for the impact which comes with the image of "good wine." The last stanza of the poem, a mixture of the color image and the gustatory, is even more like Keats's imagery, its images apparently having been

¹¹The Imagery of Keats and Shelley (Chapel Hill, North Carolina: University of North Carolina Press, 1949), pp. 222, 223.

¹²"Popularity," l. 37.

¹³Ibid., ll. 39-40.

¹⁴Ibid., ll. 16-20.

drawn directly from similar images in "The Eve of St. Agnes" and "The Mermaid Tavern." In this stanza the exotic imagery of turtle and claret are contrasted with the simplicity of porridge and the Browningsque grotesque "gorge."¹⁵ The parallel imagery of the dye follows a similar pattern of intensification followed by sharp contrast. First come "hints blue," "prints blue," and "azure feats."¹⁶ Then comes the simple image of murex, applied to Keats. The word murex evokes an image here because of the explanation given earlier in the poem of how the dye is made. Browning did not often bother with such explanations, assuming that the reader would know the reference made and understand the image. Because he often used very obscure references, many of his best potential images are lost to the casual reader. It is this reference to the less obvious that has won for Browning criticism for being obscure and for being difficult, a charge which many critics have made. Delving into the deep meaning in Browning's figures is rewarding, however, and some of his obscure images have become familiar and beautiful to readers who have taken the time to understand them.

Browning not only personalized the images to fit the style of the poets, these being in an art form with which he

¹⁵Ibid., l. 64.

¹⁶Ibid., ll. 61-63.

was most familiar and therefore might be expected to recognize the style of individual artists; but he also employed the technique in the pair of art poems already mentioned in this chapter. The joy of living is imparted to Fra Lippo Lippi in a poem filled with images which appeal to all the senses, the auditory:

There came a hurry of feet and little feet,
A sweep of lute-strings, laughs, and whiffs
 of song,¹⁷

the olfactory and gustatory:

I starved there, God knows how, a year or two
On fig skins, melon-parings, rinds and shucks,
Refuse and rubbish,¹⁸

the kinesthetic:

. . . . so, I swallow my rage,
Clench my teeth, suck my lips in tight, and
 paint,¹⁹

and the tactile:

". . . . scratched and prodded to our
 heart's content."²⁰

In addition to these there are many visual images of all categories, but most of these visual images are used to present people, either individually or in groups. Browning seems to have used the vivid images especially to portray the world-loving monk, because nowhere else does he paint

¹⁷"Fra Lippo Lippi," ll. 51-52.

¹⁸Ibid., ll. 83-84.

¹⁹Ibid., ll. 242-243.

²⁰Ibid., l. 329.

such a variety of characters so clearly and individually. The reason for such presentation is easy to perceive after a study of the paintings of Lippi. The monk's pictures show large groups of people, carefully arranged and individually handled, so that each character is given all the detail of an individual portrait. That Browning had become thoroughly familiar with Lippi's paintings, as well as with his life story, is amply evident.

The soul of the "perfect painter," Andrea del Sarto, is just as vividly portrayed. Here the images are subdued. The sounds, which in "Fra Lippo Lippi" were merry and laughing, have become in "Andrea del Sarto" "the low voice my soul hears,"²¹ and the soft voice of the cue owls as they "speak the name we call them by."²² Movement has dwindled from the street crowds of "Fra Lippo Lippi" to the stillness of two people standing by a window at twilight. The same glorious, exact detail is there, but now the detail is that which one painter gives to the picture of the woman he loves when he paints her as a madonna. All contrast is blotted out, just as the color contrast is subdued by the "common greyness."²³ Even the yearning, which was for the world and all its joys for the monk, is narrowed to the yearning for the love of one woman, even the yearning to hold one small hand for an hour.

²¹L. 124.

²²Ibid., l. 210.

²³Ibid., l. 35.

II. Light Imagery

Interesting because of both traditional meanings and Browning's own "private" meanings is the poet's use of light imagery. Often repeated is the light-shade symbolism of good and evil. In this area are the symbolic images "good stars,"²⁴ "light that your soul casts,"²⁵ "light of God,"²⁶ and "His [God's] fire of fires,"²⁷ all of which carry out the traditional poetic use of light to symbolize good, joy, youth, and immortality. Darkness, traditionally associated with evil, sorrow, old age, and death, is portrayed in images of the "dusk of life,"²⁸ "darkness thick and hot,"²⁹ "our low life . . . the night's,"³⁰ and "long dark Autumn evenings."³¹ Often the contrast between good and evil, youth and age, or gladness and sorrow is in one figure: "What's midnight's doubt before the dayspring's faith?"³²

²⁴"Evelyn Hope," l. 19.

²⁵"A Lovers' Quarrel," ll. 99-100.

²⁶"Andrea del Sarto," l. 79.

²⁷"Any Wife to Any Husband," l. 22.

²⁸Ibid., l. 49.

²⁹"A Serenade at the Villa," l. 48.

³⁰"A Grammarian's Funeral," l. 23.

³¹"By the Fireside," l. 2.

³²"Bishop Blougram's Apology," l. 254.

In another reference light and shade are the basis for showing relative importance:

"That burns on, though all the rest grow dark."³³

Sometimes the light and shade are blended to create a visual image of mysticism, as in these quotations: "The lights and shades make up a spell,"³⁴ which speaks of personal relations in "By the Fireside," and the description of a girl's hair from "In Three Days": "Lights and darks outbreaking into fairy sparks."³⁵

Contrast is also shown many times by such sudden flashes of light across a dark background as are in references to "life's flash,"³⁶ light "gone like a rocket,"³⁷ "a sunbeam that burst thro' the tent roof,"³⁸ and the path "where lightening went."³⁹

Spanning the distance from infinite space to the smallest natural light is a figure in "Popularity," the

³³"Any Wife to Any Husband," l. 24.

³⁴L. 188.

³⁵Ll. 17-18.

³⁶"Fra Lippo Lippi," l. 213.

³⁷"Master Hugues of Saxe-Gotha," l. 144.

³⁸"Saul," l. 28.

³⁹"A Serenade at the Villa," l. 44.

well known tribute to Keats which refers to that poet as
 "my star, God's glow-worm!"⁴⁰

The same distance is covered in "Any Wife to Any
 Husband," but the meaning is somewhat different in that this
 image speaks, figuratively, of immortality. The speaker
 observes that

The fire-fly glimpses past me, come and gone.
 -- Where was it till the sunset? where anon
 It will be at the sunrise!⁴¹

The setting for "A Serenade at the Villa" is given
 in terms of light, or rather of darkness, for all the light
 images are negative, as is explained in the line, "Life was
 dead and so was light."⁴² To achieve this setting of dark-
 ness Browning uses more variety in light imagery in this
 poem than in any other poem in the volume. Terms which
 establish the lack of light include "midnight's tent"⁴³
 which no moon can pierce, "how dark your villa,"⁴⁴ and
 "Lightning! --where it broke the roof!"⁴⁵ The absolute
 darkness is portrayed even more vividly by three different
 references to the tiny light of fire-flies and glow-worms.

⁴⁰L. 6.

⁴¹Ll. 58-60.

⁴²L. 5.

⁴³Ibid., l. 42.

⁴⁴Ibid., l. 56.

⁴⁵Ibid., l. 14.

These include the following:

Not a twinkle from the fly,
Not a glimmer from the worm,⁴⁶

which occurs near the beginning of the poem, and the echo,
"when the fire-fly hides its spot,"⁴⁷ which occurs near the
end of the poem.

It should be noted that although many of the references
to light are to natural light sources, Browning also frequently
uses allusions to man-made light; it is in these references
that he shows his "private imagery" in the form of images
peculiar to Browning. "Master Hugues of Saxe-Gotha" is also
given its setting by the use of the strategic mention of
light. After telling us that he is alone in the emptying
church, the musician adds:

Fast they extinguish the lights--
Hallo there, sacristan! five minutes grace!⁴⁸

That the lights will be turned out soon we are reminded later
as the musician urges the old master to speak out quickly,
"Ere my candle's a snuff."⁴⁹ Finally the parley is ended
when the candle burns out. The musician calls the sacristan
for a light and, with a speech in the grotesque style for

⁴⁶Ibid., ll. 6-7.

⁴⁷Ibid., l. 46.

⁴⁸Ll. 12-13.

⁴⁹Ibid., l. 52.

which Browning is famous, concludes, "Do I carry the moon in my pocket?"⁵⁰

Also typical of Browning's treatment of the grotesque is the figure which describes a church,

Its crypt, one fingers along with a torch,
Its face, set full for the sun to shave,⁵¹

with its contrast of varying degrees of brilliance from man-made and natural sources. Bordering on the grotesque, yet somewhat nearer the usual poetic image, is the line from "Saul" which pictures "the dawn struggling with night on his shoulder."⁵²

These images have not been compiled to constitute an exhaustive list of the use of images of brilliance in Men and Women; many areas have not even been mentioned here that are repeated frequently in the poems, such as the many images of fire. These that have been pointed out are sufficient to show the importance that Browning placed on the quantity and source of light without respect to color, and will perhaps justify the inclusion of images of brilliance as a separate category in the tabulation of images.

III. Synaesthetic Imagery

My tabulation of images was sometimes complicated by the fact that sounds, colors, shapes, tastes, and odors

⁵⁰Ibid., l. 149.

⁵¹"Old Pictures in Florence," ll. 39-40.

⁵²L. 209.

have a tendency to fuse and melt into each other, often within a word, frequently in two or three words. The one-word difficulty came with such expressions as the quotation already given from "Fra Lippo Lippi,"⁵³ in which refuse and rubbish seemed to indicate both gustatory and olfactory images, or the oft repeated mountain, which Browning used in different poems to evoke different images. Word combinations, such as a "sunset-touch,"⁵⁴ offer a similar, if slightly more complex, problem. Most often the images falling into such a category seem to be of the type called "synaesthetic." In so labeling this device employed by Browning in some of his poems, I have no intention of placing him in a group of modern subjective Symbolists, to whom, Fogle declares, synaesthesia is

. . . . a literary artifice effective when sufficiently sudden in impact and outré in the terms of the analogy which it proposes. For the most part it works by swift but controlled violence, as in Frances Thompson's striking comparison of the rays of the setting sun with the blaring and clang of brasses. . . .⁵⁵

Browning's synaesthesia is not startling, nor is it subjective. It is much nearer a more conventional figure of speech, such as a simile or a metaphor, and it comes so naturally that it is accepted almost before we realize that

⁵³Cf. page 56.

⁵⁴"Bishop Blougram's Apology," l. 182.

⁵⁵Op. cit., p. 103.

it is there. Nevertheless, Browning's technique is defined in the definition of synaesthesia:

. . . . a subjective sensation, or image, of another sense than the one being stimulated, as in color hearing, in which sounds seem to have characteristic colors.⁵⁶

This psychological meaning differs slightly from the literary application of the principle, in which the sense-analogies are used more figuratively or reflectively. Its range is wide, from little more than a hint at sense-fusion to the extreme employed by Huysman in A Rebours.

Fogle reports the novelist's method:

. . . . Huysman reduces it to absurdity by carrying it to its logical extreme. His hero, the exquisite Des Esseintes, has a cupboard filled with assorted liqueurs, each of which he has designated with the name of an orchestral instrument. The liqueurs correspond in taste to the tone of the instruments: curacao to the clarinet, kummel to the oboe, mint and anisette to the flute, etc. By judiciously imbibing, Des Esseintes is able to play for himself elaborate symphonies.⁵⁷

Browning's synaesthesia is much less self-conscious, much more an integral part of the artist's thought and creation. His use of the device is less obvious even than its use by the romanticists, and so much more subtle than the synaesthesia of the more modern Symbolists that it must of necessity be carefully differentiated from that application of the term. Like the modern Symbolists, however, Browning

⁵⁶Webster's Collegiate Dictionary, Fifth edition (Springfield, Massachusetts: G. and C. Merriam Company, 1948), p. 1012.

⁵⁷Op. cit., pp. 104-105.

difficult, and its six-line stanzas, which are among the most regular that Browning wrote, would seem to discourage pyrotechnics of any sort. It would seem therefore that when Browning took the time to polish and refine a poem, he was more inclined to employ synaesthetic images than when he wrote with more ease and fluidity of line. Most of his poems contain the images which might apparently come from ordinary conversation; for this reason even his synaesthetic images are less subjective and personal than the usual images of this type. His love of the grotesque and striking might otherwise have produced synaesthesia of the type employed by the Symbolists.

Another fusion often applied by Browning is the tactual-visual or the tactual-auditory. In "Transcendentalism" he conveys two rather frequently found analogies of the first type. Early in the poem he speaks of taking the harp

"Only to speak dry words across its strings."⁶¹

Again the image is natural and unobtrusive, yet it effectually combines the two senses. Another of the same type is the twice used "tough book" and "tougher book,"⁶² a figure not at all new to students, who have used the term, or a similar one, for generations. Similarly he uses the figure

⁶¹L. 9.

⁶²Ibid., ll. 30 and 36.

"musty volume,"⁶³ thus combining the olfactory with the visual in another frequently applied analogy.

The tactual-auditory occurs in "A Toccata of Galuppi's" to show a lack of sensuousness by appealing to the senses:

"In you come with your cold music, till I creep
thro' every nerve."⁶⁴

Yet, the speaker says, he too feels "chilly and grown old"⁶⁵ when he thinks of the sensory pleasures of other days.

The visual-tactual is recorded in a different vein in "Old Pictures in Florence," in which we encounter the somewhat more complex image, "the live translucent bath of air."⁶⁶ This, one of the most richly sensuous of Browning's synaesthetic images, combines three tactile and kinesthetic images with one visual image to achieve a very striking effect. It is sometimes difficult to draw a line between the tactile and the kinesthetic, but "live" seems to produce an image of the latter type, while "bath" and "air" appeal more to the sense of touch. Very definitely kinesthetic, however, is the kinesthetic-sound pattern of the image "stooping to inquire"⁶⁷ which is found in "Cleon." Again

⁶³Ibid., l. 43.

⁶⁴L. 33.

⁶⁵Ibid., l. 45.

⁶⁶L. 11.

⁶⁷L. 345.

the figure is neither new nor startling, but it is rather closely related to the kinesthetic-taste image, "joy-hunger,"⁶⁸ which occurs a few lines previously in the same poem and which fills a need of English for the exact word to express the idea.

IV. Abstract Imagery

Very similar to synaesthesia but differing in one of the component parts is a device often used by Browning--that of combining the abstract and the concrete in one image. Thus, Bishop Blougram speaks of "a toy of soul,"⁶⁹ making tangible his own tastes, and personifies truth in the image of the rising sun, saying that they will "see truth dawn together, . . . truth that peeps over the glass's edge when dinner's done."⁷⁰ Even the abstraction doubt becomes an image-word when the Bishop clothes it in bodily senses:

What matter though I doubt at every pore,
Head-doubts, heart-doubts, doubts at my fingers' ends,
Doubts in the trivial work of every day,
Doubts at the very bases of my soul.⁷¹

Because the senses are so employed in an active reading of "Bishop Blougram's Apology," what might otherwise well be an abstract philosophical harangue is given body and life and

⁶⁸L. 326.

⁶⁹"Bishop Blougram's Apology," l. 328.

⁷⁰Ibid., ll. 17-18.

⁷¹Ibid., ll. 618-621.

earthiness which not only make it more interesting and more artistic, but which give a clearer meaning through the use of these very elements. Often, it is true, the images have difficulty in making themselves effective in the midst of multisyllabled abstraction, such as "arbitrary accidental thoughts"⁷² and "fixed, precise, and absolute forms of faith,"⁷³ but usually there is an image or a simile near enough to hold up the meaning and the art form. One interesting sustained simile, which runs throughout the poem, and about which many of the images are built, is a comparison of life with a ship's cabin.

Another interesting phase of Browning's abstract imagery is the way in which he handled the spiritual side of man's being. Concerned as he was with the soul of man, Browning turned naturally to a contrast of the material and the spiritual. The manner in which he handled this contrast shows his mastery of the medium of poetry to express the intangible through imagery. It is for this reason that the writer has designated a distinctive type of imagery as the "soul-image." It became evident early in this study that the soul, although intangible, is not an abstraction in the poems of Browning, but an actuality. Once such a category was established, many images otherwise very difficult to

⁷²L. 991.

⁷³Ibid., ll. 307-308.

place fell rather logically into it. Only through such a designation are we able to realize the artistry of a poem such as "The Patriot," in which the contrast between the sensuous and the spiritual is very pronounced. In the first twenty-five lines of the poem images crowd upon each other as the world heaps on its praise and later its blame. The last two lines would seem to fail to achieve the promised height of imagery if we did not take into account the soul image:

"Paid by the World, --what dost thou owe
Me?" God might question: now instead,
'Tis God shall repay! I am safer so.⁷⁴

All mention of the Divinity falls in this division, excepting only the gods of folklore, who are presented in their earthly habiliments and seem therefore to fit into the visual, rather than the spiritual, category, and visual presentations of Christ or Mary, such as the mention which sometimes occurs in the "Epistle from Karshish." Artemis, who is speaking as a person in "Artemis Prologizes," is an example of this exception, as is the mention of a painting of Christ and the Virgin in "Old Pictures in Florence." David's description of Christ, however, although he visualizes "a face like my face,"⁷⁵ seems to fall into the spiritual realm, and was tabulated as a soul image.

⁷⁴L1. 28-30.

⁷⁵"Saul," l. 316.

Other terms used to express the personality of God, when the use amounts to personification, have also been counted:

The very God! think, Abib; dost thou think?
So, the All-Great were the All-Loving too--⁷⁶

Heaven, as the dwelling place of the soul, has also been considered in this classification, as it is in "An Epistle from Karshish":

Heaven opened to a soul while yet on earth,
Earth forced on a soul's use while seeing Heaven.⁷⁷

Also tabulated as soul-images are those images relating to the moralistic, aside from the religious, life, such as this from "By the Fireside":

Be Hate that fruit, or Love that fruit,
It forwards the general Deed of Man.⁷⁸

Browning's use of the term soul varies with the speaker. The pagan, Cleon, speaks of it as a matter of fact, thus:

And I have written three books on the soul,
Proving absurd all written hitherto,
And putting us to ignorance again.⁷⁹

In "One Word More," the term is used to convey the idea of the total personality, earthly and spiritual:

⁷⁶"An Epistle from Karshish," ll. 304-305.

⁷⁷Ll. 141-142.

⁷⁸Ll. 246-247.

⁷⁹"Cleon," ll. 57-59.

God be thanked, the meanest of his creatures
Boasts two soul-sides, one to face the world with,
One to show a woman when he loves her.⁸⁰

This highly personal soul is transferred to a man's work by
Andrea del Sarto, who speaks of the artist's "pouring his
soul" into his art, and then of the flaws in a painting:

That arm is wrongly put--and there again--
A fault to pardon in the drawing's lines,⁸¹
Its body, so to speak: its soul is right.

Frequently Browning uses the word soul to stand for the
essence of life removed from mortality. Karshish speaks of
the soul of Lazarus in this way:

"The just returned and new-established soul."⁸²

Again he finds a facial and visible evidence of the invis-
ible as "the man's soul springs into his face."⁸³ Further
visible manifestation of soul is described by Fra Lippo
Lippi in relating the reaction of the churchmen to his
paintings; they have told him:

Your business is to paint the soul of men--
Man's soul, and it's a fire, smoke,...not it's not...
It's vapour done up like a new-born babe--
(In that shape when you die it leaves your mouth).⁸⁴

Also tabulated as soul images are words that stand
for basic truths or beliefs, such as

⁸⁰Ll. 184-186.

⁸¹"Andrea del Sarto," ll. 111-113.

⁸²"An Epistle from Karshish," l. 94.

⁸³Ibid., l. 191.

⁸⁴"Fra Lippo Lippi," ll. 183-186.

"With me, faith means perpetual unbelief,"⁸⁵
 or qualities of soul and heart, exemplified by these terms
 in "Any Wife to Any Husband":

Thy singleness of soul that made me proud,
 Thy purity of heart I loved aloud,
 Thy man's truth I was bold to bid God see.⁸⁶

These many uses of the soul seem to justify a classification of imagery devoted to the development of the soul; therefore, this category has been added and the entries tabulated in the total number of images charted. Although the point of perception is more general, such imagery seems to be only slightly less sensory, at least in the poems of Browning, than the highly sensuous kinesthetic image. It may be very intense, just as any other image may be intense, or it may come nearer the abstract level by a lack of intensity.

Another type of imagery which is used by Browning to make the intangible concrete is that which I have labeled "time imagery." Although the poems of Men and Women were written before the scientific discussions of the "fourth dimension," Browning may have viewed time as one of the fundamentals of the universe and hence of life itself. His poems show not only the temporal aspects of life on earth--contrast of summer and winter, youth and age--but also the

⁸⁵"Bishop Blougram's Apology," l. 674.

⁸⁶Ll. 87-89.

timelessness of eternity as conceived by a time-bound mortal. The fading of beauty is a theme which has appealed to poets since time and poetry began, but to Browning the approach of old age heralded the best time of life. A poem not in Men and Women, "Rabbi Ben Ezra," is commonly thought of when this idea is mentioned, but the poems of Men and Women develop the philosophy also, although no whole poem is built upon the theme. Some of these poems contain in their time images some of Browning's most beautiful imagery, figures by which Browning again makes art of philosophical ideas. In one of them David foresees that Saul will feel the joy of youth in old age as

By the spirit when age shall o'ercome thee,
 thou still shalt enjoy
 More indeed, than at first when unconscious,
 the life of a boy.⁸⁷

There is a wide diversity of images for the coming of old age. The scholar in "A Grammarian's Funeral" did not moan when the "little touch [came], and youth was gone."⁸⁸ The speaker in "By the Fireside" finds old age a time for reflection on his good life,

And the whole is well worth thinking o'er
 When the autumn comes: which I mean to do
 One day, as I said before.⁸⁹

⁸⁷"Saul," ll. 166-167.

⁸⁸L. 37.

⁸⁹Ll. 264-266.

Yet not all Browning's characters share this healthy philosophy. Although the speaker in "Any Wife to Any Husband" avows that

"Chance cannot change my love, nor time impair,"⁹⁰
and speaks of "the dusk of life,"⁹¹ in combining sight and time in a very beautiful synaesthetic image, we are allowed later to hear her say,

Why, time was what I wanted, to turn o'er
Within my mind each look, get more and more
By heart each word, too much to learn at first.⁹²

Even the philosopher of "By the Fireside" recognizes that there is a "path grey heads abhor,"⁹³ although that path has no terror for him,

For it leads to a crag's sheer edge with them;
Youth, flowery all the way, there stops--
Not they; age threatens and they contemn,
Till they reach the gulf wherein youth drops,
One inch from our life's safe hem!⁹⁴

An image akin to the picture of the crag's sheer edge, in that it contrasts the solidness of time with the void around it, is the one used by Bishop Blougram in speaking of his own place in time:

⁹⁰L. 54.

⁹¹Ibid., l. 55.

⁹²Ibid., ll. 108-110.

⁹³L. 105.

⁹⁴Ibid., ll. 106-110.

It's through my coming in the tail of time,
Nicking the minute with a happy tact.⁹⁵

Bishop Blougram is not the only one of Browning's characters to realize the importance of the minute. The speaker of "Old Pictures in Florence" stresses the importance of "life's minute,"⁹⁶ and the speaker in "Two in the Campagna" mentions how "the good minute goes,"⁹⁷ before he adds,

Already how am I so far
Out of that minute?⁹⁸

There may be a "difficult minute,"⁹⁹ as well as a "good minute," but minutes are no more fleeting than the hours, which, however brief, are fixed points of reference for life:

For all this, one little hour's to thank
But now, because the hour through years was fixed
· · · · ·
Therefore she is immortally my bride.¹⁰⁰

The linking of the temporal and the eternal, such as the use of the word immortally in contrast to hours and years in this quotation, is the feature which makes the time imagery of Browning particularly different from the use of

⁹⁵"Bishop Blougram's Apology," ll. 415-416.

⁹⁶L. 138.

⁹⁷L. 50.

⁹⁸Ibid., ll. 51-52.

⁹⁹"Saul," l. 285.

¹⁰⁰"Any Wife to Any Husband," ll. 48-49, 53.

time in the works of other poets. Although other poets bemoan the passing of time, Browning alone can say with the stalwart of "A Grammarian's Funeral,"

What's time? Leave Now for dogs and apes!
Man has forever.¹⁰¹

The fourth dimensional effect, or the essential unity of time as one of the bases of the universe, is strong in this figure, in which the time image is very direct, as it is in references to modern and classical art in "Old Pictures in Florence." The latter poem contends that in the same way that man is superior to animals, the Christian's hope for eternity makes him greater than the heathen, though civilized, Greek, because

Precisely because of our wider nature,
For time, theirs--ours, for eternity.¹⁰²

A memorable ride is better in eternity than in life here, when an "instant [is] made eternity,"¹⁰³ but the imagery is more vivid and expresses the same idea in the afore-mentioned lines from "Old Pictures in Florence,"¹⁰⁴ which contain the intense sight-size imagery:

. . . . Life after life in unlimited series;
Only the scale's to be changed, that's all.¹⁰⁵

¹⁰¹L1. 83-84.

¹⁰²L1. 119-120.

¹⁰³"The Last Ride Together," l. 107.

¹⁰⁴Cf. p. 32.

¹⁰⁵L1. 167-168.

These time references make it evident that Browning used mention of time, as he used sight, sound, kinesthetic, and other sense imagery, to evoke images. Time imagery is indeed one of the poet's most often used devices, coming after general visual, kinesthetic, and sound images, which are his most frequent. The number and percentages of time images in the poems of Men and Women are shown in Table III, but they are not tabulated in the total number of images. Although I feel that the quotations establish time imagery as a type, I have not included it in the totals because of the close relationship the image bears to philosophy. Whether counted as images or not, however, the time references enrich the poems by adding another dimension to the standard three dimensions and by providing a basis of measurement for one of the universal elements of life.

V. Contrast and Intensity

Of the techniques which Browning uses in employing imagery in his poetry, two have been important in almost every phase of imagery under consideration. Contrast--between light and dark, drabness and color, the beautiful and the grotesque, and between one personality and another personality--and intensity--the degree to which an image seizes the attention of both the reader and the poet--have thus already entered this discussion several times. A further

consideration of Browning's manipulation of these techniques is the purpose of this section.

The lack of contrast to achieve an effect in "Andrea del Sarto" has already been pointed out. Lack of contrast, which seems to be deliberate in this poem on painting, is even more evident after a consideration of the skillful way in which Browning often uses contrast. One of the most interesting examples of this technique occurs in "Childe Roland to the Dark Tower Came," exhibiting contrast in regard to the sound imagery. The poet does not need to tell us that the deserted land was soundless; he indicates the silence through imagery. From the instant when he says:

" . . . quiet as despair, I turned from him,"¹⁰⁶
to set out upon the dark road to the dark tower, until the closing stanzas

. . . when noise was everywhere! it tolled
Increasing like a bell,¹⁰⁷

there is a significant lack of auditory imagery. The images, with one exception, consist of hushed sounds: the whisper of a sluggish tide, "mute despair,"¹⁰⁸ and "a click, as when a trap shuts."¹⁰⁹ It is the exception which makes the poem

¹⁰⁶L. 43.

¹⁰⁷Ibid., ll. 193-194.

¹⁰⁸Ibid., l. 124.

¹⁰⁹Ibid., l. 175.

notable, from an auditory standpoint. As Childe Roland fords a stream he uses his spear to seek for hollows:

--It may have been a water-rat I speared,
But, ugh! it sounded like a baby's shriek.¹¹⁰

After eighty lines without a sound this sudden shriek is much more effective than it would be with the auditory imagery less skillfully used. After the shriek, only the click of the trap interrupts the complete silence until the diapason of sound upon Roland's arrival at the tower. The poem closes on a note from the horn:

Dauntless the slug-horn to my lips I set,
And blew. "Childe Roland to the Dark Tower came."¹¹¹

Such an aesthetically active reading of this sometimes baffling poem takes much of the emphasis from the question of meaning and places it where it properly belongs, on the ability of a poem to evoke a mood. One of the chief reasons that readers are puzzled by Browning's poetry is that they grope only for the intellectual meaning of the poem and ignore feeling. Browning makes an appeal to the intellect, but the reader is better able to understand the intellectual if he first understands the mood that the poet felt and placed at the core of the poem. Contrast in sound imagery is one of the ways in which Browning sought to achieve the mood.

¹¹⁰Ibid., ll. 132-133.

¹¹¹Ibid., ll. 203-204.

In the previous comparison of "Popularity" and "Memorabilia" the study of imagery necessitated an introduction to Browning's use of the other technique under consideration, that of intensity. "Memorabilia," the shorter and less sensuous of the two, contains fewer images, but the images which are in the poem are symbolic rather than purely sensory. The present method of analysis does not differentiate between the images produced by words such as sound, which are more general and therefore less intense image-making words, and other more intense and specific images evoked by words such as purr or shout or peel. An objective study such as this would have difficulty in presenting intensity, for in considering intensity we are launching rather deeply into the subjective. No method yet devised seems capable of removing the study of intensity from the subjective, but a "spectrum" method employed by Professor Lennox Grey in the study of symbol seems to offer at least some terms which may be used.¹¹² As the spectrum is employed, it suggests relatively greater and less refinement, but there is no intention of indicating that one area is necessarily preferable to another, hence the term level is not used. The symbolic spectrum, when interpreted in terms of images, falls into the pattern shown in Plate V.

¹¹²"No Signs, No Symbols! Uses A-B-C's, A Problem of Practical Definition," Communication in General Education (Dubuque, Iowa: William C. Brown Company, 1949), p. 15.

PLATE V

"The Image Spectrum"

Arbitrary designation of imagistic scope or value	(s)	(s/)	(I)	(I/)	(SI)
Idiomatic designation	mere sign	sign plus	image (specific image)	image plus	symbolic image
Example*	"sound"	"music"	"warbling"	"help-tune" or "wine-song"	"harp"
Context value	(mere mention of a sound)	(mention of any musical sound)	(used here to denote a musical sound of water)	(a parti- cular tune of signi- ficance to David and Saul, hence to the reader)	(suggests the music as well as the instru- ment. May also have re- ligious conno- tations)
SCIENCE _____ language of _____ ART					

*The following examples are all from "Saul."

The scale thus given allows for an infinite number of gradations between the points. Its weakness in imagistic analysis lies in the fact that the specific symbolic image is usually, but not always, more intense than is the image-plus. It is often less sensuous, also, in that it may stand for ideational rather than sensory content. Hence, its place in the spectrum should vary to allow for the differences in intensity between symbolic images. Thus, murex, which was mentioned as being an image in the foregoing discussion of "Popularity," although it is a symbolic image, lacks the intensity of the image-plus, "abyss of blue,"¹¹³ in the same poem. A very intense image, however, is that of

"A moulted feather, an eagle-feather--"¹¹⁴

and it seems to fit into the category of the symbolic image. Since we cannot ignore the symbolic image, because of its importance, we must assign it a place in any scheme we devise; so this system is not alone in this weakness. Its chief advantage lies in its giving a basis of classification and visualization to a field heretofore spoken of entirely in abstractions. Although I have not attempted in the present study an extensive application of this spectrum method of analysis, I do find that it offers certain possibilities for a study of intensity of imagery.

¹¹³L. 44.

¹¹⁴Ibid., l. 15.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSIONS

The purposes of this study have been two-fold: first it has been the purpose of the writer to investigate the poems of Robert Browning in an effort to discover what was the poetic philosophy of the poet and to apply the findings in that study to a consideration of the poet's own art. Second, the aesthetic theories of some other modern aestheticians have been studied, and methods of analysis suggested by them have been adapted and used to study the poems of Browning in an effort to discover the possibilities of the use of such methods.

The nature of the survey has permitted results to be shown in both chart and graph and in discussion. Only by a study such as the one reported here could imagery be reduced to a form, to be tabulated and compared numerically with any accuracy. The second purpose, therefore, has been accomplished in that the results have justified the method employed to obtain them. It has been shown that some modern aesthetic theories can be used as a basis for the study of poetry of an earlier date, and that an art may be studied analytically and scientifically by applying certain principles which help to objectify, by classification, certain phases of that art.

The first purpose has been fulfilled in an analysis of Browning's poems which discuss the arts. It has been shown that Browning's aesthetic theories develop the functions of art generally as well as concerning itself with the individual arts and that central to this aesthetic is Browning's belief that art must have a high purpose in order to justify its existence. One of these high purposes, it has been pointed out, is that of making people see truths and beauties of which they are otherwise but dimly aware.

Browning's philosophy of failure, which is rather closely related to both imagery and philosophy, has been fully developed in the consideration of the poet's aesthetic beliefs. Because the poetic image is perhaps the nearest fusion of style and content, or philosophy and form, that may be found in the art form of poetry, it is necessary to consider some elements of philosophy as well as elements of form in developing a basis for a study of imagery. For this reason I have included a discussion of Browning's theories concerning the failure of the artist and the implications of this failure in terms of future perfectibility.

A survey of this type increases in value in geometric proportion to the number of such studies made, for each offers new opportunities for the comparison of various poets or of different works by one writer. Such a method would serve as a yardstick by which a number of different students could contribute to common scholarship with less individual

variation than would be possible without such a method to serve as a common denominator.

The method of attack for such a study of the intensity of imagery as I have presented seems to offer a great number of possibilities. New areas of research may be opened by the application of a system, such as the spectrum method, to the study of the imagery of English poetry. Although it can never be reduced to the definite terms that are used in the analysis of rhythm and rhyme, intensity of imagery may thus gain a vocabulary and in that way yield a fourth dimension to our study of prosody.

This study has been most rewarding personally. The possibilities for any original contributions to the scholarship already in the field of a much-studied writer such as I have chosen always seem at first to be few. When I began research on Robert Browning every discovery of published material seemed to me to narrow the field and thus curtail the amount of original work that I might do. This very abundance of material proved of value, however, for it led me to limit my field to a size which required intensive rather than extensive development of the theme and at the same time offered opportunity for originality of investigation. The fresh approach to the poetry through analysis by new methods has presented ample opportunity for originality.

My search for real images has not left me empty handed.

APPENDIX

TABLE I
NUMBER OF IMAGES IN EACH POEM

Title of Poem and Number of Lines	VISUAL (GEN.)	COLOR	SIZE	SHAPE	POSITION	MOVEMENT	BRILLIANCE	SOUND	TOUCH	KINESTHESIA	SMELL	TASTE	SOUL	TOTAL
My Star (13)	11	4	1	2	2	5	4	1	0	0	0	0	2	31
Misconceptions(14)	12	0	0	0	1	3	0	1	0	10	0	0	0	27
Memorabilia (16)	9	0	1	0	0	5	1	4	0	0	0	0	0	20
Love in a Life(16)	16	0	1	1	2	1	4	1	1	3	1	0	0	32
One Way of Love(18)	8	0	0	1	1	4	0	8	2	3	0	0	4	31
After (18)	7	0	0	0	5	0	0	0	0	7	0	0	1	21
Life in a Love (22)	4	0	1	0	2	4	2	1	1	8	0	0	0	23
Respectability (24)	24	0	0	1	0	2	3	3	7	6	0	0	0	46
The Twins (28)	28	1	0	1	1	2	0	6	4	9	0	0	0	56
The Patriot (31)	24	0	0	0	3	9	3	8	1	5	3	0	2	58
Another Way of Love (33)	24	2	0	0	0	3	1	3	1	4	0	4	0	42

TABLE I--CONTINUED

Title of Poem and Number of Lines	VISUAL (GEN.)	COLOR	SIZE	SHAPE	POSITION	MOVEMENT	BRILLIANCE	SOUND	TOUCH	KINESTHESIA	SMELL	TASTE	SOUL	TOTAL
In Three Days (38)	11	1	1	0	0	3	23	2	10	14	1	0	1	67
Before (40)	27	1	0	1	4	11	0	13	1	16	1	2	8	85
A Woman's Last Word (40)	26	1	0	0	0	0	2	10	0	16	0	0	0	55
A Toccata of Galuppi's (45)	58	3	0	0	3	6	5	26	7	22	0	0	5	135
De Gustibus (46)	45	5	0	0	2	3	2	6	10	14	1	1	1	90
Women and Roses (48)	39	5	0	12	10	14	5	2	7	17	0	4	1	116
Transcendentalism (51)	51	0	3	3	8	10	0	32	2	9	1	0	2	121
A Light Woman (56)	36	2	0	1	3	11	5	7	3	9	0	4	5	86
The Guardian Angel (56)	55	1	3	0	14	9	1	5	7	11	0	1	9	116
Evelyn Hope (56)	46	6	0	0	0	0	4	3	3	16	0	0	7	83
Protus (57)	81	0	4	3	3	9	2	8	4	7	0	1	0	122

TABLE I--CONTINUED

Title of Poem and Number of Lines	VISUAL (GEN.)	COLOR	SIZE	SHAPE	POSITION	MOVEMENT	BRILLIANCE	SOUND	TOUCH	KINESTHESIA	SMELL	TASTE	SOUL	TOTAL
Two in the Campagna (60)	31	2	3	4	6	8	2	4	14	28	1	4	7	114
A Serenade at the Villa (60)	22	2	5	3	5	5	21	19	8	17	0	0	2	109
Up at a Villa (64)	120	8	0	0	10	12	7	21	12	25	2	4	0	221
Popularity (65)	56	16	1	2	5	8	7	9	6	2	0	6	6	124
Instans Tyrannus (72)	41	2	14	2	7	6	3	11	1	20	0	3	2	112
A Pretty Woman (72)	40	6	0	0	1	3	2	12	2	11	2	0	2	79
The Heretic's Tragedy (79)	70	3	5	3	12	19	11	33	3	15	4	5	28	211
In a Year (80)	11	4	0	0	2	5	0	10	9	22	0	0	2	65
Love Among the Ruins (84)	110	6	0	0	0	0	5	9	6	18	0	0	2	156
The Last Ride Together (110)	43	1	2	1	11	27	7	21	4	40	0	0	5	162
How it Strikes a Contemporary (115)	121	6	2	3	15	19	7	21	3	15	2	8	2	224

TABLE I--CONTINUED

Title of Poem and Number of Lines	VISUAL (GEN.)	COLOR	SIZE	SHAPE	POSITION	MOVEMENT	BRILLIANCE	SOUND	TOUCH	KINESTHESIA	SMELL	TASTE	SOUL	TOTAL
Holy Cross Day (120)	119	1	1	1	18	26	4	54	8	33	5	4	24	298
Any Wife to Any Husband (126)	59	2	3	2	8	17	17	19	9	35	0	2	17	190
Mesmerism (135)	65	3	1	2	6	18	11	14	7	20	0	0	10	158
A Grammarian's Funeral (148)	90	1	12	5	21	25	9	29	14	75	0	7	8	296
Master Hugues (149)	98	6	7	3	5	24	17	103	15	15	0	0	8	310
A Lovers' Quarrel (154)	159	11	0	0	0	0	8	28	31	21	0	0	6	264
One Word More (201)	211	11	3	9	7	64	17	70	8	56	0	10	8	474
Childe Roland (204)	195	15	11	7	20	37	17	42	33	71	0	4	4	456
The Statue and the Bust (250)	231	11	1	9	24	30	25	44	11	53	0	5	28	472
By the Fireside (265)	154	15	21	20	19	32	18	35	23	32	1	3	16	379
Andrea del Sarto (267)	238	12	10	5	28	48	18	49	11	93	0	0	26	538

TABLE I--CONTINUED

Title of Poem and Number of Lines	VISUAL (GEN.)	COLOR	SIZE	SHAPE	POSITION	MOVEMENT	BRILLIANCE	SOUND	TOUCH	KINESTHESIA	SMELL	TASTE	SOUL	TOTAL
Old Pictures in Florence (288)	224	8	4	7	11	20	12	49	20	81	0	1	25	462
An Epistle of Karshish (312)	228	6	20	6	8	14	13	66	14	96	0	9	34	544
Saul (342)	388	24	14	12	51	53	29	121	61	259	1	29	73	1115
Cleon (353)	233	9	22	14	22	63	11	84	14	111	0	14	19	605
Fra Lippo Lippi (392)	390	18	19	14	21	68	20	75	19	96	7	18	30	795
Bishop Blougram's Apology (1022)	632	4	25	15	57	113	36	220	54	278	4	35	136	1555

TABLE II
NUMBER OF IMAGES TO 100 LINES

Title of Poem and Number of Lines	VISUAL (GEN.)	COLOR	SIZE	SHAPE	POSITION	MOVEMENT
My Star (13)	85.	31.	7.7	15.	15.	39.
Misconceptions (14)	86.	0.0	0.0	0.0	7.1	21.
Memorabilia (16)	56.	0.0	6.3	0.0	0.0	31.
Love in a Life (16)	119.	0.0	6.3	6.3	13.	6.3
One Way of Love (18)	44.	0.0	0.0	5.6	5.6	22.
After (18)	39.	0.0	0.0	0.0	28.	0.0
Life in a Love (22)	18.	0.0	4.5	0.0	9.1	18.
Respectability (24)	100.	0.0	0.0	4.2	0.0	8.3
The Twins (28)	100.	3.6	0.0	3.6	3.6	7.1
The Patriot (31)	77.	0.0	0.0	0.0	9.7	29.
Another Way of Love (33)	73.	6.1	0.0	0.0	0.0	9.1
In Three Days (38)	29.	2.6	2.6	0.0	0.0	7.9
Before (40)	68.	2.5	0.0	2.5	10.	27.
A Woman's Last Word (40)	65.	2.5	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
A Toccata of Galuppi's (45)	129.	6.7	0.0	0.0	6.7	13.
De Gustibus (46)	98.	11.	0.0	0.0	4.4	6.5
Women and Roses (48)	81.	10.	0.0	25.	21.	29.

TABLE II--CONTINUED

BRILLIANCE	SOUND	TOUCH	KINESTHESIA	SMELL	TASTE	SOUL	TOTAL
31.	7.7	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	15.	238.
0.0	7.1	0.0	71.	0.0	0.0	0.0	193.
6.3	25.	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	125.
25.	6.3	6.3	19.	6.3	0.0	0.0	200.
0.0	44.	11.	17.	0.0	0.0	22.	172.
0.0	0.0	0.0	39.	0.0	0.0	5.6	117.
9.1	4.5	4.5	36.	0.0	0.0	0.0	109.
13.	13.	29.	25.	0.0	0.0	0.0	192.
0.0	21.	14.	32.	0.0	0.0	0.0	200.
9.7	26.	23.	16.	9.7	0.0	6.5	187.
3.	9.1	3.	12.	0.0	12.	0.0	127.
61.	5.3	26.	37.	2.6	0.0	2.6	176.
0.0	33.	2.5	40.	2.5	5.	20.	212.
5.	25.	0.0	40.	0.0	0.0	0.0	137.
11.	58.	16.	49.	0.0	0.0	11.	300.
4.4	13.	22.	31.	2.2	2.2	2.2	196.
10.	4.2	15.	35.	0.0	8.3	2.1	241.

TABLE II--CONTINUED

Title of Poem and Number of Lines	VISUAL (GEN.)	COLOR	SIZE	SHAPE	POSITION	MOVEMENT
Transcendentalism (51)	100.	0.0	5.9	5.9	16.	20.
A Light Woman(56)	64.	3.6	0.0	1.8	5.4	20.
The Guardian Angel (56)	98.	1.8	5.4	0.0	25.	16.
Evelyn Hope (56)	82.	10.7	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Protus (57)	142.	0.0	7.	5.3	5.3	16.
Two in the Campagna (60)	52.	3.3	5.	6.7	10.	13.
A Serenade at the Villa (60)	37.	3.3	8.3	8.3	5.	8.3
Up at a Villa (64)	188.	13.	0.0	0.0	16.	19.
Popularity (65)	86.	25.	1.5	3.1	7.7	12.
Instans Tyrannus (72)	57.	2.8	19.	2.8	10.	8.5
A Pretty Woman(72)	56.	8.3	0.0	0.0	1.4	4.2
The Heretic's Tragedy (79)	89.	3.8	6.3	3.8	15.	24.
In a Year (80)	14.	5.	0.0	0.0	2.5	6.3
Love Among the Ruins (84)	130.	7.1	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
The Last Ride Together (110)	39.	.9	1.8	.9	10.	25.
How it Strikes a Contemporary (115)	105.	5.2	1.7	2.6	13.	17.
Holy Cross Day (120)	99.	.8	.8	.8	15.	22.

TABLE II--CONTINUED

BRILLIANCE	SOUND	TOUCH	KINESTHESIA	SMELL	TASTE	SOUL	TOTAL
0.0	63.	3.9	18.	2.	0.0	3.9	237
8.9	13.	5.4	16.	0.0	7.1	8.9	150
1.8	8.9	13.	20.	0.0	1.8	16.	207
7.1	5.4	5.4	29.	0.0	0.0	12.	148
3.5	14.	7.0	12.	0.0	1.8	0.0	214
3.3	6.7	23.	47.	1.7	6.7	12	190
35.	32.	13.	28.	0.0	0.0	3.3	181
11.	33.	19.	39.	3.1	6.3	0.0	344
11.	14.	9.2	3.1	0.0	9.2	9.2	190
4.2	10.	1.4	28.	0.0	4.2	2.8	169
2.8	17.	2.8	15.	2.8	0.0	2.8	109
19.	42.	3.8	19.	5.1	6.3	35.	267
0.0	13.	11.	28.	0.0	0.0	2.5	81
5.9	11.	7.1	21.	0.0	0.0	0.0	188
6.4	19.	3.6	36.	0.0	0.0	4.5	147
6.1	21.	2.6	15.	1.7	7.0	1.7	190
3.3	45.	6.7	33.	4.2	3.3	20.	248

TABLE II--CONTINUED

Title of Poem and Number of of Lines	VISUAL (GEN.)	COLOR	SIZE	SHAPE	POSITION	MOVEMENT
Any Wife to Any Husband (126)	47.	1.6	2.4	1.6	6.4	13.
Mesmerism (135)	48.	2.2	.7	2.2	4.5	13.
A Grammarian's Funeral (148)	61.	.7	8.1	3.4	14.	17.
Master Hugues of Saxe-Gotha(149)	66.	4.	4.7	2.	3.4	16.
A Lovers' Quarrel (154)	103.	7.2	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
One Word More(201)	105.	5.5	1.5	4.5	8.5	32.
Childe Roland(204)	97.	7.5	5.5	3.5	10.	18.
The Statue and the Bust (250)	93.	4.4	.4	3.6	9.6	12.
By the Fireside (265)	58.	5.7	7.9	7.6	7.2	12.
Andrea del Sarto (267)	89.	4.5	3.7	1.9	10.	18.
Old Pictures in Florence (288)	74.	2.8	1.4	2.4	3.8	6.9
An Epistle of Karshish (312)	73.	1.9	6.4	1.9	2.6	14.
Saul (342)	113.	7.0	4.1	3.5	15.	15.5
Cleon (353)	66.	2.5	6.2	4.0	6.2	1.8
Fra Lippo Lippi (392)	100.	4.6	4.9	3.6	5.4	17.
Bishop Blougram's Apology (1022)	63.	0.4	2.5	1.5	5.7	11.

TABLE II--CONTINUED

BRILLIANCE	SOUND	TOUCH	KINESTHESIA	SMELL	TASTE	SOUL	TOTAL
13.	15.	7.1	28.	0.0	1.6	13.	151.
11.	14.	5.2	15.	0.0	0.0	7.4	117.
6.1	20.	9.5	51.	0.0	4.7	5.4	200.
11.	69.	9.4	10.	0.0	0.0	5.4	208.
5.2	18.	20.	14.	0.0	0.0	3.9	171.
8.5	35.	4.0	28.	0.0	5.0	4.0	235.
8.5	42.	16.	35.	0.0	2.0	9.0	223.
10.	18.	4.4	21.	0.0	2.0	11.	189.
6.8	13.	8.7	12.	0.4	1.1	6.0	140.
6.8	18.	4.1	35.	0.0	0.0	10.	201.
4.1	14.	6.9	28.	0.0	0.4	8.7	160.
4.2	21.	4.5	31.	0.0	2.9	11.	175.
8.5	35.	17.	75.	0.3	8.5	21.	326.
3.1	24.	4.0	32.	0.0	4.5	5.4	169.
5.1	19.	4.9	24.	1.8	4.6	7.6	203.
3.6	22.	5.4	28.	0.4	3.5	14.	152.

TABLE III
TIME IMAGERY IN BROWNING

Title of Poem and Number of Lines	Number of Images	Images to 100 Lines
My Star (13)	0	0.0
Misconceptions (14)	1	7.1
Memorabilia (16)	0	0.0
Love in a Life (16)	0	0.0
One Way of Love (18)	4	22.0
After (18)	1	5.6
Life in a Love (22)	0	0.0
Respectability (24)	4	17.0
The Twins (28)	4	14.0
The Patriot (31)	5	16.0
Another Way of Love (33)	3	9.1
In Three Days (38)	15	40.0
Before (40)	0	0.0
A Woman's Last Word (40)	2	5.0
A Toccata of Galuppi's (45)	6	13.0
De Gustibus (46)	4	8.7
Women and Roses (48)	6	13.0
Transcendentalism (51)	2	3.9

TIME IMAGERY IN BROWNING (CONT.)

Title of Poem and Number of Lines	Number of Images	Images to 100 lines
A Light Woman (56)	1	1.8
The Guardian Angel (56)	3	5.4
Evelyn Hope (56)	11	20.0
Protus (57)	9	16.0
Two in the Campagna (60)	6	10.0
A Serenade at the Villa (60)	3	5.0
Up at a Villa (64)	14	22.0
Popularity (65)	8	12.0
Instans Tyrannus (72)	0	0.0
A Pretty Woman (72)	0	0.0
The Heretic's Tragedy (79)	4	5.1
In a Year (80)	2	2.5
Love Among the Ruins (84)	10	12.0
The Last Ride Together (110)	12	11.0
How it Strikes a Contemporary (115)	10	8.7
Holy Cross Day (120)	15	13.0
Any Wife to Any Husband (126)	13	10.0

TIME IMAGERY IN BROWNING (CONT.)

Title of Poem and Number of Lines		
<hr/>		
Mesmerism (135)	1	0.7
A Grammarian's Funeral (148)	11	7.5
Master Hugues of Saxe-Gotha (149)	4	2.7
A Lovers' Quarrel (154)	11	7.1
One Word More (201)	14	7.0
Childe Roland to the Dark Tower Came (204)	16	7.8
The Statue and the Bust (250)	39	16.0
By the Fire-Side (265)	25	9.4
Andrea del Sarto (267)	26	10.0
Old Pictures in Florence (288)	31	11.0
An Epistle of Karshish (312)	17	5.5
Saul (342)	27	7.9
Cleon (353)	31	9.0
Fra Lippo Lippi (392)	26	6.6
Bishop Blougram (1022)	71	7.1

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Armstrong, A. J. Browning the World Over, Baylor Browning Interests, Series VI. Waco, Texas: Baylor University, 1933.
- Bagehot, Walter. "Wordsworth, Tennyson, and Browning," Literary Studies. London: Longman's Green, 1898.
- Bates, Margret H. Browning Critiques. Chicago: Morris Book Shop, 1921.
- Baugh, Albert C. (ed.) A Literary History of England. New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, 1948.
- Berdoe, Edward. The Browning Cyclopedia. New York: Macmillan Co., 1931.
- Boas, Ralph P. and Barbara M. Hahn. Social Backgrounds of English Literature. Boston: Little, Brown, and Co., 1931.
- Bonnell, John Kester. "Touch in the Poetry of Robert Browning," Publications of the Modern Language Association, XXXVII (1922), 575.
- Brooke, Stopford A. The Poetry of Robert Browning. New York: Thomas Y. Crowell Co., 1902.
- Browning, Fannie Barrett. Some Memories of Robert Browning. Boston: Marshall Jones Co., 1928.
- Browning, Robert. The Complete Poetic and Dramatic Works of Robert Browning. Cambridge Edition. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1895.
- Cary, Elizabeth L. Browning, Poet and Man. London: Putnam's, 1899.
- Coffin, Robert Peter Tristram. The Substance That Is Poetry. New York: Macmillan Company, 1942.
- Cooke, George W. A Guide-Book to the Poetic and Dramatic Works of Robert Browning. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1896.

- Corson, Hiram. An Introduction to the Study of Robert Browning's Poetry. Boston: D. C. Heath Co., 1899.
- Curle, Richard. Robert Browning and Julia Wedgwood. New York: Frederick A. Stokes, 1937.
- Day-Lewis, C. The Poetic Image.
- DeVane, William Clyde. A Browning Handbook. New York: F. S. Crofts Co., 1935.
- Doubleday, Frank Neal. Studies in Poetry. New York: Harper and Bros., 1940.
- Duckworth, F. R. G. Browning, Background and Conflict. London: Ernest Benn, 1931.
- Fogle, Richard. The Imagery of Keats and Shelley. Chapel Hill, North Carolina: University of North Carolina Press, 1949.
- Gaylord, Harriet. Pompilia and Her Poet. New York: Literary Publications, 1931.
- Grey, Lennox. "No Signs, No Symbols! Uses A-B-C's, A Problem of Practical Definition," Communication in General Education. Dubuque, Iowa: William C. Brown Co., 1949.
- Griffin, W. Hall and H. C. Minchin. The Life of Robert Browning. London: Methuen and Co., 1938.
- Griggs, Edward H. The Poetry and Philosophy of Browning. New York: B. W. Huebsch, 1905.
- Groom, Bernard. "Browning," Publications of the Society for Pure English. Oxford; England: Clarendon Press, 1939.
- Harrington, Vernon C. Browning Studies. Boston: Richard G. Badger, 1915.
- Hogrefe, Pearl. Browning and Italian Arts and Artists. Lawrence, Kansas: University of Kansas Press, 1914.
- Kenyon, Frederick G. Robert Browning and Alfred Domett. New York: E. P. Dutton, 1906.

- Lounsbury, Thomas R. The Early Literary Career of Robert Browning. New York: Scribner's, 1911.
- Millett, Fred B. Reading Poetry. New York: Harper and Bros., 1950.
- Needleman, Morriss H., and William B. Otis. Outline History of English Literature. New York: Barnes and Noble, 1939.
- Orr, Mrs. Sutherland. Life and Letters of Robert Browning. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1906.
- Raymond, George L. Poetry as a Representative Art. New York: Putnam's, 1903.
- Roberts, W. Wright. "Music in Browning," Music and Letters, XVII (1936), 232.
- Russell, Frances Theresa. One Word More on Browning. Stanford University, California: Stanford Press, 1927.
- Sim, Frances M. Robert Browning, The Poet and the Man. London: T. Fisher Unwin, 1923.
- Spurgeon, Caroline. Shakespeare's Imagery. New York: Macmillan Co., 1935.
- Symons, Arthur. An Introduction to the Study of Browning. London: Cassell and Co., 1890.
- Webster's Collegiate Dictionary. 5th ed. Springfield, Massachusetts: G. and C. Merriam Co., 1948.
p. 1012.
- Wenger, C. N. The Aesthetics of Robert Browning. Ann Arbor, Michigan: George Wahr, 1924.
- Wise, Thomas J. Letters of Robert Browning. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1933.