

BROWNING

THE POEMS OF
BROWNING

VOLUME SIX:
THE RING AND
THE BOOK,
BOOKS 7-12

EDITED BY
JOHN WOOLFORD,
DANIEL KARLIN AND
JOSEPH PHELAN

ROUTLEDGE



THE POEMS OF ROBERT BROWNING

The Ring and the Book, published serially in 1868–9, is one of the most daring and innovative poems in the English language. The story is based on the trial of an Italian nobleman, Guido Franceschini, for the murder of his wife Pompilia in Rome in 1698.

Browning's discovery of the 'old yellow book', a bundle of legal documents and letters relating to the trial, on a second-hand market stall in Florence, sparked an imaginative engagement with this sordid tale of domestic cruelty, adultery, and greed which grew, through four years of arduous labour, into an epic peopled not by gods and warriors but by concrete, recognizably human beings. Fusing the technique of the dramatic monologue, the form he had made his own, with the grandeur of classical epic and the vivid realism of the modern novel, Browning created a unique hybrid form that allowed him not only to bring to life an entire historical period but also to reflect on the process of artistic creation itself—the forging of the golden 'ring' of the poem from the 'pure crude fact' of its historical original.

This edition, comprising volumes 5 and 6 in the acclaimed Longman Annotated English Poets edition of Browning's poems, does full justice to the scope and depth of Browning's achievement. The headnote in volume 5 gives an authoritative account of the poem's composition, publication, sources, and reception, making use of hitherto unpublished letters and textual material. In addition to giving readers help, where needed, with historical and linguistic comprehension, the notes track Browning's formidable range of allusion, from the most erudite to the most vulgar. The appendices in volume 6 present a selection from the original sources, a list of variants from extant proofs, and key passages from Browning's fascinating and revealing correspondence with one of the earliest readers of the poem, Julia Wedgwood. The aim is to enable readers not just to understand the poem as an object of study, but to take pleasure in its abounding intellectual and emotional energies.

John Woolford is Emeritus Professor of Nineteenth-Century Literature and Culture at the University of Manchester and Honorary Research Fellow at the University of Sheffield, UK.

Daniel Karlin is Emeritus Professor of English Literature at the University of Bristol, UK, and a Fellow of the British Academy.

Joseph Phelan is Professor of Nineteenth-Century Literature at De Montfort University, UK.

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THE POEMS OF
ROBERT BROWNING

EDITED BY

JOHN WOOLFORD
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AND

JOSEPH PHELAN

– Volume VI –

The Ring and the Book, Books 7–12

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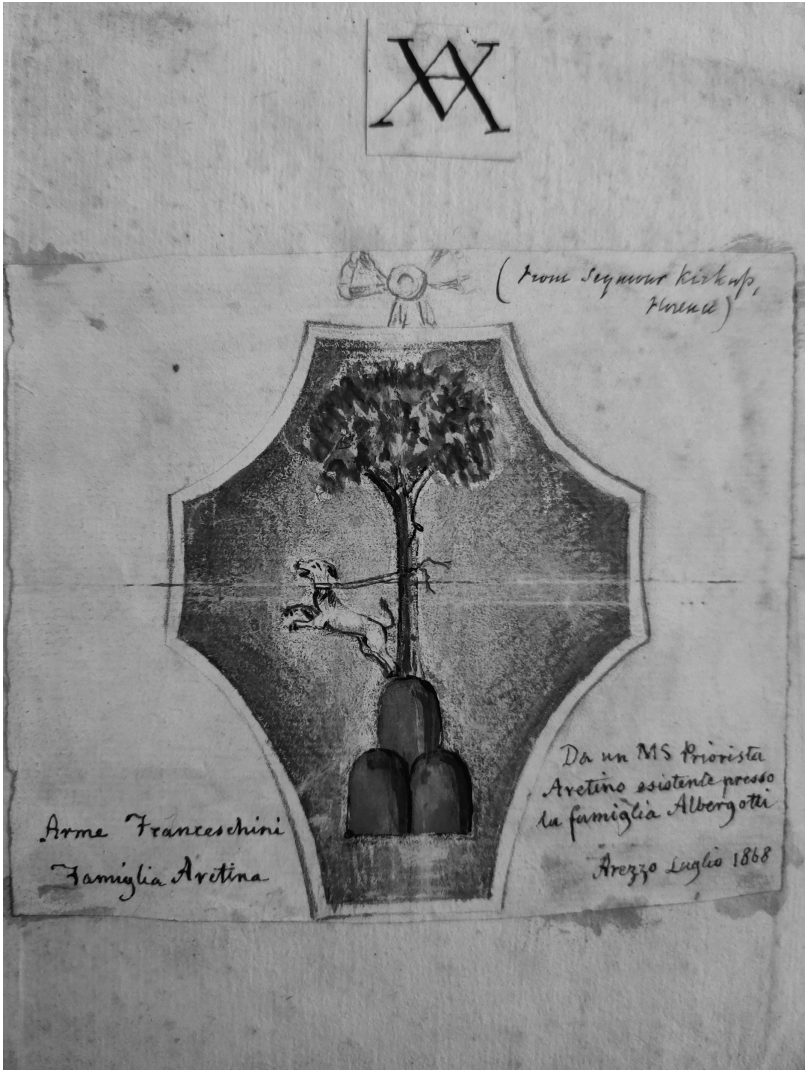
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Frontispiece. The Franceschini coat of arms, a drawing made for Browning by Seymour Kirkup in Arezzo in July 1868, and pasted on the inside cover of the 'old yellow book'. Kirkup's note reads: 'From an MS of the Priors of Arezzo now in the possession of the Albergotti family'. Reproduced by kind permission of the Master and Fellows of Balliol College.



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Note by the General Editors

The Longman Annotated English Poets series was launched in 1965 with the publication of Kenneth Allott's edition of *The Poems of Matthew Arnold*. F. W. Bateson wrote then that the 'new series is the first designed to provide university students and teachers, and the general reader with complete and fully annotated editions of the major English poets'. That remains the aim of the series, and Bateson's original vision of its policy remains essentially the same. Its 'concern is primarily with the meaning of the extant texts in their various contexts'.

Accordingly, the annotation which the various editors provide ranges from the glossing of obscure words and references to the evocation of the cultural, social, and political contexts within which the poems were created and first received. The editions draw on recent scholarship but also embody the fruits of the editors' own new research. The aim, in so far as this is possible through the medium of editorial annotation, is to place the modern reader in a position which approximates that enjoyed by the poems' first audience.

The treatment of the text has varied pragmatically from edition to edition; some have provided modernised texts where the original conventions of spelling and punctuation were likely to create problems for a reader, whereas others retain the original accidentals—the spelling, punctuation, italics, and capitals.

This edition of *The Ring and the Book*, comprising the fifth and sixth volumes of the Longman edition of *The Poems of Browning*, provides readers with a scrupulously prepared text of one of the most original long poems of the Victorian period. Its genesis lay in Browning's discovery of documents connected with the trial in 1698 of Guido Franceschini and his accomplices for the murder of his wife. The editors' detailed annotation includes glosses of difficult words and syntax, while the substantial Headnote and Appendices provide a wealth of information about the poem's biographical and historical contexts, its literary sources, and contemporary reception.

Acknowledgments

For permission to consult, and quote from, manuscripts of poems, letters, and other materials we wish to thank Sir John Murray and the following institutions: Armstrong Browning Library, Baylor University, Waco, TX; Balliol College, Oxford; the British Library; Huntington Library, San Marino, CA; Morgan Library, New York; National Library of Scotland (Smith, Elder archive); New York Public Library (Henry W. and Albert A. Berg Collection); Yale University Library, New Haven, CN (Beinecke Library).

We owe a particular debt of gratitude to the Armstrong Browning Library: Jennifer Borderud, the current Director, together with her predecessors, and specialist curators and members of staff, have helped us unfailingly. We are also grateful to the staff of the Department of Rare Books and Manuscripts at the British Library, where the manuscript of *The Ring and the Book* is housed, and of the library of Balliol College, Oxford, which holds the 'old yellow book' from which the poem sprang. We are very grateful to Professor Judith Hawley, of Royal Holloway University of London, and Professor Henry Woudhuysen, Rector of Lincoln College Oxford, for checking variants in copies of the first edition of the poem in the British Library and Oxford (Bodleian Library, Balliol College, and Wadham College) when the editors were unable to do so themselves.

For generous institutional support, including research leave and financial assistance with research trips and materials, we thank De Montfort University and the University of Bristol. Joseph Phelan was A. Bartlett Giamatti Fellow at the Beinecke Library, Yale, in 2014. John Woolford and Joseph Phelan benefited from Visting Fellowships at the Armstrong Browning Library in 2015. The British Academy's Small Research Grant funded research trips to the British Library and the National Library of Scotland, and enabled the editors to make use of the considerable expertise of Dr David Money, classical scholar and philologist and Research Associate at Wolfson College, Cambridge, who undertook to review the translations of the law-Latin found in the 'old yellow book', and Browning's own translations in the poem. His help was invaluable; any errors or omissions are our responsibility. The same goes for the many insights into Roman Catholic history, scripture and liturgy of the period given to us by the art historian and literary scholar Bruce Redford, and by the music scholar Dennis Crowley, formerly of Groton School, MA.

The published volumes of *The Brownings' Correspondence*, edited by Philip Kelley and others over many years, continue to be an indispensable resource; we remain deeply grateful to the editor-in-chief, Philip Kelley, who has given us access to many unpublished letters and documents, and has shared his encyclopaedic knowledge of the Brownings' biographical and historical context. Michael Meredith's archival research marked a watershed in the scholarly history of *The Ring and the Book*, and we are greatly in his debt, even where we have taken issue with some of his conclusions. We likewise acknowledge the work of previous and current editors of *The Ring and the Book*, making special mention of Richard Altick's edition of the poem (originally published in the Penguin Poetry Library series, 1971) and the Oxford English Texts edition, edited by Stefan Hawlin and Tim Burnett. The disagreements we occasionally note are more than matched by the many instances in which we have benefited from their work.

Over the course of a decade we have consulted (not to say importuned) many colleagues, friends, and family members for advice on particular aspects of the poem—from the broadest outlines of its historical canvas to the smallest details of punctuation and syntax. We cannot thank them all individually, but we are conscious that without their knowledge and encouragement this edition would be considerably poorer.

Illustrations

Frontispiece. The Franceschini coat of arms, a drawing made for Browning by Seymour Kirkup in Arezzo in July 1868, and pasted on the inside cover of the 'old yellow book'. Reproduced by kind permission of the Master and Fellows of Balliol College.

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Plate 4. Page [xli] of the 'old yellow book': the opening of Pamphlet 3, written by Arcangeli. Reproduced by kind permission of the Master and Fellows of Balliol College.

Plate 5. Page [xcvii] of the 'old yellow book' (Pamphlet 7): extract from the alleged love letters exchanged between Pompilia and Caponsacchi. Reproduced by kind permission of the Master and Fellows of Balliol College.

Plate 6. Page [cclix] of the 'old yellow book': the 'Instrument of Final Judgment', dated 9 September 1698, attesting Pompilia's innocence. Reproduced by kind permission of the Master and Fellows of Balliol College.

Abbreviations and references

B.	Robert Browning
EBB.	Elizabeth Barrett Browning
corr.	corrected
cp.	compare
edn.	edition
l.c., u.c.	lower case, upper case
publ.	published
repr.	reprinted
rev.	revision <i>or</i> revised
transl.	translated (by)

For books, the place of publication is London unless otherwise indicated.

I. Editions of *The Ring and the Book*

In our annotation we refer to the poem as *Ring*. MS (in italic) refers to the manuscript of the poem; MS (roman) to any other manuscript (e.g. ‘the MS of this poem is in EBB.’s hand’).

(a) Editions publ. in B.’s lifetime

- 1868–9 *The Ring and the Book*, 4 vols. (Smith, Elder, 1868–9); the first British edition.
- 1st Am. *The Ring and the Book*, 2 vols. (Boston: Fields, Osgood, 1869); the first American edition.
- 1872 *The Ring and the Book*, 4 vols. (Smith, Elder, 1872); the second British edition, though vols. 3 and 4 were not revised until 1882–3; see headnote, p. 3.
- 1888 *The Poetical Works of Robert Browning*, 16 vols. (Smith, Elder, 1888–9); *Ring* occupies vols. viii, ix, and x.
- 1889 *The Poetical Works of Robert Browning*, 16 vols. (Smith, Elder, 1889); re-issue of 1888; vols. i–x contain some authorial variants.

(b) Editions publ. after B.'s death

- Florentine* *The Complete Works of Robert Browning*, ed. Charlotte Porter and Helen A. Clarke, 12 vols. (New York: Thomas Y. Crowell, 1898); *Ring* occupies vols. vi–vii.
- Ohio* *The Complete Works of Robert Browning*, 17 vols. (Athens, OH: Ohio University Press, and Waco, TX: Baylor University, 1969–1985); *Ring* (ed. Roma A. King, Jr.) occupies vols. vii–ix.
- Oxford* *The Poetical Works of Robert Browning* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1983- [Oxford English Texts]); *Ring* (ed. Stefan Hawlin and Tim Burnett) occupies vols. vii–ix.
- Altick* *The Ring and the Book*, ed. Richard D. Altick (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1971 [Penguin English Poets]).

II. Browning's works other than *The Ring and the Book*

Titles are in italic for long poems published as a single volume (*Paracelsus*, *Sordello*), and in quotation marks for shorter poems ('De Gustibus', 'A Likeness'). References to poems in the headnote and notes are either complete (e.g. 'Mesmerism', 'Confessions') or use the first word or phrase of the title, omitting the definite article and apostrophes (e.g. 'Andrea' for 'Andrea del Sarto', *Balaustion* for *Balaustion's Adventure*).

Where a poem has been published in a previous volume of our edition, its location is given by volume and page number following the line reference. For example:

See 'Bishop Blougram' 126 (III 167) and *Balaustion* 138 (IV 343).

The following short titles are used for volumes of shorter works included in vols. I–IV:

- B & P* *Bells and Pomegranates* [series title: see Appendix B, II 470]
- CE & ED* *Christmas-Eve and Easter-Day* (1850)
- DL* *Dramatic Lyrics* (1842)
- DP* *Dramatis Personae* (1864)
- DR & L* *Dramatic Romances and Lyrics* (1845)
- M & W* *Men and Women*, 2 vols. (Chapman and Hall, 1855)

Poems not published in vols. I–IV (which cover Browning's poems to 1871) are referred to by title and date of publication, followed by line references to the first edition text. Longer poems published after 1871 are referred to by short title (in *italic*) and date, as in the following list. In the case of shorter poems, the date of publication provides the key to the volume in which the poem was published, as in the following list. One case in particular requires mentioning. B.'s 1887 collection, *Parleyings with Certain People of Importance in Their Day*, contains a number of poems which are headed 'With', the word 'Parleying' being understood: 'With Bernard de Mandeville', 'With George Bubb Dodington', 'With Christopher Smart', etc. We omit the preposition in our references to these poems.

Unpublished poems after 1871 are cited from *Robert Browning: The Poems*, 2 vols., ed. John Pettigrew, supplemented and completed by Thomas J. Collins (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1981 [Penguin English Poets]). We retain the short title *Penguin*, which was used in previous vols. of our edition, for this edition, which contains B.'s poems other than *Ring*.

(a) *Longer works after 1871 (all publ. by Smith, Elder)*

Fifine at the Fair, 1872

Red Cotton Night-Cap Country, 1873

The Inn Album, 1875

Aristophanes' Apology, Including a Transcript from Euripides, Being the Last Adventure of Balaustion, 1875

The Agamemnon of Æschylus, 1877

La Saisiaz and *The Two Poets of Croisic*, 1878 [single volume containing two long poems]

(b) *Volumes of shorter poems after 1871 (all publ. by Smith, Elder)*

1876 *Pacchiarotto and How He Worked in Distemper: With Other Poems*

1879 *Dramatic Idyls* [DI]

1880 *Dramatic Idyls, Second Series* [DI²]

1883 *Ferishtah's Fancies*

1884 *Jocoseria*

- 1887 *Parleyings with Certain People of Importance in Their Day* [etc.]
- 1889 *Asolando: Fancies and Facts*

III. Letters (incl. those of Elizabeth Barrett Browning)

- American Friends* *Browning to His American Friends: Letters between the Brownings, the Storys and James Russell Lowell 1841–1890*, ed. G. R. Hudson (1965)
- Correspondence* *The Brownings' Correspondence*, ed. P. Kelley, R. Hudson, S. Lewis and E. Hagan (Winfield, KS, 1984–)
- Dearest Isa* *Dearest Isa: Robert Browning's Letters to Isabella Blagden*, ed. E. C. McAleer (Austin, TX and Edinburgh 1951)
- EBB to Arabella* *The Letters of Elizabeth Barrett Browning to Her Sister Arabella*, 2 vols., ed. S. Lewis (Winfield, KS 2002)
- Florentine Friends* *Florentine Friends: The Letters of Elizabeth Barrett Browning and Robert Browning to Isa Blagden 1850–1861*, ed. P. Kelley and S. Donaldson (Winfield, KS and Waco, TX, 2009)
- LH* *Letters of Robert Browning collected by Thomas J. Wise*, ed. T. L. Hood (1933)
- Learned Lady* *Learned Lady: Letters from Robert Browning to Mrs Thomas Fitzgerald 1876–1889*, ed. E. C. McAleer (Cambridge, MA 1966)
- Letters of EBB* *The Letters of Elizabeth Barrett Browning*, ed. F. G. Kenyon, 2 vols. (1897)
- New Letters* *New Letters of Robert Browning*, ed. W. C. DeVane and K. L. Knickerbocker (1951)
- RB & JW* *Robert Browning and Julia Wedgwood: A Broken Friendship as Revealed in Their Letters*, ed. R. Curle (1937); text corr. from Sue Brown, 'Robert Browning and Julia Wedgwood: the Unpublished Correspondence', *Journal of Browning Studies* iii (2012) 29–52
- Trumpeter* *Browning's Trumpeter: The Correspondence of Robert Browning and Frederick J. Furnivall 1872–1889*, ed. W. S. Peterson (Washington, DC 1979)

IV. General

- ABL* Armstrong Browning Library (Baylor University, Waco, Texas)
- Allingham* *William Allingham's Diary*, ed. G. Grigson (1967)
- Berg* Henry W. and Albert A. Berg Collection, New York Public Library
- Bibliography* L. N. Broughton, C. S. Northrup, and R. B. Pearsall, *Robert Browning: A Bibliography 1830–1950* (Ithaca, NY, 1953) [Cornell Studies in English xxxix]
- BL* British Library
- Casanatense* Pamphlet on the Franceschini trial, in volume titled *Varii successi curiosi e degni di esser considerate* [Various curious events worthy of being considered], Misc. Ms. 2037, Royal Casanatense Library, Rome
- Collections* P. Kelley and B. A. Coley, *The Browning Collections: A Reconstruction with Other Memorabilia* (Winfield, KS, 1984); online edn.
www.browningguide.org/collections
- Cook* A. K. Cook, *A Commentary upon Browning's The Ring and the Book* (Oxford, 1920)
- Corrigan* *Curious Annals: New Documents Relating to Browning's Roman Murder Story*, transl. and ed. Beatrice Corrigan (Toronto, 1956)
- Fantozzi* Federico Fantozzi, *Nuova Guida ovvero Descrizione Storico-Artistico-Critica della Città e Contorni di Firenze* (Firenze, 1843)
- Farulli* Abate Pietro Farulli, *Annali ovvero Notizie Istoriche della Città di Arezzo in Toscana* [Annals or Historical Reports on the city of Arezzo in Tuscany] (Foligno, 1717)
- Gest* John Marshall Gest, *The Old Yellow Book, Source of Browning's The Ring and the Book: a New Translation with Explanatory Notes and Critical Chapters upon the Poem and its Source* (Philadelphia, 1927)
- Griffin and Minchin* W. H. Griffin and H. C. Minchin, *The Life of Robert Browning*, 3rd ed. (1938)
- Huntington* The Huntington Library, Pasadena, CA
- J.* Samuel Johnson, *A Dictionary of the English Language*, 1st edn. (1755)
- Lemprière* J. Lemprière, *A Classical Dictionary*, 12th edn. (1823)

LION	<i>Literature Online</i> (ProQuest database)
Morgan	Morgan Library, New York (formerly the Pierpont Morgan Library)
ODP	<i>Oxford Dictionary of Proverbs</i> (online edn.)
OED	<i>Oxford English Dictionary</i> (online edn.)
Orr <i>Handbook</i>	Mrs [Alexandra Sutherland] Orr, <i>A Handbook to the Works of Robert Browning</i> , 7th ed. (1896)
Orr <i>Life</i>	Mrs [Alexandra Sutherland] Orr, <i>Life and Letters of Robert Browning</i> (1891; repr. with revs., 1908)
OYB	Charles W. Hodell, <i>The Old Yellow Book, Source of Browning's The Ring and the Book, in Complete Photo-Reproduction, with Translation, Essay, and Notes</i> , 2nd edn. (Carnegie Institute of Washington, 1916)
PMLA	Publications of the Modern Language Association of America
PL	John Milton, <i>Paradise Lost</i>
Secondary Source	<i>Morte dell' Uxoricide Guido Franceschini Decapitato</i> [The Death of the Wife-Murderer Guido Franceschini, by Beheading] in <i>Miscellanies of the Philobiblon Society</i> xii (1868–9); repr. in this edn., Appendix B.
Story	William Wetmore Story, <i>Roba di Roma</i> , 3rd edn. (1864)
Thomas	Charles Flint Thomas, <i>Art and Architecture in the Poetry of Robert Browning</i> (Troy, NY, 1991)
Treves	Sir Frederick Treves, <i>The Country of "The Ring and the Book"</i> (1913)

The Bible is cited from the King James or Authorized Version (1611), in modern spelling. Names of books in the New Testament are given in the standard abbreviated forms, e.g. *Matthew* = *The Gospel according to Saint Matthew*, *1 Corinthians* = *The First Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Corinthians*, *1 Peter* = *The First Epistle General of Peter*, etc.

Greek and Roman works are cited, with a few exceptions, from the current Loeb Classical Library editions, publ. by Harvard University Press; online texts have been used where available. The exceptions concern instances where B.'s phrasing has clearly been influenced by an older translation (e.g. Pope's Homer).

Shakespeare's plays and poems are cited from the Riverside Edition, 2nd ed., ed. G. Blakemore Evans et al. (New York 1997).

Paradise Lost is cited from the Longman Annotated English Poets edition, 2nd edn., ed. Alastair Fowler (Harlow, 1998).

EBB's poems are cited from *The Works of Elizabeth Barrett Browning*, ed. Sandra Donaldson et al., 5 vols. (Pickering & Chatto, 2010)

THE RING AND THE BOOK

VII

P O M P I L I A

- I am just seventeen years and five months old,
And, if I lived one day more, three full weeks;
'Tis writ so in the church's register,
Lorenzo in Lucina, all my names
- 5 At length, so many names for one poor child,
—Francesca Camilla Vittoria Angela
Pompilia Comparini,—laughable!
Also 'tis writ that I was married there
Four years ago: and they will add, I hope,
- 10 When they insert my death, a word or two,—
Omitting all about the mode of death,—
This, in its place, this which one cares to know,
That I had been a mother of a son
Exactly two weeks. It will be through grace

Title. For B.'s preview see i 1076–1104 (p. 216), and for the historical figure see headnote, p. 108. The setting in 'the good house that helps the poor to die' (i 1085), identified by Other Half-Rome as 'the long white lazar-house . . . Saint Anna's' is B.'s invention; Pompilia was cared for, and died, in the family home in Via Vittoria where the murders took place (see iii 35–7n., p. 329, and headnote, p. 128). The date is 6 Jan., the day of Caponsacchi's speech (see note to bk. vi title, p. 623); Pompilia's arithmetic in ll. 1–2, counting from the day of her birth, is accurate. At l. 40 she speaks of herself as being 'to die to-night' and at l. 84 says that she has 'a whole day to live out'; the duration of her speech represents this interval of time, assuming that she speaks the last words with her dying breath.

vii 1–7. Based on the certified copy of Pompilia's 'baptismal record' in the register of S. Lorenzo in Lucina, the parish church of the Comparini family (see headnote, p. 108, and ii 6–14n., p. 235).

vii 8–9. *Also 'tis writ that I was married there / Four years ago:* on the date of Pompilia's marriage, see headnote, p. 109.

vii 9–14. *and they will add . . . Exactly two weeks:* the record of Pompilia's death in the church register, to which B. did not have access, is reproduced in *Treves* (p. 300); it is dated 7 Jan. 1698, and mentions neither her 'mode of death' nor the fact that she had a son.

vii 13–14. *That I had been a mother of a son / Exactly two weeks:* B.'s chronology dates the birth of Pompilia's son to 18 Dec. 1697; this date is given by Bottini

- 15 O' the Curate, not through any claim I have;
 Because the boy was born at, so baptized
 Close to, the Villa, in the proper church:
 A pretty church, I say no word against,
 Yet stranger-like,—while this Lorenzo seems
- 20 My own particular place, I always say.
 I used to wonder, when I stood scarce high
 As the bed here, what the marble lion meant,
 With half his body rushing from the wall,
 Eating the figure of a prostrate man—
- 25 (To the right, it is, of entry by the door)
 An ominous sign to one baptized like me,
 Married, and to be buried there, I hope.
 And they should add, to have my life complete,
 He is a boy and Gaetan by name—
- 30 Gaetano, for a reason,—if the friar
 Don Celestine will ask this grace for me

(OYB 151). 'Exactly' is therefore not right, since two weeks from 18 December would mean that Pompilia was speaking on 2 Jan.; this mistake may, however, be deliberate on B.'s part, since that was the day of the murders.

vii 15. *O' the Curate*] Of the Curate (*MS*). In bks. i–vi *MS* almost always has 'of the' and 'in the', revised to 'o' the' and 'i' the' in 1868–9; from this point on (with the partial exception of bk. x) 'o' the' and 'i' the' are already present in *MS*.

vii 16–20. For the 'Villa' (l. 17), see i 604–5n.; the nearby church is unidentified (for obvious reasons, since the location itself is fictitious). No record of the child's baptism has been found in the register of S. Lorenzo or that of six adjoining parishes (*Treves*, pp. 125, 300).

vii 18.] added in *MS*, beginning 'Pretty and what'.

vii 21–7. There is a 'marble lion' (l. 22) on either side of the portico of S. Lorenzo in Lucina; both lions appear to be 'rushing from the wall' (l. 23), and the one on the right (as you look out from the church) has something between its paws, though it is difficult to be sure what this is meant to be. It is possible that these lines draw on the information B. obtained from Frederic Leighton; see ii 6–14n. (p. 235).

vii 26. *and to be buried*] and even buried (*MS 1st reading*).

vii 28. *they*: i.e. the people entering Pompilia's death into the church records.

vii 29–30. *Gaetan* . . . *Gaetano*: see ll. 100–7n. Both forms of the name are pronounced as three syllables (i.e. 'Gae' counts as two syllables in 'Gaetan' but only one in 'Gaetano').

vii 31. *Don Celestine*: see iii 18n. (p. 328).

Of Curate Ottoboni: he it was
 Baptized me: he remembers my whole life
 As I do his grey hair.

- 35 All these few things
 I know are true,—will you remember them?
 Because time flies. The surgeon cared for me,
 To count my wounds,—twenty-two dagger-wounds,
 Five deadly, but I do not suffer much—
 40 Or too much pain,—and am to die to-night.

- Oh how good God is that my babe was born,
 —Better than born, baptized and hid away
 Before this happened, safe from being hurt!
 That had been sin God could not well forgive:
 45 He was too young to smile and save himself.
 When they took, two days after he was born,
 My babe away from me to be baptized
 And hidden awhile, for fear his foe should find,—
 The country-woman, used to nursing babes,
 50 Said “Why take on so? where is the great loss?
 These next three weeks he will but sleep and feed,

vii 32–4. *Curate Ottoboni . . . his grey hair*: the copy of Pompilia’s baptismal record was made by Pietro Ottoboni, but the baptism itself was carried out by Bartolomeo Mini; see ll. 1–7n.

vii 38. *twenty-two dagger wounds*: a detail taken from *Secondary Source* (Appendix B, p. 1358, §11).

vii 42–5. Cp. v 1478–9n. (p. 597).

vii 49. The pro-Guido Pamphlet 10 states that the child was ‘intrusted secretly to a nurse’ (i.e. a wet-nurse, It. *balia*) (OYB 122); such women were often recruited by city-dwellers from the surrounding countryside, where the air was thought to be healthier. Cp. B. to Arabella Barrett, 13 Mar. 1849, following the birth of Pen: ‘We have got a famous wet nurse, from the country’ (*Correspondence* xv 241). The nurse in question is identified by the editors as Tecla Celavini; ‘Tecla’ is used as a specimen name for a gossiping servant by Guido (v 63–4) and as the name of one of Pompilia’s friends (l. 480). In her letter of 8–16 Apr., EBB. added that ‘she has had two children, & been out as nurse before, & so she doesn’t hold the baby as if she were drawing a sword’ (*ibid.* 251). For another quotation from this letter relating to Bottinius’s evocation of a ‘young and comely peasant-nurse’, see ix 49–53n. (p. 927).

- Only begin to smile at the month's end;
 He would not know you, if you kept him here,
 Sooner than that; so, spend three merry weeks
 55 Snug in the Villa, getting strong and stout,
 And then I bring him back to be your own,
 And both of you may steal to—we know where!"
 The month—there wants of it two weeks this day!
 Still, I half fancied when I heard the knock
 60 At the Villa in the dusk, it might prove she—
 Come to say "Since he smiles before the time,
 Why should I cheat you out of one good hour?
 Back I have brought him; speak to him and judge!"
 Now I shall never see him; what is worse,
 65 When he grows up and gets to be my age,
 He will seem hardly more than a great boy;
 And if he asks "What was my mother like?"
 People may answer "Like girls of seventeen"—
 And how can he but think of this and that,
 70 Lucias, Marias, Sofias, who titter or blush
 When he regards them as such boys may do?
 Therefore I wish some one will please to say
 I looked already old though I was young;
 Do I not . . . say, if you are by to speak . . .
 75 Look nearer twenty? No more like, at least,
 Girls who look arch or redden when boys laugh,
 Than the poor Virgin that I used to know
 At our street-corner in a lonely niche,—
 The babe, that sat upon her knees, broke off,—

vii 57. The implication is that the Comparini are planning to move to a third location, neither the house in Via Vittoria nor the 'Pauline' villa; Pietro alludes to this 'other villa' as lying 'outside the city-gate' (see ll. 235, 238). It is wholly B.'s invention.

vii 58. Pompilia claims that Gaetano was baptised on 20 Dec. 1697 (see l. 46); as she is speaking on 6 Jan. 1698, it still 'wants' two weeks to the 20th, exactly one month after the event.

vii 67. "What was my mother like?"] "What was Pompilia like?" (*MS 1st reading*).

vii 74. *say, if you are by to speak*: Pompilia is dying and cannot clearly perceive the people around her bed.

vii 79. *broke off*: 'broken off'; the whole line is in apposition to 'the poor Virgin' in l. 77.

- 80 Thin white glazed clay, you pitied her the more:
She, not the gay ones, always got my rose.

How happy those are who know how to write!
Such could write what their son should read in time,
Had they a whole day to live out like me.

- 85 Also my name is not a common name,
“Pompilia,” and may help to keep apart
A little the thing I am from what girls are.
But then how far away, how hard to find
Will anything about me have become,
90 Even if the boy bethink himself and ask!
No father that he ever knew at all,
Nor ever had—no, never had, I say!
That is the truth,—nor any mother left,
Out of the little two weeks that she lived,
95 Fit for such memory as might assist:
As good too as no family, no name,
Not even poor old Pietro’s name, nor hers,
Poor kind unwise Violante, since it seems
They must not be my parents any more.
100 That is why something put it in my head
To call the boy “Gaetano”—no old name
For sorrow’s sake; I looked up to the sky
And took a new saint to begin anew.
One who has only been made saint—how long?

vii 85–7. See headnote, p. 109.

vii 91–2. Towards the end of her monologue, Pompilia repeats her insistence that Guido is not Gaetano’s father, though she does not mean by this that Caponsacchi is: see ll. 1762–4.

vii 92. *I say!* I say— (*MS*).

vii 98. *Poor kind unwise*] Kind unwise (*MS 1st reading*); the same addition was made at l. 286.

vii 100–7. Gaetano dei Conti di Thiene (1480–1547), also known as St. Cajetan, a religious reformer within the Catholic Church; he co-founded the Order of the Theatines, which combined the spiritual discipline of monastic life with good works; he was canonised by Pope Clement X in 1671. Pompilia, ‘wander[ing] in her mind’ during the flight to Rome with Caponsacchi, utters the name, which he does not realise is a premonition of her pregnancy (vi 1388–9, p. 691). B. wrote to

105 Twenty-five years: so, carefuller, perhaps,
 To guard a namesake than those old saints grow,
 Tired out by this time,—see my own five saints!

On second thoughts, I hope he will regard
 The history of me as what someone dreamed,
 110 And get to disbelieve it at the last:
 Since to myself it dwindles fast to that,
 Sheer dreaming and impossibility,—
 Just in four days too! All the seventeen years,
 Not once did a suspicion visit me
 115 How very different a lot is mine
 From any other woman's in the world.
 The reason must be, 'twas by step and step
 It got to grow so terrible and strange:
 These strange woes stole on tiptoe, as it were,
 120 Into my neighbourhood and privacy,
 Sat down where I sat, laid them where I lay;
 And I was found familiarised with fear,
 When friends broke in, held up a torch and cried
 "Why, you Pompilia in the cavern thus,
 125 How comes that arm of yours about a wolf?
 And the soft length,—lies in and out your feet
 And laps you round the knee,—a snake it is!"

his friend W. C. Cartwright on 17 May 1867: 'Ask any instructed person, why a mother in want of a name for her child would be led to call him "Gaetano"—what virtues are there in that saint's patronage?' (*ABL MS*). Cartwright's answer is not extant; it would not have helped B. much to learn that Gaetano is the patron saint of bankers, gamblers, and the unemployed.

vii 107. *five saints!*] four saints! (*MS*). As Charles LaPorte observes, "There exists no "St. Pompilia" in the Catholic canon, as Browning surely knew when he revised the poem's manuscript"; he suggests that the list 'may retrospectively be considered to include herself' (*Victorian Poets and the Changing Bible* [Charlottesville and London, 2011] 171).

vii 110. *at the last*] all at last (*MS*).

vii 121. *Sat down where I sat*: a possible reminiscence of *Ezekiel* iii 15: "Then I came to them of the captivity at Tel-abib, that dwelt by the river of Chebar, and I sat where they sat, and remained there astonished among them seven days'.

And so on.

- Well, and they are right enough,
- 130 By the torch they hold up now: for first, observe,
I never had a father,—no, nor yet
A mother: my own boy can say at least
“I had a mother whom I kept two weeks!”
Not I, who little used to doubt . . . *I* doubt
- 135 Good Pietro, kind Violante, gave me birth?
They loved me always as I love my babe
(—Nearly so, that is—quite so could not be—)
Did for me all I meant to do for him,
Till one surprising day, three years ago,
- 140 They both declared, at Rome, before some judge
In some court where the people flocked to hear,
That really I had never been their child,
Was a mere castaway, the careless crime
Of an unknown man, the crime and care too much
- 145 Of a woman known too well,—little to these,
Therefore, of whom I was the flesh and blood:
What then to Pietro and Violante, both
No more my relatives than you or you?
Nothing to them! You know what they declared.
- 150 So with my husband,—just such a surprise,
Such a mistake, in that relationship!
Everyone says that husbands love their wives,
Guard them and guide them, give them happiness;
’Tis duty, law, pleasure, religion: well,
- 155 You see how much of this comes true in mine!
People indeed would fain have somehow proved
He was no husband: but he did not hear,

vii 146–8.] added in MS.

vii 149. *to them! You know*] to them,—you know (MS). *You know what they declared:* according to Arcangeli, Pietro and Violante ‘did not blush to declare that Francesca [Pompilia] had been conceived illegitimately, and had been born of a harlot’ (OYB 99).

vii 156–7. *somehow proved / He was no husband:* see ii 1287–93n. (p. 310).

Or would not wait, and so has killed us all.
 Then there is . . . only let me name one more!
 160 There is the friend,—men will not ask about,
 But tell untruths of, and give nicknames to,
 And think my lover, most surprise of all!
 Do only hear, it is the priest they mean,
 Giuseppe Caponsacchi: a priest—love,
 165 And love me! Well, yet people think he did.
 I am married, he has taken priestly vows,
 They know that, and yet go on, say, the same,
 “Yes, how he loves you!” “That was love”—they say,
 When anything is answered that they ask:
 170 Or else “No wonder you love him”—they say.
 Then they shake heads, pity much, scarcely blame—
 As if we neither of us lacked excuse,
 And anyhow are punished to the full,
 And downright love atones for everything!
 175 Nay, I heard read-out in the public court
 Before the judge, in presence of my friends,
 Letters ’twas said the priest had sent to me,
 And other letters sent him by myself,
 We being lovers!

180 Listen what this is like!
 When I was a mere child, my mother . . . that’s
 Violante, you must let me call her so
 Nor waste time, trying to unlearn the word, . . .
 She brought a neighbour’s child of my own age
 185 To play with me of rainy afternoons;
 And, since there hung a tapestry on the wall,
 We two agreed to find each other out
 Among the figures. “Tisbe, that is you,
 With half-moon on your hair-knot, spear in hand,

vii 181, 183. The inconsistency between the two-point ellipsis in l. 181, and the three-point ellipsis in l. 183, is present in MS.

vii 188. *Tisbe*: Italian form of Thisbe, best known from the Greek legend of Pyramus and Thisbe; B. had used it before in *Soul’s Tragedy* i 366 (II 196).

vii 188–96. The tapestry remembered by Pompilia depicts the goddess Diana and the nymph Daphne, figures from classical mythology associated with virginity;

- 190 Flying, but no wings, only the great scarf
 Blown to a bluish rainbow at your back:
 Call off your hound and leave the stag alone!”
 “—And there are you, Pompilia, such green leaves
 Flourishing out of your five finger-ends,
 195 And all the rest of you so brown and rough:
 Why is it you are turned a sort of tree?”
 You know the figures never were ourselves
 Though we nicknamed them so. Thus, all my life,—
 As well what was, as what, like this, was not,—
 200 Looks old, fantastic and impossible:
 I touch a fairy thing that fades and fades.
 —Even to my babe! I thought, when he was born,
 Something began for once that would not end,
 Nor change into a laugh at me, but stay
 205 For evermore, eternally quite mine.
 Well, so he is,—but yet they bore him off,
 The third day, lest my husband should lay traps
 And catch him, and by means of him catch me.
 Since they have saved him so, it was well done:
 210 Yet thence comes such confusion of what was
 With what will be,—that late seems long ago,
 And, what years should bring round, already come,
 Till even he withdraws into a dream
 As the rest do: I fancy him grown great,
 215 Strong, stern, a tall young man who tutors me,

Tisbe becomes Diana the huntress, whose dogs hunt down Actaeon whom she has transformed into a stag, after he sees her bathing naked (Ovid, *Metamorphoses* iii 138–252); Pompilia is seen as Daphne, daughter of the river-god Peneus, who was transformed by him into a laurel in order to escape the lustful attentions of Apollo (*ibid.* i 453–567). As moon-goddess Diana is often depicted with a crescent or half-moon above her head, and as huntress holds a spear or bow, accompanied by hounds; the motif of the drapery blown behind her is also common, most famously in Titian's *Diana and Actaeon* (National Gallery). *Thomas* (p. 314) suggests Gerard Hoet's *Apollo and Daphne* (1700) as a source for the image of Daphne; it is in the Dulwich Gallery, which B. knew well. He would also have known Bernini's sculpture (1622-5), now in the Galleria Borghese in Rome.

vii 201.] added in *MS*. *fades and fades*] fades at once (*MS 1st reading*).

vii 214. *grown great*] grown tall (*MS 1st reading*).

Frowns with the others “Poor imprudent child!
 Why did you venture out of the safe street?
 Why go so far from help to that lone house?
 Why open at the whisper and the knock?”

- 220 Six days ago when it was New Year’s-day,
 We bent above the fire and talked of him,
 What he should do when he was grown and great.
 Violante, Pietro, each had given the arm
 I leant on, to walk by, from couch to chair
- 225 And fireside,—laughed, as I lay safe at last,
 “Pompilia’s march from bed to board is made,
 Pompilia back again and with a babe,
 Shall one day lend his arm and help her walk!”
 Then we all wished each other more New Years.
- 230 Pietro began to scheme—“Our cause is gained;
 The law is stronger than a wicked man:
 Let him henceforth go his way, leave us ours!
 We will avoid the city, tempt no more
 The greedy ones by feasting and parade,—
- 235 Live at the other villa, we know where,
 Still farther off, and we can watch the babe
 Grow fast in the good air; and wood is cheap
 And wine sincere outside the city gate.

vii 216. *Frowns*] Chides (*MS*). “*Poor imprudent child!*” “*Poor imprudent one!*” (*MS 1st reading*). The closing quotation marks were retained in *MS* by mistake after B. added the next three lines in *MS*.

vii 217–19.] added in *MS*.

vii 218–19. *safe street . . . lone house*: on these locations see headnote, p. 128.

vii 220.] Four days ago when it was New Year’s Eve (*MS 1st reading*).

vii 225. *And fireside*] And the fire-side (*MS*).

vii 227–8. *a babe, / Shall*: ‘a babe, who shall’.

vii 230. *Our cause is gained*: as Cook (p. 147) points out, Pietro and Violante had not won their legal actions (*cause* in Italian) against Guido, but they might have regarded Pompilia’s safe return to their house with her child as a kind of victory.

vii 235. See l. 57n.

vii 238. *sincere*: ‘pure; unmingled’ (*J.*); cp. *Story* (p. 247):

As soon as it enters the gates [of the city, wine] is destined to . . . adulteration of every kind, and lucky is he who gets a bottle of pure and sincere wine from any *osteria*, pot-house, or drinking-shop within the walls.

- I still have two or three old friends will grope
 240 Their way along the mere half-mile of road,
 With staff and lantern on a moonless night
 When one needs talk: they'll find me, never fear,
 And I'll find them a flask of the old sort yet!"
 Violante said "You chatter like a crow:
 245 Pompilia tires o' the tattle, and shall to-bed:
 Do not too much the first day,—somewhat more
 To-morrow, and, the next, begin the cape
 And hood and coat! I have spun wool enough."
 Oh what a happy friendly eve was that!
- 250 And, next day, about noon, out Pietro went—
 He was so happy and would talk so much,
 Until Violante pushed and laughed him forth
 Sight-seeing in the cold,—“So much to see
 I' the churches! Swathe your throat three times!” she cried,
 255 “And, above all, beware the slippery ways,
 And bring us all the news by supper-time!”
 He came back late, laid by cloak, staff and hat,
 Powdered so thick with snow it made us laugh,
 Rolled a great log upon the ash o' the hearth,
 260 And bade Violante treat us to a flask,
 Because he had obeyed her faithfully,
 Gone sight-see through the seven, and found no church

vii 239. *friends will grope*: 'friends who will grope'.

vii 240.] not *MS*.

vii 247–8. *begin the cape / And hood and coat*: i.e. begin making winter clothes for the baby.

vii 251.] added in *MS*.

vii 253. *Sight-seeing*: the churches of Rome would still have been adorned with 'pre-sepi', or nativity scenes, for Christmas; Pietro gives a description of one of them in ll. 263–6.

vii 256.] added in *MS*.

vii 258.] added in *MS*.

vii 259. *o' the hearth*] *sic* in *MS*; see l. 15n. From this point on it may be assumed that all instances of 'o' the' and 'i' the' are present in *MS*, unless otherwise noted.

vii 261.] added in *MS*.

vii 262. *the seven*: the seven 'pilgrim churches' of Rome: S. Giovanni Laterano, S. Pietro, S. Paolo fuori le mura, S. Maria Maggiore, S. Lorenzo fuori le mura, S.

To his mind like San Giovanni—"There's the fold,
 And all the sheep together, big as cats!
 265 And such a shepherd, half the size of life,
 Starts up and hears the angel"—when, at the door,
 A tap: we started up: you know the rest.

Pietro at least had done no harm, I know;
 Nor even Violante, so much harm as makes
 270 Such revenge lawful. Certainly she erred—
 Did wrong, how shall I dare say otherwise?—
 In telling that first falsehood, buying me
 From my poor faulty mother at a price,
 To pass off upon Pietro as his child:

Sebastiano, and S. Croce in Gerusalemme. The tradition of visiting them in turn goes back to the sixteenth century, and was associated more with pilgrimage (especially in jubilee years) than Christmas; the major churches, however, would have had elaborately decorated nativity scenes of the kind Pietro describes.

vii 263–6.] He had gone through the whole, and found no church / To his mind like San Giovanni—when at the door (*MS 1st reading*). By adding to Pietro's speech, B. connects this passage to the network of imagery in the poem concerning sheep, shepherds, and wolves (the latter implicit here, but note l. 125). Shepherds feature prominently in *Story's* description of the *presepio* (nativity scene) in the basilica of S. Maria in Ara Coeli (pp. 52–3), which *Story*—in contrast to Pietro—declares to be 'the most splendid'. The shepherd who 'Starts up and hears the angel' ironically evokes Guido's stratagem to gain admittance: cp. i 622–3 (p. 192), and note Pompilia's final declaration that she 'sprang to meet' Caponsacchi (ll. 1806–9). The biblical source is *Luke* ii 8–9:

And there were in the same country shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night. And lo, the angel of the Lord came upon them, and the glory of the Lord shone round about them: and they were sore afraid.

vii 263. S. Giovanni in Laterano (see prec. note) is a relatively short distance from the Porta S. Paolo, near which B. located the villa supposedly owned by the Comparini.

vii 265.] A tap: we started: you know the dreadful rest. (*MS 1st reading*).

vii 268–70. *Pietro at least . . . Such revenge lawful*: the defence argued, on the contrary, 'that Guido had most just cause for killing the said couple, and that very just anger had been excited against them' (*OYB* 19); Arcangeli cited not just the deception practised with regard to Pompilia's birth, but the couple's alleged plot against Guido in Arezzo (see ii 697ff., p. 275), and their collusion in the

- 275 If one should take my babe, give him a name,
 Say he was not Gaetano and my own,
 But that some other woman made his mouth
 And hands and feet,—how very false were that!
 No good could come of that; and all harm did.
- 280 Yet if a stranger were to represent
 “Needs must you either give your babe to me
 And let me call him mine for ever more,
 Or let your husband get him”—ah, my God,
 That were a trial I refuse to face!
- 285 Well, just so here: it proved wrong but seemed right

(again, alleged) continuation of her affair with Caponsacchi after she was released from the convent (see ii 1180n., p. 302). In a later pleading, Arcangeli argued:

If therefore Master Guido is not to be punished for murder of his wife, for the same reason he cannot be punished for the murder of Pietro and Violante, because these murders were committed for the same cause, *causa honoris*.

(OYB 98, substituting ‘Master’ for Hodell’s ‘Count’; the Lat. has ‘D. Guido’, ‘D.’ standing for the courtesy title ‘Dominus’)

Bottini, in Pamphlet 13 (OYB 152–3) rebuts this argument at length, concentrating on the accusation of complicity in adultery, since that was the strongest point in the attempt by the defence to make the murders into a single crime; the ‘true cause . . . could be no other than the hatred with which the husband had been aflame’, a hatred which Bottini traces to the lawsuits surrounding Pompilia’s birth and dowry, and the Comparini’s exposure of the ‘meagreness of the home comforts’ in his household (pp. 153–4).

vii 280.] Yet did a stranger say—Or give him me (*MS 1st reading*); we do not agree with *Oxford* that there are quotation marks before ‘Or’; quotation marks were added at the start of the next (added) line and after ‘him’ in l. 283. *represent*: ‘to set out clearly before a person’ (*OED*), with ‘to me’ understood.
 vii 281–2.] added in *MS*.

vii 285–311. Pompilia here relays (with an intervening comment in ll. 301–5) Violante’s account of her meeting with Pompilia’s real mother, and her motivation for buying a child. Violante, it would seem, emphasised the rescue of Pompilia, and her and Pietro’s happiness, downplaying the financial motive. Other Half-Rome has a version of this apologia (iii 179–218, p. 337), together with a trenchant answer to Violante’s question ‘What so excessive harm was done?’ (ll. 219–28). As Pompilia makes clear (ll. 316–19), she was given Violante’s softened version after her release from the convent into the Comparini’s custody; while she was still in Arezzo, as Caponsacchi bears witness (vi 782–97, p. 664) she was simply bewildered by her parents’ conduct.

- To poor Violante—for there lay, she said,
 My poor real dying mother in her rags,
 Who put me from her with the life and all,
 Poverty, pain, shame and disease at once,
 290 To die the easier by what price I fetched—
 Also (I hope) because I should be spared
 Sorrow and sin,—why may not that have helped?
 My father,—he was no one, any one,—
 The worse, the likelier,—call him,—he who came,
 295 Was wicked for his pleasure, went his way,
 And left no trace to track by; there remained
 Nothing but me, the unnecessary life,
 To catch up or let fall,—and yet a thing
 She could make happy, be made happy with,
 300 This poor Violante,—who would frown thereat?

- Well, God, you see! God plants us where we grow.
 It is not that, because a bud is born
 At a wild briar's end, full i' the wild beast's way,
 We ought to pluck and put it out of reach
 305 On the oak-tree top,—say, "There the bud belongs!"
 She thought, moreover, real lies were—lies told
 For harm's sake; whereas this had good at heart,
 Good for my mother, good for me, and good
 For Pietro who was meant to love a babe,
 310 And needed one to make his life of use,
 Receive his house and land when he should die.
 Wrong, wrong and always wrong! how plainly wrong!

vii 286. *To poor Violante*] To Violante (*MS 1st reading*). See l. 98n.

vii 297. *the unnecessary life*] the pitiable life (*MS 1st reading*).

vii 302–3. *bud* . . . *At a wild briar's end*: cp. the Pope's image of Pompilia as a rose sprung from a 'mere chance-sown, cleft-nursed seed' (x 1040–6).

vii 303.] At a wild-briar's end, full in the creatures' way,— (*MS*); At a briar's end, full in the wild beast's way,— (*MS 1st reading*).

vii 305.] On the oak-top, and say, there the rose shall wave. (*MS 1st reading*). *the bud*] the rose (*MS*).

vii 309.] Even to Pietro who loved a babe so much (*MS 1st reading*).

- For see, this fault kept pricking, as faults do,
 All the same at her heart,—this falsehood hatched,
 315 She could not let it go nor keep it fast.
 She told me so,—the first time I was found
 Locked in her arms once more after the pain,
 When the nuns let me leave them and go home,
 And both of us cried all the cares away,—
 320 This it was set her on to make amends,
 This brought about the marriage—simply this!
 Do let me speak for her you blame so much!
 When Paul, my husband's brother, found me out,
 Heard there was wealth for who should marry me,
 325 So, came and made a speech to ask my hand
 For Guido,—she, instead of piercing straight
 Through the pretence to the ignoble truth,
 Fancied she saw God's very finger point,
 Designate just the time for planting me,
 330 (The wild briar-slip she plucked to love and wear)
 In soil where I could strike real root, and grow,
 And get to be the thing I called myself:
 For, wife and husband are one flesh, God says,
 And I, whose parents seemed such and were none,
 335 Should in a husband have a husband now,
 Find nothing, this time, but was what it seemed,
 —All truth and no confusion any more.
 I know she meant all good to me, all pain
 To herself,—since how could it be aught but pain,
 340 To give me up, so, from her very breast,

vii 314. *this falsehood hatched*: 'once this falsehood had been hatched'. *this falsehood*] the falsehood (*MS*).

vii 322.] added in *MS*.

vii 323–6. *When Paul . . . For Guido*: Pompilia here gives the version of events which has the Franceschini making the first move in the marriage negotiation, with Paolo as the prime agent: cp. ii 320–4n. (p. 254).

vii 326. *piercing straight*] seeing clear (*MS 1st reading*).

vii 333. *wife and husband are one flesh, God says*: see v 581–2n. (p. 550).

vii 336. *but was what*] but the fact (*MS*).

vii 340. *To give*] Giving (*MS*).

All outside is lone field, moon and such peace—
 Flowing in, filling up as with a sea
 370 Whereon comes Someone, walks fast on the white,
 Jesus Christ's self, Don Celestine declares,
 To meet me and calm all things back again.

Beside, up to my marriage, thirteen years
 Were, each day, happy as the day was long:
 375 This may have made the change too terrible.
 I know that when Violante told me first
 The cavalier,—she meant to bring next morn,
 Whom I must also let take, kiss my hand,—
 Would be at San Lorenzo the same eve
 380 And marry me,—which over, we should go
 Home both of us without him as before,
 And, till she bade speak, I must hold my tongue,
 Such being the correct way with girl-brides,
 From whom one word would make a father blush,—

vii 368. *moon and such peace*—] moon and repose (*MS 1st reading*).

vii 370–2. Cp. *Matthew* xiv 25–7:

And in the fourth watch of the night Jesus went unto them, walking on the sea. And when the disciples saw him walking on the sea, they were troubled, saying, It is a spirit; and they cried out for fear. But straightway Jesus spake unto them, saying, Be of good cheer; it is I; be not afraid.

vii 371.] The Saviour's self, Don Celestine affirms, (*MS 1st reading*). *declares*] asserts (*MS*).

vii 373–4. Cp. Beatrice in *Much Ado About Nothing* II i 48–9: 'For the heavens, he [St. Peter] shows me where the bachelors sit, and there live we as merry as the day is long'.

vii 376–80. *when Violante told me . . . and marry me*: Pompilia implies that she first met Guido on the morning of the day she was married; this would fit the account given by both Other Half-Rome (iii 250ff., p. 341) and Tertium Quid (iv 469ff., p. 448), in which the negotiations in Via Vittoria are between Violante and Paolo, without Guido being present.

vii 377. *cavalier*: see ii 1000n. (p. 293), and ll. 389–93.

vii 383. *girl-brides*: we have not found this compound in poetry before B., and it appears to be a nineteenth-century coinage: *OED*'s first citation is Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre* (1847), ch. 24.

- 385 I know, I say, that when she told me this,
 —Well, I no more saw sense in what she said
 Than a lamb does in people clipping wool;
 Only lay down and let myself be clipped.
 And when next day the cavalier who came
 390 (Tisbe had told me that the slim young man
 With wings at head, and wings at feet, and sword
 Threatening a monster, in our tapestry,
 Would eat a girl else,—was a cavalier)
 When he proved Guido Franceschini,—old
 395 And nothing like so tall as I myself,
 Hook-nosed and yellow in a bush of beard,
 Much like a thing I saw on a boy's wrist,
 He called an owl and used for catching birds,—
 And when he took my hand and made a smile—
 400 Why, the uncomfortableness of it all
 Seemed hardly more important in the case
 Than,—when one gives you, say, a coin to spend,—
 Its newness or its oldness; if the piece
 Weigh properly and buy you what you wish,
 405 No matter whether you get grime or glare!
 Men take the coin, return you grapes and figs.

vii 385.] added in *MS*.

vii 386–8. Cp. iii 459–68n. (p. 354); Pompilia softens the image by referring to the lamb being clipped rather than slaughtered.

vii 390–3. For the tapestry with mythological subjects, see ll. 186ff. The myth alluded to here is that of the Greek hero Perseus's rescue of Andromeda, a princess who was chained to a rock by her parents in order to propitiate a sea-monster. The myth had been a personal talisman of B.'s for many years, and an etching of Caravaggio's painting of the subject 'was always before his eyes as he wrote his earlier poems' (Orr *Handbook* 21n.). See *Pauline* 656–67n. (I 67–8).

vii 390. *Tisbe*: Pompilia's childhood friend; see ll. 181ff. *slim young man*] tall young man (*MS 1st reading*); Pompilia remarks on Guido's height at l. 395, a line added in *MS*.

vii 397–8. For this image see iii 338n. (p. 347).

vii 403.] Dirty or shiny; if it weighs aright (*MS 1st reading*). Dirty or shiny; if the weight be well (*MS 2nd reading*). Neither of these readings takes account of the next (added) line.

vii 404.] added in *MS*.

vii 405. *grime or glare*] grime with gold (*MS 1st reading*).

Here, marriage was the coin, a dirty piece
 Would purchase me the praise of those I loved:
 About what else should I concern myself?

- 410 So, hardly knowing what a husband meant,
 I supposed this or any man would serve,
 No whit the worse for being so uncouth:
 For I was ill once and a doctor came
 With a great ugly hat, no plume thereto,
 415 Black jerkin and black buckles and black sword,
 And white sharp beard over the ruff in front,
 And oh so lean, so sour-faced and austere!—
 Who felt my pulse, made me put out my tongue,
 Then oped a phial, dripped a drop or two
 420 Of a black bitter something,—I was cured!
 What mattered the fierce beard or the grim face?
 It was the physic beautified the man,
 Master Malpichi,—never met his match
 In Rome, they said,—so ugly all the same!
- 425 However, I was hurried through a storm,
 Next dark eve of December's deadeſt day—
 How it rained!—through our ſtreet and the Lion's-mouth
 And the bit of Corso,—cloaked round, covered cloſe,
 I was like ſomething ſtrange or contraband,—

vii 415. *jerkin*: a jacket or ſhort coat (*J.*).

vii 421.] What mattered the white beard or the ſour face? (*MS 1ſt reading*).

vii 423. *Maſter Malpichi*: Marcello Malpighi (1628–94), a celebrated phyſician and pioneering reſearcher into human anatomy, became perſonal phyſician to Pope Innocent XII in 1691; as *Cook* notes, '[the] Comparini were fortunate in ſecuring the great man as a general practitioner!' (p. 149). B.'s ſpelling of the ſurname ('Malpichi') is found in a number of Engliſh and Italian ſources. There are numerous portraits of Malpighi, but none correſponds exactly to Pompilia's deſcription.

vii 426. *December's deadeſt day*: on the date of the marriage, ſee headnote, p. 109.

vii 427. *the Lion's-mouth*: a translation of '[Via] Bocca di Leone', a ſtreet on the route between the Comparinis' houſe and the pariſh church of S. Lorenzo in Lucina; Violante would have choſen this route, avoiding the Corso, to minimise the riſk of being detected while taking Pompilia to her clandestine marriage. The Brownings ſtayed at 43 Via Bocca di Leone during their periods of reſidence in Rome in 1853–4 and 1858–9.

- 430 Into blank San Lorenzo, up the aisle,
 My mother keeping hold of me so tight,
 I fancied we were come to see a corpse
 Before the altar which she pulled me toward.
 There we found waiting an unpleasant priest
- 435 Who proved the brother, not our parish friend,
 But one with mischief-making mouth and eye,
 Paul, whom I know since to my cost. And then
 I heard the heavy church-door lock out help
 Behind us: for the customary warmth,
- 440 Two tapers shivered on the altar. “Quick—
 Lose no time!”—cried the priest. And straightway down
 From . . . what’s behind the altar where he hid—
 Hawk-nose and yellowness and bush and all,
 Stepped Guido, caught my hand, and there was I
- 445 O’ the chancel, and the priest had opened book,
 Read here and there, made me say that and this,
 And after, told me I was now a wife,
 Honoured indeed, since Christ thus weds the Church,

vii 434–6.] There we found yesterday’s unpleasant man

Waiting, the brother, not our parish priest

But one with fox-like face and ferret eye (*MS 1st reading*).

Pompilia here confirms Other Half-Rome’s speculation that Paolo officiated at the marriage: see iii 449–58n. (p. 354).

vii 435. *Who proved*] That proved (*MS*).

vii 445. *chancel*: ‘the eastern part of the church, in which the altar is placed’ (*J.*). Pompilia mounts a couple of steps to stand ‘O’ [on] the chancel’, before stepping down again after the ceremony (l. 452).

vii 448–50. *since Christ thus weds the Church . . . like Christ*: cp. *Ephesians* v 22–7:

Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord.
 For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church: and he is the saviour of the body. Therefore as the church is subject unto Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in every thing. Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it; that he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word.

Pompilia, perhaps misunderstanding Paolo’s patter, confuses these instructions with the miracle at Cana, in which Jesus turned water into wine (*John* ii 1–11). On the use made by other speakers of this passage from *Ephesians*, see v 716–27n. (p. 557).

vii 448. *Honoured indeed, since*] Honoured in this that (*MS*).

- And therefore turned he water into wine,
 450 To show I should obey my spouse like Christ.
 Then the two slipped aside and talked apart,
 And I, silent and scared, got down again
 And joined my mother who was weeping now.
 Nobody seemed to mind us any more,
 455 And both of us on tiptoe found our way
 To the door which was unlocked by this, and wide.
 When we were in the street, the rain had stopped,
 All things looked better. At our own house-door,
 Violante whispered "No one syllable
 460 To Pietro! Girl-brides never breathe a word!"
 "—Well treated to a wetting, draggle-tails!"
 Laughed Pietro as he opened—"Very near
 You made me brave the gutter's roaring sea
 To carry off from roost old dove and young,
 465 Trussed up in church, the cote, by me, the kite!
 What do these priests mean, praying folk to death
 On stormy afternoons, with Christmas close
 To wash our sins off nor require the rain?"
 Violante gave my hand a timely squeeze,
 470 Madonna saved me from immodest speech,
 I kissed him and was quiet, being a bride.

When I saw nothing more, the next three weeks,
 Of Guido—"Nor the Church sees Christ" thought I:
 "Nothing is changed however, wine is wine

vii 449. *turned he water*] turned once water (*MS*).

vii 454.] added in *MS*.

vii 456.] and wide.] lay wide. (*MS*).

vii 460. *To Pietro! Girl-brides*] To Pietro,—girl-brides (*MS*).

vii 461. *draggle-tails!*] "draggle-tails?" (*1st Am.*); the question-mark is probably, though not certainly, a mispr. A 'draggle-tail' is 'a woman whose skirts are wet and dragged' (*OED*). Used by Pope to illustrate the synecdoche (part for whole, as here) in his essay *Peri-Bathous, or the Art of Sinking in Poetry* (1728): 'you may call a young Woman sometimes *Pretty-face* and *Pigs-eyes*, and sometimes *Snotty-nose* and *Draggle-tail*' (ch. 10).

vii 464. *To carry off*] And carry off (*MS*).

vii 473. *Nor the Church sees Christ*: the earthly Church apprehends Christ through faith, which is 'the evidence of things not seen' (*Hebrews xi 1*).

- 475 And water only water in our house.
 Nor did I see that ugly doctor since
 The cure of the illness: just as I was cured,
 I am married,—neither scarecrow will return.”
- Three weeks, I chuckled—“How would Giulia stare,
 480 And Tecla smile and Tisbe laugh outright,
 Were it not impudent for brides to talk!”—
 Until one morning, as I sat and sang
 At the broidery-frame alone i’ the chamber,—loud
 Voices, two, three together, sobbings too,
 485 And my name, “Guido,” “Paolo,” flung like stones
 From each to the other! In I ran to see.
 There stood the very Guido and the priest
 With sly face,—formal but nowise afraid,—
 While Pietro seemed all red and angry, scarce
 490 Able to stutter out his wrath in words;
 And this it was that made my mother sob,
 As he reproached her—“You have murdered us,
 Me and yourself and this our child beside!”
 The Guido interposed “Murdered or not,
 495 Be it enough your child is now my wife!
 I claim and come to take her.” Paul put in,
 “Consider—kinsman, dare I term you so?—
 What is the good of your sagacity
 Except to counsel in a strait like this?
 500 I guarantee the parties man and wife

vii 479–80. *Giulia* . . . *Tecla*: childhood friends, not mentioned elsewhere in the poem; as with ‘Tisbe’, ‘Tecla’ is the Italian form of a Greek name, Thekla; see l. 49n. vii 479.] Three weeks did I chuckle—“How would Gigia stare, (MS). ‘Gigia’ returns as de Archangelis’s cook (viii 542, 1380).

vii 482–583. Pompilia’s account of Pietro’s angry reaction to the clandestine marriage, and his eventual acceptance of it as a *fait accompli*, considerably expands on the source in *OYB* in terms of domestic detail; it omits, however, any mention of the intervention of the Cardinal, Paolo’s patron, whose role is emphasised in other accounts, e.g. iii 469–76 (p. 355).

vii 488. *With sly face*] With the sly face (MS); With the fox-face (MS 1st reading).

vii 497. *dare I term you so?*—] dare I name you so?— (MS); shall I dare address?— (MS 1st reading).

- Whether you like or loathe it, bless or ban.
 May spilt milk be put back within the bowl—
 The done thing, undone? You, it is, we look
 For counsel to, you fittest will advise!
- 505 Since milk, though spilt and spoilt, does marble good,
 Better we down on knees and scrub the floor,
 Than sigh, 'the waste would make a syllabub!'
 Help us so turn disaster to account,
 So predispose the groom, he needs shall grace
- 510 The bride with favour from the very first,
 Not begin marriage an embittered man!"
 He smiled,—the game so wholly in his hands!
 While fast and faster sobbed Violante—"Ay,
 All of us murdered, past averting now!
- 515 O my sin, O my secret!" and such like.

- Then I began to half surmise the truth;
 Something had happened, low, mean, underhand,
 False, and my mother was to blame, and I
 To pity, whom all spoke of, none addressed:
- 520 I was the chattel that had caused a crime.
 I stood mute,—those who tangled must untie
 The embroilment. Pietro cried "Withdraw, my child!

vii 501. *ban*: curse.

vii 503. *The done thing, undone?* The Latin legal maxim '*factum infectum fieri non potest*' is cited by the author of the second anonymous pamphlet in his account of this episode (OYB ccx; transl. by Hodel 'what is done can not be undone', p. 171).

vii 507. *syllabub!* A drink made of milk 'curdled by the admixture of wine, cider, or other acid, and often sweetened and flavoured' (OED).

vii 508. *turn disaster*] turn the matter (MS 1st reading).

vii 509–10. *the groom . . . the bride*] the Groom . . . the Bride (MS).

vii 514–15. *past averting now!* . . . *O my secret!*] 'past averting now,— . . . O my secret,—' (MS). On the surface Violante's 'sin' and 'secret' relate simply to her deception of Pietro in arranging the clandestine marriage, but Pompilia (somewhat implausibly) implies that she is already thinking back to the false pregnancy, and experiencing the remorse which will later drive her to confess it; this forms part of Pompilia's consistent attempt to place Violante's conduct in a more favourable light, as she herself acknowledges (l. 322).

vii 520. *the chattel*: cp. v 426–9n. (p. 543).

She is not helpful to the sacrifice
 At this stage,—do you want the victim by
 525 While you discuss the value of her blood?
 For her sake, I consent to hear you talk:
 Go, child, and pray God help the innocent!”

I did go and was praying God, when came
 Violante, with eyes swollen and red enough,
 530 But movement on her mouth for make-believe
 Matters were somehow getting right again.
 She bade me sit down by her side and hear.
 “You are too young and cannot understand,
 Nor did your father understand at first.
 535 I wished to benefit all three of us,
 And when he failed to take my meaning,—why,
 I tried to have my way at unaware—
 Obtained him the advantage he refused.
 As if I put before him wholesome food
 540 Instead of broken victual,—he finds change
 I’ the viands, never cares to reason why,
 But falls to blaming me, would fling the plate
 From window, scandalize the neighbourhood,
 Even while he smacks his lips,—men’s way, my child!
 545 But either you have prayed him unperversé
 Or I have talked him back into his wits:
 And Paolo was a help in time of need,—
 Guido, not much—my child, the way of men!
 A priest is more a woman than a man,

vii 523. *not helpful*] not party to (*MS 1st reading*).

vii 524.] At this stage,—when you want the victim, well. (*MS 1st reading*).

vii 525.] added in *MS*.

vii 534. *your father*] your Father (*MS*).

vii 536. *at unaware*: unbeknownst to Pietro; in B.’s only other use of this phrase
 (‘An Epistle’ 296, III 572) it means ‘without forewarning’.

vii 538.] not *MS*.

vii 541.] added in *MS*. *viands*: see vi 1745n. (p. 710).

vii 543.] added in *MS*.

vii 546. *talked him back*] reasoned sense (*MS 1st reading*); the second word is difficult to read; we agree with *Oxford’s* conjecture.

- 550 And Paul did wonders to persuade. In short,
 Yes, he was wrong, your father sees and says;
 My scheme was worth attempting: and bears fruit,
 Gives you a husband and a noble name,
 A palace and no end of pleasant things.
- 555 What do you care about a handsome youth?
 They are so volatile, and tease their wives!
 This is the kind of man to keep the house.
 We lose no daughter,—gain a son, that's all:
 For 'tis arranged we never separate,
- 560 Nor miss, in our grey time of life, the tints
 Of you that colour eve to match with morn.
 In good or ill, we share and share alike,
 And cast our lots into a common lap,
 And all three die together as we lived!
- 565 Only, at Arezzo,—that's a Tuscan town,
 Not so large as this noisy Rome, no doubt,
 But older far and finer much, say folks,—
 In a great palace where you will be queen,
 Know the Archbishop and the Governor,
- 570 And we see homage done you ere we die.
 Therefore, be good and pardon!"—"Pardon what?
 You know things, I am very ignorant:
 All is right if you only will not cry!"

And so an end! Because a blank begins

- 575 From when, at the word, she kissed me hard and hot,

vii 555–6.] added in *MS*.

vii 556. *tease*: more usually 'tease' (to which it was changed in 1868–72); in the sense (stronger than the current) of 'to torment with importunity; to vex with assiduous impertinence' (*J*). *Violante* may mean either that a young husband will importune his wife for sex, or that he will be unfaithful to her, more likely the latter in view of l. 557.

vii 565. *that's a Tuscan town*] that famed Tuscan town (*MS 1st reading*); the revision better conforms to the image of Pompilia as an uninstructed child, ignorant even of the name of Arezzo.

vii 568. *be queen*] be Queen (*MS*).

vii 569.] added in *MS*, strengthening the dramatic irony in *Violante's* rosy prospectus, since Pompilia's acquaintance with the Archbishop and the Governor does her no good.

vii 574. *an end! Because*] an end,—because (*MS*).

And took me back to where my father leaned
 Opposite Guido—who stood eyeing him,
 As eyes the butcher the cast panting ox
 That feels his fate is come, nor struggles more,—
 580 While Paul looked archly on, pricked brow at whites
 With the pen-point as to punish triumph there,—
 And said “Count Guido, take your lawful wife
 Until death part you!”

All since is one blank,

585 Over and ended; a terrific dream.
 It is the good of dreams—so soon they go!
 Wake in a horror of heart-beats, you may—
 Cry, “The dread thing will never from my thoughts!”
 Still, a few daylight doses of plain life,
 590 Cock-crow and sparrow-chirp, or bleat and bell
 Of goats that trot by, tinkling, to be milked;
 And when you rub your eyes awake and wide,
 Where is the harm o’ the horror? Gone! So here.
 I know I wake,—but from what? Blank, I say!
 595 This is the note of evil: for good lasts.
 Even when Don Celestine bade “Search and find!”

vii 576. *my father leaned*] my father sat (*MS*).

vii 577. *stood eyeing him,*] stood o’er him—eyed, (*MS*); was eyeing him (*MS 1st reading*).

vii 578. *cast*: thrown down (on the floor of the slaughterhouse).

vii 581. *as*: ‘as if’.

vii 582. *take your lawful wife*] take your wife again (*MS 1st reading*).

vii 585. *terrific*: ‘dreadful; causing terror’ (*J.*).

vii 586. *dreams—so soon they go!*] dreams that thus they go: (*MS 1st reading*).

vii 588. *will never from my thoughts*: ‘will never disappear from my thoughts’.

vii 590–1. *bleat and bell / Of goats*: as *Cook* (p. 149) remarks, this was still a common sight in the nineteenth-century city, as described by Story in *Roba di Roma*:

Early in the morning you will see streaming through the streets or gathered together in picturesque groups . . . herds of long-haired goats, brown, white, and black, which have been driven, or rather which have followed their shepherd into the city to be milked.

(p. 132)

vii 595. *for good lasts.*] it lasts not. (*MS 1st reading*).

- For your soul's sake, remember what is past,
 The better to forgive it,"—all in vain!
 What was fast getting indistinct before,
 600 Vanished outright. By special grace perhaps,
 Between that first calm and this last, four years
 Vanish,—one quarter of my life, you know.
 I am held up, amid the nothingness,
 By one or two truths only—thence I hang,
 605 And there I live,—the rest is death or dream,
 All but those points of my support. I think
 Of what I saw at Rome once in the Square
 O' the Spaniards, opposite the Spanish House:
 There was a foreigner had trained a goat,
 610 A shuddering white woman of a beast,
 To climb up, stand straight on a pile of sticks
 Put close, which gave the creature room enough:
 When she was settled there he, one by one,
 Took away all the sticks, left just the four
 615 Whereon the little hoofs did really rest,
 There she kept firm, all underneath was air.
 So, what I hold by, are my prayer to God,
 My hope, that came in answer to the prayer,
 Some hand would interpose and save me—hand
 620 Which proved to be my friend's hand: and,—best bliss,—

vii 605. *death or dream*] death and dream (*MS 1st reading*).

vii 607–8. *the Square / O' the Spaniards, opposite the Spanish House*: Pompilia is referring to the Piazza di Spagna, the nearest large square to the Comparini house in Via Vittoria; the 'Spanish House' is the Palazzo di Spagna (also called the Palazzo Monaldeschi) in the square, which houses the Embassy of Spain to the Vatican. See also l. 1170.

vii 609–16. It seems likely that B. had witnessed this trick, either in Rome or elsewhere, but we have found no record of it in his or EBB.'s letters.

vii 610. *of a beast*] of a thing (*MS 1st reading*).

vii 617–18. *my prayer to God, / My hope*] the prayer to God, / The hope (*MS 1st reading*).

vii 620. *my friend's hand*: Caponsacchi's; cp. l. 361. *best bliss*] blest bliss (1888). *Oxford* retains this reading (and does not record 'best', the reading in *MS* and all other edns.), but it seems likely to be a printer's error, with the compositor interpolating an 'l' in 'best' by eyeskip from 'bliss'.

That fancy which began so faint at first,
 That thrill of dawn's suffusion through my dark,
 Which I perceive was promise of my child,
 The light his unborn face sent long before,—
 625 God's way of breaking the good news to flesh.
 That is all left now of those four bad years.
 Don Celestine urged "But remember more!
 Other men's faults may help me find your own.
 I need the cruelty exposed, explained,
 630 Or how can I advise you to forgive?"
 He thought I could not properly forgive
 Unless I ceased forgetting,—which is true:
 For, bringing back reluctantly to mind
 My husband's treatment of me,—by a light
 635 That's later than my life-time, I review
 And comprehend much and imagine more,
 And have but little to forgive at last.
 For now,—be fair and say,—is it not true
 He was ill-used and cheated of his hope
 640 To get enriched by marriage? Marriage gave
 Me and no money, broke the compact so:
 He had a right to ask me on those terms,
 As Pietro and Violante to declare
 They would not give me: so the bargain stood:

vii 621–5. See ll. 1200ff.

vii 622. *That thrill of dawn's suffusion*] The thrill of that star's dawning (*MS 1st reading*).

vii 625.] added in *MS*.

vii 629. *the cruelty*] the cruelties (*MS*).

vii 632. *which is true:*] he was right (*MS 1st reading*).

vii 633–7. On the wording of Pompilia's forgiveness of Guido in *OYB*, see iii 18n. (p. 328).

vii 636. *imagine more*] forgive the more (*MS 1st reading*).

vii 637.] added in *MS*.

vii 642–5. Pompilia acknowledges here the justice of Guido's complaint that the Comparini had reneged on the bargain he struck with them (see v 479ff., p. 545), without commenting on the immorality of the bargain itself.

vii 643.] And Pietro and Violante to refuse (*MS 1st reading*); the lack of a punctuation mark at the end of the line is an oversight.

vii 644.] added in *MS*, with 'give me: so' the original reading.

- 645 They broke it, and he felt himself aggrieved,
 Became unkind with me to punish them.
 They said 'twas he began deception first,
 Nor, in one point whereto he pledged himself,
 Kept promise: what of that, suppose it were?
 650 Echoes die off, scarcely reverberate
 For ever,—why should ill keep echoing ill,
 And never let our ears have done with noise?
 Then my poor parents took the violent way
 To thwart him,—he must needs retaliate,—wrong,
 655 Wrong, and all wrong,—better say, all blind!
 As I myself was, that is sure, who else
 Had understood the mystery: for his wife
 Was bound in some sort to help somehow there.
 It seems as if I might have interposed,
 660 Blunted the edge of their resentment so,
 Since he vexed me because they first vexed him;
 “I will entreat them to desist, submit,
 Give him the money and be poor in peace,—
 Certainly not go tell the world: perhaps
 665 He will grow quiet with his gains.”

Yes, say

Something to this effect and you do well!
 But then you have to see first: I was blind.
 That is the fruit of all such wormy ways,

vii 645. *They broke it,*] They did not: (*MS 1st reading*).

vii 648–9. *Nor, in one point . . . Kept promise:*] And, in all things . . . Broke promise— (*MS 1st reading*).

vii 651. *keep echoing ill*] keep waking ill (*MS 1st reading*).

vii 658. *there.*] there (*MS 1st reading*); the full stop was presumably added after the revisions in the two following lines.

vii 659.] added in *MS*.

vii 660.] And turn the drift of all their rage on me: (*MS 1st reading*).

vii 666. *Yes, say*] Yes, say— (*MS 1st reading*); the revision was required by the addition of the next line.

vii 667.] added in *MS*.

vii 669. *wormy ways*] hidden ways (*MS 1st reading*); ‘wormy’ meaning ‘crooked, tortuous’ (*OED 4b*). This figurative sense is not in *J*.

- 670 The indirect, the unapproved of God:
 You cannot find their author's end and aim,
 Not even to substitute your good for bad,
 Your open for the irregular; you stand
 Stupefied, profitless, as cow or sheep
- 675 That miss a man's mind; anger him just twice
 By trial at repairing the first fault.
 Thus, when he blamed me, "You are a coquette,
 A lure-owl posturing to attract birds,
 You look love-lures at theatre and church,
- 680 In walk, at window!"—that, I knew, was false:
 But why he charged me falsely, whither sought
 To drive me by such charge,—how could I know?
 So, unaware, I only made things worse.
 I tried to soothe him by abjuring walk,
- 685 Window, church, theatre, for good and all,
 As if he had been in earnest: that, you know,
 Was nothing like the object of his charge.
 Yes, when I got my maid to supplicate
 The priest, whose name she read when she would read
- 690 Those feigned false letters I was forced to hear
 Though I could read no word of,—he should cease
 Writing,—nay, if he minded prayer of mine,
 Cease from so much as even pass the street
 Whereon our house looked,—in my ignorance

vii 673. *Your open*] Your straight (1888; one of the revs. made in 1872 *ABL*). If, as we believe, 'blest' for 'best' in l. 620 is a misprint, this is the first verbal revision to bk. vii in 1888. No other book has so few; see headnote, p. 35.

vii 675–6. *anger him just twice / By trial at repairing the first fault*: 'You succeed only in angering him again if you attempt to make amends for the original fault [because you are not aware of what that was]'

vii 678. *lure-owl*: see iii 338n. (p. 347).

vii 682–3.] To drive me by such charge,—so, unaware, (*MS 1st reading*).

vii 687. *the object of his charge*: 'the purpose of his accusation'.

vii 688–94. *Yes, when I got my maid . . . Whereon our house looked*: we know from Caponsacchi that the servant, Maria Margherita, did not deliver these messages, except a version of the one asking Caponsacchi not to pass in front of the house, purportedly for his own safety: see vi 653–4n. (p. 657).

vii 689. *The priest, whose name*] That he, whose name (*MS 1st reading*).

vii 690. *Those feigned false letters*] Those letters to me (*MS 1st reading*).

- 695 I was just thwarting Guido's true intent;
Which was, to bring about a wicked change
Of sport to earnest, tempt a thoughtless man
To write indeed, and pass the house, and more,
Till both of us were taken in a crime.
- 700 He ought not to have wished me thus act lies,
Simulate folly,—but,—wrong or right, the wish,—
I failed to apprehend its drift. How plain
It follows,—if I fell into such fault,
He also may have overreached the mark,
- 705 Made mistake, by perversity of brain,
In the whole sad strange plot, this same intrigue
To make me and my friend unself ourselves,
Be other man and woman than we were!
Think it out, you who have the time! for me,—
- 710 I cannot say less; more I will not say.
Leave it to God to cover and undo!

Only, my dulness should not prove too much!

vii 695. *true intent*]; true intent (*MS 1st reading*); the revision was required by the addition of the next lines.

vii 696–7.] added in *MS*; 'a wicked change' in l. 696 was originally 'a wickedness'.

vii 698. *To write indeed*] My friend should write (*MS 1st reading*). B. wrote 'priest' in the left margin, then deleted it; *Oxford* suggests he was thinking of 'My priest'; if so he may have decided that it was an inappropriate phrase for Pompilia to use of Caponsacchi, even in reporting Guido's 'intent'.

vii 699. *taken in a crime*] taken in a trap (*MS 1st reading*).

vii 701–2.] Simulate guilt,—but, wrong or right of him, / I failed to apprehend the wish. Why then (*MS 1st reading*, except that B. originally tried 'I failed to take this' at the start of l. 702).

vii 705. *made mistake*: 'made [a] mistake' [in attempting to trick Caponsacchi and Pompilia into acting against their natural inclinations].

vii 707. *unself*: *OED* records 'unselfing' as a noun from 1654 and 'unselfed' as an adjective from 1668, usually meaning spiritual abandonment of the worldly self; the first citation of 'unself' as a verb relates, as here, to a person's irreducible identity: 'I cannot unself or unsex myself sufficiently to write in a narrative form; it must be I—I—I, and all about me—me—me' (T. S. Sturr, *A Winter in London*, 1806).

vii 712–16.] Only, my dullness does not prove at all

That in a certain single point—wherein

My husband blamed me and you also blame,

If I interpret shakes of head aright,—

I did so very wrong, if I dared speak! (*MS 1st reading*; l. 716 was added).

- Not prove that in a certain other point
 Wherein my husband blamed me,—and you blame,
 715 If I interpret smiles and shakes of head,—
 I was dull too. Oh, if I dared but speak!
 Must I speak? I am blamed that I forwent
 A way to make my husband's favour come.
 That is true: I was firm, withstood, refused. . .
 720 —Women as you are, how can I find the words?

- I felt there was just one thing Guido claimed
 I had no right to give nor he to take;
 We being in estrangement, soul from soul:
 Till, when I sought help, the Archbishop smiled,
 725 Inquiring into privacies of life,
 —Said I was blameable—(he stands for God)

vii 720. *Women as you are*: the first indication that Pompilia is being cared for by female attendants, belonging to the 'lazar-house' (see note to title).

vii 721–846. Pompilia here gives, first a summary (ll. 721–33) and then a much longer, more detailed and explicit account of her appeal to the Archbishop, which she situates after the departure of the Comparini to Rome, and which was motivated, according to her, by Guido's demand that she fulfil her 'duty' as a wife and have sex with him, and by his condoning of the advances of his younger brother Girolamo. The conversations Pompilia has with the Archbishop are B.'s invention; there is however evidence in *OYB* that Pompilia did on at least one occasion refuse to sleep with her husband: see headnote, p. 111.

vii 721–3. Pompilia's sense of right goes against orthodox theological opinion and social attitudes at the time, which enjoined the wife's obedience to her husband and did not recognise 'marital rape'; cp. the observation of the friar, Romano, who fails to help her (vi 839–41, p. 666) and the Archbishop's statement about her 'covenant' (l. 771). The concept of love as the union of two souls was well established in poetry and philosophy, but it had no bearing on the laws governing marriage as a religious and social institution.

vii 724.] Till the Archbishop smiled, when I sought help, (*MS*); 'smiled' was originally 'said'.

vii 726. —*Said I was blameable*] That I was blameable (*MS*); That I was wholly wrong (*MS 1st reading*).

- Nowise entitled to exemption there.
 Then I obeyed,—as surely had obeyed
 Were the injunction “Since your husband bids,
 730 Swallow the burning coal he proffers you!”
 But I did wrong, and he gave wrong advice
 Though he were thrice Archbishop,—that, I know!—
 Now I have got to die and see things clear.
 Remember I was barely twelve years old—
 735 A child at marriage: I was let alone
 For weeks, I told you, lived my child-life still
 Even at Arezzo, when I woke and found
 First . . . but I need not think of that again—
 Over and ended! Try and take the sense
 740 Of what I signify, if it must be so.
 After the first, my husband, for hate’s sake,
 Said one eve, when the simpler cruelty
 Seemed somewhat dull at edge and fit to bear,
 “We have been man and wife six months almost:
 745 How long is this your comedy to last?
 Go this night to my chamber, not your own!”
 At which word, I did rush—most true the charge—
 And gain the Archbishop’s house—he stands for God—
 And fall upon my knees and clasp his feet,
 750 Praying him hinder what my estranged soul
 Refused to bear, though patient of the rest:
 “Place me within a convent,” I implored—
 “Let me henceforward lead the virgin life
 You praise in Her you bid me imitate!”

vii 728. *he proffers you!*"] he gives his wife!" (*MS 1st reading*).

vii 731. *and he gave*] for he gave (*MS*).

vii 732–3. *that, I know!*— / *Now*] that, I know / Now (*MS*).

vii 734. Pompilia (according to B.'s own chronology) was born in July 1680 and married in December 1693; she was therefore thirteen and a half years old: see headnote, p. 104.

vii 737–8. *when I woke . . . think of that again*: the 'first' calamity is not, as *Oxford* suggests, Pompilia's 'brutal sexual initiation' by Guido, since that followed her encounter with the Archbishop, but Guido's first attempt to coerce her into having sexual relations with him.

vii 744. *six months almost*] almost a year (*MS 1st reading*).

vii 750. *praying him hinder*] praying him spare me (*MS 1st reading*).

- 755 What did he answer? “Folly of ignorance!
 Know, daughter, circumstances make or mar
 Virginity,—’tis virtue or ’tis vice.
 That which was glory in the Mother of God
 Had been, for instance, damnable in Eve
 760 Created to be mother of mankind.
 Had Eve, in answer to her Maker’s speech
 ‘Be fruitful, multiply, replenish earth’—
 Pouted ‘But I choose rather to remain
 Single’—why, she had spared herself forthwith
 765 Further probation by the apple and snake,
 Been pushed straight out of Paradise! For see—
 If motherhood be qualified impure,
 I catch you making God command Eve sin!
 —A blasphemy so like these Molinists’,
 770 I must suspect you dip into their books.”
 Then he pursued “’Twas in your covenant!”

No! There my husband never used deceit.

He never did by speech nor act imply

“Because of our souls’ yearning that we meet

- 775 And mix in soul through flesh, which yours and mine
 Wear and impress, and make their visible selves,
 —All which means, for the love of you and me,
 Let us become one flesh, being one soul!”
 He only stipulated for the wealth;

vii 760. *mother of mankind*] Mother of Mankind (*MS*).

vii 762. Cp. *Genesis* i 28: ‘God said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth’.

vii 764. *Single’—why, she had spared*] A virgin’—she had spared (*MS 1st reading*).

vii 765. *probation*: ‘trial; examination’ (*J.*).

vii 767. *qualified*: ‘classed as’.

vii 769. The Archbishop’s use of Molinism as a catch-all stigma (see headnote, p. 65) is especially far-fetched.

vii 771. *your covenant!* I.e. your marriage contract, but the Archbishop probably alludes to the biblical use of ‘covenant’ as a contract that has divine sanction.

vii 772–8. Guido himself takes the opposite view of what the marriage bargain entitled him to expect: see v 574–84, 604–6 (pp. 550, 551).

vii 772.] “Pompilia, for the yearning that we meet (*MS 1st reading*).

vii 777. *for the love of you and me*] for the absolute love of you (*MS 1st reading*).

- 780 Honest so far. But when he spoke as plain—
 Dreadfully honest also—“Since our souls
 Stand each from each, a whole world’s width between,
 Give me the fleshy vesture I can reach
 And rend and leave just fit for hell to burn!”—
 Why, in God’s name, for Guido’s soul’s own sake
 785 Imperilled by polluting mine,—I say,
 I did resist; would I had overcome!

- My heart died out at the Archbishop’s smile;
 —It seemed so stale and worn a way o’ the world,
 790 As though ’twere nature frowning—“Here is Spring,
 The sun shines as he shone at Adam’s fall,
 The earth requires that warmth reach everywhere:
 What, must your patch of snow be saved forsooth
 Because you rather fancy snow than flowers?”
 795 Something in this style he began with me.
 Last he said, savagely for a good man,
 “This explains why you call your husband harsh,
 Harsh to you, harsh to whom you love. God’s Bread!
 The poor Count has to manage a mere child

vii 781–2. “*Since our souls . . . between*: B. may have been thinking, by contrast, of the opening lines of EBB.’s *Sonnets from the Portuguese* xxii: ‘When our two souls stand up erect and strong, / Face to face, silent, drawing nigh and nigher’.

vii 783. *the fleshy vesture*] the fleshy vesture (1888; one of the revs. made in 1872 ABL). The opposite rev., from ‘fleshly’ to ‘fleshy’, is made in ‘Last Ride’ 59 (III 288).

vii 790. *nature frowning*] Nature frowning (MS).

vii 791. *at Adam’s fall*] at Adam’s birth (MS 1st reading). The revision darkens the thought Pompilia imagines ‘nature’ expressing, since for the sun to shine as it did on the unfallen world would imply nature’s enduring innocence; the revision implies that nature is indifferent to (or even complicit with) human sin. B. may also have been thinking of Milton’s description of the changes in the natural world consequent on the Fall, beginning with the sun, which God orders ‘so to move, so shine / As might affect the earth with cold and heat / Scarce tolerable, and from the north to call / Decrepid winter, from the south to bring / Solstitial summer’s heat’ (PL x 652–6).

vii 793. *snow*: a traditional image of female chastity and purity; cp. Hamlet to Ophelia: ‘If thou dost marry, I’ll give thee this plague for thy dowry: be thou as chaste as ice, as pure as snow, thou shalt not escape calumny’ (III i 134–6).

vii 795.] added in MS.

vii 798. *God’s Bread!* Not a translation of an Italian, but a Shakespearean oath: cp. *Romeo and Juliet* III v 176, noting the context (Capulet’s anger that Juliet refuses to marry Count Paris).

- 800 Whose parents leave untaught the simplest things
 Their duty was and privilege to teach,—
 Goodwives' instruction, gossips' lore: they laugh
 And leave the Count the task,—or leave it me!"
 Then I resolved to tell a frightful thing.
- 805 "I am not ignorant,—know what I say,
 Declaring this is sought for hate, not love.
 Sir, you may hear things like almighty God.
 I tell you that my housemate, yes—the priest
 My husband's brother, Canon Girolamo—
- 810 Has taught me what depraved and misnamed love
 Means, and what outward signs denote the sin,
 For he solicits me and says he loves,
 The idle young priest with nought else to do.
 My husband sees this, knows this, and lets be.
- 815 Is it your counsel I bear this beside?"
 "—More scandal, and against a priest this time!
 What, 'tis the Canon now?"—less snappishly—
 "Rise up, my child, for such a child you are,
 The rod were too advanced a punishment!
- 820 Let's try the honeyed cake. A parable!
 'Without a parable spake He not to them.'
 There was a ripe round long black toothsome fruit,
 Even a flower-fig, the prime boast of May:
 And, to the tree, said . . . either the spirit o' the fig,

vii 802. *Goodwives' instruction, gossips' lore*: a goodwife is 'The female head of a household' (*OED*); 'gossips' are female friends and neighbours (as at ii 513). The Archbishop suggests that Pompilia's older female relatives and acquaintances should have taught her about sex.

vii 819–20. Cp. the popular maxim 'spare the rod and spoil the child' (from *Proverbs* xiii 24); Pompilia is so naive that punishing her would be excessive.

vii 821. Cp. *Matthew* xiii 34: 'All these things spake Jesus unto the multitude in parables; and without a parable spake he not unto them'.

vii 823. *a flower-fig*: 'fico' is the Italian word for fig-tree and fig; the feminine form would normally be used for the fruit, and is also slang for the female genitalia. The Archbishop's 'parable' is consistent with his general tone of condescension and mockery towards Pompilia for her ignorance and misgivings. The term 'fichi-fiori' (flower figs) occurs in *Story* (p. 292) where it designates the first crop of the fig tree.

- 825 Or, if we bring in men, the gardener,
 Archbishop of the orchard—had I time
 To try o' the two which fits in best: indeed
 It might be the Creator's self, but then
 The tree should bear an apple, I suppose,—
- 830 Well, anyhow, one with authority said
 'Ripe fig, burst skin, regale the fig-pecker—
 The bird whereof thou art a perquisite!'
 'Nay,' with a flounce, replied the restif fig,
 'I much prefer to keep my pulp myself:
- 835 He may go breakfastless and dinnerless,
 Supperless of one crimson seed, for me!
 So, back she flopped into her bunch of leaves.
 He flew off, left her,—did the natural lord,—
 And lo, three hundred thousand bees and wasps
- 840 Found her out, feasted on her to the shuck:
 Such gain the fig's that gave its bird no bite!
 The moral,—fools elude their proper lot,
 Tempt other fools, get ruined all alike.

vii 828–9. The fruit of the Tree of Knowledge in the garden of Eden was traditionally depicted as an apple, though the Bible itself does not specify this.

vii 831. *fig-pecker*: It. 'beccafico', 'a name given in Italy to small migratory birds of the genus *Sylvia* . . . identified with the British Pettychaps and Blackcaps' (*OED*). Mentioned as a dainty in *Pippa* iii 230 (II 86).

vii 832. *The bird*] That bird (*MS*). *perquisite*: in the figurative sense of 'A thing to which a person, etc., has (or claims) the sole right' (*OED* 5).

vii 833. *restif*: 'obstinate; stubborn' (*J.*).

vii 834. *keep my pulp myself*] keep my seeds my own (*MS 1st reading*).

vii 836. *one crimson seed*] one single seed (*MS 1st reading*).

vii 838–40. Cp. the image of the lady in 'Light Woman' as 'a pear hung basking over a wall' which the speaker plucks: 'With no mind to eat it, that's the worst! / Were it thrown in the road, would the case assist? / 'Twas quenching a dozen blue-flies' thirst / When I gave its stalk a twist' (ll. 34, 37–40, III 610–11).

vii 840. *shuck*: *OED* describes this word as 'Chiefly dialect and U.S.', and gives its normal meaning as 'A husk, pod, or shell'. B.'s usage here is the only one listed under sense 1(b)—'A fruit skin'—and he might have derived it from one of Frederick Goddard Tuckerman's sonnets, 'No shame dissuades his thought', which ends: 'Flung to the offal-heap with shard and shuck!' (*Poems* [Boston, 1864] 203). Tuckerman was the brother of Sophia Eckley, a friend of the Brownings from whom they became estranged towards the end of EBB.'s life; see headnote to 'Worst of It' (IV 121–3).

Therefore go home, embrace your husband quick!
 845 Which if his Canon brother chance to see,
 He will the sooner back to book again.”

So, home I did go; so, the worst befell:
 So, I had proof the Archbishop was just man,
 And hardly that, and certainly no more.
 850 For, miserable consequence to me,
 My husband's hatred waxed nor waned at all,
 His brother's boldness grew effrontery soon,
 And my last stay and comfort in myself
 Was forced from me: henceforth I looked to God
 855 Only, nor cared my desecrated soul
 Should have fair walls, gay windows for the world.
 God's glimmer, that came through the ruin-top,
 Was witness why all lights were quenched inside:
 Henceforth I asked God counsel, not mankind.

860 So, when I made the effort, saved myself,
 They said—“No care to save appearance here!
 “How cynic,—when, how wanton, were enough!”
 —Adding, it all came of my mother's life—
 My own real mother, whom I never knew,
 865 Who did wrong (if she needs must have done wrong)
 Through being all her life, not my four years,

vii 844–6.] Therefore go home and kiss your husband's hand

The better if his brother chance to see

Who sooner will back to breviary again.” (*MS 1st reading*).

vii 853–4. *I looked to God / Only, nor cared my*] I cared for God / Only, not for the (*MS 1st reading*).

vii 858.] Was witness wherefore all was black inside. (*MS 1st reading*).

vii 860. *saved myself*] freed myself (1888; one of the revs. made in 1872 *ABL*).

vii 861. *They said*] Then said (*MS*); this does not make sense, since Pompilia cannot be the speaker of the lines that follow; possibly a slip of the pen for “These” (cp. the *MS* reading in l. 1836).

vii 862. *cynic*: ‘having the qualities of a dog; currish; brutal; snarling; satirical’ (*J*).

vii 863–73. On the notion that Pompilia has inherited her ‘wanton’ nature from her prostitute mother, see v 77–93n. (p. 523).

vii 866. *not my four years*: i.e. the four years of her marriage to Guido.

At mercy of the hateful,—every beast
 O' the field was wont to break that fountain-fence,
 Trample the silver into mud so murk
 870 Heaven could not find itself reflected there,—
 Now they cry "Out on her, who, plashy pool,
 Bequeathed turbidity and bitterness
 To the daughter-stream where Guido dipt and drank!"

Well, since she had to bear this brand—let me!
 875 The rather do I understand her now,—
 From my experience of what hate calls love,—
 Much love might be in what their love called hate.
 If she sold . . what they call, sold . . me her child—
 I shall believe she hoped in her poor heart
 880 That I at least might try be good and pure,
 Begin to live untempted, not go doomed
 And done with ere once found in fault, as she.
 Oh and, my mother, it all came to this?
 Why should I trust those that speak ill of you,
 885 When I mistrust who speaks even well of them?
 Why, since all bound to do me good, did harm,
 May not you, seeming as you harmed me most,
 Have meant to do most good—and feed your child
 From bramble-bush, whom not one orchard-tree

vii 869. *murk*: this adjectival use is described by *OED* as 'Now chiefly *British regional* and *poetic*'.

vii 871–2. *who, plashy pool, / Bequeathed turbidity*] the plashy pool / That lends turbidity (*MS 1st reading*). The revision sharpens the accusation that Pompilia has inherited her mother's corrupt nature, an accusation made several times in the poem by Guido and others (e.g. 'Her mother's birthright-licence', v 90).

vii 871. *plashy*: 'watery; filled with puddles' (*J.*).

vii 872. *turbidity*: cloudiness; Pompilia's mother is compared to a fountain which has been broken into and trampled by wild animals, defiling its waters.

vii 874. *to bear this brand—let me!*] to bear this, why not I? (*MS 1st reading*). The revision allows Pompilia to echo (unconsciously) Guido's image of her being stigmatised by her birth (v 884–6, p. 566).

vii 876–7. Cp. Caponsacchi on the perverse embrace he imagines between Guido and Judas (vi 1938–40n., p. 719).

vii 877.] added in *MS*.

vii 879.] added in *MS*.

- 890 But drew-back bough from, nor let one fruit fall?
 This it was for you sacrificed your babe?
 Gained just this, giving your heart's hope away
 As I might give mine, loving it as you,
 If . . . but that never could be asked of me!
- 895 There, enough! I have my support again,
 Again the knowledge that my babe was, is,
 Will be mine only. Him, by death, I give
 Outright to God, without a further care,—
 But not to any parent in the world,—
- 900 So to be safe: why is it we repine?
 What guardianship were safer could we choose?
 All human plans and projects come to nought,
 My life, and what I know of other lives,
 Prove that: no plan nor project! God shall care!
- 905 And now you are not tired? How patient then
 All of you,—Oh yes, patient this long while
 Listening, and understanding, I am sure!
 Four days ago, when I was sound and well
 And like to live, no one would understand.
- 910 People were kind, but smiled “And what of him,
 Your friend, whose tonsure, the rich dark-brown hides?
 There, there!—your lover, do we dream he was?
 A priest too—never were such naughtiness!
 Still, he thinks many a long think, never fear,

vii 890. *drew-back bough*] drew bough back (1888).

vii 891. *sacrificed your babe?*] sacrificed your babe, (MS); sacrificed even me, (MS 1st reading).

vii 897–904. *Him, by death, I give . . . God shall care!* Contrast Other Half-Rome's statement that Pompilia, on her deathbed 'Care[s] for the boy's concerns', borne out by the fact that she made her will in his favour and appointed a guardian: see iii 30–1n. (p. 329).

vii 909. *like to live*: 'likely to live'.

vii 911. Cp. Half-Rome's reference to Caponsacchi's 'curls that clustered to the tonsure quite' (ii 787), similarly implying that he is not devoted to priestly celibacy. On the 'tonsure' see i 331n. (p. 175).

vii 913. *naughtiness!* Cp. iii 1456n. (p. 406).

- 915 After the shy pale lady,—lay so light
 For a moment in his arms, the lucky one!
 And so on: wherefore should I blame you much?
 So we are made, such difference in minds,
 Such difference too in eyes that see the minds!
- 920 That man, you misinterpret and misprise—
 The glory of his nature, I had thought,
 Shot itself out in white light, blazed the truth
 Through every atom of his act with me:
 Yet where I point you, through the chrystal shrine,
- 925 Purity in quintessence, one dew-drop,
 You all descry a spider in the midst.
 One says, “The head of it is plain to see,”
 And one, “They are the feet by which I judge,”
 All say, “Those films were spun by nothing else.”
- 930 Then, I must lay my babe away with God,
 Nor think of him again, for gratitude.
 Yes, my last breath shall wholly spend itself
 In one attempt more to disperse the stain,
 The mist from other breath fond mouths have made,
- 935 About a lustrous and pellucid soul:
 So that, when I am gone but sorrow stays,

vii 915. *lay so light*: ‘who lay so light’; referring to Caponsacchi carrying her into the inn at Castelnuovo (vi 1410–14, p. 692).

vii 918. *So we*] So men (*MS*).

vii 920. *misinterpret*] used to jest with (*MS*).

vii 921. *The glory*] The essence (*MS 1st reading*); we differ from *Oxford’s* conjecture of ‘glance’.

vii 924. *chrystal*] crystal (*1st Am. 1888*; one of the revs. made in 1872 *ABL*, and also *Yale sheets*); for this spelling see iv 865n. (p. 470). Perhaps alluding to an obsolete sense of ‘crystal’ as ‘a reliquary or other container made of [a transparent mineral substance]’ (*OED 2 [b]*); the shrine contains the ‘dew-drop’ of Caponsacchi’s ‘Purity in quintessence’, according to Pompilia, but others see ‘a spider in the midst’. Cp. the lines added to ‘Gold Hair’ in the 2nd edn. of *Dramatis Personae*, in which the purity of a ‘stainless soul’ is questioned: ‘Had a spider found out the communion-cup, / Was a toad in the christening-font?’ (ll. 100[^]101n., IV 99).

vii 926. *You all descry*] You all would find (*MS*).

vii 927. “*The head of it*” “Admit, the head (*MS 1st reading*).

vii 934.] The mist from foul breath foolish mouths have made, (*MS 1st reading*).
fond: ‘foolish; silly; indiscreet; imprudent; injudicious’ (*J.*).

- Voices one buzz. I looked but to the stage,
 Whereon two lovers sang and interchanged
 960 "True life is only love, love only bliss:
 I love thee—thee I love!" then they embraced.
 I looked thence to the ceiling and the walls,—
 Over the crowd, those voices and those eyes,—
 My thoughts went through the roof and out, to Rome
 965 On wings of music, waft of measured words,—
 Set me down there, a happy child again,
 Sure that to-morrow would be festa-day,
 Hearing my parents praise past festas more,
 And seeing they were old if I was young,
 970 Yet wondering why they still would end discourse
 With "We must soon go, you abide your time,
 And,—might we haply see the proper friend
 Throw his arm over you and make you safe!"

- Sudden I saw him; into my lap there fell
 975 A foolish twist of comfits, broke my dream
 And brought me from the air and laid me low,
 As ruined as the soaring bee that's reached
 (So Pietro told me at the Villa once)
 By the dust-handful. There the comfits lay:
 980 I looked to see who flung them, and I faced
 This Caponsacchi, looking up in turn.
 Ere I could reason out why, I felt sure,
 Whoever flung them, his was not the hand,—
 Up rose the round face and good-natured grin

vii 960. *love only bliss:*] and love is bliss. (*MS 1st reading*).

vii 963.] added in *MS*.

vii 964. *and out, to Rome*] and soared to Rome (*MS 1st reading*); and out, reached Rome (*MS 2nd reading*).

vii 965. *music, waft of*] music and of (*MS 1st reading*).

vii 966. *there, a happy child again,*] there again, a happy child, (*MS*).

vii 972. *the proper friend*] the proper man (*MS 1st reading*).

vii 977–9. *As ruined . . . the dust-handful:* Cook (p. 152) compares Virgil, *Georgics* iv 86–7: 'hi motus animorum atque haec certamina tanta / pulveris exigui iactu compressa quiescent' [These storms of passion, these savage conflicts, by the tossing of a little dust will be quelled and laid to rest]. B. gets round the implausibility of having Pompilia quote Virgil by attributing the expression to Pietro.

- 985 Of him who, in effect, had played the prank,
 From covert close beside the earnest face,—
 Fat waggish Conti, friend of all the world.
 He was my husband's cousin, privileged
 To throw the thing: the other, silent, grave,
 990 Solemn almost, saw me, as I saw him.

- There is a psalm Don Celestine recites,
 "Had I a dove's wings, how I fain would flee!"
 The psalm runs not "I hope, I pray for wings,"—
 Not "If wings fall from heaven, I fix them fast,"—
 995 Simply "How good it were to fly and rest,
 Have hope now, and one day expect content!
 How well to do what I shall never do!"
 So I said "Had there been a man like that,
 To lift me with his strength out of all strife
 1000 Into the calm, how I could fly and rest!
 I have a keeper in the garden here
 Whose sole employment is to strike me low
 If ever I, for solace, seek the sun.
 Life means with me successful feigning death,
 1005 Lying stone-like, eluding notice so,
 Forgoing here the turf and there the sky.
 Suppose that man had been instead of this!"

vii 985. *Of him who*] Of one who (1872–88); the first verbal revision in this book in 1872.

vii 992. Cp. *Psalms* lv 6: 'Oh that I had wings like a dove! for then would I fly away'.

vii 994. *fix them fast,*—"] fix them here,"— (*MS*; 'fast' was the original reading).

vii 996.] added in *MS*.

vii 998–1000. Cp. *EBB.*'s *Sonnets from the Portuguese* xxvii 1–6:

My own Belovèd, who hast lifted me
 From this drear flat of earth where I was thrown,
 And, in betwixt the languid ringlets, blown
 A life-breath, till the forehead hopefully
 Shines out again, as all the angels see,
 Before thy saving kiss!

vii 1000. *could fly*] would fly (*MS*).

vii 1003.] If I look up for solace in sun or star. (*MS 1st reading*); *Oxford* reads 'to' for 'in'.

vii 1007. *that . . . this!*"] this . . . that!" (*MS*).

- Presently Conti laughed into my ear,
 —Had tripped up to the raised place where I sat—
 1010 “Cousin, I flung them brutishly and hard!
 Because you must be hurt, to look austere
 As Caponsacchi yonder, my tall friend
 A-gazing now. Ah, Guido, you so close?
 Keep on your knees, do! Beg her to forgive!
 1015 My cornet battered like a cannon-ball.
 Good bye, I’m gone!”—nor waited the reply.
- That night at supper, out my husband broke,
 “Why was that throwing, that buffoonery?
 Do you think I am your dupe? What man would dare
 1020 Throw comfits in a stranger lady’s lap?
 ’Twas knowledge of you bred such insolence
 In Caponsacchi; he dared shoot the bolt,
 Using that Conti for his stalking-horse.
 How could you see him this once and no more,
 1025 When he is always haunting hereabout
 At the street-corner or the palace-side,
 Publishing my shame and your impudence?
 You are a wanton,—I a dupe, you think?
 O Christ, what hinders that I kill her quick?”
 1030 Whereat he drew his sword and feigned a thrust.

vii 1010. *I flung them*] I hit you (*MS 1st reading*).

vii 1011. *look austere*] look so grave (*MS 1st reading*).

vii 1012.] Grave as the Caponsacchi, yon tall friend (*MS 1st reading*); Grave as the Caponsacchi, yonder friend (*MS 2nd reading*). The phrase ‘the Caponsacchi’, an Italian idiom, appears again in *MS* at l. 1106, where it is again revised.

vii 1013. *you so close?*] you there too? (*MS 1st reading*).

vii 1014–15.] added in *MS*.

vii 1015. *cornet*: ‘a cap of paper, made by retailers for small wares’ (*J*); Conti is referring to the ‘twist of comfits’ he flung at Pompilia.

vii 1016. *nor waited the reply*] he left the theatre (*MS 1st reading*).

vii 1022. *shoot the bolt*] play the fool (*MS 1st reading*).

vii 1023. *Using that Conti*] That creature Conti (*MS 1st reading*).

vii 1024–7. In her deposition Pompilia claims that she spoke to Caponsacchi ‘one day as he was passing our house’ and ‘begged him not to pass that way’, but that he did not desist (Appendix C, p. 1368).

vii 1029. This threat by Guido is reported in Pompilia’s deposition, though with a pistol rather than a sword (Appendix C, p. 1368).

vii 1030.] added in *MS*.

All this, now,—being not so strange to me,
 Used to such misconception day by day
 And broken-in to bear,—I bore, this time,
 More quietly than woman should perhaps;
 1035 Repeated the mere truth and held my tongue.

Then he said, “Since you play the ignorant,
 I shall instruct you. This amour,—commenced
 Or finished or midway in act, all’s one,—
 ’Tis the town-talk; so my revenge shall be.
 1040 Does he presume because he is a priest?
 I warn him that the sword I wear shall pink
 His lily-scented cassock through and through,
 Next time I catch him underneath your eaves!”

But he had threatened with the sword so oft
 1045 And, after all, not kept his promise. All
 I said was, “Let God save the innocent!
 Moreover, death is far from a bad fate.
 I shall go pray for you and me, not him;
 And then I look to sleep, come death or, worse,
 1050 Life.” So, I slept.

There may have elapsed a week,
 When Margherita,—called my waiting-maid,
 Whom it is said my husband found too fair—
 Who stood and heard the charge and the reply,

vii 1034. *than woman should*] than a wife should (*MS 1st reading*).

vii 1040–3. Pompilia does not report a threat to Caponsacchi in her deposition, but Caponsacchi himself states that the servant, Maria Margherita Contenti, ‘told me that Guido said he was going to kill his wife . . . and that he would also be avenged on me’ (Appendix C, p. 1375).

vii 1040.] added in *MS*.

vii 1041. *pink*: ‘to pierce in small holes’ (*J.*).

vii 1049–50. *come death or, worse, / Life.*] *come death or worse. / So I did.* (*MS 1st reading*); the lack of closing quotation marks after ‘worse.’ suggests that this was a running revision.

vii 1052–3. *Margherita*: see iii 1097–1109n. (p. 388), vi 553–4n. (p. 652).

vii 1054.] added in *MS*.

- 1055 Who never once would let the matter rest
 From that night forward, but rang changes still
 On this the thrust and that the shame, and how
 Good cause for jealousy cures jealous fools,
 And what a paragon was this same priest
- 1060 She talked about until I stopped my ears,—
 She said, “A week is gone; you comb your hair,
 Then go mope in a corner, cheek on palm,
 Till night comes round again,—so, waste a week
 As if your husband menaced you in sport.
- 1065 Have not I some acquaintance with his tricks?
 Oh no, he did not stab the serving-man
 Who made and sang the rhymes about me once!
 For why? They sent him to the wars next day.
 Nor poisoned he the foreigner, my friend,

vii 1056. *but rang changes*] rang the changes (*MS*).

vii 1057. *the shame*] the charge (*MS 1st reading*), i.e. the charge of infidelity; the ‘shame’ refers to something more general (‘your husband’s shameful treatment of you’ or ‘the shame your husband is bringing on you by his conduct’).

vii 1058. Proverbial; since Guido unjustly suspects Pompilia, it will serve him right if she takes revenge by making his unfounded suspicion come true. *Good cause*] A cause (*MS*).

vii 1059. *this same priest*] this poor priest (*MS 1st reading*); this young priest (*MS 2nd reading*).

vii 1065–77. Margherita pretends that Guido has been jealous of her and has only refrained from violence against her other admirers because his ‘revenge’ was pre-empted: in the case of the ‘serving-man’ by his being ‘sent . . . to the wars’ (where he would in all likelihood be killed), and in the case of the ‘foreigner’ by his being tricked into marrying a woman with ‘a skin as black as ink’ (a ‘Better revenge’ than killing him). These stories are meant (by B.) to seem implausible; they actually reveal Guido’s bluster and cowardice. The references to the ‘whiteness of [Margherita’s] breast’ and the ‘swarth skins of our city’ are not (overtly) racial epithets, but spring from the traditional view that the women of southern Europe had darker complexions than their northern European counterparts; in this context the phrase ‘a skin as black as ink’ is not to be taken literally, but as hyperbole. In one of the alleged love letters, Pompilia hits out at a rival for Caponsacchi’s affections:

She is bursting because she can not say, as you tell me here, that she is white as milk, and that you are darker than I. If I had been you, I might have called you ivory, as I do call you.

(OYB 81–2)

- 1070 Who wagered on the whiteness of my breast,—
 The swarth skins of our city in dispute:
 For, though he paid me proper compliment,
 The Count well knew he was besotted with
 Somebody else, a skin as black as ink,
 1075 (As all the town knew save my foreigner)
 He found and wedded presently,—‘Why need
 Better revenge?’—the Count asked. But what’s here?
 A priest, that does not fight, and cannot wed,
 Yet must be dealt with! If the Count took fire
 1080 For the poor pastime of a minute,—me—
 What were the conflagration for yourself,
 Countess and lady-wife and all the rest?
 The priest will perish; you will grieve too late:
 So shall the city-ladies’ handsomest,
 1085 Frankest and liberalest gentleman
 Die for you, to appease a scurvy dog
 Hanging’s too good for. Is there no escape?
 Were it not simple Christian charity
 To warn the priest be on his guard,—save him
 1090 Assured death, save yourself from causing it?
 I meet him in the street. Give me a glove,
 A ring to show for token! Mum’s the word!”

- I answered, “If you were, as styled, my maid,
 I would command you: as you are, you say,
 1095 My husband’s intimate,—assist his wife
 Who can do nothing but entreat ‘Be still!’

On the other hand, the racial connotations of such language are hard to avoid; cp. Caponsacchi’s slur on Guido as a ‘Moor’ (vi 2035–6n., p. 724).

vii 1071–5. The black skins of the city in dispute,— / For he was then besotted with the fool (*MS 1st reading*).

vii 1074. *a skin*] a soul (*MS*).

vii 1075.] not *MS*.

vii 1081. *for yourself*] for yourself? (*MS 1st reading*); the revision is consequent on the addition of the next line.

vii 1082.] added in *MS*.

vii 1083. *The priest*] The Priest (*MS*).

vii 1086. *scurvy*: in the figurative sense, ‘vile; bad; sorry; worthless; contemptible; offensive’ (*J.*); frequent in Shakespeare, e.g. ‘scurvy, lousy knave’ (*Henry V V i 18*).

- Even if you speak truth and a crime is planned,
 Leave help to God as I am forced to do!
 There is no other course, or we should craze,
 1100 Seeing such evil with no human cure.
 Reflect that God, who makes the storm desist,
 Can make an angry violent heart subside.
 Why should we venture teach Him governance?
 Never address me on this subject more!”
- 1105 Next night she said, “But I went, all the same,
 —Ay, saw your Caponsacchi in his house,
 And come back stuffed with news I must outpour.
 I told him, ‘Sir, my mistress is a stone:
 Why should you harm her for no good you get?
 1110 For you do harm her—prowl about our place
 With the Count never distant half the street,
 Lurking at every corner, would you look!
 ’Tis certain she has witched you with a spell.
 Are there not other beauties at your beck?
 1115 We all know, Donna This and Monna That
 Die for a glance of yours, yet here you gaze!
 Go make them grateful, leave the stone its cold!’
 And he—oh, he turned first white and then red,
 And then—‘To her behest I bow myself,
 1120 Whom I love with my body and my soul:

vii 1099. *no other course*] no other cause (1872); no other help (1888; one of the revs. made in 1872 *ABL*). ‘Cause’ is puzzling, and may be a mispr.; if not, this a rare example of a further revision in 1888 of a word already revised in 1872. *craze*: ‘To become crazy, go mad’ (*OED* 6b); *OED* cites B.’s *Paracelsus* i 566 (I 138).

vii 1101. *who makes the storm desist*] who makes the sun arise (*MS 1st reading*). Cp. *Luke* viii 23–5, where Jesus calms ‘a storm of wind’ on the Lake of Galilee, and the disciples ‘wondered, saying one to another, What manner of man is this! for he commandeth even the winds and water, and they obey him’.

vii 1106. *saw your Caponsacchi*] saw the Caponsacchi (*MS 1st reading*); see l. 1012n.
 vii 1112.] Margherita’s speech originally finished here in *MS*; B. erased the closing quotation marks when he decided to extend it to the following lines.

vii 1113.] ’Tis certain you have witched him with a spell. (*MS 1st reading*).

vii 1114. *beck*: ‘a nod of command’ (*J*).

vii 1118.] added in *MS*; the following line originally began ‘And he’.

vii 1120.] added in *MS*.

Only, a word i' the bowing! See, I write
 One little word, no harm to see or hear!
 Then, fear no further!' This is what he wrote.
 I know you cannot read,—therefore, let me!
 1125 'My idol!' . . .

But I took it from her hand
 And tore it into shreds. "Why join the rest
 Who harm me? Have I ever done you wrong?
 People have told me 'tis you wrong myself:
 1130 Let it suffice I either feel no wrong
 Or else forgive it,—yet you turn my foe!
 The others hunt me and you throw a noose!"

She muttered, "Have your wilful way!" I slept.

Whereupon . . . no, I leave my husband out!
 1135 It is not to do him more hurt, I speak.
 Let it suffice, when misery was most,
 One day, I swooned and got a respite so.
 She stooped as I was slowly coming to,
 This Margherita, ever on my trace,
 1140 And whispered—"Caponsacchi!"

If I drowned,
 But woke afloat i' the wave with upturned eyes,
 And found their first sight was a star! I turned—
 For the first time, I let her have her will,

vii 1125.] emended in agreement with *MS* and 1888; 1868–9 and 1872 have a four-point ellipsis, in contrast to viii 474 where the four-point ellipsis is in *MS*; see also xi 1447n. (p. 1233). 'My idol!' One of the (supposed) love letters begins 'My Beloved Idol' [*Amato Idolo mio*], but it is Pompilia addressing Caponsacchi (*OYB* 81).

vii 1127. *Why join the rest*] Why, join the rest (1872–88). *Oxford* retains the comma, though it looks like a mispr.; Pompilia is asking a question, not making an exclamation.

vii 1131. *yet you turn my foe!*] here are you, the same, (*MS 1st reading*).

vii 1135.] added in *MS*, with 'harm' for 'hurt' in the original reading.

vii 1137. *a respite so.*] a respite thus. (*MS*).

vii 1139.] added in *MS*.