- 3 Barrett first read Wollstonecraft's *Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (1792) in 1817 or 1818. In 1821 she wrote, under its influence, her 'Fragment of "An Essay on Woman"'

On Poetry I: 'the object of the intellectual part of me'

Elizabeth Barrett

[Y]ou are quite right in telling me not to give up poetry for magazine-writing, or for prose of a higher character. You will be satisfied when you hear me say that I couldn't if I tried. Whatever degree of faculty I have, lies in poetry – still more of my personal happiness lies in it – still more of my love. I cannot remember the time when I did not love it ... with a lying-awake sort of passion at nine years old, and with a more powerful feeling since, which even all my griefs, such as have shaken life, have failed to shake. At this moment I love it more than ever – and am bent more than ever, if possible, to work into light ... not into popularity but into expression ... whatever faculty I have. This is the object of the intellectual part of me – and if I live it shall be done. There will be no bitterness in the process whatever the labour ... because it is not for the sake of popularity, no, nor of a higher kind of fame, but for poetry's own sake – rather, to speak more humbly and accurately, for the sake of my love of it. Love is the safest and most unwearied moving principle in all things – it is an heroic worker.

Letter to Mary Russell Mitford, 20 January 1842 (*Correspondence*, v. 220)

On Poetry II: 'I want to write a new poem of a new class'

Elizabeth Barrett

A few characters – a simple story – and plenty of room for passion and thought – that is what I want. ... [P]eople care for a story – there's the truth! And I who care so much for stories, am not to find fault with them. And now tell me, – where is the obstacle to making as interesting a story of a poem as of a prose work – Echo answers *where*.¹ Conversations and events, why may they not be given as rapidly and passionately and lucidly in verse as in prose – echo answers *why*. You see nobody is offended by my approach to the