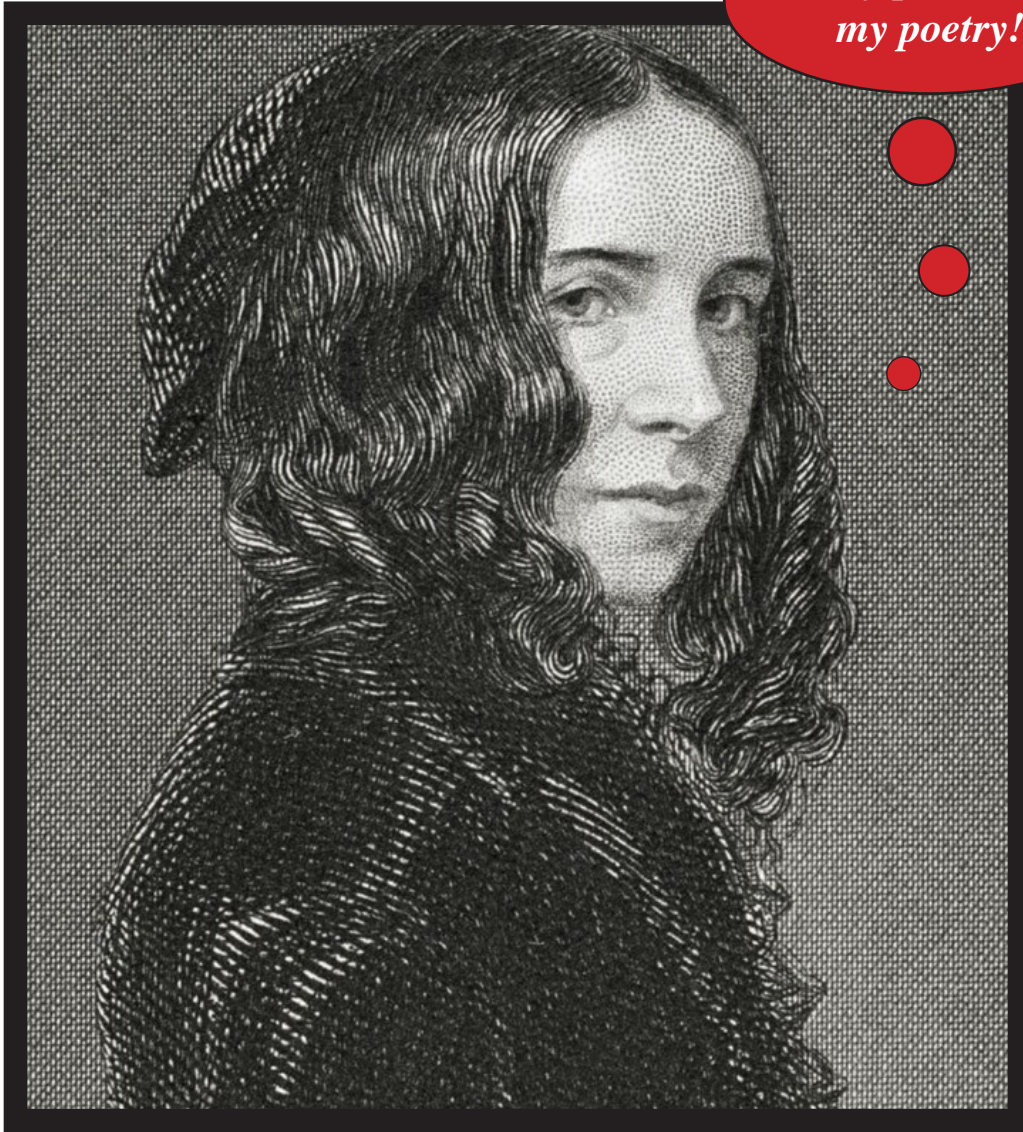


PWR Newsletter



*I self-published
my poetry!*



Elizabeth Barrett Browning

(March 6, 1806 – June 29, 1861)



PUBLISHED WRITERS OF ROSSMOOR



PUBLISHED WRITERS OF ROSSMOOR



A Club to Celebrate and Support Aspiring and Published Authors



August 5, 2017

Volume VI, Issue 8

Board Members

President: Ron Wren
Vice President: Patricia Keith-Spiegel
Secretary: Dorothy Pritchett
Treasurer: Nazli Monahan
Programs: Polly Bernson
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Newsletter Editor: Paul Weisser

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Featured Authors: Barbara Kirbach
Room Setup: Duke Robinson
Archives: Polly Bernson
Website Manager: John Gilbert
Website Coordinator: TBD
Author Events: TBD
Social Coordinator: Patricia Keith-Spiegel
Fall Bazaar Coordinator: TBD
Newsletter Editor: Peter Li

Coming up!
This Saturday, August 5, 2017
From 9:45 A.M. to 12:00 P.M.
In the Fairway Room at Creekside Clubhouse

Come early and enjoy complimentary coffee or tea!

August's Speaker: Jim Azevedo on e-Book Publishing (cont'd)

BY BARBARA KIRBACH



Barbara Kirbach

Jim Azevedo will continue acquainting the PWR members with the basics of e-book publishing and the best practices of bestselling authors at our meeting on August 5 from 9:45 A.M. to noon. The meeting will again be in our regular meeting place, the Fairway Room at Creekside

Jim Azevedo is the Marketing Manager for Smashwords, the world's largest distributor of indie e-books, with more than 450,000 titles available through major retailers such as Apple, Barnes & Noble, and Kobo.

At this meeting, Jim will discuss the best practices of successful e-book authors. "While there is no single magic bullet to suddenly land an author on a bestseller list," says Jim, "I will unveil the many simple, yet important strategies to help make one's books more accessible, more discoverable,

and more desirable to readers. PWR members will learn how to self-publish with greater pride and professionalism."



Jim Azevedo

The meetings are open to both aspiring authors and those who have previously published their work but may be investigating the self-publishing of e-books for the first time. □

For more information on the program, contact ronwren@aol.com

For more information on PWR, visit www.rossmoor-writers.com



The President's Page

By RON WREN



Ron Wren

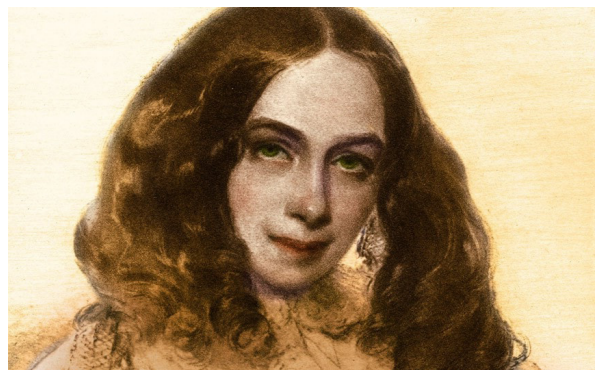
At every monthly meeting of the Published Writers of Rossmoor, we recognize and say hello to familiar faces. But what do we really know about those published writers of Rossmoor?

To help the PWR Board answer the needs of our members, we'll be distributing a Member Profile at our August 5th meeting. Pick up the form from Julie Blade when checking in. Then accept this writing assignment: tell us about yourself. Edit out the questionable stuff, boast about the best. Whatever you'd like us to know is fine. The more we know about you and your skills, interests, and goals, the more productive our meetings can be.

Publishing and promotion have been key subjects. But would you like to learn more about the often painful process of actual writing? How many rejections are too many? When we do grin and bear it and move on to another book? How important are the social aspects of PWR? Should we do more to connect

one-on-one? Could a member panel discussion with plenty of give-and-take offer insights that a single presenter might find daunting?

We're here to serve you, so serve up your facts and foibles, and we'll go to work. □





Changing of the Guard: PWR Elects New Board Members

BY PETER LI



Peter Li

On June 3, 2017, PWR celebrated its fifth year of supporting aspiring as well as accomplished authors in publishing and promoting their books. The membership also elected new members to the Board of Directors, all of whom will serve a two-year term, 2017–2018.

Ron Wren, who has served as the Program Chair, becomes the new President; Patricia Keith-Spiegel continues as Vice President; Dorothy Pritchett is the Secretary; Nazli Monahan is continuing as Treasurer; Polly Bernson is the new Program Chair; and Peter Li is responsible for Publicity.

The outgoing and founding President, Duke Robinson, received a standing ovation for his inspirational service to the organization. Although retired from his official post, Duke has been appointed

President Emeritus and will continue to serve PWR with his wisdom, experience, and delightful humor.

The new President, Ron Wren, has been a professional writer for over fifty years and has worked in public relations, advertising, and broadcasting. The organization is in good hands with Ron holding the reins.

Our VP, Tricia, has had a distinguished career in the area of professional ethics in psychology, especially the resolution of ethical conflicts, and has written a number of books on these subjects. Tricia has worked tirelessly to enable our organization to run smoothly.



The New Board

Nazli, our Treasurer, comes to PWR from the world of international finance and banking. Keeping track of our accounts is small potatoes for Nazli, but she is one of the hardest-working board members, keeping track of new members and urging delinquent old members to pay up.

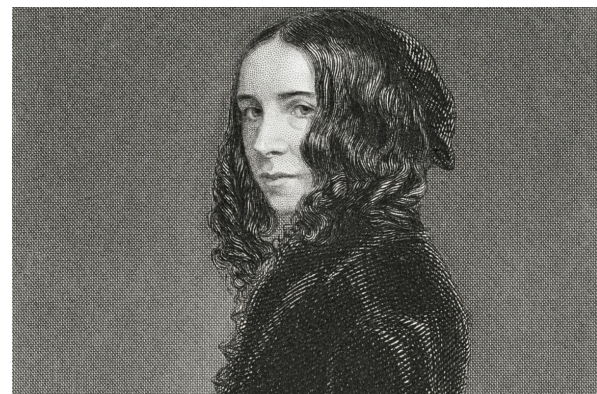
Dorothy Pritchett, the new Secretary, has been a career coach for professionals for many years and formerly led an

international recruiting service division. Now in retirement, Dorothy is the successful writer of a series of children's books.

Polly Bernson, the new Programs Chairwoman, is the founder and editor of Big Hat Press in Lafayette and has been in publishing for over fifteen years.

Peter Li, in charge of Publicity, comes to PWR from the world of academia, where he has taught for thirty years in the field of Asian Studies, and is now happily retired in Rossmoor. Peter will be trying his hand at writing news releases. Wish him (me) luck.

In addition to the new Board members, there is an extensive slate of coordinators and their backups who serve as the backbone of the organization. The coordinators perform many critical functions, including: managing the PWR website; lining up featured authors; coordinating social events; and editing this *Newsletter*. □



Vegetarian Circle

BY GENE GORDON



Gene Gordon

Vegetarian Writer of the Month: Han Kang

Han Kang, born in 1970, is a South Korean writer. She has participated in the Iowa Writers' Workshop and is now a professor in the Department of Creative Writing at the Seoul Institute of the Arts.

In 2007, Han published *The Vegetarian*. Set in modern-day Seoul, the novel is about a homemaker, Yeong-hye, who decides to stop eating meat after a terrible nightmare about human cruelty. After she throws out all the meat products in her home, she attends a family dinner at which her father attempts to force her to eat meat. When she refuses, his rejection of her is so intense that she slits her wrists.

At first, Han was thought of in her native Korea as extreme and bizarre, but now she has won the Man Booker

International Prize (for Best Book in English Translation), the Yi Sang Literary Prize, the Today's Young Artist Award, and the Manhae Literary Prize.

The English translation of *The Vegetarian*, by British translator Deborah Smith, which is published both in Britain and the United States, has received international acclaim. Reminiscent of Kafka's "The Metamorphosis," Han's novel has been called "both terrifying and terrific."

Currently translated into twelve other languages aside from English, *The Vegetarian* has been named one of the best books of the year by *The New York Times Book Review*, *Publisher's Weekly*, *TIME*, *The Wall Street Journal*, *The Economist*, *Slate*, and *The Huffington Post*. □



Han Kang





Scam Alert — Self-Publishers Beware!

BY SHOSHANA KOBRIN



Shoshana Kobrin & Friend

The first time it happened, I was taken in. It sounded like a great deal. All kinds of publicity for my book, from radio talk shows and TV appearances to book fairs—and displayed on any website you can imagine. I listened, enthralled. Wow! That would take care of the arduous Internet marketing I was still getting my teeth into. (And breaking off chips in the process!)

At the end of the pitch, I was told I would need only \$200 to have all this wonderful stuff handed to me on a golden plate. And do you know, I nearly fell for it. But the adult part of my brain, which functions only too seldom, alerted me. Rather reluctantly, I refused.

Since then, I've had three more calls. One offered to have one of my books

displayed at a famous book fair in Germany. The caller assured me that her firm was looking for inspirational books. The book of mine that they had discovered was my first book. A red flag went up in my mind because that book is not inspirational. It's a pragmatic self-help journaling how-to guide, written all of seven years ago. My latest book, published only last year, would fit the bill far better.

I had the hardest time getting the caller to tell me what she wanted from me. Only \$500, she crowed, for this once-in-a-lifetime opportunity. "Not in *my* lifetime!" I snapped, and slammed down the phone in the middle of another verbose spiel. I was left drained and exhausted.

So don't waste your time, my writer friends. Just tell these folks who are preying on our literary vulnerabilities to take you off their calling list.

Pronto! □





5-MINUTE MEMOIR

A Maverick Guide to Persistence

BY ROBERT W. BONE

Shortly after my family and I moved to Hawaii in 1971, I began to think about writing a serious travel guidebook to the island state.

No such book then existed. At the time I was a newspaper reporter, but had experience with guidebooks, having worked in Europe for Temple Fielding, then considered the top American writer in that field.

In Honolulu I ran into an executive at Rand McNally, who took an interest in my idea. Soon after he returned to his Chicago headquarters, I received a book contract from Rand McNally and an advance of \$3,000 against royalties.

The contract called for the first half to be finished in six months—by the end of January 1974. To meet that goal, I went on part time at the paper while researching tourism subjects on Oahu and flying frequently to the outer islands in the state.

After turning in the first portion of the manuscript, I received a phone call from Sylvia McNair, a highly respected editor at Rand McNally. She did not like the very personal—and often critical—approach I had taken with the project.

"Sadly, it is simply not a Rand McNally kind of book," she said. She went on to say that I could either a) revise the text to reflect their more conventional style, or b) cancel the contract, keep the advance and take my project to another publisher.

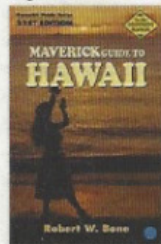
I chose the second option. I'd found Rand McNally quickly enough—surely I could find another publisher in jig time.

As it turned out, I was wrong.

I went full time back at the newspaper, and spent pretty much the rest of my waking hours over the next year writing to more than 100 publishers and receiving just as many rejections—though many wished me good luck.

In my proposals, I called the manuscript *A Consumer Guide to Hawaii*. But a Dec. 6, 1974, rejection letter from the editor of Quadrangle Books, The New York Times Company's book publishing arm, inadvertently gave me a better title.

"I admire very much your effort to write a book that is frank and honest revealing the blemishes as well as the beauty marks. I think that is the way all guidebooks should be written, though I doubt they ever will."



The editor, Jonathan Segal, said he doubted the industry would embrace "a maverick book on Hawaii."

Later, I imagined his name to be *Jonathan Livingston Seagull*, the title of the inspirational book by Richard Bach, whose life lessons might be applied to my own aspirations. And I began calling my own book the *Maverick Guide to Hawaii*.

A year and a half after my divorce from Rand McNally, I received a letter from Pelican Publishing Co. in New Orleans



saying they'd like to explore the idea. Pelican eventually sent me a contract as well as a small advance, and the book was published in 1976.

The Hawaii guidebook remained in print through 21 revised editions until 2002, when the internet changed the travel guide picture. In that time, it also led to my writing two more *Maverick* guides for Pelican (on Australia and New Zealand), plus a book on Alaska and Canada's Yukon Territory for William Morrow and Co. All of this was supplemented by freelancing, with travel articles and photos sold to dozens of publications.

Being a maverick means trusting your gut, remaining persistent and, above all, telling the story you want to tell. In my experience, that's a darn good way to approach a successful writing career.

Robert W. Bone (robertbone.com) is the author of *Fire Bone! A Maverick Guide to a Life in Journalism*.



CALL FOR SUBMISSIONS: Submit your own 600-word essay reflection on the writing life by emailing it to wds submissions@fwmedia.com with "5-Minute Memoir" in the subject line.

Above is a photocopy of an article that Bob Bone wrote for the current edition of Writer's Digest. (Congratulations, Bob!!!)



Bob Bone



Two Great Opportunities to Sell Your Books

BY JON FOYT



Jon Foyt

The Democrats of Rossmoor (DOR)

You have a new opportunity to display, talk about, and sell your books at 150-attendance dinners at the Events Center. PWR member Jon Foyt, who is a member of the Democrats of Rossmoor, is expecting to reinstate the special Authors' Table at DOR evening dinner events. This will be a chance to get your book in front of upwards of 200 dinner guests once a month. DOR membership is necessary.

I will be displaying my two new historical novels, *The Gilded Chateau* and *Homeward Bound*, at the table, and there's currently room for three more authors.

A Book Fest for Authors

I am also a member of the Mechanics Library in San Francisco, so I want to alert PWR members to the camaraderie

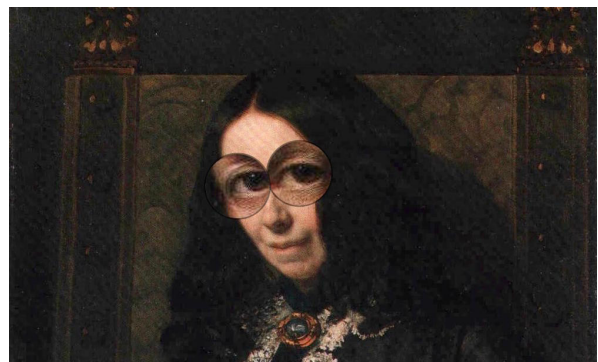
offered by the Indie Publishing Group at the Mechanics Library.

On December 15, 2017, published authors who are members of the Mechanics will have an opportunity to display, talk about, and sell their books at the monthly Writers Lunch.

Then, even sooner, on September 15, 2017, authors are invited to attend another Writers Lunch, at which the subject for discussion will be: "Self-Publishing on a Shoestring." I will be talking for five minutes on the editorial and editing aspects of self-publishing.

The Mechanics Library is the oldest library in California, and is an excellent source of research, with most current books available to members. □

For more information about either or both of these opportunities, contact me at jonfoyt@mac.com or (925) 322-3064.





Treasurer's Report

BY NAZLI MONAHAN



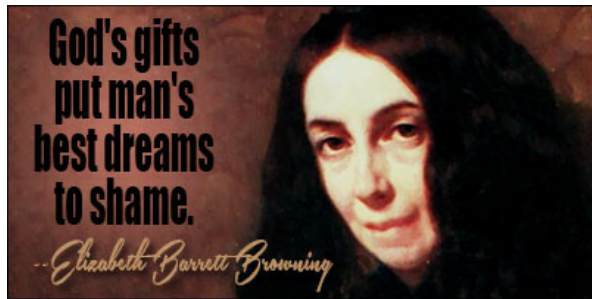
Nazli Monahan

PWR's total budget for Fiscal Year 2017–2018 is \$2,540, which will be paid for from the membership dues (\$20 for basic membership, \$30 for membership with the Author's Page on the PWR Website). If you have not had a chance to do so, you can pay your dues:

1. By check (or cash) during our meeting on Saturday, August 5th;
2. Leaving a check in the PWR box at Gateway Administrative Offices; or
3. Mailing a check to: PWR, c/o Nazli Monahan, 4033 Terra Granada Dr. #7C, Walnut Creek, CA 94595.

If you have any questions or comments about PWR's finances, please feel free to contact me at *Monahan.nazli@gmail.com* □





The Grotto Is Out!

BY RICHARD DEVLIN



Richard Devlin

This is to announce the publication of *The Grotto: A Novel of Heresy, Holy War, and Love*, the second book of the *Abraxas Chronicles*. Abraxas was a mysterious cult figure first praised by Basilides, a heretical Gnostic writer who lived during the second century in Alexandria, Egypt.

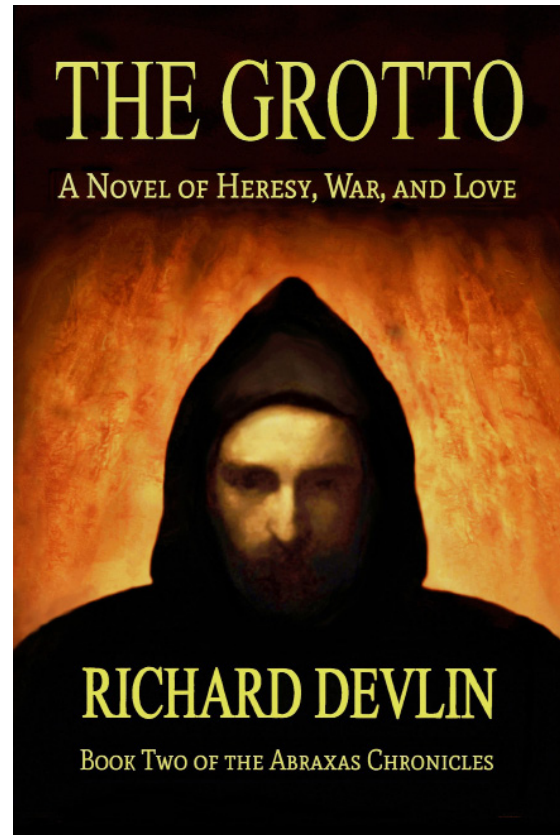
My first book, *The Cult: A Novel of Two Norman Kingdoms*, was short-listed for Foreword Review's INDIEFAB Book of the Year Award in Historical Fiction, winning an Honorable Mention in that category.

Both *The Grotto* and *The Cult* are set primarily in twelfth-century England and Arab-Norman Sicily. Although they include many of the same characters, both novels are self-contained and can be read either separately or together.

The Grotto begins with the murder of a young guard in Normandy, then moves on to the fate of the book's three principal characters, Elise, Edmond, and Martin, former pupils of a learned English scholar. Meanwhile, the reader follows the cult's chilling path from

Normandy to Sicily, Cyprus, and Malta.

The Grotto is available on *amazon.com* in paperback for \$12.95 and as a Kindle e-book for \$2.99. □





From the Editor



Paul Weisser

Elizabeth Barrett Browning, Self-Publisher

Elizabeth Barrett Moulton-Barrett was born on March 6, 1806, in County Durham, England. Her parents were Mary Graham Clarke and Edward Barrett Moulton-Barrett, both of whom were descended from wealthy families that owned sugar plantations in Jamaica. Although Elizabeth's father amassed a great fortune from his sugar plantation, he chose to live with his family in Britain.



Elizabeth was the oldest of twelve children (eight boys and four girls), all of whom had nicknames. Elizabeth's was "Ba." With her siblings she participated in home theatrical productions. But, unlike them, she immersed herself in books as often as she could.

In 1809, when Elizabeth was 3, the family moved to Hope End, a 500-acre estate in Herefordshire, where her father built a new mansion of opulent Turkish design, which his wife described as something from the *Arabian Nights*.



Elizabeth was educated at home, tutored with her oldest brother, and began writing verses at the age of four. Her mother compiled her poetry into collections of "Poems by Elizabeth B. Barrett"—which forms one of the largest extant collections of juvenilia by any English writer. Elizabeth's father called her the "Poet Laureate of Hope End" and encouraged her work.

Elizabeth was an intensely studious and brilliant child, who read widely in literature, philosophy, and history.

(continued on page 21)

She was already reading novels by the age of 6; at 8 she was entranced by Pope's translations of Homer; by 10 she was studying Greek; and at 12 she was writing her own Homeric epic, *The Battle of Marathon: A Poem*.



It was this epic poem, in fact, that Elizabeth self-published in 1820, when she was 14—although, as with the precocious Jane Austen and Rudyard Kipling, the actual payments for printing and binding costs were made by her father. (In all three cases, the parents deserve applause for recognizing and supporting the creative genius of their children.) An interesting side note to Elizabeth's story is that all fifty copies of her book remained within the family. In other words, all the buyers were relatives!

At 15, Elizabeth became ill, suffering intense head and spinal pain, which lasted for the rest of her life. Later, she also developed lung problems, possibly tuberculosis.



She took laudanum (a tincture of opium) for the pain from an early age and throughout her life, which is likely to have contributed to her frail health—but also to the wild vividness of her imagination, the empathetic quality of her poetry, and her passionate devotion to social causes, especially women's equality, child labor reforms, and the abolition of slavery.

In one of her anti-slavery poems, "The Runaway Slave at Pilgrim's Point," she describes the experience of a slave woman who is whipped, raped, and made pregnant as she curses the slavers.



(continued on page 22)



The irony of Elizabeth's position is that the wealth of her family depended on slavery. The double irony is that her father believed that Abolitionism would ruin his business, but, by all accounts, always treated his slaves "humanely."

Elizabeth apparently believed that she herself had African blood through her maternal grandfather, but there is no evidence of this. Other branches of her family, however, clearly had African blood through relationships between plantation owners and slaves—almost certainly always male owners and female slaves.



After the abolition of slavery in Britain in 1833, Elizabeth's father incurred great financial and investment

losses that forced him to sell Hope End. Nevertheless, the family was always comfortable.

When Elizabeth was in her thirties, she was struck with serious illness again, and afterward spent most of her time in seclusion as an invalid, although cared for by her companion, confidante, and nurse, Elizabeth Wilson, who tended to her every need

During this period, a friend gave Elizabeth a pet Spaniel, "Flush," who gave the poet great comfort. Virginia Woolf later fictionalized the life of the dog, making him the protagonist of her 1933 novel *Flush: A Biography*.



The nature of Elizabeth's illness could not be diagnosed in her own day, but some modern scientists speculate that she had hypokalemic periodic paralysis, a genetic disorder that causes muscle weakness, spinal pain, intense headaches, and many of the other symptoms Elizabeth described. Interestingly, all three of her sisters experienced the same symptoms in their youth, but, unlike her, outgrew them.

(continued on page 23)

Despite her poor health, Elizabeth continued to write poetry throughout her life. When, as a critically and commercially successful author, she published another volume of her poems in 1844, at the age of 38, she attracted the attention of Robert Browning, who was inspired to write to her.



“I love your verses with all my heart, dear Miss Barrett,” he wrote, praising their “fresh strange music, the affluent language, the exquisite pathos and true new brave thought.”

A friend arranged for Elizabeth to meet Robert, who was six years her junior, on May 20, 1845. When they met in Elizabeth’s rooms on that day, so began one of the most famous courtships in literature—immortalized in Rudolf Besier’s play *The Barretts of Wimpole Street* (1931), which became a signature vehicle for the actress Katharine Cornell.

The play was twice adapted into film by MGM. The 1934 version starred Norma Shearer as Elizabeth, with Charles Laughton as her father and Fredric March as her husband. The 1957

version starred Jennifer Jones, with Sir John Gielgud and Bill Travers in the same supporting roles. Interestingly, both versions, 23 years apart, had the same director, Sidney Franklin.



Knowing that her father disapproved of Robert, and that her brothers regarded him as a lower-class gold-digger, Elizabeth married him secretly in London, after which the couple honeymooned in Paris, and then moved to Italy, where she spent most of the rest of her life (with Elizabeth Wilson still in attendance).



(continued on page 24)

In Elizabeth's youth, her doctors had strongly encouraged her to go to the warmer climates of Italy to avoid the English winters, but her father wouldn't hear of it. Now, when he learned of the marriage, her father disinherited Elizabeth and never forgave her. Fortunately, she had inherited some money from an uncle, so the new couple were reasonably well off financially.



Nevertheless, this rejection by her father (who also disinherited all his other children who married) was a severe psychological blow to Elizabeth, who had once told her mother (who agreed with her) that without father, life was no fun.

Elizabeth and Robert had many visitors to their home in Italy, and socialized with many literary giants of the time, including Samuel Taylor Coleridge, John Ruskin, George Sand, Harriet Beecher Stowe, Alfred Tennyson, William Makepeace Thackeray, Anthony Trollope, and William Wordsworth.

When Elizabeth and Robert attempted

to have children, she miscarried four times, but in 1849, at the age of 43, she gave birth to a healthy son, Robert Wiedeman Barrett Browning, who was known to friends and family as Pen.



With Pen

Elizabeth and Robert's line came to an end with Pen, who is said to have had no "legitimate" children. On the other hand, this is only a legal statement, not a biological one.

Despite her lifelong illness and weakness, Elizabeth was always a voracious reader and prolific writer. In fact, her poetic output made her a rival to Tennyson as a candidate for poet laureate on the death of Wordsworth in 1850, when Elizabeth was 44.



Much of Elizabeth's poetry was highly spiritual. She once said that Christianity "is essentially poetry—poetry glorified." One of her biographers, Lilian Whiting, wrote in 1899 that Elizabeth was "the most philosophical poet," depicting her life as "a Gospel of applied Christianity." It might not be an overstatement to say that Elizabeth's lifelong physical pain and suffering were a form of perpetual crucifixion.



Elizabeth had a profound impact on some other literary heavyweights, including Emily Dickinson and Virginia Woolf, who both admired her as a woman and as a writer of great achievement. Perhaps most of all, however, Elizabeth inspired Edgar Allan Poe, who carried on an extensive literary dialogue with her by mail, and

modeled his own poem "The Raven" after her poem "Lady Geraldine's Courtship." Poe even dedicated his 1845 collection *The Raven and Other Poems* to Elizabeth, referring to her as "the noblest of her sex."

Ironically, in a sad commentary on the position of women in her day, Elizabeth—who created strong and independent women in her poetry—is known to have written to friends and her husband that she believed that women were intellectually inferior to men.

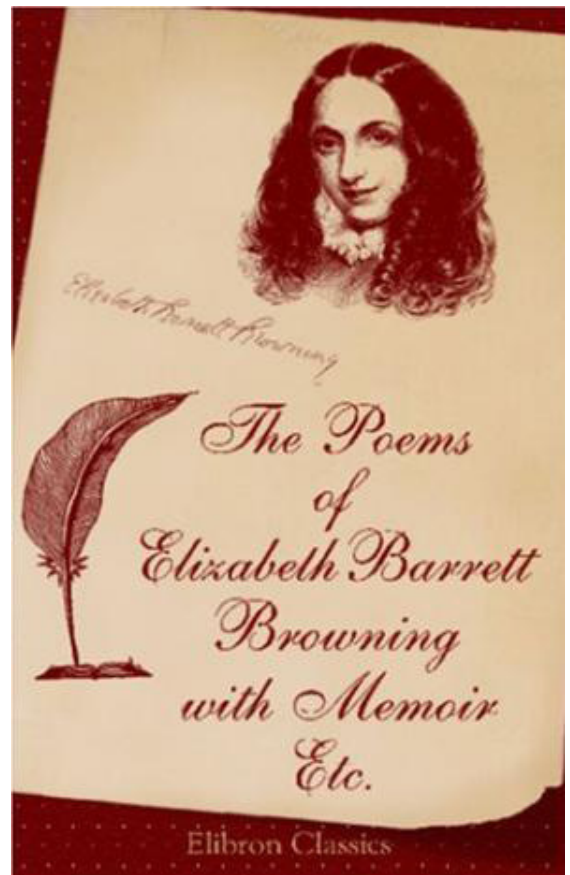
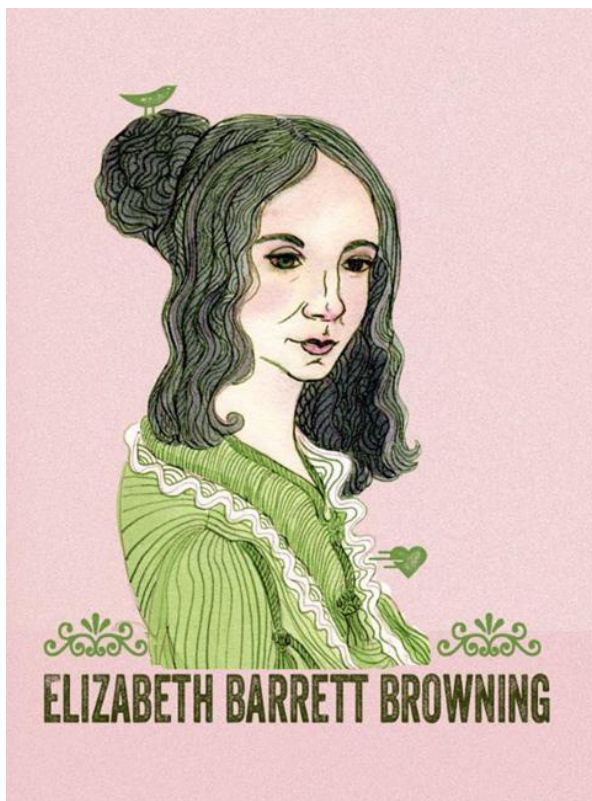
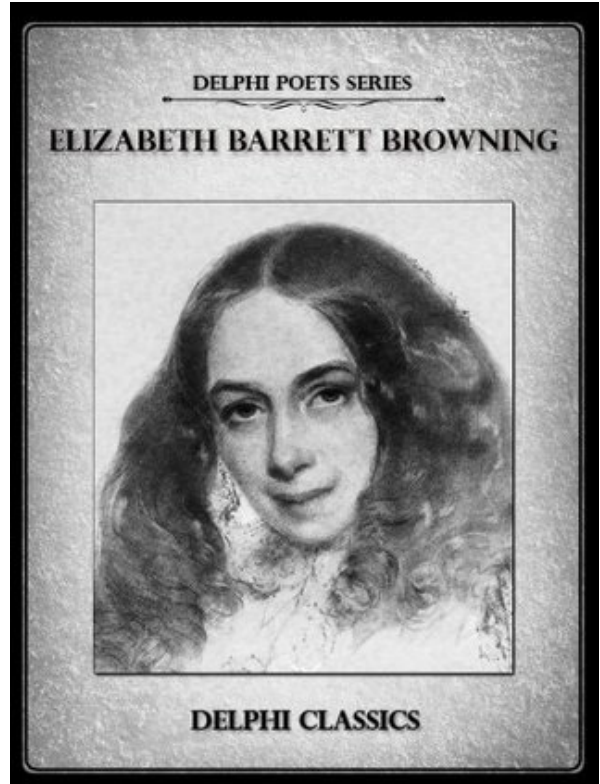


Elizabeth's poetry remained popular and critically praised in Britain and the United States throughout the nineteenth century. In the twentieth century, however, literary criticism of her poetry remained sparse until her poems were rediscovered by the women's movement.

Elizabeth Barrett Browning died in her husband's arms on June 29, 1861, at the relatively young age of 55. According to Robert, who outlived her by 28 years, the last word Elizabeth uttered was, "Beautiful...." □

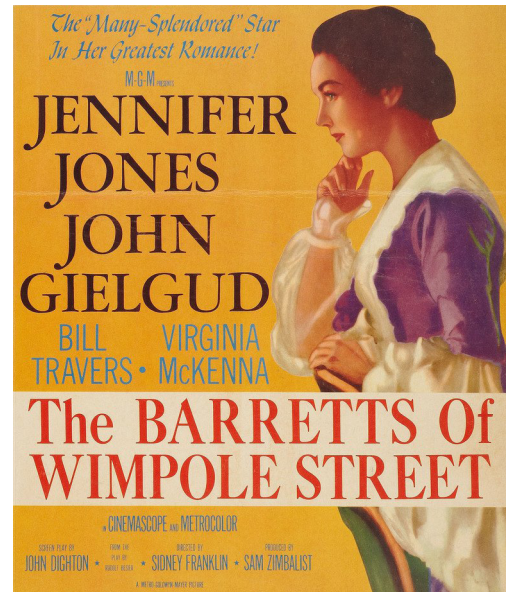


Clasped Hands of Robert and Elizabeth Barrett Browning, 1853, by Harriet Hosmer





*Elizabeth's Tomb in the English Cemetery,
Florence, Italy*



Elizabeth Barrett Browning
Aurora Leigh

OXFORD WORLD'S CLASSICS

Thought for the Month

“At painful times, when composition is impossible and reading is not enough, grammars and dictionaries are excellent for distraction.”

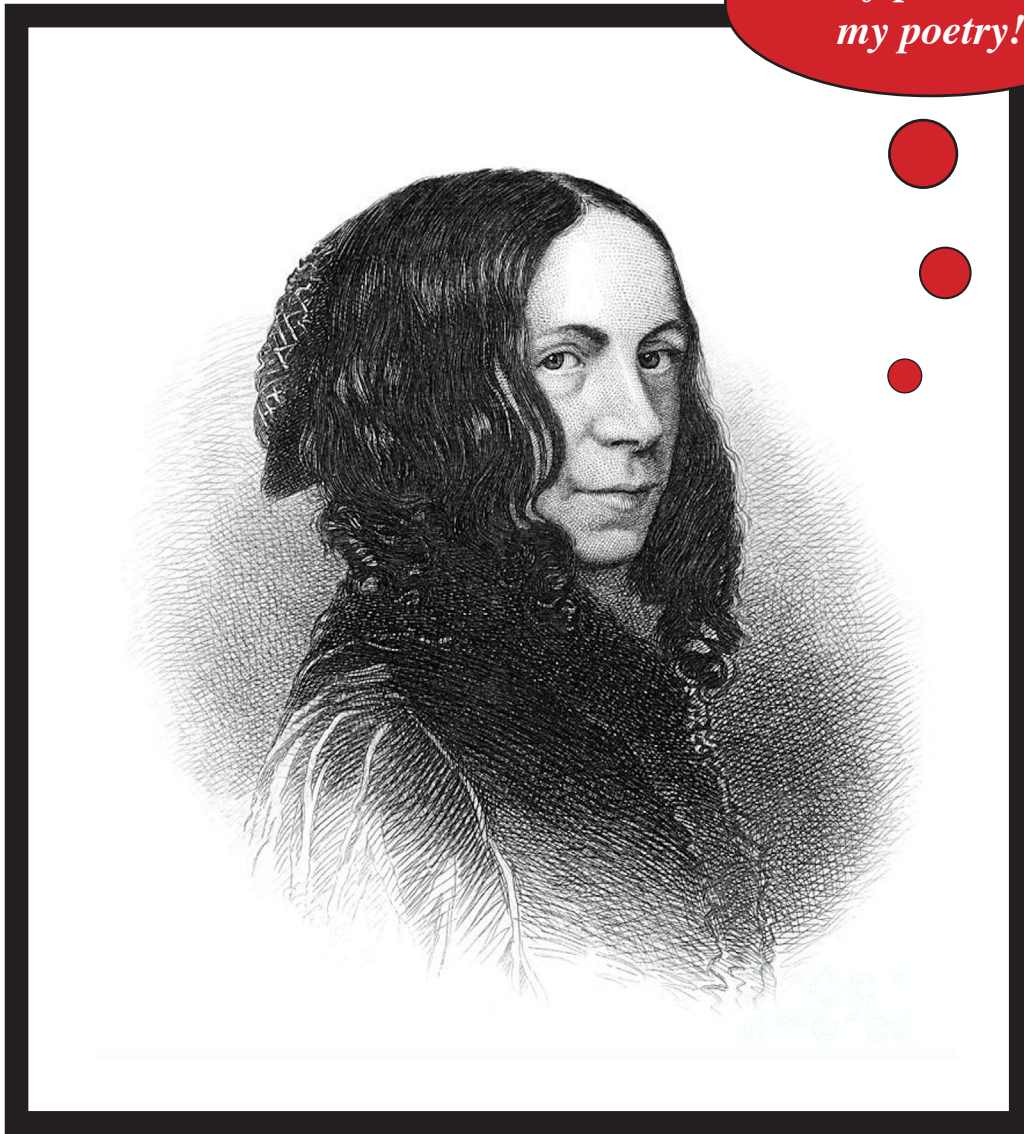
—Elizabeth Barrett Browning



PWR Newsletter



*I self-published
my poetry!*



Elizabeth Barrett Browning

(March 6, 1806 – June 29, 1861)



PUBLISHED WRITERS OF ROSSMOOR

