

Aurora, the Morning-Star: Shedding a New Light on 19th Century Christology

Elizabeth Barrett Browning's poetic novel *Aurora Leigh* as a model for a poetic Christology

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SUMMARY

This essay explores the inter-disciplinarity of poetry and theology through a 'novel poem' written by the Victorian poet Elizabeth Barrett Browning (1806-1861 henceforth, EBB), *Aurora Leigh*. Specific focus of attention is the Christological dimension inherent: the

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inter-connectedness between the figure of Jesus Christ and the (female) poet, the Logos as the (poetic) word incarnate, and moreover, the relationship between the arts and social reform in general. Hence, unfolding and analysing EBB's carefully constructed female Christology makes the unaware reader stand back in amazement at the riches to be tasted.

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ZUSAMMENFASSUNG

Dieser Aufsatz setzt sich zur Aufgabe das interdisziplinäre Verhältnis von Poesie und Theologie anhand des 'Romangedichtes', *Aurora Leigh*, der Viktorianischen Dichterin Elizabeth Barrett Browning (1806-1861; von nun an mit EBB abgekürzt) zu erforschen. Im Besonderen wird die christologische Dimension des Gedichtes beleuchtet werden, d.h.

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das In-Sich-Verwoben-Sein der Christus-Figur und der Gestalt der Dichterin, der Logos als das (poetische) inkarnierte Wort, darüberhinaus im Allgemeinen, die Beziehung zwischen den Künsten und der Sozialreform. Folglich, versetzt das Offenlegen und Analysieren von EBB's sorgfältig konstruierter weiblicher Christologie den unerwarteten Leser in Erstaunen, ob der Schätze, die gekostet werden können.

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RÉSUMÉ

Elizabeth Barrett Browning (1801-1861), qui vécut à l'époque victorienne, a écrit un roman poétique qui s'intitule *Aurora Leigh*. Le présent article considère le caractère interdisciplinaire de ce texte poético-théologique, en s'intéressant plus particulièrement à sa perspective christologique. Il discerne en effet des liens

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entre le personnage de Jésus-Christ et la poétesse, et avec le Logos comme la parole (poétique) incarnée. Il s'intéresse aussi aux liens entre les arts et les réformes sociales en général. Cette analyse du poème et de sa christologie féminine soigneusement construite conduit le lecteur qui n'était pas conscient de cette perspective à l'admiration devant les richesses qu'il contient.

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EBB states her purpose in writing *Aurora Leigh* in a letter to her husband Robert Browning:

['. . .] But my chief *intention* just now is the

writing of a sort of novel poem [. . .] running in the midst of our conventions, and rushing into drawing-rooms and the like, 'where angels fear to tread;' and so meeting face to face the

Humanity of the age, and speaking the truth as I conceive of it out plainly. [. . .].¹

EBB starts laying the foundation for this new 'novel-poem' around 1852. 'The bare events of the story might be related in half a dozen of sentences', observe Charlotte Porter and Helen A. Clarke.² The events themselves are not what is unusual about this piece of work, they simply portray mid-century Victorian England. Rather through Aurora, EBB expresses her critique of her own Victorian society and her proposal that the arts be used to improve social conditions.

In a letter to her friend Anna Jameson, EBB describes *Aurora Leigh* as a 'poetic art-novel', mediating between herself as poet and herself as a human being, between the author EBB and the character of Aurora. Thus, *Aurora Leigh* should be understood, as Marjorie Stone phrases it, as a 'portrait of the artist embedded within one of the Victorian period's most notable works of sage discourse: [. . .] a work offering nothing less than a revelation'.³ A revelation of *what* is the focus of this discussion.

Before moving to a more detailed analysis, a short summary of *Aurora Leigh* itself shall be given. Unfortunately only a mere skeleton of the narrative can be offered, just so much as to serve the argument of this essay.

The story revolves around the central character Aurora Leigh, beginning with her 'lonely childhood of intense spiritual ardour and with a highly organized artistic temperament, loving beauty both for its own sake and for its part in life as a means of spiritual aspiration'.⁴ From the very first, Aurora is alive to God and meeting God through art. Unusually for her era, she thinks and decides for herself, insisting upon a woman's right to her own individual growth. Thus, she is very antagonistic to the spirit of her age: Aurora is described as a human being born with a free soul and this enables her to have this attitude. She views her freedom as a gift from God that orients her toward God in her art and life.

The other central character is Romney, noble and full of good intentions – he is the modern representative of a social reformer. However, like most Victorian men, even those with liberal ideals, he does not apply them to gender relations. His bias is so strong that he can only think of woman as an appendage to man. He is incapable (at first) of seeing woman as a human creature like himself, and not simply a domesticated animal. For him,

women lack the power to generalise, art is not a women's sphere and his hypothetical wife will have to submit immediately to his superior judgement.

Although at this stage Aurora has no intention of marrying Romney, she is injured by these limiting depictions of female ability. (And probably that is why she does not want to marry him!) Through the attitudes of Aurora and Romney, the reader is confronted with a conflict between two souls: the masculine, damaging, self-centred Romney versus the awakening feminine, creative, self-awareness of Aurora. This conflict is illustrated in the contrast between Romney's concentration upon the basic material aspects of life and Aurora's value of spiritual and artistic cultivation for a happy physical condition. Aurora, in order to retain her integrity as a woman and as an artist, cannot love and marry this Romney. He will not allow her to be true to herself or to her calling as a poet.

However, as the years pass, Aurora's feelings for Romney grow more and more tender, until she realises that she loves him more than any other man. For a while, she does not dare to confess this truth to him, for he is not yet ready to receive her love. Romney undergoes several tragedies before he is proven worthy of his beloved. He is forced to apply his liberal ideals to his understanding of women, their abilities and roles in society. Finally, he is able to affirm her as an artist even as a married woman.

Aurora Leigh can be, and in my view has to be, read as a story that inextricably links transformation, transfiguration and resurrection. Aurora, and Romney are transfigured from an earthly to a super-terrestrial until they embody a meeting of the human and Divine, as Christ did in the narratives of His transfiguration and resurrection. Interestingly enough, these changes are always rooted firmly in the everyday of this world. Thus, *Aurora Leigh* depicts an anticipation and at the same time a guarantee of the eschatological reality described in the book of Revelation.

Some naïve statements circulate in Victorianist circles about the incompatibility of the theological and the feminist dimensions of the work of EBB: they seem almost categorically to ignore EBB's portrayal of the resurrected Christ in the second half of this poem and the implications following from this. Thus, eminent feminist literary scholars, such as Cora Kaplan and Deirdre David prevent a true evaluation of the construction of a female Christology in *Aurora Leigh*. Kaplan criticises EBB on the grounds that she '[. . .] has no answer

to the misery of the poor except her own brand of Christian love – and poetry [. . .].⁵ Like Cora Kaplan Deidre David ignores EBB's intentional embodiment of the vision at the end of Revelation, arguing that 'Elizabeth Barrett Browning's comments about women and her rhapsodic closing of *Aurora Leigh* must 'dislodge much of the feminist meaning recently read into her career'.⁶ Such remarks only prove that neither Kaplan nor David have grasped the extraordinary rich and complex biblical allusions inherent in the figure of Aurora herself. Nor have they understood EBB's desire to cultivate the spiritual and artistic nature as means of addressing the material and social aspects of life. *Aurora Leigh* does not offer a disembodied poetry and theology but a poetic theology or a theological poetics planted firmly in human existence. EBB certainly does not deserve such dismissals of her theology as being merely traditional. Her theology is progressive in its redaction of biblical material – though it can be said that she is traditional in that she *does* refer to scriptural passages.

Kaplan and David are not alone in their blindness to EBB's (radical) portrayal of the Resurrected embodied in women and not only men. At the beginning of the story Romney says to Aurora:

'[. . .] Women as you are,
Mere women, personal and passionate,
You give us doating mothers, and perfect
wives,
Sublime Madonnas, and enduring saints!
We get no Christ from you, – and verily
We shall not get a poet, in my mind' (2, 220-25).⁷

Here Romney voices what is seen as the 'orthodox' (male) theology of his time: women weep and pray, but they are not capable of anything else. Consequently, women are limited in their scope and their creative energies are ignored. However, EBB employs not so subtle irony – we do get Christ from sublime Madonnas! In contrast to Romney's words, EBB presents Aurora, in whom both Christ and poetry dwell. In her they are an indissoluble unity. The female, traditionally seen as incapable of representing or embodying either Christ or the poet, is in Aurora the incarnation of both. EBB leaves the path of conventional 19th century theological discourse and creates a possibility for a re-thinking, a re-defining and a re-creation of the Christ event in the female. 'We get no Christ from you', says Romney – but Aurora 'gets no Christ' from a purely male treatment

of salvation history. Isobel Armstrong refers to *Aurora Leigh* as a 'feminine demystified form of the Christian myth'.⁸ However, with Kaplan and David, Armstrong also ignores the second half of the poem (books six to nine) where the active, creative, revealing and redemptive Christ works ultimately and jubilantly through the female poet Aurora. Her comments describe only the passion and the suffering of Christ in the female Aurora (alluded to in books one to five). Again overlooking the resurrection motif Linda Lewis refers to *Aurora Leigh*, as a 'feminizing of the passion [. . .] giving Christ more feminine qualities'.⁹ All of these critics miss EBB's important linking of Aurora as the active Christ and a female poet reformer (which EBB sets up as early as book two!). Marjorie Stone in her very enlightening and comprehensive discussion of *Aurora Leigh* emphasises the prophetic dimension of Aurora (Aurora as 'prophet-poet' (5, 534)). But even Stone does not recognise how extreme and radical EBB's female Christology is.

In sum, in *Aurora Leigh* the reader can detect EBB's carefully constructed responses to several sources of influence. Firstly, to 18th century Enlightenment philosophy (i.e., 'going beyond/behind the Christ of dogma' to what he represented 'ethically', to paraphrase Jaroslav Pelikan) and 19th century concepts of the figure of Christ,¹⁰ heavily indebted to German Idealist thought and German Romanticism, as well as English Romanticism.¹¹ Secondly, her own poetic and socio-political reading of the book of Revelation, and the role poetry plays in making the Christian story relevant for her contemporary situation. Her Christology suggests several affinities with modern feminist and perhaps liberation theology (if I am allowed to make such a bold claim). EBB's portrayal of Aurora as Christ and Christ-poet illustrates the Church historian Jaroslav Pelikan's discussion of 19th century cultural depictions of Victorian society: 'Christ as the Poet of the Spirit' and 'Christ the Liberator'. In her portrayal of these categories, EBB seems sensitive as well to 20th century feminist concerns about the infinite Logos becoming finite in the incarnation. Through Aurora, EBB enfleshes the Christian resurrection to new life, as the ending, or rather the beginning of her poetic narrative.

At the opening of the poetic-novel we meet a very young, dogmatic and idealistic Aurora who informs the reader that in tackling books of a theological and philosophical nature she is moving

nearer 'the central truth' (1, 800) about God. A more sceptical and older Aurora (who is the retrospective narrator) sighs, at least 'I thought so' (1, 801). When she begins to read poetry, the young Aurora declares that 'her soul sprang up surprised/ Convicted of the great eternities' at 'poetry's divine first finger touch' (1, 850-53). With an idealist's certainty she sees poets as 'the only truth-tellers now left to God/ The only speakers of *essential* truth' (1, 859-61; emphasis mine). Poetry, for her at this moment, is 'passionate for truth/ *Beyond* these senses' (1, 916; emphasis mine). EBB signals that Aurora is now ready for the first acquaintance with the youthful Romney for she is still 'so young, so strong, so sure of God!' (2, 13) – and does not choose to be wise yet.

The encounter with Romney in a confrontational exchange indeed tests Aurora's complacent idealism about God and poetry. On the basis of her gender Romney rejects Aurora's qualifications for writing meaningful and useful poetry. He appeals to the maleness of Christ and the traditional male gender of a poet. He brings together the poet with Christ in a typically Romantic revisionist manner, but forbids any identification between the Christ-poet and the female. Thus, Romney reveals his modernity in his understanding of the poetic, but is backward and limited in his outlook on gender-issues.

As mentioned earlier, in Jaroslav Pelikan's *Jesus Christ through the Centuries, His Place in the History of Culture* we find two motifs of Victorian depictions of Christ. He defines 'Christ as the Poet of Spirit' as a construct of Jesus who identifies subject and object, reconciles humanity and nature, consciousness and unconsciousness.¹² Drawing on Schleiermacher's *Life of Jesus* the 'central content of the biography of Jesus [...] was the 'development' in him of a 'God-consciousness' that was [...] 'perfect' and therefore unique in degree, but on the other hand, not fundamentally different in kind' from the God-consciousness of others.¹³ Hence, Jesus is for Schleiermacher (this time quoting from *The Christian Faith*) 'the 'archetype [*Urbild*]' of authentic humanity in its relation to and consciousness of God: in Jesus Christ [...] the archetype must have become completely historical [...].'¹⁴ Pelikan points out that 'because such God-consciousness' has been manifested with special force in artists and poets, the aesthetic experience of Jesus can 'supersede the dogmatic, the moral, even the historical'.¹⁵

Ralph Waldo Emerson is another thinker that has engaged in similar topics though his approach is different from the Schleiermacherian. His 'God-consciousness' is awakened by his experience of the natural, rather than a reference to the life of Jesus. The mystery of beauty for him is '[s]tanding on the bare ground – my head bathed by the blithe air and uplifted into infinite space [...] the currents of the Universal Being circulate through me; I am a part [...] of God', he writes in his essay on *Nature*.¹⁶ What Emerson is constructing here is an *analogia Naturae*, as Pelikan phrases it. Something close to what EBB refers to in *Aurora Leigh*, but also for example in her earlier essay *The Book of the Poets* (1842).

To bring this argument to a point, this consciousness of the Divine and the natural seems to inform EBB's presentation of the poet Aurora and her union with Christ.

While discussing 'Christ the Liberator' Pelikan summarises the arguments in 19th and 20th century debates on the 'Historical Jesus'. He writes that these debates retrieved the view of Christ as the 'first century Prophet who had preached the justice of God as it was directed against all oppressors of humanity'.¹⁷ Again, this dimension of Christ seems to inform EBB's portrayal of Aurora and her artistic efforts to liberate women in Christ.

In *Aurora Leigh* EBB winds together these two different strands, the artistic and the political, which Pelikan somehow wants to separate. United with Christ as His representative, the character of Aurora functions artistically and politically. Aurora and her creator EBB understand them to be inseparable: political reform is in need of art, and rules about who can produce art are in need of political reform. That is what Aurora tries to teach Romney.

When Romney emphasises Christ's maleness he denies Aurora's status to Christ, not only does deny he her to have a 'God-consciousness', but also her opportunity to be a 'Poet of the Spirit'. In his eyes, she, as a woman *cannot* write the word or Word. She *cannot* have the artistic ability to liberate the oppressed from injustice through art.

Again as mentioned earlier, two issues in modern feminist debate over Christ's maleness seem to coincide with EBB's portrayal of Aurora as Christ and Christ-poet. I will choose to prominent figures to make my point.

The Feminist theologian Rosemary Radford Ruether suggests that the historical Jesus should

be understood as a particular and paradigmatic revelation of God's Logos. '[W]e need a fuller ability to accept his particularity, without confusing one aspect of that particularity, his maleness, with the essence of Christ as God's Word incarnate'.¹⁸ Romney expresses the confusion Radford Ruether warns against. Despite his discouragement, Aurora learns to express the Logos in her own language and her own form as a female (Christ), Who is the mediator between God's eternal world and our world in time.

Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza asserts that what is theologically important is Jesus' choice to devote Himself to the needy – and not his masculinity. The young Romney focuses on Christ's manhood, rather than acknowledging Christ's solidarity with the poor. Therefore, Romney cannot accept Aurora's poetry as having inherent liberating qualities. He must learn to read Aurora and her work differently and to grow out of his male-centred vision of Christ. Aurora, on the other hand, must learn to embrace who Christ calls her to be.

Throughout *Aurora Leigh*, Aurora attempts to define poetry, the poet and poetry's function. She maintains that the poet mediates '[b]etwixt the seen and unseen', speaking out for 'what lies beyond/ Both speech and imagination' (2, 468-72). That is, the poet – even a female poet – mediates the Divine realm. She says the 'poet's individualism' becomes the political 'universal' because '[i]t takes the soul/ To move a body'; '[i]t takes the ideal, to blow the hair's breadth off/ The dust of the actual'. She exclaims that the French socialist reformer Fourier failed because he was not enough of a poet 'to understand/ That life develops from within' (2, 478-84). Aurora's poet is both Pelikan's 'Christ the Poet of the Spirit', and 'Christ the Liberator' who claims that politics are in need of a (poetic) soul, just as much as a (poetic) soul is in need of politics.

Aurora explains to Romney retrospectively that she (and he) had 'made too small a part for God' (8, 555) in their lives. In her developing theory of poetry, she desires to keep God's part before her. She commissions poets to give human voice 'to the spirit-world/ Outside the limits of our space and time' (5, 123) else we 'miss the thought' and fail to interpret the spirit world. Her worshipful cry to 'my God, my God/ O supreme Artist' (5, 435) places her own artistry in the context of His Logos, and reveals how God, nature and poetry are inseparable categories.¹⁹

Just to mention briefly, Aurora and Romney

both face tragedies. Aurora is confronted with the rape of Marian, a female friend and thus, with the issue of the female body. Aurora deals simultaneously with these challenges of being a woman and a poet, and the relationship between art, life and love. She concludes, therefore, that the spiritual should not be separated from the earthly, or vice versa.²⁰ She deduces from that, that the poet's truth must draw '[t]hrough all things upwards' for '[w]ithout the spiritual, observe, the natural's impossible [. . .] without sensuous, [the] spiritual [is] inappreciable, – no beauty or power'. The artist 'holds firmly by the natural to reach the spiritual beyond it'. Like Fra Lippo Lippi, she exclaims '[e]arth's crammed with heaven, and every common bush afire with God' (7, 760-824). Appropriately, the artist's language is 'God's, not ours, and [we] pass it on/ Like bread at sacrament' (7, 872-75). The poet's word becomes the Logos made flesh, meaning the word becoming reality in the celebration of the sacraments. Nevertheless, despite the import of poetic language, it seems that art itself must 'feel the soul/ Live past it'. She accedes that human language has its limitations and '[l]ove strikes higher' towards the eternal truth.

At this point, Aurora – who is just gaining a glimpse of herself as a woman – is just as overwhelmed as the reader. Questions about 'truth'; the 'natural' and the 'sensuous'; the 'spiritual' and the 'heavenly'; the 'poet's word' and the 'Divine Logos'; 'art' and 'love' have been raised. To weave these various dimensions into a whole we need a mediator – we need the Christ whom Romney could not find in the female Aurora. It is Christ who allows Aurora to regain her faith in her female poet's voice. Since the tri-une God's face is not made fully visible to the human world, He is known in and by the Logos that speaks of Him. Jesus Christ is that Logos incarnate, that which came from the mouth of God and took flesh. God and the Logos are co-eternal and inseparable²¹ – and the Logos is in some sense the primary and fundamental way of relating to God. Because she is united with Christ, the Logos, Aurora, the poet, can be a mediator between the bodily and the spiritual, between time and eternity. Through Christ, the Poet of the Spirit, her word can disclose the mystery of the God behind the veil. Poetry can, to some extent, be an analogy to Christ's incarnation: it can convey the mystery of God's truth to its readers and listeners.

God makes his love incarnate in Christ. Through

Christ, love creates art. Rooted in Christ, love and art have a salvific dimension. Aurora refers directly to the Incarnation: '[a]nd therefore did He come into our flesh/ [...] take the soul,/ And so possess the whole man, body and soul' (8, 545-50). Romney describes the effect Aurora's poetry has on him: '[y]ou have shown me truths,/ [...] truths not yours, indeed,/ But set within my reach by means of you,/ Presented by your voice and verse the way/ To take them clearest' (8, 608-13). The truths Aurora's poetry has revealed to Romney seem to have an inherent redemptive power. Her poetry incarnates or discloses aspects of God's truth for Romney. He proclaims: '[i]t is the hour for souls,/ That bodies, leavened by the will and love,/ Be lightened to redemption' (9, 939-41).

Through the development of Aurora and Romney EBB prepares us for her Victorian embodiment of the Book of Revelation. At the end of *Aurora Leigh*, she envisions her own world transformed by redemption and revelation. Aurora as empowered by Christ the Poet of the Spirit, EBB unites Christ with Aurora, who Romney calls the 'morning star' (9, 908).²² In Rev 22,16 Christ proclaims: 'I am [...] the bright morning star' (NRSV). The identification of Christ with Aurora's name²³ is twofold. She is the morning star of early dawn, of new beginnings and new insights. She is also a transformed allusion to the dropped star in Rev 8, 10.11.²⁴ In the final judgement a great star is burning as a lamp to embitter a third part of the earth's waters. Aurora refers to this passage: '[a] dropped star/ Makes bitter waters' (5, 917-18). However EBB uses this allusion not to signify God's wrath, but the destructive power going out from the woman artist who is a dropped star, who abandons her vocation for the material security of marriage. When Aurora decides to marry Romney, there are no signs that she will belong to the many 'dropped stars', being a slave to her husband's interests. Rather, Romney prophesies that Aurora will be a 'morning-star' (9, 908),²⁵ 'speaking her revelation to the world'.²⁶ This finally corrects his prior words: '[w]e get no Christ from you', for he calls Her his Christ, who has come to reveal Himself and redeem him.

Aurora becomes to Romney the 'Christ-bearer'.²⁷ At the very end of *Aurora Leigh* there is a movement towards the 'understanding [of] true power as identical to love' in the image of Christ.²⁸ God's love, 'the soul of soul, within the soul' (9, 880), that is, love incarnate in Christ, finds its full-

est and most efficacious expression in both incarnational art and the love of wedded souls. Both reveal the Logos within the word. The revelation vision at the close of the narrative depicts the end of the soul-making and soul-saving process of this poem by a female Christ-poet.

Aurora Leigh represents a culmination of EBB's thoughts – and can, therefore, be viewed as her most mature of works. In a letter to Robert Browning, written eleven years before the book is published, she describes 'an intense trust in the truth [...] which the poet struggles to communicate [...] an ineffectual struggle [though], issuing in masterpieces of the world'.²⁹ For her the struggle is already the masterpiece.

The final understanding of Christ in *Aurora Leigh* embodies Christ as Poet and EBB's socio-political theory of a new world in Christ Who comes to redeem, to reveal and to overcome. Schüssler Fiorenza's commentary on Revelation points out that 'Revelation's theological and historical location is in the margins of the Christian canon and of mainline theology' and that liberation theologies 'cherish Revelation's political world of vision for its prophetic indictment of exploitation and oppression as well as its sustaining vision of justice'.³⁰ Schüssler Fiorenza underlines the earthly nature of the New Jerusalem: 'the centre of the theological vision and rhetorical movement of Revelation is the earth'.³¹ It is for this earth, and through the female Christ-poet that EBB envisions her political, social, artistic and inner worlds 'made new'³² in the light of the dawning day.

Notes

- 1 Cf. *The Complete Works of Elizabeth Barrett Browning*, ed. by Charlotte Porter/ Helen A. Clarke, New York: Thomas Crowell & Co., AMS rpt, 1973, vol 4,
- 2 Porter/ Clarke, p. viii.
- 3 Marjorie Stone, *Elizabeth Barrett Browning*, London: Macmillan, 1995, p. 137.
- 4 Porter/ Clarke, vol. 4, p. ix.
- 5 Cora Kaplan (ed.), *Elizabeth Barrett Browning, Aurora Leigh and Other Poems*, London Women's Press, 1978, p. 12.
- 6 Deidre David, *Intellectual Women and Victorian Patriarchy*, London: Macmillan, 1987, p. 142.
- 7 I am indebted to Corinne Davies for this reference which has completely changed my focus on *Aurora Leigh*.
- 8 Isobel Armstrong, *Victorian Poetry: Poetry, Poetics and Politics*, London: Routledge, 1993, p. 369.

- 9 Linda Lewis, *Elizabeth Barrett Browning's Spiritual Progress*, Columbia: University of Missouri Press, pp. 230.234.
- 10 Here I am referring to Pelikan's classification of Christ as 'The Teacher of Common Sense' (18th century), 'The Poet of the Spirit' and 'The Liberator' (both 19th century). Cf. Pelikan, *Jesus Christ through the Centuries. His Place in the History of Culture*, New York: Yale University Press, 1985.
- 11 Victorianists, such as Stone have made me aware of the strong Romantic influences inherent in EBB's poetry.
- 12 Cf. Pelikan, p. 194.
- 13 Ibid., p. 196.
- 14 Ibid., p. 197.
- 15 Ibid., p. 198.
- 16 *The Complete Essays and Other Writings of Ralph Waldo Emerson*, ed. by Brook Atkinson, New York: Modern Library, 1940, pp. 6.9.
- 17 Pelikan., p. 209.
- 18 Rosemary Radford Ruether, *Introducing Redemption in Christian Feminism*, Sheffield Academic Press, 1998, p. 147.
- 19 Cf., EBB's essay *The Book of the Poets*, in: Porter/Clarke, vol. 6, pp. 294f.
- 20 Cf. Aurora's poetics in book one of *Aurora Leigh*.
- 21 Cf. Prologue to St John's Gospel.
- 22 Victorianists generally refer to one primary inter-text from Rev 21 about the twelve gates of the New Jerusalem (9, 955-64). However, there are many more numerous echoes of images, or images directly derived from the book of Revelation in the last 60 lines of the poem. There are eleven such images or echoes: they appear 79 times in Revelation. Among them are sun, key, stand, door, clarification, breath, walls, clouds new, noon, and of course morning star.
- 23 Aurora is the vigilant Goddess of Dawn who opens the purple gate of the East. Cf. , Ovid, *Metamorphoses* I, 112f.
- 24 'The third angel blew his trumpet, and a great star fell from heaven, blazing like a torch, and it fell on the thirds of the rivers and on the springs of water. The name of the star is Wormwood. A third of the waters became wormwood, and many died from the water, because it was made bitter'(NRSV). (Emphasis mine)
- 25 Romney: '[. . .] My morning-star, my morning, – rise and shine,/ And touch my hills with radiance not their own./ Shine for us two, Aurora [. . .]' (9, 908-10).
- 26 Stone, p. 136.
- 27 Compare this with the David – Saul relationship in Robert Browning's *Saul*.
- 28 Elizabeth Biemann, *Ongoing Testament in Browning's 'Saul'*, in: University of Toronto Quarterly, 43.2 (Winter 1974), p. 166.
- 29 Philip Kelley/ Scott Lewis (eds.), *The Browning Correspondence*, vol. 10, Winfield: Wedgstone Press, 1992, p. 264.
- 30 Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, *Revelation: Vision of a Just World*, Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1998, pp. 6f.
- 31 Ibid, p. 109. Cf. Rev. 21, 4: '[s]ee, the home of God is among mortals. He will dwell with them; they will be his peoples, and God himself will be with them' (NRSV).
- 32 Cf. Rev 21, 5: '[. . .] [s]ee, I am making all things new' (NRSV).

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