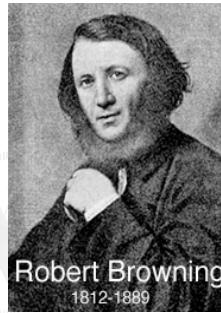


Robert Browning: “Childe Roland to the Dark Tower Came”

Supplement to Lecture
Dr. Theresa Thompson
English 2130
Fall 2009

Robert Browning



- ▶ **Biography**
- ▶ 19th-c. Medieval Revival
- ▶ Arthurian Legend / Myth
 - Fisher King waits at the Grail Castle for a knight to ask the necessary question: "What ails thee?"
 - In the Vulgate Cycle, he is called Pelles; Robert de Boron calls him Bron; Wolfram calls him Anfortas.
- ▶ Browning's poem asks Victorian culture: What ails thee?

Terms

- ▶ **Dramatic Monologue** is a type of lyric verse involving:
 - a single person (not the poet) who utters the entire poem;
 - this person addresses / interacts with one or more people, but readers know about them only through what the speaker says;
 - the poem, through organization & word choice, reveals the speaker's temperament & character.
- ▶ **Simile**: comparison of two unlike things using words such as "like" or "as" to link the vehicle (image used) & the tenor (subject). (lines 109-113, 125-6)
 - Similes tell us our speaker's state of mind (lines 85-103)
- ▶ **Pathetic Fallacy**: a figure of speech that bestows human characteristics upon inanimate nature. (lines 61-66, 115-120)
 - Personification: human characteristics to anything nonhuman, not just nature. Not a feature of this poem...
- ▶ **Psychopomp**: a conductor of souls between worlds. (line 160)

Quest in “Childe Roland to the Dark Tower Came”



Sir John Everett Millais,
“Knight Errant”

- ▶ **Dramatic Monologue**
 - Who is speaking? To whom is he speaking?
 - What type of person is the speaker? (lines 13-18)
- ▶ What is his quest? (lines 10-24)
- ▶ What does the speaker encounter? (lines 55-6, 73-84, 133-144)
- ▶ Is he successful or not? (lines 199-204)