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PARENTHETIC FUNCTION, CHARACTERIZATION, AND THE VOICE OF AUTHORITY IN *THE RING AND THE BOOK*

A Thesis

Presented to the

Department of English

and the

Faculty of the Graduate College

University of Nebraska

In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Masters of Arts

University of Nebraska at Omaha

by

Bonita Bernadine Dattner-Garza

August 1988

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THESIS ACCEPTANCE

Acceptance for the faculty of the Graduate College, University of Nebraska, in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree Master of Arts, University of Nebraska at Omaha.

Committee

Name	Department
Thomas P. Walsh	English
William L. Blizek	Philosophy & Religion
Phillip C. Amis	English

Thomas P. Walsh
Chairman

28 July 1988
Date

To Alfonso Javier Garza,

A thing of beauty is a joy forever:
Its loveliness increases; it will never
Pass into nothingness;
. . . .
yes, in spite of all,
Some shape of beauty moves away the pall
From our dark spirits.

Nor do we merely feel these essences
For one short hour;
. . . .
glories infinite,
Haunt us till they become a cheering light
Unto our souls, and bound to us so fast,
That, whether there be shine, or gloom o'ercast,
They alway must be with us, or we die.

From Keats' Endymion

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION: DESTRUCTIVE DISCLOSURE

Who was the masked man in Alexander Dumas' The Iron Mask? What were the circumstances that led up to his entrapment in the mask? Most of us are fascinated by the mystery that surrounds the use of masks. The ancient Greeks used masks in their dramas to create expressions of sorrow, anger, joy, etc. Masks enabled actors to hide their true selves--actors merely playing a part. One of the basic character types in Greek drama was the trickser who pretended to be ignorant, "thereby provoking somebody else to reveal his most ludicrous side" (Jones and Wilson 194). In the 19th century, Robert Browning created what Shaw so aptly designated the "Lord of Misrule" (268)--Archangeli, the comic trickster in The Ring and the Book who manipulates language for his own ends. Archangeli uses language as a mask. Language, like the mysterious mask, is not merely an instrument of control over the audience, but enables Archangeli to hold his personality together. By deceiving himself and others, he justifies his own existence. As a lawyer, Archangeli uses rhetorical modes to twist and shape language to express his own attitudes and beliefs. One of the main rhetorical modes contributing to our awareness of Archangeli's "ludicrous side" is the use of parentheses.

Parentheses can function as stumbling blocks, or they can express passion; they can be informative or edifying. I propose to distinguish the different levels at which the parentheses function within the monologue of the lawyer Archangeli in The Ring and the Book. Operating at multiple levels, their compositional role is significant. They lay bare a purely subjective intepretation of the more objective material expressed outside the parenthesis.

Browning uses a mask or persona in order to create consistent, credible and authoritative characters in The Ring and the Book. Each of his characters exerts his or her own kind of ethical appeal, but through the parenthetic function the character Archangeli gradually reveals himself. Subtle communiques employed by the author disclose numerous examples of unwitting character revelation by what Nancy Watanabe describes as a "psychoethical autonomous narrator" (1). An interpretation of some of these passages suggests that the author employed a psychosymbolic mode. Nancy Watanabe defines this mode as a subjective form of expression in the first person-narrative resembling the literature of personal confession, "continuing and modifying an attitude that the romantics found congenial" (1). The character that emerges from Book VIII is that of the fool who reveals his own doubts and anxieties. He struggles with what J. Hillis Miller terms a divided self. W. David Shaw notes that the lawyers' "digressions express a form of

professional anxiety" (269). By analyzing the parenthetic function, we recognize how the dramatized narrator destructively unfolds his inner make-up, particularly his ethical-moral nature.

The procedure adopted is to present the idea of destructive revelation in the first-person narrative, moving from a general discussion that analyzes the parenthetic function to the interpretation of selected parenthetic passages and passages affected by these, with attention to both form and content. In order to illustrate the strategies employed by the author, we will adopt Susan Suleiman's analysis of the figure of discourse known as the parenthesis. She categorizes its function into three major groups, which often overlap: the narrative functions (to serve as flashbacks, announcing, preparing, or generating events to come), the associative (to serve as reminders of past events and keep the narrative moving forward), the interpretive (to serve as insightful explanations or generalizations) (465). Under the narrative functions, we will embrace Browning's descriptive pause because as Gerard Genette points out,

> from the point of view of modes of presentation, to recount an event and to describe an object are two similar operations, which bring into play the same resources of language. (_Figures_ 136)

Therefore, under the category of narrative will fall the

descriptive pause, as well as the portrait of a character and his/her history (since these necessarily describe a character). Many times these functions overlap. We can easily see how the portrait of a character falls into the interpretive function whereby a generalization is made on the narrator's part about a character. A systematic examination of the parentheses will show what kind of functions they fulfill, what kind of material is inside them, and how they relate to the sequence or material that surrounds them, particularly the sequence introducing them.

It is important to note that the author and the narrator are two distinct entities. Only where it serves to support the text will there be references to the silent author's biography. The poem is a narrative whose "internal focalization" is fully realized because it is an "'interior monologue' where the central character is limited absolutely to--and strictly inferred from--his focal position alone" (Genette, Narrative Discourse 193). The Ring and the Book provides 10 different interior monologues whose central character in each, including that of the dying heroine, Pompilia, presents his/her judgement on a murder case. In the first and last Books, Browning introduces and sets up his own judgements about the historical Roman murder case that took place in 1698. The central character within Book VIII is that of the defense attorney, Archangeli, pleading the case for the confessed murderer, Guido, who hired

assasins to murder his wife and her family. Browning creates a persona that narrates in the direct style.

Because The Ring and the Book is in the tradition of an epistolary novel, where the "the same event may be evoked several times according to the point of view of several letter-writing characters," we can veiw Archangeli's passions/desires as a form of "epistolary seduction" (Genette, Narrative Discourse 189-90). The character, like the poet, is in the process of writing. But the narrator's seductive interjections of thought interrupt his writing. The digressions are seductive because they manifest the passions of the narrrator, but they are also seductive because they generate a first-hand view of the narrator's self-described self-conception. The digressions express more personally and fully the narrator's conception of himself, and man's self conception, as Peckham explains, is necessarily deceptive. Peckham states that

> to manipulate language is to manipulate one's mask,and therefore is the prime method of manipulating others.
>
> . . . .
>
> Manipulation of one's self and others in the furtherance of certain life-essential interests is the way we live, and what makes it possible for us to live. To present publicly one's self-conception, the mask behind the mask, is on

> the one hand to force one's attitudes on others and on the other to expose oneself to unnecessary challenges. (92)

Man arrives closer to those truths he seeks only by "uncovering his own insincerity, something impossible to do if [he] is busy defending them" (Peckham 93).

Through subtle communiques by the implied author, we recognize the mask of Archangeli more completely. The various parenthetic functions reveal the psychological process of self-deception. Slinn Warwick accurately notes that

> Browning employs the illusion of a person speaking in order to suggest the illusion in human understanding; the point is not only to portray experience but also to question it, and he does this by indicating the linguistic artifice which underlies all speech. While spontaneous conversation reinforces a commonplace realism, there is another paradoxical sense in which it undermines the illusion: in the way that temporal progression is constantly impeded . . . parenthetical sentences tend to break the pattern of noraml syntax with its forward movement and so divert attention from ends to process. (3)

The parentheses function to reveal characterization, and this gives unity to the poem.

Browning interweaves the poetic imitative and the narrative styles, creating a dramatized narrator, Archangeli, who relates the events in the first-person. Because Browning refuses to speak directly in his own voice, he establishes a style which is appropriate to what Plato calls strict or poetic imitation (mimesis). At the same time, relating the historical events of a Renaissance court case places Browning's text in the diegetic mode. Consequently, both elements, diegesis (simple narrative or what is said) and mimesis (imitation proper or way of saying), are present within the text. Genette notes that for Plato

> perfect imitation is no longer an imitation, it is the thing itself, and, in the end, the only imitation is an imperfect one. Mimesis is diegesis. (Figures 132-33)

Because no narrative can be recounted with total objectivity, it is imperfect since it necessarily attracts subjectivity. Plato believed that when the narrative poet speaks or narrates in his own person without the guise of another person, then he is representing directly the events or actors speaking. This is what he terms diegesis or simple narrative. By contrast, imitation takes place when the narrator speaks under the guise of another person trying to persuade the audience that the speaker is not himself. Plato classifies a tale told in the direct style

(first-person) poetic imitation and in the indirect style (third-person) simple narrative. By relating the historical events and actions under the guise of another person, Browning challenges the opposition between the objectivity of the narrative and the subjectivty of poetic discourse. In his "Essay on Shelly" Browning writes: "Nor is there any reason why these two modes of poetic faculty may not issue hereafter from the same poet" (1003). His imitation or parody of the lawyers becomes its own story and is no longer an imitation but an experience all its own. It possesses both objective and subjective elements.

Ironically, the use of personae does not serve to mask Browning's own inner struggle with the divided self. Paul F. Mattheisen suggests that the "normal distinction between author and persona tends to break down" (127), and we note that Browning speaks in his own voice in Books I and XII. The Ring and the Book seems to reflect the poet's own personality so that when we speak of the poet's intention, "we rightly seek the persona for an expression of it within the poem" (Mattheisen 128). It must be emphasized that this study assumes that the implied author and the dramatized narrator are separate. But to some extent,

> the implied author, envisioning some artistic and broadly philosophical goals in writing the work, has made the narrator a spokesman, perhaps weirdly

> distorted, introverted or corrupt, but ultimately a spokesman nonetheless, for some idea.
>
> (Watanabe 4)

Like the lawyers, Browning was a man whose doubts and anxieties surfaced--as revealed in many of his later poems in Pachiarotto and How He Worked in Distemper: With Other Poems (1876). His style in The Ring and the Book reflects these doubts. The writer's use of certain rhetorical figures points out these uncertainties with particular emphasis. The parenthesis is one of those figures which reveal the inner workings of the characters.

Like Kierkegaard who employs the technique of "indirect communication," Browning also employs a similar technique to "arouse inwardness in a person" who does not notice the contradictions in his life but continues to think of himself as a morally upright citizen of the community (Raymond Anderson 163). Such a person, according to Kierkegaard, lives in an "illusion" (Raymond Anderson 163). And it is this illusion or lie in which man lives that Browning so poignantly describes in The Ring and the Book. The poet draws attention to these illusions or false appearances with the device of parentheses because they serve many times to "betray a man who is unusually concerned for the accuracy of his statements and for the image he is projecting to his audience" (Corbett 89).

Therefore, it is important to show how the objective reality and the purely subjective character, of which the narrator asserts, unmask the psychological motives of the character. It is the function of the parenthesis to establish how these two types of discourse (objective and subjective) in the dramatic narrative poem The Ring and the Book interweave to present the unveiling of the "Lord of Misrule." In order to analyze the way in which the parenthesis operates, we must first understand the importance of its function in the narrative.

Narrative Functions

The parenthesis introduces sequences that may seem trivial, but however insignificant any particular enunciation may seem, it constitutes a function or narrative unit which has meaning. The function of any device is significant because

> the soul of any function is, as it were, its seedlike quality, which enables the function to inseminate the narrative with an element that will later come to maturity, on the same level, or elsewhere on another level. (Barthes 244)

Roland Barthes' "An Introduction to the Structural Analysis of Narrative" distinguishes three levels in any narrative work: the level of "functions," of "actions," and of

"narration" (243). Since this study focuses on a dramatic narrative poem, we will apply the linguistic terms introduced by Barthes whose structural approach to narrative discourse reveals those operations that take place within the parenthesis.

Because the function of any narrative is considered a linguistic content unit, "'it is what an uttterance means,' not the way it is made, which constitutes it as a functional unit" (Barthes 245). At the same time, it is important to stress that the level of narration (roughly the level of discourse), as well as the level of action overlap. In the final analysis, both of these levels give meaning to the work as a whole. Another important idea to keep in mind is that

> the functional character of the segment under consideration . . . will not necessarily coincide with . . . parts of the narrative discourse (actions, scenes, paragraphs, dialogues, inner monologues, etc.) (Barthes 245)

However, an investigation reveals how functions work to link parenthetic narrative discourse with psychological classes, "behaviors, feelings, intentions, motivations, rationalizations of characters" (Barthes 245).

The narrative many times represents functions by units larger than the sentence or by lesser units--the word (Barthes 246). One word can signify or introduce an

important concept which has connotative value. For example,in Archangeli's expression "don't I hear the dog!" the moneme "dog" constitutes a functional unit which has simultaneous functions that we can describe primarily asinterpretive because they serve to reveal the anxiety of the speaker and associative because they more fully shape the metaphor of the hunt which occurs later in the text.

In analyzing the functions of the parenthetic sequences, we will make use of Barthes terms: indices, informants, and catalyses to indicate the operations going on within the parenthesis. Each of these secondary operations possesses both a "surface texture" and an "indepth dimension" (Barthes 270). Barthes suggests that these secondary operations move the narrative along (270). "The excess of implicit information over explicit information is the whole play of what Barthes calls indices" (Genette, Narrative Discourse 198). Indices require a deciphering on our part as readers, while informants authenticate the reality, for example, informing us of the character's age. Barthes' indices and informants operate at the interpretive and narrative/descriptive levels. The parenthesis functions as a catalysis, filling up the space between two moments in a story which "precipitates, [or] delays . . . the pace of the discourse, sums up, anticipates, and sometimes even confuses the reader" (Barthes 249). The parentheses, then, contain secondary

operations that separate two moments in the narrated text. They operate, states Barthes, to maintain "contact between the narrator and the reader" (248).

In order to define a sign, like the parenthesis, there must be, according to Charles Sanders Pierce, an "interpretant" (de Man 29). The sign must

> be interpreted if we are to understand the idea it is to convey, and this is so because the sign is not the thing but a meaning derived from the thing by a process here called representation.
>
> (de Man 29)

Analyzing Pierce's definintion of the rhetorical process, de Man suggests that it is when "one open sign gives birth to another" that we can distinquish what Pierce calls "pure rhetoric" from "pure grammar" (29). Susan Suleiman gives an example of how the parenthetic sign can give birth to another sign which leads us to an associative interpretation. Those parentheses which signal

> a virtual presence of an element in the narrative that is absent from a given sequence, but that was present in earlier sequences and may be present in later ones (467)

may be interpreted as associative. These parenthetic associations provide a serialization of themes which serve as a mnemonic device and can, therefore, function as an "interpretant." Interpreting each of the parentheses, we

can discover Archangeli's unintentionaly, destructive disclosure. Each of the three functions, descriptive/narrative, interpretive, and associative, serves either to inform, explain, or provide links that establish the narrator's lack of ethos. The present study discloses Archangeli's addiction to parentheses and how their functions attempt to unmask the narrator. Chapter two analyzes one of the main "deflections" of Archangeli's monologue which leads to the association of the major symbol of Book VIII, the fox. Chapter three investigates all of the longer, parenthetic digressions that generate the narrator's deficiencies. Chapter four focuses on the instructive nature of disruptive doubts which leads to the narrator's unintended irony and seductive, rhetorical techniques. Finally, the conclusion notes how parenthetic functions highlight Browning's concerns with self-deception and the role that subjectivity and objectivity play in his work.

CHAPTER II

PAUSE FOR "DEFLECTION"

"Symbolic acts" (Bennett 248), expressed through emotional language, are many times relegated to minor parenthetical pauses. Pauses or short, parenthetic interjections do not necessarily impose themselves as interruptions. More commonly in Archangeli's monologue they serve to signal what the philosopher Kenneth Burke labeled a "'Deflection' (which he compares structurally to Freudian displacement), defined as 'any slight bias or even unintended error'" (de Man 29). Because pauses function to decribe, explain, or link themes, they may make use of ambiguity and imagery, which are important to rhetoric.

Ambiguity leads to a speaker's hidden preferences or interests (Bennett 247). For this reason, it becomes a symbolic act--one of great importance which we can construe as a "formalized embodiment of the author's philosophy" (Watanabe 5). Whether the author views the narrator's words, thoughts, feelings, and actions ironically or objectively, they are "autonomous choices" by the narrator which the author selects "for his own aesthetic and philosophical purposes" (Watanabe 5).

As readers, we must decipher the ambiguity, and through a revelation or a series of revelations we discover the nature or essence of the character. William Bennett in his

essay on Kenneth Burke notes that

> great rhetorical advantage is inherent in the use of images to suggest ideas. As he [Burke] reasons,one image may imply several ideas. When one of those ideas is called forth by use of its image, the rest of the ideas will come to bear on the minds of the audience as an added advantage. (246)

Our former example, "dog," illustrates the point. The word "dog" may suggest "inferiority," "servility," "lowliness," "beast," "hound" or--as the Hebrew word for dog (keleb) symbolizes--"persecutor of God's people." Therefore, a speaker who uses "dog" in order to suggest the idea of "persecution" gains the added advantage of the associated ideas. "Man," states Burke, "is a symbol-using animal," and therefore, "his symbolic acts are the demonstrations of his essence" (qtd. in Bennett 244). The emotional elements of language, so often expressed in the parentheses, are important because they "perform necessary functions" (Bennett 244) which are revelatory and disclose the unveiling of that aspect of the character's personality which he intentionally chooses to hide. The following analysis shows how the interpretive function serves to heighten the reader's awareness of the speaker's anxiety and the associative to link the images which imply principles, or more correctly, in Archangeli's case, a lack of

principles. The parenthetic statement functions at several levels simultaneously.

The Interpretive Level

The parenthesis functions as an interpretive pause that announces the speaker's anxiety. In a heated and passionate moment of anger, Archangeli calls Bottini a dog:

> --Ha, my Bottini, have I thee on hip?
> How will he turn this and break Tully's pate?
> "Existimandum" (don't I hear the dog!)
> "Quod Guido desginaverit elementa
> Dictoe epistoloe, quoe fuerint
> (Superinducto ab ea calamo)
> Notato atramento"--there's a style!--
> "Quia ipsa scribere nesciebat." Boh!
> Now, my turn! (162-70)

Rebuking Fisc, Archangeli uses rhetorical questions (lines 162 and 163) coupled with a declarative sentence, obtaining his declaration of hate and thus bringing his emotions to the surface with an exclamation mark. The declarative sentence of line 164 betrays not only Archangeli's feelings toward the Fisc, but his later ostensible compassion for the noble beasts, beginning on line 479.

Within the stanza, the narrator uses parenthesis to interject his emotional intensity, but then switches to

dashes which "seems not so much the measured deliberation of one anticipating responses, as of uncontrolled impulse" (Tompkins 187). This inconsistency in his style betrays his ostensible confidence, certainty, and sense of control. Mary Flowers states that

> Radical modification of sentence type indicates either loss of control or effort to maintain control in a difficult moment. Modification of terminal punctuation . . . indicates that a character is trying to produce a desired reaction in his interlocutor: information and emotional reactions freely given or extorted. Disturbances in both features simultaneously indicate violent emotion and often loss of control. (106)

The dialogue-parenthetic-statement-dialogue sentence structure (164-65) suggests the technique of the lawyer's rebuttal, while at the same time characterizing "the unconsolidated man, the 'divided self.'" Daniel J. Schneider defines this term (the divided self) as

> a soul so deeply split in its inclinations, so checked and inhibited by its "variety of imagination" that it finds itself at a profound disadvantage in dealing with "the hard, functional people" of the world who know what they want and set out to achieve their ends without hesitation or compromise or loss of energy. (447)

Archangeli's imagined interlocutor is Bottini, whom he degrades. But while he stoops to denounce his rival, he must perform at a professional level for his court audience. This causes havoc on his role playing. He suspends his more composed criticism of Bottini and loses the self-composed mannerisms of the objective lawyer. The defense attorney puts aside his courtroom manners for those of the bar-room. His parenthetic outcry becomes indicial--revealing his other self, the wily and treacherous fox leading his followers astray and off the track of his own uncertainties with an ambiguious stylistic guise.

In line 168, Archangeli switches to dashes--interrupting the proposed Latin dialogue that he anticipates the Fisc will use--to interject a sarcastic note exposing an attitude of extreme hostility. The parenthesis opens, and Bottini, whom Archangeli has been parodying in Latin, impinges upon Archangeli's consciousness with extreme rivalry which causes his outburst in English. The parenethesis closes, and Archangeli's thoughts again center upon the anticipated Latin responses of Bottini. Thus, these interruptions range from the merely taunting to the fruitfully anticipative.

The parenthesis also announces that the speaker's dialogue prior to the interjection has been in the future tense, but within the parenthesis the tense changes to the present. Thus, the parenthesis makes the distinction

between two audiences, the courtroom audience, whom the narrrator anticipates he will speak to in the future, and the audience of readers, who are attuned to the defense attorney's immediate concerns in the present tense.

Archangeli's perversion of concern with his rival's next anticipated rebuff reveals a skeptical attitude toward his own professional ability. The narrator's abruptive style is not unlike his abrupt mannerisms, which are suggested by his use of degrading terms for his colleague: "Master fop" (280), "dog" (164), "beast" (197), "ferret" (221) "Blockhead" (349) "sciolist" (855) "villain" (955), "blazing ass" (1792). Renaissance rhetoric treated mocks and tuants like these as figures and categorized them under the term Bdelygmia, which Henry Peacham defines as

> a forme of speech which the speaker useth to signifie how much he hateth and abhorreth some person, word, deed, or thing, and it is used commonly in a short forme, and in few words against a person thus: Out upon him wretch . . . against an odious deed, thus, Fie upon it.
>
> (qted in Joseph, 393)

In the parenthetic expression of line 164, the speaker gives away more of himself than he is possibly aware. Obviously, there is no sustaining content which qualifies the catalysis as edifying discourse--one that elevates--but its importance lies in that it does reveal the anxiety of

the speaker. Therefore, it is not merely functional (an informant) but indicial, pointing to Archangeli's personality type (his lack of confidence and yet ambitious need to defeat). The speaker's own passion betrays him. We are aware of the speaker's own fear of his rival (Bottini). Here Browning uses a form of indirect communication to unmask the character. "Hurried by the tumult of his mind into [a] tedious [display] of mere personal feeling which has no connection with the subject" (Longinus 102), the defense of Guido, Archangeli exposes his anxiety. Surprised and "aroused" by his heated display of emotional intensity, we become aware of the uncertainties and anxieties that the character experiences toward his colleague.

Archangeli's passion becomes a "rash impulse without the control of reason" (Longinus 100). In Longinus On the Sublime, Longinus points out those vices that deal with the passions. Like Theodorus, Longinus interprets false sentiment as a vice of the passions--"meaning by that ill-timed and empty display of emotion, where no emotion is called for, or of greater emotion than the situation warrants" (Longinus 102). Ironically, Archangeli recognizes that his ardor is one of his weaknesses when in line 44 he exclaims, "Curb we this ardor!" His ardor causes him to digress often. Unfortunately, he forgets his rule. In a heated moment of passion, he slips and drops his mask while absorbed in his perverted concern over Bottini.

The Associative Level

Archangeli's rebuke of his colleague is the first announcement which evokes the animal theme. He indirectly alludes to the hunting metaphor in the phrase "have I thee on hip?" (157) where Cook states that "Dr. Johnson took it [the phrase] to be a metaphor from hunting, the hip of a deer being the part often attacked by dogs" (166). Richard Whatley, the nineteenth-century rhetorician, in his Elements of Rhetoric, suggests that "if the Metaphor is apt and suitable to the purpose designed, it is alike conducive to Energy" (327) and remarks that the same holds good with respect to epithets also, which may be "drawn either from the highest or the lowest attributes of the thing spoken of" (327). Whatley cites an example from Aristotle who quotes Simonides,

> who, when offered a small price for an Ode to celebrate a victory in a mule-race, expressed his contempt for half-asses, as they were were commonly called; but when a larger sum was offered,addressed them in an Ode as "Daughters of Steeds swift-as-the storm." (327)

Acquainted with Aristotle's correct method for employing metaphors and epithets, the narrator conveniently uses the method when it suits his argument. When defending Guido's honor, Archangeli addresses the animal kingdom with

such epithets as "the chaste" for bees and "the noble elephant" because like Guido, they sting or kill to defend their honor. But when expressing his contempt for Bottini, he addresses him as a "pale-haired red-eyed ferret" (221) and an "ermine-vermin!" (227) Initially, Archangeli compares a man's honor with that of the beasts', which is no less honorable since they guard their chasity to the death and "do credit to their beasthood" (503). But when reproaching Bottini's honor, he compares his rival's honor with that of a beastly degrading dog and uses epithets such as "red-eyed ferret." The essential mechanism is one of "rapprochement" (Suleiman 468) or comparison and is, therefore, associative. Is there honor among beasts? Only when it is suitable for Archangeli's argument does Archangeli show compassion for the animal kingdom by implying that they possess nobility. This contrivance on his part weakens his credibility. Analyzing the compositional function of the image pattern established on line 164 exposes Archangeli's duplicity.

The short parenthetic interjection of line 164 serves to link a whole series of hunting images which establish the primary role of the dog (Bottini) who leads the chase. Suleiman notes that "the digressive elements produce not a short-range consequence but a long-range one, affecting not the sequence itself, but more distant sections" (Suleiman 464). What Browning succeeds in accomplishing with the

"announce" of the dog parenthesis is to select an image which evokes a meaning beyond what the narrator intends to express and may even suggest the opposite. Suleiman notes that the linking of widely separated themes announces that "every road leads somewhere and nothing is absolutley gratuitous" (463). Parenthetical associations become even more evident when "we superimpose them structurally on the metaphor" (Suleiman 468). Paving the way for the recognition of scenes, the parenthesis of line 164 establishes the extended metaphor of the hunt in the following passages:

> Tra-la-la!
> I've travelled ground, from childhood to this hour,
> To have the town anticipate my track?
> The old fox takes the plain and velvet path,
> The young hound's predilection,--prints the dew,
> Don't he, to suit their pulpy pads of paw?
> No! Burying nose deep down i' the briery bush,
> thus I defend Count Guido. (294-301)

> You hold,
> to punish a false wife in her own house
> Is graver than, what happens every day,
> to hale a debtor from his hiding-place
> In church protected by the Sacrament?

To this conclusion have I brought my Fisc?
Foxes have holes, and fowls o' the air their
  nests;
Praise you the impiety that follows, Fisc?
(1287-94)

That we prayed Pope Majestas' very self
To anticipate a little the tardy pack,
Bell us forth deep the authoritative bay
Should start the beagles into sudden yelp
Unisonous . . . . (1381-85)

The association on lines 294-301 (the first passage above) with the dog image guides us through the irony which reveals how Archangeli unintentionally unmasks his real character. One of Browning's major symbols within The Ring and the Book is the fox. With malicious wit, the defense attorney carefully defends his client, Guido, from being sentenced and thus labeled the fox in the hearing. With a twist, Browning signals a form of indirect communication that exposes the lawyer as the true fox in the case. Archangeli's concern lies, again, with his professional abilities. He refuses to have the whole town "anticipate" his "track." He cleverly carries out the fox theme in an extended metaphor of the hunt, which was first reported in the parenthesis of line 164. Thus, the parenthesis

functions as a foreshadowing of the lawyer's darker side--the fox.

In the second passage above (1287-94) Archangeli uses the metaphor of the hunt to argue his case with sacriligious intensity. Archangeli makes the point that the sanctity of ones's home is less sacred than that of the church. Therefore, any violent act committed in the home is less grave than that committed "in Church protected by the Sacrament" (1291). "Foxes have holes, and fowls o' the air their nests" (1293), and wives a place to lay their heads which is not "protected by the Sacrament," and therefore, not secured from a vengeful husband's entry. Thus, Guido who followed Pompilia to her home is no more a murderer than the dog who follows the fox to its hole.

The defense attorney equates man's home with that of the environmental niches of the lower species; neither is for him a sanctuary of God's protection. Browning's reference to the animal kingdom reflects the Victorian concern with progressive evolution and the possibility of man's isolation from God. Equating man's motivations with those of animals hints at the link between man and animal--a link Darwin later expressed into theory. The theory of natural selection, which links together all the species in each group, created in Victorian minds belief in a separation from God because it eliminated the notion of the miraculous act of creation. Ascribing human motivations to

animals suggests that man is at the same level of all other creations. Isolating him further from God, the doctrine of evolution serves to uproot man's unique relation to God.

Pages later (on lines 1381-85) the narrator reports the dog image one last time while unwittingly disclosing his lack of respect for the authority of the court and the church. Browning uses the metaphor of the hunt to lead us to the satirical mood. The Pope, whose authority is second only to God, echoes not the "tintinambulation" of celestial bells, but instead the "deep authoritative bay" which likens his echo to the baying of a dog. The linking of the Pope's authoritative voice with that of a dog demonstrates Archangeli's habit of degrading higher authorities. Archangeli renounces the Pope by suggesting that the Pope bays like the leader of a pack of dogs in order that he "should start the beagles into sudden yelp." The image of the bell takes on more significance since, like the hunting horn, it signals that the hunt begins. The lawyer suggests that the courtroom is nothing more than a hunt to track down the fox. The beagles start "into sudden yelp" and "Gospel" leads "law." But who is the real fox? Archangeli's mode of defending Count Guido by "burying nose deep down i' the briery bush" (300) suggests that he is the fox, and his task is to keep the town's folk from discovering his track or tools and methods for winning his case.

These seemingly incommunicable but widely linked images generate one of the major symbols within the poem, the fox. Browning's portrayal of Archangeli suggests "that there is in rhetoric a passion to name which is a mode of self-expression and self-justification" (Genette, Figures 53). Thus, it is the feeling which produces the figure or metaphor of the hunt. Archangeli releases his anger by reproaching and insulting. The figure of the hunt also brings with it the assoicated ideas or images of the dog and the fox. The idea or image of the fox carries with it the associated idea of the hunted, the persecuted. Therefore, the figure of the fox signifies more than the literal expression because as Genette states it contains connotative power (Figures 57) By designating his rival a dog and himself a fox, Archangeli discloses his motivation by detailing and making connections between the signs.

In Burke's A Rhetoric of Motives, Burke states that rhetoric is used to signal social identity, to mark the position one occupies. For Archangeli, social identity becomes the key to motivational goals. To insure his reputation, his social identity, Archangeli must conceive of himself as the fox who possesses a wily and treacherous nature, but the image of the fox also carries with it a vision of the hunted. This image allies Archangeli with the escapist who again and again takes flight into a world of self-reflection where he is free to sublimate his fear of

being stripped of his identity. By suggesting that the fox (Archangeli) cleverly anticipates the tardy pack of dogs (Bottini and the courtroom--his persecutors), Archangeli elevates his social position. Thus, the parenthesis serves to establish Archangeli's deceptive, self-perceived social identity. He presents his own self-conception, the mask behind the mask. Projecting a favorable image of himself, the defense attorney lays bare his duplicity and self-deception. Peckham states that "a wicked man can make as good a case for himself as a good man, perhaps better, because he has better reason to" (91). Archangeli's self-reflective thoughts expressed in the parentheses suggest that the narrator conceals his true character from himself. Because self-justification requires no self-examination, it becomes his primary means of escaping from self-examination.

CHAPTER III

DIGRESSIONS

The narrative structure within Archangeli's monologue reveals that at the moment that Archangeli begins the draft of his speech on line 418, Browning incorporates all digressions within parentheses. Lines 1-413 introduce all characters and participants. After introducing Giacinto, Bottini, the crime committed by Guido, and his own position with reference to the case, Archangeli says a blessing over the task at hand: "So, liver fizz, law flit and Latin fly / As we rub hand o'er dish by way of grace" (121-22). At this point he states, "May I lose cause if I vent one word more / Except--with fresh-cut quill we ink the white" (123-24). But three times after this, Archangeli strays from his task and reproaches himself for doing so: Mum, mind business, Sir?" (135), "But the version afterward! / Curb we this ardor! Notes alone, today, / The speech to-morrow, and the Latin last" (143-45), and finally, his last acknowledgment of digression comes right before beginning his speech, "And advocates / No longer Farinacci, let us add, / If I one more time fly from point proposed! / So, Vindicatio,--here begins the speech! (414-17).

Only after Archangeli begins writing the draft is there a consistent pattern with reference to parenthetic functions. At this point, Browning relegates all priorities

to Giacinto and the birthday feast to parenthetical digressions. Before his speech, there is no rhetorical device to mark the distinction between Archangeli's divided concerns/loyalities. His concerns "flit," fizz," and "fly" in every direction as he "lose[s] cause" and flies "from point proposed." The following analysis focuses on the digressions presented after Archangeli's draft begins and their function within the poem.

Except for that stated earlier, Browning's use of parenthesis seems to follow no particular pattern. Sometimes whole stanzas consisting of several complete sentences are parenthetical. At other times, we find long parenthetic digressions within a longer sequence of the narrative. Joseph Priestly, the nineteenth-century rhetorician, who in his Oratory and Criticism spoke of the appropriate use of parenthesis, argued that when used moderately parentheses

> occasion no greater pain from suspense, than what is more than counterbalanced by the pleasure we receive, the moment it terminates, in our seeing the sense complete. (143)

While the short, parenthetic interjections do not necessarily impose themselves as interruptions, the longer interjections do. Because they are lenghthy suspensions of one action in favor of another action, we define the longer, parenthetic interjections as digressions. Browning's use of

long, drawn-out parentheses produces a feeling of impatience. We want to resume the subject at hand. When the narrative does resume, "a slight feeling of shock" (Suleiman 641) sets in. This is because the digression functions as a lengthy suspension of a future action (defense for Guido) in favor of another future action (Giacinto's birthday feast) that has bearing on the present and not on the anticipated future defense for Guido, which is the subject of the monologue. Both Homer in the Odyssey and Balzac (Browning's contemporary) use digressions; although their digressions serve as flashbacks--suspension of a present action in favor of a past action that has bearing on the present. Browning's use of parentheses functions not only as flashbacks, but to anticipate a future event other than the one at hand (the defense). Browning's dual vision generates significant discoveries. With Archangeli's appeals to the ritual of the feast, a Machiavellian education, and his limited vision, we can judge the character's deficiencies at the various levels of the parenthetic function.

The Ritual of the Feast

The associative function to Browning's use of digressions establishes a series of parentheses about Giacinto's birthday feast and the feast in general. These

digressions present thematic material discontinuously, in fragments:

> (May Gigia have rememberered, nothing stings
> Fried liver out of its monotony
> Of richness, like a root of fennel, chopped
> Fine with the parsley: parsley-sprigs, I said--
> Was there need I should say "and fennel too"?
> But not, she cannot have been so obtuse!
> To our argument! The fennel will be chopped.)
>
> 534-40

> (There was one melon had improved our soup:
> But did not Cinoncino need the rind
> To make a boat with? So I seem to think.) 719-21

> (See nothing else,
> Or I shall scarce see lamb's fry in an hour!
> What to the uncle, as I bid advance
> The smoking dish? "Fry suits a tender tooth!
> Behoves we care a little for our kin--
> You, Sir,--who care so much for cousinship
> As come to your poor loving nephew's feast!"
> He has the reversion of a long lease yet--
> Land to bequeath! He loves lamb's fry, I know!)
>
> 1086-94

> (There is a porcupine to barbecue;
> Gigia can jug a rabbit well enough,
> With sour-sweet sauce and pine-pips; but, good
>   Lord,
> Suppose the devil instigate the wench
> To stew, not roast him? Stew my porcupine?
> If she does, I know where his quills shall
>   stick!
> Come, I must go myself and see to things:
> I cannot stay much longer stewing here.) 1368-75

Each of the parentheses above serves as a mnemonic device bringing together parts of the text. Although the above digressions may seem insignificant to the subject of the monologue (the defense of Guido's case), they

> are an emblem of what is no doubt the true subject of every eminently modern work: the irregular movement of an individual mind as it attempts to make sense of--to narrate--its own history.
> (Suleiman 462)

These parentheses are one of the main instruments for the characterization of Archangeli's other self as opposed to his professional self. The digressions serve as an exploration of Archangeli's dual nature. Although the narrator does not present all of the comments on Giacinto's birthday feast as parenthetic digressions--for instance, line 396 mentions the "undoing" of Archangeli's whole

speech, and what's worse this "undoing" takes place on "his [Giacinto's] birthday"--the pattern of whole parenthetic stanza's which digress into the subject of the feast is consistent throughout the monologue.

The first digression (534-40) noted above serves as an index to Archangeli's self-absorption, which is supreme from the opening moment of his monologue. As Clyde Ryals notes, "Browning's chief concern is an exploration of man's dual nature" (210). The battle which man struggles with

> is shown in the commentary: telling has become showing. Every comment is an action; every digression is "progressive" in a sense more profound than he intends. (Booth 234)

The beginning of Archangeli's commentary in his parenthetic statement marks the rambling of an erratic mind moving from a "homage [of] vile flesh and blood" to a feast of flesh and root. Archangeli divides his attention between his stomach and his defense proposal. The narrator makes a distinction between his divided concerns/loyalties. Is he to pay homage to the noble beast or to sacrifice the noble beast to his stomach? Irrationally, he does both. Appropriately, the words "tastes" and "flesh and blood" prompt Archangeli to think of his stomach before he completes his argument on honor. Thus the act of enunciating introduces a catalysis to anticipate and delay the discourse. The minor description of the feast introduced by the parenthesis is a

subsidiary notion which clusters around the words mentioned above. The parenthetical allusion is to the sacrifice of animals for consumption. And it weakens his argument by suggesting that animals are noble, but not so noble that Archangeli can't sacrifice them for the luxury of his dinner table. In a satirical vein, the narrator performs a "homage to vile flesh and blood" (534) by presenting the cooked remains of this flesh and blood at the dinner table where he hopes to gratify his tastes.

The use of different tenses in the parenthetic stanza of lines 534-40 reflects a concern with the uncertainty of speech acts. The narrator introduces his digression in the present perfect tense, "May Gigia have remembered," expressing some time before the present (now). His digression slides into the past: "I said-- / Was there need I should say" and back to the present perfect: "She cannot have been so obtuse," into the present: "To our argument," and finally, closes in the future tense: "The fennel will be chopped." These lines reflect a mind in transition--one battling with the question of an "unperformed action" in which Archangeli struggles with the rhetorical question: "Was there need I should say" and its consequence. His resolve is that "the fennel will be chopped," but his resolve is in the future tense which leaves Archangeli hanging with the uncertainty, the possiblity that the failure to explicity enunciate leads to misinterpretation.

The implicit message of the parenthesis, which reveals uncertainty, provides an index to Archangeli's personality--his fear is that he has possibly failed at expressing some of the finer points which can make all the difference in any speech act.

The interpretive function, which serves as an index to the character, overlaps with the associational which suggests that like the addition of finer roots to please Archangeli's tastes, Archangeli's arguments must be rooted in the finer points in order to please the tastes of the judges. Shaw states that "the sinister note is heightened by his [Archangeli's] eulogy of the banquet, which is given the same importance as his skill as an advocate" (272).

The second digression (719-21) on the feast reveals a series of rhetorical gradations digressing into a reductive parenthesis which carries a metonymic association--the sign of gratification, the melon. In the first of these rhetorical gradations, Archangeli catalogues changes within the law from ancient to his own present day,

> Stoning by Moses' law. "Nay, stone her not,
> Put her away!" next legislates our Lord;
> And last of all, "Nor yet divorce a wife!"
> Ordains the church . . . . (692-695)

The process of leveling continues as the narrator states, "The Gospel checks the Law which throws the stone, / The Church tears the divorce-bill Gospel grants" (706-7).

Finally, Archangeli reduces a biblical reference of the Jews longing for Egypt's melons to a comical aside whereby the melon gives gratification and becomes a mere plaything for Giacinto:

> (There was one melon had improved our soup:
> But did not Cinoncino need the rind
> To make a boat with? So I seem to think.)
>
> 719-721

The melon is no longer an object inscribed with the Lord's lesson. The narrator uses the image of the melon to create an association which goes against the lesson intended in the gospel. He is guilty of misrepresentation.

Archangeli uses the parable to justify Guido's revenge on Pompilia and her family. The nineteenth-century rhetorician Richard Whately, who advocated "an ecclesiastical rhetoric with service to the Cross, not Caesar" (Stewart 139), cautions those who use scripture-parables as examples for their argument:

> In the Parable of the unjust Steward, an Argument is drawn from Analogy, to recommend prudence and foresight to Christians in spiritual concerns; but it would be absurd to conclude that fraud was recommended to our imitation; and yet mistakes very similar to such a perversion of that Argument are by no means rare. . . . And moreover, men are thus guarded against the mistake they are so prone

> to, and which, even as it is, they are continually falling into, of laying aside their common-sense altogether in judging of any matter connected with religion; as if the rules of reasoning which they employ in temporal matters, were quite unfit to be applied in spiritual. (116-18)

The scriptural verse Arcangeli refers to (found in Numbers 11.5-6) admonishes the discontented Jews to savor God's gifts and deny the "melons, cucumbers, / And such like trash of Egypt left behind!" (717-18). The melons signify man's need to gratify his appetite. If the Jews had not been deprived of such riches, they would not have been as discontented as they were. By contrast with the Jews, Archangeli points out that Guido is the ideal Roman model--the "Natural Man"--for all to follow: he denied abstention and indulged his appetite of rage by avenging his lost honor. Barred from "primitive revenge" man's rage is "like fire damped and dammed up; it only "burns more fierce" (712-13). "Law, Gospel, and the Church" (711), even the "Molinists who bar revenge" (294), contribute to the suppression of man's natural desires. Introducing the seemingly very small detail of the melon, Archangeli destroys his argument by twisting the biblical parable. For Archangeli, the melon is "an object whose power to fascinate derives from . . . a veiled promise of the ultimate" gratification (Genette, Narrative Discourse 102).

Archangeli uses a descriptive pause (flashback) as a parody on the pleasure of Egypt's melons and as a denial that gluttony breeds lust and lust breeds "trash." On the contrary, melons breed good food. He conveniently uses a moment in the past to delay an anticipated event--the defense. His anticipated event serves as a mnemonic device for a past action; therefore, the pause's primary function is associational.

Because Archangeli's interjection qualifies and explains the verse he introduces, it also functions as an interpretive digression. The word "melon" triggers the parenthetical segment. "Melon" or the idea of gluttony--which the biblical verse implies--becomes the sign which draws the audience's attention away from the idea of abstention that the defense attorney has been trying to repudiate all along. The defense attorney indirectly reveals what the scriptural verse means to him. R.A. Sayce states that "the conne[x]ion between linguistic signs and the facts of the universe or the relations between those facts" (126) give signs meaning. The narrator's internalized question probes his feeling about "such trash" as melons. Can an object like the melon, which gives so much physical pleasure by gratifying not only a child's imagination but man's tastes as well, be trash? The physical facts have a greater degree of assurance and

pleasure for Archangeli than the moral facts (expressed in scripture).

The emphasis on uncertainty expressed in the last sentence, "So I seem to think" (721), qualifies the parenthesis as meditative. It involves the assumption of fallibility on the part of the narrator. Jeremy Bentham, the late eighteenth and early nineteenth-century philosopher, described language as a system of signs which represented complex psychological activity: "Linguistic behavior is correspondingly complex and conditioned by one's accumulated experiences which become associated with words" (Brockriede 149). The subjective and interpretive nature of the parentheses reflects the process of thinking. Archangeli's thought patterns form a system of signs not unlike a map carefully revealing roads not yet traveled. Archangeli expresses his natural predisposition toward uncertainty in the final sentence (line 721). His investigative nature leads him to believe that a thorough investigation of the evidence is a means of reaching knowledge and understanding of the physical facts but not the moral facts, which he expresses with doubt. Did his son need the rind for a plaything, or might there have been a more useful message in the melon?

By presenting a flashback which reduces into a digression, the narrator introduces his third parenthetic digression above (1086-94) with the following method of

deliberative oratory:

> Picture us raging here and raving there--
>
> . . . .
>
> 'I see my grandsire, he who fought so well
>
> At' . . . here find out and put in time and place,
>
> Or else invent the fight his grandsire fought:
>
> 'I see this? I see that?' (1078-85)

He presents Guido's grandsire's heroic deeds in some forgotton battlefield with the rhetorical device of repetition. The parenthetic stanza in lines 1086-93 opens with the word "see" which Archangeli introduces repeatedly outside the parenthesis and again repeats inside the parenthesis. Archangeli uses a method of deliberative oratory that praises the past of some patriotic deed in order to get the court to "see" the integrity of his client's character. He envisions Guido's "grandsire, he who fought so well" and attempts to "find out" if indeed Guido's grandsire ever did fight in battle. If there is no battle to praise, Archangeli will "invent the fight his [Guido's] grandsire fought." Imaginatively, the defense attorney sees "this" and "that" (1082-85) ficticious battle taking place within his mind. Thus, if the court can "see" the association between the grandsire and the client, Archangeli can establish his client's strength of character.

Archangeli appeals to the judges by corrupting evidence. He will "invent the fight" if one does not

exist. By establishing his client's family member as a reputable, honorable, and patriotic hero, the defense hopes to win over the court, even though he has to win them over by what Quintilian calls "opportunistic, unscrupulous, rhetorically untrained" methods (Kennedy 56-57). Quintilian recognized deliberative oratory as a definite part of rhetoric, but did not accept the "appeals of . . . flatterers and corrupters, who had "the power of using everything persuasive in a speech" (Quintilian qtd. in Kennedy 58).

The narrator, Archangeli, does not attempt to mask his stylistic trick. Rhetoricians, like Campbell, Blair, Whatley, and Priestly--the most influential rhetoricians between the periods 1780-1880 who aided in advancing the new rhetoric--condemned the topics (arguments of invention) when these produced artistic arguments (those which applied non-scientific methods of investigation) that contradicted the more important nonartistic ones (testimony, documents, etc.). The defense attorney does not rely on the testimony of witnesses to aid his case. Instead, he adopts the traditional rhetorical methods of Cicero and allows his invented arguments to outweigh the facts. If no such heroic deed exists, he will manufacture one to further his case. Lacking in discipline and serious intent, Archangeli's ficticious imaginings carry over into his own silent, reflective thoughts.

In a comic vein, the transistion from the ficticious, slaughtered flesh of the battlefield, in lines 1078-85 (introducing the parenthetic digression), to the smoking dish's flesh of lamb's fry, in the digression of lines 1086-93, arouses expectations in the narrator. With the immediate lack of any resources to help him discover if any such battle exists to aid his client, Archangeli suspends the moment in time, passing into the more gratifying reflective thoughts of his stomach and ancestral inheritance.

The descriptive function in the lawyer's parenthetic digression above (1086-93) provides another family character portrait, but this time it is one of his own. This portrait links back to one of the uncles of line 36 who will not merely drop in for the feast, but "trudge through rain and wind, Rather!" (37-8). The association with line 40, which characterizes the uncles as "Gossips, too, each with keepsake in his poke," generates the satiric mood of the parenthetic digression: "You, sir,--who care so much for cousinship / As come to your poor loving nephew's feast!" (1092-93). With the use of insincere flattery, Archangeli's pernicious wit advances on the uncle just as it earlier advanced on the jury.

Consistent with his preparations for his anticipated speech to the court, which takes place outside the parenthesis, Archangeli makes preparation for his

anticipated speech to the uncle. The "brokenness" (Dahl 115) of his thoughts is not unlike what Liisa Dahl says of Leopold Bloom's "broken words in the interior monologue" (115) of James Joyce's Ulysses; they imply that the

> associations proceed more quickly than verbalization can take place in his mind. Associations are replaced by new ones before they have been fully formulated. . . . An attempt to analyze one's own mental soliloquy, particularly when swayed by emotion, reveals a rapid succession of associations. The method by which Joyce reproduced his flow in linguistic form gives a psychologically convincing picture of the working mind. (115)

Archangeli's mental leaps from his stomach, to his ancestry, to his concern with land-leasing, and back to his stomach suggests a mind struggling with different interests--all of which are at stake. Which of these interests have priority over the others? He uses each to aid and further his own gratification. Knowing the uncle loves lamb's fry aids Archangeli's cause to win over the lease. Even in his own silent thoughts he cannot separate himself from his role as the lawyer fighting for a cause. But, again, what are his priorities? Is his "care so much for cousinship," or is his concern with advancing an argument which will win his son "the reversion of a long lease?" This discrepancy in his

loyalties becomes apparent as we recognize Archangeli's more material concerns. It casts doubt on the image the narrator wants to project as the man "Honoring God and serving man" (54).

Finally, the last parenthesis noted (1368-75) is indicial because it functions primarily to transfer Archangeli's intense anger from the impersonal world of the courtroom to the more personal world of his home. The narrator carries out the transfer by abruptly interrupting the sixth and last aggravation, which causes Archangeli to erupt with wrath. Archangeli transfers his extreme anger to the parenthesis, even to the last line: "I cannot stay much longer stewing here." Yes, there is a "porcupine to barbecue" for the birthday feast, but is not Guido the real porcupine that the attorney has in mind? The discourse inside and outside intertwines. Paul de Man states that discourse "opens up vertiginous possibilities of referential aberration" (30).

In the lines above (1368-75), it is impossible to predict just who or what referent Archangeli is referring to. The metonymic association is blurred. Is Bottini the devil that instigates the wench? Could we not associate Pompilia as that wench and Guido as the porcupine which the devil instigates the wench to stew? Can we trust the narrator to give us an exact referent when we cannot even be sure where he is referring to when he says, "I cannot stay

much longer stewing here" (1375)? The digressions usually serve as temporal indicators, providing temporal and spatial breaks. But in this case the digression does not provide any temporal distance between the introspective traces of memory and the narrator's actual speech time. There exists no duration between the narrative and the digression.

Because the parenthesis contains no duration proper, there is ambiguity as to the narrator's position. Is he "stewing" (angered) because of the stewed porcupine, or because he has lapsed from his drafted speech? What is the narrator referring to when he says "here"? Is he implying that he cannot waste his time worrying about whether or not the cook will stew the porcupine, or that he cannot waste his time tracing his memory when he must get back to his speech? His earlier habit, acknowledgement of straying from his speech (123-24), is an indicator of the lack of temporal distance between the introspection and the narration. Since it is impossible to decide by grammatical or other linguistic devices whether a literal or a figurative meaning explains the parenthesis, we must accept the language as possibly characterizing both explicit and implicit meaning.

The discontinuity between what is inside and outside the parenthesis provides indicial clues. With all the intensity that exclamation marks reveal, Archangeli outside the parenthesis states, "Yes, here the erruptive wrath with full effect! / How, did not indignation chain my tongue, /

Could I repel this last, worst charge of all!" (1367). He is so full of anger, that his tongue forces him back--he is speechless. Bottini is "the devil" that brings forth the charges Archangeli must defend. Fred V. Randel notes that

> such parentheses can portray hidden layers of intensity which dwell beneath speech and action; [they] have the advantage of stressing the discontinuity between what is inside and what is outside the parenthesis, in this case interior and exterior worlds. (74)

Interestingly, outside the parenthesis Archangeli reveals his anger directly: "our soul is stirred within" (1376). But he controls his anger: "did not indignation chain my tongue" (1366). He anticipates this control, but within the parenthesis he acknowledges that he must let go of his control: "I cannot stay much longer stewing here" (1375). The repetition of the word "stew" indexes Arcangeli's character, exposing his need to sublimate that anger into a compulsive desire for food. But the sublimation is not complete or successful because at one point he threatens the cook, "If she does [stew his porcupine], I know where his quills shall stick!" (1374).

Browning's choice of an interior monologue for his poem makes his use of parentheses all the more complexed. Therefore, what is said both inside and outside the parenthesis is all part of the interior world of

Archangeli. The lines outside of the parenthesis anticipate an external event; they are preparatory notes "I' the rough" (1722). Those lines within the parenthesis do not anticipate the event of the courtroom; they merely reveal Archangeli's more immediate concerns outside the courtroom. The discontinuity in this passage is that of subject matter. While the subject outside the interjection is clearly "wrath" and "indignation," the subject within is a "porcupine." So how does Archangeli release his anger? He flashes into another impending event, the feast. He cannot handle his anger appropriately, so he suppresses it by changing the subject to the feast. It is an escape motif. He is perfectly safe in this self-centered world (revealed in the parenthesis) where he is free from restraint and control. He cannot control his anger, and he doubts if he can even control the outcome of his dinner. But even this (his control in his own kitchen) is in doubt. After all, "Suppose the devil instigate the wench [Gigia] / To stew, not roast him [the porcupine] (13771-72)? Reality imposes itself even in Archangeli's own safe harbor--his kitchen. There is a deep sense of insecurity, a fear of being stripped of all that one has (the fear of exposure by Bottini).

This fear of being exposed as the "Master Fop" of the legal profession gives Archangeli "the compulsive desire to surrround himself with objects that in one way or another mean security and safety to the threatened soul" (Schneider 449). However psychiatry may explain obsession with food--whether as related to oral-aggressive tendencies or as manifesting anxiety more generally--the compulsion to think of food is without a question one of the great preoccupations of Archangeli. Browning portrays his glimpse of the divided self as it attempts to escape from its own self-examination.

A Machiavellian Education

While the mind slumbers with visions of Archangeli's legal appeals, it is suddenly roused by signifiers informing us of Archangeli's seductive, Machiavellian, educational appeals:

> (Virgil, now, should not be too difficult
> To Cinoncino,--say, the early books.
> Pen, truce to further gambols! Poscimur!) 465-67

> (Ay,
> In monasterio! He mismanages
> In with the ablative, the accusative!
> I had hoped to have hitched the villain into verse

> For a gift, this very day, a complete list
> O' the prepositions each with proper case,
> Telling a story, long was in my head.
> What prepositions take the accusative?
> Ad to or at--who saw the cat?--down to
> Ob, for, because of, keep her claws off! Tush!
> Law in a man takes the whole liberty:
> The muse is fettered: just as Ovid found!)
>
> 952-63

In the first digression, the speaker's quotation from Virgil's epic poem the Aeneid, "To whose dominion I impose no end," (464) serves as a transition which leads Archangeli into his digression on Giacinto's education. The Virgilian quote, designed by the narrator to argue for his case on honor, allows the narrator to slide into his interjection on Giacinto's education. While he introduces his aside with an English translation of Virgil's Aeneid, he ends his aside with a Latin quotation from Horace, "Poscimur!" which translates "I am called upon [for an ode]" (Cook 169). The speaker seems engaged in the education of his son. The irony that announces itself in this digression is that the poet of whom Archangeli speaks (Virgil) represents the prototype of the ideal Roman ruler whose qualities are the devotion to duty and seriousness of purpose from which Archangeli takes a respite. In fact, most of the speaker's digressions allow Archangeli to retreat into the world of

self where we discover Archangeli's obsession with his son's birthday feast, as well as his more puerile and frivolous concerns with food. Like Ovid, Browning's mischievous spirit delights in the grotesque, stark, and comic--poking fun at the more serious subject matter. Browning's portraits in The Ring and the Book should not be taken seriously; they are, similar to Ovid's, "simply convenient devices for assembling motives" (Wilkinson 19). Both poets treat their characters "with amused cynicism." (Wilkinson 35). Thus, Archangeli's digression becomes a reductive parenthesis which is effectively anti-heroic.

The parenthesis serves to retard the action, producing suspense. The syntactic discontinuity causes us constantly to "pause and reflect on subtle distinctions so that we find ourselves postponing the action of final apprehension until the last possible moment" (Tompkins 187). The first line within the parenthesis (465) qualifies Archangeli's interjection with the word "now" and the phrase "say, the early books." These qualifiers "force the reader in midstream, to consider new aspects of an idea before he has grasped it as a whole" (Tomkins 186). Eric Auerbach states that a digression which

> will increase suspense by retarding the action must be so constructed that it will not fill the present entirely, will not put the crisis, whose resolution is being awaited, entirely out of the

> reader's mind, and thereby destroy the mood of
> suspense; the crisis and the suspense must
> continue, must remain vibrant in the background.
> (4)

A symbiotic relationship keeps the narrative intact. The introduction of Virgil's quote, outside the parenthesis (464), generates the introduction of his name in the digression. The narrative background remains intact with the introduction of Virgil, which not only refers to the quote outside the parenthesis (line 464) but also to an early passage on line 76:

> How falls plumb to point
> This murder, gives me Guido to defend
> Now, of all days i' the year, just when the boy
> Verges on Virgil, reaches the right age
> For some such illustration from his sire
> Stimulus to himself! (73-78)

Thus, the name Virgil in the digression provides a link between the far removed event in the textual segment found above with that of the digression on Giacinto's education on line 465. It reminds us that Giacinto's education is the "point" to Archangeli's defense of Guido. We learn early in the narrative what the case means to the defense attorney. It is an illustration for his son: "All for our tribute to Cinotto's day" (95).

Although the interjection of line 534 seems as if it has been tossed in at random, it serves as a reminder of just what the case means to the dramatized narrator. Browning retrospectively hints at Archangeli's real purpose in the case. Archangeli's ego is at stake in this case. He will either win or lose the battle with Bottini. We view Archangeli's "egotism almost as [we] might view [our] own: it is deplorable, but there it is" (Booth 280). The narrator places himself at the level of Virgil, if not above, suggesting that if Giacinto follows his line of argument above, then Virgil should "not be too difficult." Earlier he admits that "Virgil is little help to who writes prose" (133), suggesting that his preparatory notes are not prose, but "both solid and poetic" (531), sheer poetry, "with which Horatian promise" (1789) he concludes his work.

The parenthesis serves to show us a double vision whereby Archangeli and Browning voice their concerns. Archangeli's outcry, expressed so aptly with a succession of exclamation marks, aims at curbing his digressions and getting back to his proposed defense. He recognizes that he must check his ardor, and like a poem (an ode) presented before a public festival, he must present his case before a public jury of judges. The suggested simile reveals his lack of seriousness. The case is no more than a mere form of entertainment before the public.

The last line, "Pen, truce to futher gambols," seems to be an outcry not only of the dramatized narrator, who seeks from his writing instrument a truce that will enable him to cease his digressions or gambols, but possibly of Browning's concern for Pen (the poet's son) to cease his primitive escapades and take a serious interest in his moral and educational role. The last line of the parenthetic stanza (467) possibly shows Browning's intrusion into the narrative. It may reveal his own concerns with his son's education. In her Browning biography, Betty Miller notes how "the primitive manners of the local peasant girls were not lost upon Pen Browning--a young man with 'dreadfully incipient moustachios' who was dutifully reading Virgil under his father's supervision" (236). And documentation reveals that "the responsibility, moral and educational, of his son was to become an increasing burdern" to Browning (Miller 239).

In the second digression (952-63), the indirect reference to Giacinto's education is associative since it links back to both an earlier and later discussion on Giacinto's education:

> Branches me out his verb-tree on the slate,
> Amo -as -avi -atum -are -ans,
> Up to -aturus, person, tense, and mood. (4-6)
> Rogue Hyacinth shall put on paper toque,

. . . .

Always provided that he conjugate
Bibo, I drink, correctly--nor be found
Make the perfectum, bipsi, as last year!
(1740-51)

Both discussions stress or emphasize Archangeli's concern with the grammatical aspects or rules of the Latin language. Archangeli's earlier and later concern is with the "verb tree," while his digression beginning on line 952 shows his concern with listing prepositions in their "proper case." Mrs. Orr points out that Browning's father "taught his son from babyhood the words he wished him to remember by joining them to a grotesque rhyme; the child learnt all his Latin declensions in this way" (12). Line 960 reflects Browning's early affinities with rhyming; "Ad to or at--who saw the cat?" He used particular words as mnemonic devices.

Similarly, Archangeli conditionally responds to particular words that refer to the legal profession. Consider the associative words or those that link or tie in with law: "accusative," "villain," "case," "Law," "liberty," "fettered." The etymology of the word "accusative" comes from the Latin "accusativus," indicating accusation. Edward Berdoe makes the association between the word "fettered" and the tool at "Law's disposal . . . named Vigiliarum" (Browning 8. 324-25) when he defines the term

"Vigiliarum" as a form of torture which binds or fetters the body to an instrument that incessantly jerks the limbs (429). Just as Browning with his conditioned response of grotesque rhymes recited his declensions, he dramatizes his narrator Archangeli reciting his oration with the conditioned response of legal terms.

The abundance of assonance returns us to Archangeli's earlier mnemonic recitation or enumeration of Giacinto's conjugation of verbs. The alliteration of "a" in "Amo -as -avi -atum -are -ans" (4-6) is not unlike the numerous alliteration of first syllables found in the digression beginning on line 953. Line 953 repeats the sound "m": "In monasterio! He [Giacinto] mismanages"; line 954 repeats "a," as well as the suffix "tive": "In with the ablative, the accusative"; line 955 repeats "h" and "v": "I had hoped to have hitched the villain into verse," and finally, line 957 repeats "p": "O' the prepositions each with proper case."

The significance of these grammatical rules for Archangeli seems evident enough when we consider the predominance of rules in the legal profession. For Archangeli, rules make up law; truth is the end of law; therefore, rules set forth truth. Archangeli relies on this traditional syllogistic reasoning. The seventeenth-century philosopher and mathematician Rene Descartes stated that

> as far as logic was concerned its syllogisms and most of its other methods serve rather to explain to another what one already knows, or . . . to speak without judgement of what one does not know, than to learn new things. (18-19)

Since Archangeli's task is "explaining matters, not denying them" (309), he manipulatively "makes logic levigate the big crime small" (1. 1145) Rene Descartes declaration, "I think, therefore I am," posited that truth exists in only those things that the mind clearly and distinctly perceives. The philosophical discoveries made during the seventeenth-century set forth an epistemology based on man's own perceptions. The eighteenth-century English philosopher John Locke "put in a new form the old argument that only particular, concrete things exist" (Perkins 12). Because we abstract ideas from experiences which are sensory, our "sensations are the utlimate source of our ideas" (Perkins 12). British empirical psychology "strongly reinforced the particularist and circumstantial bias in Romantic poetry" (13).

Therefore, it is not unusual that Browning, who was indebted to Shelley and the Romantic movement for his own creations, should dramatize a narrator who follows the philosophical code of "circumstantial bias," relying on his own perceived "logic-throw" (1. 239). Archangeli "wheezes out law-phrase[s]" (2243) while "he turns, twists, and tries

the oily thing" (l. 1152) that excogitates his version of truth. Jill Settlage notes that "Browning's characterizinglaw as a machine suggests its endless crushing of the individual" (33). The defense attorney relies on conditioned legal responses which fetter the muse and inhibit creative and inspired genius. What makes this situation even worse is that his primary motive is to instruct his son in performing similar conditioned reponses.

The acquisition of Latin goes beyond educational achievement or knowledge; it becomes a knowledge rooted in the evil of an ambitious rogue more interested in the manner in which he presents himself than in the cause for which he fights: "Better we lost the cause than lacked the gird / At the Fisc's Latin, lost the Judge's laugh!" (214-15). The digression discloses Archangeli's overriding concern with hitching "the villain [a list of rules] into verse / For a gift, this very day" for his son. Archangeli desires that his son obtain "the gift of eloquence" (1. 1171) that "whiffles Latin forth" (l. 1143), hoping that his son will carry on the tricks of Archangeli's trade. His main concern is appearing to be wise in order to win a case, while giving little concern to truth. Archangeli states, "Do you blame us that we turn Law's instruments" (872), and in line 1166 he cries out twice, "Means to an end, means to an end, my Fisc!" The means of manipulating the rules in order to

achieve a style that will win him the case justifies the end of Archangeli's perverted sense of truth--gratification through greed, fame, and fortune.

The interpretive function of the above digression (952-63) emphasizes how the lack of gratification produces an aesthetic response disclosing Archangeli's divided self. The following lines show Archangeli's propensity for theorizing about art: "Law in a man takes the whole liberty: / The muse is fettered: just as Ovid found!" (962-63), "Unluckily, law quite absorbs a man, / Or else I think I too had poetized" (148-49). These lines reveal Archangeli's habit of conjecturing. He supposes that he too might of been a poet if not for the demanding time which his profession requires. He speculates on what could have been possible for him if he had not chosen the legal profession. The parenthesis is inidicial, expressing what Robert Frost so poignantly spoke of in "The Road not Taken":

> Two roads diverged in a yellow wood,
> And sorry I could not travel both
> And be one traveler, long I stood
> And looked down one as far I could
> To where it bent in the undergrowth . . . . (1-5)

Archangeli's aesthetic generalization (in lines 952-63) is a manifestation of his frustration at having chosen the legal profession. Ironically, after reading Books VII, VIII and IX of <u>The Ring and the Book</u>, a Victorian critic stated,

"What a lawyer the bar lost when Robert Browning gave his intellect to the Muse" (Atlantic Monthly 259). The double vision portrayed in aesthetic terms signifies the two concerns/voices of the poet and the lawyer.

Characteristically, the parenthetic expression of the last two lines (964-63) embraces the idea of the divided self. The defense lawyer betrays his loyalty to law as Ovid becomes his symbol for the muse, and law becomes his symbol for imprisonment. Interestingly, Ovid was noted for his "pleasing shocks of blasphemy and vicarious wickedness" (Wilkinson 15). Wilkinson quotes Ovid: "Believe me, my conduct is different from my verse; my life is pure though my Muse be wanton" (15). Perhaps Archangeli's attraction lies in Ovid's "wanton Muse." "Fettered" by the traditional restrictions of his profession, Archangeli suggests he is "a like sufferer in the cause" (Cook 49) from which Ovid suffered. A. K. Cook tells how Roman officials exiled Ovid from Rome to "the dreary region of the Dobruda" (49) partly because of his publication of his Ars Amatoria, whose "blasphemy against conventional sanctities" (Wilkinson 51) went against Augustan moral rule.
Archangeli leads a double life. He follows the guidelines of his profession while at the same time desiring the uninhibited world of free love and sexuality which Ovid evokes in his poetry. Archangeli sublimates his desires by overeating. Law discouraged Ovid from writing poetry by

exiling him; so, too, law discourages Archangeli from partaking in the wild, free, uninhibited, romantic world which Ovid imagined. In his _Amores_, Ovid suggests that because of his passionate belief in poetry as a full-time occupation, criticism aqainst him was harsh:

> Why, consuming Jealousy, do you charge me with a life of idleness, and call poetry an occupation for sluggish spirits, complaining that I do not seek the usual hard-won rewards of soldiering, while the prime of life gives me strength, or learn by heart long-winded laws or prostitute my voice in the thankless courts? (qtd in Hollis 88)

Most Romans of Ovid's day did not consider poetry and literature as valuable or even worthwhile pursuits. The frivolity of these indicated a waste of one's time. Traditionally-minded Romans advanced themselves politically in public careers, while the shepherd or the full-time lover wasted his hours in literary pursuits. Even Cicero, whose speeches guide Archangeli in preparing a defense for Guido, stated that he would not waste his time reading lyric poets (Hollis 88). Archangeli reasons that to advance in his public career he must supress his poetic impulses or desires although he unintentionally undermines his position by sympathizing with Ovid, who made fun of the respectable profession of law.

The Rogue's Limited Vision

Finally, the last parenthetic stanza which takes place while the lawyer appeals to the Pope's higher authority in deciding the case, functions at several levels:

> (Our Cardinal engages to go read
> The Pope my speech, and point its beauties out.
> They say, the Pope has one half-hour, in twelve,
> Of something like a moderate return
> Of intellectuals,--never much to lose!
> If I adroitly plant this passage there,
> The Fisc will find himself forestalled, I think,
> Though he stand, beat till the old ear-drum break!
> --Ah, boy of my own bowels, Hyacinth,
> Wilt ever catch the knack, requite the pains
> Of poor papa, become proficient too
> I' the how and why and when, the time to laugh,
> The time to weep, the time, again, to pray,
> And all the times prescribed by Holy Writ?
> Well, well, we fathers can but care, but cast
> Our bread upon the waters!) 1438-1453

Each level at which the parenthesis operates reveals an important aspect of the defense attorney's character. We see and understand the character Archangeli not through his narrative account in the first-person as much as with his vision. Jean Pouillon notes the paradox as he states that

the character is seen

> not in his innerness, for then we would have to emerge from the innerness whereas instead we are absorbed into it, but is seen in the image he develops of others, and to some extent through that image. In sum, we apprehend him as we apprehend ourselves in our immediate awareness of things, our attitudes with respect to what surrounds us--what surrounds us and is not within us. Consequently we can say in conclusion: vison as an image of others is not a result of vision "with" the main character, it is itself that vision "with."
>
> (Genette, Narrative Discourse 193)

Although the dramatized narrator reflects in the first person: "I think" (1444), it is not our direct vision as readers of the narrator through the first-person which discloses Archangeli's character or motives. Surely, nowhere throughout the monologue does the narrator directly announce that he is a Machiavellian rogue. We develop an image of the character through Archangeli's vision of his (the character's) own surroundings and his attitude toward those surroundings.

The descriptive/narrative function of the parenthesis above overlaps with the interpretive and associative. Archangeli's direct appeal to the Pope in the first person

serves as a jumping off point for a general statement on the Pope's habits; "They say, the Pope has one half-hour, in twelve, / Of something like a moderate return / Of the intellectuals,--never much to lose!" (1440-41). Not only does the technique blur the distinction between the narrative text and the digression, it also serves an interpretive function. Archangeli satirically denigrates the Pope's mental powers, suggesting that the Pope experiences a reduction in his mental powers ("the intellectuals") that causes him to lie in a state of confusion ("moderate return") for a number of hours. The association carries over into the final Book where the poet of Book XII tells of another report on the Pope's habit of dozing off into a "stupor" (12. 57). A letter, received "from a stranger, man of rank, / Venetian visitor at Rome" (12 27-8), said of the old Pope,

> Yesterday he had to keep in-doors
> Because of the outrageous rain that fell.
> On such days the good soul has fainting-fits,
> Or lies in stupor, scarcely makes believe
> Of minding business, fumbles at his beads.
>
> (12. 54-58)

Even the Pope acknowledges the truth of the decayed sensibility, which he experiences in the state of grace:

> Nay, if the popular notion class me right,
> One of the well-nigh decayed intelligence,--

> What of that? Through hard labor and good will,
> And habitude that gives a blind man sight
> At the practised finger-ends of him, I do
> Discern, and dare decree in consequence,
> Whatever prove the peril of mistake.
>
> (10. 1238--46)

Ironically, Archangeli seems to experience the same lack of stability or sensibility as he digresses not only from his proposed appeal, but from one idea to another within the parenthesis. Introducing the Cardinal, who "engages to go read / The Pope [his] speech, and point its beauties out" (1438-1439), keeps the background of the narrative text intact while the narrator leaps from one idea to another. The habit of leaping from one idea to another is a system which Quintilian felt "imposed a double task on the mind" and proved to be too "cumbersome" (Kennedy 97). Indeed, the various ideas blur the distinction between the digression and the narrated text outside the parenthesis.

Archangeli's visual memory seductively imposes a kind of systematic order to his digression. He begins with noting his speech's beauties, to what he sees as the Pope's weakness, to his own adroitness at possibly forestalling Fisc's advances, "though he [Fisc] beat till the old ear-drum break" (1445), and finally ends with questioning the fate of his own son's capacity to carry on the family name of Hyacinthus and thereby "pledge a memory, when poor

papa / Latin and law are long since laid at rest" (1778-79). The pattern displayed is one of praise and criticism. Consistent with his own egotistical self-absorption, Archangeli praises his speech, his ability to forestall Fisc, and his proficiency "I' the how and why and when, the time to laugh, / The time to weep, the time, again, to pray, / And all the times prescribed by Holy Writ" (1449-1451). The introduction of Holy Writ and the biblical allusion of the last line continue to keep the narrative background intact.

The habit of criticizing others is not unusual for Archangeli. In fact, it is so ingrained in his personality that he even carries the trait over to those he loves. The question he poses in lines 1447-48 ("Wilt ever catch the knack, requite the pains of Poor papa, become proficient") is more a form of doubting than praise. Giacinto, states Archangeli, is a risk, not unlike the risk one takes with gambling when casting the dice: "we fathers can but care, but cast / Our bread upon the waters!" (1452-53). Will Giacinto maintain that guise which makes one appear wise and thereby bring success to the family name? Like the gambling risks involved in throwing dice, Achangeli must risk the future name of Hyacinthus by placing his son in charge of all. Is this a risk he wants to take? The parallel constructions of lines 1449-51: I' the how and why and when, the time to laugh, / The time to weep, the time again,

to pray, / And all the times prescribed by Holy Writ," disclose Archangeli's intense concern with time and his uncertainty with the future. Archangeli recognizes, all too well, that his own mortality, his finite existence, forces him to take the risk. He ends his digression with an interpretive generalization on time and the impermanence of the self.

The associative organizational patterns themselves, as well as the sharp images, are characteristically Browningesque. Archangeli's mental leaps are not unlike the human mind working through the anxieties of everyday concerns. Richard Lloyd-Jones' disseration on the common speech of Browning points out that "the leaps from image to image as a way of thinking naturally lead to the associative patterns of speech organization" (113). The parenthetical comments with their precise, realistic, and plain images create Byronic colloquial effects that "approximate the meandering patterns of thought rather than the patterns of formal rhetoric" (Lloyd-Jones 103). The parenthetical expressions are, states Lloyd-Jones, devices "to catch the flavor of speech" (107). In this device, we look for expressions establishing the virtue and credibility of the speaker.

The parenthetic expression allows us immediately to discern Browning's parody of the lawyer, Archangeli. With this device, Browning highlights his sneers. Settlage's

M.A. thesis points out that "to Gest [John Marshall Gest analyzed the arguments of the case found in the Old Yellow Book], of course, Browning's contemptuous lawyers, who manipulate logic and language, are entirely false [exaggerated] characterizations" of the real lawyers (29). Browning's purpose in undercutting the "strength and sense of" the lawyer's arguments was "to show that no person--even a legal representative--[is] beyond subjectivity" (Settlage 29). So where is the "lingot truth" that "[f]rom the book" Browning "bit by bit" dug up? Truth, says the poet, "nowhere, lies yet everywhere in these--/ Not absolutely in a portion, yet / Evolvable from the whole" (10. 228-30) William O. Raymond translates and evolves Archangeli's role from the preceding verse: "Deception must be intermixed with truth in order to adapt the latter to the imperfect probationary character of man's destiny in this world" (qted. in Kajs 22).

Style imparts meaning. Ohmann states that style is a way of knowing that imparts understanding (73). Commenting in the unobtrusive style of a seemingly effaced author, Browning provides secret clues by introducing parenthetical expressions that cast doubt on his dramatized narrator. The result is a kind of double vision: we have the effect of seeing things through Archangeli's eyes, but the moral vision is Browning's all the while.

CHAPTER IV

DISRUPTIVE DOUBT

Parentheses vary in length. While the longer parenthetic sequences function in a greater variety of ways, the shorter parentheses, consisting of a word, a phrase, or a sentence merely serve as brief comments. As readers, we often overlook the short disruptive parentheses. Their function is important because they comment on what has been said in the narrative text, thereby enabling us more accurately to discern the attitude or position of the narrator. The short disruptive parentheses exemplify a didactic generalization and are "always subordinated to the interpretive function" (Suleiman 466). They serve as illustrative points. The dispersion of the parentheses and the insertion of unpredictable expansions within them provide the narrative with an opportunity to absorb an ironical tone/mood that discloses information which we perceive as a flaw in the narrator. These particular illustrative points, which serve to expose the weaknesses reflected in the narrator, lay "bare the purely rhetorical, nay fictional status" (Suleiman 467) the assertion puts forth. These illustrative points are didactic in that they reveal the irony of the speaker.

The interior monologue of Archangeli's text provides the internal focalization of the character, but the brief

parenthetic interjections provide further "indices of focalization" (Genette, Narrative Discourse 202). Genette tells us that as readers we "must interpret as indices of focalization" whatever openings into the psychology of characters present themselves (Narrative Discourse 202). Even more importantly, in an interior monologue where the whole of the text is in the form of mental introspection, the rhetorical devices of the narrator impart clues to the character's personality. Ohmann's book Shaw the Style and the Man confirms "the connections between style and thought" (Xiii) by analyzing how particular stylistic devices reflect emotional patterns not unlike what Burke decribes in "A Rhetoric of Motives."

There is irony behind Archangeli's doubts. The short parenthetic expressions consisting of a word, phrase, or sentence serve to impede the progess of a sentence momentarily, causing a loss of direction while at the same time providing indicial clues. Archangeli's monologue abounds in mental seesaws, in rhetorical questions. This questioning exposes doubt and uncertainty. But it is also a rhetorical technique. Renaissance figures of disputation representing a rhetorical analysis of various techniques were commonly used in oratory. One figure commonly used was that of aporia--"a doubting or deliberating with oneself" (Joseph 381). The narrator often expresses doubt through the use of various figures. The first two lines of his

monologue expose his obsession with rhetorical questioning--"Ah my Gaicinto, he's no ruddy rogue, / Is not Cinone? What, to-day we're eight?" And in line 101 he asks, "How can the Pope doze on in decency?" He asks of the court, "Hath not my court a conscience" (1415), and on line 698 he asks, "who presumes to doubt" the law?

The short, abruptive, parenthetic expressions reflect many of Archangeli's own doubts. Because they abruptly impede and then just as abruptly return to the proposed argument, the short parentheses also suggest momentary losses of direction in the narrator. The narrator's own doubting or questioning creates doubt as to the adequacy of the dramatized narrator's own ability to accurately assess the situation. More importantly, these doubts lead us to the irony of his reflective pauses. We know too much of seduction to be willing to place trust in a person who is so knowing about how to "titillate the brain o' the Bench" (8. 257). Browning ironically uses Archangeli's parenthetic doubts in order to peel off the stylistic guise of his narrator. The subsequent analysis reveals the trickster whose reasoning exposes his unintentional irony and whose rhetorical methods disclose his seductive techniques.

Unintended Irony

The following parenthetic pauses reveal the narrator's doubts, and these lead to an ironical mood displaying Archangeli's lack of wit:

> (Or if not Aelian, somebody as sage) 505.
>
> (By Cavalier Maratta, shall I say?
> I hear he's first in reputation now) 630-31.

The first parenthetic pause above (505) is an admission of Archangeli's ignorance which he introduces after a lengthy discussion on the mating habits of animals. Not only does Archangeli's questioning of his resources create doubt, but his reasoning and presentation of the following material (478) disclose his lack of wit:

> Bird mates with bird, beast genders with his like,
> And brooks no interference. Bird and beast?
> The very insects . . . if they wive or no,
> . . . .
> But the presumption is they likewise wive,
> At least the nobler sorts; for take the bee
> . . . .
> Only cold-blooded fish lack instinct here,
> Nor gain nor guard connubiality:
> But beast, quadrupedal, mammiferous,

Do credit to their beasthood: witness him
That Aelian, cites, the noble elephant, ...
(478-504)

Attempting to salvage Guido's honor by making the comparison with beasts merely links Guido with beasts--surely an unintended error on the attorney's part. Archangeli's philosophical, objective, scientific stance does not aid him in the cause. In fact, it serves as a double irony when we note that Archangeli will present his speech to the Pope--who was at odds with the scientific community at the time. Ironically, the narrator's cataloguing of the animal kingdom--birds, insects, bees, fish, and finally, the noble elephant--by a process which Ohmann describes as "leveling" (73) does not aid the narrator's cause. The material merely serves to further indict his client, Gudio.

Suggesting he is a dissenter, the information within the parenthesis in line 505 operates as an index to Archangeli's character. Associating the traits of man with those of animals hints of heresy, especially in a time when the Roman court considered much of the new scientific knowledge as a threat to Christian doctrine. The church of Archangeli's time was compiling a list of books which they forbade good Catholics to read. The reading of Roman and Greek mythology, tragedies, comedics, poctry, and even treatises, like that of Aelian's whose information could be

distorted, produced suspicion among the clergy. The church's greatest fear was that the belief in the new mechanical image of the world as "matter in motion" would undermine the belief in miracles. Archangeli's implication that there may indeed be some connection between the animal world and the human world--as Darwin later put into theory--could only aid in destroying the sense of mystery that the church so desperatly held on to. Using as his primary source for his argument on honor a heretical reading that for the seventeenth-century the church considered unorthodox makes Archangeli's unintended irony all the more clear. Should we place our trust in a lawyer who puts his client at risk with arguments that will surely lose him the case?

Another irony that reveals itself in the first parenthetic pause (505) is the reference to Aelian whose epithet as the "'honey-tongued,' from the sweetness of his style" (Berdoe 429), contrasts with Archangeli's rhetorical excesses. One of the many comments made on Browning's verse is that it is obscure. Aelian's treatises on animals are not widely read today, and they were not widely read during Browning's day. But the educated people of the Renaissance period were still clinging to the past. Many of the humanists of the period became intoxicated with the antiquity of the past--pagan cultures, ancient language, literature and art. What we discover of Archangli is his

ignorance of ancient literature. Shaw notes that Archangeli's "oration is a form of subversion by antics and includes both social and rhetorical clowning" (268).

Archangeli's own admission as to his uncertainty of the quotes he presents exposes his ignorance: "I hardly recollect it, but it ends, / . . . / Or if not Aelian, somebody as sage" (477-505). The problem presented is that we are unsure of his honesty when he states in his speech, "I hardly recollect it." More than likely, because his speech act is meant to persuade, he uses deceptive rhetorical techniques to induce empathy through a form of humble admission before the court, whom he flatters with remarks like, "to the Hill of Mars, . . . / to that assembly of the sage / Paralleled only by my judges here" (921-924). Not wanting to sound too pedantic to the court, nor overwhelmingly ignorant, the narrator seems to choose his speech passages carefully. Ironically, his attention to the detailing of animal habits unmasks him before the court as an overly pretentious buffoon.

Archangeli's tricks move forward as we, and no doubt the court later recognizes, discover he is less than honest and more like a manipulative, "honey-tongued" sophist. "Seduction," says Leslie Fiedler, "is always creative" (qtd in Maebelle Jones 30). Browning sets out to educate and train imaginations to the seductive powers of the trickster. Both appreciative insight and critical vigilence

lead us to what Richard Langbaum describes as "the poetry of experience."

The second reflective doubt functions as an illustrative point which produces irony. A catalysis develops just at the point where Archangeli's discourse on grief digresses into a rhetorical question on art's portrayal of life: "Was ever portrait limned so like the life" (629). His sentence structure in lines 623-26 makes use of the particular scheme of construction known as epistrophe: Nor knows shame at all, / . . . nor consults / Reason, . . . / nor dreads the loss of dignity." This device duplicates the narrator's own logical scheme of repeating words to aid his own memory. For example, on line 628 Archangeli repeats the word (trait): "why trait for trait," to lead him into the idea of portrait painting. Ironically, he sets up as his model of the portrait artist one Cavalier Maratta--a somewhat obscure artist to most nineteenth and twentieth-century audiences. Cook hints that although Maratta was "for nearly half a century the most eminent painter in Rome" (55), his fame did not last for long. Maratta's paintings of virgins may have produced an uproar in Rome during his own day, but in Browning's world, as well as our own, Maratta's portraits were "consigned to the oblivious lumber-room" (Charles Lamb, qtd in Cook 55), where, no doubt, the vigins were introduced to the hot furnace.

Archangeli becomes the "primary victim of Browning's pervasive irony in that he is, unlike the perspicacious poet himself, usually acutely unaware of the significance of what he sees" (Maebelle Jones 43) or says. In her dissertation entitled "The Terrrible Choice," Maebelle Jones likens Archangeli to the pilgrim Chaucer, who is "a seeker after good, but often mistaken" (43). Is Archangeli seeking after good, or is he merely attempting to release the fettered muse of line 963?

Archangeli's introspective questioning in the parenthetic pause of lines 630-31 reflects his sense of doubt and is indicial in that it characterizes his materialistic concerns for success and "good fame" (51). Certainly Maratta meets with Archangeli's standards; "he's (Maratta) first in reputation now" not unlike Archangeli's goal. Like the painter who illustrates "trait for trait" the portrait of a man's grief, the lawyer illustrates the reasons for a man's grief. Archangeli pleads his case "by way of illustration of the law" (1728). His emphasis on the word "now" (631) is a clue to his earlier speculation (lines 962-63) on the impermanence of time and his own mortality. The irony of this passage is that like Maratta, whose works were relegated to the lumber-room, Archangeli's famous defense is relegated to an old yellow book found at a vender's book stall;

> Here it is, this I toss and take again;
> Small-quarto size, part print part manuscript:
> A book in shape but, really, pure crude fact
> Secreted from man's life when hearts beat hard,
> And brains, high-blooded, ticked two centuries
> since. (Browning 1. 85-7)

Arbitrary, Rhetorical Methods of Seduction

The narrator's short, reflective doubt on line 675 clues us to his blatantly arbitrary, rhetorical methods of seduction:

> Saint Ambrose makes a comment with much fruit,
> Doubtless my Judges long since laid to heart,
> So I desist from bringing forward here.
> (I can't quite recollect it) 672-675.

Archangeli uses his wit to mask his igorance before the court, but he does not attempt to hide his manipulative tricks from us as his auditors. The information within the parenthesis is an admission of his ignorance. But can we believe the narrator? After all, on line 477, where he concedes, "I hardly quite recollect it," he pleads to the same ignorance (lack of knowledge) and uses it as a rhetorical device to produce empathy in the courtroom.

Archangeli does not want to seem overly pedantic, yet at the same time his aim is to flatter the judges. He does not plead total ignorance; he states he "hardly" recollects. The intention is to persuade, not to antagonize the court by name-dropping. The words "hardly" and "quite" qualify the clause. The confusion lies in that the clause of line 477 serves a nonrestrictive function within the main sentence, and therefore, it is impossible to know for sure whether the narrator intends that the court take note of this admission or not. Since the clause serves a nonrestrictive function within the main sentence and is not enclosed within parentheses--as in line 675--we assume the narrator intends that the court take note of this admission. But the story and the narrator's reflective admission of line 675 become tangled. Genette states that many times

> the extreme closeness of story to narrating produces . . . a very subtle effect of friction (if I may call it that) between the slight temporal displacement of the narrative of events. . . and the complete simultaneousness in the report of thoughts and feelings.
>
> (Narrative Discourse 217)

While line 477 seems to be part of the narrative event, the near equivalent expression of line 675, enclosed within parentheses, is a report of his thoughts. The narrated

event is an anticipated speech which Archangeli is writing at the time of the monologue, and the thoughts of the narrator are those of the present. This inconsistency in style (the narrated event and the digressive thoughts) produces confusion so that "focalization in the narrator is at the same time focalization of the hero" (Genette 218). Since the hero and the narrator are one and the same, the voices merge. The use of a rhetorical device like the parenthesis, which is transgressive--introducing into one situation the knowledge of another--usually allows us to distinguish between the two voices of narrating a speech and narrating thoughts. But at this point, the two moments seem to have no "duration proper" (Genette, Narrative Discourse 204). In his work Narrative Discourse, Genette speaks of the effect a displaced point of view has in creating "dissonance" (218).

Although the rhetoric of line 675 functions as explanatory--explaining why the narrator "desist[s] from bringing forward" Saint Ambrose's comment--it is also "alienating and seductive" (Howard Anderson 966). It is not unlike what Howard Anderson tells us of the narrator in Tristram Shandy:

> . . . we are at once put on guard and disarmed by Tristram's unexpected conciousness of our dawning criticism of his blatantly arbitrary narrative method (or, alternatively, by this sign that he is

> himself more aware than we had been of that very arbitrariness); we are both put off and attracted by the prospect of intimacy with a person of such perception. And we know too much of seduction to be entirely willing to place trust in a person who is so knowing about our responses and, at the same time, so suavely determined to follow his own intentions in spite of them. (966)

Is the narrator Archangeli using rhetorical methods on us as readers? Up to this point, he has not blatantly expressed any of his own deficiencies. On the contrary, his method in the monologue is to show the faults of others while praising his own strengths. The insertion of the qualifier "quite" gives a clue to the narrator's reluctance to admit to complete and total ignorance. In this deceptive display of sincerity, we gain an insight into Archangeli's moral character. Since he has persistently and intentionally masked himself, why should we trust that it is now the narrator's purpose to unveil himself. Archangeli's use of blatant, contradictory signs causes us to doubt him as a narrator.

Irony is always subordinated to the interpretive function. In the short, disruptive parentheses above, it serves to establish didactic generalizations, bringing to the forefront the manipulative tricks of the lawyer whose whole art is to persuade. The figure of irony contributes

to mood or tone. When the narrator's doubts interject into the parentheses, we necessarily suspect Archangeli's motives for exposing those doubts. Their purpose in the monologue is to illustrate or communicate "extratextual truths," or as Suleiman states,

> the illustrative anecdotes in the novel can indeed be seen as schemata for communication of extratextual truths or, like their ancestor the exemplum, as rhetorical proofs of the validity of certain general laws. (467)

These general laws establish the fictive nature of any rhetorical mode. They call into question the very assertions they make. Paul de Man notes, "that a 'literary text simultaneously asserts and denies the authority of its own rhetorical mode'" (qted. in Suleiman 467). The conclusion to be drawn is that "fixed principles," like those found in the classical principles of rhetoric or the speech act, "can never be adequate to judge truth" (Langbuam 144). Because rhetoric twists words to persuade, it destroys truth.

Archangeli's seductive methods are a study in the old rhetorical system, emphasizing the use of artistic topics and persuasive discourse: "Thus circumstantially evolve we facts" (136) states Archangeli. By analyzing Archangeli's methods in terms of both the traditional and new rhetoric, emphasizing non-artistic topics of invention and

philosophical discourse, we can trace Browning's message more completely. The ideas and writings of Whately, Campbell, Blair, and Priestly shaped nineteenth-century rhetoric. Eighteenth-century philosophers like John Locke paved the way by announcing the need to emphasize non-artistic topics--scientific investigatory methods that apply mathematical patterns of reasoning to all argument in order to arrive at probability. Only "by tracing several sequences of connections between opposing conclusions and the ideas which support them" and "balancing one sequence against another" can we determine what the most probable conclusion is (Holmes 81-2). By providing "an investigative mode of dealing with the powers of language" (Genette, Figures xii), Browning leads us to make a scientific judgement not unlike that of the structuralists who suggest that the text unfolds an analytic process.

Browning not only adapts his rhetoric in The Ring and the Book to the Hegelian theme of historicism, but to Kant's philosophical theme of subjectivity. Kant expressed a crucial philosophical concept in judging the reality of truth. He asserted that individuals do not go through life passively receiving information from the outside world but instead must judge and shape what they receive. Judgement, then, "is a matter of talent, insight, and the essential moral quality of" individual "judgement" (Langbuam 144). Browning's poem, then, becomes an exercise in judgement.

Each perspective is a discriminatory judgement call, but one based (in this study) on analytical structural methods. This leads us to what Genette later conceived as the end of discourse, subjectivity (Narrative Discourse 173).

Browning was never one to distance himself entirely from his readers. As a poet, he made his own attitude felt by subtly changing the tone of his work with the use of irony. Quintilian believed

> that a figure like irony may have differing classifications and affects, and his recommendation is always for restraint and control. . . . Particular figures really do not have particular psychological effects out of context; they intensify the thought or the emotion or give variety, and what is successful in one context will fail in another.
>
> (Kennedy, Quintilian 89)

With the use of irony, the poet establishes his own didactic generalizations. But ultimately it is up to each one of us to discover the dialectic at work--it is how man advances his moral understanding.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION: DECEPTIVE DEFENSE

The parentheses in Browning's monologue of Book VIII serve as manifestations of the character's different guises. They are a system of signs through which we, as auditors, come to know the character more completely. The author's unique placement of these digressive impulses and their multiplicity of functions fascinate readers. Through this device, Browning created an impression of the process of thinking, not unlike Joyce. But even Joyce did not have as "full a grasp of the possibilities of English grammar" (Peckham 104). Morse Peckham tells us that Browning's theme is always consistent; his theme is "the mask of language" (104). The narrator veils his world in his own perceptions, and language masks these perceptions. The way a person speaks of his surroundings or vocalizes his attitudes plays a significant role in revealing the speaker's conception about himself. Through words, man, says Peckham, defines himself (103):

> The mask of language then does not merely protect the man within, or the mask within; we are language, and language is a mask, and it is masks that hold our personalities together. Without masks, it may be Browning's implication, we are nothing. . . . Since each man is unique in that

> he warps the general pattern of self-deception into a necessarily unique style of life, each man has a different notion of propositional truth; for the function of propositional truths is to facilitate and justify action directly or else indirectly by justifying the self-deceiving self-conception which is the ground of actions. Hence the word "truth" has as many meanings as men who use it. (94-98)

It is significant that Browning chose Archangeli's monologue to introduce the multiplicity of functions that the rhetorical device of the parenthesis generates. Book VIII not only abounds in the longer parenthetic digressions, but makes the greatest use of them. It is the only Book in the text that makes use of parenthetic stanzas. Louise Snitslaar suggests that "Archangeli's task was the more difficult of the two lawyers" (88). Archangeli, after all, was defending a confessed murderer. It is quite natural for the judges, who are but human, "to be biased in favour of the young and unhappy Pompilia" (Snitslaar 88). From the start, Archangeli must work against the biased and veiled imaginations of the judges. Therefore, Archangeli makes use of many rhetorical methods/tools to win his case. The application of parentheses to expose Archangeli's introspective thoughts is merely one more function of the character's ability to delude even himself. Browning's

primary method in employing the device is to make us doubt the imaginative faculties of the narrator upon whom we have relied to carry us through the narrative.

Although we question the motives of both lawyers, the heavier judgement lies on Archangeli because he is on the side of evil, defending the murderer, while Bottini is on the side of good, defending the innocent Pompilia. The Ring and the Book traces man's habit of coloring his perceptions of reality. When man uses that habit to rationalize evil actions, the delusion takes on even more significance. It becomes a weapon in the hands of an even greater evil force--one that lacks the judgement to decide between good and evil because its guide is evil.

The "deliberately deceptive use of the arts of language is for Browning an unfailing mark of those who move in varying degrees of moral darkness" (Altick and Loucks 127). The language of amplification which the parenthesis denotes is the symbol of Archangeli's particular rhetorical vice. It creates tension between his "ever present sensuality" (Shaw 272) and his ever-present scientific "logic-throw" (239). The parentheses serve to identify the tension and the contradiction between Archangeli's divided allegiance. He wavers between his extreme aesthetic bent which enables him to rejoice in gluttony and his extreme legal obligations which enable him to "turn Law's instruments" (872) into a means to his own ends.

Browning recognized the freedom masks provided him from the intrusion of the outside world and portrays in Archangeli the same protective guise. The necessity to separate the speaking self and the described self in Archangeli's monologue conveys the double role playing. Henry James created the short story The Private Life based on the double life of the artist Robert Browning, and Maisie Ward subtitled her biography of Browning "Two Robert Brownings?" Both spoke of contradictions between the public man of society and the private genius. A. R. Jones tells how the poet "in order to protect his profound and dependent relationship with his mother was forced to play a double role" (309). At home, Browning adopted his mother's Calvinistic moral standards, but abroad he remained intellectually free. He also suffered with his conflicting attitudes between his poetic feelings and his intellectual position (A. R. Jones 309).

The Victorian frame of mind prevented man's private despairs and uncertainties from coming to the surface; many subjects were taboo. Many studies on "Victorian verse have tended to emphazise the split personalities of the poets as artists" (Byatt 16). Forced to lead double lives, many artists experienced doubts and anxieties as a result of their Victorian culture. Browning released and expressed his own despairs and uncertainties in his writing. Only through his art could he legitimately speak about those

forbidden subjects. J. A. Boulton describes Browning as "a potential revolutionary":

> The intellectual exhibitionism finds expression in the detailed analysis of motive, the dissection of human behaviour, as in <u>The Ring and the Book</u>; while the physical bases are explicitly, if dramatically, indicated in "Saul":
>
> "Oh, our manhood's private vigour! No spirit feels waste,
> Not a muscle is stopped in its playing nor sinew unbraced.
> Ho, the wild joys of living! the leaping from rock up to rock,
> The strong rending of boughs from the fir-tree, the cool silver shock
> Of the plunge in a pool's living water--"
>
> (qtd. in Boulton 165)

Browning's power was in "embodying an emotional response to the experience" (Boulton 166) of passions. And yet, he embodies this reality "in a formulation which is a demonstrable contrivance" (Warwick 5). The uncertainties, generated deep within the character, create a tension which discloses itself in the character's "fluctuating expressiveness" (Warwick 16).

The rhetorical patterns of the parentheses function as an aspect of Archangeli's psychological need to wear a mask

and, therefore, protect himself from the "unnecessary challenges" (Peckham 93), which Bottini or others might confront him with. Peckham suggests that unmasking would reveal, as it does with Guido in Book XI, "an organism struggling only for continued existence" (94). Browning's objective stance reduces all men to organisms, who like machines move forward in constant progression. But with the rhetorical device of parentheses, he imposes a subjective view. The parenthesis signals a catalysis--a halt in the forward progression of the machine. The "interruption draws attention to itself" and "minimizes the referential aspect of the language, depreciating the realism and encouraging a sense of the artifice in human expression" (Warwick 4).

The Objective as a Subjective Process

Similar to structuralists, like Levi-Strauss, Browning employed scientific techniques while at the same time working with the Romantic theory of individual perception. Kant's notion of epistemology centered on man's own experience. It is all man can know. Analyzing the techniques of narrative poetic structure in terms of the parentheses brings to focus the dramatization of subjectivity in the self-described thoughts of the

narrator. Ironically, Warwick notes that

> to recognize irony it is necessary to retain a sense of identity separate from the speaker, but to the extent that our own feelings and rationalizations are involved in discriminating among the hero's, we too are absorbed in a subjective process. (9)

Like the hero trapped or imprisoned in his own subjectivity, as readers, our "critical interpretation" merely superimposes "one layer of language [the narrator's view of himself and his world] upon another [the reader's view of himself and his/her world]" (Warwick 9). While irony exposes the narrator, it also serves a heuristic function. We discover the subjective psychological processes that the character experiences, as well as our own subjective interpretive experience of the poem. The poet tells us,

> This life is training and a passage; pass,--
> Still, we march over some flat obstacle
> We made give way before us; solid truth
> In front of it, were motion for the world?
> The moral sense grows but by exercise.
>
> (10. 1411-14)

Browning's poetic devices reinforce the conflict between objectivism and subjectivism. Kant's notion that the human mind structures reality prepared the way for "subjectivism"--the idea that each individual judges

existence from his/her perspective. Browning embodies this concept in The Ring and the Book. By presenting the objective facts of history through subjective points of view, Browning leads us to the discovery that "the meaning does not lie at the end" of the poem, "but straddles it" (Barthes 243): "Truth, nowhere, lies yet everywhere in these--(10. 228). Barthes explains that "meaning eludes any unilateral investigation" (243). To discover meaning in the story, it is necessary to investigate all levels of the narrative--functions, actions, and narration. Meaning, like truth is "Evolvable from the whole" (10. 230). Even a structural analysis leads to a subjective process because we are caught in the same circularity that the characters experience:

> In so far as the characters attempt to interpret their world they become trapped in their own hermeneutic circle and far from coming to know themselves through self-objectification, as Langbaum claims (p. 25) they show through unconscious irony that they attain only the illusion of objectivity. (Warwick 8)

Like the narrator, we interpret and derive meaning as we percieve it. Because we all structure our own reality in different ways/forms, we each gain a different perspective on reading Browning's poem.

Although it is logical and convenient to investigate one level of the the narrative poem at a time, it is important to stress that the narrative is always "integrated," and we cannot read the monologue without at the same time reading "its style, its actions, its character, its values, and so on" (Rabkin 71). By separating one level of narration or style from the one monologue, we can abstract information about that level of narration from another monologue. Browning seems to insist that we judge not only Archangeli's deficiencies at every step but all the characters weaknesses.

The parentheses furnish information that aids us in judging Archangeli at every step by providing a subjective interpretation of the more factual material outside of the parentheses. More importantly, they disclose a mode of thinking which "reveals an implicit bent toward an epistemological subjectivism" (Genette, Figures xi) which is determined by Browning's emphasis on the interpretive function. We've noted the manipulative devices and the insincerity of the narrator in these interruptions. Our analysis of the parentheses reveals that they signal interpretive functions that index the character. They can also serve an associative function that links the character to earlier indices, or finally, they may serve a descriptive/narrative function that announces a particular character trait. Each of these levels overlaps, bringing

Archangeli's divided consciousness--his role playing--to our attention. Browning tells of a report that admonishes us to "ponder" (12. 542) Guido and Pompilia's cases before judging them. His advice is that we not only judge the ethos of the lawyer Archangeli, but all those characters who experience self-delusion:

> Glorify no brass
> That shines like burnished gold in noonday glare,
> For fools! Be otherwise instructed you!
> And preferably ponder, ere ye judge,
> Each incident of this strange human play
> Privily acted on a theatre,
> That seemed secure from every gaze but God's
> Till, of a sudden, earthquake laid wall low
> And let the world perceive wild work inside,
> And how, in petrifaction of surprise,
> The actors stood,--(12. 539-47)

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