

indeed are equally the relations of God's universe – but when the strings lie relaxed in the damp, we call them simply philosophical – and when they are tuned up to music, (as the loosest of all *may* be!) they are poetical.

Letter to Sara Coleridge, 16 April 1845 (*Correspondence*, x.167)

Notes

Coleridge (1802–52), daughter and editor of S. T. Coleridge, was well known as a translator, poet and literary figure. Barrett told her on 19 March 1845 (*Correspondence*, x.129) that 'I do not like you to speak of poetry as "a diversion", when I take it to be rather a sublimation'.

'I look everywhere for grandmothers and see none'

Elizabeth Barrett

England has had many learned women, not merely readers but writers of the learned languages, in Elizabeth's time and afterwards – women of deeper acquirements than are common now in the greater diffusion of letters: and yet where were the poetesses? The divine breath which seemed to come and go, and, ere it went, filled the land with that crowd of true poets whom we call the old dramatists – why did it never pass, even in the lyrical form, over the lips of a woman? How strange! And can we deny that it was so? I look everywhere for grandmothers and see none. It is not in the filial spirit I am deficient, I do assure you – witness my reverent love of the grandfathers!

Letter to Henry Chorley, 7 January 1845 (*LEBB*, i.231–2;
Correspondence, x.14)

Notes

Barrett is responding to Henry Chorley's discussion of 'Poetesses' in *The New Quarterly Review* for January 1845, and following on from topics raised in her letter to him of 3 January. There she suggests that 'previous to Joanna Baillie [playwright and poet (1762–1851)], there was no such thing in England as a poetess'; later in the second letter she says that 'poor LEL [Letitia Elizabeth Landon (1802–38)]' 'had the gift, though in certain respects, she dishonored the art'.