UNIT 38 ROBERT BROWNING: TWO EARLY POEMS

Structure

38.0 Objectives
38.1 Introduction
38.2 'Porphyria's Lover'
  38.2.1 An Analysis
38.3 'The Bishop Orders his Tomb at St. Praxed's Church'
  38.3.1 An Appreciation
38.4 Let's sum up
38.5 Answers to exercises
38.6 Further reading

38.0 OBJECTIVES

After you have studied this unit you will be able to have an idea of and write on Browning s poetic art as evident from his early poetry. This would, however, be with special reference to 'Porphyria's Lover' and 'The Bishop Orders his Tomb at St. Praxed's Church'. Your study would enable you to comment on selected passages from the two poems mentioned above.

38.1 INTRODUCTION

Now that you are familiar with Robert Browning's life and early aspirations as evident from the passage you studied from *Sordello* you can go on to appreciate the development of Browning's art and craft as a poet. In this unit you are going to study two poems: 'Porphyria's Lover' and 'The Bishop Orders his Tomb at St Praxed's Chruch' The former was published in *Dramatic Lyrics* (1842) and the latter in *Dramatic Romances and Lyrics* (1845). You should be able to see the developmentin Browning's art even within a period of three years. Artistically, the latter poem appears to be more sophisticated compared with the former.

38.2 'PORPHYRIA'S LOVER'

'Porphyria' was probably written is 1839 when Browning was on a brief visit to St. Petersburg, Russia. It was first published along with 'Johannes Agricola' anonymously (signed "Z") in *The Monthly Repository* (January 1836). The editor Mr. Fox also published a song from *Pippa Passes* and some verses later introduced in *James Lee's Wife*. He was, as Mrs. Sutherland Orr points out, 'the generous and very earliest encourager of Mr. Browning's boyish attempts at poetry'.

Browning grouped the two poems, i.e. 'Porphyryia' and 'Johannes Agricola', under the general title 'Madhouse Cells' in *Dramatic Lyrics* (1842). He lengthened the titles to 'Johannes Agricola in Meditation' and 'Porphyria's Lover' in 1849. However, the two poems were delinked in the collected poems of 1863 and in later collections. The linking together of the two poems under the title 'Madhouse Cells' offers a clue to our understanding of 'Porphyria's Lover'. Both, Porphyria's Lover and Johannes Agricola (1494-1566) the

founder of Antinomian heresy are extreme solipsists (one who pays too great attention to oneself rather than to relation with others) if not mad.

'Porphyria's Lover', is a soliloquy rather than a dramatic monologue. It is a simple lyrical and narrative poem, rich in visual details. You can appreciate it without the intervention of a teacher. So read it and THEN do the following exercise based on the poem.

Self-Check Exercise-I

In order to answer the following questions you may be required to read the poem once again.

1. Who are the characters in the poem?

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2. Record below the lines in which marks of exclamation occur.

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3. Scan the following lines and comment on the chief prosodic features:

The rain set early in tonight

The sullen wind was soon awake,

It tore the elm tops down for spite,

And did its worst to vex the lake:

I listened with heart fit to break

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38.2.1 An Analysis

Browning wrote 'Porphyria' in his early twenties. It belongs to his exploratory period in which he was trying to discover his poetic ideology, medium and style through a number of long poems such as *Pauline* (1833), *Paracelsus* (1835) and *Sordello* (1840) and plays such as *Pippa Passes* (1841) and shorter dramatic lyrics such as 'Porphyria', 'Johannes Agricola', 'Cristina', 'Count Gismond', 'Soliloquy of a Spanish Cloister' and 'In a Gondola'.

You must have noticed that Browning tells you the story of Porphyria's Lover with utmost economy. So much so that we don't even know his name. He must be an insignificant person, not just socially but also morally. He lives on the margins of the society, a cottager to whose house Porphyria could come only in a storm when there could not be a witness to her act of stealth. Her lover is not alert and vigilant like herself. When she enters her room she notices that the fire has not been properly stoked which she does and cheers up the room shutting both the storm and the cold out. Having brought life to the cheerless place she proceeds to ring the bells of existence into her lover's self. She removes, one by one, her clothes, in order to waken him up from his torpor. Her lover has refused to respond much less take the masculine lead in the love-act. She gives him a call. He does not reply. Then she takes the lead once again, puts his arm about her waist, bares her shoulder for him and when he is still unresponsive he makes his cheek lie on it and covers his head with her golden

locks. Having performed all these acts of love herself *she* confesses her love for him.

If you carefully examine the text once again you will find that after a description of the weather in the opening five lines Browning, rather the lover, devotes the next fifteen lines describing Porphyria's acts – sensuous and warm – almost with vatsyayanian felicity. In its progression the narrative looked at from the heroine's point of view, has a lyrical charm from the opening through most of the twenty-first lines.

The anti-lyrical movement begins after the caesura in the twenty-first line. So far, the reader who has not been very clear about the role of the lover begins to get a better look into his character – diabolical ? Not. Insane ? Yes. He who has described his Porphyria's acts in all its telling details now proceeds to analyze her character as 'weak' and 'proud' and 'vain' – weak according to him, because she could not dissever her ties with the false pride of her class and station in the society. She could come to his cottage that night partly because of her uncontrollable passion, infrequent as it was, and partly because she got a suitable cover for it by the 'wind and rain'. However, this rare blissful condition, provided by his beloved, brought a sudden thought to Porphyria's lover. He was pale owing to his unfulfilled desire for possessing her.

Having described his own wan condition he now hurriedly describes the steps that led to the strangling of Porphyria at the end of the second section of the poem (which ends with line forty-one). The lover looked into the beloved's eye – 'happy and proud'. Her pride indicates her station in life; while happiness tells us about her condition by the side of her lover. This told her in no unmistakable terms that Porphyria loved, no 'worshipped' him. The lover, finding that he had got something which neither his station nor his character entitled him to he 'swelled' in satisfaction and pride and perversely, rather in a fit of madness, began to plan what he could do. Right at the peak of his experience of bliss when she appeared to him to have been his completely and perfectly, in all her being, in all her perfection and purity and goodness he thought of strangling her to death with the 'String' of her golden hair.

The third section of the poem is even more eerie than the second. The narrator now goes on to justify the act and display composure which no one but the mad person can have. He asserts that Porphyria did not feel pain. However, his assertion in line forty-one is trivialized by the colloquial 'quite sure' in the succeeding line.

> No pain felt she;
> I am quite sure she felt no pain.

Like an innocent child that opens a bud into which a bee has entered with its tiny fingers, the murderer opens her eyelids and she appears to be laughing innocently. Next he untightens the tresses around her neck and feels that her blood has once again coursed through her veins and to her checks. While he did not once caress or kiss her when she was alive, he now offers her corpse his 'burning kiss' at which she even responds by blushing. However, the 'only' discordant note in the tune is struck by the head of the corpse, which 'droops' upon his shoulder.

Otherwise, the demented lover believes that the 'smiling rosy *little* head' (emphasis added) of his beloved is glad to have 'its utmost will'. However, it is noticeable that he is lying. While until line fifty-one he uses the personal pronoun 'her' for Porphyria in lines fiftyone through fiftyfour she is referred to as 'it'. He is aware that a corpse is an inanimate thing and thus has no gender

However, his assertions regarding Porphyria in those very lines are meant to mislead others; those who are ready to overhear him

The climax of the poem is gradually built towards the close i.e. in its sharply ironic statements of the poet:

> Porphyria's love; she guessed not how
> Her darling one wish would be heard.
> And thus we sit together now,
> And all night long we have not stirred,

The lover's lurid romantic posturing at the close sharply contrasts Polyphria's healthy stance in lines six to twenty one. In fact the heroine's liveliness and vigour are set in sharp relief by the insane joyousness of her low and despicable lover. The ambiguity of the situation is perhaps best summed up in the last line of the poem:

> And yet God has not said a word !

Does it mean that Browning holds here as in the famous lines in *Pippa Passes*:

> God's in his heaven –
> All's right with the world!

However, in that case Pippa was witness to an idyllic scene. In his words:

> The year's at the spring
> And day's at the morn;
> Morning's at seven;
> The hill- side's dew-pearled;
> The lark's on the wing.

and

> The snail's on the thorn.

Should we assume that Porphyria's lover also imagines himself being in a perfect situation, with his beloved by his side, for perpetuity.

Or, is he also an antinomian, somewhat like Johannes Agricola who believed that he was exempt from all ethical considerations as he was a Christian. Agricola even went beyond it. He claimed to have been made even before the sun and the stars:

> .... God said
> This head this hand should rest upon
> Thus, ere he fashioned star or sun
> And having thus created me,
> Thus rooted me, he bade me grow:
> Guiltless forever, like a tree
> That buds and blooms, not seeks to know
> The law by which it prospers so:

Agricola is a solipsist like Pophyria's lover and the consequence is mania, delusion, paranoia and possession by the delusion of total power. In fact it is possible that Porphyria's lover is a fantasist who has conjured up the whole situation in his dream where he can see the process of his reduction.

Porphyria's lover, just like the Duke of Ferrara in 'My Last Duchess' is a jealous lover. While the former kills his beloved the latter probably has her

killed and *possesses* her painting, so that he alone can savour her beauty. The Duke in 'My Last Duchess' tells the Count's messenger

> Oh Sir, she smiled, no doubt,
> Whenever I passed her; but who passed without
> Much the same smile? This grew; I gave commands;
> Then all smiles stopped together. There she stands
> As if alive.

Both Porphyria's lover and the Duke are neurotics. They wish to possess their beloveds in the most extreme sense and if murder is necessary for it they would go to the extent of committing even that. 'Prophyria's Lover' is a penetrating study of type of a neurosis.

Self-Check Exercise-II

1. Porphyria's lover strangled her to death. Which other character in Browning's poetry had his wife murdered ?

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2. What's common between Porphyria's lover and Browning's Johannes Agricola ?

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38.3 THE BISHOP ORDERS HIS TOMB AT ST. PRAXED'S CHURCH

The poem was first published in *Hood's Magazine* (for March 1845) edited by F.O. Ward as 'The Tomb at St. Praxed's'. Browning appears to have felt dissatisfied with the title so when it was published in *Dramatic Romances and Lyrics* (1845) it became 'The Bishop orders his Tomb at Saint Praxed's Church'. Browning does not tell us the Bishop's name. His archrival in the poem - Gandolf - is likewise fictitious. However, the poem could have been inspired by the little church of Santa Prassede (built 822) which was restored just before Browning visited it in 1844. Santa Prassede, the virgin saint after whom it was named, was daughter of Pudens, a second century Roman senator.

The closest analogue to the Bishop in the monologue is the life of Cardinal Ippolito d'Este the Younger, a materialistic, vain and extremely stingy person. The effigy of Cardinal Cetive (d. 1474) on top of his tomb is in front of one of the entrances of 'Garden of Paradise', a splendid chapel full of mosaics. It could also have inspired the poem. However, Browning does not describe either any person or the structures in detail.

While portraying the Bishop, as K.I.D. Meslen pointed out, Browning may have remembered Thomas Macaulay's (1800-'59) review of Leopold Ranke's (1795-1886) *Ecclesiastical and Political History of the Popes of Rome, during the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries* (translated into English from the original in German by Sarah Austin) in the *Edinburgh Review* (October 1840). Macaulay deplored a pope such as Leo X (1531-'21) who along with the latinity of the Augustan age had also acquired its atheistical and disrespectful spirit. He spoke of the Incarnation of God in his Son Jesus Christ and the Christian ceremony of Eucharist (based on Christ's last supper on earth) or Mass in the same vein as Cotta and Velleius.

John Ruskin (1819-1900) the famous Victorian writer, scholar and sage was full of appreciation for 'The Bishop orders his Tomb'. His observations offer a valuable insight into the poem:

> I know no other piece of modern English, prose or poetry, in which there is so much told, as in these lines, of the Renaissance spirit - its worldliness, inconsistency, pride, hypocrisy, ignorance of itself, love of art, of luxury, and of good Latin.

Ruskin went on to add:

> It is nearly all that I said of the central Renaissance in thirty pages of the *Stones of Venice* put into as many lines, talked of the oracle of Delphi, or of the voice of Faunus in the wilderness.

Talking about the Popes

Macaulay deplored:

> Their years glided by in a soft dream of sensual and intellectual voluptuousness. Choice cookery, delicious wines, lovely women, hounds, falcons, horses, newly-discovered manuscripts of the classics... These things were the delight and even the sensuous business of their lives. (*Edinburgh Review*, 72, Page 242)

Browning's poem reflects the mindset like that of Macaulay. When you read the poem you will find the influence of Macaulay's review published less than five years ago in the *Edinburgh Review* on it.

With this background knowledge you should read the poem (printed in this block) first and then do the following exercise.

Self-Check Exercise-III

a. What kind of a person is the Bishop? Give at least three examples in support of your opinion.

b. Who was Gandolf ? What is the Bishop's attitude towards him?

c. Scan the following lines and comment briefly on the chief prosodic features:

> Vanity, saith the preacher, vanity!
>
> Draw round my bed: is Anselm keeping back?

Nephews — sons mine… ah god, I know not! Well

She, men would have to be your mother once,

Old Gandolf envied me, so fair she was!

38.3.1 A Discussion

The Bishop, who asks, rather orders his sons to make him a tomb in St. Praxed's Church is a sixteenth century Roman clergyman. It is significant that Browning avoids telling us about the specific date just as he omits the Bishop's name. However, he tells us a lot about the Bishop's character, half-unconscious as he is in the last moments of a strifeful life. And yet, the Bishop in his state of delirium unveils his true life before his own sons, who probably know most, though not every detail of it already.

True to the person and character of a bishop, the poem begins with a well-known Biblical quotation from the Ecclesiastes:

> Vanity of vanities, says The Teacher
> Vanity of vanities! All is vanity. (Ecclesiastes 1:2)

However, the next sentence is in the imperative which effectively, if also ironically, expresses the Bishop's proud demeanour. Apparently, Anselm is the name of one of his sons. Perhaps he is his favourite and he wants him to be close to him. He addresses his sons first as his nephews as he always did in public and then making use of the familiar rhetorical device of *epanorthosis*, changes over to 'sons'. Browning uses a dash between 'Nephews' and 'sons' and suggests a break in speech thus making use of the rhetorical device of *aposiopesis*. Then there are three dots. The latter break is meant to indicate the momentary introspection when he, sort of, confesses falsely before his God. He pleads ignorance before Him: 'I know not !' In tune with his confession he remembers his 'wife' and almost in a tone of complaint utters:

> She, men would have to be your mother once,

The next line (i.e. the fifth) informs us that another colleague of his – Gandolf was competing with him to win her hand, nay clandestine love (because the clerics have to take a vow of chastity). And yet the Bishop appears to show no warmth of feeling for his late beloved. She was a prize object, which the Bishop won against a colleague just as the latter won the southern corner for his resting-place against him. Ironically, jealousy did not forsake these clergymen even in matters of intense life (i.e. love) and death. They truly represent the inordinate lust and acquisitive propensities of the Renaissance.

The Bishop's lustfulness finds expression not just in his affair with a woman who begat him many sons but more so in his words to them. He tells them that he had prayed to St. Praxed to grant them besides horses and Greek manuscripts 'mistresses with great smooth marbly limbs'. He appears to be such a confirmed epicurean that he does not see the irony of such a prayer. Not only that, he does not see the oddness of huddling

> .... One pan
> Ready to twitch the Nymph's last garment off.

along with Moses with his tablets; Jesus, making his Sermon on the Mount and Saint Praxed with the nimbus round his head. It is interesting to point out that such an odd assemblage does exist on some of the friezes on the tombs in Rome, which Browning must have remembered vividly.

Howsoever ludicrous the Bishop may appear to us, Browning did not find him absurd. The Renaissance Bishop was a man of the world in the best sense of the term. He is a lover of the classics, which finds expression in his love of good attick Latin. He wants his sons to write his epitaph in the language of Cicero:

> ... Carve my epitaph aright,
> Choice Latin, picked phrase, Tully's every word,
> No gaudy ware like Gandolf's second line –
> Tully, my master ? Ulpian serves his need ! (ll. 76-79)

Domitius Ulpianus (d. 228), a Roman jurist had a style that reflected the decadence, the fall from the urbanity and polish of the classical Roman style of Marcus Tullius Cicero (106-43 BC). As the night advances the Bishop discloses that he had deliberately had Gandolf's epitaph written in the Ulpian language :

> Aha, ELUCESBAT quoth our friend?
> No Tully, said I, Ulpian at the best! (ll. 99-100)

Cicero would have written *elucebat* (i.e. he was illustrious) and not as the Bishop had it inscribed on Gandolf's tomb – *Elucesbat*.

Besides his appreciation for good Latin, it is also in his close familiarity with the classical culture that we discover the positive aspect of the Bishop's personality that Browning must have appreciated. This is best expressed in the telling *exemplum* of the lynx tied to a tripod:

> ... Ye would heighten my impoverished frieze,
> Piece out its starved design, and fill my vase
> With grapes, and add a visor and a term,
> And to the tripod ye would tie a lynx
> That in his struggle throws the thyrsus down,
> To comfort me on my entablature
> Whereon I am to lie till I must ask
> 'Do I live, am I dead?' (ll. 106-113)

The Bishop had a clear idea of what he wanted for his grave. Earlier on he had suggested: 'Some tripod, thyrsus, with a vase or so ! (l. 58). It was not the utterance of a stupefied Bishop. When he comes back to the matter of his frieze he completes the picture in his mind. He wants the vase to be full of luscious grapes. The image of grapes suggests Dionysius, the god of wine, as does the lynx. He wants visors or masks of the helmet and a bust on a pedestal (term) to be part of the illustration on the frieze. Brisk movement is suggested by the struggle of the lynx, which lets the tripod fall to which it has been tied as it

lounges towards the Bishop to comfort him. While it does so the thyrsus, the ornamented staff carried in processions by the worshippers of Dionysus (or the Roman Bacchus), falls on the ground. A bacchanal, as you know, is a noisy feast at which a lot of drinking and disorderly behaviour, even sex, takes place. We thus find that without having either Dionysius or Bacchus on the frieze he has everything that suggests them: the grapes, the thyrsus and the lynx. The exemplum is highly suggestive of the character of the worldly, Renaissance Bishop. His thoughts are symbolized best by Dionysius the god of wine and love and the idea of festivity represented by the quick movement of the empathetic lynx which makes the Bishop ask himself 'Do I live, am I dead ?' Brownings's words remind us of Keats' in 'Ode to a Nightingale'.

> Was it a vision, or a waking dream?
> Fled is that music:- Do I wake or sleep?

However, while Keats was inspired by the nightingale's song it is the dead Bishop's statue lying on the entablature that is expected by the dying Bishop to ask this question as he imagines all the props around him – unreal though real somewhat like Yeats' 'form' made by some Grecian goldsmith 'of hammered gold and gold enamelling':

> To keep a drowsy Emperor awake:
> Or set upon a golden bough to sing .
> To lords and ladies of Byzantium
> Of what is past or passing or to come

However, Browning's image of the Bishop's statue delighting in his funerary artifacts is an art of greater poetic *tour de force* than either Keats' or Yeats'.

The Catholic clergymen are required to take the vow of chastity, obedience and poverty. However, the Bishop is a symbol of avarice. He has choice stallions and has secretly built lavish villas with baths. He wants to have his tomb made of jasper 'pure green as a pistachio-nut' basalt, agate and red marble:

> Peach-blossom marble all, the rare, the ripe
> As fresh-poured red wine of a mighty pulse. (ll. 29-30)

He divulges that he had stolen a precious *lapis lazuli* from a church and then probably burnt it to hide his theft. He buried the blue stone in the vineyard. He gives detailed description of its place of hiding and method of recovery. The Bishop wants this blue stone to be placed between his knees so that Gandolf may burst, of envy and disappointment.

As he is unmindful of his vows and acts contrary to them so is his conduct in discord with even the norms of good behaviour for laymen. He is seen trying to bribe his sons. He has promised to pray to St. Praxed on their behalf. He reminds them of his patrimony of the villas at Frascati, in the fashionable resort town in the Alban Hills, some fifteen miles south of Rome:

> Sons, all have I bequeathed you, villas, all,
> That brave Frascati villa with its bath. (ll. 45-46)

And if they do not obey his 'orders' he even threatens to tell the Pope about his villas in which case they would revert to him and not to them:

> Else I give the Pope
> My Villas! (ll. 102-3)

The Bishop has the cunning and guile of a worldly person.

The poem is a brilliant account of the changing moods of the Bishop. He appears at the outset to be downcast and depressed to feel that he is dying. So much so that in line 13 he asks himself ' Do I live, am I dead?' Even while alive he feels dead, as the inner precincts of the church is too quiet for the man of activity that the Bishop was. However, he soon overcomes this mood and begins to recall his strife with Gandolf and the thought that the richness of his tomb would, for all times to come, raise his status above Gandolf, his rival, cheers up his spirits. In his exhilaration he goes on to give all the details of his sarcophagus and tomb.

He discloses the way he got the big piece of *lapis lazuli*, and compares its size with a Jew's head and its colour with the blue vein on Mary's breast. Significantly, Mary is no less sacred for the Catholics than Jesus Christ Himself, and John the Baptist was the first great Roman Catholic martyr and the representation of his severed head in the European pictorial art is a common place However, to the Bishop he is no more than a piece of stone to be poised between his knees. In the great Jesuit church in Rome, the altar of St. Ignatius (1491-1556), the leader of the Counter Reformation is adorned with a group of the Trinity. The Father there holds a globe in his hand, which is said to be the largest piece *of lapis lazuli* in existence. The Bishop in the poem seems to recall it and his nonchalant manner seems to suggest that that might be a matter of emulation, not piety, for him.

However, as the poem draws to a close the candles of his sons 'dwindle' and the memory of their 'tall pale mother with her talking eyes' rekindles in the Bishop's mind. It strikes a discordant tone in the flow of the Bishop's great ideas about his tomb. He discovers that they would not heed his requests, much less care for his commands,

> ... Will ye ever eat my heart?
> Ever your eyes were as a lizard's quick,
> They glitter like your mother's for my soul, (ll. 103-5)

From this low of his disposition he does momentarily rise to a high but then again relapses into despondence:

> There leave me there!
> For ye have stabbed me with ingratitude
> To death— (ll. 113-15)

He does not hope now that his tomb would be built of anything other than mere sandstone ('Gritstone, a-crumble !').

'In a parody of Dante's tripartite scheme' wrote John Woolford, 'the Bishop distinguishes grades of 'afterlife' on the basis of grades of stone.' (p.116) If Gandolf's 'paltry onion stone' represents the purgatory his imagined basalt and agate and *lapis lazuli* would bequeath upon him an eternal paradisal existence which he could not enjoy even in life. However, as it is, the sandstone sarcophagus with its ' clammy squares, which sweat/As if the corpse they keep were oozing through -- 'would offer him the slimy afterlife, a state of rotting as not even in Hell. The Bishop's rich imagination and fulsome, if not true Christian, life finds expression in the multitude of details assembled paratactically in the poem. The Bishop remains his true self till the end. Nevertheless he is reconciled to his fate and tells his children:

> Well go! I bless ye. (l. 119)

Gregg Hecimovich in his paper entitled 'Just the thing for the time'. Contextualizing Religion in Browning's "The Bishop orders his Tomb at St. Praxed's Church" (*Victorian Poetry* vol. 36, No. 3, Fall 1998) has convincingly read the poem as Browning's contribution to the Oxford Movement. However, notwithstanding his worldly picture of the contemporary Bishop, in tune with the Protestant temper, Browning was no Catholic baiter. In fact, though 'a staunch non-conformist his whole life' according to Hecimovich, 'Browning found in the history of the Catholic Church and its sacraments matters of spiritual moment'. To conclude, 'The Bishop Orders His Tomb...' is one of Browning's great early Poems that would sustain many readings and yet succeed in offering a rich, complex, and ever fresh poetic delight.

38.4 LET'S SUM UP

In this unit you studied two early poems of Robert Browning. You scanned two passages from the poems in order to understand their rhythm. These were meant to give you a feel for the early evolution in the art of the poet. These analyses should be helpful to you in writing your third assignment on this course which could be on just one work of art, i.e. a poem.

38.5 ANSWERS TO EXERCISES

Self-Check Exercise-I

1. Porphyria and her lover who strangles her to death.
2. Twice: in lines 55 and 60
3. The passage is in regular iambic tetrameter.

The rain set early in tonight

The sullen wind was soon awake,

It tore the elm-tops down for spite,

And did its worst to vex the lake:

I listened with heart fit to break

Self-Check Exercise-II

1. Probably the Duke of Ferrara in 'My Last Duchess' had his wife murdered.
2. They are both solipsists of the extreme kind.

Self-Check Exercise-III

a. The Bishop, contrary to his accepted vocation, is a worldly person who values wealth, sensual pleasures and does not hesitate even to steal and lie.

b. Gandolf was a fellow priest of the Bishop. The latter is jealous of the former even when he is dead though in life he had won the love of a woman whom Gandolf wished to make his own.

c. Vanity saith the preacher vanity !
Draw round my bed: is Anselm keeping back?
Nephews – sons mine . Ah God I know not ! Well –
She, men would have to be your mother once,
Old Gandolf envied me, so fair she was!

The dominant meter of the above passage is iambic pentameter. However, the first is a tetrameter line with the first foot being an amphimacer which is sûcceeded by an anapaest. The first foot of the third line is a trochaic inversion and in the fourth line Browning substitutes a spondee in the first foot for an iambus. The lines do not rhyme. The passage is a good example of the vitality of iambic pentameter poetry.

38.6 FURTHER READING

In case you are interested in reading more poems of this period you may read 'My Last Duchess', 'Count Gismond', 'Soliloquy of a Spanish Cloister', ' In a Gondola' published in *Dramatic Lyics* and ' Pictor Ignatus' and ' The Laboratory' in *Dramatic Romances and Lyrics*. These would be available in any good anthology such as *Norton's* or the *Oxford Book of Victorian Poetry*. *The Works of Robert Browning* ed. F.G. Kenyon (New York: Barnes & Nobles 1966) may be very useful but difficult to lay your hands on. *Browning: Poetry and Prose* selected by Simon Nowell-Smith (London: Rupert-Davis, 1950) is an easily available selection of Browning's poems. *Robert Browning: The Poems* in 2 volumes edited by John Pettigrew (London. New Haven: Yale University Press. 1981) is an authoritative collection of Browning's poems.

Among the critical works, I have referred to in 38.3.1 above is John Woolford's. *Browning the Revisionary* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1988) and you may consult it if it's readily available.