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A HERAKLES IN THE HOUSE OF MOURNING: THE LATE LONG POETRY OF ROBERT BROWNING

by

JONIZO CAIN

A THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

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ABSTRACT

A HERAKLES IN THE HOUSE OF MOURNING:
THE LONG LATE POETRY OF ROBERT BROWNING

Jonizo Cain

Critics of Robert Browning's late long poems discuss them in terms of the poet's autobiographical expression or his philosophical teaching rather than focus mainly upon the characterization of speakers and protagonists. To delineate personae, Browning embeds fictions—plays, dreams, narratives, and monologues—within the larger, poetic structures. For example, Herakles, the hero in two plays of Euripides, Alkestis and Herakles, is a role-model for Balaustion, the speaker of the poems Balaustion's Adventure, Including a Transcript from Euripides (1871) and Aristophanes' Apology, Including a Transcript from Euripides, Being the Last Adventure of Balaustion (1875), which contain these two plays, respectively. Parallels to Herakles may be discerned in other poems when his characteristics as a savior in Alkestis and as a madman in Herakles are divided between speakers and protagonists rather than found in a single persona. Interplay of comic and tragic elements reinforces the sane and disturbed behavior of the various characters in the seven long poems after The Ring and the Book (1868-69).
Several speakers explain events by means of the stories they tell. Balaustion becomes more self-aware in Apology than in Adventure because her authority is tested by the character Aristophanes; she learns to accept dissolution as Herakles does in Herakles, the play she reads. She becomes more self-conscious than the speakers in Prince Hohenstiel-Schwangau (1871) and Fifine at the Fair (1872) whose lives are tragic because they are unconscious of their inner disturbance. In Red Cotton Night-Cap Country (1873) and The Inn Album (1875), the speakers are detached, comic figures similar to Balaustion in Adventure who are never openly threatened as Monsieur Miranda, the man and lady in the inn, and Alkestis are ravaged. Only in the epilogue to Parleyings with Certain People of Importance in Their Day (1887), a dialogue between John Fust and seven friends, do the two aspects of Herakles' character recombine in Fust, a modern savior who invents a socially useful product, the printing press. This comic protagonist refuses to be isolated in his house like the lonely, self-victimized speakers in Prince, Fifine, and the Parleyings or the personae who die in Night-Cap and Album.
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Chapter I

The Fiction as Self's Other

I

In the late long poetry after The Ring and the Book (1868-69), Robert Browning creates personae who set themselves within archetypal and metaphorical contexts. The fictive speakers of the poems and the personae they describe have certain attributes found in Euripides' characterization of Herakles as the good-natured savior and the violent madman. Influence is obvious, since Browning has translated and included versions of Euripides' Alkestis and Herakles in Balaustion's Adventure, Including a Transcript from Euripides (1871) and Aristophanes' Apology, Including a Transcript from Euripides, Being the Last Adventure of Balaustion (1875). Balaustion, the speaker in these two poems, and the other poems' speakers manipulate their fictions and the personae in them as their objects of contemplation or externalized products of the mind which reveal information about the creative poet-personae. Not only does each speaker present himself within the context of a linguistic fiction which draws upon character types, but also he is
involved in manipulating mythoi and metaphor to define himself or grapple with problems of existence by sheer verbal skill: to acquire self-knowledge, to detach himself from threatening content, or to establish a bond with society. If an individual behaves more like Herakles the savior than Herakles the madman, then the dominant mythos in the poem tends to be comic. On the other hand, a speaker or protagonist may remain estranged from others by means of literal and symbolic confinement in a situation where the tragic element prevails. Appropriately, reliance upon an edifice, whether it be a literal or symbolic enclosure, often indicates a persona's estrangement within false, but supposedly secure systems and structures. Construction of character is the primary aim of the poems and the determinant of the content and structure because within each work, a first-person speaker always orders experience by filtering information through his consciousness. Each work reflects the poet's belief that most human beings share a desire for self-preservation and self-expression. The only information not presented through a speaker's voice is in the prologue and epilogue to the Parleyings with Certain People of Importance in Their Day (1887), but even that stylistic detail reveals something crucial about the speaker: his loss of control over his fiction and himself. How a
characterization terminates is significant since at the poems' endings, characters may or may not show a better understanding which enables them to progress in self-knowledge or in their socialization.

In Euripides' two plays which Browning includes in Balaustion's Adventure and Aristophanes' Apology, Herakles always has the potential for both good and vile behavior. Gilbert Murray points out that, traditionally, Herakles has been interpreted as the best of men and as the most violent, crudest mythic hero.² Euripides' plays certainly manifest these extremes of Herakles' character. In Alkestis, Herakles' darker side first emerges while he engages in socially accepted acts in Admetus' house. While drinking and eating, Herakles' behavior--his unmusical singing, shouting, and drunkenness--offends the slave who has to wait upon him. That Herakles is an unselfish, heroic character becomes evident at the play's conclusion when he saves Alkestis. By contrast, Herakles presents the triumphant return of Herakles from the underworld after he has completed the last of his labors for Eurystheus, but the hero is undercut when Hera, Iris, and Madness cause him to murder his family. Whenever Herakles is presented as a savior, the context in which he acts seems more mythic, but when he revels or maddens, the setting becomes
realistic. Alkestis' tale moves into the world of the fantastic when Herakles and Death wrestle for the woman's body. Euripides reverses the progress from realism to myth in the later play Herakles: the plot moves from Herakles' heroic completion of labors and the return from the underworld with Cerberus to the naturalistic realm where Herakles' violence turns against his wife and sons.

In four late long poems, the poetic speakers either shield themselves from harm or develop into more self-aware beings; they also adopt a comic mythos. In three of the poems, Balaustion's Adventure, Red Cotton Night-Cap Country (1873), and The Inn Album (1875), the speakers maintain absolute control over themselves and their stories' content; they resemble Herakles as savior because they are artists who shield themselves from the frightening, potentially maddening experiences which they relate in their tales. Balaustion in Aristophanes' Apology blends the two aspects found in Herakles because she is a storyteller, an artist who recreates her past and herself, and one who is exposed to verbal abuse and possible physical danger. The forces of salvation and madness, order and chaos, affect Balaustion, a representative Everywoman who endures. Experiences in Athens cause her to accept dissolution and change just as the embedded fiction she reads, Herakles,
teaches Herakles to endure madness and adversity.

In Balaustion's Adventure and Aristophanes' Apology, Balaustion identifies with the hero of the fictions she tells—Herakles. In the former poem, she assumes a savior's role similar to Herakles' in Alkestis because she literally protects herself and others within the action narrated in the poem. In Aristophanes' Apology, Balaustion is less effective because the sheer length of Aristophanes' verbiage seems to overpower her and because she now has little to save. Athens is at war and will fall; Euripides is dead. Balaustion and her spouse flee Athens, not from fear for their lives so much as from an aesthetic repugnance to the Spartan occupation of Athens.

Other characters besides the speaker of the poem may either unintentionally or overtly imitate Herakles' role-model; the persona Aristophanes in Aristophanes' Apology is one example. The irrational, passionate behavior of Herakles furens surfaces in Aristophanes' pose as a satyr whose Komos of actors invades Balaustion's house on the night of Euripides' death. Aristophanes' role is superficially similar to Herakles' in Alkestis since the son of Zeus also enters a domicile touched by death. By contrast to that scene in Alkestis, Aristophanes is not a welcome guest, and unlike Herakles, he is already aware
that Balaustion's house is in mourning.

In Aristophanes' Apology, Browning uses the same speaker that he employs in Balaustion's Adventure to show a progression from the speaker's former naive stance to a more sophisticated attitude toward the disruption of orderly activities, and he sets up the normative identification between speaker and fiction by which other poems may be judged. Because both of Balaustion's fictions contain the tales about Herakles, the two poems should be examined together although other long poems were composed in the years between their publication in 1871 and 1875. In the latter poem, the speaker or poet-persona changes and achieves what others only attain in part, so this one poem and its embedded fiction, Herakles, are paradigms for the fiction of transformation. In such a fiction, the speaker copes by changing himself in some way; change within a character or the ease with which a persona accepts external shifts may indicate a more fully self-conscious individual. If one cannot handle the dislocation and existential angst found in Herakles and Aristophanes' Apology, uncertainty and self-deception occur.

The speakers in Prince Hohenstiel-Schwangau (1871) and Fifine at the Fair (1872) are two who are not fully self-conscious; they act as if they are comic eirons, but by the
end of their monologues reveal they are tragic alazons.⁴ The prince and the speaker of Fifine try to be sane, logical, deprecating protagonists, yet they ignore their lack of success and the indications of psychic disturbance when they speak to non-existent auditors. Torn between the will to help and the tendency to destroy, the prince poses as a "savior of society," as indicated by his apology's subtitle, yet by his actions he debilitates his country, repressing individuality and trying to save another society, Italy, that is not his own. Fifine's poet-persona, who is often called "Don Juan" by critics although he never names himself, is a libertine who gives lip service to the virtues of marriage, but he weakens his marriage to Elvire, if not destroys it toward the poem's end, by his return to the gypsy girl Fifine. Even if Elvire does not exist, as the monologue suggests, the contradiction between the speaker's words and his desires proves him to be unstable and disturbed.

In Night-Cap and Album, there is a rigid polarization of the savior and madman characteristics between the speakers and the characters they describe. In the former poem, the embedded tale about Léonce Miranda characterizes a man who destroys himself by leaping from a tower in order to prove that he is saved by the miraculous intervention of
a saint. The poet-persona of *Night-Cap* balances Miranda's madness with his orderly presentation of the tale within a framework that consoles the reader and cushions him from the tragedy. In *Album*, written immediately after Aristophanes' *Apology* was published, the young man in the embedded tale tries to rescue a wronged lady, yet must commit murder in order to save her. Although the youth is the only central figure in any of the late long poems who kills someone, he is also most caring about the lady whom he respects just as Herakles proves his dedication to Alkestis by confronting Death. The youth, a combination of goodness and evil, wills to behave in an orderly manner, but the potential for violence in him is ever-present. His predilection for gambling and roistering and the decision to enter a loveless marriage with his prosperous cousin portend the final act of violence from the otherwise jovial fellow.

In the *Parleyings*, the transformation which occurs differs from that in the other poems considered because its poet-persona does not express the entire poem in his voice. The fiction itself contains the voice between the prologue and epilogue and illustrates a transforming process greater than the speaker. The poetic continuity of the late tragic and comic poems before the *Parleyings* is provided by the speaker's voice, but in the last poem, the
movement from the prologue's plot to that of the epilogue dominates over the speaker's narrative voice and turns the usual fictive structure inside out. The speaker in the Parleyings poses as a sane artist, but as he articulates the fiction, he progressively maddens and becomes obsessed with the past, dead individuals he names although he claims to be interested in the present and future. Only the character Fust, in the epilogue to the Parleyings, incarnates an integrated personality which combines the savior and madman in one productive and energetic human being.

II

Echoing the bifurcated behavior attributed to Herakles by Euripides and Browning, the interplay of comic and tragic elements in these poems presents a conflict between the impulses to order confusion and to let passion or violence explode. Although only one mythos, tragic or comic, can describe a fiction, characteristics of the other may emerge within a work. While discussing English Renaissance drama, Madeleine Doran suggests three ways that tragic and comic factors may interact: the combination of alternating tragic and comic episodes, the use of high and low class figures, and tragic action with a happy, festive conclusion. The first two elements are conducive to the use of double plots,
and Browning imitates that multiple structure in his use of fictions embedded within another level of fiction which the poet-personae speak. The third element Doran cites combines the threat of danger and exclusion with the assurance of social and personal well-being. In such a work, the audience knows danger will be averted but does not know how or when the omens will be disproven.⁶ Northrop Frye argues that the tragic potential in some comedy is a vestige of the death-threat found in romance. Such intimations of danger and disruption could be nothing more than a "mere change of tone."⁷ Shifts in scene, symbol, and fictive voice change a work and introduce an element of instability into these poems. The interplay between static and dynamic imagery is one example of conflict or tonal variation; the images of houses, temples, and other edifices contrast with the shifting movement and potential dissolution implicit in seasonal change, time of day, and travel from place to place.

The reader may discern the characters' levels of self-consciousness by noting the type of mythos employed in the works. Each speaker creates a fiction about himself or relates a tale about other personae, and the mythoi of these fictions and adventures that each speaker relates tend to be the opposite of the mythoi used in the poems' outermost
frames of reality. For example, in Balaustion's Adventure, Night-Cap, Album, and the Parleyings, the speakers try to see themselves as detached, comic speakers while they relate tragic tales. The self-deceived poet-personae in Prince and Fifine believe they are employing a comic mythos when unintentionally they are portraying themselves as fallen, tragic heroes.

The antithetical mythos of the embedded fiction transforms the poet-persona in part just as the unwitting Balaustion is brought to acknowledge her fallibility. Fust is an exception since he is already aware of his flaws and has less potential for unconscious, tragic error. In the paradigmatic poem, Aristophanes' Apology, the outer fiction involves two eirons, Balaustion and Aristophanes, who mutually refuse each other's festivity, yet the tragic tale she reads enables her to accept imperfection in the external world and respond to changes by becoming more adaptable. Adaptability signifies the character's willingness to alter himself or to realize that external uncertainties are the normative experience. To accept such changes enables a persona to have less fantastic expectations of life; therein lies happiness. Combining the impulse to serve mankind by inventing the printing press and recognizing that his invention may be exploited for
evil purposes, Fust is both the savior and propagator of human knowledge and the stoic acceptor of evil which he may indirectly cause. Unlike the tragic tale of Herakles, the epilogue to the Parleyings does not present a hero who leaves one society in quest of another realm of action, but a protagonist who remains a comic eiron within society. The modern Herakles, Fust, must work within his specific cultural milieu whereas the mythic Herakles and Balaustion in Aristophanes' Apology move on to other lands and labors.

The use of setting in the poet's characterization of personae has been underestimated by some critics. Robert Langbaum calls the setting of the works impalpable and says that Browning does not understand the importance of external motivation in portraying an inner state. In the poems, setting and external details are subservient to the personae's mental play, not vice versa. The "dissolving external world" in the poems actually mirrors for the characters the existential uncertainty of life. The edifice images and the embedded fictions--such as the manuscripts of Euripides or the faulty self-portraits of certain speakers--are a means of explaining, justifying, and excusing the self in the face of contingency. External details become less significant to Balaustion and Herakles, for instance, because as travellers, their rapid transit through space creates a
mental impression of external dissolution; such an experience produces the subjective perspective of a constantly, but consistently, shifting view. By contrast, solid images may be as inscrutable as the house of mourning is for Herakles in Alkestis.

The conflict between stable and shifting imagery plays a part in a persona's characterization. In Aristophanes' Apology, Balaustion must leave Athens and travel by sea to Rhodes. Such geographical movement parallels her inner shift away from the limited, romanticized perspective she held about Euripides and Herakles in Balaustion's Adventure. Balaustion must renounce the stability of her adopted home in Athens just as Herakles leaves his house to confront life once again at the end of Herakles.

Personae who rely too much on the security of enclosures, structures, containers, and edifices are usually less self-know ledgeable and need to develop a greater understanding of themselves. The prince and the speaker of Fifine remain alone and imprisoned in their homes at the ends of their fictions, and their houses become emblems of their isolation. The prince has not been able to overcome the trauma of failure, nor the speaker of Fifine, the fear of death. They neither understand themselves nor interact well with others. The speaker of Fifine verbally
describes the shifting scenes during his walk and uses them as a visual aid to illustrate the surface falsity of the world as opposed to changeless, underlying truths, yet his attempt to deceive himself and his reader indicates that he is really out of contact with those fundamentals.

Unlike the lone prince, the speaker in *Fifine*, the isolated Miranda in *Night-Cap*, and the closed, self-destructive community of four in *Album*, Fust remains at home, admitting his seven friends into his company regardless of their different ideologies. Fust apparently feels that social contact is preferable to the madness which comes from total isolation. Because he accepts himself as fallible, yet redeemed, Fust possesses the self-consciousness requisite to withstand the attacks of his unenlightened, pious friends.

Images of external scenes are not the only way that a character reveals himself. The speakers also use aural images, fictive voices, and tales to disguise their own thoughts and express sentiments which they prefer not to articulate in their own voices. The rhetorical tools of ethopoeia and effictio evoke the speech and describe the outer appearance of personae that the speakers tell about in their fictions. This interplay of imagistic and rhetorical devices, the contrast between tragic and comic
mythoi, and the tension between the two aspects of Herakles' character indicate a dialectical pattern of thought in Browning's poems.

III

Dialectical thought was an important part of the philosophical systems in vogue during Browning's life. Although Roger Sharrock, William Irvine, and Park Honan concur that Browning probably never had any direct contact with the writings of Kant, Hegel, or Schelling, English literature had already been enriched by Coleridge's translations of German works and Carlyle's incorporation of German thought into his books. Assuming that opposites imply the existence of one another, Hegel effects a synthesis of antithetical ideas in his definition of the Absolute Spirit. Hegel perceives the Geist, mind, or spirit as being ever expanding because the Absolute is revealed sequentially to man throughout history and is manifested through finite art forms, human beings, and historical events; therefore, it only represents the highest stage attained by the spirit at any given point in time. Even thought Hegel foresees a synthesis of opposites at specific times, there is a ceaseless metaphysical disjunction between the Absolute as man presently perceives it and the Absolute
as it will be perceived in the future. The shifts Hegel observes in the artistic form and in the dominant cultures through history are changes which parallel the stages of an individual's growth from youth to maturity.

Kenneth Burke explains that in Hegel's view of personal and universal history, the spirit of man develops from a "state of potentiality to a state of realization, this realization being complete when it has been embodied in concrete details that lead to complete self-consciousness."14 Two phrases, "concrete details" and "self-consciousness," refer to art in the broadest sense--fictions, constructs, and grammars which lend form to thought--and to the potential for development in each individual's consciousness. Since concrete details constantly change and since the self is never as fully aware as it could be, the unknown other continually poses a challenge to man.

The dialectical style is only a metaphorical model for the mind's workings or what James Olney calls the attempt "to grasp the unknown through the known, or to let the known stand for the unknown."15 All fictions or metaphors produced by the self are autobiographical in the sense that the categories and structures always reflect the known which exists in one's consciousness. Dialectic is built upon the principle that negation and antithesis
exist. The concept of the other is implicit in verbal structures. As Kenneth Burke explains, positive and negative always imply each other, and dialectic "derives its character from the systematic contemplation of the antinomies . . . , we necessarily define a thing in terms of something else."\(^{16}\) Bergson notes that no negative condition exists in nature,\(^{17}\) and Burke suggests that an awareness of the negative is exclusively derived from the mind of man where antithetical elements may be inextricably bound and may mutually define each other.

Browning's mixing of tragic and comic elements and the synthesis of multiple levels of fiction within each work reflect Hegel's general view that resolution is possible and desirable. Although Kenneth Burke quite lucidly explains Hegel's concepts, Hegel himself is a spokesman of nineteenth-century thought, and as Browning's contemporary, his views on the Absolute seem more relevant to the poet's works. The speakers who seek to define themselves and the threatening, external facts are versions of the Hegelian self coming to consciousness by means of mental strategies. The interrelationship between the self and the other is set forth in Hegel's tripartite schematization of the self's movement toward the Absolute. In the initial stage of consciousness, the self only contemplates
the object and perceives it as distinct from itself; as the self becomes more self-conscious, the object becomes identified with the self until, in the final stage of reason, it is both distinct from and identical with the self.18

There are a few constants in both Hegel's and Browning's attitudes toward their respective descriptions of life: specificity, selectivity, change, and the necessity of symbolism. W. T. Stace calls the result of man's efforts the "concrete unity of self-knowing spirit . . . [and] the universal, but not the abstract universal."19 Hegel and Browning both focus on specific examples which embody the otherwise infinite spirit. To Hegel, the concreteness of self-knowledge in fictions ranges from the symbolic, abstract forms in Oriental architecture to the balance of content and representation found in classical sculpture and to dramatic poetry, the most recent development in art.20 In delineating the decay and growth of each stage of history and art, Hegel always envisions a shift to a new geographical theatre with more self-aware people who probably share the same mode of self-definition.21 Hegel writes about history as if it contained just a few well-defined stages: Oriental, Greek, Roman, and German phases. As one culture wanes, another fills its
place. If, as Roger Sharrock suggests, Browning employs specific historical and geographical settings when characterizing various personae, then the poems seem to reflect Hegel's selectivity in the discussion of historical, artistic, and personal development.

Morse Peckham observes that a few surviving documents can give a clearer picture of ancient Greece than the multiplicity of modern documents gives of contemporary life, if one wants to write lucid, modern history as well as fiction, one may use only a few selected details to record something, but not everything, about a real or fictive event. Since Hegel's system is articulated in a highly schematic, triadic way, he seems to embrace wholeheartedly the employment of fictions, constructs, and roles to describe and achieve the Absolute through history, art, and consciousness—three ways of classifying experience. Browning's poet-personae in the late long poems present their fictions through a single, controlling consciousness which selects and edits experience so that there is only one version of the poem's story. They tell their own past histories or those of other personae by using embedded fictions, the manuscripts and stories they have invented or appropriated; documents, gossip, and imagination reconstruct the near or distant past in fiction just as the
historian uses selected facts to record the times gone by. Both fictive speakers and historians manipulate constructs, but fictional personae differ because they only create an illusion of reality: fictive events in literature are neither false nor true.\textsuperscript{23}

Hegel and Browning both advocate a view of life in which man is continually reevaluating himself and the changing world. Since the Absolute is expressed through the phenomenal world, the Absolute is never really attained because there is always something external to man which he must seek out and understand.\textsuperscript{24} Since external, finite details never remain the same, the object which the self contemplates and integrates is ever-shifting. There is a Hegelian awareness of the history of ideas reflected in Browning's canon. Philip Drew notes that Browning was acquainted with such "independent thinkers as Erigena, as Scotus and Ockham, as Eckhart, as Hume and Hamann and Kierkegaard. This succession of active religious thought sometimes occurs in this order within a single poem, as medieval and eighteenth-century lines of thought are replaced by something more modern, more radical and less dogmatic.\textsuperscript{25} The dialectical method of Hegel's thought is suited to Browning's discussion of displaced ideologies because it allows for the presentation of alternate,
antithetical concepts.

The three principles of selectivity, specificity, and change found in Hegel's system are involved in symbolism, the representation of one thing by another. The shaping of metaphors, the selection of factual data to record, and the roles that an individual plays are ways art, history, and consciousness operate symbolically. Morse Peckham finds fault with systems which employ symbols because there is a tendency to seek gratification in the manipulation of symbols whose meaning becomes less powerful as it becomes final and fixed.²⁶ Disparaging Hegel's dialectic, Peckham notes that Nietzsche describes a true dialogue between self and other as the "eternally transvaluing encounter between the mind's instrumental constructs and reality in . . . a continuous restructuring of orientations."²⁷ According to Peckham, no system of order may be imposed upon experience as being immutable and changeless, and symbolism, he implies, is another failed system which is meaningful at only one point in time. Hegel's philosophy, however, need not be interpreted as authoritative and fixed, for even though his system manipulated fictions by imposing an orderly schema on experience and even though the enterprise appears encyclopedic, Hegel concedes that his philosophy cannot ever equal absolute knowledge. In
attempting to retrace every step that mind has made, Hegel omits much detail, and the elimination of excess in quest of the essentials is the prime activity in symbol-making.

Helmut Rehder correctly asserts that Hegel demands only that "the general and the specific, the descriptive and the historical, remain mutually alert and interdependent" because no single assertion of symbol can yield more than temporary knowledge unless projected into "the perspective of 'dynamic' relationships." The principle of negativity is one instance of the incompleteness and dynamism that Hegel's schematization allows. His system is as open to transvaluation as any other, for by necessity, he only includes a description of the spirit's manifestations as they appear in the past. He cannot discuss the future and must accept the fact that his theory does not express the final word on the Absolute.

Critics have long pondered Browning's attitude toward the Absolute. Countering the usual view of the poet as a relativist, Roger Sharrock proclaims that Browning's personae, existing in a temporal setting, are not manifestations of the author's dealing with mutable, historical truths, but manifestations of the Absolute spirit "imprisoned in forms." Not every critic agrees with Sharrock's notion; Norton B. Crowell implies that Browning was anti-Hegelian because he seems to condemn the Absolute in "An Epistle, Containing
the Strange Medical Experience of Karshish, the Arab Physician." Crowell concludes that in the poem Browning warns about the dangers of knowing the Absolute too intimately. Lazarus, according to Karshish, merely sits and seems completely useless after having seen Heaven before he was resurrected from the dead by Christ. The critic errs, however, in equating Karshish's observations with Browning's beliefs since Karshish slants his argument in order to deny the miracle. Therefore, the warning against knowing the Absolute comes from the persona Karshish, not Browning himself. Crowell takes the Pope's statement, "We have got too familiar with the light," as another proof that it is dangerous to know the Absolute. If Karshish and the Pope in the Ring are supposed to issue the same kind of warning, one man being a pagan and the other an evangelical Roman Catholic, they are being likened to one another by Crowell. Such an assumption is unwarranted. Karshish's warning stems from a desire to quench interest in Lazarus' story, although Karshish is still driven to relate the events. On the other hand, the Pope comments ironically upon the lack of true Christian understanding in his century. The light, the Incarnation, has become a fixed icon in the minds of the people, and it is not the living light that Lazarus knew. There seems to be no real
danger of knowing the light as absolutely as the Pope and
Browning probably would like. 34

IV

Hegel's ideas are useful because they help the reader
to understand Browning's fictions: the dialectic between
self and object parallels the relation between Browning's
poetic speakers and the fictions they produce in order to
achieve a greater self-awareness or to convince themselves
that they are already aware. The embedded fictions that
each poet-persona tells within the late poems are personally
significant because in verbalizing the fictions, the poet-
persona externalizes and projects his thoughts by using
the spoken word which becomes the self's object of contem-
plation, its other.

Not only is there a crucial interplay between the
speaker and his fiction, but also there is an intended
dramatic dialectic between the poet-persona and the reader.
Some critics misunderstand the late poems' complexity by
reading them as long and obscure works styled to confuse
the reader; they do not perceive the challenge Browning
presents to the audience. He employs length and relative
obscurity in order to enmesh the reader in the fictions
and create a dramatic encounter which extends beyond
the bounds of the poetry itself. Audience-participation is a premise of Browning's late poems; any fiction dependent on either pathos or comic conventions responds to people's expectations and encourages a response. Northrop Frye says that in comedy "the logic of events gives way to the audience's desire for a happy ending,"35 and O. B. Hardison speaks of auditors' responses as being essential to the catharsis of both tragic and comic plots.36

Some critics have inferred that Browning is mentally or sexually disturbed because of the length and relative obscurity of the late poems. They do not suggest that he is trying to stimulate the reader through his fictions' complexity, yet it is important that one neither be deterred by Browning's proximity nor straightforwardly attribute a character's problem or statement to the poet. S. W. Holmes equates Browning with his personae, semantic stutters who do not express metaphysical ideas clearly. Holmes labels Browning's headaches as "psychophysio-logical, electro-colloidal blockages" which are the result of semantic disturbances such as the inability to make the "world of things and the world of symbols congruent."37 Also, he divides Browning's writings into two categories: the metaphysical, prophetic poems in which semantic stuttering occurs and the dramatic poems in which Browning "flourished
and sang." By imposing this division, Holmes excludes metaphysical topics from dramatic treatment and makes the two groups mutually exclusive. To Holmes, the dramatic poems of the middle years are simpler, but in the Ring, the poet was "contorted with phantoms, human and linguistic" and wrote "not for men (who exist and read books and ask questions), but for mankind (a phantom, a soothing idea for Browning's head)." Barbara Melchiori also discusses the poetry mainly in terms of Browning's psychological traumas. Melchiori interprets the poems' obscure language as a clue to the poet's longing for self-concealment. She thinks Browning's ramblings are a defense mechanism which simultaneously reveals and conceals sexual fears. Melchiori believes the imagery of Fifine, for example, suggests Browning's latent fears of impotence and death; for her, Night-Cap seems to contain Freudian images of castration in the protagonist's burning of his own hands. She links this action to the leg and hand-cutting imagery found in certain personal letters of Browning to his wife.

By contrast to these objectors to Browning's supposed unintelligibility, C. R. Tracy sensibly suggests that in the age of Auden, Pound, and Thomas, Browning's so-called obscurity ought to be no real obstacle to readers; nevertheless, critics debate over which poems in Browning's canon
are the most obscure. Robert Preyer divides the poems into two groups: those which employ a simple style and those with a difficult one. Unlike Holmes, who sees the dramatic monologues of Browning's middle period as better and more austere than the "stuttering," metaphysical poems like Sordello, Preyer interprets the dramatic monologues as being written in the difficult style. Although most of his comments are specifically applied to the dramatic monologues of the middle years, Preyer's description of the difficult style could apply to the late poems as well. Preyer, taking issue with Tracy's classification of Browning with Auden and Pound, says that the difficult style is not obscure in the modern sense of containing private reference and symbol for which no key is available, but in the sense that "syntactical and temporal displacements slow down the process of comprehension . . . the rhythmical pace does not slacken so that we are allowed time to get our bearings . . . It is not in-comprehensibility that we face but rather a deliberately created discrepancy between the rate at which we hear the verse and take in its meaning." By making any fiction understood only after great effort on the part of the reader, the poet, like the creator of a philosophical system, teaches both the limitation and the richness of language. Philip Drew goes one
step beyond Preyer by suggesting that Browning tries to describe the incomprehensibility of experience through his fictions' relative obscurity: "Browning is moving in a world where finality is not to be looked for: the elusiveness of the personality under examination is matched by the impression that the language of the poem has not been exhaustively apprehended."46 Expressing a similar notion, G. M. Ridenour links Shelley's technique of "varied approximation" to Browning as a means of "defeating the limits of language . . . so that if language is to be serviceable for capturing an ever more uncertain reality, it must itself be increasingly elaborated."47 Hegel's effort to write an encyclopedic corpus of knowledge called the "self-manifestation of the Absolute Spirit" led him to accept these same "limitations of linguistic expression" such as unintelligibility and premature generalization.48 S. W. Holmes fails to grasp the possibility that Browning also may have made such concessions.

The critic who best understands the dynamic relation between the reader and Browning's fictions is T. J. Collins. He finds certain late and early poems which are often overlooked worthy of study. Unlike the monologues of Men and Women (1855) and Dramatis Personae (1864), these works at the extreme ends of Browning's career typify for Collins a
new "synthetist genre" of poetry. This genre is characterized by a linguistic suggestiveness and requires the kind of involved, creative audience Preyer describes. Collins finds the term "synthetist" in the 1863 revised edition of Sordello, which Pound cites as an outstanding work long before it is popular to consider the dramatic monologues as the "pinnacle of his art." In Book Five of Sordello, the text contains the implication that there is a difference between dramatic or "theatrical" literature and the synthetist genre. Sordello is an example of the latter style which is not resumed until the Ring, whose syntactical complications are more demanding on the reader than the works of the middle period. The non-synthetist, theatrical crisis in "Fra Lippo Lippi" is unlike the psychic crisis in "Pompilia": in the former, Fra Lippo speaks in order to extricate himself from the guards by making them excuse his questionable behavior; in the latter, Pompilia wants "to create a sense of herself," although her behavior has been impeccable and her auditors are less powerful than Fra Lippo's. Deception and illusion motivate Fra Lippo; honesty and confession, Pompilia. The former establishes a fraudulent relationship with the audience within the poem while Pompilia seeks to communicate truthfully.
While Collins writes off the monologues of the middle period as superficial, thus committing over-generalization himself, he suggests that the interaction between reader and fiction can be compelling and dramatic. Such interaction parallels and emphasizes the relationship which the personae within the late poems have with the fictions they create or interpret in order to save themselves, literally and metaphorically. The supposed auditors within the poems interact with the speakers while readers also distance themselves from auditor, speaker, and fiction—judging them all. The difficult, dialectical style is an appropriate medium for characters who are seeking resolution and for the reader who synthesizes the poetic fiction's meaning within his own consciousness.

Browning's late poems, then, are autobiographical in the sense that the poet-personae reveal themselves. André Gide speaks of Browning's âme élastique which enables him to create the role of a persona without writing confessional literature. Furthermore, Frye asserts: "In lyrics . . . [the] writer is to some extent a fictional hero . . . if the element of fictional projection disappeared completely, the writing would become direct address, or straight discursive writing, and cease to be literature." Such a bifurcation between the author and the late poems' speakers
mirrors the other disjunctions that are essential for dramatic conflict: the distinction between the audience and fiction, the various personae within the fiction, and the various fictive voices that each poet-persona uses.

V

Asking that the synthetist reader discern the speakers' performance—their exposed motives and particular milieu, Browning draws upon the nineteenth century's interest in nonperformed drama. Michael Mason notes that there are two groups of plays written in the poet's age—the acted and the unacted—and Charles Lamb expresses the thought that Shakespeare's plays should never be acted. In fact, the late poems owe much to Browning's study of drama and the composition of plays in the early part of his career. Speaking of Browning's attempt at writing drama, Edwin Muir says Browning was always "concerned with the dramatis personae rather than with the play." In spite of the fact that Browning's tragedies are generally considered unfit for the stage and lack much external display of action, Park Honan calls the play-writing an invaluable experience because in the plays Browning forged technical skills which he effectively uses in his poetry. Among such skills are the perfection of the monologue-format, the use of
conversational blank-verse, and the manipulation of silent, on-stage crowds of auditors whose presence is suggested by the speaker. By using these dramatic skills in the middle and later poems to project the poet-personae's inner condition, Browning enacts what Kenneth Burke sees as the result of modern literature, "the turn from dramatic act to lyric state." As Nietzsche suggests in *The Birth of Tragedy*, tragedy grew out of lyric. Greek Old Comedy also contains a Komos or revel that is derived from the lyric songs of primitive fertility rites. The cyclical return of the dramatic art-form to the lyric, therefore, is no surprising concept.

Browning obviously thinks highly of Euripides as both a dramatist and poet because he includes two versions of the Greek's plays in his own works. By showing psychological depth within characters and taking liberties with traditional personae and plots, Euripides combines novelty and order, and the fusion of the predictable and the unpredictable is typified in Euripides' creation, Herakles. When John J. Chapman tries to describe Browning within the skeptical nineteenth century as a Herakles in the "House of Mourning," the analogy depends, in part, on the irony that Herakles is a character of joy and sorrow who can perform both beneficial and destructive deeds and is victimized by his heroism as
well as by his existential angst.

As a product of a particular historical and cultural heritage, Browning combines the nineteenth-century love of drama and dramatic situations and the predominant philosophical concern with the self's movement toward consciousness. The process of knowing oneself found in real people may be applied to fictive beings; just as Euripides reinterprets myths, Balaustion appropriates his fiction in order to save herself. Each of the poet-personae in Browning's late works attempts to affirm his own reality by speaking dramatically to himself or to his auditor. The speakers, intentionally or not, use conflicting tragic and comic elements that are derived from drama to show either how self-conscious they are or how close they come to being undeceived. None of the poet-personae is merely a cold, rhetorical vehicle for ideas, for the fictions each produces become the self's other and help confirm the creative being's identity.

Hegel's definition of the synthesizing mind as one which brings together the subjective self and the objective external is an appropriate model for Browning's fiction-using personae. External events only have meaning when they affect the lives of reflective characters, and one way the impact of the objective world is recorded and personalized
by individuals is through artifice and documentation. As Morse Peckham observes, such human products are "the objects of personality and behavior." For example, Balaustion is a subjective self who interacts with the objective landscapes through which she travels, the adventures she has, and the fictions of Euripides—the externalized objects of his mind. The two poetic artifices which result from Balaustion's adventures are presented through her single, synthesizing voice and structured by her consciousness.
NOTES FOR CHAPTER I

1 I am not asserting that the works do not reveal certain interests which Browning may have had. The Parleyings with Certain People of Importance in Their Day, in particular, have often been interpreted autobiographically, and in fact, Browning gave certain clues to support that kind of reading. His father had copied Charles Avison's march in his own handwriting. Browning himself had read the works and studied the careers of the men he mentions in the Parleyings; otherwise, he could not have begun to deal with them in his fiction. No work is de-valued if the poetic personae are viewed as perhaps being distinct from the poet. Any work is significantly diminished in richness if only an author's autobiographical references are studied.


4 Northrop Frye calls an eiron "a self-deprecating or unobtrusively treated character in fiction, usually an agent of the happy ending in comedy and of the catastrophe
in tragedy," and he defines an alazon as "a deceiving or self-deceived character in fiction, normally an object of ridicule in comedy or satire, but often the hero of a tragedy. In comedy he most frequently takes the form of a *miles gloriosus* or a pedant" (Anatomy of Criticism [Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1957], p. 365).


6 Doran, p. 206.

7 Frye, p. 179.


9 Roma A. King, Jr., uses this phrase pejoratively to describe the *Ring* (The Focusing Artifice [Athens: Ohio University Press, 1968], p. 173).

10 *Ethopoeia* comes from the Greek phrase "delineation of character" (Richard A. Lanham, *A Handlist of Rhetorical Terms* [Berkeley: University of California Press, 1968], p. 46). It is a type of *energia*, a "description of natural propensities, manners, affections, virtues, and vices." Lanham continues his definition: "The Greek orator Lysias was supposed to be the first to develop this technique
fully; it does not seem too far removed from 'method' acting, or indeed from naturalistic acting of any sort" (p. 46). **Prosopopoeia** differs from **ethopoeia** because it represents the words and actions of a personified entity, an animal, or "an imaginary or absent person" as if it were an observable human being (p. 83).

*Effictio* is the "personal description" of outward appearance (p. 39).


13 Copleston, VII, 179.


19 Stace, p. 458.

20 The concept of dialectical necessity may seem to be opposed to Browning's emphasis on the personal idiosyncrasies and will of his personae, yet the notion that each individual must undergo certain phases in order to move toward the Absolute is not contradictory to the poet's belief in progress.


22 Peckham, *Vision*, p. 27.

23 Robert Langbaum calls the Romantics and Browning the writers of poetry of experience because he assumes that each work gains "validity just because it is dramatized as an event which we must accept as having taken place, rather than formulated as an idea with which we must agree or disagree" (*The Poetry of Experience* [New York: Random House, 1957], p. 43).
24 Morse Peckham disparages Hegel's view of the self because the self's integration of the external object into its consciousness implies that everything external, including the unacceptable, is really acceptable. Peckham finds this notion distasteful because of his bias toward Nietzsche's philosophy and because he believes one must view the unacceptable as unalterably itself ("Afterward" in Victorian Poetry, ed. Malcolm Bradbury and David Palmer, Stratford-Upon-Avon Studies, 15 [London: Edward Arnold Publishers, 1972], p. 292).


27 Peckham, Vision, p. 368.


29 Rehder, p. 137.

30 Sharrock, p. 87.


33 Crowell, Soul, p. 47.

34 Although Norton B. Crowell is ostensibly opposed to the usual critical argument that Browning prefers to show the emotions rather than the intellect, he still believes that Browning fears too much knowledge of the Absolute will lead to intellectual excess. George Santayana originated the notion that Browning was no thinker and liked to use casuistry to debase reason (Boyd Litzinger, Time's Revenges [Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1964], p. 159). Santayana's view of Browning is echoed by W. C. DeVane, W. O. Raymond, C. R. Tracy, K. L. Knickerbocker, and E. D. H. Johnson. For example, W. O. Raymond assumes that after 1870 Browning's personae were only "mouthpieces of his intellectual and emotional convictions" until the Parleyings where Browning speaks in his own voice without any disguise (The Infinite Moment, 2nd ed. [Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1965], p. 109).

35 Frye, p. 75.

37 S. W. Holmes, "Browning," *PMLA*, 60 (1945), 249.

38 Holmes, p. 255.

39 Holmes, p. 251.


45 Preyer, p. 73.


50  Cited by Roma A. King, Jr., *The Bow and the Lyre* 

51  Frye, p. 53.

52  Robert Langbaum says Browning's poetry of experience 
makes the reader totally reliant upon the clues given by 
the speaker; when the character is reprehensible, as in 
the case of the duke in "My Last Duchess," the reader 
understands the speaker so well that the latter gains 
sympathy (*Experience*, p. 85).

53  Michael Mason, "Browning and the Dramatic Monologue," 
*RB*, p. 240.

54  Edwin Muir, "Robert Browning" in *Essays on Literature 
and Society* (1949), rpt. in *Robert Browning*, ed. Philip 

55  Park Honan, *Browning's Characters* (New Haven and 

56  Honan, *Characters*, p. 66.

57  Honan, *Characters*, p. 52.
58 Burke, *Grammar*, p. 441.


60 David Shaw says the late poems "even when faultless in their logical progression, are devoid of feeling" (*The Dialectical Temper* [Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1968], p. 5), and he suggests that only the *Ring* synthesizes the antagonistic impulses of Browning's early subjectivism in works like *Pauline* and the objective world found in the dramatic monologues of Browning's mid-career (Shaw, p. 317).

Robert Langbaum says that *Prince* and *Fifine* are unsuccessful "because no outline of character emerges from the intricacy of the argument, there is no one to sympathize with and we are therefore not convinced even though the arguments are every bit as good as in the successful poems" (*Experience*, p. 86).

Chapter II

The Adventurous Poet-Persona

I

_Balaustion's Adventure_ and _Aristophanes' Apology_, both set in fifth-century Greece, contain the embedded plays by Euripides which show Herakles as a savior and a madman. Balaustion, the speaker or poet-persona, models herself after Herakles and employs fictions as useful constructs to effect results in the world and to help her know and express herself. Balaustion imitates Browning's authorial act by mirroring the poet who creates fictions and personae. At the end of _BA_, she is safe, but limited, just as Herakles is the too nearly perfect rescuer in _Alkestis_, which she recites. In _AA_, she finds herself in a more threatening, but intellectually enlightening, situation just as Herakles finds himself in _Herakles_. Therefore, her behavior and attitude are correlated to the plays' content which she appropriates. Herakles is one who is caught in the ceaseless predicaments of life; consequently, as Balaustion finds herself in different crises, she responds by discerning the state of affairs and acting as the hero would do. Balaustion matures
in AA and becomes a heroine who stoically accepts disruptive experiences and changes herself for the better; she also sets a standard by which other poet-personae may be judged. She tries to imitate Herakles more closely than any other speaker emulates his embedded fiction's protagonist; the speakers in Prince and Fifine tell about themselves while those in Night-Cap, Album, and the Parleyings talk about others whom they do not consciously try to copy. This critical examination of the two "Greek" poems involves an exploration of the interrelationship between character, mythoi, and imagery in the embedded fictions of Euripides and the framing narratives in which Balaustion reveals herself.

Critics have differed about Browning's right to interpret Euripides' work as he does.\(^2\) William Clyde DeVane calls both of Balaustion's fictions flawed, unfaithful renditions of Euripides' art and historical fact; he criticizes her for revising Alkestis in "modern terms" and faults Browning for imaginatively interpreting history by making Aristophanes speak an apology that "was never made in fact, and is hardly likely in imagination, for the comic poet did not see in Euripides those things which Browning saw--the great art, the lofty idealism, the sympathetic insight into the human heart."\(^3\) Although Roma King
does not deny Browning's right to reinterpret Alkestis, he implicitly refuses to consider Balaustion as a viable character when he says that BA is the Alkestis from Euripides', Browning's, and Elizabeth Barrett Browning's viewpoints only. Although the epigraph for BA and the refrain "the Human with his droppings of warm tears" which describe Euripides come from Elizabeth's poem Wine of Cyprus, Browning transvalues her lines, just as Balaustion re-interprets Euripides' fictions, and makes the playwright, not a figure of pathos as Elizabeth seems to intend, but an exemplar of ethos who is concerned with humanity and is actually another savior.

As popular as the use of biographical detail has been in explicating BA and AA, it seems that Browning adopts the themes of redemption, rescue, and reconciliation, not because of his suppressed longing for Elizabeth, but because the themes are comic situations that usually involve tragic elements. Redemption, rescue, and reconciliation imply an initial separation which precedes the felicitous resolution. Alkestis and BA both contain triumphant arrivals which follow trauma and departure: Alkestis returns from the dead, and Balaustion arrives at Athens from Rhodes. Euripides' play is used in BA because the persona Herakles is relevant to Balaustion's situation, not because Euripides
was Elizabeth's favorite Greek playwright. Perhaps Browning portrays Balaustion as an apologist for Euripides, whom she trusts, because Browning writes and publishes in a world of skeptics who trust few things. Never could Browning be accused of light-hearted optimism though since Herakles and AA contain moments of sober self-evaluation for the two protagonists.

II

Balaustion relates her experience in a safe, pastoral setting and uses a comic framework to tell the near-tragic story of Alkestis. Posing as a savior who separates herself from the maddening aspects of life, she reinforces the pastoral factors in the narrative in order to attach herself to a traditionally secure milieu. The events are not presented in chronological order since Balaustion speaks the poem after all the events in her adventure have already occurred, but the telling of those past events is perhaps the most important adventure of all because her narration enables her to fashion the events in a palatable, conventional way. The actions which precede the poem's present setting in which Balaustion speaks to her four auditors are as follows: the beginning of the war between Athens and Sparta, the decision of Rhodes the island to side with
Sparta, the flight of Balaustion and a few others by boat from Rhodes, the pursuit of their boat by a pirate ship which forces them to land at Syracuse, the decision of the Syracusans to free Balaustion and the others if she tells the story of Alkestis, and her telling of the tale to enemies of Athens while she stands at the temple of Herakles in Syracuse. After telling the story of Alkestis' death and the rescue by Herakles who wrestles with Death for her body, Balaustion repeats the tale two more times on two succeeding days in Syracuse; then she and her friends are released by the captors so that they may proceed to Athens. When Balaustion retells the adventure in Athens, she also relates a second, altered version of Alkestis' tale in which the wife's soul enters the husband. In this version of the tale, Alkestis is sent back to earth from Hades because Admetus has received her soul into his body and, therefore, has a double-soul, an advantage over other mortals. Herakles does not appear within Balaustion's revised version; Balaustion partially assumes his role when she becomes the artist-savior of the poem. Also, after she reaches Athens, she visits Euripides, and he gives her the manuscript of his play Herakles.

In AA, Balaustion loses control of her fiction as she and Aristophanes attempt to undercut each other: she is
exposed to his threats and the komos of actors which invades her home; he is threatened by her stance as the dead Euripides' defender and by the power of the manuscript she reads to him. \textit{AA} is set at the time of Athens' fall; at the outset of the poem, Balaustion and her spouse Euthukles are fleeing from Athens after the destruction of the long walls around the city. They sail back to her old home, Rhodes, and the poem ends as their ship comes within sight of the island. The adventure which she tells, however, happens one year earlier than the poem's present situation. A year before, the war between Sparta and Athens was still being fought. On the same night that Euripides dies, Aristophanes' \textit{Thesmophoriazusae} is first produced. Since the play uses Euripides as a character and parodies some of his works, Balaustion assumes that this play as well as the other comedies by Aristophanes are personal attacks on Euripides. Aristophanes and his drunken actors enter Balaustion's house as she prepares to read the manuscript of \underline{Herakles}, Euripides' gift to her when she visits him and thanks him for indirectly causing her release from Syracuse. Aristophanes expresses his views on comedy, tragedy, Euripides, and Balaustion; Balaustion tries to defend Euripides by arguing for the superiority of tragedy over comedy although her best defense against Aristophanes' railing is the
manuscript which she reads aloud. The play seems to affect her because it implicitly challenges her to accept the kind of adversity that Herakles tolerates. After the reading, Aristophanes departs from the house at daybreak, promising to return a year later to visit Balaustion after writing another play, The Frogs, which casts Euripides as a character. Of course, the promise cannot be fulfilled because Athens falls that year and Balaustion and Euthukles flee from their adopted home.

In order to understand how Balaustion utilizes the Alkestis, one must examine the various ways that Herakles' character and the play are perceived. Herakles is condemned as the happy fool who feasts and drinks while Alkestis is buried and whose only redeeming feature is that he acts as a disinterested deus ex machina to reverse the result of Alkestis' self-sacrifice. The play has long been considered tragic although the ending is clearly comic. Madeleine Doran notes that in ancient times, the Greeks saw plot only in terms of tragedy, comedy, or satyr— not tragi-comedy. Nevertheless, Herakles' rescue and Alkestis' sacrifice produce such a tragi-comic plot. Although Alkestis' death might be seen as tragic, A. P. Burnett points out that even this event is not unconditionally evil since Alkestis behaves as the dutiful wife and mother should and bends her will to
society's demands. She dies in order that her husband might live and her children might continue in their father's social rank.

In making Herakles the protagonist of his two plays, Euripides implicitly acknowledges Dionysian vitality as a force, especially in transforming problematic situations into acceptable resolutions. G. K. Galinsky notes that Herakles and Dionysus have many things in common—both are sons of Zeus, builders of civilization, and victims of Hera. Arrowsmith cites innovations in Euripides' drama: Herakles' definition of a new heroism, the theme of loneliness as a common fate, and the fusion of comedy and tragedy. Arrowsmith believes that Aristotelian ideas, especially the definition of tragedy, are not pertinent to Euripides' dramas because the structured order required by Aristotle is reversed by Euripides' artistic portrayal of disorder, which mirrors the world's chaos. Rather than show a tragic flaw in Herakles, Arrowsmith suggests that Herakles' madness and revelling is similar to a Nietzschean "dark spring" of action. In fact, when Robert Langbaum repudiates Aristotle's orderly system of criticism, he argues that Nietzsche and Browning are similar, but he does not mention Euripides, whose innovations greatly affect Browning. In actuality, Euripides' dramas are just as innovative and
disorienting as the notions Nietzsche espouses.

Browning uses Euripides' transformation of traditional fictions and character stereotypes by making Balaustion freely interpret the Alkestis and by creating a powerful heroine who contrasts with Admetus' wife. Philip Vellacott notes there is no main role for a woman in Herakles, but the observation applies to Alkestis as well since the wife does not participate in the action as much as acquiesce to Death and to Herakles' rescue. Balaustion's placing herself as a guiding, interpretive force in RA indicates that she may feel she is a foil for Alkestis and a woman who recognizes that female passivity must be overcome. She tries to become both heroic and Heraklean as a speaker who is elevated above the crowd. As Norton B. Crowell points out, Balaustion is "the antithesis of the ignorant primitive." With the exception of Euthukles in AA, Balaustion always seems to stand alone, literally and figuratively. In RA, she often positions herself in prominent places: the altar by the ship's mast where she encourages the rowers to work harder to escape the pirate ship, the steps of Syracuse's temple to Herakles where she tell the Alkestis. Such elevated positioning suggests that she sees herself as an important person. Northrop Frye notes that epiphanies usually take place on elevated, isolated spots; perhaps Browning puts
Balaustion in these locations in order to intimate that she possesses an intuitive, vatic wisdom. Even in her marriage, Balaustion dominates over Euthukles who serves as her idolater and personal secretary in AA when he inscribes her dictated remembrances of that night when Euripides dies and Aristophanes intrudes into her house.

Her purported interest in Admetus' spiritual development, which Clyde de L. Ryals suggests, is less important than her will to glorify Euripides, Herakles, and herself as literary, mythic, and experiential saviors, respectively. Balaustion is a complex figure whose desires for self-preservation and expression merge when she identifies with Herakles, not with the stereotyped Alkestis, and converts her own enjoyment of fictions into a more immediate use at Syracuse. Her refusal to be typecast as a pathetic victim like Alkestis, who behaves so mechanically and lacks a strong will, enables her to become her own artificer. Balaustion and Herakles are similar because both are so powerful; Balaustion's use of Alkestis to save herself and friends by means of her verbal skills is analogous to Herakles' ability to save by sheer physical prowess. Alkestis' passivity, Herakles' heroism, and Euripides' innovative artistry apparently invite Balaustion to re-evaluate her roles as female and poet-persona because she
consciously strives to become active. She performs her and the ship's salvation by means of her expressive, life-saving interpretation of *Alkestis*.

Rather than tell an impersonal adventure of Sparta's and Athens's wars which took place between 431 B.C. and 404 B.C., Balaustion tells her personal story instead. If she were only a transparent eyeball and revealed little about herself, the work might justifiably be called a publically-oriented epic. But by making the reader concerned with her particular plight, she involves him in the history of a culture. Assuming a vatic role when exhorting her kinsmen at Rhodes, she characterizes her speech as "prayer" (1. 41) and cites the religious and dramatic contributions of Athens which lend stability through ritual to Greek culture: the temples and tombs (1. 30), the fasts and feasts (1. 32), the sacred grove (1. 33), and

> Ours the great Dionysiac theatre,  
> And tragic triad of immortal fames,  
> Aischulos, Sophokles, Euripides!  
> To Athens, all of us that have a soul,  
> Follow me!  

(11. 37-41)

Echoing Milton's speaker who seeks an audience fit though few in number in *Paradise Lost*, Balaustion seeks out and convinces "a few like-minded as ourselves" (1. 46) to leave
Rhodes for Athens. Balaustion implies that the ideal auditor must acknowledge Athens as a kind of holy place as well as possess a sophisticated appreciation of art.

_BA_ is complicated by the facts that Euripides' tale and Balaustion's framing adventure contrast plots that contain antithetical elements. The reader knows that Balaustion has already lived through the experience which she tells to her four female companions "Petalé,/ Phullis, Charopé, and Chrusion" (ll. 4-5) in the poem's present setting, and he learns quickly that she has been her own savior. This information reduces the element of surprise and creates an atmosphere of mutual safety for Balaustion and the reader. On the other hand, _Alkestis_ ' plot is more nearly tragic by comparison with Balaustion's situation, and Euripides' tale allows no abatement of tension for the auditor until the final peripeteia effected by Herakles. Only this heroic deed prevents the action from being catastrophic.

Balaustion's plight corresponds to Northrop Frye's description of the fifth phase of comedy; in this phase, the tales "do not avoid tragedies but contain them." The audience feels raised above the action to a safe vantage-point with Balaustion. It is fitting that she tell her past adventure to her audience in a flash-back because the device informs the reader that Balaustion is now
unthreatened. This phase of comedy is also called the sea adventure by Frye because the sea, a symbol of chaos or a literal threat, is the element from which personae are usually saved in this mythos.19 The characters in BA are indeed taken at sea by the enemy at Syracuse and eventually end their wanderings by joining the more hospitable Athenians. Just as the personae rescued from the sea often join a new society, according to Frye, Balaustion saves herself during her adventure, marries Euthukles, and enters the established society at Athens.

By contrast, Alkestis, is a first phase tragedy because the heroine "is violated by Death and then has her fidelity vindicated" as in other plots about rape, orphans, and questionable parentage.20 Structurally, its linear plot contains no early release of tension nor any intimation of the comic ending; it is a perfect, fictional foil for Balaustion's circular flash-back.

Although Balaustion as poet-persona is safe, Balaustion, at the outset of her actual adventure, is involved in a potentially tragic situation. She is at odds with the majority of people at Rhodes, her homeland, for she tells the largely unsympathetic audience there not to turn against Athens and suggests that those who love her should heed her words. She risks great danger to leave Rhodes for Athens
during the middle of a war. After being chased by a pirate ship, the "wolf" (l. 89), the ship on which she rides is "rescued" by enemies. Like Herakles in Admetus' house, Balaustion finds herself in a situation where she feels alien and disoriented. Therefore, it is essential for her to find a proper audience or to teach auditors how to be responsive to her. At Rhodes, she cries "to who would hear/
And those who loved me" (ll. 22-23) and implies that the two groups who love and hear her should, ideally, be identical. By indirection, then, the reader is induced to side with her and become like the four lovely females who sit next to her in the poem's present situation. We certainly hear her and feel compelled to side with Balaustion since we do not want to be as hateful as the unresponsive people at Rhodes. Balaustion preserves her sense of humanity and a comic outlook when she leaves Rhodes by re-enforcing the sense of community aboard the ship. Such a fellowship of refugees keeps them from feeling isolated and unsupported and helps her maintain the will to extricate herself from her predicament. The comic resolution of her plight is more complex than her being released from Syracuse. It involves her personal triumph as a woman who is accepted by three diverse groups: the escaped Rhodes kinsmen whom she saves, the captors at Syracuse who respect her for knowing
Euripides' play, and the Athenians to whom she goes for asylum.

Since this particular phase of comedy pertains to the experiental world,\textsuperscript{21} Balaustion's nostalgia for the past is especially touching as she uses certain pastoral allusions to recapture a sense of lost innocence and youth. She twice mentions her girlhood in the first twenty lines of \textit{BA}, and addressing the four girls, who seem to be shepherdesses with alliterative names, she evokes the pastoral ambiance and proposes the conventional return home at dark:

\begin{quote}
... Hear the play itself!
Under the grape-vines, by the streamlet-side,
Close to Bacchedon; till the cool increase,
And other stars steal on the evening-star,
And so, we homeward flock i' the dusk, we five!
\end{quote}

(11. 336-40)

These female auditors play two important roles in the poem: first, they function as surrogates for the reader; second, they represent the girl that Balaustion once was in the past adventure at Syracuse.

She has every right to be nostalgic since at the age of fourteen, she has acquired much--fearlessness, creative skill, and the respect of others. By being oppressed, Balaustion has learned to cope with adversity. When she encourages the rowers to work as they are being pursued by
the pirate ship, she stands "upon the altar by the mast" 
(1.74) and reminds the people on board of the Aeschylean 
"song of ours which saved at Salamis" (1. 76). Although she 
describes this brief song as being inspired in the "passion 
of pursuit" (1. 72), her composed response seems to be quite 
adequate in spite of the pressure. Her creative interpreta-
tion of Alkestis three times in Syracuse when she "told it, 
and, two days more, repeated it" (1. 252) indicates that 
she responds when under pressure, remembering and embryo-
dering the tale to make it as interesting to the people at 
Syracuse on the three occasions as it is to the reader. 
She uses fictions by skillfully creating pauses, by making 
editorial comments, and by incorporating the role of a 
Heraklean rescuer within herself. Her identification with 
fictions is cemented when the ship's captain makes a point 
of explaining his beloved heroine's name, "Wild-pomegranate-
flower,/ Balaustion" (11. 207-208). Like the flower, she 
provides metaphorical "food, drink, odour, all at once" 
(1. 211) for him and the others on the ship. Also she is 
known as "the lyric girl" (1. 186), a phrase which unites 
her with the fictions she tells, embellishes, and utilizes 
to obtain power.

Balaustion's version of the Alkestis at Syracuse is 
told, appropriately, at the temple of Herakles; she wants
to assimilate the hero's vitality to herself and establish as many overt correlations between him and herself as possible. Although she makes the analogy between her situation and Alkestis' plight, she never openly equates herself to the once-dead woman when she asks,

--For had not Herakles a second time Wrestled with Death and saved devoted ones?-- (11. 258-59)

In this statement, she could have substituted her own name in place of "Herakles," and the meaning would be true in a literal sense since she, not the mythic persona, saves people at Syracuse. Her portrayal of Herakles' adventure and the assumption of his behavior indicate that she is enacting and proclaiming a new role for women different from that portrayed by Alkestis. Although Clyde de L. Ryals asserts that in AA a prudish Balaustion prefers to be associated only with the soul and detached from the corporeality that Aristophanes represents, Balaustion's intentional identification with the masculine hero Herakles, one who possesses excessive sexual and gustatory desires, indicates her awareness and appreciation of physicality. This identification does not preclude the fact that Balaustion may also understand Alkestis' alienation within her own house and country. As a victim of her husband and of a social prejudice, Alkestis is one woman who lets herself
be exploited while Balaustion is another female who flees her thankless homeland rather than tolerate distasteful political alliances. Balaustion represents everything that Alkestis is not, since she is neither wife, queen, nor mother. When she selects her homeland and her spouse, she does not choose the conventional or easy choice since she must move to an adopted land and marry a foreigner. Combining the three modes of Hegelian progress—history, art, and consciousness—she becomes a cultural historian, telling her adventure to her four friends and the reader; an art-appreciator, reciting the play which is her gospel and salvation; and an apologist, presenting a history of the self in her monologue.

III

Balaustion poses as a plain-dealer in BA and claims that her tale has an objective, eye-witness validity. She insists that

. . . plain I told the play,
Just as I saw it; what the actors said,
And what I saw, or thought I saw the while.
(11. 246-48)

Nevertheless, the subjective self inevitably intrudes on the objective observation of the play when she describes the expressions on the actors' faces which had been covered with masks in the performance she saw.23 Even her statement
asserting her detachment contains the admission that she tells what she "thought I saw" (l. 248). In his brief introduction to BA, F. G. Kenyon says that when Balaustion tells the Alkestis, she gives "stage directions put into verse,"24 but in fact, the entire fiction contains "stage directions" for the people Balaustion has seen in Rhodes and Syracuse. Browning does not have her indicate by mere indirection the words of others; she incorporates their words directly into her speech. Her quotations of other personae are lesser fictions which she relates just as she tells the major one, Alkestis; these speeches serve as other autonomous objects or artifacts upon which Balaustion reflects. She includes in the play subjective comments as she omits certain short interchanges between characters, leaves most long speeches intact, summarizes some omitted dialogue in her own paraphrase, and adds important editorial comments on the action.

As soon as Balaustion learns that a fiction by Euripides will placate the captors at Syracuse, the initial tension of the sea chase abates and a festive, safe atmosphere prevails throughout the rest of her adventure. By noting that one person in Syracuse has said, "Thank Herakles for the good holiday" (l. 238), Balaustion conveys the impression that the four auditors and the reader ought to
relax and participate in this holiday feeling. Even before she learns that the people of Syracuse want to hear a tale by Euripides, she has been aware of previous cases in which men used fictions in Syracuse to effect their own salvation. In the war between Sparta and Athens, certain Athenians had been made captives, but if any one could "speak/ A chorus to the end, or prologize" (ll. 165-66) from Euripides' works, he was set free. In fact, radical changes in social status might be effected by the appropriate use of fictions:

If he were slave i' the house, for reverence  
They rose up, bowed to who proved master now,  
And bade him go free, thank Euripides!  
(ll. 174-76)

As slaves possessing knowledge, these Athenians become true masters of the situation because they can teach what their masters wish to learn.

By contrast with the rapid change of scenery in the sea adventure, static images of houses, buildings, and other familiar places of security play an important part in Balaustion's description of events which occur on land. Euripides' house becomes a significant image in the poem as well as in Browning's canon because the aging playwright is pictured in the darkened, "tragic house" (l. 289), and this correlation between being confined to one's domicile and approaching literal or spiritual decline is found in
every other late long poem after BA. In Euripides' case, literal death awaits him when Balaustion visits and depicts Euripides as "a statue in its niche; Cold walls enclose him, mostly darkness there" (ll. 298-99). His house is a tomb-like place in Athens, a place already idealized by the poet-persona, and in it, he and Sokrates, who is old also, sit and wait to join their "peers above the talk" (l. 297).

Balaustion's description of "some foreigner uncouth" (l. 300) who "breaks in, sits, stares an hour, and so departs" (l. 301) from Euripides' house is an unintentional portrayal of herself. She herself is foreign and seems to have forgotten that fact. Browning intimates that Balaustion is not as wise as she seems; she is mistaken in thinking that she knows Euripides well. Clearly, the content of Herakles, the play Euripides gives her, may be beyond her grasp at this point because she is so caught up in her own proud accomplishments at Syracuse. This intimation of Balaustion's short-comings forecasts the situation in AA when she will be overtly challenged by Aristophanes who invades her house just as she has intruded upon Euripides in his home.

Balaustion's transition from the present pastoral setting to the action in Alkestis is accomplished through
the images of various edifices or supposed places of security. Their concreteness provides continuity throughout the juxtaposition of three levels of time—present, past, and fictive—and the two genres—lyric and dramatic. She says that he "who hears the poem, therefore, sees the play" (l. 335). In the present situation of the poem, the five women are near the temple of Baccheion when Balaustion begins to tell them her tale. Directing their attention to the temple, she compares her elaboration of the Alkestis to the ivy which festoons this temple's stone. Just as the column, not the ivy, actually holds the cornice up, Alkestis retains its autonomy as a fiction apart from her interpretation. The ivy alters the visual image of the temple just as her comments alter the hearers' perception of the tale. Also, she likens her love for Euripides' fiction to a "nest" (l. 346) to which she will guide her auditors as their appreciation and love for the tale increase. Appropriately, the past setting in Syracuse is the temple of Herakles, and the fictive setting, the "silent palace" (l. 358) of Admetus, so she accomplishes a transition to the embedded artifice. The palace serves as Alkestis' sole backdrop, but it is more important as a home than as a palace since the problem in the embedded fiction arises from a marital situation, not strictly an
affair of state.

Predictably, the initial conflict of Alkestis between the two gods Death and Apollo revolves around their influence in Admetus' house. Apollo leaves the house where he has served as a slave at Zeus' command. Death enters "half in, half out the portal,--watch and ward" (1. 408), according to Balaustion's own words. She suggests that Death is now the master of the situation and has authority over the house because Alkestis is dying inside the edifice. Nevertheless, Balaustion indicates that Death's triumph is questionable when she suggests that Death would be "somehow disadvantaged" (1. 411) should he and Apollo strive. In the case of Death and Apollo in Admetus' house, each only partially succeeds in working his will: Apollo, in trying to protect Admetus from woe; Death, in seeking to make Admetus suffer. Because both gods seek to assert their control over each other, they embody qualities which pertain to master and slave; both seek to dominate yet are subject to the other. Neither has a particularly strong case for his stand; it is as reasonable for Apollo to want to prolong Admetus' life as it is for Death to want Admetus dead. They have equally valid, subjective, and arbitrary justifications. Apollo's disappearance after "Death's portentous passage through the door" (1. 494) cedes the victory to Death and his
representative elements of night, darkness, and chaos. There is no battle, only a passive and pathetic reaction by Apollo as he stands "a pitying moment-space" (1. 495). Balaustion dismisses him in her editorial remark:

I caught one last gold gaze upon the night
Nearing the world now: And God was gone,
And mortals left to deal with misery. . . .
(ll. 496-98)

Alkestis' sacrifice for her husband and children is as much a part of a dying social order which negates a woman's worth as Apollo's disappearance marks the passing of a mythic order. Herakles is the appropriate, new hero of the existential, potentially unsettling situation, for he is not paralyzed by useless pity and fear as Apollo is. Herakles' reaction is spontaneous while Apollo's pity seems traditionally Aristotelian. In actuality, Alkestis' choice should be between two equal duties: to obey the Fates and save Admetus or to stay alive and raise her children to adulthood. But she resolves her inner struggle, if there is one, by choosing to die for her spouse and by extracting the promise that he will not remarry and that he will not bring a stepmother to their home to rule over these motherless children. Alkestis seems to be less complex and more petty than she ought to be, but her state as a victim evokes pathos and makes the audience uncritical of her
shortcomings. Alkestis bears the burden of victimization like an archetypal pharmakos or scape-goat. Not only is she victimized by Admetus, his old father Pheres, and his mother, who all refuse to die, but also she is victimized indirectly by the Fates and Apollo who arrange the deal which should temporarily save Admetus from death. Balaustion presents a powerful, pathetic image of Alkestis, the doomed wife, as a horse whose head is covered so that it cannot see a fire through which it passes. Finally, when all protection--family, social rank, and time--is stripped away, Balaustion adds that Alkestis most likely understands "things plain as Gods do" (1. 712) and sees

. . . with a new sense, all her death would do,  
And which of her survivors had the right,  
And which the less right, to survive thereby.  
For, you shall note, she uttered no one word  
Of love more to her husband. . . .  
(11. 692-96)

After Alkestis' fate is determined and Death performs his role, the focus shifts to masculine behavior and inter-relationships among Admetus, Pheres, and Herakles. Their interest in or enactment of power struggles causes several agons within the narrated play.

The suggestion by Balaustion that Admetus is the master leading the horse through the fire damns him much more effectively than direct invective because he unfairly
exerts power over someone who is weaker. Balaustion characterizes Admetus by expressing what he does not say or do (ll. 879-909). He could have felt that the proviso that he not remarry was too strong since the avoidance of one evil, death, had only led to other evils, loneliness and celibacy. Twice, Balaustion associates Admetus with the metaphor of a merchant who sells Alkestis a bale of purple cloth, a symbol of the posthumous honor she receives "in place of all that coin" (l. 704) and who in "storm,/ Throws the freight over to redeem the ship" (ll. 901-902). By associating Alkestis with coin and freight, Balaustion indicates Alkestis' status as chattel in Admetus' eyes. Using the edifice metaphor to probe Admetus' depths of guilt and selfishness, Balaustion describes him as being

Quiet as ever: but a quietude
Bent on pursuing its decent to truth,
As who must grope until he gain the ground
0' the dungeon doomed to be his dwelling now.
(ll. 1300-303)

Not only does Balaustion indict Admetus, but also Pheres, in Euripides' original text, denounces him. William Arrowsmith notes how Pheres, the father of Admetus, exposes his son's heroic pose. Pheres verbally attacks his son and is also an example of what Admetus will become in old age when selfishness is "pushed to completion" (l. 1374). According to Balaustion, Pheres is "a statue: bloodless,
hard, cold bronze" (l. 1372), a demonic parallel to the
statuesque Euripides whom she sees in his own house. Admetus'
attempt to disown his father is a fruitless fiction of the
unself-conscious mind. The similarities between father and
son cannot be denied by Admetus. Similarly, Pheres creates
a useless fiction by trying to mask his true character with
a false front which makes him seem to be "pacific . . . /
Bringing the decent praise, the due regret, /
And each banality prescribed of old" (ll. 1460-62). Balaustion
indicates how the mutual hatred of father and son is
actually a self-hatred; both strive to master the other and
fail because they are only enslaved to their mutual denun-
ciation in order to obtain self-worth. In a sense, the
struggle for mastery between Admetus and Pheres is the
human counterpart to the struggle between the supernatural
forces of Death and Apollo.

The arrival and the deceiving of Herakles, one who is
willing to die and equally willing to laugh, occurs, and
Balaustion shows her sympathy for one who is capable of
great sacrifice and rejoicing:

    I think that Herakles, who held his life
    Out on his hand, for any man to take--
    I think his laugh had marred their threnody.
    (ll. 1076-78)

In spite of their differences, Herakles and the more passive
Alkestis are victims of social expectation. Admetus practically requires that Herakles revel rather than desire to mourn. Admetus misreads Herakles' emotional capability and denies Alkestis' worth and her right to be mourned by Herakles since the host assumes that the god values his food above his dear friends. Although Herakles seems to be honored as a friend and guest of Admetus, the son of Zeus is, nevertheless, demeaned by Admetus' expectation that Herakles should have no desire to know about Alkestis' suffering and death. Admetus undervalues the hero, therefore, as much as women. When Herakles rescues Alkestis and offers her to Admetus, Admetus makes excuses but does not mention his vow not to marry. Admetus finally relents and accepts the woman that Herakles offers only because he wants to placate Herakles and end the conversation between himself and the god. Illustrating his hypocritical fastidiousness, Admetus opens the doors of the house to admit this disguised woman, but he refuses to touch her.

Just as the house of Admetus is divided between sorrow and Herakles' benign joy, Herakles himself is divided. He has only revealed half of his character, the capacity to revel in a kind of temporary frenzy, and does not show his ability to save until the second half of the tale in which a more mythic atmosphere prevails. The hero cannot inhabit
a place where Admetus and his household, with their thoughts of guilt and doom, remain, for upon learning the true state of affairs, Herakles leaves the house to find Alkestis and triumph over Death.

Earlier, as the funeral procession leaves the house of Admetus, Balaustion reorients her auditors toward the house by speaking in her own voice as if she were a part of the Greek chorus:

. . . we faced about,  
Fronted the palace where the mid-hall-gate  
Opened--not half, nor half of half, perhaps--  
Yet wide enough to let out light and life.  
(11. 1613-16)

In this way, she never lets the reader forget that she is the artificer of this tale. Although she tells about the various struggles between Admetus and Pheres, Admetus and Herakles, and Herakles and Death, it is her skill as poet-persona and ubiquity as participant in three levels of action--present, past, and fictive--which help her rise above such power-struggles.

In describing her understanding of the *Alkestis* and her wish to create a second version of the tale as Sophokles had meant to do, Balaustion connects herself with its hero and creator, Herakles and Euripides, by alluding to Dionysian associations among them. Not only does Herakles participate in drunken revels from time to time, but also
Balaustion characterizes Euripides as the "latest child" of Dionysus or Bacchus, the wine god. Euripides and Dionysus are linked by a common trait, newness: Euripides' as a playwright and Dionysus' as a deity

. . . who himself, born latest of the Gods,  
Was stoutly held impostor by mankind.  
(11. 163-64)

Balaustion describes Euripides' gift of the tale as "the cup that gave the wine" (1. 2426) as well as the "vine" (1. 2428) because the author's play causes her to create her version, and calling the play a "poem," she describes her state of artistic inspiration:

For I have drunk this poem, quenched my thirst,  
Satisfied heart and soul--yet more remains!  
(11. 2431-32)

Since Balaustion sees herself as a Heraklean heroine at Syracuse and as Euripides' defender, it is important to her that she performs an act that is comparable to those achievements of Herakles and Euripides. She creates her version of Alkestis' tale as an act of self-affirmation (11. 2435-660). In it, she omits Herakles as a character and apparently assumes the role of savior when she describes Alkestis' rescue in a unique way and moulds "a new/ Admetos, new Alkestis" (11. 2415-16).

Just as Euripides' tale directs irony toward the royal pair, Balaustion disparages them for naively hoping to
bring back "the Golden Age" (l. 2656) and makes Euripides' irony explicit by portraying Admetus as a once-greedy king. In her earlier telling of Euripides' story, she says Apollo finds Admetus an acceptable master when the sun god declares, "the lord I chanced upon was holy too" (l. 382). Of course, Euripides' point is that Admetus is not holy; he lets his wife die when he should have died. Apollo's words are a self-indictment. In her second version of the plot, Balaustion changes Admetus from one who seems selfless, but is not, to one who has overtly shown "lust and greed" (ll. 2444, 2451), but has been changed for the better by Apollo. Also, she makes the king appear rather sentimental and melodramatic in his declarations of love to Alkestis, for he even renounces his desire to escape death at one point, exclaiming, "All the unwise wish is unwished, oh wife!" (l. 2551).

The edifice image recurs in association with Alkestis' blind pride in Admetus. Balaustion has the doomed woman say that Admetus should carry "our victorious coping-stone" (l. 2580) to "cap and crown the structure this last time" (l. 2583). The notion of crowning a figurative structure derives from a passage in Herakles and AA28 where the hero has murdered his family and looks back on his past accomplishments and ills. The epigraph to Prince Hohenstiel-


Schwangau consists of the same lines translated from *Herakles* which speak of vain pride:

I slew the Hydra, and from labour pass'd
To labour--tribes of labours! Till, at last,
Attempting one more labour, in a trice,
Alack, with ills I crowned the edifice.

Just as Herakles' statement and the prince's supposed vaunt indicate their personal failure, Alkestis' praise of Admetus makes them both seem ridiculous. When Alkestis dies, her soul enters her spouse's body, but her body is forced to return to life because Admetus has an unfair advantage over other mortals. Koré sends Alkestis back to life when she says:

Two souls in one were formidable odds:
Admetos must not be himself and thou!
(11. 2646-47)

Balaustion treats the content of her own fiction as if it were an objective fact that could be documented by other persons. The tale becomes externalized and crystallized beyond the subjective self which makes it, for Balaustion acts as if Alkestis' and Admetus' fabricated adventure is objective reality:

So, the two lived together long and well.
But never could I learn, by word of scribe
Or voice of poet, rumour wafts our way,
That--of the scheme of rule in righteousness,
The bringing back again the Golden Age,
Which, rather than renounce, our pair would die--
That ever one faint particle came true,
With both alive to bring it to effect.
(11. 2652-59)
The statements seem to be made tongue in cheek because the couple's willingness to die for the Golden Age, an ideal, is ridiculous when one member of the couple, Admetus, would not even have died for his wife, a person.

After concluding her version of the tale, Balaustion uses two other fictions to establish a rapport between her auditors and her narrative: the refrain which calls Euripides "The Human with his droppings of warm tears" (11. 2412, 2671) and the Kaunian painter's picture. The epithet for Euripides, the playwright who helps Balaustion save herself, establishes him as a hero who creates and manipulates fictions; the creation of art is a necessary outlet for him. He is the archetypal human being who feels, yet acts; he does not merely suffer. In the painting which Balaustion visualizes, she incorporates the four female auditors into the scene. By addressing the auditors in the poem's outermost frame of action, Balaustion successfully leads the reader out of the embedded fiction about Alkestis and into the "present." Balaustion seeks to flatter her pastoral listeners by picturing them in the spatial tableau she describes: "women wailers . . . Four, beautiful as you four" (11. 2683-84) watch Herakles and Death wrestle for Alkestis' body.

In closing the poem, she praises Euripides by using
the same term that she has Alkestis employ, the concept of Herakles' crowning the edifice. Balaustion asserts that her praise for the playwright is almost gratuitous:

Why crown whom Zeus has crowned in soul before? (l. 2705)

On the surface, Browning has Balaustion assert that even though Euripides does not win a prize for Alkestis, he has talents which elevate him above other artists. But implicitly, Browning indicates Balaustion's flaws by the word-choice which indicted her. Her worship of Euripides unintentionally echoes Alkestis' naive trust in Admetus. Balaustion's limitation is indicated by her willingness to praise only the things she likes. In AA, she dislikes comedy because she assumes tragedy is innately superior and denounces Aristophanes because he is not like her idol Euripides. The ostensible triumph of Balaustion's crowning Euripides reveals that ingenuous faith in Euripides which limits her in AA.

IV

In contrast to the dominant edifice imagery in BA—the settings at the temple of Bacchelon in Athens, the temple of Herakles in Syracuse, and Admetus' palace in Alkestis—the backdrop of AA consists of shifting landscapes, real and imagined, which Balaustion and her spouse see and discuss
as they sail to Rhodes from Athens. The shift in imagery and setting corresponds to the change from elements of romance found in BA to those of disruptive satire and irony in AA. BA is told on land in a safe, pastoral setting while AA is narrated at sea immediately after Balaustion has witnessed the destruction of Athens. During the sea adventure of AA which is set in the poem's present, she tells about events in Athens before the fall. Another realm of action occurs within Herakles, which Balaustion reads, and completes the three levels of time also found in BA--present, past, and fictive.

Disruption and defeat prevail throughout AA: Euripides is dead, Athens has fallen, and Balaustion seems impotent against the attack of Aristophanes. The watery setting of Balaustion's present situation is a fitting image for her inner uncertainty and for the plot's ambiguous ending. The tale is told in transit and ends with the characters still at sea. The unresolved sea adventure, society's dissolution, and the bizarre spectacle of Aristophanes' komos combine to disorient her. Even her elevated, vatic pose in BA is no longer effective when she tries to match wits with Aristophanes. Since Herakles serves as a model of strength for Balaustion in BA, the figure in Herakles becomes the appropriate model for her less heroic stance, although she
is not immediately conscious of the likeness between
Herakles' trauma and her own. The confrontation between
Balaustion and Aristophanes is somewhat like Herakles
facing his nemesis, Madness, in *Herakles*. Balaustion is a
victim of her own greater self because in *AA* her adventure
is called her "last," an adjective which connotes a terminal
phase in her life. The conflict with Aristophanes offers
her no definitive triumph, and her development and maturity
have been arrested at a stage in which she still wants to
be the heroic protagonist she has been in Syracuse. By
adopting the aggressiveness of Herakles and by turning
away from the passivity of Alkestis, Balaustion becomes a
new kind of heroic woman in *BA*. Nevertheless, as the
heroic Herakles, a reveller, is finally hurt by Madness, a
hidden psychological weakness as much as an external force—
Balaustion, a more cautious but no less proud character, is
nearly defeated by Aristophanes because she perceives her-
self as a flawless defender of Euripides and his art, which
she is not.

The sea travel and the confrontation between Aris-
tophanes and Balaustion fall into the broad category of
comedy. The two chief protagonists in Athens view each
other as mutually disruptive forces and refusers of each
other's means of festivity. She rejects his komos crew's
behavior, and he, her quiet devotions to Euripides. Her character and behavior are similar to those found in protagonists described by Northrop Frye in the first phase of comedy; Aristophanes' qualities suggest the eiron of third phase satire. Balaustion seems to resemble the low-norm, rustic plain-dealer with pastoral and homiletic affinities. The role of the preaching rustic fits her well since she maintains a naive faith in Euripides and Herakles. On the other hand, Aristophanes is an urbane satyr who is identified with and through the city of Athens. The energy of Aristophanes' language is akin to the phase of satire where "the verbal tempest, the tremendous outpouring of words in catalogues, abusive epithets and erudite technicalities" are used. Neither Balaustion nor Aristophanes convinces the other of her or his beliefs, but each serves to control and limit the other's excesses. Both mistakenly view the world of Athens as an undisplaceable, comic society until it falls despite them.

Her reputation as Euripides' defender is, indeed, a heavy responsibility for her, a role she does not fully understand. Balaustion and Euthukles are identified so completely with Euripides that the Athenians observe that "you were the couple constant at his cave" (l. 356). Euthukles' words correspond to his wife's thoughts when he
vehemently defends Euripides by attacking Aristophanes, who has just produced his *Thesmophoriazusae*:

You best know what dog tore him when alive.
You others, who now make a ring to hear,
Have not you just enjoyed a second treat,
Proclaimed that ne'er was play more worthy prize
Than this, myself assisted at, last year,
And gave it's worth to,--spitting on the same?
(11. 377-82)

The persona Aristophanes is fully aware that Balaustion and her husband, her mouthpiece, despise him and his comedies, and by voicing their dislike of all his plays, the couple has managed to bait the comic writer and encourage his attack.

Once, Balaustion rather loftily tells Euripides about her "great adventure" (1. 518) in Syracuse and mentions as an afterthought "how Alkestis helped" (1. 518). Describing Herakles as a savior, she purges his character of all taint; she even omits his tendency to revel:

. . . Hearts are fain
To follow cheerful weary Herakles
Striding away from the huge gratitude,
Club shouldered, lion-fleece round loin and flank,
Bound on the next new labour "height o'er height
Ever surmounting,--destiny's decree!"
Thither He helps us: that's the story's end;
He smiling said so, when I told him mine--
My great adventure, how Alkestis helped.
(11. 510-18)

This naive egotism and her oversimplified characterization of Herakles indicate the need to modify her views and learn
to tolerate chaos, imperfection, and madness. Like Herakles at the end of Herakles, she must learn to accept her inadequacies in order to grow. The latter play differs from Alkestis because it redefines conventional heroism and complicates Herakles' character; if Herakles can alter his behavior, Browning implies that Balaustion must also.

Browning uses Euripides' play and the fictive ethopoeia of the playwright to present a challenge to the poem's speaker. The character Euripides asks Balaustion, at one point, to judge him "when the noise tires out" (1. 526). The request may refer not only to the noise of the world or to Aristophanes' satiric attacks as Balaustion may think, but also to the noise of her own pride and her misunderstanding of Euripides and Herakles. The tragedian's ambiguous words about a day "when somebody--/ Who? I forget--proves nobody at all" (11. 527-28) could be intended to deflate the vaunts of Balaustion as well as of Aristophanes. Perhaps by forcing Balaustion to return to Rhodes, Browning indicates that she must progress beyond her past experiences by making the external transition from one geographical setting to another. The shift is emblematic of the inner passage from one level of self-consciousness to another, a process which is necessary in human life. Unless periodic, personal, and historical revision takes place,
there will be a permanent, rather than a transitional, madness.34

Because Herakles learns to accept his madness and his life as it is, the plot resembles the fourth phase of tragedy in Northrop Frye's system, a mythos which "minimizes the sense of ritual inevitability in tragedy, supplies social and psychological explanations for catastrophe."35 Madness, in Herakles, is sometimes interpreted as a goddess who causes Herakles to kill; however, by the acceptance of his violent deeds, Herakles seems to see madness as a part of his own personality. Indeed, Herakles' lines which serve as the epigraph to Prince and utilize the edifice image usually associated with unself-consciousness show how Herakles blames himself:

But then I,—wretch,—dared this last labour—-see!
Slew my sons, keystone-coped my house with ills.
(11. 4910-11)

Hera, Iris, and Madness serve as a triumvirate of femmes fatales who counterpoint Balaustion's role as dominant, beneficent female in the narrating of BA and AA. Yet Herakles' madness, in the psychological and not the mythical sense, reflects the passionate, destructive tendency toward violence which, latent in Alkestis, is foreshadowed by his revelry and drunkenness. As a reaction to his disorientation and temporary insanity, Herakles repudiates the old
world-view (ll. 4976-83) that gods behave as men think they do. Herakles' new, stoic heroism is accompanied by a revised understanding of God. Herakles rejects Theseus' simple-minded, "literary" view:

... since God stands in need--
If he is really God--of nought at all.
These are the poets' pitiful conceits!
(11. 4981-83)

William Arrowsmith notes that Euripides was haunted by the disappearance of the old integrated culture and the heroic image of man, so in order to express that rejection of tradition in Herakles, Euripides' hero moves on to new lands in order to survive at the end of the play.

Herakles is a series of unmitigated tragic events until the conclusion, when the hero's self-acceptance of his deeds prevents it from being a tale of unrelieved suffering. The godlike hero becomes the enduring Everyman who is determined to live in spite of the past. He has been placed in a situation that is similar to Admetus', only worse, for not only has he killed his wife, but also his offspring; he actually enacts the role of Death, not that of Admetus. After Herakles' agon with Madness, there is no felicitous reversal of events, only the acceptance of his bow in spite of the fact that it was the means by which he destroyed his family. Philip Vellacott points out that if Herakles had
left the bow and arrows, he would have performed a suicidal action, a denial of his identity.\textsuperscript{38} Herakles observes:

\begin{quote}
\ldots Yet, naked of my darts
Wherewith I did my bravest, Hellas through,
Throwing myself beneath foot to my foes,
Shall I die basely? No! relinquishment
Of these must never be,--companion once,
We sorrowfully must observe the pact.
\end{quote}

\textit{(11. 5029-34)}

The lack of self-knowledge in Balaustion and Herakles at the outset of \textit{AA} and \textit{Herakles}, respectively, is more profound and isolating than the mere alienation between individuals can be. The self's estrangement from itself is overcome by the end of both works; Balaustion and Herakles accept and know themselves. Just as husband and wife or son and father are alienated from one another in \textit{Alkestis}, Herakles' sudden loss of his family and the ideological separation from Theseus are isolating experiences in \textit{Herakles}.\textsuperscript{39} Alkestis' lack of self-consciousness and Herakles' absence of self-control in the plays show a more serious alienation within the single mind. Balaustion's pride and underestimation of Euripides' and Herakles' complexity reveal the limitations which Balaustion must surmount in order to know herself better.

One constructive use of fictions is to enlighten individuals and unite diverse people in a universal appreciation of art as Balaustion uses the play in Syracuse;
Browning implies that art should not be used as a tool of politics. William C. DeVane's comment that AA is like Plato's Symposium because it is a debate on the "relative efficacy of comedy and tragedy as corrective of the ills of society" makes the poem sound too sociological and philosophical. In fact, by setting the discussion of Aristophanes and Balaustion one year before the fall of Athens, Browning ridicules any artist's pretension to save society by art. Neither Balaustion, as Euripides' spokesperson, nor Aristophanes can end the political agon of Sparta and Athens.

The fact that Browning does not present the persona Euripides in either poem which Balaustion narrates shows how Browning relies upon the force of Euripides' fictions to sustain his reputation. Balaustion and Aristophanes both describe past meetings that they have had with the playwright, so the reader only knows the tragedian through reported conversation and through the two plays. As an artist, Euripides is classless because his status as an apolitical writer helps him transcend social rank. Aristophanes, on the other hand, attempts to be a political force, not merely an artist, and that aspiration weakens his claim as a legitimate, detached playwright. In AA, Euripides' fiction arbitrates between the Dionysian energy
of Aristophanes and Balaustion's naive understanding of Herakles. Clyde de L. Ryals concludes that Herakles undercuts them both by revealing Euripides not to be the antagonist to the flesh that Aristophanes thought nor the disembodied spirit that Balaustion thought.\textsuperscript{41} According to Ryals, Euripides sees the human condition as a dialectic between strength and weakness, hope and despair, good and evil.\textsuperscript{42} Ryals' over-simplified dualism between Balaustion as spirit and Aristophanes as body denies her involvement with and reverence for Herakles, a physical hero, and denies Aristophanes' belief in the old gods and the old traditions. Balaustion is forced to enter the fallen world when she is confronted by her adversaries in Athens; her world resembles that which exists in the last portion of Herakles. Aristophanes, too, must sober after his drunken invasion of her home and face the effective artistic challenge which the dead Euripides' play presents to him.

\textbf{V}

At the outset of AA, Balaustion's lack of solid touchstones is reflected linguistically in the negative definition and the imaginary landscapes she uses. Defining her actions by negation, she says she flees from "not sorrow but despair,/ Not memory but the present and its pang" (ll. 2-3). Just as Death invades Admetus' house and turns it into a
place of confusion for Herakles, personified Death also seems to take possession of Athens because Balaustion describes "Death's entry, Haides' outrage! Doomed to die" (l. 9). In a series of imagined scenes, Balaustion envisions other possible and more desirable ways that Athens could have fallen by using the images of fire, earthquake, and tidal wave. If Death's entry could be seen as a rape of the city, then Balaustion's fancied vision of the way that the imagined fire, earth, and water might have embraced Athens expresses a loving, lyric epitaph for her adopted homeland. Balaustion fancies fire's "passion of embrace . . . (Temple by temple folded to his breast . . . )" (ll. 10-12), earth's sundering and absorption of Athens "buried below Olumpos" (l. 17), and sea's inundating "that marbled last magnificence" (l. 24) until the land may "again breathe unconfused with sea,/ Attiké was, Athenai was not now!" (ll. 28-29). Any kind of natural destruction, in other words, would have been preferable to the destruction of Athens by Death, a symbol for the Spartans or perhaps for war itself. Death embraces and overpowers an entire culture so that Balaustion feels she must escape by sea with a select group, her spouse and the ship's captain. This dissolution of Athens forces her to turn inward to her memories to find what consolation she can gather. The
destruction of Athens' edifices in the imagined scenes indicates the internal disorientation she feels.

Turning to the air, the unmentioned fourth way Athens could have been transformed, she guides her thoughts back to the past. She looks upward hopefully, almost mechanically, in order to envision what she later calls a new Athens that is quarried out of cloud and sunset (ll. 110-11). She articulates her vision and attempts to overcome the disappointment of past experiences:

. . . distinct above
Man's wickedness and folly, flies the wind
And floats the cloud, free transport for our soul
Out of its fleshly durance dim and low,—
Since disembodied soul anticipates
(Thought-borne as now, in rapturous unrestraint)
Above all crowding, crystal silentness,
Above all noise, a silver solitude.
(11. 39-46)

Such a quietude exists in her imagination as a substitute for Athens, a place which she has idealized and seen destroyed. The word-repetition (11. 45-46) resembles an incantation which Balaustion utters in order to convince herself that such a "crystal silentness" (1. 45) and "silver solitude" (1. 46) may exist.

Balaustion describes Sparta and Athens as if they were struggling with each other in a master-slave relationship. After the fall of Athens, she says,
... pride succumbed to pride, 
Oppression met the oppressor and was matched. 
Athenai's vaunt braved Sparté's violence. 
(ll. 68-70)

As the victimized party, Athens undergoes two kinds of dissolution: the destruction of the long walls around the city and the altered behavior of the inhabitants. The Piraean bulwarks around Athens are demolished while music, a chorus from one of Aristophanes' works, is played by flute girls; these girls are members of Athens' "harlotry" (l. 99) who survive in the fallen city. Like other decadent members of society—the quack priest, sycophant, and pimp (ll. 85-94)—the girls endure Athens' fall because they are already debased, unfeeling beings. Balaustion and the "terror-stricken populace" (l. 84) risk being turned into inhuman entities; some citizens already stand with stone-like "heads and hearts" (l. 83) because their "trust" (l. 77) has been undermined. Athens' free citizens are "slaves now" (l. 78) because the fallen city's status is reflected by each individual. Just as Sparta usurps Athens' power, various lesser men, whom Balaustion calls apes, have attacked greater men:

Some new Hermippos to pelt Perikles, 
Kratinos to swear Pheidias robbed a shrine, 
Eruxis—I suspect, Euripides, 
No brow will ache because with mop and mow 
He gibes my poet! 
(11. 128-32)
Nevertheless, she affirms a higher law which confirms the
greatness of "Aischulos, Sophokles, Euripides/ . . . gain
prize or lose prize, godlike still" (ll. 121-22).

The city's "lyric troop,/ Chantress and psaltress,
flute-girl, dancing-girl" (ll. 97-98) is the triumphant
female spirit of fallen Athens, the antithesis of Balaustion,
the fiction's presiding female. These girls whose music
accompanies destruction represent the antimasque element
which threatens order, and their activity foreshadows the
intrusion upon Balaustion's domestic peace of Aristophanes
and his komos of actors. In the dialectic of masque and
antimasque, comic and potentially tragic, disruptive elements
are counterpointed. In the masque, a happy society prevails,
and according to Frye's definition, a female in it usually
symbolizes unity and order as the Lady in Milton's Comus
does.43 Balaustion, of course, corresponds to that benign
archetype; however, these females of the antimasque as well
as the triumvirate of goddesses in Herakles undercut the
fictional order that Balaustion tries to impose upon her
experiences in the poem. The lyric troop usurps Balaustion's
old role as "lyric girl" in BA because they perform the music
in AA which ironically contributes to communal dissolution,
not to unification.

The antimasque threatens to cause chaos unless a god
appears: "The revel of satyrs impinges on the appearance of a commanding god, and Dionysos is brought into line with Apollo." In AA, the commanding force which appears to control the komos of actors in Balaustion's house is not the heroine, who is no longer dominant in her own house after Aristophanes invades it, but the manuscript of Herakles which she reads. As soon as she begins the reading, Aristophanes becomes silent. Instead of the masque's traditional dance of audience and actors, the synthetist audience performs an intellectual dance with the manuscript.

Her lyric, the entire poem which Balaustion speaks, is a fiction that she tells in order to sustain herself on the long boat ride back to Rhodes. The desire to teach her listeners seems to be absent at first because her despair in AA seems to be more important than a need to help or save others. Likening her memory of Athens' fall to a snake which she might encourage "out to practise fork and fang" (l. 153) or ignore and "feign a snake is dormant though it gnaw" (l. 150), Balaustion decides to take "a middle course" (l. 158) and record her "tragic theme" (l. 159) as the three Greek tragedians would have done. She decides to express herself through her fiction rather than stimulate self-indulgent sorrow or practice self-deception. As she speaks,
though, there is a gradual turning toward the desire to
teach once again when she decides that, rather than speak
and rant impotently to the wind and water, she will have
Euthukles record her history of the past:

. . . let Athenai fall
Once more, nay, oft again till life conclude,
Lent for the lesson: Choros, I and thou!
(11. 171-73)

Although her present, relatively safe situation on the
ship to Rhodes is comic because rescue is likely, but not
certain, she uses the formulaic, Aristotelian terms like
"tragedy" (l. 167), "pity" (l. 175), and "terror" (l. 176)
to describe her past adventure. She cannot directly confront
the collapse of Athens, so she proposes to tell about Aris-
tophanes' unannounced visit to her home and to

. . . Rehearse
Rather the prologue, well a year away,
Than the main misery, a sunset old.
What else but fitting prologue to the piece
Style an adventure, stranger than my first
By so much as the issue it enwombed
Lurked big beyond Balaustion's littleness?
(11. 181-87)

Her inability to get beyond the introduction and explain the
fall of Athens reveals how much the overthrow of her adopted
city disturbs her. If she can get through the induction and
understand Aristophanes' attack, she might be able to accept
Athens' dissolution. When Balaustion voices her belief that
man ought to develop beyond the status quo, she unintentionally
expresses her own need to grow and to accept sudden changes: "Yet progress means contention to my mind" (l. 141).

She digresses, recalling that Spring day when she speaks to her four friends in BA (ll. 188-218). Her remembrance of that day is expressed in an elegiac lament for the past; perhaps the recollection is inspired by the fact that BA and AA both begin as flashbacks to previous experiences. Balaustion cites all of the elements in that pastoral setting in BA which she longs for, as well as the pleasant aspects of her adventure at Syracuse: her four friends (ll. 188-98), the stream of water (ll. 199-204), Euripides and his dramas (ll. 205-207), and her courtship and marriage to Euthukles (ll. 208-210). The longing only makes her more aware of "dead Athenai" (l. 217) which has been replaced in her mind by "the live/ That's in the cloud there with the new-born star!" (ll. 217-18). The indulgence in nostalgia momentarily directs her thoughts away from her immediate sorrow, but only by examining the events of a year before Athens' fall does she vent her grief over her losses. The past event which occurs in her house in Athens makes Balaustion's situation similar to that found in the "Heracleian House, defenceless" (l. 546) when the hero once departs to bring back Cerberus from the underworld and once leaves to kill Lukos. As Herakles leaves his family,
Euripides has died and left Balaustion alone.

Just as Herakles is divided between a desire to save and a capacity to revel and commit darker deeds of madness and murder, Aristophanes and Balaustion both have personal strengths and weaknesses. They are imperfectly evolved avatars of Herakles who fiercely defend their own points of view to each other. In the power-struggle between Balaustion and Aristophanes, both alternate between being more forceful than the other at different times. She adopts a proud pose as a defense and frightens some of the actors; also, she and Euthukles adopt a verbal coarseness which is comparable to the sexual and physical vulgarity in Aristophanic comedy that they are trying to denounce. For example, she calls Lysistrata a "pustule" (l. 418) while Euthukles likens the audience who enjoys the last play to some beetles "with trundled dung-ball" (l. 486). Aristophanes, too, has his power because he can use drunkenness as a defense or an offense. Drinking is correlated to Dionysus and gives the drunkard "traditional immunity" (l. 968) from conventional rules of behavior. Even Balaustion must grant that she has no right to criticize him for being "drunk, perhaps, / But that's religion . . . / Still, sensuality was grown a rite" (ll. 617-19). Not only is Aristophanes associated with wine, but also with food in the poem's epigraph:
I eat no carrion; when you sacrifice
Some cleanly creature—call me for a slice.⁴⁵

He clearly manifests a Heraklean delight in fleshly activities.

Indeed, both Balaustion and Aristophanes see themselves and each other as being stronger and more Heraklean than they had expected. When she meets him, she is surprised at his ability to control his appetites:

What I had disbelieved most proved most true.
There was a mind here, mind a-wantoning
At ease of undisputed mastery
Over the body's brood, those appetites.
Oh but he grasped them grandly, as the god
His either struggling handful,—hurtless snakes
Held deep down, strained hard off from side and side!

At mandate of one muscle, order reigned.
(11. 620-30)

Balaustion envisions him as struggling with the serpents which Herakles killed as an infant. Aristophanes' measure of self-mastery is revealed by his ability to sober quickly in Balaustion's house; he realizes that she will not be impressed by uncontrolled behavior. Characterizing this "domineering deity" (1. 613), she recalls Aristophanes' speech and describes his outward appearance by noticing his bald head, large eyes, aggressive mouth, and white beard. Balaustion is no less domineering than he: she is capable of quelling the komos' exuberance by standing "statuesque . . . pedestalled/ On much disapprobation and mistake"
(ll. 686-87), as Aristophanes says.

The distinction between Aristophanes and Euripides in Balaustion's mind may be perceived as a division between the maddened and sane aspects of Herakles. The two writers enact a kind of Hegelian dialectic in their artistic styles. Aristophanes uses personal attack, falsehood, sexual themes, multitudes onstage in the chorus, and repetitive plots in his comedies. By implication or by direct statements of Aristophanes and Balaustion, the reader perceives that Euripides' tragic art is supposed to be orderly, oriented toward the individual, and dramatically compelling. In Baulaustion's reproduction of Aristophanes' apology, he says that he intentionally makes ridiculous statements in his comedies and uses hate and creative chaos to pay "the more appropriate worship to the Power/Adulterous, night-roaming" (ll. 2360-61). In disavowing his lies and attacks on the tragedian, Aristophanes admits that when he calls Sokrates a thief (l. 2494) or any foe's mother a thief (l. 2535), such an attack cannot be taken at face value:

. . . Every word is false,  
Looked close at; but stand distant and stare through,  
All's absolute indubitable truth  
Behind lies, truth which only lies declare!  
For come, concede me truth's in thing not word,  
Meaning not manner!  

(ll. 2498-503)

He claims that he uses falsehood and contradiction to achieve
truth, the same effect that Euripides' sophistic, "proper argument" (l. 2544) would achieve. Aristophanes' use of fictions, especially the use of ridiculous lies, correlates with the exuberance and the love of revelling and drinking found in Herakles. Aristophanes' attacks on Euripides are so ridiculous at times that no one, except perhaps Balaustion, would take them seriously. Of all people, Aristophanes knows that he and Euripides both "extended bounds" (l. 1690) in art, although their methods differed.

Aristophanes attacks Euripides, in part, because Euripides is a great achiever. In adopting the tone of jest to explain why he opposes one "who, his whole life long, championed every cause/ I called my heart's cause, loving as I loved" (11. 1717-18), Aristophanes acknowledges that his public saw him as less credible:

. . . O the tragic end of Comedy!—
Balaustion pities Aristophanes.
For, who believed him?
(11. 1740-42)

He disguises his hurt by mocking Balaustion and by suggesting that she is heartless. In fact, he longs for a sympathetic auditor, although he finds none, and does not really want people to think he feels slighted by Euripides' achievement. He displaces his feelings into the voice of a fictive persona who tries to imagine why Aristophanes should attack
Euripides, "the Tragic Master," (l. 1750) who

. . . in a moody muse
Passed him [Aristophanes] unhailing, and it hurts--
it hurts!
(11. 1750-51)

There are also socio-political, religious, and literary
differences between the two playwrights. Aristophanes
thinks art is a political tool; Euripides does not. Aris-
tophanes advises that the populace is capable only of
drinking and revelling while Euripides does not disparage
people, especially not slaves and women as Aristophanes'
Thesmophoriazusae suggests. The patronizing attitude that
Aristophanes shows toward the people when he speaks to
Balaustion indicates he does not really think as highly of
them as he pretends in Thesmophoriazusae. In that play,
whose title means "The Female Celebrators of the Feast"
(l. 349) and which was actually produced in 411 B.C., six
years before Athens' fall, Aristophanes portrays the women
of Athens as being upset that Euripides misrepresented them
in his plays and even gave away some of the manipulative
tricks that women use on their men. The female characters
are not entirely sympathetic in Aristophanes' work, so one
might argue that, first, Euripides is not so mistreated as
Balaustion thinks and, second, that Aristophanes does not
favor women. The females whom Aristophanes' play is supposed
to defend seem at times to be more ludicrous than Euripides, the ostensible foe. Aristophanes' charge that Euripides favors the common man, woman, and slave too much indicates the confusion or the intentional irony in Aristophanes' thinking because Aristophanes sees himself as a defender of the populace as well. Speaking with tongue in cheek, Aristophanes likens Euripides' personae to a

. . . shag-rag hero-race,
The noble slaves, wise women, move as much
Pity and terror as true tragic types.
(11. 2191-93)

Aristophanes outrageously claims that comedy has caused Athens to defeat Sparta in battle (11. 2417-18) and states that once peace occurs, people will resume their old ways:

Our commonalty soon content themselves
With doing just what they are born to do,
Eat, drink, make merry, mind their own affairs
And leave state-business to the larger brain!
(11. 2450-53)

His condescending tone shows him, rather than Euripides, to be the undemocratic discriminator of human beings. The comedian describes only a rule of the few, not an egalitarian "Republic" (l. 1785).

Aristophanes sees himself as a deist, a supporter of the old Greek gods and the old political customs, while he labels Euripides an atheist. When Aristophanes advocates, "Accept the old,/ Contest the strange" (11. 2649-50), he is
casting Euripides not only as a radical innovator and equalizer of classes and sexes, but also as a disbeliever in the traditional gods. Just as Balaustion issues a blanket condemnation of Aristophanes' art before she has met him or seen all of his plays, Aristophanes commits the same mistakes of generalization and closed-mindedness when he describes Euripides' qualities.

To interpret the agon between Aristophanes and Euripides as merely a conflict between comedy and tragedy is to oversimplify their views and to underestimate their shared notion that art should evolve into something other than it is in the present.46 Euripides faults Aristophanes for not fulfilling his potential and not becoming the greatest Greek playwright, a tragi-comic writer who could have surpassed even Euripides himself. As it is, Aristophanes does not write tragi-comedy, only comedy, but claims he could easily have been a tragedian

... minded simply to make verse,
To fabricate, parade resplendent arms,
Flourish and sparkle out a Trilogy.
(11. 2285-87)

Aristophanes' use of feigned hatred, falsehood, and frenzy in his comedies shows that his fictions are just as well-planned as Euripides' tragedies. By claiming to resent Balaustion's judgment of comedy in "theory and practice"
(1. 1763) by the "altitudes the Tragic friend/ Rose to" (ll. 1764-65), Aristophanes is only pretending to be anti-intellectual. Actually, Aristophanes is just as capable of writing according to dramatic conventions as Euripides, for Aristophanes adheres to comedy's obligatory, concluding komos, gamos, or feast. He, in turn, judges tragedy by the criterion of his comedies when he objects that tragedy is unmindful of the multitude. Aristophanes notes that the tragedians' practice of including a satyr play after a trilogy of tragedies is only a "concession . . . to the true taste of the mere multitude" (ll. 2387-88). By contrast, the chorus in comedy symbolizes the multitude's "primaeval virtue, antique faith" (l. 1062). Aristophanes finds fault with the sophists' practice of "book-learning, logic-chopping" (l. 1065) because these men assume that the multitude might be educated and elevated above animal lusts.47

Although neither Aristophanes nor Euripides is satisfied with art as it exists, both personae are drawn to the tragi-comic structure: Euripides advocates it theoretically; Aristophanes finds it fortuitously. The comedian's extended description of a feast held after the production of his latest play becomes a brilliant tragi-comic scene. At the feast, he learns of Euripides' death, and in rapid succession, Aristophanes' mood shifts from one of riotous,
comic revelry to feelings of tragic pathos and finally, when Aristophanes toasts the dead playwright, to a tragi-comic mixture of remembrance and renewed rivalry. At the high priest's house after Thesmophorizusae's production, the "choragos, choros, actors, mutes/ And flutes aforesaid, friends in crowd" (ll. 1176-77) feast with Aristophanes when Sophokles enters to announce Euripides' passing. Sophokles proclaims that his chorus will be "clothed in black ... ungarlanded" (l. 1221). Like Mercadie's entrance in Shakespeare's Love's Labour's Lost, this intrusion of Sophokles reverses the overriding atmosphere of festive comedy. The arrival of a bearer of sad news is the opposite of Herakles' entry into Admetus' mourning household and Aristophanes' drunken invasion of Balaustion's house. Like a Herakles who learns of Alkestis' death, Aristophanes reacts to the disorienting news by soberly assessing Euripides:

But I ... had pierced
Quite through friends' outside-straining, foes'
mock-praise,
And reached conviction hearted under all.
Death's rapid line had closed a life's account,
And cut off, left unalterably clear
The summed-up value of Euripides.

. . . . . . . . . . . . . . . .
. . . death seemed life and life seemed death.
(ll. 1273-82)

Alone in a crowd of persons who do not fully appreciate the seriousness of death or the contribution of Euripides,
Aristophanes is alienated among friends just as Herakles is set apart in Admetus' house. Even in Herakles, Herakles' only friend Theseus cannot fathom the sorrow and the self-awareness of the hero. Recalling that Euripides had once told him that he had the potential to become a great writer, Aristophanes now understands what Euripides had in mind when the tragedian spoke about a synthesis of two mythoi, comic and tragic, which would be the greatest fiction. Aristophanes recalls Euripides' words to him:

You know what kind's the nobler, what makes grave
Or what makes grin; there's a nobler still,

. . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . .

. . whereye laughter joins with tears,
Tragic and Comic Poet prove one power,
And Aristophanes becomes our Fourth—
Nay, greatest! Never needs the Art stand still.
(11. 1298-304)

So it is fitting that when one of the party suggests that they drink to the comic muse, Aristophanes requests that they drink to the tragic muse, but when the people think he is joking by turning "the Tragic on its Comic side" (1. 1433), Aristophanes quickly retreats from a tragic vein to a more tragi-comic attitude. He calls upon the muse of "complex Poetry" (1. 1473) and asks the priest to preside over "Tragic and Comic function of the god,/ Help with libation to the blended twain!" (11. 1469-70).

After Aristophanes finishes his lengthy apology in
Balaustion's house, she responds to him by playing upon stereotyped roles in society and emphasizing that she is a member of the weaker sex. She calls herself a "mere mouse" (l. 2737) before this "forest-monarch Aristophanes" (l. 2738), and she dares not "deny submissive trust/ To any process aiming at result . . . your songs are pregnant with" (ll. 2744-46). She poses as the naive foreigner that Aristophanes thinks she is when she mockingly asks about comedy:

This product of Athenai—\_I dispute, Impugn? . . .
. . . I, poor critic, see, hear, feel;
But eyes, ears, senses prove me—foreigner!
(ll. 2801-804)

Aristophanes has erred when he links comedy with Athens and unintentionally predicts their possibly mutual transience:

I'll prove our institution, Comedy,
Coēval with the birth of freedom, matched
So nice with our Republic, that its growth
Measures each greatness, just as its decline
Would signalize the downfall of the pair.
(ll. 1783-87)

So Balaustion picks up this theme by emphasizing the relative newness of comedy which began "in the slush" (l. 2960) until Aristophanes changes "buffoonery/ For wit" (ll. 2963-64). She asserts that tragedy's history is longer and greater and repudiates Aristophanes' claim that drama ought to amuse the multitude only to preserve civil order.

She notes that by pandering to the "commonalty"
(1. 3098) and "King Multitude" (1. 3104), Aristophanes has not effected peace in the twenty-five years since the wars between Athens and Sparta began (11. 3195-96). She correctly reasons that comedy's goals are fruitless if only political or social reform is its aim or the only defense for comedy's existence; however, she is mistaken if she thinks Euripides' fictions will help Athens escape defeat. Besides claiming that he has not improved upon his predecessors' art or ended the wars, she attacks Aristophanes' career and says it is deteriorating "year by year, play by play" (1. 3408). The "boy's-triumph" (1. 3409), Acharnes, and the "man's-shame" (1. 3410), Thesmophoriazusae, which both mention Euripides, are "Obscenity impregnated with 'Peace'" (1. 3418).

Reiterating what Euripides told Aristophanes about his becoming a greater writer of tragi-comedy, she says that he ought to make

. . . Comedy and Tragedy combine, 
Prove some new Both-yet-neither, all one bard, 
Euripides and Aristophanes 
Coöperant!

(11. 3440-43)

This echo of Euripides' advice is the single most forceful thing she says to Aristophanes; her attack on him and his plays and the feigned submissiveness are merely feeble attempts to equal Aristophanes' verbal prowess. Only the
reading of **Herakles** can be the definitive defense of Euripides which Aristophanes demands; intuitively sensing that the manuscript is her strongest weapon, she reads it aloud and prefaces her reading with an allusion to *The Bacchae* by Euripides. She believes that the play will show Euripides' greatness just as

... when rash hands but touch divinity,  
The chains drop off, the prison-walls dispar,  
And--fire--he fronts mad Pentheus!  
(11. 3531-33)

Euripides' Pentheus is an avatar of mad Herakles, and such an allusion is the perfect transition into the reading of **Herakles**.

The houses in **AA** and **Herakles** are places which offer a false security in the midst of rapid travel and hardship. Just as Herakles and Balaustion are both travellers through many lands, both have houses which have been invaded by antagonistic forces. In **Herakles**, when the hero returns from his latest labor in Hades, he finds a disturbed household; his father, wife, and sons have been threatened with death by the usurper Lukos who has killed Kreon, the ruler of Thebes and the father of Megara, Herakles' wife. The Heraklean edifice becomes the play's single backdrop just as Admetus' house in the **Alkestis** remains continually in the audience's view. As Herakles returns home, his thoughts
focus upon the house and family, which the house emblemaries:

  . . . My children I behold
Before the house in garments of the grave,
  . . . . . . . . . .
Wife, what new sorrow has approached our home?  
(11. 4114-20)

Later, after he kills Lukos and returns home, Madness
possesses him and causes him to kill his family inside their
house. The chorus of old men observes how

    A whirlwind shakes hither and thither,
The house--the roof falls in together!  
(11. 4499-500)

When affected by Madness, Herakles thinks he is inside
Eurystheus' house, and when he kills, he believes he is
slaughtering the sons of his master. As it turns out, the
collapse of the roof is caused by Herakles' falling against
the column that supports it; therefore, Herakles is respon-
sible for destroying his literal house as well as his family.
At the conclusion of the play, Herakles symbolizes his ills
by using the image of the house when he blames himself, not
Madness as a deity, for his problems: "Myself,—who with
these shames/ Have cast away my house" (11. 5076-77).

Theseus belongs to a more naive school of thought
than Herakles because he tells Herakles to bear "what . . .
the gods inflict" (1. 4858), to be purified by Pallas, and
to come and share his house with him (11. 4957-60). Theseus
implies that Herakles is being womanish because Herakles
considers the death of his family to be greater than all other burdens that he has had to bear. There is no resolution between the friends Theseus and Herakles as they argue:

Th. Strange! Of thy labours no more memory?
Her. All those were less than these, those ills I bore.
Th. Who sees thee grow a woman,—will not praise.
Her. I live low to thee? Not so once, I think.
Th. Too low by far! "Famed Herakles"—where's he?
Her. Down amid evils, of what kind wast thou?
Th. As far as courage,—least of all mankind!
Her. How say'st, then, I in evils shrink to nought?
Th. Forward!

(ll. 5062-70)

Herakles remains unconvinced by his friend's statements, although he does accept his bow and reject the idea of "My life—past, present—as unliveable" (l. 4887). Theseus does not greatly influence Herakles' thinking; rather, his benign presence jars Herakles and makes him remember the existence of the external world, the realm of action beyond this destroyed house and household. Herakles' mention that friends are worth more than wealth and strength (ll. 5079-80) is less direct praise for his friend than a general comment on life. His observation and the chorus' bemoaning their loss of Herakles as their friend are echoed by Aristophanes after the reading; the comedian turns Herakles' remark against Euripides by ironically calling the tragedian a "best friend" (l. 5174) who steals ideas from Sophokles, among others.
Regardless of the manuscript which has just been read, Aristophanes feels triumphant over Balaustion and her idol Euripides and sings Sophokles' lyric about Thamuris as a way of satirizing Euripides, not to create a non-satiric song of beauty, as Clyde de L. Ryals thinks. The comedian portrays Euripides as one similar to Thamuris who "spurned the common life . . . who sings for gods, not men!" (ll. 5266-68). Thinking he has sufficiently condemned Euripides as other-worldly, Aristophanes forecasts the next play that he will write, The Frogs, which will be a success. Promising to return the next year to see her, Aristophanes departs from the house of Balaustion feeling confident in himself and in the notion that Athens will be left standing for one more year.

On the other hand, Balaustion seems to have become more aware of the potential for dissolution and uncertainty in her world. Euripides' fiction seems to have affected her thinking: just as Herakles must learn to accept his life as it is, Balaustion comes to accept Athens' destruction. She begins to employ various images which relate to the ephemerality of perception, fictions, and war. For instance, she describes Aristophanes' departing form as being "lost in the morning-grey,/ Rose-streaked and gold to eastward" (ll. 5338-39); he seems to fade as he moves farther away
from her. Returning the reader's attention to the present situation on the boat with Euthukles, she affirms that the fiction she has just completed has meaning only while it is being lived or told, for as she speaks, "soul escapes/ From eloquence made captive" (ll. 5346-47). The story becomes "mere words" (l. 5347) like any other person's statement whether literary or not. She tells how other fictions were created in that year between Aristophanes' visit and the fall of Athens; Aristophanes' Frogs was produced as well as Sophokles' son Iophon's play "where Oidipous/ Dared the descent mid earthquake-thundering" (ll. 5377-78), another image of chaos that mirrors Herakles' internal state in Herakles. Besides the fictive images of destruction which she uses, she mentions the battle of Aigispotamoi where death came to many Greeks. She recounts the facts of the battle: the loss of one-hundred war ships and the wrecking of the walls around Athens. Not only do fictions and historical details reflect disruption, but also future time becomes a baffling uncertainty since she notes that "next year came, and went not, but is now,/ Still now, while you and I are bound for Rhodes" (ll. 5369-70). Aristophanes had promised to return the next year, but the defeat of Athens suddenly prevents any normal social intercourse. Disruption of man's order and plans for the future
surrounds Balaustion, but now she uses her dislocation artistically.

The deaths in *Herakles* and the past destruction in Athens are telescoped into the poem's present situation, and all three time frames—present, past and fictive—merge in the single fiction she creates on the boat. Although Balaustion's circumstances appear to be unstable and transient, she now asserts that man may still accomplish significant actions by means of fiction. Euthukles as the "man of Phokis" saves the walls of the Acropolis from the Spartans' wrath when no "mere human argument" (l. 5544) and no sign from Zeus or Pallas would work. To stop the destruction, Euthukles uses a quotation from one of Euripides' works which describes how Elektra had been "cast from house and home" (l. 5572) and wedded to a herdsman:

Daughter of Agamemnon, late my liege,  
Elektra, palaced once, a visitant  
To thy poor rustic dwelling, now I come?  
(11. 5551-53)

Although the fiction saves the Acropolis, the rustic lifestyle it describes has passed away just as Balaustion's tale of Aristophanes becomes "mere words" which, nevertheless, have saved her from possible insanity on the ship's journey.

Upon arriving in sight of Rhodes, an island that is
"boiled round with breakers" (l. 5708), she affirms her confidence in a new God of Euripides, not the old gods of Aristophanes. The action is still at sea and does not indicate a firmly resolved plot, so perhaps the un-Aristotelian open-endedness of the story is a final repudiation of any lingering reliance that she might have still had upon convention. The island replaces the edifice as a more apt symbol of the battered survivor whom she has learned about in the play by Euripides. Still, in the other late long poems, many characters, except John Fust in the epilogue to the Parleyings, use edifices as a means of escape from the world, from sanity, and from self-knowledge.

Balaustion's ability to escape from Athens' "sights and sound,/ Hideous exultings, wailings worth contempt" (ll. 5661-62) is positive because there is nothing left there for her; she has internalized all that is essential about the Athenian culture and Euripides. Just as William Arrow-smith speaks of Herakles' development of the inner space of Herakles, Balaustion evolves beyond her state in BA by means of the agons within AA. She has contended with Aristophanes and the meaning of the manuscript she reads. Like Adam and Eve in Milton's Paradise Lost who have internalized the paradise after the fall and after they must leave the Garden of Eden, Balaustion stores in her heart the dream of what
Athens once was. She leaves the ruin which no longer resembles the place she idealized in order to

... press to other earth, new heaven, by sea
That somehow ever prompts to 'scape despair.
(11. 5663-64)
NOTES FOR CHAPTER II

1 Hereafter called BA and AA, respectively.

2 Also, critics of BA often point out a few basic themes: the biographical parallel between the husband's love for his wife in Alkestis and Browning's dedication to his wife after her death, the similarity between Herakles' rescue of Alkestis and the St. George-Perseus and Andromeda myth alluded to in the Ring, and the purported comments on Christianity. Joseph H. Friend in "Euripides Browningized" explores all three approaches (Victorian Poetry, 2 [1964], 180). William Clyde DeVane also cites the Browning-wife and Admetus-Alkestis analogue ("The Virgin and the Dragon," Yale Reviews, new series 37 [September 1947], rpt. in BC, pp. 181-96). W. Hall Griffin's and H. C. Minchin's biography of Browning seems to have inspired the notion that Elizabeth was a wronged woman like Alkestis (The Life of Robert Browning [London: Methuen, 1910; revised, 1938; rpt. 1966]). The biographers also compare Elizabeth to Elvire in Fifine and intimate that Browning feels a lapse of fidelity to his late wife because he has proposed to Lady Ashburton. Friend says that Browning focuses on the moral disparity of Admetus and Alkestis as a means of self-flagellation (Friend, p. 182). If Browning realized that
he was a greater poet than his wife, as Friend suggests (p. 186), then he does not really resemble Admetus who realizes his wife's greater worth after her death. Calling BA a casuistic treatment of suffering and redemption, Friend imposes a Christian interpretation on the work (p. 179). Indeed, he asserts that Balaustion sees Herakles as a prefiguration of Christ (p. 184). At one point, Friend does go beyond the biographical and religious assumptions to note that the rescue theme in Alkestis recurs in the framing plot when Balaustion saves her shipmates at Syracuse. DeVane cites the St. George-Perseus and Andromeda analogy to Herakles and Alkestis, and he notes that Euripides is a Christian prototype ("Browning and the Spirit of Greece" in Nineteenth-Century Studies, ed. Herbert John Davis, W. C. DeVane, and R. C. Bald [Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1940], p. 197). Philip Drew interprets Euripides' affirmation of virtue in "the absence of revelation" as a message to modern men "who were no longer able to accept the authority of Christ" ("Browning and Philosophy" in RB, p. 132).

3 DeVane, "Greece," p. 184.

4 King, Artifice, p. 203.

5 Browning, Works, VII, l. 2412.
6 Doran, p. 192.


8 Burnett, p. 57.


10 Arrowsmith, pp. 20-22.


12 Arrowsmith, p. 23.

13 See Langbaum, Experience, pp. 210-35.


15 Crowell, Soul, p. 174.

16 Frye, p. 203.

Frye, p. 184.

Frye, p. 184.

Frye, p. 219.


Ryals, p. 107.

Ryals uses this detail about her elaboration of the original play which she saw to prove that Browning indirectly criticizes Biblical literalists who object to the kind of interpretation that Balaustion as a "higher critic" gives (p. 37). However, Balaustion does not seem deeply concerned with the girl who questions her overly-imaginative presentation, so the theological commentary theory seems unlikely. Ryals is intent upon reading BA as a theological work when he casts Herakles as the suffering Christ-figure and when he says the Admetus-Alkestis relationship illustrates the development of Admetus' soul (p. 34). He notes that the focus of Balaustion's revision of Alkestis, the version which eliminates Herakles, is upon Alkestis' saving love (p. 39), and Ryals seems to slight Balaustion's role as an artist-savior. The only time Ryals mentions Balaustion's adroit
fiction-manipulation is when he talks about her inclusion of Elizabeth's lines of poetry and Sir Frederick Leighton's painting, *Herakles Wrestling with Death for the Body of Alcestis*. Ryals connects these two art works with the Incarnation of Christ, an association which is never implied in RA or overtly mentioned. Nevertheless, Ryals calls the two works mentioned "good art" which can inspire others just as Christ could compel and save others (p. 40). By bringing in extraneous matter, Ryals reaches an unconvincing affirmation when he calls RA the "embodiment of Browning's idea of Christian love and what it means to be a poet" (p. 41).


25 Death and Apollo seem to engage in a Hegelian master-slave relationship in which both seek to become master. In such a relationship, the master wishes to destroy or control the object which poses a threat to the self's independence by claiming to be an independent rival. According to Hegel, the master seeks to reduce the object to absolute dependence on the master (Stace, p. 357). Ironically, the master finds his independence is subject to his keeping the slave dependent, so the master becomes enslaved to his victim while the slave rises through his labor to the level of true existence
Hegel's view of tragedy as the struggle between two equal ethical forces might be applicable (See Stace, pp. 481-82, and A. C. Bradley, Oxford Lectures on Poetry [London: Macmillan and Co., 1909], p. 71).

27 Arrowsmith, p. 17.


29 Frye, p. 226.

30 Frye, p. 236.

31 Frye, p. 227.

32 Frye, p. 236.

33 Arrowsmith, p. 20.

34 One might argue that a return to Rhodes is a regressive rather than a progressive activity, yet by going to her homeland, the island, Balaustion humbly acknowledges her heritage and humanity. When she first left Rhodes for Athens, she was discarding her past and embracing a new life. As a heroine at Syracuse, she receives the public's respect, something she cannot obtain at Rhodes when most people there refuse to believe that they should side with Athens against Sparta. At Athens, however, her reputation
becomes greater than her capabilities, for she cannot cope with Aristophanes as well as she could placate the foes at Syracuse. After the sources of her pride, Athens and Euripides, either fall or die, she returns to the place where she has had less fame and power, Rhodes. One senses that this movement homeward is a step forward because she leaves behind the static, one-dimensional, heroic concept of herself.

35 Frye, p. 237.

36 Arrowsmith, p. 15.

37 The bow of Herakles has played an important part in Greek legend, not only for its meaning in the Herakles tales, but also for its significance in that culture's legendary history. In Hesiod's *Theogony*, Herakles uses the bow to kill the eagle which plagues Prometheus (Galinsky, p. 16) while in Aeschylus' *Prometheus Unbound*, he indirectly accomplishes the same end by means of the bow. Herakles accidentally wounds the centaur Chiron and asks Zeus to let Chiron die in Prometheus' stead and to let Prometheus go free (Galinsky, p. 45). Finally, in Sophokles' *Philoctetes*, the bow is treated not only as the means of the Greek army's conquering Troy, but also as a spiritual tool since with it Herakles "freed Prometheus, father of
the arts,[and] he slew the centaurs, wild monsters who refused their birthright to become men" (Galinsky, p. 52).

38 Vellacott, p. 242.

39 Arrowsmith, p. 22.


41 Ryals, p. 112.

42 Ryals, p. 114.

43 Frye, p. 293.

44 Northrop Frye paraphrases Nietzsche's thought (p. 292).

45 The epigraph to AA comes from Aristophanes'

Fragmenta.

46 Euripides' purported belief that Aristophanes could have evolved into a writer of tragi-comedy is related to Browning's general theory of progress and change in the arts. In his Essay on Shelley, Browning describes a desirable alternation in history between subjective and objective art. Even the canon of a single writer should contain a combination of these two types of art. In "Abt Vogler," the extemporaneous playing of music is the epitome of
aesthetic creation because the art-form does not imitate any preexisting object and because music, in particular, does not last. It must continually be created anew; consequently, human fictions are as temporal as the beings who make them.

Euripides did employ soloists rather than choruses in some tragedies because he seemed to prefer showing the individual rather than a crowd onstage (Gilbert Murray, The Literature of Ancient Greece [Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1956], p. 209).
Chapter III

The Self-Deceived Prisoners

I

In *Prince Hohenstiel-Schwangau: Saviour of Society* (1871) and *Fifine at the Fair* (1872), the speakers turn inward and rely upon themselves as Balaustion does, but their inwardness is not self-conscious since they use their fictions to justify fixed beliefs, not to achieve a new awareness. In *AA*, by contrast, the poet-persona Balaustion and the protagonist of the embedded fiction, Herakles, change from their roles as heroic saviors; both learn to move on to new lands and accept imperfection and dissolution in life. This transition symbolizes the inward change from dependence upon solid touchstones such as Athens, an edifice, or a naive attitude. Both Balaustion and Herakles achieve peace within themselves unlike the less self-conscious speakers found in *Prince* and *Fifine* who are both poet-personae and protagonists in their poems. When they speak, they do not evolve in character as Balaustion does, in part because they do not learn from another character as she reflects upon Herakles. Rather, their fictions
cushion them from other people, and they are entirely too self-involved and uncaring or unconscious regarding external objects of contemplation. They are victimizers of others, then, because they do not know themselves. As a ruler, the prince sees himself as the defender of society, while the speaker in Fifine imagines he defends marriage and truth, but actually they end up hurting or disparaging the populace and women, respectively. By examining how these two speakers see themselves as heroic and how they intuitively perceive their houses as symbols of self, one may observe their mode of undercutting themselves unintentionally.

Because the two poems Prince and Fifine were published between the two Balaustion poems, they appeared before the transvaluation of heroism found in Herakles had been fully articulated in AA. Nevertheless, the influence of Euripides' Herakles is evident in these two poems. Even Prince's epigraph comes from the play. Both speakers reveal their terrible isolation, mask their tragic plight with wit, and use the telling edifice image as an external, though ineffectual, touchstone. These vaunting poet-personae resemble Herakles before he makes the critical acceptance of his past deeds. Before Herakles determines not to kill himself and chooses to take up his bow once again, the fallen, less heroic Herakles, struck by Pallas Athena with a stone,
sleeps, escaping from reality to the world of dream after his crimes. Herakles' suicidal condition and his temporary incapability to cope with problems is reflected in the prince's and Fifine's speaker's subconscious attraction to dissolution, death, and dream-like situations. Sometimes they speak as if they were observing themselves and others in a dream or hearing disembodied voices, but their fantasy contrasts at the poems' conclusions with the darkness and loneliness of their tragic existence within their domiciles.1

The plot of Prince is rather simple. In the fictive present, the sixty year-old prince is sitting alone in his "Residenz"2 in France although he pretends to be in Leicesters Square in England. Feigning to speak to an imagined young woman, he presents an apology for his life as a sovereign and tries to justify the decisions which he has made during his twenty-year rule. He has also just written a letter to his cousin, a duke, which he has failed to send because of his day-dream, yet he attributes the entire poem's creation to the letter's "grey oblong . . . grim seal" (l. 2152) which "set all these fancies floating for an hour" (l. 2153).

The plot of Fifine is more complex than Prince because the speaker is simultaneously acting and talking, unlike the prince who simply talks about what he has already done.
In the prologue to Fifine, the first-person speaker describes how he has taken a swim and seen a butterfly overhead. He reflects upon the differences between himself and the insect and their respective locations in water and air. In the body of the poem, the speaker, apparently the same voice which speaks in the prologue, and an auditor called "Elvire," who may not be present or who may not exist, seem to take a walk. Although the epigraph to the poem suggests the speaker might be Don Juan, the hero of Molière's play and the spouse of Elvire, the speaker never names himself in the poem. By using the title "Don Juan" to refer to the literary figure in other works and the name "Juan" to refer to the poet-persona in Browning's Fifine, I will maintain a distinction between the traditional type and the specific persona in the poem. Juan and Elvire walk to a fair and see some gypsies perform; they then walk through the surrounding countryside to a Druid monument where Juan describes a dream that he has had that morning. Arriving at their villa door, Juan tells Elvire that he must return to the fair because he has received a note which implies that he left too much money in the tambourine of Fifine, a gypsy performer. At this point, Juan indicates that his auditor may not exist or may not be present because he speaks rather flippantly and bids her to "slip from flesh and blood, and play the ghost again!" If she were present, she would have to be unfeeling
to bear such dismissal. In the epilogue, the first-person speaker is sitting alone in his house when an unnamed "She" speaks to him from the dead, and the speaker composes his own epitaph in preparation for his death. Fifine, like Prince, concludes within the claustrophobic confinement of an edifice, the image of false security.

In Prince and Fifine, Browning projects personae in modern situations, not ancient times as in BA and AA. According to Browning's letters, 4 Prince may have begun as a satire on Louis Napoleon, the nephew of Napoleon Bonaparte who became Napoleon III, president and emperor of France. Napoleon III was elected to the former office in 1848 and to the latter in 1852, so such historical details fix Prince's probable milieu in nineteenth-century France. Fifine is set in the town of Pornic, and since the speaker refers to a composition by Schumann, the latter poem also seems to be set in nineteenth-century France.

Not only do the poet-personae share the same approximate time and place, but also they both seek anonymity. Unlike Balaustion, they do not have their names explained, nor do they tell what their names are supposed to mean. The prince's name sounds suspiciously fictional, and indeed, Browning may be playing upon the family name of Louis Napoleon's foes in the Franco-Prussian war, the
Hohenzollern-Sigmaringens who ruled Prussia. The end of the war in 1870 occurred when Napoleon III surrendered at Sedan to the King of Prussia; with the surrender came the end of Napoleon's reign in France. The association between the prince, whom some critics call Napoleon III, and the name of Napoleon's enemies seems to be Browning's clue that the prince is not to be correlated directly with Napoleon III. On the other hand, Juan never even names himself or tells about anyone calling him by name.

Possessing dubious or uncertain identities, the prince and Juan are victimizers who become self-victimized and who are obsessed with a fear of death. Unlike Herakles who accepts life as imperfect in Herakles, the prince and Juan delude themselves when they try to justify their poses as ruler and husband, claiming they have done their best in life. The prince's and Juan's tales contain certain elements found in Frye's category of tragedy: the world of the poems is a place of experience and fallibility. They try to assume the role of satiric eirons who know more than society or the common man, but they cannot hide their loneliness and fear since they unconsciously utilize the mythos of self-victim-ized Shakespearean heroes. Frye describes the fourth phase of tragedy and the fall of the hero as being

So delicately balanced emotionally that we
almost exaggerate any one element in it merely by calling attention to it. One of these elements is the elegiac aspect in which irony is at a minimum.\textsuperscript{6}

The poet-personae unintentionally illustrate the tragic flaw of self-ignorance and an elegiac longing for the past. The prince agonizes over his reign that is ending, while in Fifine's epilogue Juan seems to be aware of his wasted youth. Both fears are only disguised anxieties about death and aging. Philip Drew describes these speakers as non-casuistic personae who are not fully aware or fully in control of themselves when they speak:

Such irony as emerges is dramatic, in the technical sense, as if the poem were a soliloquy spoken by a tragic hero just before his downfall, looking back over his career, judging himself with some acuteness, realizing his fatal inability to act through principle rather than through expediency, but unaware that his doom is imminent through precisely this cause.\textsuperscript{7}

In principle, the prince would like to be a plain-dealer, for he thinks he is preserving the desired values of established society and sees himself as a "conservator" (l. 298) or care-taker in government. Juan tries to be more flamboyant, like Aristophanes, as if he were in a third phase satire, a mode which tends to be "fragmentary, unfinished, or anonymous."\textsuperscript{8}

The reader finds both the plots and the speakers of the two poems to be problematic because the former are
episodic and end arbitrarily while the speakers' implied relationships with their putative auditors seem forced. There is no causal sequence of events like that found in BA and AA when Balaustion relates two distinct adventures which could not have been cut off at any place other than where she concludes. The prince appends an informal epilogue to this tale which he has abruptly ended by the use of ellipsis (l. 2072), and Juan arbitrarily ends the body of the poem when he decides to visit Fifine and do what he has wanted to do throughout the poem. He could have stopped at an earlier point in the fiction to rejoin the gypsy since it is unlikely that Elvire is a real obstacle to him. The monologues are not told to reliable auditors within the fictions. The imagined girl and Elvire are fictive interlocutors for the prince and Juan, but the speakers' use of such auditors, nevertheless, is an indication that they have a covert desire to reveal themselves to another audience--the reader.

There are various literary analogues to the situations found in both poems; Goethe, Shakespeare, and Byron all characterize personae similar to the prince and Juan. The poems correspond to the two parts of Goethe's Faust because Juan, as a lover, is similar to the unself-conscious Faust who seduces Gretchen; the prince is like Faust the emperor
in Part II. Morse Peckham points out the Dionysian amorality of Faust; in Part I, good and evil seem to be inseparable when Faust loves and then abandons the innocent girl. In Part II, Faust as emperor has no guilt about past deeds and continues to seek other-worldly achievements, the chief of which is his aspiration to possess Helen of Troy. Both Juan and the prince seek to have their way in sex or politics, for like Faust, both have incomplete, imperfect concepts of women, or they like to manipulate females for their own selfish purposes. They either etherealize or debase women in their minds. Juan treats Elvire as an object of romantic love while longing for Fifine, and the prince imagines that the fictive girl to whom he speaks has a questionable character. Juan apparently uses Elvire as a blocking figure who makes the illicit love with Fifine seem more tantalizing, while also viewing Elvire herself as an object of idealized passion. As such an unrealistic love object, Elvire seems to be neither human nor attainable, so his longing for her is a disguised death-wish, a desire to escape the corporeal realm entirely. In other words, Juan would have to invent her, if Elvire did not exist, in order to stimulate his need to entertain and convince a skeptical auditor. The prince does, in fact, admit that he has created the female auditor who is as much his conscience
as his confidante.

Like certain rulers in Shakespeare's tragedies, the prince is torn between his desire for justice and his incompetence. G. R. Stange notes that Browning was influenced by Shakespeare's soliloquies, especially those found in *King Lear*, so the unself-consciousness indicated by Lear's self-destructive actions as well as that of other Shakespearean men of power may have shaped Browning's portrayal of the prince. Just as the Shakespearean protagonists speak in soliloquies, the prince's monologue is spoken in isolation from all other human beings within the prison of his own house toward the end of his life.

Juan combines the comic and satiric qualities also found in the two characters in Byron's *Don Juan*. Alvin Kernan calls Byron's Don Juan a thoughtless youth who lacks a consciousness and whose behavior makes him comic, whereas the poem's narrator has an analytic mind and the worldly experience which qualify him as a satiric observer. Browning's Juan seems both comic and satiric: he points out the flaws of marriage while ludicrously pretending to defend the institution and seeming to remain in the mainstream of conventional society. Because he is the insatiable, compelled lover of beauty, Juan reveals his tragic obsession with romantic love. In *Fifine*, there is no
light-hearted denouement as in Byron's story, only the realism of an aging man alone with his thoughts.

Hoxie Neal Fairchild and W. O. Raymond are incorrect in assuming that the prince has as much control over his fiction as they imply when they label him and Juan as intentional casuists. The prince intends no malice in his deception of the reader. To suppose that the prince could somehow stop what he is doing is to perceive him as being fully self-conscious. Rather than being a master of the subtle rationalization, the prince is primarily a man who talks because he is old, faces death, and wants to defend his past.

N. B. Crowell thinks the reader is being tested and asked to see the masquerade of evil pretending to be good. The critic judges the prince and Juan as if they should know better, as if each one was already acquainted with the Absolute and was intentionally perverting it: the prince through a life of inaction and Juan through lust and infidelity. But Browning is not ridiculing the personae so much as representing them as pathetic. When Crowell calls the prince's speech "a dazzling performance in distortion of the truth, the false analogy, and the non sequitur," he does not imagine that the speaker may see nothing wrong with his logic and is simply following his
usual thought-processes. The same observation applies to Juan's speech.

II

Browning shapes the prince's persona so that he is as loquacious as the actual Louis Napoleon was taciturn. In writing about the historical ruler, Theodore Zeldin describes the difficulty he has in understanding a man who spoke so little and wrote even less. Unlike his predecessor Napoleon Bonaparte, who wrote fifty volumes of letters, Louis Napoleon has a reputation as a great listener, not as a man of words. Zeldin is forced to conclude that "it is more important to know what this regime was than what it said it was." Browning's prince does speak and poses as a satiric plain-dealer, but by the poem's conclusion, his stance as a competent speaker and ruler have been stripped away to reveal his emotional emptiness. Frye describes the plain-dealer's role as a giant-killer, but in the prince's case, his giant is himself. Such a predicament emphasizes the irony of his truly unheroic pose, for he becomes savior and adversary. These two aspects of the self are so interwoven that the prince has difficulty discerning when he has said something incriminating. The voices he imagines; the view of himself as a gifted, though common, man; and his present inaction in the Residenz are evidence of the prince's
delusions about reality and his fading power.

Like BA, Prince begins with a question which gives the speaker an excuse to speak. Just as Balaustion expects no answer from her auditors when she asks, "About that . . . song/ I, when a girl . . . saved my life by?" (ll. 1-3), the prince rhetorically asks the imagined girl in his monologue:

> You have seen better days, dear? So have I--
> And worse too, for they brought no such bud-mouth
> As yours to lisp "You wish you knew me!"

(ll. 1-3)

While Balaustion tries to stir up interest in an audience by acting as if the auditors have asked to hear her tale, the prince Pretends to teach an inquisitive female the truth about himself. In actuality, he is creating an imaginary circumstance which gives him license to speak an apology that, if overtly spoken to no one, might seem gratuitous or self-indulgent.

21 He uses the fictive girl's voice as his inner interlocutor just as Juan uses Elvire's purported questionings and statements as an opportunity to present an apology and a means of articulating fears. The prince casts himself as a "Sphinx in wise old age,/ Grown sick of snapping foolish people's heads" (ll. 9-10) who decides to reveal himself to the imaginary girl, his "Oedipus . . . / Under a pork-pie hat and crinoline" (ll. 6-7). She is his other, the portion
of himself that longs to be young and heroic as Oedipus is when he triumphs over the Sphinx. This other is projected as a persona who seems to believe what the prince desires to have believed about himself. Nevertheless, the reversal of genders is significant because in casting his Oedipus as a female and himself as the Sphinx, who is traditionally female, the prince reveals his anxiety about pleasing and dealing with females. There seems to be a covert, sexual fear of their power over him just as Oedipus overpowers the Sphinx and causes her death. Like the Sphinx who has a weakness and was fallible, the prince, obviously a vain man, is vulnerable to flattery: he says the fictive woman "finds me hardly grey, and likes my nose,/ And thinks a man of sixty at the prime" (ll. 20-21). Apparently, he needs to boost his self-image by means of the girl because he fears age and the possible loss of sexual attractiveness. Also, he claims that "revealment of myself" (l. 22) is essential because he is afraid of being called a quack and is afraid of dying before a defense can be made of his life (ll. 12-17).

The girl is one of many personae and personifications the prince fabricates; others include Sagacity, the Head-servant, Nature, Modern Science, and men of faith and faithlessness. These multitudinous, internal voices are similar to those heard by the speaker in the Parleyings and indicate
a fragmented, uncertain self. Not only does his female 
auditor epitomize what he fears and desires, but also she 
is a construct which he uses to practice his speaking skills. 
He tells "the law by which I lived" (l. 26) to her because 
she is his "arch stranger-friend, my audience both/ And 
arbitress" (ll. 1199-1200), a phrase of address which portrays 
the auditor as a conglomeration of opposites. As both a 
stranger and a friend, she threatens and consoles him. By 
appealing to her feelings, he entertains her, and as an 
arbitress, she is being rhetorically persuaded. To be 
successful at both tasks of entertainment and inducement, 
the poet-persona must apply pathos and ethos to achieve his 
goals. The two parts of the poem, in fact, fall into these 
two broad categories as well; the first part, a first-person 
autobiography, plays upon the readers' sympathetic involve-
ment with the speaker while the second part as third-person 
history establishes his character in a more detached way.

There is a constant dialectic within the monologue 
between the mundane and the seemingly abstract or serious. 
The juxtaposition of the prince's expressed desire for self-
revelation to a more trivial comment on tea-drinking and 
cigar-smoking is one example of the contrast. Before he 
can get down to the business of presenting his apology to 
the girl, he shifts his tone and focuses on social amenities:
But listen, for we must co-operate;  
I don't drink tea: permit me the cigar!  
(11. 23-24)

These lines contrast greatly with the two parenthetical 
lines in the opening passage in which he justifies his  
"revealment of myself" (1. 22):

(Because night draws on, and the sands increase,  
And desert-whispers grow a prophecy)  
(11. 16-17)

The sands, desert-whispers, and prophecy are exotic alternatives to the equally fictive situation in Leicester Square. Although desert-whispers intimate the closeness of night and death, the prince also describes the more mundane fantasy in Leicester Square as portentous, as "one instant of my life/ 
Spent sitting by your side in this neat room" (11. 27-28). Both settings of nighttime--in the desert and in England--eventually dissolve into the scene at the Residenz where the prince has really been all along, and he concludes  
"My reverie . . . as dreaming should,/ With daybreak" (11. 2146-47).

Such juxtapositions establish the illusion of reality within the fiction by constructing a specific locale, a historical time-frame, and the trivial details within the scene. When he wants to prove the abstract statement that it is "fitter to do than let alone" (1. 40), he draws a five-inch line to connect two ink blots on paper while
simultaneously pulling his "moustache to a point" (l. 44) with the other hand. Such miniscule detail and the simultaneity of action suggest that this speaker has an eye for the commonplace as well as a nervous energy which always compels him to do something that is "better, fitter, by but one degree" (l. 41).

This obsession with commonplace details and with rigidly preserving the state of affairs in his domain explains, in part, the release he finds in creating fictions. Politically, he acts as a care-taker for the people rather than being an instigator of reform or a great tyrant; his philosophy is neither liberal nor conservative because he only wants to maintain the status quo by following laws and setting few precedents. He speaks of man in general and himself in particular in terms of "moral mathematics" (l. 52) or "the law by which I lived" (l. 26), and since mathematics and law are highly ordered disciplines, the prince apparently recommends what every prudent plain-dealer advocates, systemized and "conventional life at its best."\(^{22}\) The prince does not use fictions for political change as Aristophanes does in \textit{AA}. Rather than properly use a fiction to develop self-consciousness, the prince uses illusion to escape his mundane existence at the Residenz, but unintentionally, he is led to a consciousness of his political
failure in the fictive address to the young woman. Instead of being a radical reformer, he presents his own philosophy of minimal reform and tries to fulfill his role as a satiric advocate of conventional, cautious behavior. Again juxtaposing the frivolous with the weighty, the prince rules out the philosophies of "Fourier, Comte, and all that ends in smoke" (l. 439) as not being worth "the whiff of my cigar" (l. 438). Obviously Comte's and Fourier's ideas of radical social transformation were adverse to one who thinks as the prince does. Comte's positivism and Fourier's communism ideally lead to the removal of power from the ruling classes and to the control of society by the proletariat.

The prince's conservatism prevents him from making a commitment to any one point of view and makes him skeptical of philosophical as well as literary innovation. The prince never makes a whole-hearted dedication to either idealism or pragmatism; he likes aspects of both ideologies. Likewise, he does not prefer faith or faithlessness but finds a compromise between them in his "right usage of my power in head and heart,/ And reasonable piety beside" (ll. 477-78). The prince deflates the men both of faith and of faithlessness as extremes of behavior because they make the world either too placid or wild. When he addresses these two types of men, the voice of the fictive girl metamorphosizes
into that of the other adversaries. Aware of his non-commitment, he creates the ethopoeia of those who fault him for trying to "do the best with the least change possible:/ Carry the incompleteness on, a stage" (ll. 397-98). The incompleteness of his reign is an evil rather than a good. What the prince believes about himself and his age corresponds to Frank Kermode's description of a period of transition which is considered an endless age or saeculum in itself.24 When one considers that the prince's care-taker reign lasts twenty years, a detail he is fond of repeating, the link between two supposedly greater periods seems virtually endless. He does not want the innovative future to arrive. Although he claims to anticipate his successor who will "change things thoroughly" (l. 405), this fictive being is only a useful construct upon which the prince casts his unresolved problems; he claims to be satisfied with "the Present an improvement on the Past,/ And promise for the Future" (ll. 424-25). Just as Aristophanes poses as one who is in favor of the old Greek gods and ways, the prince makes "the best of the old" (l. 268) and grudgingly accepts the newer laws that men have added "to a plan once plain enough" (l. 386). Besides addressing himself to social and political reformers and philosophers who want to "change what is to what may be" (l. 502), the prince also parodies
innovative literary style. The Byronic bard, his "gifted friend" (l. 555), contrasts Man unfavorably with Nature, and the prince apparently dislikes the idea that Man is subject to the vicissitude of a vast, irrational force. So he parodies the bard:

O grandeur of the visible universe
Our human littleness contrasteth withal!
O sun, O moon, ye mountains and thou sea,
Thou emblem of immensity, thou this,
That, and the other . . . .
(11. 519-23)

Interpreting his reign as a time between other greater periods, he views his rule as being more evolutionary than revolutionary. Using a metaphor of the circle, the prince merely professes to trace "the broken circle of society,/ Dim actual order" (11. 301-302), and adapting the metaphor to a common man's level of understanding, he compares society's broken circle to the crescent moon's shape, a "white paring of your thumb-nail outside there,/ Above the plaster-monarch on his steed" (11. 307-308). Finally, the circle image recurs in his evaluation of his administration, which is seen only as being adequate, not exceptional:

... efficient for the age's need:
Preserving you in either case the old,
Nor aiming at a new and greater thing,
A sun for moon.
(11. 314-17)

Utilizing other recurrent images, he creates a portrait
of himself along two lines: that he is the typical common
man and that he is also a courier of God. Assuming the role
of a lowly, but blessed, savior, he asks:

     A conservator, call me, if you please,
     Not a creator nor destroyer: one
     Who keeps the world safe.
     (ll. 298-300)

He uses negative definition to describe uncommon men whom
he is unlike:

     . . . dervish desert-spectre, swordsman, saint,
     Law-giver, lyrist . . .
     Quite other these than I. Our time requires
     No such strange potentate.
     (ll. 350-53)

Rather, he describes his life's task as being like any other
man's:

     No matter what the object of a life,
     Small work or large,—the making thrive a shop,
     Or seeing that an empire take no harm,—
     There are known fruits to judge obedience by.
     (ll. 218-21)

Calling the speech a "sermon" (1. 608), he says he intends
to "save society" (1. 612) and adopts a homiletic tone to
appeal to every man's common sense. Reenforcing his self-
image as a common person, the prince casts himself as a
laborer. First, he likens himself to one who throws

     Deliver-like, spadeful after spadeful up,
     Just as truths come, the subsoil of me, mould
     Whence spring my moods.
     (ll. 97-99)

Later, he develops the analogy between himself and the farmer
who cultivates a "corn-field" (l. 736) but spends no great amount of time on a prodigy flower. Special interests or pet causes can spread one's energies too diffusely. He asks:

Was I to turn aside from husbandry,
Leave hope of harvest for the corn, my care,
To play at horticulture, rear some rose
Or poppy into perfect leaf and bloom . . . ?
(11. 746-49)

He sees himself as subtly heroic, yet ostensibly repudiates the Heraklean model for a more modest role when he likens himself to "passive and obscure" (l. 718) Atlas, not Herakles. The former hero, like the common laborer, bears a great burden for an extended period of time; the latter only bears the world for one day. Nevertheless, Herakles gains greater recognition for the smaller feat because "'T is the transition-stage, the tug and strain,/ That strike men: standing still is stupid-like" (11. 722-23).

The frequent juxtaposition of comments about himself and observations about God reveals a correlation in his mind between himself and the Deity. In one breath, the prince proudly states a Machiavellian desire, "I live to please myself" (l. 111), and then recognizes a "Power passing mind, immeasurable, God" (l. 112). It is as if the two forces that he respects—self and God—are equal in his mind. The proof for the poet-persona's existence is identical
to the proof that God exists also:

I know that He is there as I am here,
By the same proof, which seems no proof at all,
It so exceeds familiar forms of proof.
(11. 115-117)

Because the prince is not actually "here" in Leicester Square, his proof of self and God seems unconvincing. In fact, each affirmation of self and God is ambiguous, as if there were "no proof at all." Recalling his past relationship with his messenger (11. 131-61), the prince likens it to God's relationship with him. Just as the servant must serve the master by fulfilling a task, the prince feels that he is serving God. He says that it does not really matter how a message is delivered as long as the task is accomplished, but this subordination of the means to one's ends implies that the prince may be sinister and exploitative when he tries to achieve his political goals. When he emphasizes that Man's stature is "a little lower than/ The angels" (11. 568-69), he seems to be speaking personally rather than generically, especially when he emphasizes the familiar, reciprocal relationship between himself and God, who makes "all things for me and me for Him" (1. 576).

The unrecognized tragedy of the prince's situation impinges upon his vain egotism, his self-contradictory pose as a plain-dealer who tries to assert his "power" (1. 237):
Namely, that just the creature I was bound
To be, I should become, nor thwart at all
God's purpose in creation. I conceive
No other duty possible to man.
(11. 246-49)

Repeating the same introductory word, he then undercuts the
nobler aim that he has just announced by revealing a selfish
wish:

Namely, to rule men . . .
To order, influence and dispose them so
As render solid and stabilify
Mankind in particles, the light and loose,
For their good and my pleasure in the act.
(11. 278-82)

This egotism and the dehumanized view of mankind as mere
particles to be manipulated reveal his exploitative way of
thinking.

Interpolated in the discussion of God and himself
there are clues that the prince is displacing important
information about himself. The prince's lack of political
power in the poem's present and his status as an uncommon
citizen are both indicated by his actual location in the
Residenz; as a man who once asserted a godlike control over
a nation, he is neither as high as he would like to be nor
as low as some people in the realm. The Residenz symbolizes
the grandeur and poverty of his life, for he is alone in its
splendor. Indeed, certain parenthetical observations
indicate that he would like to confess his true location to
the reader, but such an admission would also prove that the fictive girl and the situation in Leicester Square are non-existent and would deny his ostensible reason for talking. For instance, he asks to "talk as if I smoked/ Yet in the Residenz, a personage" (ll. 132-33); the statement displaces the real situation in the Residenz into a dream-like, hypothetical state while the illusory scene in the square seems more realistic.

The prince, like Juan, cloaks himself in the guise of respectability and sanity to suppress his own fears about dissolution; however, by the poem's conclusion, the reader intuits that a disruption has occurred in the prince's political and personal life. There are clues that he longs for the darker, more questionable, side of life: for instance, he describes the fictive auditor as one who has "a natural naughtiness or two" (l. 185) and has "practisings with London-town" (l. 190). In fact, critics often take the imaginary girl to be a prostitute. Because of these subconscious fears and longings which are sexual in nature, the prince zealously subordinates everything to an overriding preservation of order or, at least, the status quo.

Echoing the edifice imagery found in the two Balaustion poems, the prince likens ordered society to a "temple" (l. 658) which the radical multitude wants to burn while he
has the architect's, meaning "God's," approval to stick "my torch/ Inside a good stout lantern . . . above the hooks and crooks" (11. 698-700). Paralleling Herakles', Alkestis', and Admetus' various hopes to crown a metaphorical edifice with labors or a Golden Age, the prince piously describes the human achievements and love that have "crowned strength" (1. 661). Utilizing a device often found in the medieval dream-vision, the prince pretends to see all things at once when he envisions a scene in the metaphorical temple where a long procession of humanity marches. He describes the fane as if it were a literal place; he names the various architectural points--altar, portal, apse, aisle, nave, pillared roof, and carved screen (11. 682-86)--whose hooks and crooks "irk the movement and impede the march" (1. 687). The edifice image as well as the order he proposes for society are characterized as somewhat archaic and ineffectual. The philosophy of minimal action which he holds in adulthood is no better than the youthful idealism which once inspired him.

Regardless of his fears of change, he must acknowledge that time has passed and he is no longer a youth. Speaking of one critic who is "mere voice and nothing more" (1. 820), he is reminded that he also was once "voice and nothing more"(1. 874) in the past when he wanted to save Italy. Like the prince in the poem, the young Louis Napoleon did participate
in an anti-papal revolt in Italy; therefore, the allusion to "Peter's Dome,/ The scorpion body with . . . nippers" (ll. 862-64) may not be an example of Browning's anti-Catholic bias, as one critic says, but a fictive detail simply inspired by historical fact. In his youth, the prince fought for all the fundamental rights in Italy, but when he comes to power in his own country, he learns that reform is much more difficult to effect "when solid earth's your stage" (l. 880).

For the prince, change in the world by ideological reform must be gradual or not at all. Again, he brings together the commonplace and the ideal when he ridicules reform by saying the hungry Everyman "Hans Slouch" (l. 1109) cannot chew Kant's "Critique of Pure Reason" (l. 1111). The ideal, in fact, may require "just what it finds--/ The ignorance, stupidity, the hate" (ll. 1130-31). He hypothesizes that such obstacles are like the alloys in a medicine, which cannot be given undiluted to a sick man. Neither can a country tolerate radical reform, he rationalizes, because the remedy could be as bad as the ills it cures. The idealist has his rights, the prince reasons, but such rights are reducible to simplistic terms and reflect the speaker's own preoccupation with structures:

Hans must not burn Kant's house above his head
Because he cannot understand Kant's book.

(ll. 1147-48)
He apparently does not move from his position in the Residenz throughout the entire poem, so he is not, quite literally, a man of action in his maturity. Instead, he is a dreamer whose vision of the multitude over which he rules is similar to the carnival crowd Juan fancies in his dream in Fifine. Although the prince feeds the bodies of the multitude, he perceives the people as unreal, incorporeal images because his description of them sounds like a nightmare and because the multitude seems to be a mass of bodily parts. Repeating the word "such," he chants:

Such eyes I saw that craved the light alone,  
Such mouths that wanted bread and nothing else,  
Such hands that supplicated handiwork,  
Men with the wives, and women with the babes,  
Yet all these pleading just to live, not die!  
(11. 907-911)

Then using the dream-vision convention of presenting personified entities, he addresses Nature and Modern Science (11. 971-93), and echoing Modern Science's tracing of life "through fish and insect . . . to be an ape at last" (11. 989-90), he expresses the wish that he should have evolved from a common man, lodged successively in "the hole, the cave, the hut, the tenement,/ The mansion and the palace" (11. 1013-14). By viewing life and progress as a series of fixed points, the prince attempts to resist images of rapid, radical change and thus reinforces the
reader's impression of him as a static, decaying soul in the Residenz.

When the speaker stops telling his "autobiography" (l. 1220) and begins to relate events as if they were "history/ And falsehood: not the ineffective truth" (ll. 1221-22), he implies that autobiography is not edited by its creator. Autobiography, like history, is only a fiction based upon selected, recorded details, not the whole truth. The last part of the poem in which he tells about himself as if his story were "history" is treated as an overt artifice, whereas in the first part of the poem he pretends to speak truth only. Announcing that the latter part of his narrative is "the unwritten chapter" (l. 1231) of a fictional, twelve-volume history, he fabricates what "might have been" (l. 1224) in his life and uses the third-person as if he were detached from himself.

In the last fictive chapter of his history, the prince creates a fanciful situation in which he divides himself into three parts: the third-person poet-persona, the Head-servant, and Sagacity. The speaking voice can only contain, but not control or reconcile, the two other voices which exist within the prince. It is as if the speaker were having a dream in which several voices speak and reveal the conflicting aspects of one person, namely himself. The
critically acclaimed dialectic between Sagacity and the Head is not so important in the work as the voice of the prince itself, acting as the detached, third-person manipulator of the two personifications. In the hypothetical situation which the speaker sets up, the "Head-servant" (l. 1239) is vacating his place in government while "fellow-servants" (l. 1241) conspire against him with their "little minds" (ll. 1290, 1296, 1300), and even though he is aware "that weakness, wickedness will be" (l. 1317), the Head tries to do "the appointed service" (l. 1345). The prince characterizes the Head as one who patronizes the people and calls them fools (ll. 1242, 1382, 1415, 1489, 1592); like Aristophanes, the Head condescends to the populace he supposedly helps. Sagacity contradicts itself when it warns the prince to be more swift in quelling civil disturbances and more cautious in intervening in Italy's problems. Sagacity uses the Head's favorite, belittling metaphor for his enemies and turns it against the Head by attacking the latter's "small mind" (l. 1449). Sagacity warns the Head not to interfere in Rome's problems because a great mind ought to know "the power of gentleness" (l. 1574), while the Head prefers to wrench "out the whole canker, root and branch" (l. 1523) by intervening in foreign affairs as when he was a youth. Sometimes the Head and Sagacity both advocate violence: Sagacity in
the instance of a civil dispute, the Head in the Roman affair.29

In Sagacity's advice to the Head, the latter is told to become a "city-builder" (l. 1683), a Heraklean or Dionysian savior of civilization. Evoking a dream-like image of seeing an entire city and countryside in detail all at once,30 Sagacity fancies the progress of fearful hut-dwellers on a mountain who move to a valley in a time of peace. Such an image recalls the prince's previous statement about his evolving from one edifice to another. Sagacity's final vision of pacific civilization is only another structure, the "dome and spire/ Befitting the assured metropolis" (ll. 1701-702). The change from a hut to a more stable building emblemizes mankind's evolution toward peace rather than war until finally Man's indulgence in comic "feast and game" (l. 1717) leads him to neglect the hillside fort, which becomes a ruin. The Head repudiates such mindless festivity because he values "no multitude, no entity that apes/ One wise man, being but a million fools!" (ll. 1770-71).

The speaker, an amalgam of Sagacity and Head, learns the art of crowd-pleasing which the Head initially rejects. He also decides to begin a war to deliver Italy from Austria, an endeavor which Sagacity discredits but which the Head calls a "necessity" (l. 1863). Therefore, it is not only
the salvation of Hohenstiel-Schwangau's society to which
the poem's subtitle refers, but also the liberation of society
in Italy, which is not the prince's realm. The subtitle
gains ironic significance in two ways: because the prince
fails to be a real savior or reformer for his own country
and because he tries to be a redeemer for a society that is
not his own.

In summing up his history, the speaker alludes to his
death and his lack of an heir through the words of Sagacity
and the Head-servant:

    So do the old enthroned decrepitudes
    Acknowledge . . .
    Their knell is knolled.
    (11. 1937-39)

The prince consciously resists acknowledging change while
speaking in his own voice. Nevertheless, he uses the voice
of the Head to affirm theoretically that alteration is
natural and that "Nature prefers a motion by unrest" (1. 2029).
Like King Lear, the prince recognizes death's nearness when-
ever he begins to think about a successor to the crown. By
calling himself a common man selected by God whose heir
probably could not have received his "genius from the sire"
(1. 1956), he underplays his concern with having a son and
heir by trying to assert that only God "the great gardener
grafts the excellence/ On wildings where he will" (11. 1982-
83). Regardless of this protestation, the prince, through
the voice of Sagacity, rejects the naive belief that rulers may be chosen "by pillow-luck/ And divine right" (ll. 2070-71). Although the prince avoids thinking about an heir because it reminds him of his own decline in power, he proceeds to relate a parable about the death which he fears. In the Head's ethopoeia, the prince tells about a legendary rite at a Roman temple in which the successor of a priest must slay him. This "little wayside temple" (l. 1986) is dissociated from other pastoral places since the rural quietude is disturbed by the violence of the priestly ritual. The prince realizes that this myth suggests that old world-views must always pass away, and subconsciously, he knows his own reign of conservatism must end as some other prince takes over. Through the dialectic between Sagacity and the Head, the prince implicitly recognizes that the overthrow of one order is always possible and sometimes inevitable; such is the lesson that Herakles and Balaustion learn in AA.

Interrupted by the clock's striking five o'clock in the morning, the prince halts his waking dream-vision. Although he pretends that he has willfully created his fiction from "the old gay miserable time, rehearsed,/ Tried on again like cast clothes" (ll. 2076-77), he does not acknowledge that he has been victimized by time against his will. The prince does not admit that the fictive voices and the changes they
prophesy in the natural and human order have frenzied and obsessed him as he sits in his supposedly safe, secure house. He calls the fiction which he has just told a "wild work . . . past all bound/ And bearing" (11. 2074-75) and denies its content's validity just as Juan tries to deny the content of the dream which he presents in Fifine; both speakers want to assert that permanence is superior to change, but their fictions prove the opposite. The fact that the prince is alone in the Residenz with no female auditor and that Leicester Square has dissolved into nothingness reveals that his alienated, existential situation is similar to Herakles' isolation and lack of awareness in Admetus' house. The difference lies in the fact that the prince is in his own house and is self-estranged while in Alkestis, Herakles is deceived by others in a foreign locale.

The statement "I am not I" (1. 2079), which Roma King calls the prince's doubt that he exists, actually expresses the disjunction between his achievements as a conservator in the past and his present status as an old and lonely man. The prince has, in fact, changed whether or not he wants to accept mutability in principle. Rather than being a "dissipation of a soul," the speaker's examination of the past, his use of personified concepts as dialectical tools, and the revelation of his true, altered status at the poem's
close indicate the prince's unintentional progress toward self-consciousness. However, the speaker stops short of accepting dissolution as Balaustion tolerates it when she confronts Euripides' death, Athens' fall, and her own inability to prevent certain evils in life. The dialectic of the fictive "interlocutors" (1. 2095) leads him toward an affirmation of "one intimatest fact--myself/ Am first to be considered" (11. 2102-103), but he cannot reconcile the diverse voices he fancies or the various auditors to whom he speaks. His ultimate inability to present himself as a fully self-conscious, integrated being in his fiction causes him to renounce language as useless: "Ah, if one had no need to use the tongue!" (1. 2090). Like Hegel's tragic, unhappy consciousness who is aware of the infinite, yet will not accept his finite being, the prince is one who sees only the disjunction between what finite Man is and what Man can never become. In order to survive, the unhappy soul must accept finite existence's imperfection, changefulness, and inevitability as well as language's limitations.

The prince must acknowledge that he is more common than god-like and is bound to use human language rather than transcend it. Remaining trapped, not freed, by words and fictions until the poem's conclusion, he tries to determine if he should send the letter to his cousin, the duke.
Although he reviles language, he must resume the use of
linguistic constructs out of necessity since he must speak
and write in order to affirm his selfhood to himself while
he sits in his house alone. His fiction fails to present a
poet-persona who is completely honest with himself and his
reader, but he must, in truth, acknowledge words' necessity
and power:

... Alack, one lies oneself
Even in the stating that one's end was truth,
Truth only, if one states as much in words!
Give me the inner chamber of the soul
For obvious easy argument! 't is there
One pits the silent truth against a lie--
... . . . . . . . . . . . .
... . . . But, do your best,
Words have to come: And somehow words deflect
As the best cannon ever rifled will.
(11. 2123-34)

The dream-like elements of his monologue—the personified
entities, the seeing of the multitude in detail, and the
knowing of many things at once—show the prince's desire
for superhuman potency, a longing which conflicts with his
human weakness.

III

In Fifine at the Fair (1872), published one year after
Prince, the dream-like elements recur as Juan also tries to
see himself as a satiric protagonist, but he is really a
tragic figure. Like the prince, Juan cannot quiet the
diverse, but not necessarily conflicting, voices and
impulses which plague him. The prince agonizes over his past political decisions by using several voices while Juan reflects upon the diverse women of history and fiction to whom he is drawn. Although Roma King is inclined to believe that the poet-persona in Fifine is more self-knowledgeable than the prince, both speakers exhibit the tragic irony which Philip Drew perceives. Juan sees himself as a disrupter of conventional attitudes like the eiron described in Frye's third phase of satire, but actually, Juan is hopelessly caught in his obsession with romantic passion. He seems to be as oblivious to his loneliness as the prince is, for just as the prince speaks to a non-existent persona, Juan's Elvire is a fictive other he uses to disguise his true isolation from people and from himself. Elvire plays two roles in fulfilling Juan's desires: she is both the romantic love-object who is idealized and the blocking-figure who makes Fifine less accessible to Juan. As a love-object, Elvire stifles Juan's libertinism; as an obstacle, she stimulates his lust for Fifine. Fifine, as the object of purely sexual passion, becomes more delectable because she is unattainable as long as Elvire is an obstacle in Juan's mind. His obsession with the wifely "She" in the epilogue is only a culmination of his life-long mental association of women, fear, and death. When "She" invites
him to die, Juan is ready because the romantic game has lost its appeal. Elvire, as either a romantic love-object or an obstacle between Juan and other women, is a fiction that no longer sustains or intrigues him. The romantic love-object which he has pursued becomes an explicit symbol of his rapidly approaching death. Lacking the will and the capability for passion in old age, Juan wants to die because, without the challenge or the desire to overcome an obstacle, romantic love is meaningless.

Although some critics tend to see Juan as a persona who is divided between Elvire and Fifine or spirit and flesh, another struggle for Juan is his conflict between the impulse to be an artificer through words, satire, and dream-vision and to be a romantic lover of all unconquered beauty. Sven-Johan Spinberg and C. C. Watkins assert that Juan is less interested in seduction per se than in the argumentation and in the aesthetic pleasure that the use of metaphoric language brings. C. K. Columbus is one of the few critics to suggest that Elvire may be a fiction created by the speaker; others assume she exists, but say she is significant primarily as one dialectical pole that is opposed to Fifine and the fleshly. In either case, Elvire does not impress the reader as a substantial persona, and Fifine fares little better since she seems to be more
important to Juan as a topic of discussion than as a woman. Neither female speaks; Juan talks for them and derives as much pleasure from articulating his ideas, creating fictive speeches for the women, and presenting images as from doing anything else. Elvire and Fifine are two primary constructs with which Juan toys. In spite of their differences as a putative wife and a flirt, both women are sought after and depersonalized by Juan. These two women are, then, part of the ceaseless flow of metaphors, pageants, dreams, and art works which Juan manipulates in the monologue.

Critics have sometimes disagreed about the continuity or organic consistency of the poem's three parts: prologue, body, and epilogue. Roma King denies that the prologue and epilogue have any important relationship to the body; he asserts that they only confirm the necessity for striving until death. However, there is evidence to support the poem's interpretation as a three-part fiction in which the first-person poet-persona of the prologue and epilogue is Juan, who speaks in the body. One may logically assume that Juan does speak in all three parts, not that Browning tells the prologue and epilogue in his own voice and reveals autobiographically significant details about his relationship with Elizabeth. The structural anomalies which make this poem differ from the other long poems discussed are
its irregular, stanzaic divisions and the prologue and epilogue, which are also in stanzas. Only the Parleyings with Certain People repeat these two structural devices, although two other late poems—Red Cotton Night-Cap Country and The Inn Album—also have internal division and labelling by numerals.

The prologue and epilogue create a framework for the embedded fiction, the body of the poem, and the three-part structure is like a triptych in which the speaker's obsession with romantic love is evident throughout. The literary allusion to Molière's Don Juan in the poem's epigraph has been overlooked, but it does reiterate the romantic love theme found in the poem's body. In Don Juan, the protagonist is the traditional, lecherous, promiscuous character, and Elvire is only one of his many wives. In the play, there is a scene in which Don Juan goes boating in order to pursue a young girl, but when the boat capsize, he finds himself in the water, a situation similar to Juan's in the poem's prologue, the "Amphibian." In Molière's Don Juan, Elvire is a fit companion for Don Juan because she also believes in that romantic love which thrives on the overcoming of obstacles, passions, and crises. In the epigraph to Fifine, Elvire prefers that Don Juan make a convincing, false excuse rather than a confused expression of the truth when she remarks,
"How awkwardly my lord/ Attempts a defence." Her preoccupation with death, passion, false swearing, and vowing incorporates all of the things the incurable, romantic soul enjoys. In the body of Fifine, Elvire has no autonomy from Juan. She is not a full-fledged persona as Elvire in Don Juan is; however, she is the means by which Juan pursues his romantic fantasies.

The prologue does not try to assert a truth or condemn either the flesh or the spirit; it is a linguistic exercise, nothing more. C. C. Watkins calls the poem relativistic because contradictory ideas seem to be advocated in the prologue and the rest of the poem.39 She believes that the symbolic language of the "Amphibian" condemns the fleshly while the ending of the body shows Fifine's fleshly triumph over Elvire.40 J. L. Kendall disagrees; rather than condemning the fleshly, the prologue directs irony toward the spirit and the heavens which are unknown and which may or may not be as man envisions them.41 Swimming in the water, Juan sees a butterfly which causes him to think about his mortal state. The beautiful butterfly seems to correspond to the quintessential woman who is sought by Molière's Don Juan as well as Juan. As a victim of romantic love, Juan always sees every unattainable beauty, in this case a butterfly, as a love-object to be seduced. The language of romantic,
courtly verse such as "soul," "passion," "heaven," "pity," and "wonder" are used in the prologue in order to hone the poetic speaker's skills in verbal seduction.

In the Don Juan tradition and in Fifine, after the lover achieves his sexual or rhetorical conquest, he moves on in search of another victim. The obsession with the quest rather than with the conquest itself indicates an underlying fear of commitment to one woman. Juan seems to like the butterfly just as well as he likes Fifine or any new woman because each is a "creature as dear as new" (st. 3). The prologue's speaker confesses that he is

... one who, in the world,
Both lives and likes life's way,
Nor wishes the wings unfurled
That sleep in the worm . . . .
(st. 10)

Since his feeling of weightlessness in the water is akin to the seemingly weightless state of the airborne creature, the speaker tries to convince himself that "they need not scorn/Our sea, who live in the air!" (st. 13), as if his dissolute state were as good as any other condition. In an attempt to etherealize his sensuality, he says poetry is to the intellect what swimming is to the body since art frees the self from mundane experiences. His concluding question in the prologue foreshadows the tragic undercurrent of the entire poem: the inability to stabilize the contention
between marriage and lust, sky and sea, reason and physicality. After speaking a lyric in which he tries verbally to seduce the butterfly by professing his poetic and spiritual longings, he asks, with an eye to the effect that he may have upon her,

Does she look, pity, wonder
At one who mimics flight,
Swims--heaven above, sea under,
Yet always earth in sight?
(st. 19)

By asking this rhetorical question, the speaker indicates that the prologue is no more than a performance; the butterfly means no more to him than any woman, and the linguistic exercise means as much to him as the swim in the water.

In a poem that seems ostensibly cheerful, the mention of death in the epigraph and the prologue may suggest the poet-persona's preoccupation with it. The idea of death is a significant part of the love that Molière's Elvire demands when she wants Don Juan to say that nothing can "separate us two, save what, in stopping breath,/ May peradventure stop devotion likewise--death!" In the prologue, the poet-persona notes that if the butterfly should touch the sea, "Death sure and swift waits there" (st. 6). He speaks of a literal, but also of a symbolic and sexual consummation which would end his interest in the butterfly
since it would have entered his element—the sea, the fleshly realm. Death is the common bond between all individuals and the ultimate barrier between human beings and animals, so Juan seems to have every right to feel a love-hate response to it. In fact, Denis de Rougemont speculates that romantic love, a self-tormenting and unfulfilling passion, is a disguised death-wish that is covertly expressed in a sexual myth in order to conceal the dangerous content.  

Preoccupation with love is a vehicle for Juan's concern with mortality and limitation. Juan cannot think of death, except in covert, symbolic terms, and his ambiguous relationship with females indicates his attraction and repulsion to life's ending. In fact, there is a fixed set of images associated with mortality, female destructiveness, and human limitation in this poem; these images are usually related to water, aquatic vessels, and sea creatures. For example, Juan's longing for an escape from life is expressed through the description of a pennon and the body of water to which it points, for he seems to have empathy with the inanimate object and fancies that it points toward "the home far away, the distance where lives joy,/ The cure, at once and ever, of world and world's annoy" (ll. 39-40). The "ocean-idleness, sky-blue and millpond-smooth" (l. 42) water
recalls the prologue's scene in which the speaker escapes from land into the water and associates beauty, water, and death in his thoughts.

Through images of water, women are connected with death when described in terms of rillets and fish. Juan describes "the feminine/ Rillet . . . That's woman--typified from Fifine to Elvire" (ll. 1214-18). Also, he compares women to "a glassy bubble-fish" (l. 1188) which can deflate nine-tenths of itself; he then tells Elvire "to discard/ Nine-tenths" (ll. 1221-22) of herself. Man, on the other hand, is a "mere recipient of the brine" (l. 1213), a liquid that is reminiscent of amniotic fluid. Juan needs to quiet his own fears that women are too powerful because he has added one potentially frightening detail about females: "Women grow you, while men depend on you at best./ And what dependence!" (ll. 1179-80). The statement reveals the hidden anxiety he has about women who "grow you" in their wombs. This critique of women reveals his repressed, subconscious fear of women who seem to "rush into you, and there remain absorbed" (l. 1173) as if they were water.

Continuing the aquatic imagery, Juan likens Elvire to a moored, safe ship (l. 1392) and Fifine to a floating cockle-shell (l. 1394). Using the cockle-shell, Juan creates a Faustian fantasy in which he leaves Pornic in
order to reach ancient Athens. Juan reconstructs a scene by imagining the long destroyed walls and buildings of Greece:

. . . So, off we push from beach
Of Pornic town, and lo, ere eye can wink, we reach
The Long Walls, and I prove that Athens is no dream,
For there the temples rise! they are, they nowise seem!
Earth is not all one lie, this truth attests me true!
Thanks therefore to Fifine!
(11. 1452-57)

Such a fiction is supposed to prove "that we ourselves are true" (1. 1398), but his fictional recollection of a long destroyed Athenian landscape (st. 83) presents a scene that no longer exists. Later, his description of the night when

. . . the land
Turns sea-like; overcrept by grey, the plains expand,
Assume significance; while ocean dwindles, shrinks
Into a pettier bound . . . .
(11. 1462-65)

presents an unstable, phenomenal scene which shows that Juan is more attracted to the fantastic, false, and shifting than the true and immutable. The description of unreal images during the fiction he creates for Elvire on their walk foreshadows the final dream-vision of Venice where nothing is fixed and true.

By contrast to Balaustion who accepts change outside and inside herself, the prince and Juan are afraid of change. The prince is blatantly conservative in his employment of political reform. Juan seems to be interested
in saving and stabilizing his marriage by explaining away
his interest in Fifine while secretly, he longs for the
fearful, yet seductive, aspects of illicit love and forbidden
love-objects. He proclaims that "Elvire, Fifine" (l. 1355)
and women in general

. . . convince unreasonable me
That I am, anyhow, a truth, though all else seem
And be not: if I dream, at least I know I dream.
. . . . . . . . . . . . . . .
. . . your steadying touch of hand
Assists me to remain self-centred, fixed amid
All on the move.

(11. 1357-63)

IV

Theoretical elements of dramatic tragedy and comedy are
found in the mixture of higher and lower class figures:
Juan is a gentleman and the carnival folk are poor. Regard-
less of the class difference, Juan seems to envy the
carnival entertainers who live free from constraints, but
he sets himself up as a respectable citizen who is not like
these "misguided ones who gave society the slip" (l. 65).
He pretends to scorn, but covertly likes, the poor entertain-
ers who are like beggars who steal corn "from garners crammed
and closed" (l. 72) while respectable people "get grain as
good, by thrashing straw forever!" (l. 73). Although there
is no classic, tragic fall of the mighty because Juan is
too weak and there is no comic inclusion of the gypsies into
society, the tension between the forces of masque and anti-masque in art or culture and counterculture within society pervades the poem. Juan longs for the chaotic element, but cleverly cloaks himself in respectability by identifying with the benefactors of the poor who are imposed upon by those who "require some touch of us the tame,/ Since clothing, meat and drink, mean money all the same" (ll. 80-81). These rival groups in society produce an agon within the world as well as in Juan who desires to be affiliated with one or the other at different times. Juan questions what moral society values by speaking to an imaginary member of the aristocracy who reacts in a startled way when Juan hypothetically asks, "What price should you impose . . . on repute,/ . . . your own good fame and family's to boot?" (ll. 104-105). Juan employs a fictive speech to show how the aristocratic other, the respectable side of himself, might react to a gypsy. He fancies that an aristocrat could either joke with the man who manages the fair's show and accept him as he is or moralize to him and tell him to join society by becoming a "God-fearing householder" (l. 134). The gypsies would only spurn the latter alternative, and Juan implies that he would agree with them. It is significant, then, that the thing he despises--being a householder--is exactly what he becomes in the poem's epilogue "The Householder." Like the prince
who does not want to accept change in government or society, but who is a victim of change anyway, Juan becomes what he tries hardest not to be.

Although C. K. Columbus asserts that there is no unmasking of Juan in the poem because the entire speech is in "his voice and his vision and therefore with no checks and balances," Juan's dual attraction to the carnival and to respectable society is one way the external world impinges on his subjectivity. He seems to be a skillful rhetorician who is capable of deceiving some of the people some of the time, but he is undercut by his actions and his subconscious fears as well. His return to Fifine and the world she represents, for example, is a telling capitulation to the antimasque element; his action undercuts his protestations to Elvire that he prefers her over Fifine. Juan's strong attraction to Fifine and the fair people is balanced by an ambiguous treatment of Fifine and what she symbolizes. The gypsies' entertainment is flaunted forth "as brisk as butterfly from grub" (l. 8), but the simile does not mean that the show is either beautiful or appealing, only that it is brisk. Juan characterizes Fifine and the dancers as being no more distinguished entertainment than six-legged sheep or an ape because the entertainers "bounce forth, squalid girls transformed to gamesome boys" (l. 26). Only
when he has time to elaborate upon this initial impression does he change his tale to be more "authentic" (l. 27). Even then, his suggestion that Fifine is both the Holy Grail (l. 28) and "queen-tulip of the Fair" (l. 34) seems somewhat ludicrous, not flattering.

The reader assumes, nevertheless, that the gypsies' visit is a phenomenal reality which probably has inspired the poem. The carnival actors and entertainers blatantly pretend; they do not hide their falsehood, an attitude which makes them most truthful: "the histrionic truth is the natural lie" (l. 1492). E. W. Slinn believes that the world in the poem is entirely subjective, but there is no reason to doubt the entertainers' objective existence or the facts of the epilogue, which C. K. Columbus calls the realities of death and marriage. By the epilogue, Juan can no longer displace or defer the reality of aging and death through use of fictions, pageants, dreams, and extended conceits. Slinn accurately notes, however, that even Juan's married state is doubtful because Juan says he and Elvire are "like husband and like wife" (ll. 2, 1520); nevertheless, the arrival of the fair's actors is an event which is not unreal since Juan has no motive to fabricate it as he does manufacture Elvire. Whenever he recalls the scene of the actors whose stage-playing is called "honest cheating"
(1. 1517), Juan shows his delight in their sense of artifice, but also he reminds the reader of the concrete fact with which the poem began.

The division of classes is, of course, reflected in the two women Elvire and Fifine. In a sense, the poet-persona is in an uncertain, existential predicament similar to Herakles' situation in Admetus' house: Juan does not fully understand his secret fear of women and death which is embedded in the concept of romantic love. Fifine and Elvire illustrate the archetypal distinction between the dark, sexual female, on the one hand, and the blonde, sexless woman, on the other. Juan's depiction of the dark Fifine who combines "woolly . . . wiry hair" (1. 152), "Greek-nymph nose" (1. 153), and "Hebrew pair/ Of eye and eye" (ll. 153-54) contrasts with the bland physical description of Elvire as "the tall thin personage, with paled eye, pensive face" (1. 806). Fifine is called an object upon which the subjective self focuses to "make my thoughts be surer what they mean" (1. 149). Reflecting on her hair, eyes, mole, ears, neck, necklace, breasts, page-costume, and hips, he seems to take inventory of her body as if he were trying to "know" her in the intellectual, not merely the carnal, sense of the word. Her imperfection and commonness which attract Juan are indicated by his mention
of her mole and the cheap necklace, which add a certain vulgar charm. On the other hand, Elvire seems "free and flower-like" (1. 174), but is also associated with law and morality (11. 174-75). Sexuality as a means of self-gratification or preservation of the race has become so institutionalized through marriage that Juan seems to prefer illicit sex as a more aesthetic, self-expressive endeavor. Although he likens Elvire to a flower, he also describes Fifine's "dear and damning scent" (1. 184). Both have an appeal for him, but at the end of the discussion on women and flowers, he announces that "it is Elvire we love, and not Fifine" (1. 198). The word "we" is a clue that, perhaps, the preference for Elvire is a statement made by Juan in his respectable pose: the "we" indicates that Elvire is more socially acceptable than Fifine although Juan may not personally prefer her. In fact, he employs pathos to characterize Fifine as a victim of circumstance and a heroine to her family. He refers to Fifine as a "hapless infant" (1. 271), "an infant born . . . as sensitive and nice/ As any soul of you, proud dames" (11. 275-76), and he hypothesizes that Fifine may be married to "the Strong Man" (1. 289) at the carnival, one who gives her a "customary curse" (1. 297) and takes away her money. There is a tone of mockery as Juan attacks respectable society and defends Fifine as
one who undergoes great suffering. He suggests that she has had a reason for debasing herself, for she may have stooped . . . to degradation, loth That some just-budding sister, the dew yet on the rose, Should have to share in turn the ignoble trade. (11. 281-83)

Using a fabricated story of Fifine's origin and her domestic life, Juan sets forth to show the worth of Fifine and prove that all bodies, like hers, "show me minds" (l. 335). Fifine is like "the single grain of sand, mid millions heaped" (l. 344) which he happens to see and select just because it is "earth's brightest for the nonce,/ When sunshine shall impinge on just that grain's facet" (ll. 347-48). Through this imagery, Juan perfectly describes the moment of epiphany, the point when all things are seen in a new way. By elevating Fifine to a higher place than the realm in which she exists, Juan implies that she becomes more than a girl and that she is an object of contemplation for Everyman, a viable symbol of epiphany for all men. By elevating her beyond her mortal status, he sins against her humanness and masks his own unaltered lust for her. All of his high-flown language is a verbal smoke-screen.

The connection between Juan and other romantic lovers in fiction and history is established in the pageant of women (st. 19) which he creates; the women mentioned recur throughout the poem at intervals and serve as useful images
of varying types of beauty. Juan begins his pageant with Helen of Troy and describes her as being "like a moon/ Out-breaking from a cloud" (ll. 212-13). The second figure, Cleopatra, is also identified with a circular image because her body's curves are orbs "of indolent ripe health" (l. 219). Like Helen who causes the Trojan war, Cleopatra is associated with violence. Juan describes her casting a "thievish glance" (l. 225) back "to count the slain" (l. 226). Citing these women who are known as great temptresses and who are associated with war, Juan seems to be attracted to women who appeal sensually to men, like Fifine, as well as those who are connected with death, like the ghostly Elvire. By contrast to Helen and Cleopatra, Juan next includes a nameless saint whose feminine form is not rounded. This saint is "cold-pinnacled aloft o' the spire" (l. 229), and the angular, almost phallic, image of the spire recurs in the description of her "one long thin pure finger in the girth/ O' the girdle" (ll. 237-38) and "one, pressed hushingly to lip" (l. 240). Such a position suggests the saint's repression of sexuality and speech, a denial of the self-preserving and the self-expressive aspects of one's being. Juan attacks conventional purity and modesty by noting that the saint probably would "have stripped herself only to clothe the poor" (l. 245). Fifine is the fourth female
whom Juan visualizes, but Elvire objects to Fifine's inclusion.

To pacify Elvire or, rather, to pacify his own mind's need for contention and resolution, Juan includes a phantom Elvire in the pageant. At the same time that he concludes his elaborate, fictive display, he is engaging in other activities which become significant later. Just as the prince talks and draws simultaneously, Juan talks and places a franc in Fifine's tambourine; this deed causes him to have a reason to return and see her later. Also, he begins to confound the illusory and the "real" Elvire when he makes her confront herself within the pageant (l. 261). Later, the putative wife continually questions Juan's statements: she doubts his fidelity and mastery over sensuality (st. 60), and she questions the credibility of "all this make-believe" (l. 941) that Juan speaks to her. Since all of Elvire's speeches are presented through Juan's voice, one must assume he is trying to create trouble for himself. By first making the ghostly Elvire into a phantom in the pageant, he foreshadows his words to her when he leaves to meet Fifine: "Why, slip from flesh and blood, and play the ghost again!" (l. 2355).

As if to reinforce this association between Elvire and a phantom, Juan relates this putative listener to a curious
tale about Helen of Troy. In his story, he says the real woman never went to Troy; only her phantom went and made "half the world sublime./ And half absurd" (ll. 316-17). Although he tends to see Elvire as ghostly, he says she corresponds to the "true Helen's self" (l. 318) who remains far away from Troy. He fancies Helen within a traditional, pastoral setting beside a river, an image that recalls Balaustion's setting in the outer framework of BA. Since Helen and Elvire are both cast as traditional characters of pastoral romance, Elvire seems no more real than in the pageant. Apparently Juan's purpose in this comparison is a combined desire to amuse himself and to undercut the conventional life which Elvire epitomizes and which is unlike Fifine's persecuted existence.

Echoing the list of women found in the pageant, Juan employs a fictive speech and attributes his own thoughts to Fifine, the putative speaker of stanzas 32-33. Her ethopoeia mentions Helen, Cleopatra, the saint, and Elvire and contains six fictive speeches embedded within the single speech of Fifine. Juan makes her ask that men "pay for just the sight you see" (l. 410) and that they not demand the usual games involved in romantic love. Defining herself by contrast with Helen, Cleopatra, and the saint, Fifine shows she is no conventional beauty like Helen whom "history, the glare
and bullying of verse" (1. 422) praise in spite of the war and the brutalities she inspires, no Cleopatra who proclaims the superiority of her wine's "vintage" (1. 447), and no saint who values the romantic frenzy of "passion which endures" (1. 460). Through Fifine as a mouthpiece, Juan turns to Elvire and says he intends to "have you listen, learn your character at last" (1. 463). Keeping in mind that Elvire may be a phantom of Juan's mind, one finds his description of her to be a revelation about his own romantic obsession. Elvire is supposedly a blend of "sad smiles and gay tears" (1. 466), and her submissiveness seems to invite men. While Fifine openly invites men's attentions and disparages romantic illusion, Elvire has that idealized passion of a love-object which inspires Juan and that wifely status which, in turn, makes Fifine seem desirable.

After Fifine's ethopoeia, Juan portrays Elvire as being alternatively domestic and alien, mundane and ethereal. At one point, he illustrates the lack of intrigue or glamor in marital love as he creates the speech of a conventional wife, possibly Elvire, who unenthusiastically entreats her spouse to stay home:

Now, what's a smile to you? Poor candle that lights up The decent household gloom which sends you out to sup. A tear? worse! warns that health requires you keep aloof From nuptial chamber, since rain penetrates the roof! (11. 488-91)
By contrast, he then envisions her as being forbidden and death-like. His fear and longing merge in a passage which reveals the paradox of romantic obsession:

How ravishingly pure you stand in pale constraint!
My new-created shape, without or touch or taint,
Inviolate of life and worldliness and sin.
(1l. 586-88)

This image of a dead woman both attracts and repels him; the idealized, unattainable love-object is so foreign to the common, domestic drudge. Death is the ultimate barrier between the lover and his beloved, so that separation makes the dead person a most desirable goal.

The despiritualization of Elvire and the elevation of her phantom self are complete when the latter becomes more real to him than the persona to whom he speaks (st. 53). The phantom lives "in my soul" (l. 808) while "this other-you" (l. 804) becomes less significant because it is less appealing to his fancy. Juan's assumption of Elvire's essence into himself reveals her to be what she truly is—a fictional construct. Just as Alkestis' soul enters Admetus' body in Balaustion's revised version of Euripides' tale, Juan possesses Elvire's soul within himself and deprives her of a personal identity. If Elvire existed, he would be turning her into the object of her own phantom, and such a reversal perverts the usual manner in which fictions are manipulated by individuals to achieve self-consciousness. Elvire's
phantom is not a fictive construct of her own mind, but it does usurp her identity in her husband's mind. By deifying her image and making himself a slave to an ideal, a fiction which is more real to him than an actual woman is, Juan attempts to make her into his slave.

He interprets Elvire as both phantom and real, alien and domestic, by the use of artistic conventions and by reference to artworks. Likening her phantom to the various art forms--poetry, painting, and music, he implies that any fiction is more appealing than a woman. Only a ghost or fiction can become so integrated with oneself that Juan can exclaim that the phantom wife is "Mine henceforth, ever mine!" (l. 633). He tries to deny this phantom any independence from himself just as he wishes to deny the reality of Elvire. The passages in which Juan expresses a questionable devotion to Elvire might be read as straightforward love lyrics set within the poem's framework, for using the fourteen-line structure in stanza 39, he imitates a sonnet by employing phraseology and commonplaces used by Petrarch and the troubadours: the notion that two lovers are halves of a whole (ll. 609-611); the idea of the beloved as a precious pearl (ll. 611-14); the romanticized description of the beloved with "eyes so grey" (l. 615), "alabaster brow" (l. 620), and "brown hair" (l. 618) like rilletts of water
pouring down "each side/ O' the rock-top, pushed by Spring!" (11. 621-22). Such images are ridiculous when compared with Juan's actual feelings for Elvire, so his reason for utilizing these literary conventions must be his desire to create another seductive speech as in the prologue. He talks to Elvire just as he speaks to the butterfly; in both cases, he is interested only in the impression he makes, not in the sincerity he conveys or in the love-object's reaction to him. Juan acknowledges that Elvire is not identical to her ghost and credits his aesthetic imagination with creating such a lovely artifice in the pageant by means of "the sense/ And soul of me, Art's judge" (11. 627-28). In spite of his claim that he is being imaginative, Juan's depiction is an unoriginal one; Elvire's phantom seems to resemble other typical beauties found in sonnets about idealized women.

Moving from the literary sphere to other art forms, Juan compares an etherealized Elvire to "the verse-book laid on shelf,/ The picture turned to wall, the music fled from ear" (11. 630-31). Juan draws three kinds of faces in sand (st. 47-49) and shows his preference for dealing with fictive phantoms rather than with people. The three types he draws correspond to three moods--tragedy, comedy, and romance. The first face represents Horror (st. 47); the second, Thalia or Good Cheer (st. 48); and the third, Elvire
with her "utter passion, absolute self-sacrifice" (l. 731). Again she is cast as the perfect object of adoration because the drawing, like the phantom in the pageant, seems more inviting as an image in sand than as a fleshly body. The intimated similarity between Elvire and his "housemate" (l. 537), a Rafael painting he owns and would save in case of fire, enables Juan to suggest that he loves Elvire as a wife; nevertheless, since the connection between her and the painting is only implicit, he never openly vows to be faithful to her. When Juan tells about a sculpture he owns which may be the "goddess Eidotheé" (l. 779), the daughter of Proteus, he combines the concepts of women, water, Elvire, and artifice in one concrete, marble image. He never equates Elvire with the goddess, just as he never equates her with the Rafael painting, but he implies the likeness by juxtaposing a discussion of Elvire to the discussion of the sculpture, which he purchased cheaply because other people called the stone's form the result of "mimetic play/Of Nature" (ll. 763-64), nothing more. Juan fancies the work is by Michelangelo and depicts the goddess emerging from a wave like one who has not "evolved, in earth, in air, / In wave; but, manifest i' the soul's domain" (ll. 788-89). Such a figure might be similar to Michelangelo's "St. Matthew" in which the figure seems to emerge from within the
stone but whose shape is not fully articulated. Whether the work is Eidothée or not, Juan's mention of her is significant because the goddess may represent to Juan the archetypal, beautiful, elusive female. Since Juan always casts women as wraiths or artifices and identifies them with water, rillets, and oceans, he may view all women as daughters of Proteus who are mutable and, therefore, malleable in man's imagination.

Perhaps Juan's penchant for artists like Rafael and Michelangelo reveals his desire to be a Renaissance man whose possession of knowledge and art and whose mastery over words and rhetoric set him apart from most men. This desire to create art merges with his wish to control the unknown: women and death. When he possessively claims, "My Elvire to me" (l. 753), he apparently evaluates her on the same level of worth as his painting and sculpture. Like Faust, Juan revels in learning and manipulates images to obtain both intellectual and sensual pleasure. Emulating the "Master" (ll. 851, 863) artist, Juan dares to define more clearly the figure of Eidothée which Michelangelo did not shape and then destroys his plaster cast of the goddess's form which was "plain to my soul, although, to sense, that triple-tine's/Achievement halt half-way" (ll. 861-62).

Laying aside the metaphors of visual art, painting and
sculpture, Juan turns to music as a vehicle, but again he indicates his inner preoccupation. As he sets out to educate Elvire on their walk, Juan compares his "weary words" (l. 961) unfavorably with music and attempts to imitate the music of songbirds: he exclaims, "Once fairly on the wing,/ Let me flap far and wide!" (ll. 965-66). The suppressed topic of death emerges in his description of a graveyard scene where the prattling birds eat the "yellow crisp bead-blooms" (l. 980) that have been placed on the graves of the newly buried, and the fear resurfaces in stanza 63 when he compares the singing of a "bird to its couched corpse" (l. 1006) with his speech to the silent Elvire. Although he pretends to sing and soar like a bird, Juan prefers the metaphor of swimming in water where one keeps

Body and limbs below, hold head back, uplift chin,
. . . . . . . . . . .
No matter though they sink, let but the nose emerge.
(ll. 1013-16)

Putting on a mask of conventionality, he unconvincingly calls "air--the essential good, not sea" (l. 1054); nevertheless, the joy he derives from the risk and danger of swimming betrays his lame protestation that "I want sky not sea" (l. 1129).

Throughout the poem, the theme of death has been displaced because the poet-persona does not want to express
his fears and wishes overtly; the longing for incorporeality is masked by his discussion of love, beauty, and art. When Juan describes the hypothetical house-fire in which he would save his Rafael painting, he adds the masochistic detail that if he could not save it, he would rather stay and "share its fate, be made its martyr nor repine?/ Inextricably wed, such ashes mixed with mine" (ll. 576-77). When describing the purported sculpture of Eidotheé, he claims that the imperceptive viewer who cannot see the shape of a woman in the stone will say the marble is "Death still" (l. 762) and "Death therefore to the world" (l. 768). If one steps back, just as Juan asks the viewer of the marble to "step back a pace or two" (l. 768), one can see the meaning of his allusion to death: he is afraid of dying yet fascinated with talking about it. Juan uses these artifices--the phantoms in the pageant of women, the ethopoeia of Fifine, and the artistic creations of Rafael, Michelangelo, and himself--to define the ideal he desires, and this quest for the romantic ideal is inextricably intertwined with his fixation on death.

V

Although Juan uses fictions as a way to express the self or the soul, the dialectic of the self's interaction with the other is perverted by the covert symbolism of
romantic love. In stanza 59, his language takes on the distinctive tone of the troubadour praising an unearthly beauty:

While, oh, how all the more will love become intense
Hereafter, when "to love" means yearning to dispense,
Each soul, its own amount of gain through its own mode
Of practising with life, upon some soul . . .
... What joy, when each may supplement
The other . . . till, wholly blent,
Our old things shall be new, and what we both ignite,
Fuse, lose the varicolor in achromatic white!
...
... love's law, which I avow
And thus would formulate: each soul lives, longs and works
For itself, by itself,—because a lodestar lurks,
An other than itself.

(11. 881-902)

Romantic language is no longer associated with Elvire, only with the self; the other is an ideal never to be reached except in death or dissolution since the "lodestar" (l. 901) for the self is only "guessed at through the flesh" (l. 908). His failure to view women as phenomenological realities and not just as voices or images underscores Juan's inability to accept love as a non supernatural occurrence and to tolerate the disjunction between the body's flaws and man's knowledge of perfection. This dissatisfaction with flesh's inadequacy in comparison to the "soul" marks Juan as an unhappy consciousness, according to Hegel's definition.

The discussion of the soul (st. 54-56) is not really a
metaphysical discourse so much as Juan's unwitting satire upon conventional lovers who speak in terms of soul and spirit but are preoccupied with or fearful of the body. Juan's portrayal of the soul as a victor over the inert, dead world evokes the struggle between Herakles and Death in *Alkestis*. Juan describes the soul as being girded with an immortal power, "a belt of all the glints and gleams/ It struck from out that world" (ll. 811-12). The soul is cast as a savior in a metaphorical house of mourning, the world, because the soul is "conquering to conquer, through all eternity,/ That's battle without end" (ll. 816-17) and faces "death/ I' the shape of ugliness" (ll. 835-36). Juan's predisposition to view the world as "stuff for transmuting" (l. 826) and his calling the soul a flame which burns "gums and spice, or else . . . straw and rottenness" (l. 830) indicate a disdain for material objects and foreshadow the unstable landscapes, objects, and personae in the dream-vision which he relates to Elvire. This obsession with the world as an unpleasant place which ought to be changed or destroyed is a belief similar to Manicheism and gnosticism, which spurn the flesh, encourage licentiousness, and incorporate a death-wish in their philosophy.46

Since he fears the unknown, death, Juan apparently attempts to dominate and control known others--men and women.
He uses Elvire's query about types of women as a springboard (ll. 1151-52) for a discussion on mastering people. In the tales about Herakles, the hero is characterized as a strong man who fights with men and beasts and accumulates many wives and concubines; Juan might like to emulate such violent and excessive behavior if he could because he reveals a tendency to fight men by means of verbal sabotage that sets men "to hate a little" (l. 1326) and to subdue and caress women who are not as "completely formed, full-orbed" (l. 1174) as men. Dissimulation may "master men" (l. 1231) just as a hunter hunts his herd, but to control a woman, one must "abandon stratagem for strategy" (l. 1249), a statement which is, semantically speaking, tautological. By advising that one reveal only one's "best self" (l. 1254) to females, Juan encourages as much dissembling with women as with men, to whom he openly lies. Juan tries to undercut those who seek political mastery over others, but far from despising politicians like the prince, Juan covertly likes and uses such a strategy even though he parodies one who poses as an equal to the common man but feels himself to be superior:

... Countrymen, I boast me one like you--
My lot, the common strength, the common weakness too!
... if I have the knack
Of fitting thoughts to words, you peradventure lack,
Envy me not the chance, yourselves more fortunate!
(ll. 1261-65)
After discussing the known other which exists in the world and covertly alluding to the unknown other, death and dissolution, he turns to a third other which exists within himself and which is articulated in his dream-vision that he relates to Elvire and the reader. Actually, he induces the dream by means of music and the smoke, which forms a pattern "cupola-wise above" (l. 1542) his head. Not only is Juan in a room, but also he fancies an enclosure of smoke within the room which surrounds him and which intimates a safe, womb-like container. The shifting images of his walk with Elvire are echoed as he remembers the dream's scenes and the fragmented impression of his surroundings in the room in which he dreams. Descriptions of Nature are reduced to a few isolated details; all the rest is incomprehensible. Although he notes only a minimum of facts about the setting—there is a dragon-fly and a branch with blossoms on it—he describes a multitude of unseen "visitants" (l. 1558) which enter the room: "the memories new and old" (l. 1560), "the antenatal prime experience" (l. 1561), and "the initiatory love preparing us to die" (l. 1562). Such fragmented details of his unconscious are especially revealing since they indicate a longing for the past safety of the womb, a place suggested by the smoky room.

Juan's recollection of "Schumann's 'Carnival'" (l. 1588)
to which he listens begins a pattern found in every long
poem after 1871: the remembrance of dead personae by the
speaker. Juan celebrates Schumann by recalling how he heard
the "slow caravan" (1. 1592) of gypsy performers while he
listened to the musical composition. Juan's experience is
similar to the one related by the speaker in the Parleyings
With Certain People when the latter recalls an event which
has occurred in the morning and is tied to a musical compo-
sition, Charles Avison's "March." Juan remembers his dream
in association with the music of

    ... some musician dead
    And gone, who feeling once what I feel now, instead
    Of words, sought sounds, and saved for ever, in the same,
    Truth that escapes prose,--nay, puts poetry to shame.
    (11. 1569-72)

As Juan says, the "dead and gone away" (1. 1575) may assist
those who still struggle, and although the dream induced
by the music does not reveal any new truth, it is an escape
for the speaker who finds metaphors for poetry in his dream-
vision. All of the remaining poems depend to a great degree
upon the life and deeds of dead personae: Euripides in AA,
Miranda in Night-Cap, the man and lady in Album, and the
seven men in the Parleyings.

As the action of the poem gets farther away from the
initial fact of the fair and the performers there, Juan's
ostensible desire to elucidate his feelings about Fifine to
Elvire is cast into doubt. Instead of saying outright that he desires Fifine, he amuses himself by employing metaphorical devices, and the monologue becomes less a defense than his self-indictment as a tragic poet-persona whose fiction loses its focus through the many digressions. There are several dominant elements in the dream which suggest the speaker's personal dishonesty, incompleteness, and instability: crowds of figures which frighten and interest him, shifting and coalescing landscapes and edifices, and a persistent view that truth cannot be seen through temporal, tangible things.

In stanza 98, the dream-vision's "simulacra" (l. 1736) are like the ghostly females in the pageant, yet Juan is not a spectator, but a participant in the dream's activity. When he plunges into the midst of a silent Venice mob, his perspective from within the dream's crowd allows him to see the masked "mimes/ And mummers" (ll. 1869-70) which "rather urged/ To pity than disgust" (ll. 1746-47), and he feels they are less grotesque and monstrous than they seemed from a distance because he has become immersed in their element and is more like them. They have not actually become less "rough" (l. 1876) as he thinks, but by entering the crowd, he learns to rationalize evil: "there was just/ Enough and not too much of hate, love, greed and lust" (ll. 1870-71).
The continual changing of one scene into another in the dream illustrates Juan's own mental instability. His Venice fancy actually emblemizes the world as a place of constant inconsistency or ceaseless flux: "the state/ Of mankind, masquerade in life-long permanence" (ll. 1858-59). He compares the shifting dream-landscapes to an "edifice of cloud" (l. 1828) at sunset as darkness takes over:

.. the mace
Of night fall here, fall there, bring change with every blow,
Alike to sharpened shaft and broadened portico
I' the structure: heights and depths, beneath the leaden stress,
Crumble and melt and mix together, coalesce
Re-form.

(ll. 1835-40)

The image of dissolution is similar to Balaustion's vision of Athens' destruction, for both Juan and Balaustion unconsciously use such images to mirror their own needs for structure. Both are unaware that what they value—he, the lust of the flesh and the eyes; she, the Athenian pride of life—is fleeting. Juan describes his impression of edifices which rise and fall (st. 110-14) by describing buildings in general and then by turning to specific institutions like "church and college" (l. 1958) which claim to reveal truth through religion and philosophy

Till they grow nothing, soon to re-appear no less
As something,--shaped re-shaped, till out of shapelessness
Come shape again as sure!

(ll. 1961-63)
Juan envisions an inverted Vanity Fair where several smaller structures appear and recede in the dream (st. 115-16). While Bunyan's Christian moves through the stalls which offer tainted delights, Juan sees himself being offered merchandise by various personifications. Although Christian rejects the wares of the fair because of his personal ethics, Juan has an aesthetic repulsion to what History, Morality, and Art offer. Finally, the changing Venice landscape, the mutating edifices, and the three personifications in the booths give way to a debate between two voices advocating "change" (l. 2009) and "permanence" (l. 2010). All of the edifices, institutions, and fair booths coalesce into a single monolithic structure, a Druid monument, through which Juan achieves a temporary synthesis:

...I find no simpler way
Of saying how, without or dash or shock or trace
Of violence, I found unity in the place
Of temple, tower,--nay, hall and house and hut,--one blank
Severity of peace and death.
(11. 2033-37)

The empirical reality of the monument is the object he focuses on and the stimulus for his questions about how and why it was formed. Objective fact inescapably shapes his perception, although E. W. Slinn tries to assert Juan's complete subjectivity.47 Juan tells of speculation about the monument's purpose; "Ignorance... in the mouth of
peasant-lad or lass" (ll. 2069-70) says that men wanted to make the monument to record their existence and to remind themselves that "Somebody" (l. 2074) made them. Juan finds such folklore more appealing than the "Learning" (l. 2067) that is voiced by the educated curate who calls the stone monument Jacob's pillow which became the foot of the "staircase" (l. 2115) from earth to heaven. The peasants' humanistic interpretation more closely approximates the original motive for the monument's erection; the local folk may have felt an intuitive need to create an edifice and did not experience divine revelation when they built it. Just as the landscapes, buildings, and facades in the dream collapse into the single image of the monument, he implies that falsehood and change collapse into truth.

Juan's attempt to synthesize the false and the true results in an atemporal, non-historical definition of the human spirit because he implies that permanence transcends finite form and structure. But he is not in control of himself or reality as much as he would like to be since the subject of death has become more overt and remains an objective fact which Juan can neither manipulate nor avoid. Nevertheless, he asserts certain dialectical concepts such as "the good of peace through strife,/ Of love through hate, and . . . knowledge by ignorance" (ll. 1782-83) and "my
hunger both to be and know the thing I am,/ By contrast
with the thing I am not" (ll. 1815-16). In a prosopopoeia
of "harmonics" (l. 2181), Juan again affirms the existence
of formless truth:

Each lie, superfluous now, leaves, in the singer's stead,
The indubitable song; the historic personage
Put by, leaves prominent the impulse of his age;
Truth sets aside speech, act, time, place, indeed, but
brings
Nakedly forward now the principle of things
Highest and least.

(11. 2202-207)

He suggests that change will cease when man can transcend
form entirely. Such a state would be, of course, whenever
death occurs; therefore, Juan expresses his death-wish as
a philosophy about seeking truth.

When he tries to justify sexual promiscuity and domestic
strife, though, he seems less nobly motivated. Moving from
the digressive, esoteric discussion of truth, Juan resumes
his lustful pursuit of the gypsy Fifine. He is reminded of
a tale about a Titan and a nymph whom he calls "the sea-
Fifine" (l. 2223) and who enables the Titan to find the
"Ultimate" (l. 2226). In a skillful juxtaposition of this
mythic tale, which he encloses in quotation marks, and the
real situation between himself and Fifine, which he places
in parenthetical statements, the speaker intends to mock the
conventions of myth, but unintentionally mocks his own
lecherous longings. A conventional phrase like "wingèd car" (l. 2221) in the myth becomes "that caravan on wheels" (l. 2221) in reality. The Titan lifts the nymph's veil to see the "three-formed Fate" (l. 2225), but Juan implies that, in reality, a sexual encounter takes place. Juan's circular argument employs the story about lust to express his own desire for Fifine.

Unintentionally, Juan undercut the dream's affirmation of truth and changelessness because he recognizes that no vision endures (st. 126):

. . . I dwindle at the close
Down to mere commonplace old facts which everybody knows.
So dreaming disappoints! The fresh and strange at first,
Sooner wears to trite and tame.
(11. 2228-31)

Returning to his secret fear, he likens the end of the walk to the end of life:

We end where we began . . .
. . . wherever we were nursed
To life, we bosom us on death, find last is first
And thenceforth final too.
(11. 2242-45)

Incidentally, their walk forms a circular pathway (st. 127) and imagistically illustrates the faulty logic pointed out in Juan's ethopoeia of Elvire: "Why the more/ Worth credence now than when such truth proved false before?" (11. 2245-46). Elvire is associated with the ends of things: "From Helen
to Fifine, Elvire bids back the change/ To permanence" (11. 2285-86), so when they arrive at their villa, he resolves to live and die "land-locked" (l. 2305) with Elvire and says he will conclude his walk, argument, and life there at the house. Yet even this "tower apart" (1. 2322) or the "civic house" (11. 2326, 2337) with Elvire who is "a ghost! A memory, a hope,/ A fear, a conscience"(11. 2310-11) represents the marital and domestic order which chafes him until he must abandon the edifice and his ideal standard of changelessness in order to meet Fifine.

In the epilogue, Juan is involved in those objective facts of marriage, home, and death which he has avoided and suppressed. At the poem's conclusion, Juan is spoken to by a wifely "She" who beckons him to die at home. Throughout the poem, Elvire has served as the ghostly spouse whom he tells to "slip from flesh and blood, and play the ghost again"(1. 2355); now, in the epilogue, she is the eternal feminine of romantic love, the unearthly grace-giving figure that effects Juan's "salvation." Browning's Juan more closely approximates the Don Juan found in José Zorrilla's Don Juan Tenorio (1844) than the persona represented in the works of Molière or Tirso de Molina; rather than allowing Don Juan to be damned, Zorilla shows Juan repenting of his sins at the end of the play and portrays Juan entering heaven.
The romantic portrayal of Don Juan by Zorilla is similar to the ending of Faust as well because in each case, the repentant sinner joins a female figure in heaven: Don Juan Tenorio is welcomed by Doña Inés; Faust by the Mater Gloriosa. By visualizing Elvire as the dead wife in the epilogue, the speaker imagines that she has finally become what he has wanted her to be: the unattainable woman. The reunion of man and wife in death is a more muted ending than the glorious entrance into heaven by Faust or Don Juan Tenorio, and the reader might assume Juan is being satirical when he writes his own epitaph--"Lies M., or N., departed from this life, Day the this or that, month and year the so and so" (st. 4)--if it were not for the impression that the speaker really regrets his past and that he has learned a lesson as he sits lonely and wretched in his house. The poem concludes, then, with Juan's tragic awareness that he is no longer a carefree youth; his worst fears of death and stagnation have been realized at last.

The prince's and Juan's speeches to illusory auditors; their penchant for dream-like escapism; and their respective, idealized poses as the godly, common man and the philosophical, romantic lover reveal their lack of self-awareness. Their lives are empty by the end of the poems because they have no auditor and little reality to hold onto but their houses,
the symbols of themselves. The vanity of their posturing is undercut and shown to be what it really is—a fear of the unknown, the past, and especially death. Juan and the prince are too involved in themselves to relate objectively their own personal histories, and their fictions lack direction because they cannot resolve the multitudinous voices within themselves. The only resolution for them is old age and death, and their confusion seems like a disguised madness or a desire for self-harm through deception.
NOTES FOR CHAPTER III

1 The descriptive techniques in certain dream-visions of courtly love such as the Romance of the Rose, Book of the Duchess, and House of Fame and of religious, didactic works such as Pearl and Piers Plowman link seemingly unrelated material by association and transformation (Constance B. Hieatt, The Realism of Dream Visions [The Hague and Paris: Mouton and Co., 1967], pp. 11-20). The rationale behind the use of such conventions by Browning may be explained by modern dream-analysis. Dreamers often displace threatening or alien ideas into fantasy, especially into insignificant details. The vision takes pressure off the speaker who is not overtly responsible for the dream's content (Hieatt, p. 103).

2 Browning, Works, VII, 1. 2144.

3 Browning, Works, VII, 1. 2355.

4 In a letter to Edith Story on January 1, 1872, Browning said that the fictive prince is not supposed to be a hero and that he wanted to present the emperor's excuses in a way that Browning "thought he was likely to make for himself, if inclined to try" (DeVane, Handbook, p. 362).

5 For more information on Napoleon III, see J. M.

6 Frye, p. 236.

7 Drew, *Poetry*, p. 302. Like Philip Drew, Park Honan asserts that the prince is trying to be non-casuistic because the speaker really wants to convince himself of his moral rightness and does not see the full implications of the character-portrait that he gives (Honan, *Characters*, pp. 143-44).

8 Frye, p. 234.

9 Peckham, *Vision*, p. 123.

10 Peckham, *Vision*, pp. 125-26. Helen is not only a particular, beautiful woman, but also a representation of the Greek ideal.


15 Crowell, Soul, p. 224.

16 Crowell, Soul, p. 217.

17 Crowell, Soul, p. 216.


19 Zeldin, p. 2.

20 Frye, p. 236.

21 Collins, p. 339. T. J. Collins describes the prince's situation as being undramatic like Pompilia's because the prince speaks only "to create himself for himself" and not for an audience as Fra Lippo Lippi does.

22 Frye, p. 226.

23 The bifurcation some critics see between ideals and realities is not really as clear-cut in the poem. Most critics see the dialogue between Sagacity and the Head-servant in the poem's latter half as a crucial construct within the work. The intercalated fiction in Prince is greater than just this dialogue; the entire feigned speech in Leicester Square is the embedded fiction which the prince undercuts in the last few lines of the poem. Similarly, in Fifine, the embedded fiction is the entire comic pose
which Juan assumes throughout the poem; the pose is undercut only in the epilogue when Juan faces death.

Roma King calls the dialogue of voices part of a cacophony of dream-figures (Artifice, p. 171). Philip Drew sees the dialogue as an exploration of opportunism and idealism (Poetry, p. 297), but he contrasts the dialogue with the poem's first half in which the general theories of government and the ideals which the prince knows, but has not lived up to, are presented (p. 293). King interprets the structural antagonism as a conflict between idealism and pragmatism, but he also faults the prince for having no identity or soul because of the many fictive, dream-like voices (Artifice, p. 171). Although the prince is confused, he is a speaker, and he does have a poetic identity. Ryals falls back on facile dualisms when he describes the prince's character; he condemns the speaker not only for not having a center (p. 58), but also for being trapped in an inner dialectic of good and evil behavior, democratic and imperial longings, and ideals and realities (p. 51).


26 Barbara Melchiori, "Browning in Italy" in RB, p. 175.
For a discussion of these two entities, see Drew, *Poetry*, p. 295.


King, *Artifice*, p. 171.


Sven-Johan Spinberg, "The Don Juan Figure in Browning's *Fifine*," *Comparative Literature*, 28 (Winter 1976), 33.


Claudette Kemper Columbus, "*Fifine at the Fair*," *Studies in Browning and His Circle*, 2, no. 1 (Spring 1974), 30. Just as Roma King tries to deny that the prince has an identity, he also calls Juan an abstract soul and an incomplete character. King notes that Juan is torn between Fifine and Elvire, flesh and spirit, or Druid paganism and Christianity; his comments sound remarkably similar to Ryals' description of the dualisms in the prince's character.
King mentions a likeness between Juan and Faust because both strive till the end of life "when the striver is transplanted from a temporal to an eternal scene." King over-idealizes Juan's motives and excuses his rejection of Elvire as a moral triumph:

Browning's vision of meaning and values has come clearly to focus upon the inner life of man rather than upon an ordered external structure. He excuses the final rejection of Elvire because she is unsympathetic and represents ideological stagnation (Artifice, pp. 175-87).

Philip Drew asserts that certain externals are ambiguous or mutable, especially art, Schumann's composition, and the Druid monument in the dream-like context, and unlike King who justifies Juan's abandonment of Elvire, Drew condemns the renunciation of constancy, permanency, and stability. Drew sees the epilogue's sense of impending death as showing the direct consequence of Juan's inconstancy (Poetry, pp. 310-19). Rather than affirm King's belief that external certainty and objective values do not exist, Drew is assured that death and love are two certainties found in the Druid monument and in the epilogue ("Another View of Fifine at the Fair," Essays in Criticism, 17 [1967], 248-54).

Like King, Ryals sees the two women in Fifine as representatives of the dialectical concepts--ideal and real,
law and lawlessness (Ryals, pp. 68-69). Echoing Drew, Ryals calls Elvire's love in the epilogue a triumphant, forgiving, absolute reality (Ryals, p. 81).

Sven-Johan Spinberg notes that critics discuss the poem's ideas on subjectivity and philosophy and tend to devalue the delineation of character (p. 19). Like Spinberg, C. K. Columbus tries to establish the speaker as part of the entire tradition of writings on Don Juan (pp. 21-25). Spinberg does not see any conflict between Elvire and Fifine; both provide amusement and excitement for Juan (p. 27). Spinberg does affirm, however, that certain realities—the women, art's patterns, and perpetually renewed sensations—are permanent, but only fidelity to his wife would establish his identity for certain (p. 30).

38 King, Artifice, p. 188.


40 Watkins, p. 436.


43 Columbus, p. 34.

44 E. Warwick Slinn interprets Juan as a complete subjectivist who finds validity only in fictions, but not because they enable him to function in the world or to come to a new self-consciousness. The objective or other is always unreal when compared with one's own existence, according to Slinn, because Juan as a self prefers to find validity in unrealistic stage-drama, the pageant of women, and the Venetian fair dream ("Experience as Pageant," ELH, 42 [Winter 1975], 652). Slinn adds:

The physical world in relation to the soul's world thus becomes a fiction with an illusion or a pageant within a pageant, when the truth of the soul's world is similar in kind to that of drama—a "histrionic truth," which is a counterpart to the "natural lie" of the physical world. (pp. 661-62)

45 C. K. Columbus sees the two women as contradictions within themselves. Fifine and Elvire are unstable, if they are real, because they want Juan, a man who is incapable of stability. She cites a discussion in Kierkegaard's Either/Or on Mozart's Elvire, who wants both stability and fickleness in one man (pp. 31-32), and compares the two Elvires—Mozart's and Browning's. Columbus says the poem mixes Juan's subjectivism—his carnivalesque masque of self-conception (p. 27)—with the objective certainties of home,
marriage, and death in the epilogue where Juan becomes an Everyman whose home is his tomb (p. 37).

Denis de Rougemont asserts that courtly love songs of the twelfth-century troubadours began as the covert praises of heresy in the convents and monasteries of France. The troubadours took the expressions of ideal love from the liturgy of Catharism, which has been linked to Manicheism and gnosticism (Rougemont, p. 85).

Slinn, p. 662. Slinn argues that Juan maneuvers Elvire so that their path approaches the Druid monument at the same point that the monument appears in his dream's recollection; such a correspondence between dream and reality shows how Juan tries to manipulate the latter to fit his subjective purpose.

Columbus, p. 37.

Tirso de Molina's El Burlador de Sevilla y Convidado de Piedra was first published in 1630 and served as a source for Zorilla's work. For discussion of the two Spanish plays, see the prologue by F. Garcia Pavón in Don Juan Tenorio, Fourth edition (Madrid: Taurus Ediciones, 1970).
Chapter IV

The Detached Rememberers of the Dead

I

The distance between speakers and protagonists who act within the fictions becomes an important structural feature of subsequent poems about more self-conscious personae. The interest of later poems' poet-personae in the dead, such as in Red Cotton Night-Cap Country, or Turf and Towers (1873) and The Inn Album (1875) where violent and unnatural death plays a part in the embedded tales, reflects the more normal individual's curiosity about these same unknown, universal fears. In the case of the nameless speakers in Night-Cap and Album, they seem more normal because they remain detached from the action that they relate and engage in purely contemplative adventure. They can see and understand tragic behavior, yet they do not expose themselves directly to threatening experiences like Miranda's or the man's and woman's in the inn. Rather, the poet-personae in Night-Cap and Album cushion themselves in the security of their safe, comic situation outside of their poems' embedded, violent action.
Griffin and Minchin fault *Night-Cap* and *Album* for seeming to seek truth and morality "so exclusively that beauty . . . is neglected,"¹ but actually the speakers' transvaluating consciousness makes the poems much more than ugly, tragic works.² Just as the tragedy of *Herakles* is presented to the reader by the protective voice of Balaustion, the speakers of *Night-Cap* and *Album* prevent a direct confrontation between the reader and the tragedies which the speakers tell: both embed tragic plots within their poems' overriding, comic framework. The poet-personae in both poems set up a safe, secure environment in which they narrate their tales. Frye's definition of the sixth phase of comedy--the establishment of small, cosy groups, the absence of a broader social sense, and the end of "a movement from active to contemplative adventure³--seems to apply to both poems. Characters in such fiction often listen to a story-teller who presents an adventure

Through a relaxed and contemplative haze as something that entertains us without, so to speak, confronting us, as direct tragedy confronts us.⁴

By contrast, the embedded fictions about Miranda in *Night-Cap* and the personae in *Album* are similar to plots in Renaissance domestic tragedy because there is a great amount of physical violence and mental suffering within them. The speakers of both tales are separate from the death and
frenzy; elevated above the action they describe, they are not threatened as the personae in the fictions are. By underestimating either the speaker's role or that of the inner fiction's protagonist, the critic denies the crucial interplay that is vital to the poems. Actually, the poet-personae, who are not Browning's mouthpieces, and the protagonists within the two poems are strongly bonded; they may be analogous to the two halves of the bifurcated Heraklean figure. In *Night-Cap*, the poet-persona enacts the role of a buffer or savior, and Miranda, the role of the madman. The embedded fiction in *Album* also contains elements of chaos which have been displaced and purged from the narrative framework. The speakers in both works are nameless personae who seem more coherent and controlled than Juan or the prince simply because they are more detached from the subject matter they present.⁵ The presence of the poet-persona in *Night-Cap* and *Album* serves as a buffer to prevent the fiction's audience from directly facing repelling experiences, and Miranda's or the lady's and man's deeds, which offend and startle, force the reader to rely upon the speaker who creates a communion with his fair friend as well as provides distance between the reader and the fiction's content.

In *Night-Cap*, the speaker tells about Miranda's confused
attraction to love, masochism, and idealism, and he reveals, at the poem's conclusion, that not only Miranda's tale, but also the conversation on the beach with the female auditor, has occurred "months ago and miles away."6 The plot of the inner fiction in Night-Cap is filtered through the speaker's consciousness and is constructed from fact and gossip. Miranda, a jeweler's son and a businessman himself, has met and fallen in love with Clara de Millefleurs, a flirtatious married woman, and they live together in the French countryside in a house, called "Clairvaux," which Miranda has remodeled on the site where a priory once operated. This house is patterned after the English style of architecture, and "the stretch/ Of barren country" (ll. 2146-47) around the house is turned into a park which seems to be like an oasis in the country, a refuge from Parisian mores and responsibilities. As if trying to expiate his sins, Miranda becomes a benefactor of the local church which is named for a saint, La Ravissante. His extravagance toward the church leads the speaker to conclude that Miranda has an extraordinary guilt and dependence upon La Ravissante. Miranda's mother is the reason he makes two trips to Paris: once, she summons him in order to persuade him to give up the frivolous life he leads with Clara in the country; later, he returns for her funeral. After the first visit and maternal
exhortation, Miranda jumps into the Seine river to "be rid of memory in a bath" (l. 2274); after recovering from the near-fatal episode, Miranda feels remorse because he may have hastened her death. As a result of his guilt, he holds his hands in a fire in order to burn them off. He tries to live apart from Clara at the urging of his pious and greedy family, but finally, he and Clara resume their domestic arrangement for several years until the forty-three year-old Miranda is found dead one April day at the foot of his house's tower.  

In *Album*, the embedded story involves four characters—an older man, a young man, a lady, and a girl. The latter is the youth's betrothed and his cousin. The poem ends with the youth murdering the older man because the man has sought to compromise the lady who is loved by the youth. All four personae meet at the inn for various reasons: the man and the youth to gamble, the youth and the girl to meet each other, and the lady and the girl to discuss the youth as the girl's prospective mate. The man and the lady once were lovers, and she had believed they would eventually marry until the man offends her by ridiculing the prospect of marriage. Meanwhile, she meets the youth who falls in love with her although she tells him that she will marry another man. The older clergyman whom she eventually marries
is not aware of the lady's past lover. When she marries, she apparently tries to punish herself and expiate her sins by performing the various thankless duties required of a clergyman's wife. As a friend to the girl, the lady comes to the inn to meet the girl's future husband and to approve of the match. She is unaware that the young man is the one who has loved her. When the lady accidentally meets the older man there, he tries to compromise her by threatening to tell her husband about her past affair unless she surrenders herself to the youth. By arranging this liaison, the older man thinks that he will have paid the youth in full for the gambling debt which the man owes. The man's threat which he writes in the inn's album reads:

Since play turns earnest, here's my serious fence. He loves you; he demands your love: both know What love means in my language. Love him then! Pursuant to a pact, love pays my debt: Therefore, deliver me from him, thereby Likewise delivering from me yourself!  

The youth is appalled that the man, his mentor and initiator into the rites of roguery, has sought to degrade the lady whom he secretly loves. After killing the man in a fit of passion, the youth finds out that the lady is dying. The embedded fiction ends with two dead corpses and the youth within a room while the young girl stands outside preparing to enter. Since the youth was only marrying the girl for her money and land, the innocent has probably been saved
from the lady's fate, for the reader intuits that the loveless marriage will not take place. The speaker's voice commands that the curtain should fall before the girl reacts and the reader sees her horror, yet her life remains, for a moment, untainted by evil in the static tableau which the speaker presents.

The tale about Miranda which the poet-persona reflects upon falls into Frye's sixty category of tragedy; there, death is the only escape from the "demonic epiphany, the dark tower and prison of endless pain, the city of dreadful night in the desert." In this phase of tragedy, the protagonist often finds himself in unrelieved bondage to a femme fatale, so appropriately, Miranda's preoccupation with Clara and La Ravissante might be interpreted as a kind of mental imprisonment. These two females in Miranda's life--the sensual companionship which Clara offers and the hope that La Ravissante promises--seem contradictory, and some critics have viewed the poem's subtitle, "Turf and Towers," as an expression of the conflicting fleshly and spiritual aspects of human nature. The ease he shares with Clara at their house contrasts with the acts of self-sacrifice--monetary and physical--which he thinks La Ravissante requires. Nevertheless, Clara is not wholeheartedly hedonistic just as La Ravissante is not the savior
Miranda thinks she is. Clara renounces her former life of flirtation and promiscuity, becoming a faithful mate to him. The virtues of La Ravissante, on the other hand, are confused in Miranda's mind with the demands of his mother. Like Juan, Miranda possesses an unconscious fear of women because they bear and manipulate men. By leaping off his tower in order to be borne up by La Ravissante, Miranda reveals a death-wish, since his hope contradicts what he knows about natural laws. This act of self-sacrifice is the third in a series of self-destructive acts. The first two are performed after he suffers on account of his mother in Paris. Like La Ravissante, Miranda's mother seems to be a powerful, castigating female, so by throwing himself into the Seine and burning his hands, he undergoes two preliminary trials of endurance which prepare him for the final one. Clara, La Ravissante, and his mother are his own triumvirate of Fates or femmes fatales who do him harm.

The story in Album corresponds to the fifth phase of tragedy in Frye's scheme, for the fall of the older man and lady corresponds to the typical de casibus or wheel-of-fortune tragedy. The lady kills herself because the man has threatened to compromise her by forcing her to have an illicit affair with the youth. Since the reader already senses that she does not care for her spouse and since the
youth has already revealed a willingness to behave admirably rather than selfishly toward the lady, the threat which the man poses seems somewhat absurd. It is as if the man, youth, and lady are irresistibly drawn to their fate at the poem's conclusion.

Miranda and the youth are two tragic sufferers who undergo anguish, yet possess a detached awareness of themselves. Miranda acts heroically by leaping off the tower, although the deed backfires. The youth in *Album* acts as a savior or a fulfiller of expectations for the three other characters in the inn. The girl thinks she may marry him, and as a potential mate, he fulfills her need to conform to social expectations that girls marry. The older man seems to view the youth as a successful, younger version of himself because the youth plans to marry, as the man would like to have married, and is a successful gambler. The lady sees him as a savior in the more conventional sense of the word because he removes the source of her unhappiness by killing the threatening, older man. Miranda's madness makes him suicidal and causes him to become his own victim; by contrast the youth kills someone else. Miranda does not know which lady he ought to serve—Clara, his mother, or La Ravissante, but the youth knows and demonstrates his unquestioning allegiance to the lady. Rather than idealize
the object of romantic love, the youth learns that his lady is both sinful and mortal.\textsuperscript{13}

In \textit{Night-Cap}, the Heraklean split between savior and destructive madman is no longer uneasily fused within the personality of one character as in the cases of the prince, the impotent savior of his society, and Juan, the destroyer of marital stability by his infatuation with romantic love. The speaker and the protagonist in \textit{Night-Cap} are two different entities; the former records regional history and performs the role of poet-persona while Miranda actually undergoes the more horrific suffering found in \textit{Herakles}. On the tower of his house, Miranda struggles with his perverted hope in \textit{La Ravissante}; his agon is similar to Herakles' wrestling with Death. Instead of being a place of enlightenment, Miranda's tower is a means to certain death. The knowledge he possesses there is no better than the insight he has on the turf; the turf and towers mentioned in the poem's subtitle are more alike than different.

The tower and home of Miranda become the focal point of the poem's activities just as the inn is the place of all present action in \textit{Album}. This emphasis on a single setting first appears in \textit{Alkestis} and \textit{Herakles}, the embedded tales of BA and AA which take place in front of Admetus' and Herakles' homes. In \textit{Prince} and \textit{Fifine}, the two speakers
end up alone in their own houses, and in fact, the prince has spoken the entire poem in this supposedly secure enclosure. Therefore, the emphasis upon setting in Night-Cap and Album is no new development; the disruptive behavior which occurs in houses in Euripides' plays is merely reflected in the madness, fear, and chaos found in the permanent or temporary residences in Prince, Fifine, Night-Cap, and Album.

II

Night-Cap begins with the first-person speaker addressing an auditor; the speaker is a persona of imagination, sophistication, and curiosity. The meeting between the speaker and his "fair friend" (l. 1) on a beach by the sea at Normandy (l. 21) evokes the coastline setting of Fifine and parallels the address of female listeners in Fifine and Prince. In Night-Cap, the narrator imaginatively creates a cluster of fictive landscapes when he says that he and his auditor could have met just as easily in a field at Rome (ll. 3-4), on the Paris Boulevard (l. 7), or in London (l. 12) instead of "this unpretending beach/ Below the little village" (ll. 17-18) of Saint-Rambert. The sophisticated poet-persona in Night-Cap reflects the prince's awareness of social amenities, for just as the prince discusses having tea and smoking a cigar, the speaker hypothesizes about a party in London where they could have met and "where my toe/ Trespassed upon your
flounce?" (l. 12-13). He also mentions the "Five o' clock Tea in a house we know" (l. 85). Significantly, the speaker returns to London at the poem's end and shows his urban roots. Unlike other personae in the late poems, the speaker in Night-Cap does not live in a house he owns; he temporarily resides in his "own hired house" (l. 22). In the light of the many ravages which occur within houses--the death of Alkestis and Herakles' family, the verbal attack of Aristophanes in Balaustion's house, the pathetic soliloquy of the prince, and the decay of Juan--the speaker's transient residence may be a self-protective device. Nevertheless, he is not so lonely as the prince who fabricates his auditor since the speaker in Night-Cap and his real friend "have met so oft" (l. 16) on the beach.

Although he is acquainted with the larger cultural centers such as Rome, Paris, and London, he is capable of living in natural surroundings and discerning when an imbalance has occurred. He savors his communion with natural surroundings and lists various objects with loving meticulousness--the "growth unsheaved/ Of emerald luzern bursting into blue" (l. 24-25), the "wild-mustard flower" (l. 28) which his foot crushes, the sand with its "pipy wreath-work of the worm" (l. 33), and the wave which "flecks my foot with froth" (l. 40). The only flaw in the landscape
is the church of La Ravissante which intrudes on the natural setting and is a "brand-new stone cream-coloured masterpiece" (l. 50). Even the hired house of the speaker fits into the landscape better than this edifice: the former is surrounded by a field of blooming and colorful plants and seems less artificial-looking. As a neighbor of Miranda, a former, local householder, the speaker has acquired a natural interest about one who is an anomaly in this land of placid, sleepy people just as the church edifice is odd.

In order to emphasize that there is some kind of beauty buried in the land and seascape, the poet-persona intimates that mystery exists in the setting he describes. He suggests that the sea itself "broods o'er a bag of secrets, all unbroached,/ Beneath the bosom of the placid deep" (ll. 91-92), and only the "objector" (l. 101) who is a stranger to the world in which the poem is set could see the place and find "nullity/ And ugliness" (ll. 101-102). Saint-Rambert's underlying mystery is augmented when the speaker likens the commonplace setting to a transformed edifice:

Earth's ugliest walled and ceiled imprisonment
May suffer, through its single rent in roof,
Admittance of a cataract of light
Beyond attainment through earth's palace-panes
Pinholed athwart their windowed filagree
By twinklings sobered from the sun outside.

(ll. 65-70)
Beside the sea, the two figures of the poet-persona and auditor stand "on beach, mere razor-edge 'twixt earth and sea" (l. 181) at a "distance from the world" (l. 182). Such placement makes their situation and the confrontation between the speaker and friend as well as between them and the tale of Miranda seem momentous and epiphanic.

The speaker tries to make his fair friend and the reader perceive something worthwhile in the tale. He begins to tease the friend in order to make her agree that the surface placidity of the setting hides no secrets after he intimates that the place has a hidden beauty. The speaker in Night-Cap implies that man is really not as perceptive as he thinks and that he is too worldly-wise for his own good--like Miranda. The speaker subtly mocks the naive auditor, who falls into the former category of imperceptive people, when he says, "What eye like yours--/ The learned eye is still the loving one!" (ll. 108-109). No malice or deceit is intended since the speaker includes the auditor when he tells the facts of Miranda's story. The speaker not only tests the fair friend, but also involves the reader by teaching him how to distrust appearances.

The speaker is aware of a necessary disjunction between a fiction and the reality it describes. At best, one can use metaphor or description to approximate one's observation
or to romanticize it. For the speaker, the term "Red Cotton Night-Cap Country" is a more suitable epithet than "White Cotton Night-Cap Country," his friend's name for the drowsy land, because the mention of the color red suggests blood and indicates the hidden mystery and violence to be found there. Red is still an imprecise metaphor for the place's character and for what the speaker knows about it; nevertheless, the symbolic naming of the locale is an act of a continually metaphor-making and metaphor-transvaluating artist like the speaker. He understands the auditor's nostalgic longing for the innocent conception of "our land: its quietude, productiveness" (l. 110) and "all the sweet rusticities" (l. 114) because he is not cynical. Neither is he as naive as the auditor seems or wants to be. The speaker describes how the friend plans to write a fiction, a travel book, that will be an idyllic view of the grain crop, meadow ground, orchard, farm, and hamlet (ll. 166-71), and he explains that such a view of the countryside is a glamorization of reality. As if to indicate the necessary bending of truth involved in more sophisticated modes of self-expression, the speaker describes the auditor's portrayal of the countryside and his own detachment from the description:

... we, awake outside,
Farther than ever from the imminence
Of what cool comfort, what close coverture
Your magic, deftly weaving, shall surround
The unconscious captives with. Be theirs to drowse
Trammed, and ours to watch the trammel-trick!
(ll. 171-76)

Those who unquestioningly accept fiction as fact are slaves
to the mastery of their fiction-making superiors, but even
the sophisticated artist must acknowledge the limitations of
fictions. He uses the language of mock-epic to undercut
her reverential view of fictions when he casts them as
"British maid/ And British man" (ll. 381-82) who shall
"have it out/ Here in the fields" (ll. 382-83). The
observation that they might look "puffy about eye, and pink
at nose" (l. 387) after the fight allows the speaker to
reintroduce subtly a tint of red (ll. 393-96), the color
he always relates to this countryside. The speaker's aware-
ness that fiction is not reality does not keep him from
asserting a claim of complete objectivity. Although he makes
the claim that his tale is "truth and nothing else" (l. 4235),
he must also acknowledge at the poem's end that the fiction
has been "amplified" (l. 4236).

The speaker paraphrases the friend's words, but unlike
Elvire, she has an autonomous existence. She lives five
miles down the beach in another village (l. 43). Also,
their relationship is non-sexual, unlike that which Juan
implies between himself and Elvire. The fact that the friend
is a reasonably intelligent writer suggests that the bond
between speaker and auditor is one between equals, although
he poses as the mentor who tries to teach her to be more
tolerant of realistic, unromanticized writing. By emphasizing
that all writings glamorize and conventionalize observation
to some degree, he gently points out a misconception which
the friend holds. She is similar to Balaustion before her
growth in AA. Both hold romantic viewpoints which are
changed in the course of their experience by mentor-figures--
Euripides through his manuscript and the speaker through his
narration. She believes that nothing tainted exists in the
countryside setting and has yet to hear the tale which
informs her that there is indeed a scandal in this locale's
recent history.

One intuits the poet-persona's wide-ranging knowledge
from his discussions on violins and night-caps. The symbol
of the cap is a principal object of contemplation for the
speaker, auditor, and reader because as the former repeats
the words "White Cotton Night-Cap Country" and "Red Cotton
Night-Cap Country," the meaning of the expression "night-
cap" becomes more multifaceted. In the passage on the use
of night-caps in infancy, youth, manhood, and old age (11.
195-231), the speaker comically describes the ages of man,
showing a blend of humor and loving appreciation for humanity in his description of man and the use of the cap from youth to death: 15

Finally, when the last sleep finds the eye
So tired it cannot even shut itself,
Does not a kind domestic hand unite
Friend to friend, lid from lid to part no more,
Consigned alike to that receptacle
So bleak without, so warm and white within?
(11. 226-231)

The meaning of night-caps and night has become more complex throughout the passage. The speaker employs history in his image of the red cap, associated with the bloody "Cap of Freedom" (1. 314) which France symbolically wears during the overthrow of Louis XVI. 16 Appropriately, the night-cap first applies to the country of France as a whole, and second, to the region surrounding Saint-Rambert, the poem's stage. Just as the mention of the night-cap and sleep leads to the speaker's awareness of death, a casual, colloquial exclamation "Fiddle" (1. 244) leads to a discourse on fiddles. The discussion of a "Fiddle-show" (1. 251) with its "Three hundred violin-varieties/ Exposed to public view!" (11. 274-75) introduces the image of a hypothetical night-cap show (1. 277) which would contain the night-caps of artists like Pope, Voltaire, Hogarth, and Cowper as well as of a hanged man (11. 282-99). The comparison between violins and night-caps elevates the latter to the level of artifact.
Not only does the speaker trace the history of nightcaps, but also he gives a knowledgeable account of the building--Miranda's house--which serves as a record of the jeweler's family and their homeland. The area in which the edifice is located was once a priory during the rule of the French monarchy (l. 615). Eventually, the building was bought by Miranda's father "three-and-twenty years ago" (l. 627) and inherited by the son "twelve years since" (l. 639) when the man dies. The speaker leads the friend to anticipate how the estate should now appear and surprises her because she does not plan to see the modern, English garden and house behind the old walls. The "Parc Anglais" (l. 704), the stucco walls, and the tower's Belvedere are Miranda's contribution to the "partial-ruin" (l. 1090);¹⁷ his changes seem to desecrate the antique, holy spot.

The speaker interprets the house and Miranda's profession, which seem so straightforward and conventional, as forbidden and untraditional. The house becomes "the object which determines me/ Victorious or defeated" (l. 560-61), the literal goal toward which he walks. The poet-persona sees the "edifice" (l. 608) as an externalized emblem of Miranda's internal guilt and an other which he reflects upon in order to come to a greater self-understanding.¹⁸ Like the mysterious sea and landscape, the house challenges
the speaker with its peculiar history. Located behind a wall of brick and a solid curtain of trees that "shut in mysteries" (l. 587), the place becomes a symbol of the unknown which invites interpretation. The speaker even views Miranda's job of jeweler as being "no unsuggestive craft" (l. 588), and although he has warned the fair friend against being deceived by surfaces or conventions, the poet-persona himself displays a regard for the superficial glamour that surrounds valuable jewels. He confesses that the trade "admits of much romance, indeed" (l. 589) and recounts tales of "authentic story-books" (l. 593) in which jewels are favored as a ransom (l. 591) or a dowry (l. 592) and in which murder (l. 602) and marriage (ll. 603-604) occur for the sake of gems.

Knowing the tragic outcome of Miranda's story, the poet-persona still misleads the friend and the reader with his description of hypothetical events in the house and tower of Miranda's Clairvaux; the situations ironically cast the protagonist in two roles: the prophet and the patriarch. Like some Elijah or Ezekiel, he is cast as a "solitary" (l. 683) person on the tower who might watch a "stretch/ Of sea and land, throughout the seasons' change" (ll. 681-82), and eliciting the reader's association of Miranda with Noah, the speaker describes how the solitary man might
Winds, welcome wafts of sea-smell, first white bird
That flaps thus far to taste the land again.

(11. 687-89)

The speaker speculates about Miranda as the head of a house-
hold, as one who kisses his "wife" on the tower (11. 684-86)
and who embraces her in the house below (1. 692). By
suggesting that Miranda does indeed have a wife, that he
was a religious man who gave gifts to La Ravissante, and
that Clara did not mind Miranda's generosity to the church,
the speaker encourages the auditor to remark, "Not of the
world, your heroine!" (1. 821). As the perfect man with
the ideal wife, Miranda seems to be the son who is "unsmirched
from top to toe" (1. 914) and whose past is white like an
"old tale of town and country life,/ This rise and progress
of a family" (11. 907-908).

III

It is fitting that the speaker begins his proof of the
metaphorical redness of the countryside by telling about La
Ravissante, who has a small influence over the lives of most
villagers, but profoundly affects Miranda's life. Without
passing judgment on religion, the speaker simply states
certain details about this local saint who motivates
Miranda's tragic leap off his tower. The people in Saint-
Rambert pay homage to the saint as long as they are promised
something in return; the "bluff farmer" (l. 474) is a typical citizen who gives a contribution to La Ravissante after being

. . . admonished well
By wife to care lest his new colewort-crop
Stray sorrowfully sparse like last year's seed.
(ll. 474-76)

By exposing the motives which cause people to act charitably, he is not so much condemning the townfolk as proving that any so-called white deed, such as honoring the Virgin, has its red taint. Humanity must acknowledge the imperfection which inspires most human deeds:

"Heaven" saith the sage "is with us, here inside
Each man:" "Hell also," simplicity subjoins,
By White and Red describing human flesh.
(ll. 556-58)

Just as he gives the histories of night-caps, fiddles, the French Revolution, and Miranda's house, the speaker also traces the folk tradition surrounding the sculpture of La Ravissante which is located at the church. He notes that Eldobert, Bishop of Raimbault (ll. 1193-95), set it "up a-working miracles/ Until the Northmen's fury laid it low" (ll. 1200-1201). After being unearthed by "an egregious sheep" (l. 1202), carried by people to Londres, and restored by "angels" (l. 1210) to Saint-Rambert, the sculpture was finally placed above the portal of the church. The story of the figure's sojournings involves animal, human, and divine agents, and the speaker questions the tale, in part, through
the parenthetical expression that this sculpture is "Art/
In the decrepitude of Decadence" (ll. 1198-99) rather than
"Infantine Art divinely artless" (l. 1198). Miranda, on the
other hand, believes the story of La Ravissante with a naive
faith which the speaker undercuts when he alludes to the
gruesome act of Miranda's hand-burning and says the tale of
La Ravissante

... sucked in along with mother's-milk,
Monsieur Léonce Miranda would dispute
As soon as that his hands were flesh and bone,
Milk-nourished two-and-twenty years before.
(11. 1217-20)

Miranda is the benefactor of the Virgin (11. 511-15)
and experiences much hardship and difficulty in making the
gold crowns for the Virgin and her infant. By making the
crowns, Miranda performs a labor of devotion to this saint.
Since power is no longer determined by sheer physical
strength, material wealth becomes the means by which Miranda
asserts himself. Echoing Herakles' vaunt that he has
crowned the edifice of his labors, the speaker tells how
Miranda travels a great distance to obtain materials for
the diadems:

His shop it was turned out the masterpiece,
Probably at his own expenditure;
Anyhow, his was the munificence
Contributed the central and supreme
Splendour that crowns the crown itself, The Stone,
Not even Paris, ransacked, could supply
That gem: he had to forage in New-York,
This jeweller, and country-gentleman,
And most undisputed devotee beside!
Worthily wived, too.

(11. 516-25)

The stone Miranda locates is his reward for the time he has spent searching for it. Miranda's monetary power has enabled him to crown not only La Ravissante with her headdress, but also his own life with an achievement. Otherwise, his life seems rather wasteful and anti-productive as a jeweler.

Unintentionally mimicking Herakles who plucks an apple from the tree in the Garden of the Hesperides, Miranda taps "the generous bole" (l. 2195), the jewelry firm,

Too near the quick,—it withers to the root—
Leafy, prolific, golden apple-tree,
"Miranda."

(11. 2196-98)

Just as the tree in the myth is guarded by a fierce serpent, the jewelry store's keeper is "dragon-like" (l. 2175) and protects "the precious fruitage" (l. 2177), the gems.

The metaphorical edifice which is associated with Herakles' efforts is also linked with Miranda in the recurrent battlement metaphor. In describing the youthful Miranda's vacillation between worldly and spiritual behavior, the speaker imagines the protagonist telling himself that

Youth, strength, and lustiness can sleep on turf
Yet pace the stony platform afterward:

. . . . . . . . . . . .
And, nigh on Day-of-Judgment trumpet-blast, [they]
Jumped up and manned wall, brisk as any bee?

(11. 1251-60)
A voice called Sganarelle elaborates the idea:

Go pace yon platform and play sentinel!

... . . . . . . . . . .

Stay then, provided that you keep in sight
The battlement, one bold leap lands you by!
(11. 1266-69)

The battlement image persists throughout the speaker's narration about Miranda's life in Paris before he meets Clara. He is referred to as "prospectively a combatant" (1. 1361) and one who "whistled the march-tune 'Warrior to the wall!'" (1. 1363). Sganarelle tells Miranda to enjoy his youth and defer good acts until old age as Eldobert the Bishop did, and in fact, Miranda does model himself upon Eldobert's later life in his edifice-constructing activity. Just as the Bishop "stocked Caen with churches ere he tried hand" (1. 1308) in Saint-Rambert, Miranda builds onto the old priory he inherits as if he were preparing the battlement on which his last struggle of conscience occurs.

Perhaps drawing upon the description of Don Juan in Byron's poem, the speaker in Night-Cap says that Miranda is a combination of his father's passionate, Castilian blood and his mother's cool, French spirit, a blend that creates a "battle in the brain" (1. 1155) between doubt and faith in his youth and between guilt and faith in later life. Miranda chooses to live in a ruin, so it is no surprise that the speaker talks about Miranda's "adventure to walk straight
through life/ The partial-ruin" (ll. 1107-1108). There seems to be an unfinished or ambivalent quality involved in everything that Miranda undertakes or represents. His life as the "best of sons" (l. 1341) and as a rakish boulevardier with five mistresses (ll. 1349-51) indicates his inner conflict and his willingness to compromise social expectations with personal desires.

Although the speaker employs terms which seem to allude to dichotomies between turf and tower, Clara and La Ravissante, or Clairvaux and Paris, the supposed distinctions are rather indistinct. Whether in Paris or in Clairvaux, Miranda maintains an awareness that he could or should mount the battlement of faith and continence, but does not. Nevertheless, a palatable combination between opposites may be symbolized by the "tent . . . a temporary shroud,/ Mock-faith to suit a mimic dwelling-place" (ll. 1372-73). The poet-persona adds that if

. . . folk . . . taunt
That half your rock-built wall is rubble-heap:
Answer them, half their flowery turf is stones!
(ll. 1492-94)

Just as the turf and tower images become blurred, rather than differentiated, Clara and La Ravissante become interrelated. The confusion over the real names of Clara and La Ravissante as well as the correspondence between Clara's worth in jewels and La Ravissante's gem make the two female
forces behind Miranda more alike than different and refute the clear-cut dichotomy which Roma King asserts.19 In explaining Miranda's love for Clara de Millefleurs, a married woman, the poet-persona describes the bond as a "falsish truth" (l. 1491). Not only is she a "polyanthus on his breast,/ Prize-lawful or prize-lawless, flower the same" (ll. 1498-99), but also the object of Miranda's worship, the Virgin, is dubious since the speaker ponders the question, "Was Christianity the Ravissante?" (l. 1501).

Both females promise much but fail to produce salvation for Miranda. Both are femmes fatales who mislead the protagonist; even their names are false or questionable. Although Miranda believes that the church is named for the Virgin, the speaker notes that there are

. . . records to attest
The appellation was a pleasantry,
A pious rendering of Rare Vissante,
The proper name which erst our province bore.
(ll. 1186-89)

Clara de Millefleurs reveals that her real name is "Lucie Steiner" (l. 1659) and her husband's equally non-mellifluous name is "Monsieur Ulysse Muhlhausen" (l. 1667). Likened at one point to a flower, Clara de Millefleurs seems to fit her adopted name, but being an adulteress, she is also described as a floral perversity, a product of "ruddle, bullock's blood,/ Ochre and devils'-dung" (ll. 1507-1508).
Spawned by the "flowery turf" (l. 1494), Clara tells her "martyrdom" (l. 1550) as a fatherless, would-be actress. This story enslaves Miranda and herself to a life of guilt "amid such dainty turf" (l. 1610). Nevertheless, he is as much a victim of La Ravissante who cannot save him since she is only capable of offering false encouragement when she

Smiles on, smiles ever, says to supplicant
"Ay, ay, ay"—like some kindly weathercock.
(ll. 1624-25)

The speaker utilizes red and white images to show how ambiguous Clara's character is. In describing the "happy half-and-half/ Existence" (ll. 1738-39) that Clara and Miranda share in their house for twenty years, the poet-persona likens them to "white domestic pigeon pairs secure" (l. 1744). Conflating this bird-metaphor with a Biblical allusion to the woman caught in adultery, the speaker says that he will not "throw first stone" (l. 1755) at the bird's egg in the nest. Addressing Clara, he metaphorically throws a "sugarplum against your cheek" (l. 1756), a deed which "wipes off rouge" (l. 1757) but also indicts her as the adulterous woman. The "rouge" links her with the speaker's assumed association between sin, violence, and the color red. Yet by contrast to her behavior, Clara's real name "Lucie" and the assumed name mean "light" and "clarity," respectively, and suggest her innocence. Also, Clara's light coloring
suggests a superficial whiteness which makes her appear more white than red. Rather than being a romantic heroine of idealized love, Clara is "no dream" (l. 823) because she is "singularly colourless" (l. 835), "blonde" (l. 836), "forty full" (l. 840), "featureless" (l. 843), and a "blur of a blank" (l. 877). The unflattering catalogue of flaws is equalled by the speaker's description of the ludicrous procession he observes near the house one day after Miranda's death. Madame Miranda, a female companion, "two giant goats," and "two prodigious sheep" (l. 884) appear, and "one great naked sheep-face" (l. 891) which stopped to smell the man's hand seems to be more human than the Madame's "silvery phantom-like/ Figure" (ll. 879-80). To mask any sympathy that he might have for Clara, the speaker adopts the language of socially-acceptable prudishness. His feigned coyness about using the word "whore" to describe Clara shows how the speaker ridicules society for despising her, yet he does not lose his credibility as a spokesman for normative, social behavior when he describes Clara as Miranda's "old and out-worn . . . what we blush to name" (l. 2400). In an ethopoeia of Miranda's cousins' collective thought, the same device of word-avoidance occurs when the speaker says, "Monsieur Léonce Miranda was divorced/ Once and for ever from his--ugly word" (ll. 2690-91).
Having more affinities with one another than differences, Clara and La Ravissante are both associated with jewels and hence with Miranda's profession. When Clara's revelation about her humble past confirms Miranda's love for her, the speaker describes the moment when

... the concluding necessary shake
... bids the tardy mixture crystallize
... shoot up shaft,
Durably diamond.

(11. 1786-89)

Since Clara becomes "all the world" (1. 1817) to him at that point, the diamond represents not only the solidity of their attachment, but also the irreversibility of their actions. Miranda's downfall and his inability to achieve the miraculous redemption which he expects from La Ravissante are preordained at this time when he commits himself to Clara. The crystal, diamond, or gem-metaphors related to her echo the speaker's description of La Ravissante's famous gem within her gold crown: the stone which "gratefully bore me as on arrow-flash/ To Clairvaux" (11. 754-55). Miranda has no conception of any jewel as an aesthetic object although the speaker notes that the jeweler owns

... chests chokeful with gold and silver changed
By Art to forms where wealth forgot itself,
And caskets where reposed each pullet-egg
Of diamond, slipping flame from fifty slants.

(11. 1843-46)

He simply tries to purge himself by giving the jewel to La
Ravissante as a sacrifice and to pay off Clara's husband, Muhlhausen, when he appears

Deity-like from dusk machine of fog,
And claims his consort, or his consort's worth
In rubies which her price is far above.
(1l. 1879-81)

Parodying Solomon's proverb that a virtuous wife is worth more than rubies, the speaker derides Muhlhausen for literally wanting the gems if he cannot have his wife.21

Miranda and Clara unreasonably assert that their home will become a paradise of "Permanency" (1. 2005) where "change is all we dread" (1. 2006). By seeking to affirm permanency so strongly, they only succeed in effecting their failure in a world where perpetual flux is the norm. Their quest, paradoxically, involves change since they must remodel their edifice and change it into their idea of Eden. Self-exiled from Paris, they live "in Norman solitude, the Paris life" (1. 2065) by surrounding themselves with Parisian art. Although Miranda collects art, he is no "artist-soul" (1. 2090), but a "dilettante" (1. 2098) who "nowise cared to be/ Creative" (ll. 2092-93). His interest in art is a way to pass time and ignore "all that's outside the temporary tent,/ The dim grim outline of the circuit-wall" (ll. 2110-11). The Parisian art and English architecture to which Miranda is drawn indicate his desire to seem cultured rather than to
cultivate a true aesthetic appreciation. Miranda is a remodeler of his house, and this role casts him as an artificer of sorts; rather than saving him, the belvedere he builds is a means to his end.

Miranda's lack of aesthetic awareness of the jewels and the artworks which he owns sets him apart from artists, architects, and writers--such as the speaker who is a poet. Nevertheless, by role-playing and pretending what it must be like to be a painter, musician, or poet (ll. 2116-133), Miranda identifies with the suffering artist: the painter whose "eye grew dim" (l. 2119), the musician who "might well die deaf" (l. 2123), or a poet like Corneille who is "dying and in want of sustenance" (l. 2133). Miranda is only fascinated by the maddening aspects of artists' lives rather than the normal, creative experiences; this preference for dissolution, blindness, and deafness is indicated by his attraction to the dying, incapacitated, and suffering artists and by his construction of a tower which leads to his annihilation, the ultimate incapacitation.

The triumvirate of femmes fatales drives Miranda to frenzy, for just as Clara and La Ravissante cause him to commit two irrevocable deeds—adultery and suicide, his mother drives him to attempt suicide and self-mutilation. Her claims of piety, however, are undercut by her behavior.
Rather than object to Clara on moral principles, the real "Madame Miranda" (l. 2201) simply takes issue with Miranda's extravagance in his renovation of the estate for Clara's pleasure. Although she wants her son to honor her as if "she had reached the Towers/ And there took pastime: he was still on Turf" (ll. 2260-61), she is no better than Miranda: "She played at cards, he built a Belvedere" (l. 2259).

In describing Miranda's suffering on account of his mother, the speaker recalls the image of gems, which once described Miranda's love for Clara, to characterize his unhappy experiences in Paris with his relatives. There, he argues with his mother:

And so the unseemly words were interchanged
Which crystallize what else evaporates,
And make mere misty petulance grow hard
And sharp inside each softness, heart and soul.
(ll. 2266-69)

Burning the letters from Clara that are like "precious stones" (l. 2559) to him, he also destroys his hands in the fire as an act of expiation which purges him so that he can live with Clara as a "Brother" (l. 2756):

I tried my jewels in a crucible:
Fierce fire has felt them, licked them, left them sound.
Don't tell me that my earthly love is sham,
My heavenly fear a clever counterfeit!
Each may oppose each, yet be true alike!
(ll. 2840-44)
When the dead mother's priest acts as "spokesman for his corpse" (l. 2371) and condemns Miranda for breaking her heart, the son becomes "like a stone" (l. 2378). His decision to make the pious, greedy cousins his heirs, to renounce Clara, and to deprive himself of joy and comfort is determined then when "resolution chilled/ His blood and changed his swimming eyes to stone" (ll. 2449-50). Describing the scene of repentance ironically as "a sight to melt a stone" (l. 2490), the speaker suggests that the cousins' supposedly therapeutic, forgiving handclasps are cold and unloving. The poet-persona implies that they would prefer to receive "some diamond knob" (l. 2500) in payment for their forgiveness and that Miranda has sold his birthright too cheaply.

Reflecting on the unsympathetic persons surrounding Miranda, the speaker laments that his protagonist has no "angel" (l. 2883) to counsel and encourage him to find help from the priest in Saint-Rambert. The deceased poet Milsand (l. 2945) serves as an example of an ideal friend who is desired and needed by the sufferer.22 Miranda's lack of an acquaintance to counsel and console him results in the tragic misconception that his problem's solution lies in the miracle which La Ravissante may work, not in the pedestrian counsel of a person. Instead of turning to someone in Saint-Rambert,
he reorients himself, geographically and mentally, the "other way,/ And got him guidance of The Ravissante" (ll. 2948-49). The Virgin and her supernatural associations are a more potent force in Miranda's imagination because she combines the feminine appeal of Clara and the intangible state of the deceased mother. Nevertheless, the speaker indicates that the church of La Ravissante is no better than a pagan, Greek temple, for there Miranda has attempted to bribe friends and thereby purge his ever-present guilt:

Forthwith he bade a cask of wine be broached
To satisfy all comers, till, dead-drunk
So satisfied, they strewd the holy place.
For this was grown religious and a rite.
( 1. 3145-48)

In the final section of Night-Cap, the speaker presents his version of what the desperate Miranda might have said to himself when he climbed to the belvedere in April and fell to his death (ll. 3288-591).

Although the speaker suggests that Clara, La Ravissante, and the mother are interrelated in Miranda's subconsciousness, he has Miranda consciously distinguish between the saint and Clara as punishing and passive females, respectively, and has him entirely ignore the powerful mother. When Miranda says La Ravissante "spoke first, promised best, and threatened most" (1. 3327) while "the other never threatened, promised, spoke/ A single word" (ll. 3328-29), he discounts
the twenty years that Clara spends with him as his nurse and companion and overlooks the unstated promise implicit in her deeds. If anyone "spoke first," it is not La Ravissante or Clara, but the mother who cared for and disciplined him as a child. Unknowingly, he attributes qualities to the Virgin which apply to the controlling mother when he says the Virgin has power "to punish or reward" (l. 3333). Also, the rebuke of a dead mother is similar to the silence he associates with Clara, so neither La Ravissante or Clara seems to be viewed by Miranda as being solely herself; each is a reflection of the mother who is punitive, yet wordless.

Calling himself a seeker of the "life-tree apples" (l. 3356), Miranda pleads with La Ravissante to work a miracle and to give "those life-apples" (l. 3359) to him. He asks that she break "fixed laws" (l. 3480) of physics and "save, poor world so ignorant" (l. 3481) by sending angels to carry him through the air from Clairvaux to her church. Hoping the proposed flight would be a sign of personal redemption, Miranda asserts that the "old things shall pass away and all be new!" (l. 3562). But rather than renouncing his past, he seeks to have his behavior sanctioned:

My past with all its sorrow, sin and shame,
Becomes a blank, a nothing! There she stands,
Clara de Millefleurs, all deodorized,
Twenty years' stain wiped off her innocence!
(11. 3566-69)
Not only would she have no sin in this hypothetical situation, but also Clara would lack an identity and the past experiences which have shaped her if Miranda were to assume that "there never was Muhlhausen" (11. 3570). The leap off the tower is supposed to deliver several golden apples to Miranda: the justification of his half-believed faith in La Ravissante, the purification of Clara, and the overcoming of family objections, especially his mother's posthumous censure.

After relating the death of Miranda, the speaker turns his focus on Clara, the hardy survivor who is neither as mad as Miranda nor as virtuous as she could have been. As one who endures great suffering, Clara does save the speaker, reader, and herself by performing certain healing acts. Showing his need to be distanced from Miranda's tragedy, the speaker asks that Clara stand "with interposing sweep of robe,/ Between us and this horror!" (11. 3624-25). The reader and the fair friend are included in the speaker's "us" and shielded by Clara. After the loss of her companion, she survives the death as if she were "one galley-slave . . . encumbered with a corpse-companion" (11. 3651-53). While enduring the verbal attacks of Miranda's cousins who say she
reduced Miranda to "a heap grotesque/ Of fungous flourishing excrescence" (ll. 3760-61), she tells them off by explaining that all of Miranda's wealth has been left to La Ravissante, not to her or them. She points out that the cousins have no right to judge her: "And who is it casts stone at me but you?" (l. 3939). Just as the adulterous woman was accused by other sinful people, Clara is unjustly condemned by people no better than she. Although the speaker has called her an "ugly word" and tries to be socially proper in his condemnation of Clara, he finally repudiates all previous intimations about her character when he announces that

                      . . . Of the masks
                      That figure in this little history,
                      She only has a claim to my respect.  
                      (ll. 3993-95)

Although she is not morally scrupulous, she is aesthetically appealing to the speaker who likens her to a Meissonier painting (l. 4025) or a grub which becomes a "butterfly,/ Upon unlimited Miranda-leaf" (ll. 4100-101). She lacks the internal, ethical stability requisite to renounce her dependence on external emblems of solidity, so like the prince and Juan, she endures, not by moving to a new landscape or a new psychological state as Herakles and Balaustion do; she remains alone in Miranda's house after the court declares that

                      In mere discharge, then, of conspicuous debt,
Madame Muhlhausen has priority, 
Enjoys the usufruct of Clairvaux. 
(11. 4182-84)

She spends the last part of her life in domestic isolation within the walls of her home, and the speaker foresees an imminent death for her.

Finishing his tale about Miranda, the speaker indicates that he has been recording his confrontation with the auditor, an event which occurred "months ago and miles away" (l. 4232). He has returned to London in order to distance himself from the place where Miranda's tragedy happened and where he and his fair friend "paced the sands before my house" (l. 4234). Perhaps the poet-persona covertly fears the death which threatened his story's protagonist. By placing miles between himself and his rented home in Saint-Rambert, he cushions, saves, and reorients himself in a large metropolis. The speaker affirms his own safe situation by introducing a final image of light to balance his implicit fear of life's inevitable night--death. The speaker wonders if his fiction about suffering, lust, and death may serve as a star-like beacon which tells

The drowsy world to start awake, rub eyes, 
And stand all ready for morn's joy a-blush? 
(11. 4246-47)

His language suggests an apocalyptic event which shall startle those who sleep in darkness.
IV

The all-powerful speakers in *Night-Cap* and *Album* are similar because both are detached from the dangerous events they describe. The prophetic voice of the speaker at the end of *Night-Cap* confirms his elevated position above the foolish and sleeping world; he keeps his distance from the characters in his tale because he wants to be one of the elect who anticipates the sunlight. On the other hand, it is more difficult to understand the motives of the poet-persona in *Album* since he prefers to speak in the third-person. In fact, the speaker in *Album* seems to avoid self-revelation as much as the speaker in *Night-Cap* seeks to explain his position. Nevertheless, both speakers are involved in contemplative adventure and do not meet or interact with the personae in the poems' embedded fictions.

In *Album*, the speaker even declines to open the narrative with his own voice, for unlike other poems' speakers, he begins with a persona's fictive speech. He has the older man authoritatively commanding the youth to hand him the inn's album. After gambling all night, the man intends to compute how much money he owes the youth by writing in the books' margin. By chance, the man reads some lines he finds in the album which are supposedly Browning's, but he misjudges the poet as a neglector of form and indicates his
own lack of perception. In actuality, the lines he reads which do not rhyme contain shorter lines which do rhyme, and the man simply does not catch the clue provided by the capitalized words "On" and "Of" which indicate the beginning of new lines:

"If a fellow can dine On rump-steaks and port wine,
He needs not despair Of dining well here-"
"Here!" I myself could find a better rhyme!
That bard's a Browning; he neglects the form:
But ah, the sense, ye gods, the weighty sense!
Still, I prefer this classic.
(11. 14-19)

The poet-persona indicates his own viewpoint regarding the man while heightening the reader's sense of his detachment from the action and the personae in the inn.

This role of the speaker is more important than some critics have indicated; the theatrical aspects of the poem have long preoccupied those who read Album as a second-rate drama in verse and who discuss it in terms of dramatic terminology. William Clyde DeVane comments that the poem was originally conceived as a play; the poem still obeys the unities of time, place, and action and mixes narrative and dramatic dialogue.24 J. M. Hitner echoes DeVane and labels the work a drama of evil, anti-heroism, and naturalism.25 Roma King calls the inn an Ibsenesque stage for melodrama on which the lady chooses a purposeful death in order to show her self-awareness,26 and Philip Drew labels the woman's
death the dramatic climax of the work. Clyde de L. Ryals anatomizes and labels the poem "a series of monologues joined by narrative passages" as if there were no over-riding framework to give order to the poem. Ryals suggests that the narrator only serves to come between the audience and the characters and destroys the dramatic illusion. Nevertheless, the speaker's manipulative control is evident in all parts of the poem, not only in the "narrative passages," as Ryals calls them. The coincidence that four personae whose lives are so closely interrelated should meet at the inn implies that the poet-persona is asserting a god-like power over the setting and the characters in his fiction.

In this inn and the four actors in it, the speaker indicates the potential violence in civilized society. By describing the landscape which is visible from the inn's window, the speaker imagines the evolution of the village and inn within the wilderness:

. . . except the red-roofed patch
Of half a dozen dwellings that, crept close
For hill-side shelter, make the village-clump,
This inn is perched above to dominate--
. . . . . .
There's nothing to disturb absolute peace,
The reign of English nature--which means art
And civilized existence. Wildness' self
Is just the cultured triumph. Presently
Deep solitude, be sure, reveals a Place
That knows the right way to defend itself:
Silence hems round a burning spot of life. Now, where a Place burns, must a village brood, And where a village broods, an inn should boast—Close and convenient: here you have them both. (11. 55-70)

The speaker subtly ridicules the mistaken view which people tend to have about nature as an orderly and artistic force. They do not believe in the potential destructiveness of wilderness or themselves. In the inn, the edifice in which the characters act, the death and suffering which occur imitate the chaos usually found in the wild, not in polite circles. The speaker undercuts the particular view that nature in England is somehow superior to that in other cultures. There is no reason to assume that the inn should dominate the village or that the location of the latter within the barren country has been preordained. Rather than being a location of utter calmness and silence, wilderness takes control in the village's focal point—the inn. Although the album's line "Hail, calm acclivity, salubrious spot!" (1. 11) is repeated throughout the work to emphasize the inn's virtues, the fact that two personae die in the "salubrious spot" suggests that the saying and the album in which it appears are fictions which cannot subdue the destructive, human passion and natural wildness found in man.

Throughout the poem, the four personae use lines from the album, write in it, and sometimes speak as if their
words were modelled upon the album's writings, for they seem to believe that the words in the album are valid truths. When the man writes the threat to the lady in the album, she feels that she must kill herself because of that written intimidation. When the lady writes in the album and absolves the youth from murder, the lady believes her comment justifies the deed. The "salubrious spot" phrase which appears there leads the characters to assume falsely that a calm center exists within the inn and the town, but by the time that the girl uses the line at the poem's end (I. 3078), the reader no longer believes the saying. The irony of the statement has been empirically proven by the final death scene.

By contrast, the speaker creates a fiction that is superior to the inn's album, and he reveals the truly uncivilized wildness in mankind. Ryals asserts that the album contains the essentials of the entire tale because it bears the ciphering of the older man, his extortion threat, and the absolution of the youth by the lady; however, the tale is much more than a few written statements and numbers. The album actually is the antithesis of the narrator's fiction, the poem, since he indirectly attacks everything the album stands for—the conventional optimism and phraseology. The speaker probably agrees with the youth who alludes scornfully
to the "Mild Acclivity/ In album-language" (11. 260-61). Instead of relying on the staid, old fictions, the poet-persona forms a new, intimate bond with the informed reader who intuit that the calmness of the poem's spot is an invalid construct. The reader and speaker form a cozy group of enlightened survivors who distance themselves from death and suffering. By telling the tale of the four personae, two of whom are dead, the speaker edifies the reader and teaches him that "civilized existence" (1. 63) is undesirable if epitomized by the self-centeredness of the cultured, older man and the wasted life of the lady.

The embedded tale bears a resemblance to Frye's fifth phase of tragedy because the personae suddenly fall to death in their seemingly secure existence. The lady's unrelenting drive toward expiation and self-torment for her past affair and the man's destructive lust foreshadow their demise because they already exist in a death-in-life situation. The man's end seems to be a justly deserved punishment for his evil threat against the lady and his manipulation of the youth, and the lady's death seems to release her from worldly cares. Hitner calls her refusal to tell the husband about her past a fatal flaw which effects her death, but her longing for release from life is found in the elm imagery before she is ever threatened by the older man. When he
promises to reveal her past, the threat seems to be an immediate cause for her suicide. Nevertheless, her death is the result of a long-standing, psychological burden which she has felt ever since her affair with the man, and she seeks to escape from a future filled with self-reproach. Park Honan concludes that the older man is a destructive, tragic protagonist because he causes his own downfall by misusing the album; when he writes the threat to the lady in it, he transforms it into his death warrant. 33

The man's downfall is foreshadowed by the juxtaposition of himself to the youth. Circumstances and imagery intensify the unspoken rivalry between the two. The youth assumes a dominant role as successful gambler and virile suitor of the girl, and his successes probably heighten the aging, unmarried man's sense of loss. The fact that the older man's brother is a duke (l. 240) while the youth's father is a warehouse owner (l. 242) indicates the disparity of their heredity as well as their environment. Imagistically, the speaker creates a contrast of red and white like that found in Night-Cap and associates the colors with the youth and man, respectively, as the former "grasps/ In his large red the little lean white hand" (ll. 255-56) of the latter. Such an association with the color of passion ironically foreshadows the youth's violence in this gesture of kindness;
both the murder and the handclasp are a result of the young man's impetuousness. Conceding that the youth "stands forth a hero" (l. 236), the older man expresses what he fears his protégé is thinking:

. . . There, my lord!  
Our play was true play, fun not earnest! I  
Empty your purse, inside out, while my poke  
Bulges to bursting? . . .

. . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . .
. . . We've had a palpitating night!  
Good morning! Breakfast and forget our dreams!  
My mouth's shut, mind! I tell nor man nor mouse.  
(II. 236-45)

Contrasting the suggestive image of his empty purse with the youth's bulging one, the man reveals his fear of being unmanned by a novice.

The youth would rather forget the man's debt because he feels that his older companion has made him live more fully after "one year's tutelage" (l. 331). Refuting the man's implication that the youth feels superior to him, the younger describes himself as a Timon of Athens who is befriended by the elder and saved from a life of misanthropy. Just as Timon has both sociable and antisocial behavior, the youth claims he would have changed from an amiable person into a lonely and unhappy one (ll. 302-25). In fact, Derek A. Traversi's comment on Timon's tirades seems applicable not only to the youth, but also to Herakles in Herakles, because all three personae--Timon, the youth, and Herakles--have a
potential for hatred and violence beneath their calm demeanor:

the hatred that represents the reverse side of Timon's "generosity"... has always been present as a possibility in him and... has only been clothed in the garb of a facile sociability.

Ironically, by befriending the youth, the elder initiates the events which shall lead to his death. The more he asserts his control over the youth, the weaker he becomes:

The fact is— you do compliment too much
Your humble master, as I own I am;

. . . . . . . . . . . . .

. . . . You see,
I'm old and understand things: too absurd
It were you pitched and tossed away your life,
As diamond were Scotch-pebble! all the more,
That I myself misused a stone of price.

(11. 402-14)

Significantly, he tells his tale to the youth about a lost love, misses his train out of the town, and thereby contributes to his murder because he remains in the "calm acclivity."

The unspoken rivalry between the young and the old man is heightened by the fact that both have loved the same woman. The older man says his failure to marry the lady has been "the turning-point/ Of my whole life and fortune" (11. 767-68). Being a professed "woman-liker" (1. 657), the man tells the youth how he first sees the beautiful lady and tells himself:
... Haste, secure whate'er the cost
This rarity, die in the act, be damned,
So you complete collection, crown your list!
(11. 673-75)

The Heraklean vaunt about crowning the edifice is echoed by this Don Juanesque lover who seeks to crown his slate of seduced women with the lady. His seduction of her, his lies that they would eventually marry, and his subsequent proposal after the lady has already been humiliated by his rejection of marriage lead him to feel a degree of remorse for his actions. Rather than growing beyond his selfishness and learning to love her for herself, he maintains a distorted view of the lady and values her for what he "might have gained had we kept side by side" (1. 820). Not knowing that they are both speaking about the same lady, the youth tells how he met and fell in love with a woman who belonged to another man. Just as the man sees the lady's refusal to marry him as a turning point, the youth meets her just after he has come "of age" (1. 899). Both men speak of her in terms of imagery which suggests death as well as a womb-like security; the older man describes the lady in her unseduced state as residing in "that safe den of darkness where she dozed/ Till I stole in" (11. 680-81) while the youth refers to his memory of her as "the black depths" (1. 1036).

Just as the men share certain interests and feelings of
competition, the lady and the girl are two versions of the fragile, female spirit: the former is experienced and disillusioned; the latter is naive and idealistic. An elm tree outside the inn's window becomes the object which both women contemplate, and the difference in their interpretations of the elm illustrates their disparate outlooks. Hitner calls the elm a symbol of the noumenal, but the tree is also a phenomenal reality which is subject to nature's destructiveness. The lady identifies with the elm when she likens her life to a "spoiled tree" (l. 1563) which is transplanted to the clergyman, "the rock/ Which never dreamed a straw would settle there" (ll. 1594-95). Rather than advise the girl to marry, she addresses the elm and expresses her longing for "sleep" (l. 1334) beneath it:

O you exceeding beauty, bosomful
Of lights and shades, murmurs and silences,
Sun-warmth, dew-coolness,—squirrel, bee and bird,
High, higher, highest, till the blue proclaims
"Leave earth, there's nothing better till next step
Heavenward!"—so, off flies what has wings to help!
(ll. 1142-47)

The detailed description of the tree's animal-inhabitants, appearance, and sounds indicates that she perceives the tree as a real, external object; nevertheless, she also uses the elm as a vehicle for imaginative escapism. It is significant that the youth has wanted to "drop" (l. 1208) the tree, for if he could have married the lady, there would be no need
for it as a symbol of escape. By contrast to the woman, the
girl sees the tree as "the fairy marriage-tree" (l. 1164)
instead of "an English ordinary elm" (ll. 1159). She
neither possesses the lady's disillusionment with wedlock,
nor expects that her proposed union might be unhappy.

V.

After setting up the basic similarities and differences
between the two men and women in the inn, the speaker
presents the two crucial confrontations between the lady and
man as well as the youth and man. She views the older man
as if he were Alkestis' captor:

When I shall think to glide into the grave,
There will you wait disguised as beckoning Death,
And catch and capture me for evermore!
(ll. 1407-1409)

Although she feels threatened by him, he feels equally
frightened by her dark appearance because he calls her the
"woman-fiend" (l. 1444) with

The low wide brow oppressed by sweeps of hair
Darker and darker as they coil and swathe
The crowned corpse-wanness.
(ll. 1446-48)

Hurt and vengeful, she asserts the man murdered their "dead
love" (l. 1864) while he asserts that there was "no love to
wrong" (l. 1863). When the youth first sees the man and
lady together, he intuits their past relationship in a
moment. Describing the predicament as "the game/ Of life"
(11. 2077-78), the youth claims he does not know "Who is who and what/ Is what, o' the board now, since an hour went by"
(11. 2088-89).

The youth's analogy of this situation to a game applies equally well to the conflict between himself and the man, between the man and the lady, and within himself. The first agon is an Oedipal struggle in which the older man is a father-figure who is threatened by the younger man, so when the latter finally kills the former, the struggle is resolved in the crudest, most primitive manner. The contest between the man and woman revolves around the game of passion. The man takes up the metaphor when he describes the affair:

... we but played "for love"
She won my love; had she proposed for stakes "Marriage,"--why, that's for whist, a wiser game.
Whereat she raved at me, as losers will,
And went her way.

(11. 2503-2507)

Within the consciousness of the youth, there is a third struggle between his serving the man or the lady. Such a choice recalls the topos of Herakles' judgment between Vice and Virtue. 36

There seems to be a love-hate relationship among the three personae involved in this love-triangle. The youth performs the rescue of the lady although she proclaims that she "scarcely could have loved" (1. 2177) him if she had
been "free as air when first" (l. 2176) they met. She feels that she was fated to love the older man and his falsehood, but she notes that the youth too was attracted to both her and the man and hypothesizes that "missing me, you were ready for this man" (l. 2193). By reacting with such sudden brutality toward the man, the youth may be displacing the resentment and hurt he felt when the lady rejected him. Motivated by a desire to share pain with another being and not to enlighten the youth, the older man attempts to procure the lady for his protégé. The man tempts the youth by suggesting that she is "the fruit to pluck/ Or let alone at pleasure" (ll. 2614-15), and he taunts his "friend" as if he were a timid Adam at the Tree of Knowledge or Herakles at the tree of the Hesperides:

... Next advance  
In knowledge were beyond you! Don't expect  
I bid a novice--pluck, suck, send sky-high  
Such fruit, once taught that neither crab nor sloe  
Falls readier prey to who but robs a hedge,  
Than this gold apple to my Hercules.  
Were you no novice but proficient--then,  
Then, truly, I might prompt you--Touch and taste,  
Try flavour and be tired as soon as I!  
(ll. 2615-23)

The contest between the youth and the man terminates with a violent action which is a fitting punishment for the latter's inhumanity. The man's behavior becomes more satanic, and the images associated with him more bestial as he panders
to the youth. The latter sees his mentor in a different light after he learns of his evil behavior toward the lady:

. . . he's
Both dwarf and giant, vulture, wolf, dog, cat,
Serpent and scorpion, yet man all the same.
(11. 2764-66)

Calling them his "son and daughter the exemplary" (1. 2897), the older man desperately tries to become their surrogate father, master (1. 2900), and doctor (1. 2924). Unintentionally echoing the youth's perverse, animalistic metaphors for the man, he describes himself as an "old dog" (1. 2919) who shall eye their "frisky puppyhood" (1. 2920).

The second struggle between the woman and the man is described in terms of literary allusions. Philip Drew contends that Album is Miltonic because of the allusions to Paradise Lost and because the lady is reminiscent of the virtuous one in Comus; however, the allusions only point out the difference between Milton's personae and those found in Album. The lady in Album lacks the motive of pure virtue found in Milton's lady: her deeds for the poor people who are under her husband's pastoral care are done out of a desire for punishment, not out of mercy for them; she actually scorns the objects of her service and reproaches herself for helping them half-heartedly. Likening herself to a poem, she declares that she would be Dante's Inferno,
not *Paradise Lost* (ll. 1337-42). When she describes the older man, she says,

Safe let him slink hence till some subtler Eve
Than I, anticipate the snake--bruise head
Ere he bruise heel--or, warier than the first,
Some Adam purge earth's garden of its pest
Before the slaver spoil the Tree of Life!
(11. 2227-31)

Unlike the lady in *Comus*, she has created a living Hell for herself in her own home which is "my house/ Of bondage" (ll. 1802-1803). Rather, she resembles Satan in *Paradise Lost* who wishes he could die and cannot. Her longing for death is not the joyful anticipation of one seeking eternal reward; she only wants to escape and sleep. Parodying the lady in *Comus* who sits motionless on Comus' enchanted chair and who refuses his sexual advances, the lady sits "possessed in patience; prison-roof/ Shall break one day and Heaven beam overhead" (ll. 1831-32). Her rebuff of the man indicates that she is too world-weary to resemble Eve, and when she speaks to her "Adversary" (1. 2043), the once-fallen woman resists the second temptation:

.... I am stable, uninvolved by you
In the rush downwards: free I gaze and fixed;
Your smiles, your tears, prayers, curses move alike
My crowned contempt.
(11. 2049-52)

Echoing Herakles' image of crowning the edifice, the lady now triumphs in spirit over the man with her "crowned contempt."
When the man leaves the youth and lady together for the first time, the protégé resolves his inner conflict by repudiating his old master. Favoring the lady, the youth kills the man in order to free her from danger, and he thereby becomes the dominant male in the covert Oedipal conflict and wins the lady as a mother-figure because she has, in fact, described her femininity in terms of "motherhood; / All love begins and ends there" (11. 2713-14). Wishing she had been able to warn the youth and prevent his being seduced by the man, she uses the image of Herakles rescuing Alkestis and places herself in the role of the hero who "sustained a soul" (1. 2692):

So had I missed the momentary thrill
Of finding me in presence of a god,
But gained the god's own feeling when he gives
Such thrill to what turns life from death before.
(11. 2695-98)

She tries to save the youth not only by her spoken admonition, but also by her writing in the album which absolves the youth of his murder. Being both a mother-figure and a martyr-like savior, she appeals to the youth in two ways that the man, a demonic persecutor, cannot.

After these three agons are resolved within the plot, the narrator has the final word when he commands that the curtain should fall on the last scene where two personae lie dead and the girl awaits a startling revelation. Like
the girl who stands with the door between herself and the horrible scene inside the room, the reader is divided from the tragic fiction by the speaker who acts as a protective buffer. In the edifice of mourning, the inn, the man, lady, and youth all attempt to save themselves or another unsuccessfully, but none saves so well as the speaker. The poet-persona asserts the ultimate control in the poem—the power to begin, structure, and end the fiction.

In Night-Cap and Album, the elements of Heraklean madness are displaced into the violent, domestic tragedies of Miranda, Clara, and the man and woman at the inn. The nameless speakers are detached artists who appear to be more sane and successful than the protagonists within the stories they tell. There are intimations of fear in the seemingly sane speaker of Night-Cap who must distance himself from Saint-Rambert and return to London at the poem's end to write the story he has told to his fair friend. Miranda's madness is obviously a threat. The speaker in Album does not detach himself by distance or time, but he assumes a third-person voice which makes him seem more aloof and omniscient than the four personae he describes. By contrast to the poet-personae, the characters in the embedded fictions of Night-Cap and Album end their lives in or near an edifice, a symbol of stagnation and not of security. Miranda and Clara
seem to be prisoners of their house while two personae in the inn die there. The man and lady lose their lives while the youth and girl have experiences which carry them from the carefree realm of frivolity and innocence to a recognition of suffering and mortality.
NOTES FOR CHAPTER IV

1 Griffin and Minchin, p. 252.

2 Philip Drew calls the poem tragic (Poetry, p. 322) as does Clyde de L. Ryals (p. 94). Ryals implies that Miranda's faith in La Ravissante is wrong because the saint belongs to past history (p. 96), and the critic sees the death of Miranda as a sign of religion's failure. Unfortunately, such an interpretation distorts the poem and imposes an anti-religious attitude upon Browning. The real failure lies in Miranda himself.

3 Frye, p. 185.

4 Frye, pp. 202-203.

5 Ryals likens Juan to the speaker of Night-Cap (p. 85), but the latter does not try to twist the argument to suit his lusts; he is trying only to tell a story.

6 Browning, Works, VII, 1. 4232.

7 DeVane laments that "no great characters emerge" and that "we are left with the vulgar, contemporary story and the figures of a diseased man and a most ordinary woman for hero and heroine" (Handbook, p. 374). The critical pendulum swings in the opposite direction when Ryals asserts that the
ideal is found in the real when the poet transforms a "distasteful" tale (p. 100).


10 Frye, p. 238.

11 Mark P. O. Morford and Robert J. Lenardon, Classical Mythology, Second edition (New York: David McKay Co., 1977), p. 373. Ronald Paulson calls Herakles' choice the most pervasive topos in eighteenth-century art (Emblem and Expression, [Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1975]). Browning may have been influenced by this topos because on the surface, Miranda's choice might be compared to the traditional choice of Herakles between the two personifications, Vice and Virtue. In Prodicus of Ceos' tale which is recorded by Xenophon and Cicero, the young Herakles is faced with the alternatives embodied by two women—Vice, representing ease, and Virtue, representing hardship. Herakles selects Virtue, and Miranda, La Ravissante, whom he trusts with his life. The saint corresponds to Herakles' Virtue while Clara, an adulteress, resembles Vice. In "The Statue and the Bust," Browning has championed the unconventional love between a man and a woman, and in Night-Cap, one cannot say that Browning portrays Clara as a totally vile
person because of her deeds. In fact, the poem's speaker becomes more tolerant of Clara as his tale progresses.

12 Frye, p. 237.

13 Since *Album* appears in 1875 with *AA*, the Euripidean influence, especially the savior and madman aspects of the Heraklean personality, may be anticipated by the reader. John Miegs Hitner suggests that *Album* might be evaluated in terms of Euripidean elements but does not show how such an analysis could be done. He states that the poem "comes closest to the genre of tragicomedy" (*Browning's Analysis of a Murder* [Marquette: Northern Michigan University Press, 1969], p. 75), but he tends to speak in vague generalities: it is tragic because it is emotional, dignified, and noble and comic because it is logical, fallible, and mediocre (p. 159).

14 Ryals likens the speaker to Browning as Roma King and Donald Smalley do. Smalley feels that Browning speaks in his own voice in order to "proceed more directly to give his hero's thoughts" ("Special Pleading in the Laboratory" in *Browning's Essays on Chatterton* [1948], rpt. in *BC*, p. 206). Roma King sees the poem as a series of loosely-structured conflicts between Browning and Miss Thackeray, Browning and Miranda, Miranda and his family or society,
and Miranda's internal beliefs (Artifice, p. 192). Clyde de L. Ryals suggests that the parlor debate between the poet and his auditor is only in the poet's words and is a self-dialogue rather than a discussion with an auditor (p. 87). Ryals feels the poet reflects on a "few sordid facts" (p. 96) and employs "casual humor and philosophical observation" in order to articulate his own views (p. 100).

King suggests that Browning casts Miranda as a victim of social and religious institutions because Browning seems to associate "the church with the devil, the instrument of human destruction rather than of light." King devalues the speaker's structuring of the poem because he feels there is no single unifying theme, except Miranda's conflict between the two ravishers--Clara and La Ravissante. These two female figures represent other simplistic dichotomies that King emphasizes--turf and towers, Paris and the country, flesh and spirit, and red and white. Perceiving no sympathetic bond between the speaker and Miranda, King finds the jocularity of the speaker to be inconsistent with the tragic "spirit of the poem" (Artifice, pp. 189-92). Nevertheless, the spirit of the work is determined, in part, by the speaker's so-called "parlor argument" with his auditor and is not violated by the framework into which Miranda's tale is set.
Such a description is reminiscent of Jacques' speech in Shakespeare's *As You Like It*.

C. C. Watkins discusses Thomas Carlyle's influence on *Night-Cap* and notes that one incident (l. 303) alludes to Carlyle's account in *The French Revolution* of the storming of the Tuileries in 1792 ("Browning's *Red Cotton Night-Cap Country* and Carlyle," *Victorian Studies*, 7 [1964], p. 363). The red night-cap image in the poem may refer to the cap which the French king wears when he is confronted by the anarchic masses, and the cap, then, comes to symbolize all "revolutionary events" in history (p. 363). Watkins argues that Miranda's tale becomes a Carlylean fable on the disintegration of society (p. 374). Asserting that the speaker is a persona and is not Browning himself (p. 361), the critic suggests that the poet-persona forces the reader and the poem's female auditor to look beneath the placid surface of the conventional, pastoral art that the auditor seems to prefer (p. 362).

C. C. Watkins believes the bond between Miranda and the ruin shows Carlyle's influence upon the poem because Carlyle uses architecture as a figure for human history. Watkins convincingly asserts that the speaker employs Carlyle's figure to describe Miranda's house and to imply

18 W. T. Stace explains this human attraction in Hegelian terms as the dialectic between self and other:

Space is thus that which is most empty of mind, of thought, of reason . . . the extreme opposite of thought. For thought is absolute internality, space absolute externality. (Stace, p. 312)

19 King, Artifice, p. 189.

20 See John 8: 3-11.

21 See Proverbs 31: 10-11.

22 Some critics use the fact that Browning knew Miliband as a reason for calling the speaker Browning.

23 Clara as a grub which becomes a butterfly illustrates the Browningesque metamorphosis of soul growing by means of bodily experiences.


25 Hitner, p. 22. The supposed historical sources of the poem, the Tichborne claimant and the Lord de Ros case found in The Greville Memoirs, are discussed by DeVane in Handbook and by Hitner in his book.

26 King, Artifice, p. 199.


29. Ryals, p. 120.

30. Ryals, p. 130.


32. Hitner, p. 51.


35. Hitner, p. 80.


Chapter V

The Evolution of a Modern Herakles

I

The last long poem of Browning's canon, *Parleyings with Certain People of Importance in Their Day* (1887), was written twelve years after *Aristophanes' Apology* and *The Inn Album*, and again Browning creates another poet-persona who tells about dead, misunderstood, and disaffected beings just as Balaustion speaks about Euripides, Herakles, and herself or the *Album*'s speaker talks about the four personae in the inn. The speaker in the *Parleyings* is an avatar of the detached artist exemplified by the two poet-personae in *Red Cotton Night-Cap Country* and *Album*, yet his role as a buffer between the reader and the intercalated fiction appears only within a part of the poem, the seven parleyings with seven dead men. However, in the poem's prologue and epilogue, the speaker has no power; the introductory and concluding materials are dramatic dialogues which exclude the speaker. In *Parleyings*, the poet-persona's voice actually becomes embedded within the fiction's outer framework, the tragic prologue and the comic epilogue. Not only
does the nameless, isolated speaker relate the tragic tales about dead men, but also this supposedly detached storyteller becomes an adjunct to the framing prologue and epilogue.

Although the poem is written twelve years after AA, the latter poem asserts an influence over the last long work of Browning's career. Herakles in AA teaches the speaker Balaustion to accept dissociating experiences which destroy conventions and superficial signs of security. She acquires an inner force which compensates for her loss of external and fictive touchstones. Through examining the lives of the seven men, the speaker in the Parleyings learns about the ephemerality of life. He recalls the dead persons with whom he parleys and inevitably commemorates their passing from life regardless of his approval or disapproval of their thoughts and fictions. The seven persons are presented as having lived and coped with life as either writers, painters, politicians, or musicians. Just as Herakles overcomes madness and accepts imperfect life on its own terms, the seven are everyday, non-heroic survivors who are similar to the protagonists described by Northrop Frye in his categories of fourth phase tragedy. The full title Parleyings with Certain People of Importance in Their Day reveals the implicit irony that fame and importance
only last briefly; "their day," whether it be a year or a century, is slight in comparison to the vastness of time.

Each of the three parts of the poem occurs within an edifice—the prologue in the den of the three Fates, the body of the poem in the isolated poet-persona's room, and the epilogue in the house of John Fust in Mayence, Germany; the three settings correspond to different moods and time-periods also. In the prologue, Apollo descends to the den of the Fates to save Admetus' life; the action is, of course, inspired by *Alkestis*. The tragic mythos in the prologue corresponds to Frye's fifth phase, wheel-of-fortune tragedy because the Fates and Apollo both know Admetus is destined to die at one time or another.\(^1\) Death is a commonplace fact for the Fates who are responsible for Admetus' life as well as his death; Apollo's will that Admetus be spared stems as much from the desire to win an argument over the Fates as a wish to save a friend. Admetus' humanity, however, makes his demise inevitable. In the body of the poem, the poet-persona parleys with seven figures drawn from the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, and his stance resembles that found in Frye's sixth phase of comedy, the same phase that the speakers in *Night-Cap* and *Album* seem to evoke.\(^2\) The historical persons come from diverse backgrounds: Bernard de Mandeville, an eighteenth-century
Dutch physician who lived in England; Daniel Bartoli, a seventeenth-century Italian Jesuit historian; Christopher Smart, an eighteenth-century English writer; George Bubb Dodington, Lord Melcombe, an eighteenth-century English politician during the reign of King George III; Francis Furini, a seventeenth-century Italian painter; Gerard de Lairesse, a seventeenth-century Dutch painter; and Charles Avison, an eighteenth-century English organist and composer. The epilogue "Fust and his Friends" draws upon an earlier historical figure, John Fust, who was believed to be the inventor of the printing press by some individuals and confused with the fictive persona Faust. Specifically set in 1457 and in Mayence, Fust's adventure corresponds to the second phase of comedy with Fust as the detached, mental rebel who lives within society. The invention of the press changes history, but the fact that it may be exploited by corrupt men who want to spread evil shows that the unalterable forces of greed and malice will always reassert themselves. Fust must, therefore, acknowledge that his press may be used for good or ill and that there is nothing he can do about its misuse. John Fust is the new Heraklean savior, the detached comic eiron who lives within society and not in isolation from antagonistic forces. He does not leave his house and visit new lands as Balaustion and
Herakles do, but the Parleyings' movement toward a detached individual who remains true to himself indicates an intra-fictional transformation comparable to the personal changes within Balaustion and Herakles.

II

Critics speak of the Parleyings as being the most autobiographical poem in Browning's late works. Robert Langbaum calls it Browning's intellectual autobiography, and William C. DeVane says Browning "delivers a summary of his philosophy in his own person," a philosophy that "almost drove out his art altogether." DeVane sees no organic connection between the "inferior" prologue and epilogue and the seven parleyings, for he simply calls the induction of the work Browning's tribute to Greek culture and literature and the epilogue, his celebration of the debt Browning owed to printing. DeVane's comment on the concluding part seems simplistic since the debt to printing is so universal and applicable to all writers. Both DeVane and Roma King interpret the seven historical figures as personae who stand for living nineteenth-century people. By using one group of dead persons as a way to indict or praise living ones, Browning achieves a distance from and relevance to immediate, topical issues; as King suggests, these seven, in part, reveal a composite portrait of Browning and his era.
Woolford interprets the work as an ideological manifesto and calls it Browning's rejection of Romanticism since there are no Romantic poets mentioned.\(^9\) Obviously, the variations upon Woolford's argument are endless—i.e. Browning rejects Latin, medieval, or Renaissance poetry because he does not mention it in the *Parleyings*. Rather, the work must be analyzed as an organic whole; prologue, body, and epilogue should be considered essential parts. Also, to judge the work in terms of conjecture is misleading, for the names of Browning's contemporaries whom the seven are supposed to represent or the literary movements Browning supposedly repudiates are not the primary subject matter of the poem.

As possible autobiography and as fiction, the work must be examined as it stands from start to finish. At the outset of the prologue, Browning cites three significant quotations which shape the reader's perception about the fiction—Homer's *Hymn to Mercury* (l. 559), Aeschylus' *Eumenides* (ll. 693-94, 697-98), and Euripides' *Alkestis* (ll. 12, 33). The line from the *Hymn* with its surrounding context reads:

> From their home they fly now here, now there, feeding on honeycomb and bringing all things to pass. And when they are inspired through yellow honey, they are willing to speak truth.\(^{10}\)

The allusion to the Fates as ones who bring things to pass
establishes their authority and the inevitable triumph of their will. Eventually, Admetus will die in spite of Apollo's attempt to delay death. The citation from the Eumenides includes the Furies' speech to Apollo:

Even such a part didst thou play in Pheres' house, persuading the Moirai to release a mortal from death . . . Thou . . . who abolishing old division, didst deceive with wine those ancient powers.\textsuperscript{11}

Deception is the only purpose behind the wine's employment; when drunk, the Fates do not speak the truth. The third reference to the prologue of Alkestis contains Apollo's description of how he has been successful and Death's ironic response which intimates Apollo's actual failure:

\begin{quote}
(Apollo) Cozening the Fates: the sisters promised me . . .
\end{quote}

\begin{quote}
(Death) All by thy cunning beguiled were the Fates.\textsuperscript{12}
\end{quote}

When Death taunts Apollo for not saving Alkestis as he has saved Admetus, Apollo can only hope that someone else shall come who can save her from Death; that someone is Herakles in Alkestis. In the Parleyings, the unexpected and untraditional savior is Fust, the prophet who foresees another man greater than he who shall use the printing press to change the world.

By protecting Admetus from immediate death, Apollo tries to defy a natural process to which all mortals are subject. His triumph is only temporary since in deferring
Admetus' death, he has provoked Alkestis' sacrifice. These three Fates work their will regardless of Apollo's efforts; even Death's triumph is temporary when compared to their power. Although Death wins Alkestis, he loses her to Herakles. Since the eventual outcome of Alkestis, the rescue by Herakles, is not foreshadowed in the poem's prologue, Apollo's efforts seem futile; he feels triumphant when he leaves the Fates' den because he vainly believes that only good can result from his salvation of Admetus.

The prologue's contrast between dark and light heightens the conflict between Apollo and the Fates. The former asks for light from Parnassus when he descends to the dark den, but the three sisters, who live in darkness, are not necessarily opposed to the medium associated with Apollo since they "deal to each mortal his dole of light/On earth--the upper, the glad, the bright."13 Admetus has been allowed to attain greatness and become "brave, wise, good, happy" (1. 27). In fact, he may have been more favored by the sisters than most humans, but he is not so unique that he should be spared "at the height" (1. 30) of his career. The Fates contend that no man's life is worth prolonging and that Apollo's light only transforms "to beauty life blank at the best" (1. 67). Apollo must concede that the light, order, and promise of reward in life are
fictions that sustain mankind because debarred "of illusion--
(I needs must acknowledge the plea)/ Man desponds and
despairs" (ll. 106-107).

Apollo's assertion of power over the sisters is not supported by any evidence in the prologue. He describes them as being less than they really are when he says the Fates huddle "bat-like" (l. 34) in the den, and his vaunt that the Fates' activities have been "annulled by a sun-
beam" (l. 47) is incorrect. The Fates seem to resent his proud remark when they set Apollo in his place by asking, "Boy, are not we peers?" (l. 47). Apollo cannot deny that they have equal, if not greater, claim to authority since unlike them, he cannot "alter life's law for ephemeral men" (l. 54). Apollo can only plead with them to change life's law for his and Admetus' sake, and the desire to prolong a life, which must inevitably end, is somewhat irrational. This impetuousness only reenforces what the sisters say about him when they call the younger god an "upstart" (l. 62) and a "law-flouter" (l. 61).

The god offers wine to make the Fates drunk when he realizes that he has no valid argument for prolonging Admetus' life. Since he cannot fulfill his wishes by logical argument, he resorts to deceit. By contrast, DeVane asserts that wine represents the human imagination because
it makes the Fates affirm life as unconditionally good, an affirmation they retract. Clyde de L. Ryals concurs because he equates the drink to man's art which causes the sisters to see life as a triumph. Apollo calls the wine man's invention, and he seems to use that association between man and wine as a way of protecting himself; he shirks his responsibility for the drunkenness that wine produces by attributing the invention to man. Apollo cannot be called a reliable guide for the reader. His use of the "Bacchus-prompted" (l. 127) wine is a departure from the usual actions associated with him. Although he claims he uses the drink to make the Fates "spy the relation/ Of evil to good" (ll. 142-43), "woe and weal" (l. 152), and "false things . . . with real" (l. 154), such connections imply disorder and chaos, for not only does he introduce the wine which confuses them, but also he admits that an excess of his accompanying light in the den would produce "mad confusion" (l. 180). The drunken Fates' facile assertions reveal no truths, for they affirm that "dissension is drowned,/ Defeat proves triumphant and slavery crowned" (ll. 204-205).

In the context of the prologue and the Alkestis, which inspired it, the Fates are truly triumphant, not Apollo, and the final reassertion of darkness and the wordless glee of the Fates who sing and laugh (ll. 264-65) as Apollo
ascends foreshadow the eventual fulfillment of the Fates' will. The explosion which causes the sisters to reassert their former sober stand may only be a chance event, not some ultimate reality, as Mark Siegchrist claims. The Fates are certain that what they want is justified since they simply reassert what they have held to be true from the beginning of the dialogue: they have a just claim on Admetus' life. Even when they seem to relent and give Admetus a reprieve, the arrangement is made on their terms because they demand another life in Admetus' place (ll. 251-55). Alkestis will die in Admetus' stead, and eventually, Admetus will also die.

III

Just as Herakles' effort must reverse the sad result of Apollo's pact, a Heraklean effort seems to be needed in the Parleyings to alleviate the impending doom intimated at the prologue's end. Consequently, the poet-persona's voice opens the first parleying with Bernard de Mandeville and authoritatively assumes control of the fiction. He daringly invites the spirit of the "sage dead long since" (l. 10) to review the teachings that he, Mandeville, advanced in life. The confrontation occurs on "this same midnight, by this chair of mine" (l. 1), a setting reminiscent of the contemplative situations in which the speakers of Night-Cap and
Album seem to cast themselves. The speaker in the Parleyings begins to create a fiction, the seven parleyings, which records the speaker's movement from calm, controlled behavior to frenzied madness. The situation at the opening of Mandeville corresponds to Frye's sixth phase of comedy which occurs in a safe, cozy place where the speaker is protected from external threat. Apollo uses the wine to convince the sisters that man's life is entirely triumphant; the poet-persona implies that his own life will be a success if he can adequately parley with the seven dead men's phantoms.

Since Mandeville, like the other six persons, is deceased, the speaker only knows about him through his writings and "counsels" (1. 2). The teachings of Mandeville are creations which reflect the creator's consciousness. By seeking to know these notions of Mandeville, the poet-persona hopes to understand Mandeville's self. The teachings can be understood most fully by "the loaded line/ Of Logic casting" (ll. 5-6) which reveals "truth's triumph" (1. 9). The speaker admits that any knowledge that man possesses comes through much effort and that man can only learn "truth in part, before/ Entrusted with the whole" (ll. 15-16) just as a child endures "infancy's probation" (1. 31) before it can "stand full-statured in magnificence" (1. 34)
of adulthood. Mandeville's teaching (l. 39), as the poet-persona understands it, declares that the soul strives through the "race-ground" (l. 37) of earth before reaching heaven. This statement might appear to support Henry Jones's thesis that Browning sees the world as a moral gymnasium where all evil is illusory. By asserting that Browning believes that all is well with the world, DeVane agrees with Henry Jones in viewing evil as an apparent, though unreal, obstacle in Browning's world-view. However, the word "race-ground" does not necessarily mean a place of illusion or play-acting since Browning may be alluding to a metaphor found in Hebrews which shows that life is a serious and real experience:

Therefore, since we have so great a cloud of witnesses surrounding us, let us also lay aside every encumbrance, and the sin which so easily entangles us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us.

DeVane, N. B. Crowell, and Roma King suggest that Browning misunderstood Mandeville because the speaker of Parleyings misinterprets the satirist as one who sees good and evil as complementary parts of the divine harmony. DeVane says Browning read the 1795 edition of Mandeville's Fable of the Bees which includes Mandeville's conciliatory Vindication, an endorsement of virtue over vice. Regardless of critical assertions to the contrary, Browning may
have understood Mandeville's thesis better than anyone and may have chosen to have his speaker misrepresent those teachings in part. Since the speaker believes that Mandeville advocates that good and evil "harmoniously combine" (1. 8), Mandeville, a skeptic, ironically becomes the means of establishing the speaker's belief that these opposites coexist. Skepticism produces faith. Actually, Mandeville does not deny truth or goodness, but he does limit the discussion of virtue to public, social benefits which may arise from "even the most heinous of crimes." Mandeville tries to counter the view that all true benefits come only in the afterlife. The speaker does not expect an absolute resolution of good over evil in the world of experience, for just as the interdependence of these opposites in the public sphere seems to be a distinct reality to Mandeville, the poet-persona sees evil as real and accepts any good which occurs. In fact, the speaker asks if modest triumphs of positive experiences are not better:

    ... In little, light, warmth, life are blessed--
    Which, in the large, who sees to bless?
    (11. 318-19)

Not only does the speaker see Mandeville as a skeptic who illustrates the principle of good in little, but also he introduces an antagonistic friend who some say is Thomas Carlyle and who combines friendliness and antagonism,
good and evil within himself.\textsuperscript{24} The friend's fictive speech expresses the belief that good is not supposed to prevail on earth and may not triumph in the afterlife since there seems to be no direct intervention by God in man's affairs and not

\begin{quote}
... one poor instance when he interposed
Promptly and surely and beyond mistake
Between oppression and its victim.
\textsuperscript{(11. 47-49)}
\end{quote}

In order to justify evil's presence in the world to the friend, the speaker constructs a fable of juxtaposed good and evil which Mandeville might have written. In the fable, the field has been planted with both beneficial and noxious plants by a gardener (11. 95-113), and such an arrangement produces "growth of good" (1. 112) as a consequence of "evil's neighborhood" (1. 113). Doubting that God orders life in such a way, the friend suggests that God may not think as man does.

In order to answer this antagonistic friend, which is only a voice within himself, the poet-persona cites two symbols--a blueprint of Goethe's estate at Weimar and the constellation Orion--to illustrate how God may be understood in human terms, and using a final, extended metaphor in parts 9-11 of the first parleying, the speaker gives his version of the Prometheus tale. Just as the blueprint
is not an estate and the constellation, not a man, God is not a human gardener, but the speaker reasons that one may hypothesize about God by means of analogy. Moreover, Prometheus is another god-like avatar who gave "an artifice" (l. 302) to man "whereby he drew/ Sun's rays into a focus" (ll. 302-303), but the gift of fire has an ambiguous potential for good or evil. The poet-persona tells this story from man's point of view by using a long ethnopoëia of one who envies the rest of creation which seems to benefit from the sunlight. Man contrasts himself with "the universal world of creatures bred/ By Sun's munificence" (ll. 226-27) because he seems to suffer more than other creatures do. The speaker tells the tale as he thinks Euripides would have told it (ll. 204-206). The tragedian shows individuals in situations which are often a combination of tragedy and comedy. A character like Herakles in Alkestis must wrestle with Death in order to secure the goal--Alkestis. In Herakles, the protagonist continues to live but must accept his own criminal deeds as a part of his past. Euripides always portrays life in fiction as a mixed blessing, and similarly, the speaker shows that good in little is the best that man can hope for. Prometheus' gift will have to be sufficient. The fire that man yearns for and receives is "the very Sun in little" (l. 304) which
he can manipulate; he could not utilize the sun itself which is too large. Just as a spectrum runs toward infinity, the fire and sun are two forms of the same substance. Fire may give warmth and light like the sun, and good in the most minute portion or good mixed with evil are the same as goodness in superabundance.

The internal conflict between the poet-persona's voices—"my friend" (l. 320), who feels that God may not be like man and may not want evil to exist, and "sage Mandeville" (l. 321), who suggests that good and evil co-exist—is resolved through the image of the sun in little. The speaker intimates that God and goodness are like the sun because all three—God, good, and sun—are unknowable without the symbols and the foils which make them comprehensible to the human mind. Goodness must be contrasted with evil in order for it to have any significance.

IV

The theme of good in little introduces a related notion in the next parleying with Daniel Bartoli where the poet-persona implies that the tale of a nameless girl is greater than that of Saint Scholastica. Of the eighteen parts of this parleying, only one deals with the saint; the rest are devoted to the girl. As in Mandeville, the speaker addresses the man in the parleying's opening as if to invoke
the spirit of the dead. The speaker elevates the girl's tale as a chronicle over Bartoli's legend of the saint, and he implies that there is a difference between a chronicle and a legend (11. 5,260). He tries to establish a putative difference between the two types of fictions, but a historically-based chronicle and a mythified legend are only two points on a continuum just as fire and sun are two types of light.

In the speaker's tale of the girl, a duke is torn between his love for her and social expectations. His sister and the king's minister emphasize the latter, and the minister even offers the girl a choice between having her marriage to the duke sanctioned or being imprisoned by the king. She will obtain the sanction if she betrays the duke into signing away his property to the king; however, she does not let her beloved give the property and is imprisoned. Years later, she marries a youth, and the two become outcasts from the court of the "sun-king" (1. 231). By giving up the duke and being incarcerated, the girl sacrifices herself.

The poet-persona only briefly describes Bartoli's legend in an ethopoeia attributed to the Italian:

Now, Saint Scholastica, what time she fared
In Paynimrie, behold, a lion glared
Right in her path! Her waist she promptly strips
Of girdle, binds his teeth within his lips,  
And, leashed all lamblike, to the Soldan's court  
Leads him.  

(11. 245-50)

DeVane notes that the legend is not recorded in Bartoli's  
work *Dei Simboli Trasportati al Morale* and that a feat like  
this one is never attributed to any saint named Scholastica.  

By contrast, the tale of the girl and the duke probably  
comes from the memoirs of the Marquis de Lassay, so the  
derivation of such a "descendentalist" tale from a literary  
source shows that Browning was not afraid to use elements of  
fiction to create the speaker's so-called chronicle. Although  
the legend of Saint Scholastica may be stylized because it is  
older and more compact, the tale of the girl is predictable  
and romanticized; such a chronicle is not less literary than  
a legend because both contain conventions. The girl's tale  
has elements of romance: the dedication of the youth to the  
girl in prison, the suffering of the outcast lovers after  
she is freed, and her sudden death after an unconventional  
mARRiAGE. Clearly, the speaker is manipulating the facts  
since he wants to make the common girl who "died full soon"  
(l. 235) a candidate for "saintship" (l. 238).  

The parleying concludes with the duke's speech (part 18)  
which verges on madness. The tragedy of Bartoli includes not  
only the implied failure of Bartoli to create fictions about.
people who are not mythified saints, but also the overt, personal defeat of the duke who does not marry the girl and who sees her true worth too late. The poet-persona pretends to be a "listener when, some sleepless night,/ The duke reviewed his memories" (ll. 277-78). The speaker correlates the girl with the moon (ll. 283-84) and suggests an association between her and the chaste goddess Artemis. He has the duke address a "brisk-marching bold she-shape" (l. 287), fancy it threatens him with her "black-balled worlds of eyes" (l. 288) and "black hair bristling" (l. 289), and imagine it speaks to him throughout most of his speech (ll. 295-320). By rejecting this dark, sinister femme fatale, the duke calls himself "false to Love" (l. 295); his covert death-wish and romanticized passion are irrevocably mixed when he seeks to "wrap me round with love of your black hair,/ Black eyes" (ll. 323-24). In fact, he sees himself as already a "ghost" (l. 334) of his former self which "died since left and lorn" (l. 334). The embrace of the phantom woman is linked to death's grasp which he welcomes because in death, he hopes to be

Called into life by her who long ago
Left his soul whiling time in flesh-disguise.
(ll. 337-38)

Like the unhappy consciousness that Hegel describes, the duke is aware of his ideal love for the girl and has been
unable to appreciate her in his finite, fallible existence. His present awareness of what might have been between himself and her maddens him. Just as Mandeville ends with the image of the sun in little, which warms man, Bartoli concludes with the ethopoieia of one who has become crazed because he does not utilize the little bit of goodness, the girl, which is offered to him.

V

The third parleying with Christopher Smart is structured around an extended metaphor which likens Smart's career to an edifice. The poet-persona describes the "huge house" (1. 17) which is like a "chapel" (1. 36) and which contains items of "safe mediocrity" (1. 26). In the midst of this edifice, the speaker visualizes "a hanging" (1. 33) which seems out-of-place and calls it a "Rafael Mother-Maid" (1. 40), a work of "hands long still" (1. 56) which appears to the speaker in a single, epiphanic moment (1. 32). The house contains no other surprises, only the "next room and next and next . . . nothing" (11. 68-69). Smart's poetic life is emblemed by this chapel since the speaker feels that the poet has produced only one work, A Song to David, which surpasses the other poems.

Since Smart seems to have experienced some kind of epiphany in order to write his outstanding fiction, the
speaker creates a chaotic scene to describe how such inspiration must have affected Smart:

. . . all at once the ground
Gave way beneath his step, a certain smoke
Curled up and caught him, or perhaps down broke
A fireball wrapping flesh and spirit both
In conflagration.

(11. 77-81)

Life after such a revelation can only be delineated in superhuman terms, and indeed the poet-persona describes Smart's return to normalcy and the escape from a state akin to artistic madness by conflating two events in Herakles' career. First, the speaker recalls Herakles' sobering in Alkestis when the hero learns that Alkestis has died; second, he alludes to the death of Herakles in a burning robe, a story related in Sophokles' Trachiniae. Thus the speaker describes Smart's renewed sanity:

. . . off fell
The flame-robe, and the untransfigured man
Resumed sobriety,—as he began,
So did he end nor alter pace, not he!

(11. 83-86)

The speaker intimates that sporadic achievement elevates the few great works of lesser artists to the level of art produced by greater artists. Smart's single poetic triumph, like goodness in Mandeville and the girl's saintliness in Bartoli, is only an artistic achievement "in little."

There is no question in the poet-persona's mind that
Smart once makes contact with "the otherwise all-unapproachable" (l. 105), but the speaker wonders why the event occurs only once:

... Concede the fact
That here a poet was who always could--
Never before did--never after would--
Achieve the feat: how were such fact explained?
(11. 136-39)

He hypothesizes two ways Smart could have gained such insight: either the "disguise from Nature" (l. 141) fell and revealed truth to Smart, or he was wholly motivated from within himself to create an outstanding work. In the former instance, Smart might have received external aid which let him know how to "adjust/ Real vision to right language" (11. 150-51) just as Adam knew through inspiration that each living thing in Eden "had its note and name/ For Man to know by" (11. 156-57). The second way that Smart could have formulated his song is through internal rather than external motivation. In the single act of composing the work, the speaker theorizes that Smart spends all of his "power of startling up deaf ear, blind eye" (l. 203); then he resumes the dress of "a drab-clothed decent proseman as before" (l. 207). As rumor suggests, Smart may have written his song in a "madhouse cell" (l. 184), but once "this scribble on the wall" (l. 175) is completed, Smart writes less startling poems, and his friends hail his "fast-

returning wits" (1. 173).

Changing from praise to criticism, the speaker faults Smart for showing only "the strength and beauty" (1. 212) in Nature without "teaching" (1. 211) what the strength and beauty are for. He questions Smart's particularization of "each and every apparition" (1. 236), and such a remark is close to truth because Smart's Song to David contains two elaborate lists: earth's inanimate and animate inhabitants and the ways that man and nature adore God.²⁹ Philip Drew believes that the speaker's objection to elaborate, descriptive images indirectly attacks the pre-Raphaelite artists like Dante Gabriel Rossetti, Swinburne, and Morris who admire beauty but diminish the ethical dimension in their work.³⁰ Drew's argument does not take into account the fact that Smart does moralize in his art and that the speaker overlooks the fact. In the midst of the list of ways man and nature glorify God, Smart's Song advises:

And while the luscious zest invites
The sense, that in the scene delights,
Commands desire be chaste.³¹

Not only does the speaker of the Parleyings denounce the style of Smart's poem as being too elaborate and misread its moralizing tone, but also he ignores the poem's content. The theme of David's life seems to correspond to the speaker's interest in goodness and saintship in little
because David's defeat of Goliath is an example of the triumph of the physically diminutive man over the large. Christopher Smart also emphasizes that David is an ancestor and a type of Christ, a point that the speaker never even mentions in Smart. By not emphasizing the overt content of Song and by criticizing the style, the poet-persona seems to be imperceptive and petty. The speaker concludes with an ethopoeia of how Smart should have told people to "scale the skies, then drop/ To earth--to find, how all things there" (ll. 249-50) correspond to heavenly law. The poet-persona emphasizes that Smart should have declared that man must simultaneously "live and learn,/ Not first learn and then live" (ll. 264-65). In his drive to make a point about poetry as a teaching tool, the speaker overlooks David's significance as one who does not learn and then live because his life is filled with mistakes which come from living. By not mentioning the poem's primary content, the speaker illustrates his monomania. He is prejudiced because he wants to see Smart's work as an aesthetic, but not a moralistic, triumph.

VI

Clyde de L. Ryals and Roma King both say that the next parleying with George Bubb Dodington shifts its tone and differs from the first three monologues of the speaker.
Ryals says the speaker is more cynical and manipulative like Prince Hohenstiel-Schwangau, and King contrasts the naturalism of Dodington with the idealism found in Smart when the speaker admires epiphanic images in Song. Ryals and King justify their claims that the speaker's tone varies by using musical analogies; in a symphony or a sonata, different movements or parts set different moods. The critics claim the speaker shifts tone, but they do not examine in detail the reason why such a change occurs. Since the poet-persona speaks with Dodington's phantom on "this night" (1. 73) when he also speaks to the other dead men, his critique of Dodington's political means (11. 2, 57, 73) by which he has sought "fame's goal" (1. 81) may be explained in relationship to the first three parleyings. If there is a shift in tone, clues may be found in the first three parleyings which foreshadow the attitude that the speaker exhibits in Dodington. The parleying with Dodington cannot, as some assume, simply be explained as an ironic attack on Disraeli placed in the middle of a work which commemorates deceased historical figures. Just as Mandeville shows goodness in little; Bartoli, sainthood in the nameless girl; and Smart, achievement in one poem--Dodington shows how fame comes through small, non-heroic efforts.

The speaker identifies with the politician Dodington
who has acquired a name through trivial actions because
they both know that "all outside show, in short, is sham"
(1. 66). They know the tricks of manipulating people for
selfish ends, and the speaker verifies that he and Dodington
Profess one purpose, hold one principle,
Are at odds only as to--not the will
But way of winning solace for ourselves.
(1l. 74-76)

Calling himself and Dodington two "saviours and nothing
less" (1. 84) who seek fame, the speaker confidentially
notes that "we labour" (1. 88) for the "rabble-rout" (1.
87), yet he criticizes Dodington's use of "sham" (1. 110)
to deceive "shrewd folk" (1. 123) in the crowd. Rather
than set himself above or below the people, Dodington should
have followed a middle course of employing deceptive flattery.
By manipulating people, the ideal statesman might urge them
to believe that he obeys divine law when he is actually
being selfish (11. 338-40). The speaker advocates that
Dodington "flatter, cajole" (1. 156) the populace to control
them and distinguish himself from "a dozen Dodingtons" (1.
167). The ideal statesman would make the world stand "agape"
(1. 225), would not openly lie because "straight would all
descry/ Back on the man's brow the boy's blush once more"
(11. 243-44), and would praise people although he does not
think they are special. The poet-persona's ethopoeia of
this flattering, ideal statesman says:

\[
\ldots\ldots Among\ the\ crowd\ must\ lurk\\Some\ few\ with\ faculty\ to\ judge\ my\ work\\\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\\\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\\the\ Sacred\ Band,\\No\ duping\ them\ forsooth!\\(11.\ 264-68)\\
\]

When the speaker advises the phantom Dodington, he describes an outlook in which he seems to believe:

\[
\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\\exquisite\ disguise\\Disguise-abjuring,\ truth\ that\ looks\ like\ lies,\\\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\\Say--you\ hold\ in\ contempt--not\ them\ in\ chief--\\But\ first\ and\ foremost\ your\ own\ self!\\(11.\ 328-32)\\
\]

DeVane says that the speaker's sustained ironic tone judges Dodington by his success as a ruler, not by his morality,\textsuperscript{35} but on the contrary, the parleying indicts the speaker and reveals in detail his inner disturbance. By asserting that political fame may come by means of flattery, the speaker reduces the meaning of "public good" (1. 13) in \textit{Dodington} to mere political self-seeking. Mandeville's thesis in \textit{The Fable of the Bees}, in fact, advocates that selfish acts can produce social benefits, so by indirectly endorsing Mandeville's assumption that vice produces benefits, the speaker brings himself into question in \textit{Dodington}. The speaker in the \textit{Parleyings} seems to become less like the detached narrators in \textit{Night-Cap} and \textit{Album} and more like the maddened speakers Prince Hohenstiel-
Schwangau, Juan, and the raving duke in Bartoli.

VII

Sporadic lapses in the speaker's detachment indicate that the speaker in the Parleyings does not adequately distance himself from the unsettling voices which exist within him. The multitudinous personae—the seven dead men and the characters he fancies, like the duke—contend within him as he sits in his chair, and such conflicting forces correspond to the voices heard by Juan and the prince as well as the dualistic impulses which drive Herakles—revelry and sobriety, madness and sanity.

As the speaker moves from one parleying to the next, he seems less stable. At first, he only makes an occasional, frenzied outburst such as in Bartoli when he introduces the maddened duke's ethopoeia:

... Fancy's flight
Makes me a listener when, some sleepless night,
The duke reviewed his memories, and aghast
Found that the Present intercepts the Past

... . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . .
. . . Speak, fool—duke, I mean!

(11. 276-86)

The passage provides two clues to the speaker's disturbance. First, the notion of the present converging on the past interests him, quite obviously, because he obsessively parleys with the dead men who haunt his brain. Second, he displays a tendency to be verbally cruel to personae whom
he talks about. He can seem kind to those whom he is
supposedly attacking. Also, the speaker condemns Christopher
Smart's artistry by lashing out at him and calling him a
fool after the speaker has just commended the poet's out-
standing work:

Nature was made to be by Man enjoyed
First; followed duly by enjoyment's fruit,
Instruction . . .
And you, the instructor, would you slack pursuit
Of the main prize, as poet help mankind
Just to enjoy, there leave them? Play the fool,
Abjuring a superior privilege?
(11. 225-31)

After turning against Smart, whom he seems to favor, the
speaker then rails against Dodington, although he has
identified himself with the politician, and the ubiquitous
word "fool" appears:

. . . Hence the scoff
That greets your very name: folk see but one
Fool more, as well as knave, in Dodington.
(11. 343-45)

After Smart, several parleyings' openings seem overly terse or
antagonistic toward the dead men. By contrast with the ten-
line invocation to Mandeville which opens the first parleying,
the poet-persona begins Dodington by saying, "Ah, George
Bubb Dodington Lord Melcombe,—no,/ Yours was the wrong way!"
(11. 1-2).

The conversation with the phantom Francis Furini that
follows Dodington opens with another terse address: "Nay,
that Furini, never I at least/ Mean to believe" (11. 1-2), and only lines later does the reader learn what the speaker disbelieves—that Furini wanted to burn his paintings of female nudes by which the speaker feels Furini "did homage to life's Lord" (1. 125). The poet-persona focuses on Furini's nudes and indicates his own interest in them. Using the image of a house to represent humanity's collective existence, he suggests that man benefits from Furini's

... ample gift
Of gracing walls else blank of this our house
Of life with imagery ...
... man and woman mere,
Glorified till half owned for gods,—the dear
Fleshly perfection of the human shape,—
This was apportioned you whereby to praise
Heaven and bless earth.

(11. 51-58)

In spite of the ostensible motive of praising Furini, the speaker actually uses the parleying as a means to attack Philip Baldinucci, whom he names within the monologue, and to praise the nudes' fleshliness which seems to attract the speaker. Baldinucci is characterized as one who has piled Mount Ossa on top of Olympus (11. 146-47) because he calls himself a critic as well as an artist. By calling a critic like Baldinucci a "kleptomaniac" (1. 225), the speaker reveals a scorn for criticism. Also the mention of the "naked female form" (1. 143) may indicate a repressed sexual longing which the poet-persona experiences. As priests deprived of female companionship, Furini and Fra Lippo Lippi are two examples of men who show the body's
beauty in art and attempt to compensate for their personal deprivation or their illicit behavior. Similarly, the speaker who sits alone in his chair after midnight may try to compensate for his feelings of alienation and lack of companionship.

By creating a fictive prayer and a sermon by Furini, the speaker tries to exorcise his fears through the sane, though phantom-like, painter. The prayer which the speaker makes glorifies art that causes man to love "the naked star" (l. 247), the nude. The sermon condemns analytic critics, not only of art, but also of life (parts 9-10). Addressing evolutionists, the voice attributed to Furini sets up an opposition between people who view life from the depths or in the midst of experience and those evolutionists who "glance from heights" (l. 266) and divide everything into atomic particles (l. 275). The latter group concludes that "ignorance exists" (l. 348) while others in the former group, such as Furini, begin "at the bottom" (l. 349) and improve upon the evolutionists' conclusion by formulating their premise:

    . . . I profess
    To know just one fact--my self-consciousness,--
    'Twixt ignorance and ignorance enisled,--
    Knowledge.

    (ll. 350-53)

This "self-consciousness" is "the soul--some name we need"
which cautiously climbs upward to new facts. The image of an isolated rock surrounded by amorphous space which symbolizes "evil and good irreconcilable/ Above, beneath, about my every side" (ll. 411-12) reveals the speaker's subconscious fear of losing control of himself, of slipping off the rock of consciousness. Robert Langbaum claims Browning is casting himself as a nude Andromeda imprisoned on the "rock-spit of self-knowledge" (ll. 410), but whether or not the speaker represents Browning, the former tries to mask his anxiety about ignorance and annihilation by letting the fictive voice of Furini speak for him. Like the dissolving landscapes described by Juan, the amorphous scene envisioned by the poet-persona through Furini's voice indicates an inner confusion. This fear of losing control over oneself and one's world is similar to Juan's sexual fears or anxiety about death because both the speaker and Juan risk being dominated by other forces—whether they be ignorance, in the speaker's case, or passion, in Juan's instance.

The knowledge of good and evil is preferable to ignorance; the speaker declares through Furini's voice that evil is a vital part of the "soul's progress" (ll. 463):

Could I see plain, be somehow certified
All was illusion,—evil far and wide
Was good disguised,—why, out with one huge wipe
Goes knowledge from me. Type needs antitype:
As night needs day, as shine needs shade, so good
Needs evil: how were pity understood
Unless by pain?

(11. 480-86)

Mark Siegchrist explains how "type needs antitype" by showing that all parts of the entire poem alternate between the nominal parleyers with whom the poet-persona either agrees or disagrees, but in the phrase's immediate context, the premise that dialectical opposites give meaning to each other underlies Furini's sermon. Overcoming his fear of the unknown, the speaker realizes that only by "looking low, ere looking high" (l. 546) can one understand both self and other. Just as good is known by contrast to evil, he knows that his identity is verified only when contrasted to something external.

After creating the two linguistic fictions--Furini's prayer and sermon--the speaker describes a spatial fiction which he tells the dead Furini to paint: a scene of Joan of Arc bathing. He envisions her as a girl who is not "at the end, nor midway" (l. 569) of her career and who does not yet experience transcendent visions, delusions, and voices (ll. 569-72). He envisions her as a blend of fleshliness and youthful hope; she is like Herakles before he turns from heroism to madness in Herakles. The speaker's mention of the potential frenzy and fervor of Joan
inevitably intrudes upon the reader's mind as the speaker creates the image of her guileless nudity in the water. Just as Herakles' madness is foreshadowed by his drinking and revelling in _Alkestis_, the epiphanic experiences of Joan's later life and her death by burning are foreshadowed, perhaps unintentionally, but the speaker's instructions to the phantom Furini:

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. . . Only, turn
Her face away--that face about to burn
Into an angel's when the time is ripe!
(11. 611-13)
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He uses her as the symbol of unexplained phenomena--his own self and the future, in part--because she suffers from "strange voices . . . imperiously astir" (l. 572) later just as the poet-persona himself fancies various voices within the seven parleyings.

**VIII**

There is a link between the proposed painting of Joan which intimates her potential for madness and frenzy and the paintings by Gerard de Lairesse. These blatantly show the chaos of sexual passion and an overt display of lust displaced from the speaker's sanitized view of Furini's nudes. At the opening of the parleying with Lairesse, an artist and writer who goes blind as an adult, the speaker notes that the artist's early paintings are filled with mythic beings:
... earth stocked with brood
Of monsters,—centaurs bestial, satyrs lewd,—
. . . . . . . . . . . .
Of god and goddess in their gay escapes
From the severe serene.

(11. 11-15)

Lairesse's prose work *The Art of Painting* (1778) contains that same fanciful view of commonplace landscapes in which "Holland turned Dreamland" (1. 65), so in the book as well as in the paintings, Lairesse invests everyday places with details which are no less wonderful than the speaker's fancy about Joan of Arc.

There are more similarities between Lairesse and the speaker than the latter is willing to admit. Lairesse presents scenes in his book by means of imagining a fictive stroll through the countryside, but rather than openly repudiating Lairesse's practice of seeing mythological figures in commonplace landscapes, the speaker describes such beings within a terrestrial setting and utilizes the walk-metaphor. The use of past mythology in Lairesse's paintings and writings differs only in degree from the speaker's recollection of dead men who lived in the near past. In fact, the poet-persona does not repudiate Greek mythology so much as indulge himself in it. In spite of his supposed belief that modern man sees "fact unseen but no less fact the same,/Which mind bids sense accept" (11. 152-53), the speaker presents fancies in order to convince himself of a
fact unseen: the idea that progress must occur. N. B. Crowell sums up a traditional view of Lairetse by saying that Browning renounces all that pertains to the past and to Greek culture in favor of progress and modernization, yet instead, the speaker, unstable and inconsistent, overtly rejects Lairetse's use of myth while successfully imitating it in the parleyings. Although the speaker asserts that he has no transcendent vision as Lairetse does, he sets out to copy the artist's style in spite of the claim that he cannot discern supernatural elements in the world:

I who myself contentedly abide
Awake, nor want the wings of dream,—who tramp
Earth's common surface, rough, smooth, dry or damp,
—understand alternatives, no less
—Conceive your soul's leap, Gerard de Lairetse!
How were it could I mingle false with true,
Boast, with the sights I see, your vision too?

(11. 111-17)

This mingling of false and true in Lairetse's vision is no different from the necessary coexistence of good and evil which the speaker asserts in Mandeville and the principle of sainthood, achievement, fame, and transcendence "in little" which all the other parleyings imply. Although he repudiates an "elder age" (1. 133) whose art "grew rife/ With Joves and Junos, nymphs and satyrs" (11. 136-37) in favor of "progress for the bold" (1. 172), his statement that Lairetse "saw the body, 't is the soul we see" (1. 173)
contradicts the assertion in Furini that nudes may represent the soul. If Furini, like Fra Lippo Lippi, accurately paints the body to indicate the soul's transcendent beauty, then the poet-persona is being hypocritical or forgetful because his critique of Lairesse's art contradicts the praise for Furini's work, which also shows mythological goddesses and nymphs.41

In the initial scene of the metaphorical work (part 8), the speaker presents Prometheus and the long-winged eagle of Zeus which eats his liver (11. 188-94) in a scene which is much less hopeful than the view of Prometheus as fire-giver found in Mandeville. The gift of the "sun in little" has become a questionable blessing because Prometheus suffers so horribly for his deed, and indeed, man also endures the pain inflicted by fire. "Morning's-laugh" (1. 210), which the speaker describes, seems to mock Prometheus' and the earth's "despair" (1. 209) just as the Fates' laughter mocks Apollo in the prologue to the Parleyings; both Apollo and Prometheus are powerless to help themselves. Traditionally, Herakles helps Alkestis when Apollo cannot save her and also bargains with Zeus to free Prometheus, who could not protect himself. This first scene introduces two stylistic devices which recur in the other mythological tableaux: first, all characters pause before acting, and second, there is a sense
of instability and chaos in every instance. In the first envisioned event, the eagle which torments Prometheus seems to halt before attacking his liver once again, and the mutable light and darkness create a sense of timeless indeterminateness.

After this early morning setting in which Prometheus is seen, the speaker moves on to another scape which is set later in the day and uses the same two techniques: dramatic pauses and fluid imagery. There the land becomes liquid and mobile as a tree shakes "loose dark’s clinging dregs, waves free/ In dripping glory" (ll. 214-15); "runnels plunge" (l. 215); and earth is filled "with moisture like a sponge" (l. 216). Describing Artemis as "earth's huntress-queen" (l. 231), the speaker makes all action cease before she kills her prey; even the prey assumes the landscape's looseness when the speaker says the beast is "bred of liquid marble in the dark/ Depths of the mountain's womb which ever teemed" (ll. 248-49). Roma King suggests that the speaker creates the scene in order to indict Artemis as a violent and unpitying goddess, but on the contrary, the description only masks the speaker's underlying preoccupation with death and dissolution--of the animal preyed upon, of Lairesse's artistic style, of the seven men mentioned in the parleyings, and finally of himself.
The noontime setting for the next tableau where a satyr prepares to attack the nymph Lyda contains unstable phenomena: "the valley seemed one cup / Of cloud-smoke" (ll. 264-65). The satyr lingers before attacking his sexual prey, and his "hot eyes reach and revel on the maid" (l. 307) just as the eagle of Zeus and the goddess Artemis pause and look at their victims.

In the final, imagined scenes on the walk, the confrontation of the Macedonian, Alexander the Great, and King Darius takes place, and a silent "ghost" (l. 360) with "deprecating hands" (l. 362) appears. In the former tableau, nature itself not only pauses (l. 313) but also seems to retreat from the meeting-place. The two men meet on a treeless, shrubless, and weedless "platform for . . . actors" (l. 319) before a battle when many die. The latter scene has been interpreted as an image of dying Greek philosophy or Greek civilization. Since the speaker refers to this vision of the ghost as "my last adventure" (l. 360), the ghost may represent death itself with which the poet-persona seems obsessed, and the last adventure may only be his death which he envisions. Cutting off the fictive walk in which he has indulged, the speaker proposes to deal only with "the all-including Future" (l. 367) from now on, not with the past or "the ambiguous Present" (l. 369). His insistence
upon progress at all costs makes him seem ludicrous as he
tries to ignore the past Greek heritage entirely:

Nothing has been which shall not bettered be
Hereafter,—leave the root, by law's decree
Whence springs the ultimate and perfect tree!
Busy thee with unearthing root? Nay, climb—
Quit trunk, branch, leaf and flower—reach, rest sublime
Where fruitage ripens in the blaze of day!
0'erlook, despise, forget, throw flower away,
Intent on progress?

(11. 371-78)

The speaker unintentionally indicts himself as one who goes
against natural order because he seeks only the fruit and
ignores the root, trunk, and branch which bear the fruit and
feed it. Aware of the extreme position he advocates, the
speaker couches his rejection of the past and his trust in
the future in a question rather than a declaration.

Although he disparages the ghostly "dead Greek lore"
(1. 392), he presents "the best Greece babbled of as truth"
(1. 394) which, ironically, is stylistically superior to the
modern lyric which concludes the parleying with Lairesse.

The former passage reads:

A shade, a wretched nothing,—sad, thin, drear,
Cold, dark, it holds on to the lost loves here,
If hand have haply sprinkled o'er the dead
Three charitable dust-heaps, made mouth red
One moment by the sip of sacrifice:
Just so much comfort thaws the stubborn ice
Slow-thickening upward till it choke at length
The last faint flutter craving—not for strength,
Not beauty, not the riches and the rule
0'er men that made life life indeed.

(11. 395-404)
The poetic richness of these lines suggests a subliminal identification between the poet-persona and the shade of Greek lore, which he ostensibly repudiates. In other poems, Browning does object to the Greek rejection of Christianity and of the soul's worth, especially in "Cleon." Nevertheless, in this parleying, the speaker belies his fascination with the past and with death.

This ten-line ethopoeia of Greek lore consists of four rhymed couplets followed by two unrhymed lines, and it approximates the loose, iambic pentameter verse of the poet-persona's enjambed, conversational speech. Seven lines contain alliteration—"lost loves" (l. 396), "hand have haply" (l. 397), "made mouth" (l. 398), "sip of sacrifice" (l. 399), "faint flutter" (l. 402), "the riches and the rule" (l. 403), and "men that made life life" (l. 404), and two lines match sound to content as various fricatives /f s th th/, stops /b g p d t k/, and affricates /j ch/ jar against each other and slow lines as if to suggest the stagnation of Greek lore:

Just so much comfort thaws the stubborn ice
Slow-thickening upward till it choke at length.
(l. 400-401)

By contrast to this fictive voice which uses alliteration, conversational idiom, and correspondence of content to form, the final modern lyric with which Lairesse concludes
is neither conversational nor poetically complex. In fact, it sounds like Tennyson's verse, for example, in the Idylls of the King. Both passages include comments on death, but the modern verse tries to be covert and simplistic about the topic whereas the voice of Greek lore presents death as a reality. While the voice somberly opens by saying, "a shade, a wretched nothing" (l. 395), the modern lyric on Spring tries to be gay about dancing leaves in a graveyard:

Dance, yellows and whites and reds,—
Lead your gay orgy, leaves, stalks, heads
Astir with wind in the tulip-beds!

There's sunshine; scarcely a wind at all
Disturbs starved grass and daisies small
On a certain mound by a churchyard wall.

Daisies and grass be my heart's bedfellows
On the mound wind spares and sunshine mellow:
Dance you, reds and whites and yellows!
(1l. 426-34)

The repetition of words such as the colors (1l. 426, 434), "sunshine" (1l. 429, 433), "wind" (1l. 428, 429, 433), "grass" and "daisies" (1l. 430, 432), and "mound" (1l. 431, 433) make the lyric seem elementary. There are fewer syllables in each line of these verses than appear in most other lines of the poem. The rhyme-scheme—AAABBCCC—makes the sound of the modern lyric as redundant as the content. Each triplet rhymes and contains a complete sentence and thought; the spacing between each stanza only
heightens the passage's rigid format. Although DeVane praises the lyric for being imitative of Browning's earlier works and for using the reference to Spring in order to affirm a life beyond the grave, the fact that the lines only celebrate the rebirth of nature in a graveyard and mention nothing about life after death reveals the irony of man's hope to find sympathy in "leaves, stalks, heads" in the wind.

The analogy the speaker draws between himself and Achilles is yet another clue to his obsession with death and suffering. The speaker melodramatically declares:

Be death with me, as with Achilles erst,
Of Man's calamities the last and worst:
Take it so!

(11. 409-11)

By likening himself to Achilles, the poet-persona reveals his secret wish to suffer heroically, a desire which is contradictory since he ostensibly denounces Greek lore. Such an interest in death shows a fatal infatuation with romanticized predicaments; unlike Herakles who grapples with Death in order to give Alkestis life or who stoically accepts his madness, the speaker seems to be attracted to death for its own sake. He becomes more enamored of the dissolution of Achilles and with nature's frenzied dance of leaves upon the graveyard mound than committed to life.
IX

In the final parleying with Charles Avison, the speaker relates an event which is antecedent to the seven-part narrative embedded between prologue and epilogue. This event, which occurs "this bitter morn" (l. 2), the same day as "this . . . midnight" (l. 1) mentioned in Mandeville, colors our perception of the entire monologue. His description of a black finch tugging at a "cloth-shred, still a-flutter from its nail" (l. 18) echoes the Spring-time images with which he concludes Lairesse. This day is in "uncomfortable March" (l. 36) after "five months' cruel winter" (l. 7), and seeking materials to build his nest, the bird selects a "rag of manufacture, spoiled/ By art, and yet by nature near unsoiled (ll. 33-34) instead of "moss-tuft, beard from sheaf/ Of sun-scorched barley, horsehairs long and stout . . . country-pillage" (l. 21-23). Just as the bird labors in order to obtain this particular piece of cloth, the speaker's "stay-at-home" (l. 39) soul roams "a century back" (l. 41) to grasp the "relic of a brain long still" (l. 43).

The setting in March causes the poet-persona to think of "the dead and gone/ Name" (ll. 46-47) of Avison; John Woolford says the speaker's mental association between the month and Avison who has composed a march seems to duplicate music's fluidity. By thinking about Avison and his
composition, the speaker reiterates his fear of death and fascination with the past: Avison is dead like all other musicians and composers who "did little or did much,/ But, doing, had their day once" (ll. 48-49). The speaker's remembrance of Avison makes him feel that his past memories have been "long still" (l. 43), dormant, and death-like. Not only is the speaker made aware of history's passage, but also he is conscious of his poor recollection of past events and, as Philip Drew and W. C. DeVane propose, the fact that art is transient.48 The poet-persona nostalgically recalls his childhood when his foot stepped Avison's tune "ere my hand/ Could stretch an octave" (ll. 51-52); at last, the "Grand March" of Avison inspires a hallucinatory fantasy in which he imagines that "dream-marchers marched, kept marching . . . from nowhere into nowhere" (ll. 62-64) in a vision of time's relentless motion. That history, self, and art are mutable and interconnected in the speaker's mind reflects Hegel's own view that the Geist expresses itself in these concrete forms.

The speaker's thesis in Avison splits into two parts: an affirmation of art's value and a definition of man's soul. If art fails, then man fails, according to the speaker, since "there is no truer truth obtainable/ By Man than comes of music" (ll. 138-39). Music is likened to
"quietude's immutability" (l. 71); the speaker reiterates the wish expressed in Mandeville to find "a quietude" (l. 7) in the writer's teachings. The speaker's interest in finding a place of repose makes him the paradigmatic "'Soul,' who seeks" and "shall find" (l. 148). He illustrates what he means by the word "soul" by presenting an analogy of an engineer who builds a bridge over water (ll. 152-56). Man's mind corresponds to the bridge because it contains a store of "solid knowledge" (l. 158); the soul is like the limitless ocean which flows beneath the bridge since it is "feeling" which cannot be expressed and systematized as well as knowledge in the mind can. Man needs another way to "show--/ How we Feel, hard and fast as what we Know" (ll. 193-94), so the speaker selects music as an appropriate symbol for the soul:

Does Mind get Knowledge from Art's ministry?  
What's known once is known ever: Arts arrange,  
Dissociate, re-distribute . . .  
. . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . .  
. . . produce  
Change, not creation.  

(ll. 200-205)

Music is more successful than painting and poetry in showing feeling because the latter two only show momentary "passions caught/ I' the midway swim of sea" (ll. 221-22). Music dredges deeper than other arts to show "the abysmal bottom-growth, ambiguous thing" (l. 237) which contrasts to the
conventional beauty of "the Painter's Eve, the Poet's Helena" (l. 246).

The speaker's preoccupation with the music of Avison becomes more morbid when he defines music in terms of monstrosity. He describes music's "dawn doomed phantoms" (l. 267) and then portrays himself as a second-rate chemist who reinfuses Avison's composition with "momentary liveliness" (l. 280) after its "sleep that looks like death" (l. 279). Like Mary Shelley's Frankenstein, the speaker imagines that he galvanizes Avison's work by sprinkling "chemical reactivies" (l. 290). The speaker's weariness with living and his fear of dissolution emerge in his disclaimer of the Frankenstein fantasy:

... This alone
Comes of my tiresome talking: Music's throne
Seats somebody whom somebody unseats,
... . . . . . . . . . . . .
... Never dream
That what once lived shall ever die! They seem
Dead--do they? lapsed things lost in limbo?
(l. 322-30)

By noting the shifting style and keys of music as well as the passing of popular composers into obscurity, the poet-persona covertly expresses his concern with the ephemerality of existence and the ever-present threat of death. At one point, the "minor key" (l. 337) of A introduces certain despairing voices who say that "knowledge turns nescience"
(l. 359), and at another, "bold C Major" (l. 361) precedes the poet-persona's assertion that Avison's march is "truth which endures resetting" (l. 383). He is merely masking his fear of ambiguity, monstrosity, and the unknown by means of hyperbole and distraction; he unhesitatingly claims that music is eternal truth, that man is "immortal" (l. 362), and that the phantom Avison ought to "bang the drums,/ Blow the trumps" (ll. 381-82) to break the silence.

Rather than present some optimistic future scene which might illustrate his theory in Lairesse—that progress is better than the past—the speaker remains obsessed with past events and with dead men; in fact, he regresses "back, and not forward" (l. 390) to present a scene "three hundred years ago"(l. 396) rather than foresee

Big in the distance—or my ears deceive—
Of federated England, fitly weave
March-music for the Future!
(ll. 387-89)

The speaker describes a procession moving from a dungeon to the gallows and admits that he must "wreak/ A classic vengeance on thy March" (ll. 398-99) in order to evoke this past scene "where heading, hacking, hanging is to be/ Of half-a-dozen recusants" (ll. 394-95). Ironically, the music which is supposed to represent truth has become associated with violence and death in the speaker's mind. There is no
transcendence involved in the alliterative line, "heading, hacking, hanging" (l. 394). The event to which the speaker alludes is, in fact, the execution of rebels by royal forces in the English civil war which ended with the death of King Charles I (parts 15-16). As a commoner in Parliament at that time, John Pym, one man named by the speaker, becomes the defender and hero of the common man against kingly and aristocratic abuses.  

Pym is a hero who is not beyond advocating violence in order to support his beliefs; he is celebrated as a "man of men" (l. 423) and "our citizen" (l. 427) who appeals to people who want their hero to be one of them, not superior to them. Like Herakles, Pym is associated with violence as well as goodness, and these two inseparable aspects of his character combine to make him the people's savior.

Rather than celebrate the logical reasons behind the stand that Pym takes against the monarch, the speaker emphasizes the emotional response of the populace who sees the revolt as an occasion or an excuse to be disorderly. The chaotic, Dionysian element completely takes over by the last parleying's conclusion. Ryals incorrectly says the music of Apollo has the last word, for in actuality, the music of the unruly mob triumphs over social order. The speaker's capitulation to the mob's level of thinking during
the song he sings suggests that he is no longer a detached speaker like those found in Night-Cap and Album. His identification with the populace becomes complete when he asks:

Shall we not all join chorus? Hark the hymn, --Rough, rude, robustous--homely heart-a-throb, Harsh voice a-hallo, as beseems the mob! How good is noise! what's silence but despair Of making sound match gladness never there? . . . . . . . . . .
Join in, give voice robustous rude and rough,-- Avison helps--so heart lend noise enough! (ll. 413-21)

Gradually, the speaker has become less reliable; the contradiction between his praise of progress and his actual obsession with the past and the dead becomes more evident until he joins with the frenzied multitude in his final parleying. Never attempting to distance himself from madness as other speakers in Night-Cap and Album do, he plunges into the mob's musical revel and never speaks again or resumes control of the poem's narration. The parleying with Avison simply ends with the wordless, musical score of the march. The speaker cannot justify his capitulation to chaos and his renunciation of poetic detachment, so he must say nothing.

X

By contrast to the speaker in the poem's body, the epilogue presents John Fust, the perfect mixture of sane
detachment and channelled, creative energy. Fust closely resembles Herakles as the laboring hero and suffering Everyman who endures pain and disappointment. In the epilogue, no speaker controls the straightforward, dramatic confrontation between Fust and his seven self-righteous friends. Historically, Fust lends money to Johann Gutenberg, who invents the first printing press with moveable type, but in Browning's poem, Fust is the inventor. Cast as a Faust-like sinner in need of repentance, Fust reforms and directs his once-lustful energy into the press's invention. Like Fust, Herakles shows his potential destructiveness in his drinking and revelling, but he always displays a willingness to help mankind. Although Fust hopes the press will be useful to man, his most important action is the humble acceptance of life on its own terms, an act which Herakles also performs at the end of Herakles. Fust acknowledges that evil will inevitably intrude on goodness and that his invention shall be corrupted:

Through me does Print furnish Truth wings? The same aids Cause Falsehood to range just as widely.

(11. 449-50)

Fust admits that his effort to spread truth by means of the printing invention may be undermined by exploiters. Unlike Fust and Herakles who recognize and accept failure, Apollo, in the prologue and in Alkestis, does not want Admetus to
die since he would have to admit his failure as a diety and as an impotent friend.\textsuperscript{52} Fust succeeds, however, since he stoically accepts the good "in little" in his invention.

Unlike the speaker who says he supports progress but who looks back to the past and the dead, Fust is oriented toward the future. His final words prophesy the coming of a man who shall have a great impact upon the world and whose power shall be due, in part, to the press. In contrast to Fust, the seven friends are overly-pious, Catholic men who are more concerned for themselves and for vain tradition than for Fust himself. They climb up to Fust's chamber to get him to repent, and they seem to fear that perhaps God will strike them or the entire city because of Fust:

\begin{quote}
Satan installed here, God's rule in abeyance,
Mayence some morning may crumble to dust.
\textit{(11. 8-9)}
\end{quote}

As an adult who repents of his past transgressions and who looks to new, less crippling activities, Fust dismisses their threat that the devil will come after him by saying that "childhood so talks" (1. 45).

These friends are self-appointed critics who supposedly try to help Fust, but he has already transcended their plane of existence--their legalism and their tradition. Although he admits his past sins to them and denies any dealings with "fiends" (11. 47-50), he stands apart from these men who
misinterpret his actions in spite of a confession, an action which usually brings people closer together. Like Admetus in *Alkestis* and Theseus in *Herakles*, Fust's friends are rather simple-minded. Herakles is welcomed socially, but misunderstood by Admetus who underestimates Herakles' respect for Alkestis. In *Herakles*, Theseus calls himself a companion of Herakles, yet lacks the depth necessary to understand Herakles' sensitivity; he condemns Herakles for being womanly and weak because the hero mourns for his dead family. Although friends underestimate him, Herakles responds to Alkestis' need for salvation and sorrows for his lost family; he knows he must behave in certain ways in spite of what society will think about him. Similarly, Fust has found peace with himself and with God, and he must accept himself as he is, although his friends cannot. The friends' self-righteous desire to condemn Fust shows the legalistic, un-loving views of a society to which Fust is intellectually opposed.

In order to survive and to help people with his printing press, Fust performs no miracle as Herakles does in *Alkestis*, nor does he move on to a new land as the protagonist does in *Herakles*. Fust remains in his house and does not madden like the other characters in Browning's late poems who remain too closely bound to an edifice: Prince Hohenstiel-Schwangau,
Juan, Miranda, Clara, the personae in the inn, and the speaker of the Parleyings. Adopting the stance of an objective eiron who remains within society, although he does not always agree with it, Fust combines the detachment of the comic speaker found in Night-Cap and the personal involvement of the personae found in all of the poems' embedded tales.\textsuperscript{53} As a deprecating protagonist, he is a mental runaway\textsuperscript{54} who does not change the world as much as find fault with it.\textsuperscript{55} Fust's seven friends' attitudes represent that naïve, "systematic thought"\textsuperscript{56} of society which is the perfect object of the eiron's ridicule. Calling themselves "Dominican experts" (l. 115) or medicant preachers who will not forgive Fust themselves, they say only "the Church could absolve" (l. 111) him. On the other hand, Fust adopts a more Protestant attitude that the Church is a fellowship of believers, not a hierarchy, since he asks them to "forgive and forget me" (l. 110). Although the reformation has not occurred yet, Fust's ideological views make him the fitting inventor of the press which will be used so effectively by Luther and other Protestants.

Because of their limited knowledge, the friends assume that Fust's pranks and wealth are the result of satanic influence. Their ignorance also provides an opportunity for Fust to prove his own and his invention's worth to them. When
Fust's partner tells the men that the invention makes it possible for all people to know "speech heard far and near/ At one and the same magic moment" (ll. 129-30), they assume that Fust uses sorcery and that they should exorcise the devil from him. Their inability to recollect the words of a Latin psalm which they intend to use in the exorcism gives Fust a chance to print the psalm for them. Not only does he print the psalm, but also he knows it by memory from "initium to finis" (l. 203). The friends' lack of information makes them foils for one so intimately involved in teaching others by means of the press.

When he finally reveals the invention in operation to the seven visitors, Fust begins the first of two long monologues in which he defends his creation's value by using empirical proof and by claiming divine inspiration (ll. 258-360, 363-441). First, he bids the friends to "see this Engine--be witness" (l. 271) and to "handle my Types" (l. 272) so that the men may see that the invention is "palpable" (l. 270), not a demonic illusion. Second, Fust tells them that the press saves him and the world because it will spread God's gospel to many people. In fact, he fancies that God spoke to him:

Hast sinned? Be thou saved, Fust! Continue my plan, 
Who spake and earth was: with my word things began.

.. . . . . . . . . . . .

Far and wide, North and South, East and West, have dominion
O'er thought, wingèd wonder, O Word!...

Where's Falsehood? Sun-smitten, to nothingness hurled!
(11. 284-95)

Just as Fust's lusts are now controlled, the ardor of inventing the press "in splendour and music" (1. 262) is subordinated to his higher goals--serving God and saving himself.

In the second speech, Fust refutes the poet-persona's argument which is made in Avison that knowledge is inferior to feeling and contains less truth. Rather than affirm man's ignorance or nescience, he asks:

Where's ignorance? Answer, creation! What height, What depth has escaped Thy commandment--to Know?
(11. 391-92)

Calling those who bemoan "Man's ignorance" (1. 416) foolish, Fust claims that man is always pressing "onward through ignorance" (1. 424), and the printing invention shall be the ultimate teaching tool for the masses, according to him:

. . . my Types will go forth to the world, like God's bread
--Miraculous food not for body but mind, Truth's manna!
(11. 437-39)

Acknowledging the potential misuse of the press which may "cause Falsehood to range just as widely" (1. 450) as truth, Fust triumphs through his ability to foresee a potentially frustrating event--the further spread of evil--and to balance that recognition with a hope in some future
event—the coming of a "man" (l. 475) predicted by John Huss, Martin Luther's precursor. Fust may be speaking about either Luther or some unspecified, heroic ideal in whom mankind always hopes. By looking to the future rather than to the dead past, by accepting the possible shortcomings of his invention and himself, and by maintaining his integrity as a detached skeptic who remains at home within an antagonistic society—Fust is similar to the sane, self-assured speakers in Night-Cap and Album and the sad, but knowing, Herakles in Herakles.

XI

To be a savior or even to be sane, one must be detached from disorienting experiences or invalid beliefs; to be a madman, one must renounce self-control and the use of good judgment. Often, the destructive energy of the madman can be channelled into creative actions. Fust, the revolutionary creator who seems to be possessed by demons to outsiders, reintegrates the qualities of savior and madman, which are often divided between at least two characters in the long poems. His ability to be immersed in society yet to be detached from error makes him a fully self-conscious soul.

The two other important personae in the Parleyings are much less capable than Fust, the poem's hero. The speaker initially begins the seven-part narration as an ordered,
thematically unified work which advocates the principle of good "in little," yet when he succumbs to the crowd's frenzy in Avison, what influence and goodness he possesses has become completely merged with the consuming, antithetical force of chaos. The speaker loses his individual voice and immerses himself in dissolution. Apollo, on the other hand, represents the opposite extreme; he is overly detached from reality. Trying to overcome the powerful Fates by trickery, to prolong Admetus' life without reason, and to ignore the future effect Admetus' senseless reprieve will have, Apollo foolishly leaves the Fates' den and thinks he has triumphed. By contrast, Fust is the personification of good "in little," for he is the core within society that resists external pressure. He repents out of his own volition, not by coercion, and invents and speaks his two long monologues out of a desire for self-expression; he also hopes to preserve his soul by turning his vast energy to good effect. In spite of his ignorant and insensitive friends, Fust would agree with Herakles' last words in Herakles: friends are worth more than either wealth or strength. Fust's concern for human beings and his wish to advance knowledge throughout the world show that he wants to be man's savior even though mortal and erring.

As Herakles understands his past mistakes and progresses
beyond them, Fust transcends his social limitations and affirms his selfhood by looking to the future. Morse Peckham's analysis of Faust, the character Defoe identifies with Fust, succinctly sums up the necessary distance between self and other:

... Faust, reaching the limits of his culture, and seeking to escape those limits, first had to explore that culture, including—as in the Classical Walpurgisnacht—the past of that culture. He had to resist the temptation of the hypostatized moment, the temptation to be a monadic personality. He had to reach the point of accepting the eternal feminine, the eternal not-I, the eternal otherness which draws us forever onward.58

Fust's prophecy of a "man" to come is such a progress forward for the self. The self must express itself in each particular moment through an appropriate mode or art-form—whether it be poetry, prophecy, machinery, or architecture; Browning selects the former mode as the way to display the enlightenment or the failure of the various speakers and protagonists in the late long poems, and his Fust is a most successful and self-conscious avatar of that flawed hero—Herakles.
NOTES FOR CHAPTER V

1 Frye, p. 237.


3 William Clyde DeVane, *Browning's Parleyings* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1927), pp. 292-93. The belief that Fust—the man who lent money to Gutenberg, the inventor of the press—was the first printer was a common nineteenth-century error (p. 292). Relying on the authority of William A. Speck, DeVane says that Defoe spread the idea that Fust and the fictive Faust were the same figure (p. 293).

Robert Langbaum suggests that the poet uses the past as history and not as myth. Calling the work a verse-essay on symbolism, Langbaum nevertheless deals only with a few of the parleyings in his discussion, not with the work as a whole; he only uses sparse evidence to prove how the poem involves modern, symbolist views. For example, Christopher Smart is supposed to resemble a contemporary writer because he experiences a single moment of epiphany which enables him to write one great poem, and Bartoli makes the kind of neo-classical, decorative, and non-symbolist use of myth which Browning supposedly dislikes (Langbaum, "Myth," pp. 576-80). In *BA*, Langbaum only discusses *Alkestis* as a myth and does not link the embedded fiction to Balaustion's
situation in the poem's framework. He calls Balaustion a mouthpiece for the modern, nineteenth-century sensibility (p. 582). Langbaum's argument works well with The Ring and the Book because he shows how Browning employs the pattern of Christian redemption in a realistic, modernized situation when Caponsacchi rescues Pompilia; the pure white light of Heaven is intimated through the limited humanity of Caponsacchi. In the Parleyings, Browning utilizes historical figures, who are no more glamorous or superhuman than persons in the present time, to indicate how figures of history as well as mythic personae are within the realistic artist's domain.

Critics often try to impose an external, organizing scheme on the Parleyings. Clyde de L. Ryals pairs the first six parleyings—Mandeville and Bartoli, Smart and Dodington, and Furini and Lairesse—and labels Avison the final movement in a four-part division which he calls a symphony (p. 205). Romo King groups them by stylistic elements. Mandeville and Dodington are speculative and argumentative while Smart and Avison are climactic (Artifice, pp. 241-42). Mark Siegchrist divides the seven parleyings into two groups: Mandeville, Smart, Furini, and Avison as nominal parleyers whom Browning seems to favor and Bartoli, Dodington, and Lairesse as antagonistic figures whom Browning discredits
("Type Needs Antitype," The Victorian Newsletter, no. 50 [Fall 1976], p. 2). Such attempts to impose order on the work suggest that the critics find the poem's nine-part division inadequate. These pairings and groupings are only fictions of the critics' minds and do not necessarily clarify the poem. All three critics eliminate the prologue and epilogue from consideration as a significant part of the entire fiction.

Ryals and King see the epilogue as a coda-like resolution. The former critic calls it a non-beatific movement upward from the prologue's Hellishness (p. 223) but says that the triumph of the written word, human imagination, and human inventiveness are a muted victory (p. 206). King sees the epilogue as a limited progress from Greece to the modern, realistic print shop (Artifice, p. 226).

5 Langbaum, "Myth," p. 582.
6 DeVane, Parleyings, p. 1.
7 DeVane, Parleyings, pp. 284-85.
8 King, Artifice, pp. 238-41.
9 John Woolford, "Sources and Resources in Browning's Early Reading" in RB, pp. 8-11.
DeVane, *Parleyings*, pp. 286-87. This quotation includes 11. 558-60.

DeVane, *Parleyings*, p. 286. This quotation includes 11. 726-27, 730-31 in the modern translation. DeVane rather absurdly identifies the wine with human imagination. The Fates do not speak truth when they are drunk; Apollo has only deceived them.


DeVane, *Handbook*, p. 495. Robert R. Columbus and Claudette Kemper attack DeVane's assertion that the drunken Fates affirm truth. The Fates only celebrate the joys of illusion while Apollo, who is no more wise than they, celebrates man's reason and instinct. Columbus and Kemper say that neither Apollo nor the Fates seems to be genuinely interested in man's condition. If neither side possesses the entire truth, then ultimately the reader must read the work to find his own truth. The surface confusion of the poem is a way of making the reader more involved in comprehending the meaning of words and actions and in parleying with the work as an intellectual comedy ("Browning's Fuddling Apollo, or the Perils of Parleying," *Tennessee*
Studies in Literature, 12 [1967], 83-94).

15 Ryals, p. 207.

Euripides casts Apollo as an ambiguous figure since the word for the deity which the tragedian employs is "loxias," a term that is closer in etymology to the words "oblique" and "ambush" than to the word "light" (p. 86).

17 Mark Siegchrist says the sisters utter the truth that "Man learningly lives" (l. 246) when they hear the explosive voice of an ultimate reality (p. 3). Columbus and Kemper call the explosion a collapse of an old order such as occurs in Aeschylus' Eumenides when Orestes is acquitted of killing his mother (p. 92).

18 Frye, p. 185.

19 DeVane, Parleyings, p. 31.

20 Hebrews 12: 1 (New American Standard)

21 Crowell, Soul, p. 105; King, Artifice, p. 245; and DeVane, Parleyings, p. 4.


23 Primer, p. 8.
DeVane thinks Carlyle is the friend because he had been condescending toward Browning, who may have borne a grudge against him (Parleyings, p. 25).

DeVane, Parleyings, p. 60.

DeVane, Parleyings, p. 63. Lassay's work is titled Recueil de Differentes Choses.

Ryals, p. 248. He insists that the realistic imagination which shapes the girl's story is somehow superior to that which shapes Bartoli's supposed tale (Ryals, p. 206).

After Megara's death, Herakles marries Deianira who possesses the blood of Nessus, a centaur that had been killed by Herakles for trying to rape Deianira. The wounded centaur had said his blood would prevent Herakles from loving any woman more than he loved Deianira, so later when she learns of Herakles' efforts to obtain Iole as a concubine, she dips a robe in the poisoned blood and sends it to Herakles. Morford and Lenardon summarize the result of Deianira's deed:

As the flames of the sacrificial fire warmed the poison, the robe clung to Heracles and he was burned by it with unendurable torment . . . a huge funeral pyre was made for him upon Mt. Oeta . . . . So the mortal part of Heracles was burned away and he gained immortality. (pp. 370-71)

The list of earth's inhabitants is found in stanzas 21-26 of A Song to David (Poems by Christopher Smart, ed.)

30 Drew, Poetry, p. 343.

31 Smart, Song, st. 69.

32 Smart, Song, st. 39.

33 Ryals, p. 214. Dodington may be a surrogate for Benjamin Disraeli (Drew, Poetry, p. 343).

34 King, Artifice, p. 256.

35 DeVane, Parleyings, p. 134.

36 Philip Baldinucci's Delle Notizie De Professori del Disegno was supposedly used by Browning as a source for the critic's ideas (DeVane, Parleyings, p. 201). DeVane reasons that Baldinucci calls the nude evil because he is lascivious (Parleyings, p. 204) and suggests that Baldinucci is a mask for the nineteenth-century critic J. C. Horsley, who had denounced Browning's son Pen for his nude paintings (Handbook, p. 513). The proposed painting that the speaker describes at the end of Furini may be modelled upon Pen's Joan of Arc and the Kingfisher (1886) (Parleyings, p. 211).

37 The allusion identifies Baldinucci with the giants in Greek mythology who piled Mt. Ossa on top of Mt. Olympus in
their war against Zeus, whom Herakles aids (Morford and Lenardon, p. 40). The speaker may see himself as a Herakles who is opposed to the antagonist Baldinucci, cast as a giant.


39 Siegchrist, p. 10.

40 Norton B. Crowell, The Convex Glass (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1968), p. 253. Roma King says that the metaphorical walk from dawn to dusk illustrates the waning of Greek culture, and the emphasis on the violent and lustful aspects of mythology in the imagined scenes implies decadence (Artifice, p. 261). Clyde de L. Ryals speculates that Browning is actually attacking the pre-Raphaelites, Tennyson, and Arnold, not the Greeks, when he criticizes Lairesse's use of old myths (p. 219).

41 One cannot pursue one's artistry at the expense of one's life or personal fulfillment. Fra Lippo Lippi seeks pleasure, at the risk of his priestly vows, with women as well as in his painting, for without his longing for the former, his art would not be as rich. Andrea del Sarto, on the other hand, creates art to the extent that he fails to meet his wife's needs. In "Cleon," the persona has fame as a skilled artist; however, he refuses to believe in Christianity and, thus, to resolve his questions about death and
immortality. As Professor Alan Grob explained (in a lecture in Fall 1976 at Rice University), Cleon is held back by the past, the conventions of Classicism and Greek Rationalism, while Fra Lippo Lippi chooses the future, not the past.

Lairesse's reliance on mythological beings as the subject matter in his art may be seen as a limitation of the imagination and of the realistic perception of everyday life. Nevertheless, the fact that Furini uses the same creatures and is praised by the poem's speaker indicates the latter's inconsistency.

42 King, Artifice, p. 261.

43 DeVane, Parleyings, p. 249.

44 King, Artifice, p. 262.

45 DeVane, Parleyings, p. 251.

46 The speaker's obsession with dead men differs from the attitude of the narrator in Browning's La Saisiaz (1878). In the poem, the death of a friend leads the speaker to speculate upon the nature of the soul, God, and life after death; there is information and enlightenment sought that is not evident in the Parleyings. DeVane believes that Browning's earlier poem was inspired primarily by a contemporary debate published in 1877 in The Nineteenth Century and called A Modern Symposium on the Soul and Future Life.
DeVane calls this poem Browning's direct contribution to the debate (Fairchild, p. 104), but whether or not Browning was challenged by the symposium, his work's socratic method and its topic have a precedent in Plato's *Phaedo* where Socrates and his followers discuss the soul's immortality in the face of Socrates' nearing doom.

Rather than being overcome by his contemplation of death, as is the speaker in the *Parleyings*, this persona in *La Saisiaz* recounts for the reader his mountaintop experience of self-examination some time after that event has taken place. Just as the speaker in *Night-Cap* returns to the safety of London to record the poem about Miranda, the persona retells the past event by recording it while he is in London; the reader does not learn this detail about the speaker's present location until the end of the poem. Obviously, he is trying to distance himself from the threatening content, the death of a friend, which forms the basis of the poem's content.

47 Woolford, p. 34.


49 Critics read this phrase as an unqualified affirmation of man and music by Browning, and they praise his use of music as a metaphor of inarticulate grandeur. G. M. Ridenour
says the work elevates music above words because music can give shape to experience by recreating a historical and cultural milieu (BMA, p. 165). W. Stacy Johnson and Penelope Gray agree that musical discord and its subsequent resolution parallel man's quest for and finding of truth (Johnson, "Browning's Music," Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism, 22 [1963], 206; Gray, "Browning and Music" in RB, p. 226). Johnson sees the last parleying as a discussion of truth by means of music rather than an evocation of music (p. 206). There is significance in linguistic structures, but Johnson says the poem affirms that music is the chief symbol of truth; the score's inclusion at the poem's end seems to be an implicit admission of the difficulty of words to approximate music and truth, according to Johnson (p. 207). Mark Siegchrist says art expresses the ultimate reality (p. 8), and Roma King affirms that it unites the rational and non-rational by providing structure to what already exists (Artifice, p. 265). Whether music is considered to be transcendent or not, the critics claim that the poem straightforwardly endorses music as the way to express truth appropriately.

50 John Pym almost single-handedly forces the execution of the Earl of Strafford, an aristocrat favored by the King, because Strafford opposed a reconciliation with the Scots.
The confrontation between Parliament and King Charles I in 1642 begins when the monarch tries to impeach one lord and five commoners in Parliament who have opposed him in the Grand Remonstrance. The men escape, and Charles's aggression turns the rest of Parliament against him. Pym supports Parliament in its defiance of the King and helps run England during the civil war, until his death by cancer.

The three places mentioned in the Parleyings (11. 425, 429, 433)--Somerset, Tavistock, and Westminster--are important in Pym's life. Somerset is the place from which his family comes; Tavistock, the area Pym represents in Parliament from 1624 until his death in 1643; and Westminster, the location of Parliament (Encyclopedia Britannica, 1958 ed., s.v. "Pym, John," by Sidney Reed Brett).

51 Ryals, p. 222.

52 Columbus and Kemper ask why man should succeed when Apollo, a god, fails (p. 94). They conclude that man has not triumphed since language in print defies Fust's aims (p. 100).

53 Fust shares certain qualities found in the protagonist of second phase comedy in Northrop Frye's system.


55 Frye, p. 230.
56 Frye, p. 230.

57 John Huss (or Hus) is a Bohemian reformer who was burned alive in 1415 because of his religious teachings which were inspired by John Wycliffe's (or Wiclif's) writings. The Catholic Huss "hoped to effect a religious reformation, with the aid of his ecclesiastical superiors" (Philip Schaff, ed. *A Religious Encyclopedia or Dictionary of Biblical, Historical, Doctrinal, and Practical Theology*, 4 vols. [New York: Funk and Wagnalls, Co., 1891], II, 1043). Huss denied holding Wycliffe's view against transubstantiation and based his ideas of reform on conscience and Scripture, not on the Church's authority (II, 1045). In his book *All the Blood of Christ is Glorified*, he asks Christians not to seek signs and miracles, but God's word, and like Martin Luther, Huss condemned Pope John III for his command to sell indulgences for the forgiveness of sins (II, 1044). As Schaff says, "in comparison with Wiclif, he is a moon with a borrowed light" (II, 1045).

Wycliffe was considered the first evangelical reformer; he lived from around 1324 to 1384, when he died of a paralytic stroke (IV, 2518). The basis of his "teaching is his doctrine of the absolute authority of the Scripture," and he says the Bible is higher than the authority of the Church Fathers
(IV, 2517). In 1378, he repudiated the Church when, after Urban VI was elected pope, the French cardinals elected another pope, Clement VI. Wycliffe began to translate the Bible into English that same year (IV, 2515). After his death, the Council of Constance declared Wycliffe a heretic in 1415, and like Huss' works, Wycliffe's books were burned (IV, 2516).

Before Martin Luther challenged the Church, Huss and Wycliffe both criticized the Catholic perversion of the Lord's Supper: Huss attacked the withholding of the cup from the laity, and Wycliffe, the doctrine that the bread and wine are indeed transformed into the tangible body and blood of Christ (IV, 2518). Luther disliked the doctrine of the mass (IV, 2518), but it is important that this reformer (b. 1483-d. 1546) was, at first, unaware that his beliefs were in conflict with the Church's prevailing opinions (II, 1363). As Schaff writes, "this fact is a remarkable evidence that it was not the spirit of negation and simple critical reflection, but a spirit of positive and private thought, which produced his views" (II, 1364). Thus, Wycliffe, Huss, and Luther formed a succession of spiritual thinkers who all believed that the Bible contained God's last word to man and that they as individuals were able to discern the Word's meaning by their own personal study.
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