Elizabeth Barrett Browning
1806-1861
Family Life

- mother: Mary Moulton Barrett
- father: Edward Moulton-Barrett
- eldest of 12 children
- very wealthy family when young; family plantation in Jamaica
- EBB raised in & adores countryside ("Hope End" in Hertfordshire)
- moves w/ family to London in 1835 (50 Wimple Street)

oil painting after a photography by Field Talfourd, engraved by G. Cook (1859)
Tragedy and Trials

• 1821: serious respiratory illness at age 14; opium dependence begins
• 1828: mother dies
• 1835: becomes recluse in London
• 1838: chronic lung disease; morphine use
• 1840: two brothers die: Sam (Feb., Jamaica), Edward/“Bro” (July, boat)
• 1846: father disowns her when marries, refusing to see her upon return trips

EBB as photographed by Macaire Havre (1859), engraving by T. O. Barlow
A New Life

• 1845: correspondence w/ RB; first meeting
• 1845: EBB begins writing *Sonnets from the Portuguese* (1850)
• 1846: EBB & RB marry secretly in London; travel through Europe; settle in Florence, Italy; EBB’s health improves
• 1849: stops use of opium & morphine for a time; Robert Barrett-Browning (“Pen” or “Penini” is born)
• 1861: EBB’s death

EBB and son “Pen” (1860)
EBB’s oeuvre

- 1818; 1820: 4-bk *Battle of Marathon*
- 1826: *An Essay on Mind, w/ Other Poems* (published anonymously)
- 1833: translation of Aeschylus’s Greek *Prometheus Bound* (pb. anon.)
- 1838: *The Seraphim and Other Poems* (pb. under own name)
- 1843: “The Cry of the Children”
- 1850: 2-vol. *Poems* (incl. SFTP); poet laureateship possible
- 1851: *Casa Guidi Windows*
- 1857: *Aurora Leigh*
- 1860: *Poems Before Congress*
- 1862: *Last Poems*

bronze cast of EBB’s & RB’s clasped hands (1853) by Harriet iHOsmer