


THE VICTORIAN MONOLOGUE AND THE SCIENCE OF THE MIND

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he dramatic monologue appeared at a time when theories about the human mind were undergoing radical changes. The mental sciences were not perceived as independent disciplines until the final decades of the nineteenth century, but the bases for what we now call psychology, psychiatry, and psychoanalysis had been established during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. By the time Browning and Tennyson wrote their first dramatic monologues in the 1820s and 1830s, analysis of the mind had become an important issue for philosophers, scientists and writers alike. The nineteenth-century term "psychological poet" is no longer in current use, but Browning, Tennyson, and a growing number of dramatic monologists considered themselves to be writing a new kind of psychological poetry.

Tracing the origins of our modern mental sciences is a difficult task. Until the late nineteenth century the boundaries between what we now view as discrete disciplines were still undefined. Although many nineteenth-century writers contributed to our modern understanding of the human mind, today they are not generally regarded as leading mental scientists. As a result of the variety of writers who described the human mind during this period, and of their views, twentieth-century historical accounts of the origins of the mental sciences differ considerably, not only in their terminology, but also in the lines of thought they trace. Psychological historians are thus necessarily selective. Some, for instance, emphasise a contrast between Continental and British psychology; some focus on English and Scottish psychological philosophy; while others dispense with British psychology altogether, privileging German and French experimental psychology instead. However, it does appear that similar conclusions were being reached independently by many early mental scientists. The three categories of mental science used here have been taken from Ekbert Faas's new-historicist work, *Retreat into the Mind: Victorian Poetry and the Rise of Psychiatry*. Faas divides nineteenth-century mental sciences into introspective psychology, psychological medicine and mesmerism, defining these as the precursors to modern psychology, psychiatry, and psychoanalysis.

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Nineteenth-century introspective psychology was primarily a British phenomenon, the origins of which can be traced to seventeenth-century empiricist philosophy. The development from empiricist philosophy to introspective psychology was gradual, and it is virtually impossible to draw a definitive line between them. However, two trends emerged in the 250 years between the publication of Hobbes' *Leviathan or the Matter, Form, and Power of a Commonwealth, Ecclesiastical and Civil* (1651) and Alexander Bain's *Dissertations on Leading Philosophical Topics* (1903): first, essentialist notions regarding identity were gradually disrupted; and second, introspection became an increasingly important method of inquiry.

The key idea linking empiricism and introspective psychology is associationism. Although seventeenth-century philosophers were not, strictly speaking, associationists, they provided the basis for the emergence of associationism, professing that the relationships between ideas are not coincidental, but must follow certain rules,¹⁶ and that all, or at least some thoughts are caused by earlier, conscious sensations.¹⁷ David Hume, an early associationist, describes the workings of the mind as follows: "It is evident that there is a principle of connexion between the different thoughts or ideas of the mind, and that . . . they introduce each other with a certain degree of method and regularity . . . there [are] only three principles of connexion among ideas . . . Resemblance, Contiguity in time or place, and Cause or Effect" (*Enquiry* 23-24).¹⁸ David Hartley, another contemporaneous associationist, attempted the ambitious task of producing a mechanical model of the human mind based on Newton's principles of attraction and repulsion and the laws of association. According to Hartley, sensations caused a vibration of the nerves which, once transmitted to the brain, was realised in consciousness as a simple idea. Such simple ideas were then associated into complex ideas. Thus even the most complex ideas follow from simple sensations.

The writings of Hume and Hartley represent two interpretations of the way the mind was believed to associate its discrete elements: on the one hand, thoughts followed one another chronologically by association; on the other, complex thoughts were associative syntheses of simple ones. As Alexander Bain pointed out in 1903: "By Association has always been understood . . . that the recall, resuscitation, or reproduction of ideas already formed takes place according to fixed laws, and not at random. . . . The name further implies that the mental reproduction is ruled by certain assignable principles of connexion or relationship between our mental elements" (29-30). Whether association is used to describe a temporal movement or the joining together of simple elements, or both of these, it challenges essentialist claims regarding the subject. If the succession of our thoughts reproduces the succession of their originary sensations, as Hobbes believed, human agency is implicitly challenged.¹⁹ If our most complex and abstract thoughts are products of simple sensations, as Hartley suggested, the very notion of free will becomes tenuous. It was this insight that led him to defend his theory so emphatically in part two of his *Observations*.²⁰

¹⁶ Hobbes states: "By consequence, or train of thoughts, in succession of one thought to another, which is called . . . *mental discourse*, when a man thinketh on any thing whatsoever, his next thought after, is not altogether so causal as it seems to be" (11). George Berkeley made a similar claim in his *Treatise*: "We perceive a continual succession of ideas. . . . There is therefore some cause of these ideas whereon they depend" (52).

¹⁷ John Locke maintains that "No proposition can be said to be in the mind . . . which it was never yet conscious of" (18).

¹⁸ Over fifty years later, Dugald Stewart identified the following rules of association: "Resemblance, Analogy, Contrariety, Vicinity in Place, Vicinity in Time, Relation of Cause and Effect, Relation of Means and End, Relation of Premises and Conclusion [and] Custom" (24).

¹⁹ Hobbes states: "Because in sense, to one and the same thing perceived, sometimes one thing, sometimes another succeedeth, it comes to pass in time, that in the imagining of any thing, there is no certainty what we shall imagine next; only this is certain, it shall be something that succeeded the same before, at one time or another" (12).

²⁰ David Hume openly challenged the notion of a continuous identity: "The identity, which we ascribe to the mind of man, is only a fictitious one" (*Treatise* 259).

While associationists concerned themselves primarily with defining rules governing the human mind, one of their opponents expounded the method of introspection. Thomas Reid held that his predecessors, particularly Hume, reasoned by analogy, whereas the only valid line of investigation was reflection: "It is his own mind only that [the anatomist of the mind] can examine, with any degree of accuracy and distinctness. . . . He may, from outward signs, collect the operations of other minds; but these signs are for the most part ambiguous, and must be interpreted by what he perceives within himself" (5). Less than thirty years later, Dugald Stewart incorporated the merits of introspection into his own version of associationism: "As all our knowledge of the material world rests ultimately on facts ascertained by observation, so all our knowledge of the human mind rests ultimately on facts for which we have the evidence of our own consciousness . . . the works of Dr. Reid furnish many valuable examples" (8).²¹

The philosophical concerns of associationism and introspection are addressed in many dramatic monologues. As they are read today monologues disrupt essentialist claims regarding fixed, continuous selves. That is not to say that the speakers of monologues do not claim belief in an essential self. In Tennyson's *St. Simeon Stylites*, for example, addresses God as a means of provoking Him into granting him salvation which, if forthcoming, would permanently validate what Simeon would like to believe is his essential self. In fact, Simeon appears certain that he can produce that self. His faith in his own ability to do so is based on what he considers to be an irrevocable contract between himself and his transcendental creator, a covenant requiring asceticism on Simeon's part and recognition of his lifelong sacrifice on the part of God.

However, towards the end of the monologue Simeon's project is undermined. He sees an angel approaching him with a crown, however it remains unclear whether Simeon considers the angel as real or visionary. What is apparent is that God's messenger fails to bring the desired salvation (that is, death at that particular moment, and in response to Simeon's call). Perceiving the possibility that his self-appointed, essential identity will not be confirmed in the way that he had hoped, Simeon turns to his human peers in search of validation for what he considers to be his superior position. Simeon bases his superiority on the belief that, thanks to his covenant with God, he stands closer to Him than his audience—both literally and figuratively. Sustaining the notion of his superiority until the end of his monologue, Simeon concludes with the prayer, "O Lord / Aid all this foolish people; let them take / Example, pattern; lead them to thy light" (2. 218-220). Yet paradoxically, while attempting to coerce God into validating his self, Simeon also deliberately utters his final prayer in the hearing of his human peers from whom he overtly seeks confirmation in the form of canonisation. Simeon's concurrent attempts to fix selfhood through death, performed by God, and to achieve immortality through canonisation, remain unsuccessful. In fact, his poem undermines his attempt to fix and validate an essential self, suggesting the fictive nature of such a concept.

²¹ In 1903, comparing the methods of psycho-physics and introspection, Alexander Bain wrote: "In our desire to know ourselves . . . we work at first by Introspection purely. . . . [Introspection] is alone supreme, everything else subsidiary" (242). Similarly, Freud insisted that his students undergo analysis themselves.

Dramatic monologues can also be shown to challenge introspection. Introspective philosophers aim at consciously drawing definitive conclusions from the process of looking within, by deducing rules of association, or by proving the existence of "original feelings beside impressions and ideas."²² By contrast monologists do not speak as a result of introspection; rather than looking within, they direct their speech at interlocutors. Further, unlike philosophers and psychologists, monologists remain unaware of the significance of mental processes in and to their utterances. In recent critical readings, dramatic monologues represent minds in the process of coming-into-being in relation to the particular circumstances of, and as a result of, the production of their utterances. And as we read them today, monologists themselves are unable to reach conclusions or to discover undeniable truths about themselves.

Browning's "Andrea del Sarto" represents a speaker who not only attempts to define himself in terms of external referents rather than by introspection, but also remains unaware of psychological import of his utterances. He invokes his wife, other painters, an earlier mentor and even God in an attempt to discover incontrovertible truths about himself. However, his "others" invariably fail him, because as soon as he makes a claim about himself in relation to them, he finds that the opposite is also true. For instance, at one point Andrea claims to be unmoved by the judgements of others:

I, painting from myself and to myself,
Know what I do, am unmoved by men's blame
Or their praise either. (2.90-92)

Such self-certainty is almost immediately disrupted when a few lines further on he remembers the satisfaction he had experienced when his paintings had gained the approval of the King of France:

That Francis, that first time,
And that long festal year at Fontainebleau!
I surely then could sometimes leave the ground,
Put on the glory. (2.149-52)

In fact, Andrea seems to confuse the King's approval with divine inspiration. Something which earlier he had claimed he could never obtain because God had chosen not to inspire him.

Monologists' spoken ideas generally fail to lead them any closer to an understanding of themselves. Consequently, confronted with his wife's adultery at the end of his monologue, Andrea is still unable to understand or change his circumstances. Because monologues resist the certainty with which associationists and introspective philosophers drew their conclusions, modern readings of monologues have shifted attention away from the outcome of the utterance to the process by which speakers

²² James Mill suggests: "There is one set of philosophers who think that [impressions and their corresponding ideas] are the only simple feelings, and that all the rest are merely combinations of them. There is another class of philosophers who think that there are original feelings beside impressions and ideas. . . . Of the first are Hartley and . . . Condillac; of the second . . . are Dr. Reid and . . . Kant" (8).

attempt to construct themselves in relation to others. This process can now be read as pointing towards a model of the human mind which is more complex and less definitive than associationist and introspective models.

Contemporaneous to Bain's challenge to the exclusivity of associationist methods, Philippe Pinel was conducting inquiries which would put in question many of the presumptions made by introspective and associationist philosophers. Pinel's findings acknowledged the similar work of a number of his British contemporaries. However, it would take some time before their recommendations would replace the rigid distinction between sanity and insanity implicit in British associationist and introspective psychology, and indeed commonplace in British culture. By showing that the boundaries between normalcy and madness are fluid, nineteenth-century alienists and moral psychologists produced a model of the human mind which was more complex than that of their predecessors.

3

Alienism, or mental pathology, which achieved more recognition in continental Europe than in Britain during the early-nineteenth century, later evolved into what we now know as psychiatry. Alienists conducted their examinations of the mentally deranged in the many asylums which had been built throughout Europe (including Britain) since the mid-eighteenth century. In terms of the treatment and nosology of mental illness, the work of these early psychiatrists was the most innovative in the mental sciences.

Fundamental to alienism is its opposition to the medieval belief that the deranged were possessed by the devil. In the late Middle Ages, the idea of possession became associated with witchcraft and this notion remained intact throughout the seventeenth century. Although the belief in possession and witchcraft gradually disappeared during the eighteenth century, the mentally deranged were still thought of as evil, perverse and degenerate. The most significant conclusion reached by alienists was the need for a more humane treatment based on the notion that, in Pinel's words, "insanity was curable in many instances, by mildness of treatment and attention to the state of the mind exclusively" (108).

Amongst Pinel's many innovations in medical psychology was his recognition that frequently, although his patients' powers of perception and imagination were disturbed, the functions of their understanding were often perfectly sound (135). This phenomenon was commonly known in France at the time as *folie raisonnante* (rational insanity). Further, Pinel observed that insanity was often periodical. The ideas of sufferers could be "clear and connected; they indulged in no extravagances of fancy; they answered with great pertinence and precision the questions that were proposed to them: but they were under the dominion of a most ungovernable fury, and of a thirst equally ungovernable for deeds of blood" (13-14). Pinel's nosology of mental illnesses suggested that insanity did not affect all aspects of the human mind.

The notion that people could be psychologically abnormal and yet intellectually unaffected gradually became accepted by mental scientists. In England in 1833, J.C. Prichard used the term "moral insanity" to describe a madness "consisting in a morbid perversion of the natural feelings, affections, inclinations, temper, habits, moral dispositions and natural impulses without any remarkable disorder or defect in the intellect or knowing and reasoning faculties and particularly without any insane illusion

or hallucination" (*Treatise* 182). Eventually the insane were recognised as temporarily alienated from their healthy selves, rather than as inherently mentally deficient. The consequences were revolutionary. For the first time, no one was immune to the possibility of becoming mad. Mentally alienated people differed from the sane only with regard to their specific illnesses. Prichard recognised the consequent dangers in distinguishing between sanity and insanity when he stated in 1847 that "it is often very difficult to pronounce, with certainty, as to the presence or absence of moral insanity" (*Different Forms* 184).

The new definition of insanity resulted in new methods of treatment of the insane. William Tuke, shocked by what he saw in the York Asylum, pioneered moral treatment in England at the same time as Pinel in Paris. Assisted by his son, Henry, and his grand-son, Samuel, Tuke founded the York Retreat in 1792. In 1882 Daniel Hack Tuke, Samuel's son, recalled the response of one reviewer to Samuel's *Description of the Retreat* (1813): "It does not appear to [the managers of the Retreat], because a man is mad upon one particular subject, that he is to be considered in a state of complete mental degradation, or insensible to the feelings of kindness and gratitude" (124-25). Yet the ideas of Tuke and Pinel were not readily accepted. Many contemporary physicians found it difficult to accept that a person could appear sane in all aspects but one, or that mental illness could be caused by anything other than organic factors. As for the lay population, the mentally disturbed were still regarded with disdain and suspicion. In England the notion of moral degeneracy was upheld by Prichard's unfortunate term "moral insanity." In its specialised use the term "moral" indicates a psychological (as opposed to a tangible) effect. But to the Victorian lay person, it still implied degeneracy, evil, and perversion. For many years following the innovations of Pinel and Tuke, the British insane were managed by incarceration in asylums. However, at the same time Victorian readers were fascinated by madness, believing it to be a phenomenon particular to their own era and to their own country.

Almost all pioneer dramatic monologues dealt with abnormal mental states, (Faas 51) and since they gained such widespread popularity in their day, it can reasonably be assumed that the new psychological poetry satisfied the curiosity of the middle-class Victorian reader, without threatening his/her (generally misguided) concept of madness. Given the amount of literature written on insanity at the time, St. Simeon Stylites and Johannes Agricola were certainly recognised as victims of religious insanity, while Porphyria's Lover and the speakers of *Maud* and "Evelyn Hope" would have been identified as morally insane. However, the predominantly British distinction between religious and moral insanity, believed to derive from excessive behaviour, suggests degeneracy, inferiority and lack of will-power. Thus, from a modern perspective, Pinel's concept of rational insanity, lacking a moralistic overtone, provides a more appropriate means of discussing dramatic monologues which deal with insane speakers.

In "Porphyria's Lover," the speaker appears rational and calm when he describes how he has just murdered Porphyria. Apparently he perceives his action as perfectly reasonable and logical. The lover even implies that his action has been sanctioned by God: "And yet God has not said a word!" (1.60). However, the reader discerns that the lover's action is the result of a pathological obsession for Porphyria. Fearing that she might escape him physically and emotionally, he searches for a way to ensure her

continued presence in his cottage, finally finding "A thing to do. . . . And [he] strangled her" (2.38-41). Yet the lover's apparently calm account of the murder is ambiguous. Not only does it fail to mitigate his deed, it emphasises it, rendering the murder all the more grotesque. The sequential narrative order of the poem appears to follow a cause and effect pattern, giving the illusion that the lover's action is justified; yet in the final analysis, it is at odds with the coherent delivery of his monologue.

If "Porphyria's Lover" represents a speaker who is already insane at the outset of the monologue, then *Maud* represents the process of becoming mad. At the same time *Maud* blurs the boundaries between sanity and insanity precisely because it depicts a gradual mental deterioration. The climax of *Maud's* speaker's gradual decline into insanity can be located in the madhouse scene (2.5). In earlier, comparatively sane sections, the speaker had appeared aware of the dangers of becoming mad. However, once he is incarcerated he remains innocently ignorant of his and his fellow inmates' mental conditions, claiming that to hear another man's chatter is "enough to *drive one mad*" (2.258)(emphasis added). Not recognising his madness, the speaker of *Maud* likens his present state to that of being buried alive. As he describes the suffering of others around him in some detail, he looks on them the way he looks on himself, as dead rather than mad. The speaker's inability to recognise madness retrospectively casts doubt on his earlier references to it: was he already mad when he claimed that Maud's beauty might be the only thing that could save him from madness, crime or suicide (1.558-59)?

Maud's form further blurs the distinction between madness and sanity because, throughout the monodrama, many of its sections contradict one another. This is particularly marked with regard to the speaker's accounts of his meetings with Maud. Taken separately, each meeting is narrated with apparent clarity of mind. Taken together, as the reader becomes increasingly aware of the speaker's obsession, she can no longer judge with certainty which meetings had actually occurred, and which had been the speaker's delusions.²³

Generally classed as a monodrama, *Maud* shares many features with dramatic monologues, most notably in its dramatisation of the psychological processes of the mind of its character. However, the time frame within which *Maud* unfolds separates it from most dramatic monologues. In *Maud* the reader progresses through time with the speaker, as each section is written in the present tense. A dramatic monologue, by contrast, represents a character speaking only at one particular time, although the degree to which monologists describe their past selves in order to establish their present selves is not often observed. Further, in many dramatic monologues the speakers' utterances are directed at obvious interlocutors. (Indeed, with the dialogism of the Bakhtin school in mind, it could be argued that all dramatic monologues address an interlocutor, whether overtly present or merely notional. However, a dialogic analysis of the

²³ The speaker in *Maud* displays symptoms of an illness defined by Pinel as "melancholia," of which the symptoms were "gloomy taciturnity, austere moroseness and gravity, the inequalities of a mind abounding with acrimony and passion, love of solitude, and the timid embarrassment of an artful disposition" (137). "Melancholics," writes Pinel, "are frequently absorbed by one exclusive idea, to which they perpetually recur in their conversation, and which appears to engage their whole attention" (141).

relationship between the speaker and interlocutor is beyond the scope of the present discussion.)

The confinement of the monologist's utterance to the present moment, and the act of addressing narratives at interlocutors, can be useful in distinguishing dramatic monologues from other genres such as the monodrama. Moreover, the monologist's construction of a present-tense narrative (often including narratives about the past), and the presence of an interlocutor, are also key features of modern psychoanalysis. On the basis of these shared features, dramatic monologues can be viewed as anticipating Freudian psychoanalysis in a way that contemporaneous writing did not.

4

Psychoanalysis originated from the unlikely source of mesmerism. The founder of mesmerism, Anton Mesmer, was an ambitious and charismatic man; his theory of animal magnetism took the general European population by storm, although it was very quickly discounted by the scientific community. In 1784, for instance, Pinel wrote to a friend that "the ladies here [in Paris] harbor a great zeal for this new medicine; and as certain contacts are required and the development for a certain industry on the part of the doctor who magnetises, the ladies find it all very sweet" (qtd Zilboorg and Henry 346). Pinel's bemused comment aside, mesmerism was to have deep and lasting consequences. A small number of accomplished scientists recognised that although Mesmer's reasons were flawed, the phenomena he induced in his patients were indeed real.

The mesmerists believed that all human beings were connected to a universal magnetic fluid. They held that an imbalance of that fluid could cause a variety of illnesses. Certain people—including, of course, Mesmer himself—could re-establish the equilibrium of that fluid by increasing or decreasing the flow of magnetic forces in the patient. Later, scientists were able to show that there was a psychological explanation for the effect Mesmer had on his patients. This came to be known as the hypnotic sleep which was eventually induced by simple suggestion. It is along these lines and as a result of the humanitarian attempts by Liébault, Charcot, Janet and Bernheim to cure hysterics, that Freudian psychoanalysis had its genesis.

In 1764 Thomas Reid wrote:

If the original perceptions and notions of the mind were to make their appearance single and unmixed . . . one accustomed to reflection would have less difficulty in tracing them; but before we are capable of reflection, they are so mixed, compounded and decomposed, by habits, associations and abstractions, that it is hard to know what they were originally. (7)

Although not an associationist in the eighteenth-century sense, Freud finally provided a means for retracing thoughts to their origins. Describing the method of his analysis (and referring to himself in the third person), Freud states:

Before [Freud] asks [his patients] for a detailed account of their case-history he admonishes them to relate everything that passes through

their minds . . . amnesias [gaps in the patient's memory revealed in free association] are the result of a process which he calls *repression*. . . . The psychical forces which have brought about this repression are traceable. ("Psycho-Analytic Method" 266-67)

Freud insisted that while practising free association the patient would necessarily remain unaware of his unconscious until after the analyst's interpretation.²⁴ The problem for the analyst, he says, "consists in making the unconscious accessible to consciousness" after which "the continuance and even the renewal of the morbid condition is impossible" (269). In the process of free association, the past would become increasingly important to the analysand's appreciation of his present state.

Strictly speaking, dramatic monologues cannot be likened to Freud's talking cure, because monologue speakers do not tend to reach a catharsis. Nor are they all suffering from "conditions," although most of them display dis-ease. Dramatic monologists generally remain unenlightened. For instance, even when Ulysses comes to his famous concluding cry, "To strive, to seek, to find, and not to yield" (1.70), we read this as the utterance of an old man unable to establish a new self more in keeping with the requirements of his advanced age. Further, the speaker himself remains unaware of the gap between his past and present selves. "Ulysses" provides an example of a character whose present narrative cannot be constructed, precisely because its components remain uninterpreted. As a result, from the reader's point of view, the speaker emerges as sadly deluded and disempowered.

Although most dramatic monologue speakers are not relieved of their symptoms, the process by which they attempt to attain insights about their situations resembles the analytical situation. Speakers proceed in a manner similar to free association, connecting ideas about their pasts in an attempt to produce present selves. In so doing, they divide the role of the analyst between the interlocutor and the reader: monologists address their interlocutors, applying to them the immediate role of analyst; at the same time, dramatic monologues require of the reader that he/she meet the interpretative requirements of the text.

Monologists present their interlocutors with a continuous train of provisional subject-positions. These subject-positions are often linked in ways reminiscent of the rules of association such as similarity and contiguity. Complying to the rule of similarity, Andrea del Sarto uses metaphors of enclosure as a means of expressing the

²⁴ Freud's method of interpretation is remarkably similar to that of Hobbes. Hobbes remarked:

A man may oft-times perceive the way of it [the mind], and the dependence of one thought upon another. For in a discourse of our present civil war, what could seem more impertinent, than to ask, as one did, what was the value of a Roman penny? Yet the coherence to me was manifest enough. For the thought of the war, introduced the thought of the delivering up the king to his enemies; the thought of that, brought in the thought of the delivering up of Christ; and that again the thought of the thirty pence, which was the price of that treason; and thence easily followed that malicious question, and all this in a moment of time; for thought is quick" (12-13).

Indeed, many ideas and methods which informed Freud's revolutionary technique were not new, which leads me to conclude, with Lacan, that his farthest-reaching innovation was his emphasis on the power of language and speech in the treatment and investigation of the mind.

security he experiences by choosing his wife over his art; he uses the same metaphors of enclosure to lament the stifling incarceration this limitation entails (Slinn 15). Following the rule of contiguity, Andrea juxtaposes his own limited outlook to other people's freedoms and inspirations. Andrea's own limitations are represented by grey and silver images, while other people's freedom as well as his own (self-proclaimed) former glory are defined in terms of images of light and gold.

Freudian free association uses the connection of ideas not as a means of describing the continuous and ever-conscious associationist mind, but in order to establish a depth beyond conscious thoughts. Today dramatic monologues can be read as anticipating that depth. As we have already seen, modern readings can show how dramatic monologue speakers are unable to find and fix essential truths about themselves and their worlds. If we look at the way in which speakers attempt to produce themselves for their others, as well as for themselves, Freudian psychoanalysis can help disrupt the associationists' certainty regarding consciousness. Freudian psychoanalysis also subverts the associationist aspiration of producing simple, universally valid models of the mind. In a post-Freudian reading, monologists can be shown to produce fluid selves which come into existence as the result of a complex relationship between conscious intentions and unconscious repressions. Because they address interlocutors, monologists emerge in the space between self and other, for they simultaneously produce confessional narratives for their interlocutors, and implicit historical narratives for themselves. The requirement of producing two narratives frequently causes a conflict which speakers are unable to resolve.

When speakers describe events from their pasts, they appear to do so in order to persuade their interlocutors of a particular narrative about themselves. For example, in Browning's poem "Mr Sludge, 'The Medium,'" the speaker, Sludge, appears to be concerned primarily with describing his career as a medium in an attempt to avoid public exposure, poverty, and even physical violence from his erstwhile mentor. He explains how, as a child, he had overheard his employer talking about ghosts, and had seen the potential in becoming a medium. Having been recognised as a fraud by that same employer, Sludge agrees to confess his trickery in exchange for payment.

At the same time that Sludge attempts to convince his employer that his confession is authentic, he also presents himself with his own case-history. In order to justify his deceit, as he proceeds with his confessional case-history Sludge constructs his employer as gullible, and himself as superior. Basing his superiority on his own belief that spiritualism is a hoax, Sludge implies that his employer's faith in the spirit-world is merely the effect of societal pressure, and of an empty but fashionable whim. However, Sludge is unable to maintain his self-claimed dominance: he is forced to acknowledge that he cannot fully avoid societal pressures and demands, since by becoming a medium he has become what his social superiors intended him to be.

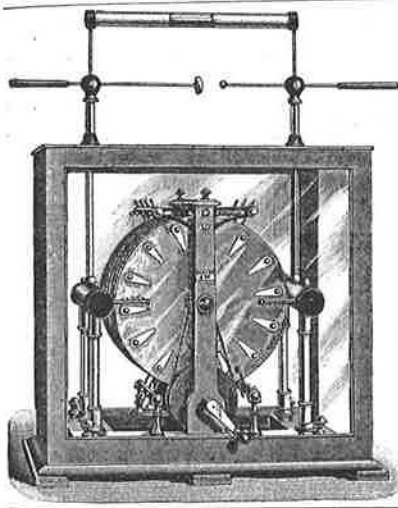
During the nineteenth century, when Browning, Tennyson and their contemporaries viewed themselves as psychological poets, they aimed to offer readers representations of human minds in action. Today Freudian psychoanalysis as well as subsequent psychoanalytic work (such as that of Jacques Lacan and Julia Kristeva) provides us with new models for analysis. These latter models can help locate dramatic monologues on a philosophical and psychological continuum spanning more than 300 years. Although we now believe that dramatic monologues, or indeed any texts,

preclude definitive analysis, monologues can be read as presenting the reader with speakers' processes of free association. Using this model, it remains the reader's task to conduct the psychoanalysis of the speakers' free association by placing him/herself in a relationship to the monologist which is analogous to that of an analyst and his/her analysand. By reading dramatic monologues as psychological poems from a twentieth-century perspective, readers may acknowledge the parallel development of the dramatic monologue genre and the sciences of the mind; they may also find that dramatic monologues, far from being limited by the boundaries of nineteenth-century mental science, indeed anticipated the subsequent development of psychoanalysis.

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