

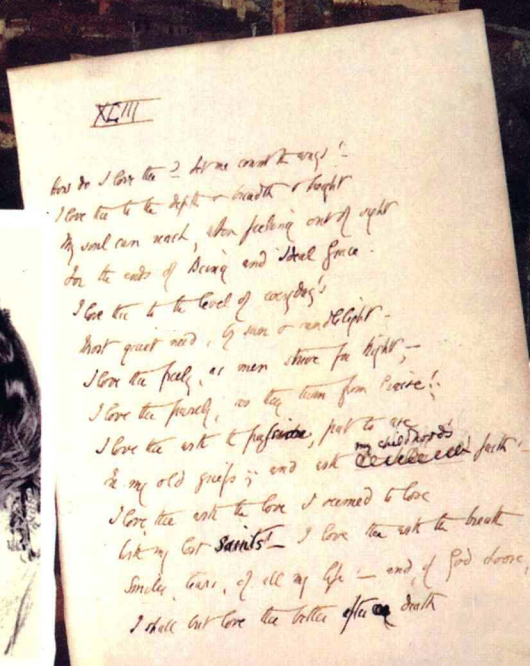
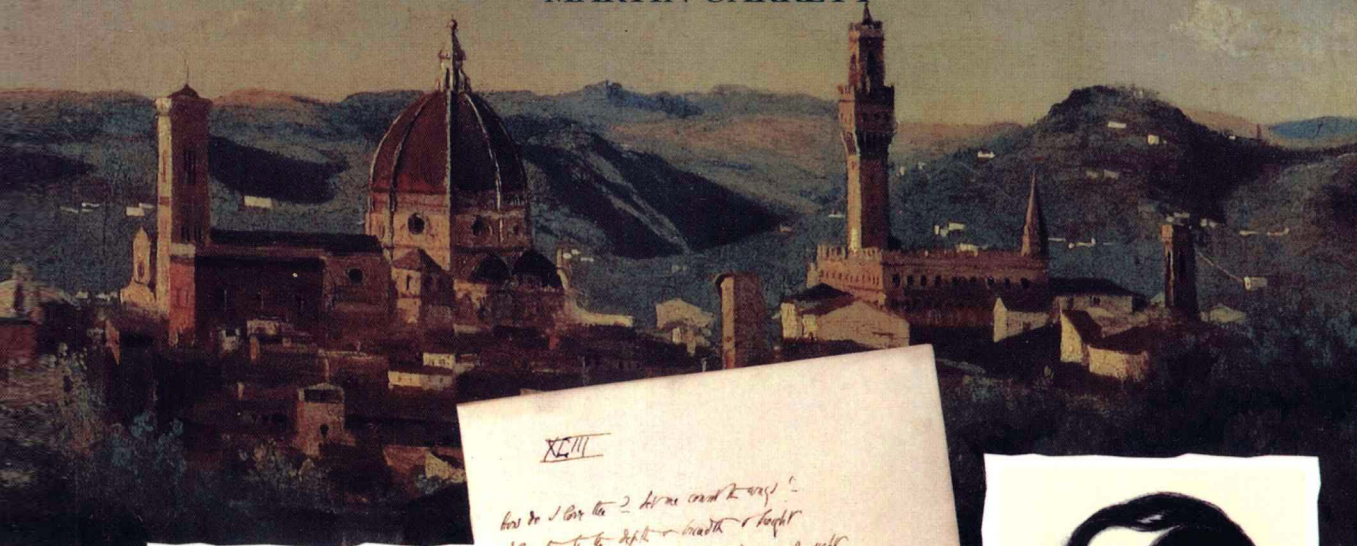
英国作家生平丛书

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writers' lives

Elizabeth Barrett Browning & Robert Browning

伊丽莎白·巴雷特·布朗宁
与罗伯特·布朗宁

MARTIN GARRETT



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& Robert Browning*

伊丽莎白·巴雷特·布朗宁

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MARTIN GARRETT

藏书章

Elizabeth Barrett Browning

Robert Browning

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总序

普通中国读者，包括英语专业的学生，对于英国文学的了解一般只限于个别经典作品，而对作家其人其事及其整个文学创作情况所知甚少。其中部分的原因是文学史家们编写的英国文学史往往注重介绍作品的情节内容，对作家的生活经历、作品的具体创作过程着墨不多。上海外语教育出版社从英国大英图书馆出版社(The British Library)引进出版“英国作家生平丛书”，弥补了这方面的缺憾。该丛书以图文并茂的形式讲述莎士比亚等14位英国著名作家的生平故事，同时穿插介绍他们的作品，有助于充实读者对英国文学的认识。

英国文学源远流长，经历了长期复杂的发展演变过程。在这个过程中，文学本体以外的各种现实的、历史的、政治的、文化的力量对文学发生着影响，而作家个体的独特生活遭遇也是造就文学杰作的一个重要因素。“英国作家生平丛书”对14位名家的传记式介绍，充分展示了这一点。戏剧方面，莎士比亚是英国文艺复兴时期最杰出的剧作家，他当过演员，其作品思想内容深刻、艺术表现手法精湛，历经几个世纪长演不衰。诗歌方面，浪漫主义诗人华兹华斯、柯勒律治、拜伦、济慈的不同身世对他们的诗歌创作及艺术风格产生深刻影响；维多利亚时代诗人伊丽莎白·巴雷特和罗伯特·布朗宁的爱情故事是英国文坛的一段佳话。小说方面，狄更斯是19世纪英国最伟大的小说家，他的许多小说以孤儿为主人公，这与作家童年时代的一段不幸经历有关；康拉德来自波兰，将自己奇特的身世背景和航海经历交融在字里行间；女作家奥斯丁、玛丽·雪莱、勃朗特姐妹、伍尔夫以女性特有的视角和敏锐的观察描摹人性与社会，思考妇女的生存状况，她们的小说无论在思想主题、题材表现方面，还是在叙述手法上，都有创新，对推动英国文学的发展作出了突出贡献。

“英国作家生平丛书”原版由大英图书馆出版社出版，体现出图书馆出版物的特点。书中配有大量的插图，有些是珍贵的手稿，有些是罕见的照片，有些是博物馆或美术馆珍藏的油画和素描，让读者有幸一睹作家的风采，产生直观的感觉。这些插图带有不同时代的印记，营造出浓厚的历史感。丛书的作者均为专业领域里有着较深造诣的学者，对史料的掌握系统全面，他们用生动的语言娓娓讲述作家生平事迹，点评具体文学作品，书末还附有供读者进一步阅读的书单，推荐了有代表性的文献，对英语专业学生撰写课程论文或毕业论文很有帮助。

“英国作家生平丛书”内容有趣，插图精美，文字简洁，兼顾普及性和专业性，是学习和了解英国文学的良师益友。

王守仁
南京大学

导 读



伊丽莎白·巴雷特·布朗宁 (Elizabeth Barrett Browning, 1806–1861) 和罗伯特·布朗宁 (Robert Browning, 1812–1889) 是 19 世纪中叶活跃在英国诗坛上出类拔萃的诗人。他俩因志同道合、情趣相投而成为生活伴侣。布朗宁夫妇生前并不出名，这不仅是因为他俩婚后生活在意大利，而且还因为他们的诗歌因风格奇特而一时难以被人接受。比罗伯特大六岁的伊丽莎白·巴雷特·布朗宁生前似乎比他丈夫更为出名，她的诗歌不仅充分反映了她对意大利民族独立运动的同情和支持，而且也表达了她对爱情的赞美和对幸福的追求。最受评论界关注的也许是她的“诗小说”《奥罗拉·利》(*Aurora Leigh*, 1856)。这部用无韵诗体写成的长篇叙事诗体现了她的实验和创新精神。罗伯特·布朗宁一生创作了近 300 首诗歌，其中最引人注目的无疑是他采用“戏剧独白”手法创作的诗歌。这是一种通过人物的自白或议论来抒发情怀的充满戏剧效果的无韵诗。罗伯特·布朗宁的代表作《环与书》(*The Ring and the Book*, 1968) 由 12 组戏剧独白组成，共 2 万余行，是 19 世纪英国最优秀的长篇诗歌之一。布朗宁夫妇的诗歌在英语国家广为流传，拥有无数的崇拜者和热情读者。他们的诗歌实验——尤其是“诗小说”和“戏剧独白”——对 20 世纪英国文学的演变产生了一定的影响。

《伊丽莎白·巴雷特·布朗宁与罗伯特·布朗宁》是大英图书馆出版社近年来隆重推出的“英国作家生平丛书”之一。这套丛书生动地记载了英国文学史上一批经典作家的生活经历和创作历程，并以全新的视角来考察他们的艺术人生和文学成就。丛书出版后在英语国家引起了积极的反响。

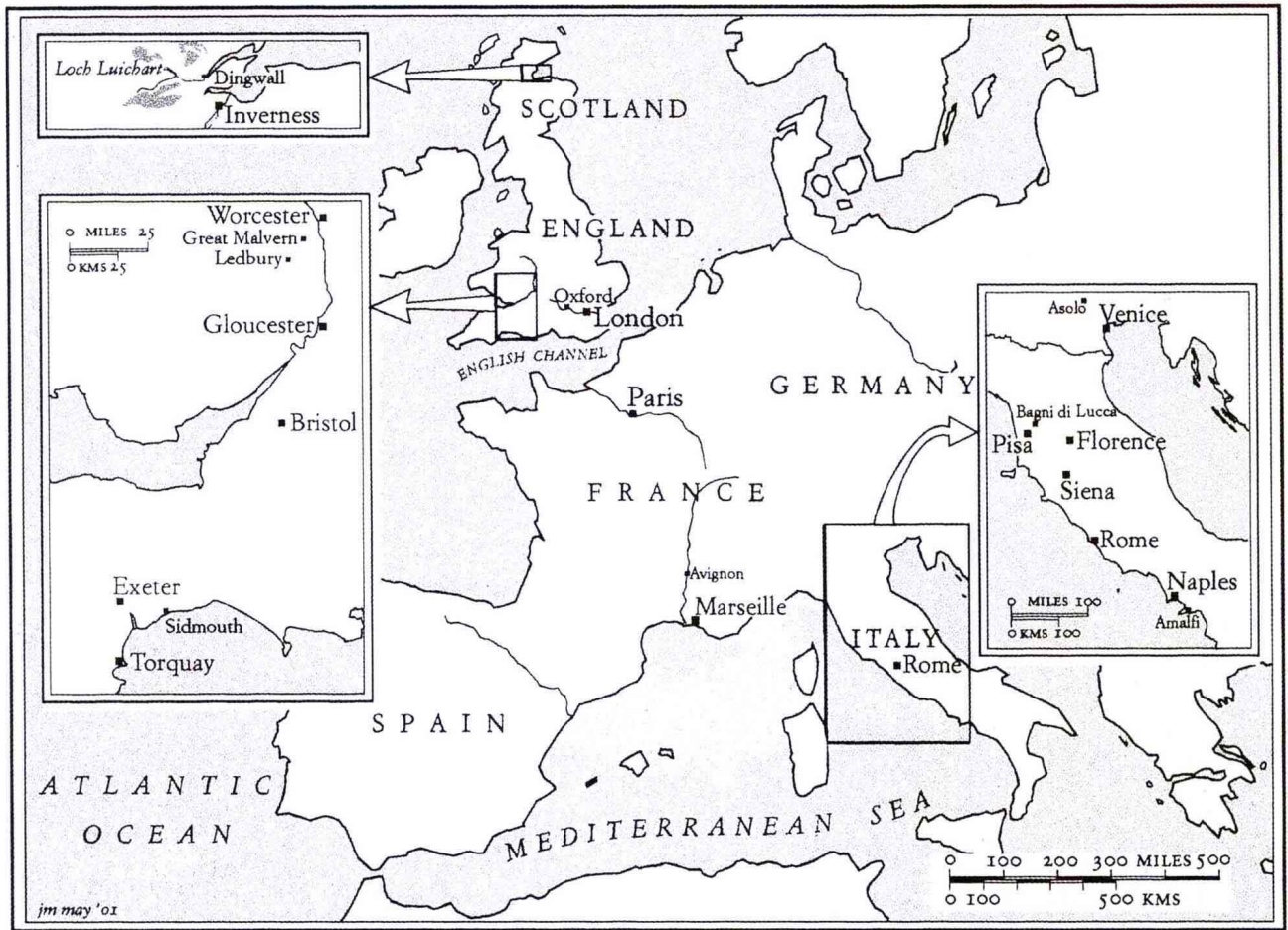
本书详细介绍了 19 世纪中叶英国诗坛明星布朗宁夫妇的爱情、婚姻及追求文学事业的历程。作者生动描述了伊丽莎白·巴雷特·布朗宁早年勤奋学习外语和苦心钻研诗学的经历，同时介绍了她的诗歌所反映出的美学观念、社会立场和政治态度。书中还介绍了罗伯特·布朗宁的成长过程以及他如何投身诗歌实验并最终跻身文坛的曲折经历。本书最引人入胜的部分也许是对布朗宁夫妇的爱情、婚姻以及国外生活的描写，还有他们与许多文坛巨匠的交往和友谊。此外，本书对布朗宁夫妇的一些重要作品进行了详细的解读，其间不时闪烁着诗人的灵感和智慧，折射出他们的理想和情怀。这部诗人传记叙述生动，资料翔实，脉络清晰，图文并茂，文笔流畅，是我国大学生、研究生和文学爱好者不可多得的英语读物。

李维屏

上海外国语大学



Elizabeth Barrett Browning and Robert Browning



Map showing places
associated with the
Barrett Brownings.



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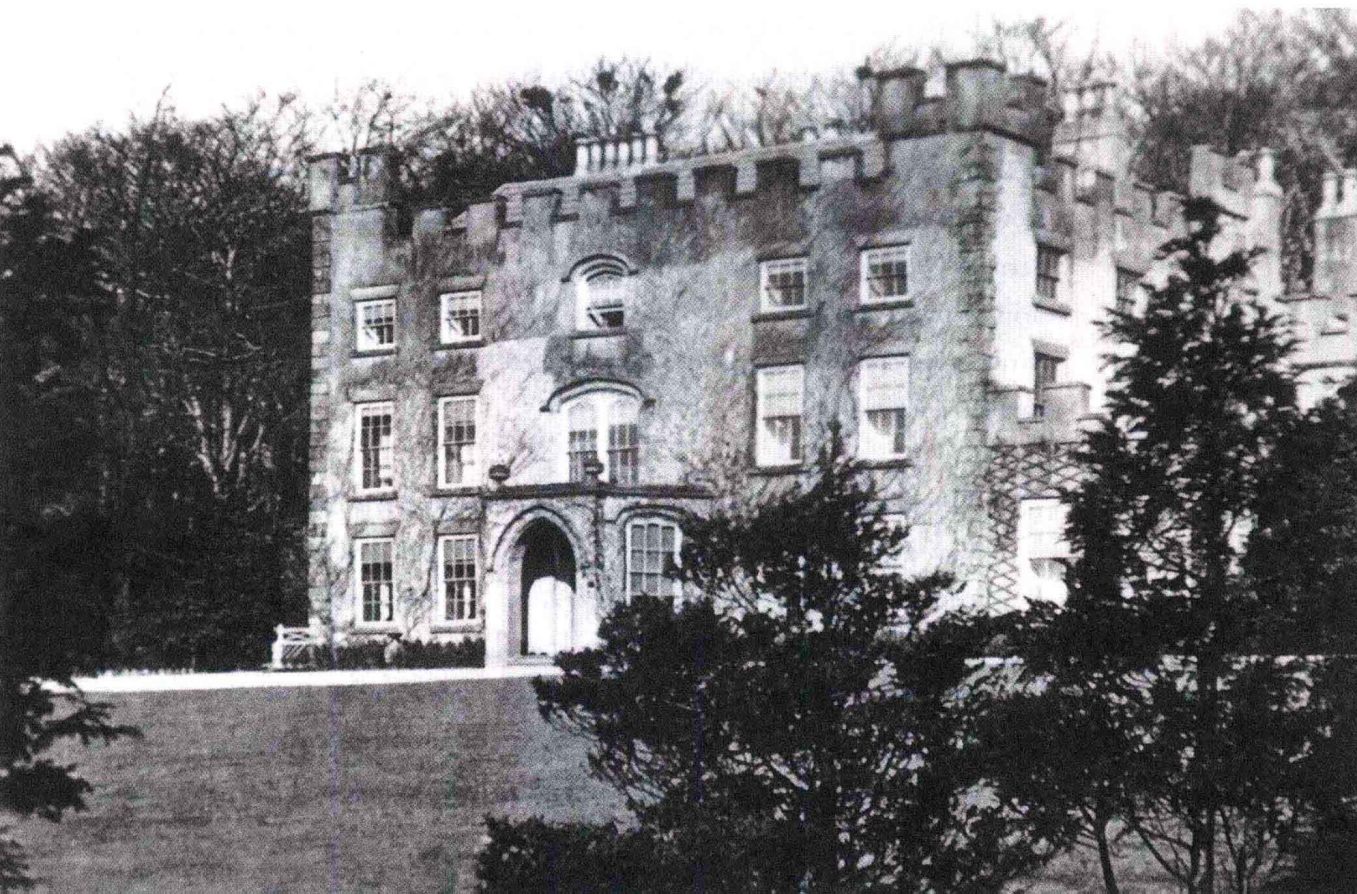
Elizabeth Barrett

The Barrett family amassed its wealth, in the late eighteenth century, with the aid of slave-workers on sugar plantations in the British colony of Jamaica. The poet's father, Edward Moulton-Barrett, was born there and later directed the business and estates from London. Mary Graham-Clarke, whom he married in 1805, came from a family long known to his own and with similar commercial interests. Their daughter Elizabeth well understood the consternation of owners when slaves were emancipated by parliamentary act in 1833, but rejoiced for humanity. Although her family in fact treated their slaves unusually well, guilt was one factor in the love of liberty – whether for slaves, child-workers, women, or nations – which her poems often declare.

The child whose full name was, a little awkwardly, Elizabeth Barrett Moulton-Barrett, was born on 6 March 1806 at Coxhoe Hall, near Durham. 'Ba', as

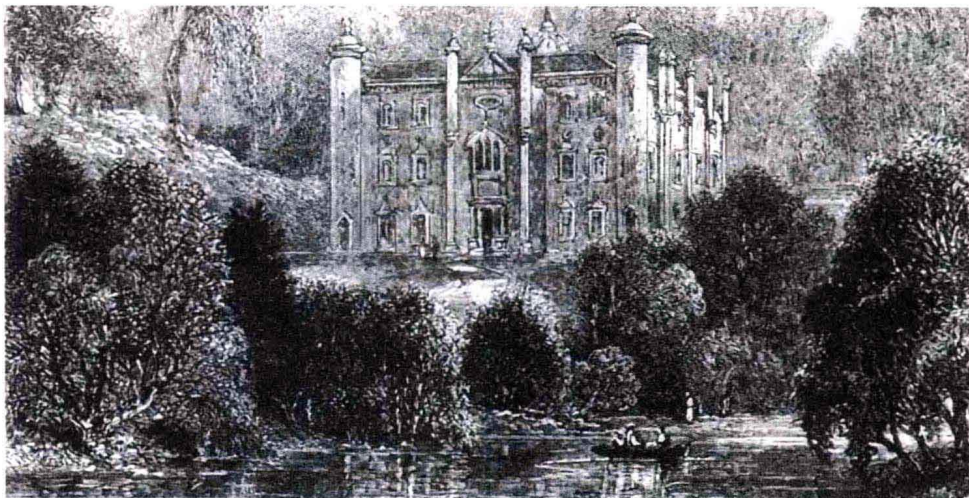
Coxhoe Hall, the birthplace in 1806 of Elizabeth Barrett Moulton-Barrett. The hall was demolished in 1952 because of mining subsidence.

*Photograph c. 1900
by courtesy of Harry Holder*



*Hope End, near
Ledbury, Herefordshire.
Elizabeth Barrett
lived here from the
age of three to twenty-
six. The house was
demolished in 1872.*

*The British Library
11612 b2*



her family called her, was the first of twelve children, all but one of whom survived infancy. In 1809 the growing family moved to Hope End (a ‘hope’ is an enclosed valley), near Ledbury in Herefordshire, where Edward Barrett converted the original house into stables and built a splendid new mansion in exotic ‘Turkish’ style. In this house, with its extensive grounds, Elizabeth Barrett spent an active, largely happy childhood. As yet there was little sign of the fearsome tyrant whom her father later became in the eyes of several of his children and of posterity. Father and sons played cricket. Indoor amusements included short plays which the precocious Elizabeth wrote and acted in with her brother Edward (‘Bro’, born 1807), her sister Henrietta (born 1809) and other siblings. Both parents were enthusiastic supporters of her early writing. In ‘Glimpses into My Own Literary Character’, a manuscript essay written when she was fourteen or fifteen, Barrett remembered how ‘in my sixth year’ (actually she was nine)

For some lines on virtue which I had penned with great care I received from Papa a ten shilling note enclosed in a letter which was addressed to the Poet Laureate of Hope End; I mention this because I received much more pleasure from the word Poet than from the ten shilling note – I did not understand the meaning of the word Laureate, but it being explained to me by my dearest Mama, the idea first presented itself to me of celebrating our birthdays by my verse. ‘Poet Laureate of Hope End’ was too great a title to lose.

My dear Mama
 I love you very
 much. & I hope you
 love me. I hope you
 like kinnerley.
 we have been very
 good, Bro has just told
 me how England

is bounded & has done
 it very well. tell dear
 Papa the Russians
 has beat the french killed
 18.000 men & taken
 14,000 prisoners. Bro &
 Hen meo & Sam joins
 with me in love to Papa
 & you & John your dear
 August 31. 12 Ba

Many of these birthday odes to her parents and siblings survive. Although not particularly remarkable poetry, they are good apprentice-work for one who soon came, she says in 'Glimpses', to long for poetic fame and to see literature as 'the star which in prospect illuminated my later days...the spur which prompted me, the aim, the very soul of my being'.

Fortunately, Barrett did not simply dream. She soon realized that such fame could be achieved only by dint of wide reading and determined application. From a very early age, initially under her mother's guidance, she read widely in English literature. A keen interest in languages also helped to extend her imaginative experience. She started to learn French when she was six or seven and Latin and Greek not long afterwards. By the end of 1816 she had progressed far enough with French to compose a short French classical tragedy, *Régulus*, for herself, Bro and Henrietta to perform. (One of the soliloquies was, she recalled, concocted in her

Letter from Elizabeth Barrett to her mother, written at the age of six on 31 August 1812. Contrary to what Barrett says in the letter, the Russians did not, in fact, 'beat the French' at the Battle of Smolensk.

*The British Library
 Add. MS 60575 ff1,1v*

‘house under the sideboard’.) What to many children would be hard labour was sheer excitement as far as the young poet was concerned: ‘poetry and Essays were my studies and I felt the most ardent desire to understand the learned languages. To comprehend even the Greek alphabet was delight inexpressible.’

A classical education was the traditional – and traditionally male – requirement for anyone wanting to become established as a serious poet, but few girls were offered such an opportunity. That girls almost never learnt Greek was, for the ambitious Elizabeth, part of its appeal. She persuaded her father to allow her to learn the language with Bro, who was being prepared by his tutor, Daniel McSwiney, to go away to school at Charterhouse. Within the immediate family there seems to have been no suggestion that her interests were eccentric or unbecoming for a female, or that she should be sewing or playing the piano (which she disliked) instead. In 1842 she told her friend Mary Russell Mitford that her only concession to ‘the duties belonging to’ what she calls ‘my femineity’ was that, amid much pricking of fingers and knotting of thread, she

once knitted an odd garter, and embroidered an odd ruffle, and committed fragments of several collars, and did something mysterious, the name of which operation has past from my head, towards producing the quarter of a purse, and made several doll’s frocks, and one or two frocks for a poor child of mine adoption.

It is difficult to say why this particular nineteenth-century family, later remembered for the authoritarian attitudes of its father, should have been so enlightened in this respect. The fact that Barrett was, as she goes on to say to Mitford, ‘always insane about books and poems – poems of my own, I mean, and books of everybody’s else’, obviously helped. Her evident enthusiasm, ability and strength of will met with encouragement rather than resistance from her loving parents.

By the age of twelve she was writing short novels and plays, translating, and experimenting with different sorts of poetry. *The Battle of Marathon*, her long poem on the ancient ‘war of Greece with Persia’s haughty King’, was privately printed, at her father’s expense, for her fourteenth birthday in 1820. Life now, however, began

Barrett aged twelve, in a drawing by William Artaud. The artist was impressed, he told a friend, by his sitter's extraordinary ability in languages and poetry.

*Wellesley College Library,
Special Collections*



in some ways to become more difficult. In April 1821 all three Barrett sisters were ill with headaches and convulsions. Henrietta and Arabel (born 1813) soon recovered, but Elizabeth did not. In July she also developed measles, and afterwards was sent to recover at the Spa Hotel, Gloucester. Here she remained for about ten months, while doctors disagreed on diagnoses and treatments. She complained of a swollen spine and was suspended for some time in a contraption known as a 'spine crib'; this, together with the then-common belief that sick women must rest absolutely,

probably weakened her further. Perhaps she did suffer from an unidentified illness, perhaps it was partly psychosomatic, but it became established that she must rest and that she needed to take opium. (This, administered in the alcoholic tincture laudanum or as morphine, was commonly prescribed for many illnesses at the time; the problem of addiction was not yet properly understood.) Having successfully resisted well-meaning doctors' attempts to curtail her reading and writing, she began to send work to periodicals, first achieving publication with 'Stanzas...on the Present State of Greece' – the Greek war for independence from the Turkish empire had just begun – in the *New Monthly Magazine* in May 1821. Her ambitious poem *An Essay on Mind* was finished in the spring of 1825 and published a year later.

Barrett already had an appreciative family audience, but *An Essay on Mind* brought her the wider and more critical response she craved. Uvedale Price, a distinguished classical scholar known to her parents, read the poem and began corresponding with her. Flatteringly, he sought her opinion of his nearly finished work on the pronunciation of Latin and Greek; he accepted many of her suggestions and remained in fruitful contact with her until his death in 1829. It was during the time she was in dialogue with Price that the first signs of disharmony with her usually encouraging father appeared. On 4 February 1827 she wrote an untitled private description of her feelings when Edward Barrett was less than appreciative of her poem 'The Development of Genius'. To her amazement, he found the first few pages of the poem, which she had laboured over for months, illegible, obscure, too inexplicit and lacking in variety. To him the hero of the poem was an insufferable madman and the verse unharmonious:

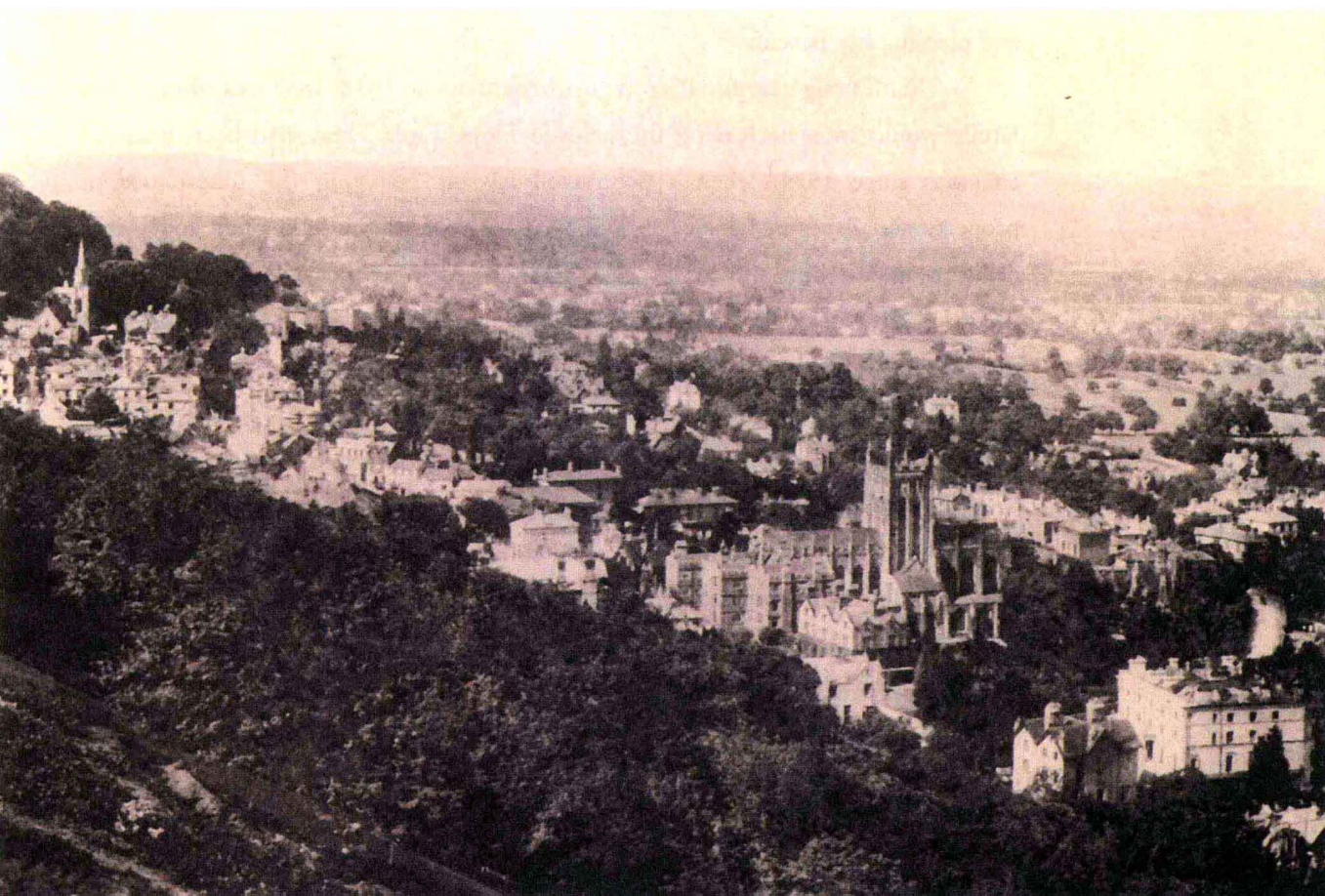
Indeed the whole production is most wretched! I must tell you so – and I think it is quite lamentable that you should have passed so much time to such an effect. You see the subject is beyond your grasp – and you must be content with what you can reach. I cannot read any more – I would not read over again what I have read for ten pounds – really not for fifty. I advise you to burn the wretched thing.

She felt 'mortified' and 'grieved'. It seemed 'a little hard that half an hour of patient attention should not be vouchsafed to my half year's patient composition'. Price, she noted, had responded positively to the poem.

It is easy to read too much into this incident. Certainly father and daughter had periods of close and evident affection afterwards. She felt great sympathy for his situation when her mother died, unexpectedly, of rheumatoid arthritis in 1828. But the 'Development of Genius' affair shows one potential area for tension. Edward Barrett was perhaps irritated less by the details of the poem than by a sense that his daughter's interests were moving away from his own, that she now needed him less than in childhood and adolescence. She still cared greatly about his reactions – 'Papa would be sorry to think how much he grieved me!' she concludes, half-lovingly, half-bitterly – but she increasingly tended to seek the opinion of friends, such as Price, the blind scholar Hugh Stuart Boyd who first wrote to her a month after the 'Development of Genius' incident, or, later, her fellow writer Mary Russell Mitford.

*Great Malvern in
Worcestershire.
Barrett stayed here
with her friend Hugh
Stuart Boyd and his
family in the spring
and autumn of 1830.*

*The British Library
10352 e11*



All three were considerably older than she was, and each acted as a substitute, to a certain extent, for her lost mother and decreasingly idealized father.

Boyd lived with his wife and daughter at Malvern Wells and for a time at Great Malvern, a few miles from Ledbury. Unlike Price, Boyd was unknown to the Barretts before the correspondence began, so Elizabeth Barrett had difficulty in convincing her father that it was proper, and herself that she had the courage, to meet him. When she eventually did, in the spring of 1828, they focused on their main common interest: Greek. Over several years she read Greek literature to him, and learned much about it from him. But her diary of 1831–1832 reveals that her relationship with Boyd was more emotionally troubling to her than he can ever have known. She talks of her uncertainty about how much her friend and mentor likes her, of her uneasy encounters with his wife and daughter, her jealousy of other young women who visit him, and her fury at herself for harbouring such feelings. It was her first experience of emotional involvement outside the family – a belated experience for one whose adolescent years had been spent reading, writing, being ill and pleasing her parents.

Something else for Barrett to worry about in 1831–1832 was whether her family would soon be leaving the beloved Hope End. There had been financial anxieties since 1824, when a protracted lawsuit involving the inheritance of property and slaves in Jamaica from Edward Barrett's grandfather had ended in a decision against him and his brother Samuel and in favour of their cousins the Goodin-Barretts. The Moulton-Barretts remained wealthy, but not as extraordinarily wealthy as they had been. One of the consequences of this was the eventual sale of Hope End in 1832. Both before and after the sale Edward Barrett failed to discuss his worries and his decision with his children. To some extent he simply fulfilled a common nineteenth-century notion, supported on the whole by religion, of loving but commanding and rather remote fatherhood. But to some extent too his own nature was lonely and intransigent; his daughter – looking back, it is true, from the perspective of her own disenchantment with many aspects of his character – told Browning that her mother had 'a sweet, gentle nature, which the thunder [her father's difficult side] a little turned from its sweetness – as when it turns milk'.