IMAGERY IN BROWNING'S THE RING AND THE BOOK

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INTRODUCTION

As Browning addresses the reader in his own voice in the final book of *The Ring and the Book*, he expresses a thought that clearly represents his own philosophy of the function and nature of poetry:

Why take the artistic way to prove so much?  
Because, it is the glory and good of Art,  
That Art remains the one way possible  
Of speaking truth, to mouths like mine at least....

Art may tell a truth  
Obliquely, do the thing shall breed the thought,  
Nor wrong the thought, missing the mediate word.  
So may you paint your picture, twice show truth,  
Beyond mere imagery on the wall,—  
So, note by note, bring music from your mind,  
Deeper than ever o'en Beethoven dived,—  
So write a book shall mean beyond the facts,  
Suffice the eye and save the soul beside.

(XII, 906, 50-76)

That Browning wishes to "tell a truth" through his poetry has long been recognized by readers and critics alike; that he wishes to "breed the thought" has been recognized also. In the passage quoted above from *The Ring and the Book*, however, it is clear that Browning considered himself both an artist and a revealer of truth; indeed, in his mind the function of the artist, whether poet, painter, or musician, was to reveal truth through his art. Browning was aware that through art truth that could not be spoken effectively in a direct fashion could be revealed indirectly. By painting a picture, the artist can show more than "mere imagery on the wall." Similarly, Browning would say, the poet can show truth beyond mere imagery on a page.

Though *The Ring and the Book* is only one of many works in which Browning reveals truth through art, this poem is significant because
it is the one to which Browning first referred persons who wished to become acquainted with his works. He must have felt that especially in this poem he had succeeded in telling the truth through art. It is impossible to compare adequately such a massive work as this with such brief yet powerful dramatic monologues as "My Last Duchess" or "Fra Lippo Lippi" because of the difference in scope, but _The Ring and the Book_ is undoubtedly Browning's _magnum opus_. A study of this work proves that the imagery on the page is used by Browning the artist to show truth beyond the facts, and that this imagery is one of the important methods through which the artist achieves the purpose set forth in the final lines of _The Ring and the Book_.

In this study the word _imagery_ is used to mean any kind of figurative language; comparison is the basis of the image. The formal differences between metaphor, simile, symbol, personification, and analogy are not important to this study, nor are the distinctions between such kinds of images as the decorative, expansive, intensive, or the exuberant. Caroline Spurgeon, who, in her study of Shakespeare's imagery, uses the word _image_ to include any figurative language, states that we all know pretty well what we mean by an image. The image, she continues, is a "little word-picture' used by a poet or prose writer to illustrate, illuminate, and embellish his thought." She defines the function of the image:

> It is a description or an idea, which by comparison or analogy, stated or understood, with something else, transmits to us through the emotions and associations it arouses, something of the 'wholeness,' the depth and richness of the way a writer views, conceives or has felt what he is telling us. The image thus gives quality, creates atmosphere and conveys emotion in a way no precise description, however clear and accurate, can possibly do.
The importance of the image, which is stressed by Miss Spurgeon, is no new discovery. Aristotle in his *Poetics* wrote of the importance of the metaphor, stating that, for the poet, the "greatest thing by far is to be a master of metaphor." He pointed out that masterful use of the metaphor cannot be learned from others, but that it is an indication of genius, because "a good metaphor implies an intuitive perception of the similarity in dissimilars." The chief significance of imagery, then, is that it can reveal something which can be revealed satisfactorily in no other way; it can reveal "obliquely."

Murry emphasizes the complexity of the nature of the metaphor or image:

It is the means by which the less familiar is assimilated to the more familiar, the unknown to the known: it 'gives to airy nothing a local habitation and a name,' so that it ceases to be airy nothing. To attempt a fundamental examination of metaphor would be nothing less than an investigation of the genesis of thought itself—a dangerous enterprise. Murry states that the highest function of imagery is to reveal the spiritual qualities which can best be perceived by analogy. The image, he continues, functions to define qualities and matter which cannot be measured:

Sensuous perception is of the qualities of the visible, audible, tangible world; of the spiritual qualities of the more recondite world of human personality and its creations there is intuition. Both faculties are necessary to the great poet, but there have been many who, though richly gifted with sensuous perception, have been deficient or altogether lacking in spiritual intuition. To the great poet his constant accumulation of vivid sense-perceptions supplies the most potent means by which he articulates his spiritual intuitions, for recognitions of spiritual quality can be most forcefully and swiftly conveyed through analogous recognitions of sensuous quality. Most images are visual, but they frequently also refer to the senses of taste, smell, hearing, and touch. But, though sense perceptions are the basis of imagery as a method of transmission of a description
or an idea, the spiritual aspect of the image is that which gives it its greatest significance in poetry.

When Browning stated in his letter to Ruskin that all poetry is the "putting of the infinite into the finite," he was speaking of all the language of poetry, but especially in his images do we see evidence of sense-perceptions used to convey spiritual qualities. The finite is indeed for Browning the language of the infinite; as Herford says, the "vastest and most transcendent realities have for him their points d'appui in some bit of intense life, some darting bird or insect, some glowing flower or leaf." To convey the infinite, images are used constantly; it has been suggested that Browning, a great admirer of Donne, felt particular sympathy with Donne's analogies which link the spiritual and the physical, or the infinite and the finite. Browning seems to think in terms of images, which "play the part of synonyms" and which "occur to him at any moment from all the corners of his memory." Wells has included Browning as one of the four great makers of symbols in all of English literature. Most of the symbols, as of the images, are visual, but in creating images Browning uses not only the painter's eye but also the musician's ear and the sculptor's hand. It is interesting to note that Browning was trained in music, that he expressed his great interest in music and in painting in his poetry, that many of his figures may be called 'touch images,' and that late in life he experimented with clay-modelling. His images are usually vivid with color, either abrupt or very smooth in line, or intense with sound—or they may combine all these elements. Seldom, however, are they purely decorative; most of the images are genuinely illuminating, and, as Duffin comments, "grow organically out of the subject." It
has been pointed out that, because of his analytic quality, Browning, the most voluminous of English poets, is also, paradoxically, the most concise, for he "puts the same thing in twenty concise ways"; he may look at a fact or a thought from many sides and illustrate it by abundant images. His images are clear and distinct, although he may change rapidly from one to another, as he rapidly develops thought after thought in his writing. When Miss Barrett, early in the acquaintance of the two poets, commented indignantly to a charge in the *Athenaeum* that Browning was misty, she commented specifically upon his images:

> And then 'mâst' is an infamous word for your kind of obscurity. You never are misty, not even in 'Sordello'—never vague. Your graver cuts deep sharp lines, always, and there is an extra-distinctness in your images and thoughts, from the midst of which, crossing each other infinitely, the general significance seems to escape."

Esther Matson has aptly expressed Browning's mastery of one particular kind of image, the symbol: "Browning...has that sort of imagination which not only rises to meet the symbol on the wing but has power as well to glide from one symbol to another." It is to a large degree through the imagery of the poem that Browning transformed the materials of the Old Yellow Book to the completed poem, *The Ring and the Book*, in which he intended to show truth beyond the facts of the Roman murder-case. It is through the imagery also that he achieved variety in the twelve monologues in which basically the same story is told in eleven ways by ten speakers. Symons has commented on the imagery in stressing the variety and the individuality of the monologues and of the speakers: "I have been astonished in reading and re-reading the poem at the variety, the difference, the wonderful individuality in each speaker's way of
telling the same story, at the profound art with which the rhythm, the metaphors, the very details of language, no less than the broad distinctions of character and subtle indications of bias, are adapted and converted into harmony.16 The imagery is particularly significant in revealing, first of all, each speaker's character; next, his attitude toward the case; and, finally, the degree to which the speaker has come to an approximation of the truth of the case and its universal significance. The significance of the images is emphasized through repetition, and through the repetition what may be called a pattern of imagery is achieved, for each image, although it is modified by the context in which it appears, is related to those that precede and follow. The similarity of this method of bringing significance to the images to the Wagnerian leitmotiv has been noted.17 Brown says of the leitmotiv in literature: "One might say that it is a verbal formula which is deliberately repeated, which is recognized at each occurrence, and which serves, by means of this recognition, to link the context in which the repetition occurs with earlier contexts in which the motive has appeared...."18 Many of the images which recur frequently throughout The Ring and the Book are first used by Browning in his introductory book, in which he attaches a particular significance to them. When they are repeated in the poem the meaning may be modified by the context, changed to have another significance, or reversed so that the meaning is exactly the opposite from that intended by Browning. The images have been divided by Smith into three levels: the ring, the dominant images of each of the books, and those images which recur throughout the poem.19 The titular image of the ring which recurs throughout the first book and again in the twelfth, and which clarifies
Browning's method in the poem as well as his conception of it, may be said to symbolize the entire poem. In some of the monologues, moreover, the speaker uses certain images so frequently and so extensively that they seem to dominate the monologue: these may be called vertical images, which appear primarily within the limits of a single monologue, although they may also occur, though less frequently and less importantly, within other monologues. In some books there seems to be no over-all dominant image, but the dominant image is clearly evident in the monologues of Archangeli, Bottini, Guido, and the Pope. In addition to the dominant images of particular books, there are images that may be called the horizontal; those that are not limited to any particular book but which are used by many, or all, of the characters in different ways, and which, by the treatment given them, are indicative of the speaker's bias in the case and thus of his perception of truth. Those who view the case similarly, as for instance Half-Rome, Guido, and Archangeli, frequently use these images in a similar manner, although the usage is modified by the context. Included in the patterns of regularly recurring images are the plant, animal, fire, astronomical, and Scriptural images, all of which are used by both pro-Guido and pro-Pompilia speakers. The images of these three levels are used to reveal the infinite through the finite, to show truth "obliquely," by revealing the limitations of human testimony but also by revealing the differences in the character and therefore in the testimony and in the approximation of the truth of the characters of The Ring and the Book.
THE RING IMAGE

The figure of the circle is a common one in Browning's poetry; indeed, this figure seems to have had a particular attraction for him.\(^1\) Nowhere, however, in his poems does he make such prominent use of the circle figure as in The Ring and the Book, for here the circle is not only an image which appears frequently throughout the poem, but one particular kind of circle—the gold ring—becomes a symbol which dominates the entire poem as Browning emphasizes the fusing of gold and alloy with which he has created the poem. In this one circle image Browning expresses his conception of the poetic process by which the complete work was formed and shows the relationship of the historical facts of the Old Yellow Book to the contributions of the poet's imagination. There are in addition other circle images in Book I, different from that of the gold ring but related to it, which illustrate the poet's conception of the structure of the entire poem and of the truth of each of the monologues. A few circle images are used in Book I to characterize the speakers. Not only the poet but also the speakers of Books II through XI use circle images, some of which are related directly to the images of Book I. Each time a speaker refers to a ring we may compare his attitude toward it with Browning's attitude in the first and last books. When a speaker uses a circle image we can compare the idea which he expresses through the image with that expressed by Browning himself and with that of the other speakers, for the character of each speaker and his view of the case determine the use he makes of the circle images. In addition to the circle, other geometrical figures used both by Browning and by some of the speakers reveal Browning's and the speakers' conception of truth.
Browning opens his poem with the figure of the ring: "Do you see this Ring?" he asks, and describes in the following lines a ring made to resemble "Etrurian circlets." This ring, which becomes a symbol for the entire poem, has a personal significance; this is the ring that Elizabeth Barrett Browning wore and that Browning wore on his watch-chain after her death. Before he points out the significance of the ring, Browning describes in detail the process by which the gold slivers become the "ring-thing right to wear" (I, 649, 16). He states that craftsmen have instructed him about the trick of ring-making. He may mean that he has learned about the process at the shop of Castellani, the famous ring-maker who made the ring for Elizabeth Barrett Browning; for in a letter to Isa Blagden he mentions a visit with Elizabeth Barrett Browning to this shop. The "trick," which becomes extremely important in the ring metaphor, is described at length by the poet: the ring-making process, he says, is like the mixing of melted wax with honey, for to the gold must be added an alloy to make a "manageable mass" before the craftsman may work with it. Once he has finished shaping the ring, the artificer spirits fiery acid over the face of it to remove the alloy, but the shape remains; the ring is "Prime nature with an added artistry" (I, 650, 6). He anticipates the reader's question, "What of it?" and answers "Tis a figure, a symbol, say; A thing's sign: now for the thing signified" (I, 650, 8-9). Before he can explain the symbol he must tell of his discovery of the Old Yellow Book with its "pure crude fact" which formed the basis of his poem. He rehearses objectively the contents of the book, which, he first stresses, are "fanciless fact," and which are like the ingot
which was used to form the ring (I, 651, 47-52). But he has found the gold untempered; he has found "The mere ring-metal ore the ring be made!" (I, 654, 34). The facts had been forgotten, but he resurrects the story; he has dug the ingot and mixed with it the alloy of his soul:

...thence bit by bit I dug
The ingot truth, that memorable day,
Assayed and knew my piecemeal gain was gold,—
Yes; but from something else surpassing that,
Something of mine which, mixed up with the mass,
Made it bear hammer and be firm to file.
Fancy with fact is just one fact the more....
I fused my live soul and that inert stuff,
Before attempting smithcraft....

(I, 655, 39-51)

He describes the method by which he fused his soul with the mere fact by living through the whole story, and as he tells the story of the Old Yellow Book in the order of the events, he includes this time the moral problem of the guilt and, chiefly through the imagery used to describe both actions and characters, passes his own judgment on the characters and their actions. This, he says, is the manner in which he often told his story and by which he often turned people from gaiety to graveness. He interfused himself, the alloy, with the gold of the book to create a ring that was ready for the acid that would leave it shapely while it removed the alloy from the surface of the story:

This was it from, my fancy with those facts,
I used to tell the tale, turned gay to grave,
But lacked a listener seldom; such alloy,
Such substance of me interfused the gold
Which, wrought into a shapely ring therewith,
Hammered and filed, fingered and favoured, last
Lay ready for the renovating wash
O' the water. "How much of the tale was true?"
I disappeared; the book grew all in all....

(I, 658, 21-29)
He wonders just what it is that he mixed with the gold to make it "malleable." This alloy added by his imagination is good, he says, but seems untrue; it is fiction which makes fact alive, and may be fact also. It is, he concludes, similar to the breath which is used to relume half-burned-out wicks of a lamp, or the breath which Elisha used to bring a corpse to life. He continues by describing the monologic method by which he has brought the old story to life. The resulting poem is the product of the gold and alloy; the poem is the ring, and, now that he has completed it, Browning can remove himself from the ring:

Such labour had such issue, so I wrought
This arc, by furtherance of such alloy,
And so, by one spirit, take away its trace
Till, justifiably golden, rounds my ring.

(I, 666, 61-64)

As Browning concludes Book I with the well-known apostrophe to his "Lyric Love," he elaborates the ring image by speaking of this tribute to his wife as a posy, a motto which he engraves within the ring he has formed.

Although in Book XII the ring figure is not used as frequently as in Book I, Browning has not forgotten the image; he uses it with the same meaning as he does in Book I. In introducing the letter from Archangel to Cencini, Browning refers casually to the ring image of Book I; the letter, he says, is extant in the same place as the rest of the material that "went, you know how,/To make the Ring that's all but round and done" (XII, 899, 15-16). The ring of verse is almost concluded with these lines. As he does complete the poem, Browning uses the figure of the ring to express the hope which he has for his poem:
And save the soul! If this intent save mine,—
If the rough ore be rounded to a ring,
Render all duty which good ring should do,
And, failing grace, succeed in guardianship,—
Might mine but lie outside thine, Lyric Love,
Thy rare gold ring of verse (the poet praised)
Linking our England to his Italy!

(XII, 906, 77-85)

In the preceding lines Browning has expressed his wish to save souls by using art to show truth, and here, with the ring figure, he tells of his wish, if he has saved his own soul through the attempt to save those of others, to place his ring outside of that of his wife. If, he says, he has successfully rounded the rough into a ring, if he has formed a ring which can serve as a guardian, he would have this ring of verse guard the verse of his wife. Cook says of these concluding lines: "The ring preserves the truth hidden away in 'the rough ore,' but it also performs another office of the ring, that of a 'guard-ring' or 'keeper' outside a wedding ring. Browning would have his 'Ring' be outside his wife's 'gold ring of verse.'"7 The two final lines refer to the inscription on the tablet placed on Casa Guidi by the municipality of Florence, in which the Italian poet, Tammaseo, describes Mrs. Browning's poetry as "a golden link between Italy and England."8

The ring image, as is evident in the final use of it in Book XII, has more than one function. As well as being a symbol for the truth and structure of the poem, it has a personal meaning. In the opening lines of the poem, Browning describes the ring worn by Mrs. Browning to introduce the comparison of the making of the ring to the making of a poem. Later in Book I, when he addresses the inscription of his ring to his wife, his "Lyric Love," it is clear as he calls on her for aid that this ring is intended to be a symbol of his love for her. Finally, in the last lines of the poem, the personal application is clarified: this poem,
he hopes, will lie next to the verse, the "rare gold ring," of his wife. Going has pointed out the relationship to this poem of Mrs. Browning's sonnet entitled "The Ring," in which she writes that her husband's love can achieve what a golden ring betokens; the ring would drop off sooner than it should, but the love "ever shall fit and ever shall cling." In *The Ring and the Book* the poet conceives of his poem as a ring for his wife and recognizes his indebtedness to her inspiration.

The relationship of the ring image to the process of creating a poem out of the dead facts of the Old Yellow Book is, however, much more significant than the personal application of the image. The significance of the ring has long baffled critics, who differ greatly in the interpretation of the image. Mrs. Orr claims that Browning did cast his fancy aside and leave the pure facts of the case. Some believe that Browning states that his fancy disappeared entirely with the wash of the acid, and that, therefore, he pressed his figure too far. Others, also believing that Browning claimed to remove his fancy entirely, say that Browning reversed his metaphor entirely, that he "muddles his own metaphor until it becomes a dangerous quagmire," and that it was the "pure crude fact," instead of the alloy, that was removed. Yet the difficulty lies not so much in the metaphor of the washing away of the fancy as in the whole metaphor of the gold, which, Browning states, represents fanciless fact. The facts may be fanciless, yet they are the selected facts which Browning had to dig out of a maze of contradictory facts, as gold must be dug from the earth. The figure of "gold," as Hodell points out, shows how highly Browning valued the content of the Old Yellow Book.

In writing the poem, Browning adds to the facts, no more workable alone than pure gold, the alloy of his imagination to create the circle of poetic truth, formed by art. This circle remains, shaped by the alloy...
which his imagination has contributed, when the poet, upon completion of the work, withdraws from the surface; the alloy is not removed but remains an essential part of the ring: "No carat lost, and you have gained a ring" (I, 650, 7). Through his imagination he has devised the monologic structure in which each of the speakers presents his version of the facts. There is no less fact but more truth when the poem is completed, as Raymond points out:

Without pretense to solve the crux, I might suggest that all art involves the transition from a lower to a higher truth through the media of interpretive imagination. A photograph is more literally, but less essentially true than a painting. In a sense there is always repristination in art, since truth is re-captured on a loftier height. Browning seems to have something like this in mind in The Ring and the Book...

The poet's imaginative contribution cannot be removed, but the film of pure gold, of what seems to be mere facts, is merely on the surface, made stable by the alloy. Through the ring metaphor, then, Browning accepts art as the way possible of revealing truth, not the absolute truth of God, but poetic truth which, with the poet's imagination, forms a golden ring, a book which "shall mean beyond the facts;/ Sufficient the eye and save the soul beside."

Besides clarifying the poetic process Browning used in creating The Ring and the Book, the ring metaphor images the structure of the poem. The circular nature of the ring, the symbol for the completed poem, is emphasized in the opening lines of the poem when Browning describes his ring as resembling "Etrurian circlets" (I, 649, 3) and when he states that, after repristination, "the shape remains;/ The rondure brave" (I, 650, 3-4). The idea of circularity is achieved in several ways. The monologic structure, through which each speaker is given a chance to express his view of the story, provides a circle of evidence through
which the truth may be discovered. Browning in Book I begins the testi-
mony which continues until the circle is concluded with the testimony
of Browning in the final book. The implication of circularity is empha-
sized in Book XII when Browning speaks of the poem as "the Ring that's
all but round and done" (XII, 599, 16). It is strengthened by the use of
the ring symbol, not only in Book I, but especially by the return to this
symbol in Book XII. In addition, in the titles of the first and last
books the transposition of terms indicates the circular nature of the poem:
"The Ring and the Book" becomes "The Book and the Ring." Two images in
particular, besides that of gold and alloy, emphasize the concept of the
poem as a ring. When in Book I Browning has briefly told the nature of
Books II through XI, he images the last book as a return to level ground
from the summit from which the reader viewed the poem. In Book I,
Browning says, he has led the reader up the mountain, and in Book XII he
will return him to the level of the first book. The circularity of the
monologic structure of the poem is suggested more explicitly in the image
of the poem as a revolving year:

Rather learn and love
Each facet-flash of the revolving year!—
Red, green and blue that whirl into a white,
The variance now, the eventual unity,
Which make the miracle.

(I, 666, 35-39)

The poet says that he might choose one aspect of the country he sees atop
the summit; instead, he will portray the various times of the year, the
various views of the case, which, like the colors of the color-wheel,
evolve into "the eventual unity." The structure is circular, like that
of a color-wheel, and the truth, or unity, comes from the entire poem,
not any single part.
These circle images all reveal Browning's conception of the poem as a ring which, through his craftsmanship, is so shaped that truth above the mere facts of the case can be revealed to man. In addition to the figures which image the poem as a ring there are other circle images in Book I which reveal Browning's conception of the truth of the poem. When Browning states that "Fancy with fact is just one fact the more," he uses an image to clarify his idea that the imagination of a poet adds to the mere facts which he relates:

To-wit, that fancy has informed, transpierced,
Thriddled and so thrum fast the facts else free,
As right through ring and ring runs the djerred
And binds the loose, one bar without a break.

(I, 635, 46-49)

In this simile Browning discloses the same truth that he expresses in the image of the addition of alloy to pure gold. The effects of the fancy of the poet upon the facts with which he works is contrasted to the linking of rings with a spear; the material of the Old Yellow Book, Browning is saying, has been "thriddled" by the poet. The poem is more than a mere group of scattered rings but still retains all of the unchanged facts. By this process the truth is revealed.

Another image which suggests a circle reveals Browning's view of the ability of the Roman populace to reach the truth of the murder case. Browning presents first in his poem the opinion of the world that looks in vain for a speck of truth:

First, the world's outtry
Around the rush and ripple of any fact
Fallen stonewise, plumb on the smooth face of things;
The world's guess, as it crowds the bank o' the pool,
At what were figure and substance, by their splash:
Then, by vibrations in the general mind,
At depth of deed already cut of reach.

(I, 660, 19-25)
The world, the poet says, feels unsuccessfully for the facts of the story. The fact, "fallen stonewise," lies in the pool, but the world merely guesses about the "figure and substance" of the fact by the splash, or the visible and audible effects, and then by the "vibrations" of what is said about the fact. The image is continued as Browning points out that Half-Rome unsuccessfully felt for the "vanished truth"; because Half-Rome's way of feeling for it is wrong, his finger cannot find the mark of truth nor "find and fix/ Truth at the bottom, that deceptive speck" (I, 660, 37-38). The Other Half-Rome, "the opposite feel/ For truth with a like swerve" (I, 660, 63-64), is also unsuccessful in finding the speck of truth. Browning reveals through the image that the truth of the poem is not to be found in a single monologue: in particular, the spokesmen for the two halves of Rome, with their differing opinions, have failed to find truth. The significance of the image to the circle-pattern is that the truth is at the center of the concentric rings formed by "the rush and ripple of any fact" (I, 660, 20).

There are in Book I other circle images which are significant in characterizing the speakers who appear in later monologues. As Browning describes the circumstances under which Tertium Quid gives his monologue, he sees the speaker courting, not the approbation of a mob, but of "Eminence This and All-Illustrious That/ Who take snuff softly, range in well-bred ring" (I, 661, 35-36). Tertium Quid is a part of the "superior social section" that harangues in "silvery and selected phrase," and he wishes to rise in its favor as he reports of the case. Browning also portrays Pompilia speaking to a ring of people, but the situation is in great contrast to that of Tertium Quid. She is surrounded by "allowably inquisitive" folk who "Encircle the low pallet where she lies" (I, 663, 12-15). Yet, though she does not court favor as she merely tells the
story of her life, the sympathies of the group are unified:

As if the bystanders gave each his straw,
All he had, though a trifle in itself,
Which, plaited all together, made a Cross
Fit to die looking on and praying with,
Just as well as if ivory or gold.

(I, 663, 24-28)

This is the group to whose "common kindliness" and "brotherly look" she speaks.

The ring figure is also used twice in Book I to characterize Guido and his family. As Browning visualizes the story of the Old Yellow Book, he sees Pietro and Violante, discovering that Guido has cheated them, "Break somehow through the satyr-family" (I, 656, 81). The ring is used in revealing Guido and family as beastly creatures who "danced about the captives in a ring" (I, 656, 85). Pompilia's parents escape, and the creatures plan to take revenge on Pompilia: "Fire laid and cauldron set, the obscene ring traced,/ The victim stripped and prostrate" (I, 657, 5-6). In both of these instances the ring signifies something evil, something which Pompilia must break through to safety; and this significance is recalled by the images of speakers in later monologues.

Through the ring images used in connection with Tertium Quid, Pompilia, and Guido, something of the character of each of these persons is revealed; to a greater extent, the use each of the speakers makes of the ring image in his own monologue reveals his character. References to a ring may be compared with those made by Browning in Books I and XII, and the use of the circle figure is often indicative of the degree to which the speaker agrees with or differs from Browning's view of the case, and may reveal how close the speaker has come to the truth of the case.

Browning in both the opening and closing lines of The Ring and the Book refers directly to the ring of his wife and to the ring of his poem.
as symbols of love and guardianship, but when his use is compared with
that of the other speakers of the poem, it is clear that some of the
speakers have different ideas of the function of a ring. The difference
between the attitude of Browning and of Guido, who refers directly to a
ring four times, is most noteworthy. When Guido tells of his futile
attempts to obtain preferment at Rome, he mentions that when he left for
Rome, he took with him a purse "to put i' the pocket of the Groom/ O' the
Chamber of the patron" and a ring for the niece of the groom (V, 730, 13-16).
In stressing Pompilia's encouragement of Caponsacchi's attentions, Guido
claims that, instead of ignoring her actions, he should have cut off a
joint of her ring-finger as punishment (V, 738, 61-65). He uses the ring
image in quoting the reply of the officials from whom he had requested
annulment of his marriage. The ring as used in the denial of the annul¬
ment is far from the ring symbol of Browning:

Though ring about your neck be brass not gold,
Needs must it clasp, gangrene you all the same!

(V, 749, 51-52)

In his second monologue, when he fears the loss of his head, he attaches
no significance to a ring but puts the loss of a ring on a level with the
loss of a snuff-box, tablets, and korchief (XI, 869, 61-65). Similar to
Guido's use of the ring is that of Pompilia's maid, Margherita, whom
Pompilia quotes as asking her to warn Caponsacchi of Guido's plan to kill
him. Margherita, Pompilia states, asked for a glove or a ring to show
Caponsacchi as a token (VII, 792, 55-56). This token would have been
delivered to Guido and would have been used by him as evidence of Pompilia's
unfaithfulness.

The contrast between the attitude of the court toward a ring with
Browning's attitude is further developed in Archangeli's monologue, and
Caponsacchi reveals in his monologue the attitude of the church. Archangel! refers to a ring in an analogy to prove that the approved action by which an owner regains his ring from a thief is like Guido's killing Pompilia to regain his honor (VIII, 81, 76-81). Both actions, he claims, are justified. Caponsacchi, in telling of his entry into the church, quotes the bishop who convinced him that he would not in reality have to forsake the world for his position in the church:

Saint Paul has had enough and to spare, I trow,
Of rugged run-away Gneeimus:
He wants the right-hand with the signet-ring
Of King Agrippa now, to shake and use.

(VI, 756, 37-40)

The church is interested now, the Bishop reveals, in appearances, not in the soul.

All of these attitudes toward a ring are in contrast to the attitude of Browning: Guido's evil nature is suggested in his conception of the ring as an object by which bribery is to be achieved and as an object equatable with a kerchief in importance, and in his thought of cutting off the ring-finger. The use Pompilia's maid—instigated, no doubt, by Guido—wishes to make of the ring reveals the duplicity of Guido and of those associated with his cause. The attitude of the court toward the brass ring of Guido's marriage and of the lawyer toward the false-ring analogy which he used to defend Guido all show the lack of true perception of the case. The attitude of the bishop toward the ring as a symbol of prestige indicates his worldly nature, and Caponsacchi's acceptance of the bishop's words indicates his early worldly nature.

It is in the images which convey the impression of circularity, however, and not in the references to the ring as a band of metal that the circle or ring image is most important in contrasting the views of
the speakers of the monologues with those expressed by Browning in Book I.

These circle images fall into two classifications: images used by speakers favoring Guido, and those used by speakers favoring Pompilia. The difference in the use of the images by the two classes of speakers is clearly evident, for those who favor Pompilia use the images in a manner similar to Browning's, but those who favor Guido often attach the opposite significance from that intended by Browning to an image.

The pro-Guido group, of which Guido himself is most significant, uses the ring image to state an attitude toward Pompilia; the anatomical sense of the ring is used in connection with an animal image to express an unfavorable opinion of Pompilia. Half-Rome first compares Pompilia's death with that of a viper. The parents no longer survive, but Pompilia, "(Viper-like, very difficult to slay)/Writhe still through every ring of her" (II, 684, 23-24). Though Half-Rome feels pity for her (He calls her a "poor wretch."), his contempt is expressed in the viper image as well as in the lines that follow the image, in which he hopes that she will make confession to purify somewhat her "putrid soul." Guido's attitude toward Pompilia is revealed in the image of the three-headed Etruscan monster as the murderer speaks frankly in his second monologue: Pompilia, he says, cannot be considered apart from her parents. Though Pompilia may resemble the simple head of a kid, he sees the serpent-like tail of the monster:

I rather see the griesly lion belch
Flame out i' the midst, the serpent writhe her rings,
Grafted into the common stock for tail,
And name the brute, Chimaera which I slew

(XI, 880, 30-33)

In the second of Guido's anatomical ring figures as well as in the Chimaera figure, the animal image reveals clearly Guido's feeling toward
Pompilia: she, like her family, is like a serpent or tapeworm to him. Speaking of his killing Pompilia and her parents, Guido refers to them as taeniae which had sucked on him but which he has finally destroyed. There is no longer "an inch of ring/ Left now to writhe about and root itself" in Guido's heart (XI, 886, 14-15). In these ring images it is clear that Half-Rome and Guido have not perceived the goodness of Pompilia.

Besides the anatomical ring images in Guido's monologues, other circle images are used in describing Pompilia, her family, and Caponsacchi. One of these is an animal image which reveals Guido's conception of the low nature of the Comparini; he speaks of them as two "ambiguous insects" who changed their nature with the seasons. The prowling ants of June, he continues, became flies which "Circled me, buzzed me deaf and stung me blind" (XI, 882, 10). Guido's picturing himself as being encircled by the insects is in direct contrast to the "obscene ring" which Browning portrays in Book I; there is irony in Guido's using an image which describes the Comparini as an obscene ring, when Browning has first characterized him as part of an obscene ring around Pompilia. There is again irony in the contrast between Browning's obscene ring and the witches' circle that Guido speaks of in connection with the supposed love letters of Pompilia and Caponsacchi. Guido says that the finding of the letters confirmed what was only feared before:

Anon
He searched the chamber where they passed the night,
Found what confirmed the worst was feared before,
However needless confirmation now—
The witches' circle intact, charms undisturbed
That raised the spirit and succubus....

(V, 740, 76-741,1)

Guido's evil nature is even more clearly revealed in a passage in which the results of the Comparini's desire for revenge are portrayed:
Why, scarce your back was turned,
There was the reptile, that feigned death at first,
Renewing its detested spire and spire
Around me, rising to such heights of hate
That, so far from mere purpose now to crush
And coil itself on the remains of me,
Body and mind, and there flesh fang content,
Its aim is now to evoke life from death,
Make me anew, satisfy in my son
The hunger I may feed but never sate,
Tormented on to perpetuity....

(V, 751, 25-35)

The bitterness and perversity of Guido's mind are evident as he describes the coil of hatred which surrounds him.

The material nature of Guido's character is revealed in two circle images, the first of which also clarifies his attitude toward Pompilia.

In his second monologue he uses an analogy to reveal his attitude toward Pompilia: the emperor, he says, gave to one of his ancestors a furze-sprig and told him that after planting the sprig, he should measure a piece of land which would then be his:

Run thence an hour in a straight line, and stop:
Describe a circle round (for central point)
The furze aforesaid, reaching every way
The length of that hour's run: I give it thee....

(XI, 892, 74-77)

Guido compares his feeling for Pompilia to his feeling toward the gift: a furze-sprig is appreciated only when surrounded by land; his furze-sprig of a wife would have been appreciated had she been surrounded by a fine dowry. For the dowry, "gold will do!" (XI, 893, 17). This gold is not the ring symbolizing love, but merely wealth, which would persuade Guido to be happy with a wife he does not love. Guido also uses the ring image in association with material gain in the analogy of his situation as he leaves the church to that of the retiring gamester. Both he and the gamester had entered with hopes of acquiring easy gain, and both retire
profitless; the onlookers give polite advice, yet are relieved:

...and the watchers of his ways,
A trifle struck compunctious at the word,
Yet sensible of relief, breathe free once more,
Break up the ring, venture polite advice...

(V, 731, 41-44)

Though the significance of the ring differs in these two analogies, Guido's nature is revealed in both, and in each he discloses his unsuccessful attempts to acquire wealth. In the first, he reveals his attitude toward Pompilia: had she been surrounded by a circle of wealth, he would have been satisfied. In the second, he reveals his attitude toward the church: had he been able to be a profiting member of the circle, he would have remained in his position with the church. Both Pompilia and the church are desirable to him only as long as they are monetarily useful to him.

On the other hand, when we turn to the monologues of Other Half-Rome, Pompilia, and the Pope, we see the circle image used in a manner favorable to Pompilia, as she is portrayed within successive circles; the images are analogous to that of Browning in which he speaks of Pompilia as being a prisoner within an obscene ring. In the monologue of Other Half-Rome, this image is a part of a pattern of two circle images depicting the Comparini. First Other Half-Rome speaks of Violante's and Pietro's life together before the birth of Pompilia: all Rome could see they were happy, he maintains. They were neither socially high nor low, neither rich nor poor, neither bright nor obscure, neither young nor old. For them, all was "at the mean where joy's components mix" (III, 687, 12). Moreover, each was the perfect match for the other:

So again, in the couple's vary souls
You saw the adequate half with half to match,
Each having and each lacking somewhat, both
Making a whole that had all and lacked nought.
The round and the sound, in whose composure just
The acquiscent and recipient side
Was Pietro's, and the striving one
Violante's....

(III, 687, 13-20)

Other Half-Rome uses the ring, as Browning frequently uses it, as the symbol of perfection. In the marriage are the two necessary components to produce the round and the sound, reminiscent of the gold and the alloy necessary for the ring. This view of the marriage is of course an idealized one, as Other Half-Rome, who is sympathetic toward the Comparini, admits in the following lines. The idea of the circle and of the completeness of the union is, however, continued when Other Half-Rome describes the growth of Pompilia as that of a tree hidden in a garden:

Well, having gained Pompilia, the girl grew
I' the midst of Pietro here, Violante there,
Each, like a semicircle with stretched arms,
Joining the other round her preciousness—
Two walls that go about a garden-plot....

(III, 688, 30-34)

But, though the idea of the circle continues, the emphasis is on Pompilia, who soon grows above the walls of the garden plot. Another circle around Pompilia is suggested by Tertium Quid not as he forms his own judgment but as he repeats the argument of Pompilia's supporters. He tells of the torture that was said to have been piled on Pompilia, "Built round about and over against for fear" (IV, 716, 26), until there was only one chance for escape:

No outlet from the encroaching pain save just
Where stood one savior like a piece of heaven,
Hell's arms would strain round but for this blue gap.

(IV, 716, 30-32)

Pompilia, according to reports, tried every possible means of escape: she appealed to the Commissary, to the Archbishop, and to a lowly friar, but,
as she made these attempts, the arms stretched still more, until only one streak was visible. Then, Tertium Quid reports, she clasped Caponsacchi's hand, and he drew Pompilia 'out o' the circle now complete' (IV, 717, 7). This image of the arms of hell encircling Pompilia recalls the image in Browning's relation of the story in Book I in which Pompilia, the victim, is within the obscene ring with the fire prepared. In both images Caponsacchi saves Pompilia at the last possible moment, but, significantly, in Browning's version Caponsacchi is explicitly stated to be an agent of God, while God's role is not mentioned in Tertium Quid's version. Tertium Quid's image, which is very similar to Browning's, is not his own sophisticated judgment; it reveals not how closely he has approximated the facts but how close some of the populace has come to the truth of the case. Tertium Quid, in giving his own judgment, does use a circle image to express his contempt of the common people and his feeling of the superiority of his own class; he calls Guido a cur, cowardly like the best of the burgossen, and advises "Kick him from out your circle by all means" (V, 721, 37).

Of Pompilia's two circle images, one recalls Browning's image of the obscene ring and Tertium Quid's image of the arms of hell; her second image reveals her innocence as she depicts her life as a circle. As Pompilia recalls her approach to Castelvetro on the flight, she remembers the fear which seized her; the town seemed like Arezzo, the people her enemies, "As if the broken circlet joined again" (VII, 798, 61). This circlet is the same one which Browning and Tertium Quid describe as being broken by Caponsacchi; here Pompilia fears that she will be caught and will again be within the fiery circle. The second image emphasizes her belief that truth with the help of an angel, not sword or speech, rescued her from the evil Guido:
I say, the angel saved me: I am safe!
Others may want and wish, I nor wish nor want
One point o' the circle plainer, where I stand
Traced round about with white to front the world.

(VII, 799, 76-79)

As she speaks her last monologue, Pompilia is lying on her deathbed, her "white bed under the arched roof" (I, 665, 20), but the whiteness which she speaks of has added meaning for the reader. In describing Pompilia, Browning frequently uses one of the most common of his metaphors, that of "whiteness" for "goodness" and "purity." The most noteworthy example is the metaphor spoken by the Pope describing Pompilia as "perfect in whiteness" (X, 852, 39). Pompilia stands encircled with goodness as she faces the world, much as the woman in "Nympholeptos," an ideal creature, stands in the center of brilliant white light.

In the monologue of the Pope there are circle images which recall previous circles, but in his speech, as is appropriate to the subject matter, the circle image is raised to a higher level than in the preceding monologues when it is used to express his philosophy. The circle suggested in the description of the Franceschini is much like that of the "obscene ring" of Book I. Guido is shown huddling in the midst of the group of "clustered crimes" which are "Around him ranged, now close and now remote," colored by the furnace in the center (X, 850, 66-76). Each of the beastly creatures is characterized in detail, and the circle figure reappears when the Pope, like Browning, considers the rescue of Pompilia to be the work of God which shows to the world the "denizens o' the cave" that cluster around the furnace (X, 852, 28-29). Pompilia, however, even then was unaffected by the evil of the Franceschini: "then as now," the Pope finds, she was "perfect in whiteness," an image which recalls Pompilia's image of herself as the center of a circle of white. The image of
Pompilia surrounded by beasts being rescued by Caponsacchi from the evil circle is recalled as the Pope passes judgment on the Canon. Much is to be reprimanded in Caponsacchi's action, but he would rather commend him for the prompt action that rescued the "martyr-maid":

I rather chronicle the healthy rage,—
When the first moan broke from the martyr-maid
At that uncaging of the beasts,—made bare
My athlete on the instant, gave such good
Great undisguised leap over post and pale
Right into the mid-cirque, free fighting-place.

(X, 854, 6-11)

Katope points out a philosophical significance in this image and in another circle image. Following the image of the rescue of Pompilia from within the cirque is a comparison of Caponsacchi's actions with those of a knight who answers the challenge of a false knight. "Was the trial sore?" or "temptation sharp?" the Pope asks. If so, "Thank God a second time!" Life on earth is a period of probation in which man must master temptations. The Pope sees Guido approaching life in a manner different from that of Caponsacchi:

Ho, as he eyes each outlet of the cirque
And narrow penfold for probation, pines
After the good things just outside its grate,
With less monition, fainter conscience-twitch,
Rarer instinctive calm at the first feel
Of greed unseemly, prompting grasp undue,
Than nature furnishes her main mankind....

(X, 845, 47-53)

Though Guido begins life with a sound mind and body, with good birth and breeding, he does not meet the temptations of life; instead, he succumbs to them and loses instead of triumphing. In both these images, then, is embodied the idea of life as probation, one of the chief concepts of Browning's philosophy which he had the Pope express.

The idea of probation is given a more general meaning in another circle image than in the preceding lines as the Pope relates the facts
of the case to his philosophy. In reply to the imagined question of whether what we see in this world is really salvation, the Pope replies that he does not have to ask himself such a question:

I

Put no such dreadful question to myself,
Within whose circle of experience burns
The central truth, Power, Wisdom, Goodness,—God:
I must outlive a thing ere know it dead....

(X, 359, 75-77)

As Keats has pointed out, "Goodness" in this passage is associated with Pompilia; earlier in his monologue, the Pope has said that he sees everywhere in the world the energy and the knowledge of man, but that a soul like Pompilia's is lacking (X, 352, 46-52). The Pope continues his discussion of life as probation later in the image of man as a triangle, with strength and intelligence, but lacking goodness, the base:

What lacks, then, of perfection fit for God
But just the instance which this tale supplies
Of love without a limit?

(X, 356, 72-74)

Pompilia has enabled the Pope to find on earth the goodness which exhibits, along with power and wisdom, the truth of God. Though the Pope's circle is, he admits, a petty one (X, 360, 22) in relation to the entire world both present and past, still in his circle of experience he has found truth, as Browning hopes readers will find truth from the ring of his book.

Caponsacchi uses an image which, while it echoes Browning's ring image, reveals the nature of the force that drew him to the rescue of Pompilia. He says that his decision to aid Pompilia was not the result of thought; thought is a difficult, a deliberate process:

I have thought sometimes, and thought long and hard.
I have stood before, gone round a serious thing,
Tasked my whole mind to touch and clasp it close,
As I stretch forth my arm to touch this bar.¹⁷

(VI, 764, 29-32)

He has often used this process in thinking of God and man and of the
duty he owes to both, but his decision to help Pompilia had nothing to
do with the process of thought. Caponsacchi felt himself involuntarily
passing into a new state and under a new rule; he did not dare to disobey
the "authoritative word" of Pompilia. The mystical nature of the
experience is contrasted to the deliberate finding of the truth by
approaching to the center of a circle; as Browning thinks truth can be
found in his circle of gold and alloy, Caponsacchi learns of God and man
by a process of "going round a serious thing," but the light of Pompilia's
truth was apparent without the concentration usually necessary to acquire
truth.

In these images the varied significances attached to the circle
image by various speakers has indicated something of their character and
of the degree to which they approach the truth of the case. In the sig¬
nificance which they attach to the ring, and in the use they make of the
circle figure, the standing of speakers in relation to the case is revealed.
Yet there is another use of the circle figure which is important: that of
contrast with another geometrical figure, which is begun by Browning in
the first book of his poem.

The contrast between the story of the murder case as revealed in the
Old Yellow Book and in the poem is imaged as the contrast between pure
gold and the finished ring, tempered by the poet, but there is another
important contrast between the square shape of the Old Yellow Book and the
circular-like nature of the finished poem. When Browning states that the
ring is a symbol, "A thing's sign," he continues "now for the thing
signified" (I, 650, 8-9). The following line emphasizes the geometrical contrast between the book and the ring: "Do you see this square old yellow Book...?" (II, 650, 10). In applying his symbol, he points out that in the "old square yellow book" lay "absolutely truth, / Fanciless fact" before the ring was forged (I, 651, 46-50). When he again stresses that his art comes from the Old Yellow Book, he for the third time calls the book "This square old yellow book" (I, 652, 19) which he used to form a shapely ring. The square represents the bare facts; the ring, the facts which have been interfused with imagination by the artist. These are no longer mere facts, but have become poetic truth.

This distinction between fact and poetic truth is not carried on in Books II through XI, yet the difference between round and square is used within the poem as first Tertium Quid and then the Pope speak of attempts to find truth. Tertium Quid stresses the confusion of the rabble about the facts of the case:

To hear the rabble and brabble, you'd call the case
Fused and confused past human finding out,
One calls the square round, t'other the round square—
And pardonably in that first surprise
O' the blood that fell and splashed the diagram:
But how we've used our eyes to the violent hue
Can't we look through the crimson and trace lines?

(IV, 706, 51-57)

Duncan points out in relation to this passage, Browning's "constant tendency to 'trace lines' in treating characters and situations."

Tertium Quid, however, though he complains of the confusion in the mob which calls the square round, or the round square, and though he asks a question Browning might ask, "Can't we look through the crimson and trace lines?," never does draw definite lines. His conclusion is an ambiguous one, in which he decides in favor of neither Guido nor Pompilia;
it is based on the opinions of the rabble, and his statements are merely comments on the frequently mistaken judgments of the mob. "Square" and "round" used together seem to indicate merely appearances, with no particular significance attached to either term. The Pope, supposedly quoting Euripides, also uses "round" and "square" in connection with facts that seem to be true. Euripides asks how close he came to the truth that Paul knew:

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How nearly did I guess at that Paul knew?
How closely came, in what I represent
As duty, to his doctrine yet a blank?
And as that limner not untruly limns
Who draws an object round or square, which square
Or round seems to the unassisted eye,
Though Galileo's tube display the same
Oval or oblong,--so, who controverts
I rendered rightly what proves wrongly wrought
Beside Paul's picture? Mine was true for me.
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(X, 261, 8-17)

The appearances of the square or circle are sufficient for Euripides; he has approached the truth as closely as he can. In both of these images, the circle, the square, and the traced lines are the facts and truths which the speaker wishes to discover, as Browning saw facts and truth in the Old Yellow Book and in the ring, though Browning's distinction between fact and poetic truth is not taken into consideration by Tertium Quid or the Pope.

In addition to the circle and the square there is a third geometrical image, that of the triangle, in *The Ring and the Book*. The Pope, describing the method he uses to find the truth of God, says that he finds a tale of God in the mouth of the world; he loves the tale with his heart, and tests it with his reason. Through his reason, he sees that man is not as strong, intelligent, and good as he can conceive of being; one should look not toward man but toward God, the cause:
Conjecture of the worker by the work:
Is there strength there?—enough: intelligence?
Ample: but goodness in a like degree?
Not to the human eye in the present state,
An isosceles deficient in the base.
What lacks, then, of perfection fit for God
But just the instance which this tale supplies
Of love without a limit? So is strength,
So is intelligence: let love be so,
Unlimited in its self-sacrifice,
Then is the tale true and God shows complete.

(X, 856, 67-77)

The machinery of sin and sorrow in the world, he continues, is devised
to make man love, to make him creative, and to make him self-sacrificing.
The Pope sees the strength and intelligence of God in the world, and sees
an example of goodness in the sacrifice of Christ; the triangle, appro-
priate to the speaker, recalls the equilateral triangle that stands as a
symbol in the church of the unity of the Trinity. The Pope sees an
isosceles, deficient in the base, not the equilateral triangle, because
mankind is unable to see the entire goodness of God which makes a perfect
triangle. The triangle figure, as the circle figure, carries with it the
connotation of completeness, at the center of which is truth.

The circle images of The Ring and the Book, then, have various
functions: the titular image reveals Browning's conception of the poem
as a ring, with the twelve monologues, molded of pure facts and his
imagination, forming a circle of poetic truth. Other circles in Book I
image the poem: the image of the thridding of rings indicates the method
by which the facts were joined by the poet's imagination; the images of the
revolving year and of the ascent and descent of the mountain depict the
circular structure of the poem. The image of the fallen stone expresses
the concept of the truth as being hidden within the center of concentric
circles, and characterizes Half-Rome and Other Half-Rome as being
unsuccessful among the truth-searchers. Tortium Guid is characterized by the image which shows him within the center of critical aristocrats whose favor he courts. Guido and his family are characterized by the "obscene ring" which they form around Pompilia. The speakers are characterized also by the attitude they express toward a ring and by their use of circle images. Neither Guido's, Margherita's, Archangeli's, the court's, nor the bishop's attitude toward the ring is similar to Browning's conception of the ring as a symbol of love and guardianship.

Guido uses the anatomical ring image to depict Pompilia as a serpent and her parents as taenias; he uses a circle image in describing the Comparini as "ambiguous insects." In speaking of the love letters of Pompilia and Caponsacchi, he uses the image to describe the "witches' circle;" and in referring the Comparini's desire for revenge he speaks of the snake coiling itself around him. He reveals the material nature of his character in the analogies of the furze-sprig and of the retiring gamester. In contrast, Other Half-Rome, who sees the case romantically, sees Pompilia as a tree within the garden of the Comparini. Pompilia recalls the circle which held her at Arezzo, from which Caponsacchi saved her, and the Pope sees her rescued from within a cirque. In addition to characterizing Pompilia, Guido, and Caponsacchi by his use of the circle figure, the wise Pope uses the image to express his concept of life as a period of probation in which he finds God at the center. Besides the circle, other geometrical figures are also important: Browning emphasizes the contrast of squareness of the Old Yellow Book from which he obtained his facts to the ring of poetic truth. The circle-square contrast is used also to indicate confusion of facts. The Pope uses the triangle, as the circle, in a philosophical sense to express his concept of the strength, wisdom, and goodness of God.
As the ring image may be said to dominate Book I, so in several of the monologues Browning uses images which may be called vertical in that each is used primarily within one particular book. Each of these images is used by other speakers, but is especially significant in a certain book, in which it is used more frequently than in others. In this book the speaker's use of the image is determined by his character and his situation; and his view of the case is indicated through the use he makes of the image. Although it is difficult in some books to discover a single dominant image and although frequently there are several types of image that seem to be predominant in a book, there is clearly a principal image in at least five of the ten books between Browning's introduction and conclusion. Archangeli uses the food image, or banquet image, throughout his monologue as his mind continually returns to the birthday-feast he is giving for his son. As Sottini rehearses his monologue he returns again and again to the conception of his speech as a painting. Guido uses the image of the torture-machine he has experienced in Book V, and the image of the Mammaia-machine he will experience in Book XI; in both of these monologues there is associated anatomical imagery. In contrast to these three speakers, the Pope uses the image of white light in expressing both his judgment on the case and his philosophy.

* * *

In Book I Browning begins the characterization of Archangeli, which is substantiated in the monologue of the Procurator of the Poor. Browning describes Archangeli as a "jolly learned man of middle age" who is both
mirthful and mighty, yet constant "to that devotion of the hearth"
(I, 665, 60-64). Besides having the task of defending Guido, he has the
burden of the birthday banquet for his only son; and, as he prepares his
speech, he "brings both to buckle in one bond" (I, 665, 76). The food
imagery of Book VIII is so predominant that Browning thinks it appropriate
to introduce the speaker with the same kind of imagery as he portrays
Archangeli making out his case, the "chick in egg;/ The masterpiece law's
bosom incubates" (I, 665, 55-56):

[Archangeli]
Wheeze out law-phrase, whiffles Latin forth,
And, just as though roast lamb would never be,
Makes logic levigate the big crime small:
Rubs palm on palm, rubs foot with itchy foot,
Conceives and inchoates the argument,
Sprinkling each flower appropriate to the time,
--Ovidian quip or Ciceroonian crank,
A-bubble in the larynx while he laughs,
As he had fritters deep down frying thorp;
Now he turns, twists, and tries the oily thing
Shall be--first speech for Guido 'gainst the Fisc.

(I, 665, 80-664, 2)

Through the food-imagery, the classical allusions, the Latin phrases,
and the Biblical quotations Archangeli uses, Browning parodies the
representative of the law. The rhetorical devices indicate the lawyer's
pompous and vain attitude; Louise Snitslar comments that "The more far-
fetched the comparisons, the lengthier the orations, the more stilted the
language, whether in season or out of season, the more absurd the inter-
mingle of Latin and English--the more ridiculous the parody becomes."1

Most of the material of the monologue, however, is taken directly from the
Old Yellow Book: the plea of honoris causa, the precedents cited, and
even the Latin phrases were found in the Book. But Browning has added a
touch of humor to the portrayal of the middle-aged lawyer, as Kodell
points out: "Browning's humor has admirable interpenetrated his conception
of the first lawyer, as he reproduces him in the Poem, and has saved Arcangeli from utter remoteness from our human interest. The idea of the birthday feast and of the corresponding imagery is Browning's own, and serves to enliven the entire monologue. Through this imagery an aspect of Archangeli's character is revealed; he is a worldly man seeking not truth but material gain. Though we can agree with Mrs. Orr that Archangeli is "a coarse good-natured paterfamilias, whose ambitions are all centred on an eight-year-old son, whose birthday it is," we must remember that much of Archangeli's interest in his son's party stems from his knowledge that the boy's wealthy grandfather will be present and that, if the grandfather is pleased, he may decide to include little Giacinto in his will. The digressions concerning the banquet, and especially the food images used in connection with the case, emphasize the material nature of a man who cannot keep his mind off possible wealth and an approaching banquet; the direct and indirect references to the coming dinner interspersed in his speech to characterize Archangeli indicate his delight in physical pleasures.

Archangeli begins his monologue as he thinks of his son's birthday and of the accomplishments of the son; and in the opening lines he uses a food image to compare Cinone's attempts with lessons to his own work on his speech. The boy "chews Corderius with his morning crust" (VIII, 302, 29) while his father prepares the speech:

Look eight years onward, and he's perched, he's perched
Dapper and deft on stool beside this chair,
Cinonzo, Cinoncello, who but he?
—Trying his milk-teeth on some crusty case
Like this, papa shall triturate full soon
To smooth Papinianian pulp!

(VIII, 302, 30-35)
Archangel immediately thinks of the banquet, the "little yearly love-
some frolic feast" (VIII, 802, 40), and of the hale grandsire, "just the
sort/ To go off suddenly" (VIII, 802, 46-47), whose will may contain
Cinone's name. The preparation of the "small-feast" for the uncle is,
as Katone notes, made to parallel the lawyer's attempt to sway the judges
for whom the speech is being prepared. Although Archangel refers only
to the birthday feast, the parallel is implicit; for the main dish that
Archangel prepares is his speech. The analogy between the speech and
food continues as Archangel considers the glory that his part in the case
will bring:

Let law come dimple Cinoncino's cheek,
And Latin dumplo Cinarello's chin,
The while we spread him fine and toss him flat
This pulp that makes the pancake, trim our mass
Of matter into Argument the First,
Prime Pleading in defense of our accused,
Which, once a-wait on paper wing, shall soar....

(VIII, 803, 19-25)

As he considers the future, Archangel yearns for the reward of a
successful career; and he thinks of his gains in terms of food: the
Est-est, the minced herb, the goose-foot, and the cock-comb. The thought
of food reminds him again of the coming feast and of the grandfather's
health, which he is not at all anxious to aid:

To earn the Est-est, merit the minced herb
That mollifies the liver's leathery slice,
With here and there a goose-foot, there a cock's-comb stuck,
Cemented in an element of cheese!
I doubt if dainties do the grandsire good:
Last June he had a sort of strangling...bah!
He's his own master, and his will is made.
So, liver fizz, law flit and Latin fly
As we rub hands o'er dish by way of grace!

(VIII, 803, 71-79)

The lawyer's lack of spirituality is clearly indicated in the last line
of the passage; instead, his casuistry in preparing the case is suggested.
He continues by commenting on his process in preparing the speech: he will prepare the notes today, the speech tomorrow, and "the Latin last."

Admiring his own powers, he states his confidence that he could have written poetry, and continues by comparing his process with the preparation of a "fry":

Unluckily, law quite absorbs a man,
Or else I think I too had poetised.
"Law is the pork substratum of the fry,
Goose-foot and cock's-comb are Latinity,"—
And in this case, if circumstance assist,
We'll garnish law with idiom, never fear!

(VIII, 804, 22-27)

He worries, however, about his defense; he recognizes Bottini's skillfulness in argument, and admits that Guido's plea of _honoris causa_ has been overworked: "The main defence o' the murder's used to death,/ By this time, dry bare bones, no scrap we pick" (VIII, 805, 31-32). Every new thought that comes to him seems to bring food to his mind. As he compares his method of argument to rubbing life into cold fingers, he thinks of Cinone, hoping that he is guarding the "precious throat on which so much depends" (VIII, 805, 54). The thought of the weather next brings to his mind the condition of Guido; though no parallel is stated, it is clear that much also depends on Guido's throat, and Archangeli comments, "no sliced fry for him, poor Count!" (VIII, 805, 57). That the lawyer's pity for Guido stems from the knowledge that the murderer will have no "fry" is indicative of the shallowness of Archangeli's understanding and sympathy. Another reference to the feast comes to the lawyer's mind with no stated connection with the case. Archangeli wonders whether Gigia is preparing the food correctly:

(Vay Gigia have remembered, nothing stings
Fried liver cut of its monotony
Of richness, like a root of fennel, chopped

(VIII, 805, 52-57)
Fino with the parsley: parsley-sprigs, I said—
Was there need I should say "and fennel too"?
But no, she cannot have been so obtuse!
To our argument! The fennel will be chopped.)

(VIII, 838, 58-64)

Again, however, there is a parallel between the meal and speech: while
Archangeli is busy with the preparation of the speech, he cannot keep his
mind from the preparation of the meal. There is, moreover, an ironic con-
trast between the interest he expresses in the minute details of the meal
and the context into which he inserts his statement of concern. He has
just spoken of the contrast between man, "creation's master-stroke," and
the animals, and claimed that man neither has to live for the low animal
tastes alone, nor has to do "such homage to vile flesh and blood." As in
the midst of his argument he continues from the precedents he has cited
from the animals for killing a false wife to precedents among the heathens,
he reveals his own animal-like nature.

Another reference to the banquet is brought in not as a parallel
to his speech but because of an allusion that reminds him of a melon that
could have been used to improve the soup, had Cinone not used the rind to
make a boat. Archangeli alludes to the children of Israel, "those old
ingrate Jews," who, despite the manna-banquet with which they were
provided, longed for the melons and cucumbers they had enjoyed in Egypt;
and he immediately remembers the feast he is planning:

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

(VIII, 810, 51-55)

Almost each time Archangeli uses a food image it has a personal
application. Thus as he cites precedents justifying a husband's slaying
an adulterous wife, he suddenly breaks off:
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!
Behooves 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!)

(VIII, 314, 45-55)

Again there is a parallel between the case and the feast. As Archangeli
deliberates what names to invent to impress the court, he wonders what
to say to impress the grandfather. In each situation, he can make use of
the sentiments aroused by relationship, but in neither case is he sincere.

Archangeli's casuistic arguments are exemplified in an image he
adapts to his own purposes from the Bible. Defending Guido's illegal
possession of arms, he claims that "too much''is better than 'not enough'":

Gather instruction from the parable!
At first we are advised--"A lad hath here
Seven barley loaves and two small fishes: what
Is that among so many?" Aptly asked:
But put that question twice and, quite as apt,
The answer is "Fragments, twelve baskets full!"

(VIII, 315, 68-73)

Archangeli does not point out that in the Biblical account there was no
concern for providing food in advance and that only a miracle provided the
excess food. If he were to apply the lesson of the Biblical story strictly,
he would have to conclude that there was no justification for Guido's
carrying the weapons. The application of the parable of the food to the
carrying of weapons is more than a little ridiculous, and reveals the
shallowness of Archangeli's mind. Moreover, he has confused the Biblical
accounts, which were told as fact, not as parable, of the feeding of the
four thousand and of the five thousand.7
Archangeli's material nature is most definitely revealed in the line following some worries he expresses about the dinner. He wonders whether Gigia has roasted the porcupine, and reveals what his anger will be if she has stewed it instead:

(There is a porcupine to barbacue;  
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.)
Our stomach...I mean, our soul is stirred within,  
And we want words.

(VIII, 817, 73-82)

Archangeli humorously extends the food image to refer to his consideration of the defense as "stewing." More important, the slip of the tongue in the defense he is rehearsing reveals the lawyer's base character. It is his nature that he be disturbed not by the stirring of his soul but by the stirring of his stomach; that he would ever be hindered by his soul is as doubtful as it is probable that he would delay for the demands of his stomach.

As Archangeli worries about the future of his son, he uses a food image in connection with two passages from Ecclesiastes, each applied with a meaning very different from that in the Bible:

—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 proscribed by Holy Writ?  
Well, well, we fathers can but care, but cast  
Our bread upon the waters!

(VIII, 818, 62-69)

In Ecclesiastes, the idea behind the statement that there is a time to laugh, to weep, and to pray is that for each of God's purposes there is
a proper time. When the writer of Ecclesiastes directs "Cast thy bread upon the waters," he is giving directions for works of charity.

Archangeli, however, is concerned with directing his son to learn the knack of doing and saying things at the right time to achieve material advances, and the bread the lawyer would give is instruction in politic behavior.

Archangeli returns to the idea of the argument as food as he decides to leave some of the points of the case to Spreti, the second lawyer defending Guido. He resolves to let Spreti handle the matter of the youthfulness of Guido's accomplices and of their nationality:

I spare that bone to Spreti, and reserve myself the juicier breast of argument—
Flinging the breast-blade i' the face o' the Fisc,
Who furnished me the tid-bit....

(VIII, 819, 89-820, 1)

Archangeli will, characteristically, take for himself the "juicier breast" of the argument for which Bottini has given him the hint.

As Archangeli continues his contention that the four assassins were merely paid laborers, he ridiculously applies a food image from the Bible:

What though he lured base hinds by lucre's hope,—
The only motive they could masticate,
Milk for babes, not strong meat which men require?

(VIII, 820, 41-45)

The adaptation of the words from Corinthians through which Archangeli attempts to justify Guido's hiring the accomplices is a typical example of the lawyer's casuistry. St. Paul refers to spiritual and mental food:

"And I, brethren, could not speak to you as unto spiritual, but as unto carnal, even as unto babes in Christ. I have fed you with milk, and not with meat." Archangeli, on the other hand, tries to excuse Guido's payment of the assassins as being necessary for "base hinds": the lawyer
fails to point out that Guido's anger was caused by his failure to receive expected wealth. Another Biblical food image indicates Archangeli's pride and satisfaction with his condition. After finishing his speech he reflects on his life, and decides that he has modelled himself on Agur's wish:

Well, I have modelled me by Agur's wish,
"Remove far from me vanity and lies,
Feed me with food convenient for me!" What
I' the world should a wise man require beyond?

(VIII, 821, 92-95)

Ironically, as Archangeli speaks of Agur's wish, it is clear that he has applied the literal meaning of the Biblical metaphor "food me with food convenient for me." The appropriateness of the question, "What/ I' the world should a wise man require beyond?" to Archangeli's character is substantiated as the lawyer's thoughts return to the coming dinner. Even more is the appropriateness confirmed in the lines spoken immediately after he finishes the rough draft of his speech. Archangeli's thoughts return to the banquet: "There's my speech! And where's my fry, my family and friends?" (VIII, 821, 61-62).

Archangeli has made boastful comments about his speech, his monster Leviathan, and he has the same boastful feeling about the fry to come. His speech has been full of lies, as he has admitted, and the vanity of the man is constantly revealed. But Archangeli is satisfied with the case he has prepared, as he is satisfied by the mere "food convenient" for him. He has no interest in the moral justice of the case, but only in the gain which it will bring to him; similarly he is interested in the feast because of the food which will please him and because of the possibility that it will bring material gain if the grandfather is pleased. As is indicated by his slip of the tongue in which he says that his stomach
is stirred, he is a man of the stomach, not of the soul, and is unable to see correctly the case of Pompilia and Guido. Much less is he able to see any higher truth in the case.

The revelation of Archangeli's character, begun in Book I and confirmed by his own monologue, especially through the imagery, is concluded in Book XII by the letter the lawyer wrote after Guido's execution. The first part is a formal letter to be shown to the clients, but in the second part he discloses himself as the material lawyer of Book VIII, with the same thoughts in mind. As he visualizes his speech through a food image, so he uses food imagery to describe the cases he will defend in the future:

Now then for both the Patrimonial Cause
And the Case of Gomez! Serve them hot and hot!

(XII, 900, 16-17)

He quotes the remark of a "certain lady-patroness" to his son at the execution: "This time, you see, Bottini rules the roast" (XII, 900, 40). The twist in the familiar expression, perhaps caused by a slip of the tongue, or pen, indicates again his conception of the case as a banquet. The letter closes with a repetition of his statement of anticipation of a future trial: "Quick then with Gomez, hot and hot next case!" (X, 901, 6). Archangeli will be proud of another chance to show his skill and knows no image to express his anticipation more satisfactorily than the image of food, one of the highest pleasures to his material nature.

* * *

While Archangeli speaks in the midst of composing the first draft of his speech, Bottini is portrayed in his study giving his completed speech before an imagined audience. There are no interruptions for other thoughts that may come to his mind, as in the approach of Archangeli; instead, Bottini's speech is "full-grown":

On the other side, some finished butterfly,  
Some breathing diamond-flake with leaf-gold fans,  
That takes the air, no trace of worm it was,  
Or cabbage-bed it had production from.

(I, 664, 9-12)

Browning further describes the speech as being composed of language that goes "easy as a glove" over both good and evil, and "smoothes both to one" (I, 664, 21-22). Browning's statement is substantiated in the monologue: there are passages of truly eloquent poetry, with elaborate illustrations from classical literature and adornments of Latin phrases.

But there is also in the monologue a hint of the "cabbage bed" in which the speech grew as Bottini reveals his pride and vanity in his monologue. Browning indicates the conceit of Bottini by describing the lawyer screaming his speech alone in his studio, while standing on tiptoe "like the cockeral that would crow" (I, 664, 45). Louise Snitslaar stresses Bottini's eagerness to impress: "He is the learned, but conceited bachelor, the narrow-minded pedant, concocting fine speeches in his study, eager for the impression he and his learning will make in the Court." He is not concerned with true justice; his task is to convict Guido, and to this end his speech is directed. As he tries to impress the court in proving Guido guilty, he does not try to bring out the truth of the case. He does not attempt to prove Pompilia's innocence, but insists that, even if she has done the things of which she is accused, Guido remains guilty.

Bowden states that Bottini tries to exhibit his genius by showing "with due exordium and argument and peroration, that Pompilia is all that her worst adversaries allege, and yet can be established innocent, or not so very guilty, by her rhetorician's learning and legal deftness in quart and tierce."
Browning closes his introduction to Bottini's speech by speaking of it as poetry which "penned, turns prose" (I, 664, 49). Bottini, who cannot give his speech before the court but must submit a written copy, is compared with a clavecinist, a player on the harpsichord, without his instrument, who yet plays an imaginary tune on the tablecloth to an imagined audience before he prints the "cold black score" (I, 664, 50-57). Bottini, in the brief introduction to the speech he reads in his study before the imagined audience, confirms his desire to read his speech before the judges. In his monologue he too uses the comparison of his speech with art; however, he sees his work not as a poem or a musical composition but as a painting. The images of painting that Bottini uses serve to characterize him and to indicate his lack of true perception of the case, for though the imagery is eloquent, it is merely decorative. It is introduced more for the purpose of impressing the court than of proving either Guido's guilt or Pompilia's innocence.

Bottini begins his speech before the imagined judges with a long story about the process a painter uses in performing his work:

Have ye seen, Judges, have ye, lights of law,—
When it may hap some painter, much in vogue
Throughout our city nutritive of arts,
Ye summon to a task shall test his worth,
To manufacture, as he knows and can,
A work may decorate a palace-wall,
Afford my lords their Holy Family,—
Hath it escaped the acumen of the Court
How such a painter sets himself to paint?

(IX, 822, 31-40)

He describes in detail and at great length the process a painter uses until he has a group of perhaps fifty studies; but, he points out, when a picture is required the painter does not dovetail parts of the various studies. Instead, he broods on the problem and produces a picture "Truer to the subject,—the main central truth/ And soul o' the picture" than are
the fragments contained in the studies. He produces "Truth rare and real, not transcripts, fact and false" (IX, 823, 15-34). Only after Bottini has completed this unnecessarily long story does he begin to speak of the murder case:

After Bottini's dashing entrance we get a very long-winded and roundabout story in which he uses many comparisons that have really nothing to do with the matter in hand, a story about a picture by one Ciro Ferri of the Holy Family's Journey to Egypt. After fifty lines of this he lands where he wants to be, namely with the Patriarch Pietro and his wife, whom we soon recognize as the Comparini family....

Finally Bottini comes to the point of his speech, the comparison of his speech with the painting he has been describing:

Thus then, just so and no whit otherwise,
Have I,—engaged as I were Ciro's self,
To paint a parallel, a Family...
Searched out, pried into, pressed the meaning forth
Of every piece of evidence in point,
How bloody Herod slew these innocents....

(IX, 823, 47-63)

He compares the Comparini, Pompilia, and her babe with the Holy Family; and Guido with Herod who slays the innocents. The important point in the comparison is not, however, the similarity of Pompilia to the Virgin Mary, nor of Guido to Herod; instead, Bottini stresses the similarity of his process to the painter's technique to impress the court with the thoroughness of his investigation of the case. He is proud of the care with which he has treated the case and of the resulting picture he can draw:

Until the glad result is gained, the group
Demonstrably presented in detail,
Their slumber and his onslaught,—like as life.

(IX, 823, 64-66)

His pride is even more evident as he claims the artist's privilege of showing only the picture, not his many studies:
But shall I ply my papers, play my proof's,
Parade my studies, fifty in a row,
As though the Court were yet in pupilage,
Claimed not the artist's ultimate appeal?
Much rather let me soar the height prescribed
And, bowing low, proffer my picture's self!

(IX, 823, 81-86)

Ironically, in the next lines Bottini must admit that he has not the
ability to paint the picture of the entire family: he must "leave the
family as unmanageable," and "stick to just one portrait, but life-size"
(IX, 824, 3-4). Almost immediately thereafter he is forced to admit that
he cannot even portray Pompilia successfully, but must content himself
with the model—the model that would serve as a basis for one of the
studies he said he would not present before the court! And when Bottini
asks himself how he dares to paint Pompilia, though the question is used
for rhetorical effect, he has admitted that he is unable even to begin
the task of painting of which he has boasted (IX, 824, 31). He turns
briefly to the conception of his speech as a poem rather than a painting:
"I dare the epic plunge" (IX, 824, 56). In this image as well as in the
painting images the pride of Bottini in his work is indicated.

Bottini's next image of painting occurs in his supposed defense of
Pompilia, in which he does not deny her guilt but excuses it. Speaking
of the love letters, he suggests that, if it were found that Pompilia
had written them, no one could blame her:

Who is so dull as wonder at the pose
Of our Pompilia in the circumstance?

(IX, 831, 60-61)

Pompilia, though she had lied about not being able to write, would be
justified because she had tried to prevent a large crime through her
small one. The argument is worthless, for after she had escaped there
was no need to deny the writing of the letters. Though the question of Pompilia's pose is significant apart from the images of painting, it is important in relation to these images because it reveals that the pose in which Bottini is willing to see her is not one which reveals her true character but one which gives him opportunity to display his powers of argument.

Bottini's lack of interest in defending Pompilia is shown further in an image of art which is only indirectly related to the speech-as-painting image. He imagines Archangeli comparing Pompilia to a bas-relief of Hesione chained to a crag; but he anticipates Archangeli's charge that, unlike Hesione, Pompilia disguised herself with pitch to elude the monster instead of waiting for one sent by Jove to save her. Bottini argues that Pompilia had no alternative, for the heavens had sent no one to save her, and that the marks of the deception will soon disappear:

...what you take for pitch,
Is nothing worse, belike, than black and blue,
More evanescent proof that hardy hands
Did yeoman's service, cared not where the gripe
Was more than duly energetic; bruised,
She smarts a little, but her bones are saved
A fracture, and her skin will soon show sleek.

(IX, 655, 68-74)

This far-fetched comparison indicates the shallowness of Bottini's speech.

Near the end of his monologue Bottini returns to his conception of the speech as a picture, and again his pride is displayed. In discussing the murder, he comments that the court has already heard his view, which he has poured out in full and which has "long since swept like surge, i' the simile/ Of Homer, overborne both dyke and dam" to overwhelm the client and the advocate (IX, 658, 41-43). Guido's fate, he says, is sealed, and he will spend no time depicting him. After displaying his willingness to
believe the many accusations against Pompilia, he states that his chief
purpose has been to portray the goodness of Pompilia, and that his
purpose remains the same:

...which was and is
And solely shall be to the very end,
To draw the true effigies of a saint,
Do justice to perfection in the sex....

(IX, 838, 46-49)

Let no one, he pleads, object that he has forgotten the purpose of his
speech, for through his portrayal of Pompilia's purity he hopes to
display Guido's wickedness:

By painting saintship I depicture sin:
Beside my pearl, I prove how black thy jet,
And, through Pompilia's virtue, Guido's crime.

(IX, 838, 60-62)

The irony of Bottini's statement that he hopes no one will think he has
devoted too much attention to depicting Pompilia's virtue is especially
significant when it is remembered that, after the murder case, Bottini
tried to prove Pompilia's guilt in his attempt to gain Pompilia's
possessions for the Convertites. Bottini closes his oration with a
statement of the poem-as-picture:

Point to point as I purposed have I drawn
Pompilia, and implied as terribly
Guido: so, gazing, let the world crown Law—
Able once more, despite my impotence,
And helped by the acumen of the Court,
To eliminate, display, make triumph truth!
What other prize than truth were worth the pains?

(IX, 840, 29-35)

Bottini's real interest in the case, however, is revealed in the brief
remarks he makes when the oration is complete: he gloats that his speech
is longer than the famous panegyric of Isocrates, and concludes with the
revealing comment, "it pays" (IX, 840, 45).
In Guido's monologues Browning reveals the character of a man who is not merely proud and material but also has the quality that seems to be "sheer monstrous wickedness." Yet he is not a man of an inexplicably diabolical nature. He is not a "miracle of evil rendered credible," as Dowden points out: "He has no spirit of diabolic revelry in crime, no feeling for its delicate artistry; he is under no spell of fascination from its horror." Guido is not a pure monster but a man: a man of noble birth who has tried to maintain the family name by both honest and dishonest methods, and who retains nobility only in name. Browning's object in Guido's monologues seems to be identical with the object Thomson noted in some of the poet's shorter poems: his intention "is by no means to prove black white and white black, to make the worse appear the better reason, but to bring a seeming monster and perplexing anomaly under the common laws of nature, by showing how it has grown to be what it is, and how it can with more or less of self-illusion reconcile itself to itself." He is, however, full of hatred, full of justification of himself.

Though Guido's character is indicated in his first monologue, it is even more fully revealed in Book XI. In Book V he appears before the court with a speech carefully thought out to appeal to the officials who will judge his case, for he knows that only through coloring their attitude can he hope to escape punishment. He is deferential to the law and to the church, as Mrs. Orr points out:

The whole monologue is leavened by a spirit of mock deference for religion, for the Church, and for the law which represents the Church. Count Guido is led in from the torture, a mass of mock-patient suffering: wincing as he speaks, but quite in spite of himself—grateful that his pains are not worse—begging his judges not to be too much concerned about him; "since, thanks to his age and shaken health, a fainting fit soon came to his relief—indeed, torture itself is a kind of relief from the moral agonies he has undergone."
Yet in his second monologue the murderer has adopted a tone very different from that of Book V; and the difference in the titles of the monologues is indicative of the change within the books. "Count Guido Franceschini" has in Book XI become merely "Guido." In prison before the execution he addresses the Cardinal and the Abate first in a conciliatory manner and then, when he realizes the futility of pleading, in hatred, with his previous mask thrown off; there is no longer need for him to pretend, and he admits his own evil nature as he states his hatred of Pompilia's purity. The setting in both these monologues, as in Archangeli's and Bottini's speeches, is important to the imagery. In Book V Guido's thought is affected by the machine of Vigil-torture, and much of his imagery is related to this machine; Browning indicates the importance of the torture in the monologue as he describes Guido's attitude at the court:

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...[Guido] does his best man's-service for himself,
Despite,—what twitches brow and waxes lip wince,—
His limbs' late taste of what was called the Cord,
Or Vigil--torture more facetiously.
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(I, 661, 75-78)

In Book XI the machine image is related to the Manmaia-machine which he will experience. In both books the anatomical images are first introduced with the machine images and then are used so continually throughout the books that they dominate both monologues. These anatomical images reveal the thought that is prominent in Guido's mind, and, as he sees the entire story from beginning to end in terms of physical suffering, it is clear that the physical, rather than the spiritual, is of chief importance in his life.

Guido begins his monologue by minimizing the importance of the torture to which he has been subjected. "Law is law," he says, and if law does not consider noblemen to be exempt from racking, he will not
blame the court. All is over, and neither wrist is out of joint, though there may have been some damage to his shoulder. Nevertheless, he stresses, the physical torture is nothing compared with the torture his brain has endured for four years:

Neds must the Court be slow to understand
How this quite novel form of taking pain,
This getting tortured merely in the flesh,
Amounts to almost an agreeable change
In my case, me fastidious, plied to much
With opposite treatment, used (forgive the joke)
To the rasp-tooth toying with this brain of mine,
And, in and out my heart, the play o' the probe.
Four years have I been operated on
I' the soul, do you see....

(V, 727, 7-16)

The torment, Guido claims, has been in his soul: "That was the Vigil-tortment, if you please!" (I, 727, 24). But what has been injured is his self-respect and his pride in his family name; these, he reveals, are the only parts of his soul Pompilia has been able to touch. The idea of Pompilia and her family as instruments of torture or of physical unpleasantness continues in the anatomical images throughout the monologue.

The torture of his flesh, Guido states, is nothing compared with the foretaste of hell-fire given by the Campanini and Pompilia. The Biblical echo in this comparison is ironic, for in Luke the instruction Christ gives is to fear God, who can cast souls into hell, instead of those who kill the body. Guido has no fear of God; but considers the blows to his pride as hell-fire:

A trifle of torture to the flesh, like yours,
While soul is spared such foretaste of hell-fire,
Is naught.

(V, 727, 61-63)

Some of the discomforts he suffered, he continues, are even equivalent to the sentence the court may plan for him; therefore he will postpone
listing some of the points of the torture until the climax arrives:

Because I would reserve some choicer points
0' the practice, more exactly parallel
(Having an eye to climax) with what gift,
Eventual grace the Court may have in store
I' the way of plague—what crown of punishments.
When I am hanged or headed, time enough
To prove the tenderness of only that,
More heading, hanging,—not their counterpart....

(V, 727, 65-72)

The only mistake of the court, he proposes, is that they "rack and wrench/ And rend a man to pieces," for no purpose whatsoever (V, 728, 2-3). Since he never denied his part in the murder, all he can do is defend his name and, if possible, stop "Discomfort to his flesh from noose or axe" (V, 728, 9).

With these lines Guido turns away from his thought of the Vigil-torture, yet the image of physical discomfort continues as he recalls before the court the story of his life. He begins his story with the remark that he has persistently followed the course in which he was directed in his life:

...wearing that yoke
My shoulder was predestined to receive,
Born to the hereditary stoop and crease....

(V, 728, 31-35)

The analogy of the obedient beast of burden continues until Guido describes his present condition:

I protruded nose
To halter, bent my back of docile beast,
And now am whealed, one wide wound all of me,
For being found at the eleventh hour o' the day
—My one fault, I am stiffened by my work,
—My one reward, I help the Court to smile!

(V, 728, 39-45)
In this image Guido reveals his tendency to look on hardships and disappointments in his life as physical discomforts and to describe them in terms of anatomy; and he attempts to gain the sympathy of the court by referring to himself as a beast of burden.

As Guido rehearses in detail the history of his life, he begins by telling of his family name and tradition, stressing the nobility of the family, and relates that at one point in his life he suddenly realized that he should be rich, not poor. He describes his situation as that of a poor deep-sea fish stranded in slush and sand; but he rapidly shifts his image to depict, in terms of anatomy, an admirable youth hindered by circumstances:

The enviable youth with the old name,
Wide chest, stout arms, sound brow and pricking veins,
A heartful of desire, man's natural load,
A brainful of belief, the noble's lot,—
All this life, cramped and grasping, high and dry
I' the wave's retreat....

(V, 728, 82-729, 1)

Guido is not content to describe himself as a beast or as a fish; he would prefer, it is clear throughout his monologue, to think of himself as a worthy man.

Guido avoids anatomical images in reporting of his unsuccessful attempts to gain preferment in the church, but returns to the images when he tells of the negotiations with the Comparini. He relates that both parties were satisfied with the bargain in which he agreed to exchange his name for wealth; and that the charge of the Comparini that he falsified the figures of the agreement is worthless. The figures were only for the sake of fashion, he insists, and deceived no one:
The veritable back-bone, understood
Essence of this same bargain, blank and bare,
Being the exchange of quality for wealth,
What may such fancy-flights be?

(V, 755, 2-5)

He admits that he may have mentioned wealth along with his name, as the
Comparini made claims for a noble ancestor; yet he maintains that each
party knew what the bargain meant:

They knew and I knew where the back-bone lurked
I' the writhings of the bargain, lords, believe!

(V, 755, 12-13)

More significant than the bargain-as-backbone image, however, are
the images with which Guido describes his wife as a cause of physical
discomfort and injury. He uses an animal image in which he describes
Pompilia as being the "pure smooth egg" which he thought would be a
comfort but turned out to be a cockatrice instead, and asks if the
court is surprised to see him stamp on her. Instead of the soft swan
he had thought her to be she became a stinging cockatrice which plagued
man and God alike:

Is it not clear that she you call my wife,
That any wife of any husband, caught
Whatting a sting like this against his breast,—
Speckled with fragments of the fresh-broke shell,
Married a month and making outcry thus,—
Proves a plague-prodigy to God and man?

(V, 755, 6-11)

The idea of Pompilia as a plague in Guido's house, suggested in this
passage, is further developed as Guido imagines words which could be
put in Pompilia's mouth and attributes to her another plague image.
He suggests that Pompilia should plead that her husband not renounce
her, not throw away the rag smeared with the plague:
If, far from casting thus away the rag
Smeared with the plague his hand had chanced upon,
Sewn to his pillow by Locusta's wile,—
Far from abolishing, root, stem, and branch,
The misgrowth of infectious mistletoe
Foisted into his stock for honest graft,...
Ah, if he did thus, what a friend were he!

(V, 736, 76-737, 18)

These words are not those Pompilia would have spoken; instead,Guido
attributes to her his own conception of her as a carrier of a plague
which would affect his stock. He reveals not only his hatred of Pompilia
but his pride in his family reputation. In the lines immediately follow¬
ing the mistletoe image he continues the anatomical image as he imagines
Pompilia describing herself as an injuring fire:

Anger he might shou,—who can stamp out flame
Yet spread no black o' the brand?—yet, rough albeit
In the act, as whose bare feet feel embers scorch,
What grace wore his, what gratitude were mine!

(V, 737, 19-22)

Again he considers his part in the case as being full of physical pain,
caused in this image by a fire, not a plague. He continues relating of
his life with Pompilia, and tells of learning of Caponsacchi's attentions
to her. He anticipates the question of why he took no immediate action:

Ask you me
Why, when I felt this trouble flap my face,
Already pricked with every shame could perch,—
When, with her parents, my wife plagued me too,—
Why I enforced not exhortation mild
To leave whore's-tricks and let my brows alone,
With mulet of comfits, promise of perfume?

(V, 738, 34-40)

Guido includes the parents in this plague image, which he combines
with the image of trouble which he feels "flap my face." He states
that he recognizes that, had he punished his wife immediately instead
of merely threatening, he might have avoided further difficulty. The punishment he thinks of is, of course, physical:

Had [I], with the vulgarest household implement, Calmly and quietly cut off, clean thro' bone
But one joint of one finger of my wife,
Saying "For listening to the serenade,
Here's your ring-finger shorter a full third...."

(V, 738, 61-65)

Ho emphasizes the anatomical details of the imagined punishment, and continues his supposed speech by warning his wife that the next time anyone saunters hopefully underneath the terrace he will slice away the next joint of her finger. Cutting off a joint of her finger, he supposes, would have been the best remedy for his wife's actions, for, although there would have been "a quick sharp scream, some pain;/ Much calling for plaister, damage to the dress," and a sulky countenance the next day, he is sure her attitude would have been changed (V, 738, 72-75). As support for his argument, he points out the analogy between his situation and that of Peter cutting off Kalchus' ear:

I don't hear much of harm that Kalchus did
After the incident of the ear, my lords!

(V, 738, 76-77)

Kalchus, he points out, was silenced, and did not hang himself like Judas, who was trusted even after he was proved a thief. So, he concludes, his wife might have been true and obedient had he taken the wise course of punishment; instead, he took milder action:

I took the other however, tried the fool's,
The lighter remedy, brandished rapier dread
With cork-ball at the tip, boxed Kalchus' ear
Instead of severing the cartilage,
Called her a terrible nickname, and the like,
And there an end....

(V, 739, 4-9)
This image of anatomy is clearly part of a false analogy. Guido has adapted the story of Malchus' ear to his own purpose, for he fails to point out that Christ immediately restored the ear of Malchus. Were he to consider this point, he would have to admit, first of all, that the future of Malchus, which, incidentally, is unknown, was not influenced by the loss of an ear but surely to a greater extent by its restoration; and, secondly, that Christ disapproved of Peter's violent action of cutting off the ear, and therefore, that He would disapprove of Guido's imagined punishment of his wife.

Guido reverts to the comparison of the wounds of his—soul, caused by Pompilia, with his wounds of the body, caused by the torture to which the court subjected him, in the next plague image. He relates that after discovering Pompilia and Caponsacchi at Arezzo he attempted to procure treatment for his soul at the court:

In this same chamber did I bare my sores
O' the soul and not the body,—shun no shame,
Shrink from no probing of the ulcerous part,
Since confident in Nature,—which is God,—
That she who, for wise ends, concocts a plague,
Curbs, at the right lime, the plague's virulence too....

(V, 741, 32-37)

Law, or Nature, that cured Lazarus, he believed, would cure him also, but he failed to find satisfaction at Rome. He continues the comparison of mental and physical suffering as he relates the consequences that followed the trial in which the only punishment meted to Pompilia was consigning her to a convent and to Caponsacchi was a three-year banishment at Civita. The pincers and screws of the court's torture, he states, were nothing compared with the shame he suffered as a result of the trial:
Apologize for the pincers, palliate screws?
Ply me with such toy-trifles, I entreat!
Trust who has tried both sulphur and sops-in wine!

(V, 742, 62-64)

Guido resumes the idea of the plague when he tells of the contents of the letter he received which denied him his divorce. In the letter, he states, Pompilia was said to have been returned to her parent's house; the letter further informed him that the Comparini would confess to being parents only when their parentage would plague Guido:

——Ko-parents, when that cheats and plunders you,
But parentage again confessed in full,
When such confession pricks and plagues you more...

(V, 745, 36-38)

The contents of the letter are interpreted by Guido and put into his own words; therefore, it seems probable that he uses the plague idea to impress upon his hearers the suffering he had to undergo.

When Guido tells of the effect of the letter had on him, he again uses an image of anatomy. The knowledge that Pompilia was released to her parents, and that Caponsacchi was free to visit her, did not arouse the reaction the court would expect, Guido insists:

Now,—I see my lords
Shift in their seat,—would I could do the same!
They probably please expect my bile was moved
To purpose, nor much blame me: now, they judge,
The fiery titillation urged my flesh
Break through the bonds. By your pardon, no, sweet Sirs!

(V, 744, 1-6)

He received the news in a stoic's mood, he maintains, and resigned himself to a quiet, childless life; only when he received the news of having an heir was he roused to action. Again he uses an anatomical image as he relates the contents of the letter: the Comparini, the letter states,
have already hidden the child away to keep Guido from making claim for him, for they are aware of the usefulness of the child:

They need him for themselves,—don't fear, they know
The use o' the bantling,—the nerve thus laid bare
To nip at, new and nice, with fingernail!

(V, 745, 31-33)

The news, Guido says, caused him to rise up like fire, and to roar like fire; he discovered that which he had thought was the end to be only the beginning. The worm which had worked itself through his skin did not stop at the bone but continued to madden him:

The worm which wormed its way from skin through flesh
To the bone and there lay biting, did its best,—
What, it goes on to scrape at the bone's self,
Will wind to inmost marrow and madden me?

(V, 745, 36-39)

His torment, which he describes in anatomical images, was not over as he had thought, he reports. The knowledge of the child would bring suffering to him were it either legitimate or illegitimate, Guido cleverly tries to convince the court. Suppose, he says, that the child is legitimate: then Pompilia was guilty of shaming not only her husband but also her child, the one thing both husband and wife could love, when she escaped from Arezzo:

Why then, the surplusage of disgrace, the spilth
Over and above the measure of infamy,
Failing to take effect on my coarse flesh
Seasoned with scorn now, saturate with shame,—
Is saved to instil on and corrode the brow,
The baby-softness of my first-born child....

(V, 745, 65-70)

Playing on the sympathies of the court by emphasizing his love for his child, Guido claims that his paternal feeling drew him to the child born "to bear this brand/ On forehead and curse me who could not save!"
(V, 746, 3-4). The anatomical image is used in connection with a corroding
agent, not with the frequently-used plague, but the implication about
Pompilia is the same. The ring image Guido uses in reporting the reply
of the officials to his request for a divorce is similar:

Though ring about your neck be brass not gold,
Needs must it clasp, gangrene you all the same!

(V, 749, 51-52)

As Guido tells of the freedom from burden he felt after the killing
of the Comparini, he uses an anatomical image to justify both the murder and
his feeling of having accomplished "God's bidding and man's duty" (V, 748,
24):

I heard Himself prescribe,
That great Physician, and dared lance the core
Of the bad ulcer; and the rage abates,
I am myself and whole now: I prove cured
By the eyes that see, the ears that hear again,
The limbs that have relearned their youthful play,
The healthy taste of food and feel of clothes
And taking to our common life once more,
All that now urges my defence from death.

(V, 748, 25-35)

Kachen traces the image to Mark 2:17, "When Jesus heard it, he saith unto
them, They that are whole have no need of the physician, but they that are
sick: I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance." Whether Browning had this passage in mind or not, Guido has adapted the
words of the Bible to his own use, as in the analogy of Malchus; for
nowhere does Christ suggest murder as a means of relieving either physical
or mental suffering. Guido's emphasis on anatomy is again indicative of
his attitude toward Pompilia. Now, he claims, his health has returned as
well as his sanity of soul, "Nowise indifferent to the body's harm" (V,
748, 61).
In concluding his monologue Guido tries to prove that the punishment meted to Pompilia and Caponsacchi was inadequate, and that the purpose of the court to right wrong was not fulfilled. He uses the idea of a plague again to prove that the intended cure became a worse disease:

...what if I, at this last of all,  
Demonstrate you, as my whole pleading proves,  
No particle of wrong received thereby  
One atom of right?—that cure grew worse disease?  
That in the process you call "justice done"  
All along you have nipped away just inch  
By inch the creeping climbing length of plague  
Breaking my tree of life from root to branch,  
And left me, after all and every act  
Of your interference,—lightened of what load?

(V, 751, 12-21)

Instead of being saved from further torment, Guido reports, he felt the reptile-like spire of hate rising around him, not only wanting to crush and coil itself on him but attempting to take life from him.

Guido ends his monologue with an appeal to the emotions of the court as he imagines himself telling his story to his son and relating how God and law approved of his task. If his son should stoop to kiss his father's hand and be surprised at its appearance, Guido would tell how he received his injury:

"That was an accident  
I' the necessary process,—just a trip  
O' the torture-irons in their search for truth,—  
Hardly misfortune, and no fault at all."

(V, 752, 42-45)

Again Guido is attempting to influence the court by his flattery and his show of paternal pride. He ends his monologue, significantly, with a reference to the same torture that he compared with mental or spiritual torture at the beginning of his monologue.

In Guido's second monologue the emphasis is not on the torture he has received but is replaced by preoccupation with the Manmaic-machine
he fears, and his use of associated imagery is affected by the future he
awaits as well as by his audience. He begins his monologue with an appeal
to his visitors, Cardinal Acciaiuoli and Abate Panciatichi, to help him
because of his noble family. Acciaiuoli's ancestor, he recalls, built
the Certosa at the bend of the Ema rivulet; his own blood, he maintains,
came from "as far a source," by which he could mean either the rivulet or
the ancestor called the Seneseal:

My blood
Comes from as far a source: ought it to end
This way, by leakage through their scaffold-planks
Into Rome's sink where her red refuse runs?
Sirs, I beseech you by blood-sympathy....

(XI, 865, 36-40)

He combines his first reference to the Manneia-machine in Book XI with an
image of anatomy as he appeals to the blood-sympathy of the Cardinal and
Abate. He tries to emphasize the inappropriateness of a man of his
position being subjected to this punishment by stressing the disgraceful
end to which his blood will come.

As Guido continues to try to gain the favor of his visitors, he uses
another anatomical image to describe the verdict of the Pope:

Friends, we used to frisk:
What of this sudden slash in a friend's face,
This cut across our good companionship
That showed its front so gay when both were young?

(XI, 867, 30-33)

This appeal to the two listeners is, unlike the previous image, not made
on the basis of his nobility. Finding his first plea unsuccessful, he
attempts to win the Cardinal and Abate on the basis of supposed friendship,
mentioned nowhere else. Here the appeal is on a different level than the
preceding one: would they not defend a comrade whose face has been
slashed by the Pope's whim? The image is developed as Guido imagines
himself with his friends faring forth on their steeds and pacing the
world as they are bid. He sees his grandfather's hoof-prints where the
ancestor stabbed a knave for daring to jibe at him. Similarly, Guido
maintains that he and his friends canter until he does exactly as his
grandfather did, but that he, unlike his grandfather, is punished for his
action:

Till, mid the jauncing pride and jaunty port,
Something of a sudden jerks at somebody—
A dagger is out, a flashing cut and thrust,
Because I play some prank my grandsire played,
And here I sprawl: where is the company? Gone!
A trot and a trample! Only I lie trapped,
Writhe in a certain novel springe just set
By the good old Pope: I'm first prize. Warn me? Why?
Apprise me that the law o' the game is changed?
Enough that I'm a warning, as I writhe,
To all and each my fellows of the file,
And make law plain henceforward past mistake....

(XI, 867, 51-62)

Guido images his punishment as a trap within which he must writhe as a
warning to his fellows, and claims reprieve because his grandfather was
not punished for what he considers to be a similar crime. But he continues
with the idea of the Hannair-machine, the Pope's brand-new engine:

Do you know what teeth you mean to try
The sharpness of, on this soft neck and throat?

(XI, 867, 70-71)

He wishes to impress on his hearers the inappropriateness of a nobleman
being subjected to such a humiliation as the Pope decreed; but, thinking
his hearers wish to speak, he asks, using anatomical terms, if they have
something to disclose:

Nay, you have something to disclose?---a smile,
At end of the forced sternness, means to mock
The heart-beats here? I call your two-hearts stone!
Is your charge to stay with me till I die?
Be tacit as your bench, then! Use your ears,
I use my tongue: how glibly yours will run
At pleasant supper-time....

(Guido, 867, 76-868, 5)

Guido emphasizes the heart-beats which will soon cease, and the ears and tongue which he will soon be unable to use.

Guido continues by relating the manner in which he learned about the "sharp iron tooth" of the Mannaia-machine. While strolling forth one day, he states, he happened to see the machine and hear the story of how Felice What's-his-name was executed for killing a duke who had kidnapped and carried off his sister. He describes in detail the "man-mutilating engine," painted red all over, with its iron plate, and vividly depicts the process of execution:

...down you kneel,
In you're pushed, over you the other drops,
Tight you're clipped, whiz, there's the blade cleaves its best,
Cut trundles body, down flops head on floor,
And where's your soul gone? That, too, I shall find!

(Guido, 869, 13-17)

This, he says, is the manner of "grooming for next world" undergone by Felice; the parallel with his own death is implicit. Times, however, have changed, he states, for now he, who did the duke's deed, is subjected to Felice's punishment. The comparison is obviously wrong: Felice, like Guido, was the murderer; Guido has performed Felice's act and will receive the same punishment. He is like the duke only in having ancestors of nobility.

Guido reveals not only the manner in which he became acquainted with the Mannaia-machine but also the method by which he achieved his knowledge of anatomy. He says that he "stomachs but ill" the euphemistic phrase "I lose my head!" (Guido, 869, 62). Early in life, he points out, he learned his useful knowledge of anatomy:
Twas useful knowledge, in those sane old days,
To know the way a head is set on neck.
My fencing-master urged "Would you excel?
Rest not content with mere bold give-and-guard,
Nor pink the antagonist somehow-anyhow!
See me dissect a little, and know your game!
Only anatomy makes a thrust the thing."

(XI, 869, 65-71)

Guido's reason for telling about his knowledge of anatomy is in part to
boast of his accomplishments, but the extent to which he dwells on details
is caused by his realization of the relation of the subject to his
approaching execution. He continues by describing to his hearers the
structure of the neck:

Oh Cardinal, those lithe live necks of ours!
Here go the vertebrae, here's Atlas, here
Axis, and here the symphyses stop short,
So wisely and well,—as, 'er a corpse, we cant,—
And here's the silver cord which...what's our word?
Depends from the gold bowl, which loosed (not "lost")
Lets us from heaven to hell,—one chop, we're loose!

(XI, 869, 72-79)

Although a sage says that there is not much pain in the process, Guido reveals
his doubt as he asks who told the sage and replies that Felice's ghost
could not have told the wise man. Mother Nature's way, he argues, is to
have the cord, worn to a thread by the span of threescore years and ten,
"ease itself away," "snap while we slumber" (XI, 870, 3-5). He compares
then the difference in the processes of Nature and of Art:

I'm told one clot of blood extravasate
Ends one as certainly as Roland's sword,—
One drop of lymph suffused proves Oliver's race,—
Intruding, either of the pleasant pair,
On the arachnoid tunic of my brain.
That's Nature's way of losing cord!—but Art,
How of Art's process with the engine here,
When bowl and cord alike are crushed across,
Bored between, bruised through? Why, if Fagon's self,
The French Court's pride, that famed practitioner,
Would pass his cold pale lighting of a knife,
Pistoja-ware, adroit 'twixt joint and joint,
With just a "See how facile, gentlefolk!"—
The thing were not so bad to bear!

(XI, 870, 6-19)

Guido first claims that Nature's way of killing is to be preferred to Art's, but then distinguishes between the artistic ways of the Kannaia-machine and of the dagger. Each time he considers the anatomical aspect of death. Never, however, does he consider the type of death he dealt the Comparini and Pompilia. Ironically, he begins his next argument that the Pope's decree of death is unnecessary with the introductory statement, "Oh, if men were but good!" (XI, 870, 26).

Guido again uses plague and associated anatomical imagery as he points out the analogy between his present condition and that in which he would be did the Cardinal and Abate wish to poison him. His own death, with his judgment and doom, he points out, will come soon enough without the Pope's decree; likewise, had his friends found signs of death already upon him when they came for revenge, they would have put away their poison. The Pope, he concludes, has no need to take his life:

--Just as you take and slip into my draught
The paperful of powder that clears scores,
You notice on my brow a certain blue:
How you both overset the wine at once!
How you both smile! "Our enemy has the plague!
Twelve hours hence he'll be scraping his bones bare
Of that intolerable flesh, and die,
Frenzied with pain; no need for poison here!...."

(XI, 870, 51-53)

His putting the words about plague and pain into the mouths of his audience reveals the obsession he has about his coming death.

One of the most revealing of Guido's images is spoken after he has thrown off his sheepskin and speaks as the wolf he really is. As he asks the Abate and Cardinal what good it will do him to repent, it is clear that
he is thinking merely of saving his body, not his soul. He asks what would happen if he did repent, and whether the Kannia-machine would then no longer be a menace to his life:

If I fall forthwith at your feet, gnash, tear, Foam, rave, to give your story the due grace, Will that assist the engine half-way back Into its hiding-house?—boards, shaking now, Bone against bone, like some old skeleton bat That wants, at winter's end, to wake and prey! Will howling put the sceptre back to sleep?

(XI, 871, 74-872, 4)

Guido reveals in this passage that, were he to claim repentance, his statement would be insincere, that it would be only for show. Moreover, he reveals that it is only his horror of death, symbolized by the machine, that would cause him to claim to repent. The anatomical image used to indicate his dread both of the machine and of death reveals Guido's mental state.

Guido uses anatomical imagery in a comparison he makes between his role in the entire affair and the role of a fencer. He states that when he engaged to fight he knew the terms and arms, as he knew that if he chose certain sins the church would hinder him. At the time of the murder he met his foe:

We cross blades, I, for all, my brag, break guard, And in goes the cold iron at my breast, Cut at my back, and end is made of me.

(XI, 872, 35-37)

The church wants, he insists, more triumph than merely his "lying flat on face"; it wants him to state that there was no passage of arms, but that instead he was defeated by his opponent's look. His opponent wants him to state, the Count continues, that the injury he received was merely accidental:
This chance scratch,
This incidental hurt, this sort of hole
I' the heart of mo? I stumbled, got it so!

(XI, 872, 46-48)

Guido admits that he knew he would have to face punishment for his crime, but as he reveals that he is angered that he is expected to repent without being given pardon, his hostile attitude toward the church is disclosed.

Guido's hypocrisy in his early service of the church is indicated in an image that follows from his statement that he does not need to repent. The Christians, he says, no longer recognize God's law, and he suggests that his hearers should concede its death. If the Christian faith is admitted to have suffered extinction, then they can boast about its past accomplishments, as the church boasts of its relics:

...treat your faith, that way,
Just as you treat your relics: "Here's a shred
Of saintly flesh, a scrap of blessed bone,
Raised King Cophetua, who was dead, to life
In Mesopotamia twelve centuries since,
Such was its virtue!" twangs the Sacristan,
Holding the shrine-box up, with hands like feet
Because of gout in every finger joint:
Does he bethink him to reduce one knob,
Alleviate one twinge by touching what he vaunts?
I think he半 uncrooks fist to catch fee,
But, for the grace, the quality of cure,—
Cophetua was the man put that to proof!

(XI, 873, 35-47)

In the same way that relics are shewn, Guido maintains, faith is both displayed and shamed at once. His comparison of the effect of faith with the supposed effect of relics, physical cure, indicates again the importance he places on physical comfort.

In ranting his abuse of the church, and especially of its leaders, Guido uses another anatomical image that reveals his preoccupation with his coming death. As one example of the fawning flattery of the Pope's
followers, he describes the Referendary, who, waiting to be received by
the Pope, suddenly has an idea to stop the spread of Molinism:

His Altitude the Referendary,—
Robed right, and ready for the usher's word
To pay devoir,—is, of all times, just then
'Ware of a master-stroke of argument
Will cut the spinal cord...ugh, ugh!...I mean,
Paralyse Molinism for evermore!

(XI, 874, 20-25)

The Referendary, Guido claims, will immediately leave the Pope's lobby,
reach home, and write the word or two of argument. He displays his zeal
for Christ while others pacify the Pope. Yet, Guido claims, his zeal is
not strong enough that he would ignore a plot to kill the Pope without
regard for his own soul. Guido's argument, again, is twisted; that he
does not realize that stopping a plot to kill a Pope, or any man, is quite
a different thing from waiting on a Pope reveals his failure to perceive
the truth of the situation. The use of the anatomical image of cutting
the spinal cord recalls his mention of the "silver cord" which must be
cut to kill a man and indicates that his concern about his own death is
prominent in his thoughts.

Guido uses anatomical terms in a passage in which he defends his
position that his lack of faith is supported by the mob of atheists on
the street much more effectively than it is challenged by a more fifty
"miracle-mongers":

Do fifty miracle-mongers match the mob
That acts on the frank faithless principle,
Born-baptized-and-bred Christian-athiests, each
With just as much a right to judge as you,—
As many senses in his soul, and nerves
I! neck of him as I,—they, soul and sense,
Neck and nerve, you abolish presently....

(XI, 875, 10-16)
The way in which the sense and soul, and nerves and neck, of the crowd immediately suggest to Guido his own body and soul which will soon be destroyed substantiates Guido's later statement that he believes only in the present life. He believes that his soul, like his neck, will soon have its end.

In speaking honestly about his feeling toward Pompilia, Guido reveals her attitude toward him and his resulting attitude toward her in anatomical terms. He states that his age made her recoil from him, that her "neck writhes, cords itself against" his kiss, but argues that he is still young in soul, and not old in body, with thighs and sinews, though the "vile surface be not smooth as once" (XI, 679, 7-11). Pompilia, he argues, declined to see that he was "the wrought man worth ten times the crude" (XI, 14-15). In telling of his consequent hatred of her, he abruptly breaks off to ask "Why do I laugh?" and immediately continues by describing death with the familiar skull figure:

Why, in the very grip
O! the jaws of death's gigantic skull, do I
Grin back his grin, make sport of my own pains?
Why from each clashing of his molars, ground
To make the devil bread from cut my grist,
Leaps out a spark of mirth, a hellish toy?

(XI, 679, 22-27)

The emphasis on death's skull, jaws, and molars indicates again Guido's concentration on the physical aspect of his coming death. That his thoughts of his death are foremost in his mind would be revealed, even without the imagery, by the interruption of his comments on death into the story of his relationship with Pompilia.

Guido's conception of Pompilia as a bearer of plague is continued in Book XI, though here without the corresponding anatomical images which he used in Book V to compare the torture of his life with her with the torture.
of the court. Guido speaks of Pompilia's change from rebellion to complete submission after her parents' departure as an act which she knew would plague him, and in which another party must be supporting her:

I'll not believe but instinct wrought in this
Set her on to conceive and execute
The preferable plague: how sure they probe—
These jades, the sensitivist soft of man!

(XI, 882, 86-883, 2)

The anatomical image is used in connection with the Comparini as well as with Pompilia in the image that depicts the family as taeniae sucking in Guido's body. He describes his revenge on the group that had tortured him:

So, I had my way,
Did my deed: so, unbrokenly lay bare
Each taenia that had sucked me dry of juice,
At last outside me, not an inch of ring
Left not to writhe about and root itself
I' the heart all powerless for revenge!

(XI, 886, 11-16)

He thinks of the damage caused by the Comparini as physical damage within his own body, as he thinks of the plague of Pompilia as attacking his body.

Guido's knowledge of anatomy, with which he attempts to impress his hearers, is emphasized as he describes Pompilia after he has tried to kill her. She was full of wounds, yet Guido's knowledge of anatomy failed to help him; for she lived long enough to give her testimony:

--Riddled with wounds by one not like to waste
The blots he dealt,—knowing anatomy,—
(I think I told you) bound to pick and choose
The vital parts! 'Twas learning all in vain!

(XI, 887, 2-5)

Though there is no anatomical imagery in this passage, Browning wishes to emphasize Guido's acquaintance with anatomy. His knowledge influences his
imagery, and the pride he expresses in his knowledge while describing his murder of his wife reveals his complete lack of feeling for her.

Guido associates anatomical imagery with the Vigil-torture as in Book IV, not with the Memmaia-machino, as he discusses the four accomplices who accompanied him to Rome. Recalling bitterly that they had confessed their plans to kill him for failing to pay them, he thinks of the confession brought about by their torture:

Those of my very household,—what did they
Trust with her rack-and-cord-contrivance late
From out their bones and marrow?

(XI, 887, 61-65)

The image of the torture as causing confession from "bones and marrow" is supported as Guido thinks of his own trial, which also affected him physically. In contrast with the images of Book V, in which Guido speaks lightly of the difficulties the court has placed upon him as being nothing compared with the torture given by Pompilia and the Comparini, in Book XI as he reveals his true feelings he discloses his bitterness toward the court in an image similar to those he used in Book V in connection with Pompilia. The trial, he states, had the effect of a corroding agent:

And then my Trial,—'tis my Trial that bites
Like a corrosive, so the cards are packed,
Dice loaded, and my life-stake tricked away!

(XI, 887, 78-80)

This image recalls that used by Guido in Book V in describing Pompilia's disgrace as that which would "corrode the brow" of his child (V, 745, 65-70). Notably, in Book XI Guido's concern for his child has disappeared along with the disguise he adopted to deceive the court.

Guido uses anatomical imagery as he expresses his desire to have a wife who, unlike Pompilia, would bring him power and wealth. He imagines such a wife suggesting a plan to gain a fortune clutched by a youthful prince:
Let me but seal up eye, sing ear to sleep
Sounder than Samson,—pounce thou on the prize
Shall slip from off my breast, and down couch-side,
And on to floor, and far as my lord's feet—
Where he stands in the shadow with the knife,
Waiting to see what Delilah dares do!
Is the youth fair? What is a man to me
Who an thy call-bird? Twist his neck—my dupe's,—
Then take the breast shall turn a breast indeed!

(I, 893, 35-41)

Guido desires a wife who can scheme and plot for wealth in the same
callous way that he can, and whose attitude toward twisting the neck:
of a man to gain wealth is the same as his. The imagined "ideal wife"
uses anatomical terms in the same way as does Guido.

Following his expression of his conception of the ideal wife, Guido
bids the Cardinal and the Abate to leave him and to take away their
crucifix, and launches a tirade against them:

I have bared, you bathe my heart—
It grown the stonier for your saving dew!
You steep the substance, you would lubricate,
In waters that but touch to petrify!

You too are petrifactions of a kind:
Have not a muscle that shows mercy.

(I, 893, 60-65)

Guido's anatomical images that he uses in disclosing the condition of his
heart reveal his essentially evil nature. Here, as he speaks frankly, he
does not even attempt to make his hearers believe in his innocence; his
heart is already stone, but becomes "the stonier" because of their efforts
to make him repent. He uses an anatomical image also in ranting against
his audience: "not a muscle" of theirs indicates that they will have mercy.

Guido reveals his own nature fully in an anatomical image in which he
depicts himself as a wolf and Pompilia as a lamb. Pompilia, he claims,
bleated until the village had him at bay; and his problem is whether to
bleat or to die fighting quietly. If he can enjoy revenge at his death, the pangs will be lessened:

The last bad blow that strikes fire in at eye
And on to brain, and so out, life and all,
How can it but be cheated of a pang
If, fighting quietly, the jaws enjoy
One re-embrace in mid back-bone they break,
After their weary work thro' the foe's flesh?
That's the wolf-nature!

(XI, 894, 71-77)

The anatomical aspect of the imagery is particularly appropriate in connection with the beast image, and, though Guido reassures the Cardinal that his fight is figurative, his desire for revenge is not figurative but literal. The anatomical image, used so frequently throughout both Guido's monologues that it may be called a dominant figure, is indicative of the importance Guido places on the physical rather than the mental or spiritual.

* * *

In contrast to Guido, Bottini, and Archangeli, the Pope is described in Book I as "Simple, sagacious, mild yet resolute, /With prudence, probity" (I, 664, 63-64). He sits in his "plain closet" with only his thoughts for company. Unlike Bottini and Archangeli, he does not rehearse a speech that he will submit to exhibit his powers of argument; and unlike Guido, he does not need to defend or justify evil actions. He pronounces judgment as an agent of God both on the case and on the world in accordance with the truth he has discovered, yet, as Dowden has pointed out, he is entirely human: "And yet he is entirely human, God's vicegerent and also an old man, learned in the secrets of the heart, patient in the inquisition of facts, weighing his documents, scrutinizing each fragment of evidence, burdened by the sense of responsibility, cheered also by the opportunity of true service, grave but not sad...a 'grey ultimate decrepitude,' yet visited by
the spiritual fire which touches a soul whose robe of flesh is worn thin..."^21

In his monologue he works out an answer to three problems: first, briefly, his authority and ability to judge the case; second, the moral question of the case; and, finally, the question of truth and its ultimate source. In both his judgment of the case and his solution to the problem of the source of truth the Pope echoes Browning's belief, first in the goodness of Pompilia and the evil of Guido, and secondly in God as the ultimate source of truth. The Pope's imagery refers primarily to the wide problem of goodness and evil with which he is concerned throughout his monologue, and not, as in the monologues of Archangeli and Guido, to a present personal situation; nor, as in the monologues of Bettini and Guido, is it used for purposes of persuasion. Instead, it illustrates his deep faith and his concern about the spiritual condition of the world. The dominant image throughout the monologue of the "old good man/Who happens to hate darkness and love light" (XII, 903, 58-59)^22 is that of white light, which he uses first in connection with the case and secondly in pronouncing the philosophical views which are brought to his mind by the case.

The first portion of the Pope's monologue is devoted to a consideration of his qualifications for judgment and a review of the facts of the case; because the Pope's task is to pronounce judgment on Guido, his emphasis as he recalls the tale is on the murderer's actions, not on Pompilia's; consequently, he fails to use the images of whiteness or of light until he stresses Pompilia's part in foiling Guido's plot against her. Her husband's plan to make her escape, the Pope recalls, was spoiled when Pompilia resolved to die. The second plot, in which Guido used the forged letters, was unsuccessful because, though Pompilia and Caponsacchi were
brought together, Pompilia's purity of soul kept her from being dishonored:

Here the blot is blanched
By God's gift of a purity of soul
That will not take pollution, ermine-like
Armed from dishonour by its own soft snow.
Such was this gift of God who showed for once
How He would have the world go white....

(x, 848, 39-44)

The purity of Pompilia's soul is emphasized by the use of the two images of ermine and snow: already, as he merely recalls the incidents of the case and before he passes final judgment, the Pope recognizes not only that Pompilia is so pure that she whitens all blots but also the lesson that the world should learn from the case so that it too can "go white." The Pope's image recalls that of Browning in Book I in which he describes Pompilia's soul as "one soul white enough for three" (I, 656, 45). The idea that Pompilia's soul is pure enough not merely for herself but also for the Comparini is similar to the Pope's statement that her soul can make the world "go white."

The second image of whiteness is used in connection with Pompilia as the Pope pronounces his verdict on the characters involved in the murder-case. His judgment of the perfection of Pompilia has no qualifying remarks:

First of the first,
Such I pronounce Pompilia, then as now
Perfect in whiteness....

(x, 852, 37-39)

He finds nothing amiss in Pompilia; she is, as she always has been, all whiteness. As the Pope continues his judgment of her he compares her with a "mere chance-sown cleft-nursed seed" that grew up by the wayside underneath the enemy's foot, but which then broke open:

...this breaks all into blaze,
Spreads itself, one wide glory of desire
To incorporate the whole great sun it loves
From the inch-height thence it looks and longs!

(x, 852, 76-79)

This is the rose he gathers for the breast of God, and which he praises
most for having been obedient "to the light allotted" her (x, 853, 3).
First she was dutiful to her foolish parents, next to her evil husband,
and finally to the law of God when she fled to save her unborn child.
In these images of light the Pope first judges Pompilia to be perfect,
and he gives the reason for the perfection in the next two images: she
attempted to incorporate within herself the light of God, and she lived
according to the law of God in so far as she was able.

In Caponsacchi the Pope discovers no white perfection, but he does
use a light image to praise the Canon for his action in rescuing Pompilia.
Though much was amiss in the career of the young hero, the Pope finds,
he came forward to save Pompilia when others were reluctant to fight.
Thus, the Pope advises, Caponsacchi should follow the light his actions
have permitted the world to see:

Well done!
Be glad thou hast let light into the world
Through that irregular breach of the boundary,—see
The same upon thy path and march assured,
Learning anew the use of soldiership,
Self-abnegation, freedom from all fear,
Loyalty to the life's end!

(x, 854, 72-78)

The contrast in the uses of the light image is significant in revealing
the difference between the Pope's judgment of Pompilia and Caponsacchi.
The Pope gives no instructions to Pompilia, who has followed the light
already throughout her life and is therefore perfect in whiteness; but
Caponsacchi, whose life has not been blameless and who has only once
helped to let light into the world, is instructed to follow the light.
The Pope uses the image of white in describing the Comparini well as Pompilic and Caponacchi; but, because they are the "indifferent product," who walk "somewhere 'twixt the best and the worst" (X, 854, 31-32), the image of black is used also. The Pope judges them to be "sadly mixed natures," both self-indulgent and self-sacrificing, and urges them to accept the death that teaches what awaits the "ambiguous creature."

The one black tuft, he points out, "Steadies the aim of the arrow" as well as does the "wide faultless white" on the breast of a bird (X, 855, 10-14). Never again, the Pope warns, should they try to combine black with white:

Never again elude the choice of tints!  
White shall not neutralize the black, nor good  
Compensate bad in man, absolve him so:  
Life's business being just the terrible choice.  

(X, 855, 20-25)

The Pope's judgment is not meant, of course, merely for the already murdered Comparini, but expresses his belief, applicable to all, that even a touch of evil mars a person otherwise good.

When the Pope has concluded his judgment of the case, he turns to a consideration of the source of the truth by which he judges the case. In the first image the emphasis is on the dark rather than on the light:

So do I see, pronounce on all and some  
Grouped for my judgment now, -- profess no doubt  
While I pronounce: dark, difficult enough  
The human sphere, yet eyes grow sharp by use,  
I find the truth, dispart the shine from shade,  
As a mere man may, with no special touch  
O' the lynx-gift in each ordinary orb....

(X, 855, 24-30)

He realizes that, though it is difficult in the darkness of this world, one may distinguish the good from the evil with no special touch, but by practice. Yet, he continues, as he goes with his candle to help him, a voice which he fears may question his judgment and his authority to judge:
Leave pavement and mount roof,
Look round thee for the light of the upper sky,
The fire which lit thy fire which finds default
In Guido Franceschini to his cost!
What if, above in the domain of light,
Thou miss the accustomed signs, remark eclipse?
Shalt thou still gaze on ground nor lift a lid,—
Steady in thy superb prerogative,
Thy inch of inkling,—nor once face the doubt
I' the sphere above thee, darkness to be felt?

(X, 855, 60-69)

What if the Pope can no longer find the light above, the voice asks. Will he continue to try to judge in the dark? The Pope reassures himself that he knows his spark, or candle, originally received its light from the sun. Everything which he does and is comes from the truth, and he wonders what he would do were he mistaken about the source of his truth:

Yet my poor spark had for its source, the sun;
Thither I sent the great looks which compel
Light from its fount: all that I do and am
Comes from the truth, or seen or else surmised,
Remembered or divined, as mere men may:
I know just so, nor otherwise. As I know,
I speak,—what should I know, then, and how speak
Were there a wild mistake of eye or brain
As to recorded governance above?
If my own breath, only, blow cool alight
I styled celestial end the morning-star?

(X, 855, 70-80)

What if he had only manufactured a celestial source of light by blowing on a coal, he wonders. He realizes his great responsibility and the importance of the light in his actions:

I, who in this world act resolutely,
Dispose of men, their bodies and their souls,
As they acknowledge or gainsay the light
I show them,—shall I too lack courage?

(X, 856, 1-4)

As the Pope re-affirms his faith, he continues the image of light as he pictures man's mind as forming an idea of God:
In all of these statements of the Pope of his judgment, his faith, his doubt, and again of his faith, he uses the light image to stand for the truth of God. As Smith points out, the Pope expresses Browning's belief that God is the source of truth: "Through his speaker, the poet here ascends to the expression of his ardent belief in God as the ultimate source of Truth and Light." The Pope continues his discussion of the means of finding God through the strength, intelligence, and goodness of which we have evidence, and declares that beyond the tale the world has of God, he must "reach into the dark," yet faith remains (X, 856, 78-79). The darkness signifies areas of life in which evidence of God's truth seems to be lacking, yet even here the Pope can find God's plan of a probationary period to test man before he finds the light of God.

The Pope expresses disappointment, however, with the probationary life of not merely the non-believers but also of the so-called Christians who wear "robes of white":

How do the Christians here deport them, keep Their robes of white unspotted by the world? (X, 857, 64-65)

The case of Pompilia recalls to the Pope's mind the Christians, exemplified by the Arretine Archbishop, the "barefoot monk," and the Convertites, who were too weak to keep unspotted and who failed to help Pompilia. The image recalls, however, the lines in which the Pope refers to Pompilia as "perfect in whiteness"; she is the one Christian he has found who has remained unspotted by the world.
The Pope's disillusionment with the Christians is, he declares, not caused by fault in the material, man; and he continues his light image as he gives his evidence that man can be good. What terrifies him is that love and faith have been and still can be brought out in man:

This terrifies me, thus compelled to perceive, Whatever love and faith we looked should spring At advent of the authoritative star, Which yet lie sluggish, curdled at the source,— These have leapt forth profusely in old time, These still respond with promptitude today, At challenge of—what unacknowledged powers Of the air, what uncommissioned meteors, warmth By law, and light by rule should supersede?

In old time, the Pope maintains, love and faith leapt forward at the call of the authoritative star, which is identified with Christ or the church, or both, and these qualities can still be brought forth—not by warmth and light, but by "uncommissioned meteors." Herford writes of these lines: "Not only had the Church, whose mission it was to guide corrupt human nature by its divine light, only darkened and destroyed, but the saving love and faith had sprung forth at the bidding of natural promptings of the spirit, which its rule and law were to supersede." Herford continues by stating that "The blaze of 'uncommissioned meteors' had intervened where the authorized luminaries failed, and if they dazzled, it was with excess of light." Cook points out that these meteors are both the "instinct of the natural man" (X, 859, 26) and the call of honor, manliness, and pity (X, 858, 85-859, 4). As an example of response to "uncommissioned meteors" the Pope cites the case of Caponsacchi:

For see this priest, this Caponsacchi, stung At the first summons,—"Help for honour's sake, Play the man, pity the oppressed!"—no pause, How does he lay about him in the midst, Strike any foe, right wrong at any risk,
All blindness, bravery, and obedience—blind?
Ay, as a man would be inside the sun,
Delirious with the plenitude of light
Should interfuse him to the finger-ends—
Let him rush straight, and how shall he go wrong?

Though Caponsacchi's action was commendable, it sprang not from love
of God and faith in Him, but from the appeal made to his honor, his
manhood, and his pity. Christians, the Pope feels, should do more than
would the natural man. They must be directed by something greater than
the meteor which is brilliant but soon fades.

The Pope's faith in God is firm, however, as is revealed in his
next light image, which he uses to illustrate his statement that he does
not ask himself the dreadful question of whether what we see is salvation.
Within his circle of experience, he feels burn the central truth, God, of
power, wisdom, and goodness. He "must outlive a thing ere know it dead"
(X, 959, 77), and he cannot outlive his faith in the sun as long as he
sees day succeeding night:

When I outlive the faith there is a sun,
When I lie, ashes to the very soul,—
Some one, not I, must wail above the heap,
"He died in dark whence never morn arose."
While I see day succeed the deepest night—
How can I speak but as I know?—my speech
Must be, throughout the darkness, "It will end:
The light that did burn, will burn!"

The sun in this image is equivalent to God, in whom the Pope has faith,
and whom he feels "burning" within his circle of experience. Only when
the Pope's soul has turned to ashes, that is, when his faith no longer
exists, will anyone be able to say of him that he died in the dark. He
still feels the existence of the sun, however, for he has seen day follow
even the darkest night; and, though the present seems to be a time of
darkness, he has faith that a time will come when goodness and love will again be seen. He knows that clouds obscure the sun, but a cloud may soothe an eye for which intense light is too bright:

Clouds obscure—
But for which obscuration all were bright?
Too hastily concluded! Sun-suffused,
A cloud may soothe the eye made blind by blaze,—
Better the very clarity of heaven:
The soft streaks are the beautiful and dear.

Cook comments that in these lines the Pope states the doctrine that it "would be overhasty to conclude that because difficulties attend the Faith the path of the believer would be easier if those difficulties were removed." The Pope, as Cook states, "gives singularly beautiful expression to Browning's favorite paradox that the weakness of a strength may be its strength." Because of his faith, the Pope concludes, he never misses his footing in the maze: "No,—I have light nor fear the dark at all" (X, 860, 20).

When the Pope imagines that he hears in reply to his statement of faith the cry of Euripides, he has the dramatist use the same kind of light images he has used, although the argument is different from his own. Euripides states that, although he was born before Christ, there was "many a watch before the star of dawn" (X, 860, 45). The image of Christ as a star, a giver of light, is similar to the Pope's reference to the truth of God as light and to God as the sun. He continues his argument by pointing out that he did his work before the light was available to him, and that the picture he drew was right for him. He asks what could he do beyond what he has accomplished:
What could I paint beyond a scheme like this
Out of the fragmentary truths where light
Lay fitful in a tenebrific time?

(X, 861, 44-46)

Now, Euripides states, the sunrise has revealed the truths to the world
which he was unable to discover:

You have the sunrise now, joins truth to truth,
Shoots life and substance into death and void;
Themselves compose the whole we made before....

(X, 861, 47-49)

Euripides insists that he should not be punished, however, for failing
to find truth in his time, before the sunrise, for he was as unsuccessful
as possible in his search, and his effort was greater than that of those
who search in the "blaze of noon":

Pope, dost thou dare pretend to punish me,
For not descrying sunshine at midnight,
He who crept all-fours, found my way so far—
While thou reward'st teachers of the truth,
Who miss the plain way in the blaze of noon....

(X, 861, 65-69)

The chief significance of Euripides' images of light is that they reveal
that the Pope's tendency to consider his faith in terms of light is so
strong that he even puts these images into the mouth of Euripides. As
the Pope answers the dramatist he uses the same images of light, dawn,
and of noon to express his own faith. He admits Euripides' charge that
in the present noon-time the truth is often missed, and states as a cause
that the light has become too familiar. Paul answered Seneca according
to legend, but it is difficult for him to answer Euripides:

How should I answer this Euripides?
Paul—'tis a legend—answered Seneca,
But that was in the day-spring; noon is now:
We have got too familiar with the light.
Shall I wish back once more that thrill of dawn?
When the whole truth-touched man burned up, one fire?

(X, 862, 1-6)
This passage recalls the earlier light image in which the Pope decries the lack of love and faith that "leapt forth profusely in old time" but that now only respond to the "uncommissioned meteors" (X, 858, 77-81). Here the Pope suggests an answer to his earlier fear about the lack of faith and love; he suggests that the light has become too familiar and that the earlier "thrill of dawn" is necessary. Men, he continues, must walk in the true way in which he is ordained to walk, "Bearing to see the light from heaven" although he is constantly "encroached on by the light of earth" which the earth puts forth to rival heaven (X, 862, 27-30). At last, the Pope finds, it becomes difficult for mankind to distinguish the sun from a mere Druid fire on a high mountain. "More praise to him," he concludes, "who with his subtle prism/ Shall decompose both beams and name the true" (X, 862, 35-36). The saints and martyrs, he states, could not fail to see the truth "Streak the night's blackness"; but he is faithful now who "untwists heaven's white from the yellow flare/ O' the world's gross torch," for the world does not have the "night's foil" that helped the early Christians (X, 862, 57-64).

As he considers the danger existing to the Christian Church, the Pope's thoughts return to the trial. Through his statement of the ability of a person like Pomptilia to distinguish good from evil, he suggests that she is one of those who are able to distinguish the true light from the false (X, 863, 12-14). For Guido, however, he has no hope except that a sudden stroke of light may save him; the Pope recalls the occurrences of an evening in Naples which, if repeated, could effect Guido's salvation:

I stood in Naples once, a night so dark
I could have scarce conjectured there was earth
Anywhere, sky, or sea or world at all;
But the night's black was burst through by a blaze--
Thunder struck blow on blow, earth groaned and bore,
Through her whole length of mountain visible:
There lay the city thick and plain with spires,
And, like a ghost disshrouded, white the sea.
So may the truth be flashed out by one blow,
And Guido see, one instant, and he saved.

(X, 866, 5-14)

The light image takes the form of lightning, not sunlight or starlight
as in many of the images. This image is adapted particularly to the
situation of Guido; the basis of thought of the truth of white light
is not changed, but the situation Guido is in is neither noon nor early
morning; he is surrounded by blackness, as his own monologues reveal,
and the only hope for him is a sudden flash of light like lightning.

In the images of whiteness and of light the Pope has remained
consistent to form a pattern of imagery: images of whiteness are used
to discuss the purity of Pompilia, and she is shown following the light,
or truth, of God. Caponsacchi, the Pope judges, has revealed light and
must continue to follow it; he has not led the untainted white life of
Pompilia. The Comparini are only partly white, but are not spoken of in
connection with the light of truth of which they seem to have no con-
ception. In his philosophical discussion the Pope consistently uses
images of light to stand for truth, although the form of the images is
adapted to each idea they are used to depict; each time, however, the
light is white (one time specifically contrasted with a false yellow
light), and each time it comes from above to replace the darkness that
previously existed. Thus the white light images are used not only to
pronounce a judgment on the murder-case and those involved in it, but
the Pope continues the same images in the philosophical discussion in
which he reveals his deep faith.
The spiritual nature of the Pope is probably most fully revealed, however, in the contrast between his images and those of Guido, Archangeli, and Bottini. In contrast to his use of the images of white light to express truths, these three characters reveal the shallowness of their thoughts. While the Pope uses the image of white chiefly to signify the purity of Pompilia, Guido, the murderer, speaks of himself as "One white integrity from head to heel" (V, 750, 47) as he attempts to convince the court of his innocence. Archangeli insists that honor, a gift of God to man that is "Precious beyond compare," is a white that "brooks no touch" (VIII, 307, 65-66); he discloses the shallowness of his mind as he defends Guido's murder on the grounds of this all-surpassing honor. The Fisc, in turn, reveals his shallowness as he addresses the judges as "lights of law" (IX, 322, 51); the Pope would say that if the judges shed any light it is the light of "uncommissioned meteors" or Druid fires, not the light of truth. Similarly, the Pope would deny the truth of the light that Guido recalls his family found in his face "when days were dim" (V, 727, 19-20).

In the variation in the type of image and the application of the image, something of the character of each of these four speakers, Archangeli, Bottini, Guido, and the Pope, is revealed. Archangeli's food images are applied to his speech from casual references to and thoughts about the family dinner to come; they represent not an attempt to decorate his speech, nor an attempt to perceive truth, but merely his preoccupation with the idea of the feast to come. They serve especially to image his entire speech as a parallel with the feast, but are also absurdly applied within the speech itself. Thus they reveal the
shallowness of his conception of the case and his casuistry in defending Guido, as well as his material nature. Bottini's images, on the other hand, are conscious, deliberate artistic devices which he uses within his finished, carefully-planned speech. They have, however, nothing to do with the case: they are purely decorative, meant to display his artistic ability, and reveal little of fact or of higher truth. Instead, they display only his pride in his oratorical ability, and, with the images of Archangeli, exemplify the ineptitude of law. Guido's images, like Archangeli's, depend on his situation, but they are an integral part of his completed monologues: the many anatomical images which are related first to his experience with the Vigil-torture and then to his imminent execution reveal the effect each of these events has on his mind. His use of the image changes, however, with his situation: in his first monologue he deliberately points the parallel between the physical torture of the court and the torture Pompilia inflicted on him to convince the court of the extent of his suffering. In the second monologue he first uses anatomical imagery to convince the Abate and the Cardinal of the impropriety of execution by the Mannaia-machine for a nobleman, but, after he has thrown off his hypocritical disguise, his continued use of anatomical imagery that discloses his true nature, without purpose of rhetorical effect, indicates his preoccupation with his coming death. When Forley mentions "all the odious cant about morbid anatomy" in the poem, he surely refers to the two monologues in which Guido justifies himself. The Pope's images, unlike Guido's and Bottini's, are not conscious artistic devices; they are not used for effect but for the clarification of his thoughts. Unlike Guido's and Archangeli's images, the Pope's images of light are consistently applied to one concept, that
of truth. The Pope, in contrast to the three worldly speakers, reveals his spiritual insight in the images of the light of heaven which, though often confused with the false light of the world, is the source of ultimate truth which, when followed, makes possible Christians such as Ponpilia, "perfect in whiteness."
HORIZONTAL IMAGES

While some of the patterns of imagery in The Ring and the Book may be said to dominate particular books, other patterns recur throughout the poem but are not predominant in any books: these patterns may be called horizontal images. Animal, plant, machine, theater, Scriptural, mythological, astronomical, and fire images reappear with significant variation throughout the poem. In this chapter two of the patterns of images which are especially significant in characterization, the animal images and plant images, are discussed. For the sake of convenience, the animal images are divided into several categories: fish, bird, serpent, and beast images, although there are relationships between the categories. The fish images are used primarily to characterize Guido, the bird images to characterize Pompilia, and the serpent images are often used of both. Images of the beast of prey, especially the wolf, are used of Guido, while images of helpless beasts, such as sheep, are used of Pompilia. The images of plants are used especially in depicting Pompilia, by both sympathizers and the antagonistic, although there are other uses of the images as well. Frequently the variations in the way the horizontal images are applied are indicative not only of the character being described but also of the speaker's character and view of the case.

The variations in the use of an image are evident in the fish image which is used frequently of Guido to depict not his fish-like qualities but his situation when "caught" by Pompilia and the Comparini. Half-Rome, biased in favor of Guido and against Pompilia and the Comparini, is fond of the angler image which depicts Violante as the angler and
Porapilia as the helpless bait tossed to Guido, who is caught when he swallows the bait. Half-Rome illustrates Violante's plot:

She who had caught one fish, could make that catch
A bigger still, in angler's policy:
So, with an angler's mercy for the bait,
Her minnow was set wriggling on its barb
And tossed to mid-stream; which means, this grown girl
With the great eyes and bounty of black hair
And first crisp youth that tempts a jaded taste,
Was whisked into the way of a certain man, who snapped....

(II, 670, 24-31)

Half-Rome deliberately continues the image ("Whore was I with that angler-simile?" II, 670, 76) as he describes Guido, just giving up hope at Rome, being spied by Violante who "threw her bait, Pompilia, where he sulked" (II, 670, 77). The idea of Violante's "catch" is continued in the lines "What constituted him so choice a catch, / You question?" (II, 671, 17-18). The image returns to Half-Rome's mind when he considers the Comparini's attitude toward Pompilia after her escape from Guido and release from the convent; he conceives of both parents, not merely the mother, as anglers who claim Pompilia only when she is useful as bait:

...yes, the pair
Who, as I told you, first had baited hook
With this poor gilded fly Pompilia-things,
Then caught the fish, pulled Guido to the shore
And gutted him,--now found a further use
For the bait, would trail the gauze wings yet again
I' the way of what new swimmer passed their stand.

(II, 683, 16-16)

Tertium Quid, in reviewing opinions of the case, uses an image similar to that of Half-Rome as he states the opinion of Guido's apologists. He conceives of Pompilia's parents as anglers, and of Pompilia as a "poor worm" that the Comparini left while they escaped:

They baited their own hook to catch a fish
With this poor worm, failed o' the prize, and then
Sought how to unbait tackle, let worm float
Or sink, amuse the monster while they 'scaped.

(IV, 715, 26-29)

Significantly, however, Tertium Quid's ambiguous opinion causes him to consider Guido not merely as a caught fish as Half-Rome thought him to be, but as a monster to which Pompilia is subjected. Thus Guido's cruelty as well as the Comparini's is emphasized in the image. Tertium Quid later refers to Guido as a fish, but in a different situation; he is not the caught fish, but a stockfish who, instead of taking immediate revenge on his wife and Caponsacchi, sticks to the law and only afterwards exhibits his rage (IV, 720, 59-63).

When Guido uses the fish image, he turns it even more to his advantage than does Half-Rome. Conceiving of his situation, early in life, as that of a fish out of water, he attempts to convince the court of his essential nobility and of the disastrous effects of his poverty:

On, therefore, I must move forthwith, transfer
By stranded self, born fish with gill and fin
Fit for the deep sea, now left flap bare-backed
In slush and sand, a scorn to crawlers vile
Reared of the low-tide and aright therein.

(V, 728, 77-81)

Later Guido uses the angler simile almost exactly as Half-Rome does, except that he considers the money, not Pompilia, to be the lure that caught him. Now, he claims, the Comparini have their wealth again ("have caught the fish and find the bait entire") and even have their child back to trade with again (V, 744, 27-32). As Guido continues to tell his story, however, he comes closer to the real truth about himself in another angler simile. This time he joins Caponsacchi with the Comparini as he images the "three-fold cord" that could "hook and fetch/ And land leviathan that king of pride!" (V, 745, 55-56).
The fish of Half-Rome's images, and the monster of Tertium Quid's, has become the monster leviathan.

When the Pope images Guido as a fish, however, the description takes a different aspect than it does in the monologues of the pro-Guido speakers. The Pope, instead of pitying the poor fish, pronounces judgment on the "ambiguous fish," who, born in "propitious circumstances," is in reality a "puny starveling" who does not strive to fill his armor but merely shrinks from his shell:

Rather, he shrinks up like the ambiguous fish,  
Detaches flesh from shell and outside show, 
And steals by moonlight (I have seen the thing) 
In and out, now to pray and now to shirk.  

(X, 846, 26-29)

The creature boasts of his armor only when in danger; he has "dropped nobility, slipped the Church" (X, 846, 41), but when Law catches him he pleads "But the case out yonder is myself!" (X, 846, 47). In this fish image the Pope not merely describes the situation in which Guido seems to be a caught fish, but reveals his insight into Guido's character, which is confirmed by Guido himself in his second monologue.

Unlike the fish image, the bird image in The Ring and the Book is used frequently in connection with Pompilia. Browning's fondness for the bird symbol, and his habit of comparing his heroines with birds, has been noted. Yet the variation of the image has not been pointed out. Browning images his wife as "half-angel" and "half-bird" in the "Lyric Love" address; and throughout the poem he returns to bird images to depict Pompilia and occasionally to depict other characters.

The pro-Pompilia speakers, Other Half-Rome, Caponsacchi, and the Fisc, use the bird image to depict her favorably, as do Pompilia herself and her judge the Pope. Other Half-Rome, the young bachelor, uses the image several times in showing his sympathy with Pompilia. As he quotes the artist Maratta's comment that her face is shaped like
"a peacock's egg, the pure as pearl, \ That hatches you anon a snow-white chick" (III, 686, 30-31), he reveals his own belief in her white purity as well as his feeling for her beauty. A similar image comes from his own mouth when he sympathetically depicts Violante's adoption of Pompilia:

Well then, she had caught up this castaway:
This fragile egg, some careless wild bird dropped,
She had picked from where it waited the foot-fall,
And put in her own breast till forth broke Finch
Able to sing God praise on mornings now.

(III, 688, 15-19)

Other Half-Rome's use of a bird image rather than the angler simile of Half-Rome in relating the circumstances that brought about Pompilia's and Guido's marriage reveals the contrasting opinions of these two speakers about the marriage contract. Other Half-Rome does not consider Guido to be caught as a fish but to be responsible for the contract because his brother sought out Violante to bargain with her. The Abate envisioned the difficulty of Guido's going in search of a wife:

Since if his simple kinsman were so bent,
Began his rounds in Rome to catch a wife,
Full soon would such unworldliness surprise
The rare bird, sprinkle salt on phoenix' tail,
And so secure the nest a sparrow-hawk.
No lack of mothers here in Rome,—no dread
Of daughters lured as larks by looking-glass!
The first name-pecking credit-scratching foul
Would drop her unfledged cuckoo in our nest
To gather greyness there, give voice at length
And shame the brood...but it was long ago
When crusades were, and we sent eagles forth!

(III, 689, 50-61)

Other Half-Rome returns to the bird image in describing the effect of Guido's revenge on the trapped Pompilia. Guido chased her "about the coop of daily life," having first closed each outlet except the one with which he meant to catch her, Other Half-Rome states (III, 694, 85-895, 4).

Other Half-Rome sympathizes with the poor bird that cannot prove its
innocence because it knows nothing of the trap in which Guido planned to catch the helpless creature:

The bird says "So I fluttered where a springe
Caught me: the springe did not contrive itself,
That I know: who contrived it God forgive!"

(III, 695, 25-27)

In both of these images the helplessness of Porapilia, the trapped bird, is emphasized; in contrast, in his next bird image depicting Porapilia, Other Half-Rome stresses the instinctive action of the girl. He quotes Porapilia's statement of her reason for fleeing: God instilled in her the thought of flying as he warns the martin to migrate; Caponsacchi was to her "the warm day, / The south wind and whatever favours flight" (III, 699, 1-6). The bird-like instinct is further emphasized, and given a further significance, as Other Half-Rome compares Porapilia to a breeding dove:

So when the she-dove breeds, strange yearnings come
For the shelter by undreamed-of shores,
And there is born a blood-pulse in her heart
To fight if needs be, though with flap of wing,
For the wool-flock on the fur-tuft, though a hawk
Contest the prize,—therefore, she knows not yet.

(III, 704, 12-17)

Dove-like, Porapilia yearns for shelter and will contest even Guido, the hawk, to protect her child. Caponsacchi's indirect use of the Pompilia-as-dove image recalls that of Half-Rome. The image of the dove contesting the hawk is echoed as the priest asks the court what it wants of him:

I am free to break the blow, next hawk that swoops
On next dove, nor miss much of good repute?

(VI, 755, 76-77)

Pompilia as well as Caponsacchi echoes the image Half-Rome uses to depict her as a dove seeking protection. She recalls that one morning, when she saw the sparrows flying and heard them singing, her heart also
sang and, because she too had something for which to care, she knew that she had to fly:

The bird brings hither sticks and hairs and wool,  
And nowhere else i' the world; that fly breaks rank,  
Falls out of the procession that befits,  
From window here to window there, with all  
The world to choose,--so well he knows his course?  
I have my purpose and my motive too,  
By march to Rome, like any bird or fly.

(VII, 794, 51-57)

Pompilia's joy comes from the knowledge that she must flee, not to save herself, but to save her child. She describes not only herself but also her child with a bird image as she speaks of Caponesacchi's rescue of her child. The "bird-like thing," she feels, would never have "peeped forth" at Arezzo, but now it can live "the life among the leaves/ God meant him!"

(VII, 800, 5-11).

Of the speakers who favor Pompilia, Bottini uses the dove image that reveals least about her; but he reveals much about Guido. In speaking of Pompilia's return to her parents' house and the birth of her son, he describes Pompilia's transformation in the eyes of her husband:

And thither let the husband,—joyous, ay,  
But contrite also—quick betake himself,  
Proud that his dove which lay among the pots  
Hath mused those dingy feathers,—moulted now,  
Shows silver bosom clothed with yellow gold!

(IX, 856, 55-57)

All that is indicated about Pompilia is her husband's conception of her, but the image of silver and gold accurately discloses Guido's reason for being concerned about his son. In this image the difference between Bottini's images and the images of her true supporters is exemplified: Bottini is not concerned with depicting the true Pompilia, but with establishing Guido's guilt.
Bottini's lack of interest in painting Pompilia's "saintship" is clearly indicated in the dove images of Book XII. Bottini quotes from a sermon by Fra Celestino, Pompilia's confessor, who warns the world that the mere fact that Pompilia's purity triumphed does not mean that truth always triumphs. The monk illustrates his point: the inhabitants of the ark, when they witnessed the return of the dove with the olive branch, could have concluded that there was no danger to anything that flew, and that the lark or culver could have flown out without harm. Yet, the monk stresses, he seems to hear God's voice warning him that each wave brings with it "some dead dove-like thing as dear" (XII, 902, 12-26). The monk's image of Pompilia as a dove of purity is twisted, however, by Bottini in his comments on the sermon and on his own plans:

And this foul-mouthed friar shall find
His Noah's-dove that brought the olive back
Turn into quite the other sooty scout,
The raven, Noah first put forth the ark,
Which never came back but ate carcasses!

(XII, 905, 24-28)

Bottini now plans to paint Pompilia as black as possible in his case for the Convertites; he has no hesitation about portraying a dove as a raven to suit his own purposes.

The contrast between the dove-like peace of Pompilia and the seeming peace of the Convertites is emphasized in an image the Pope uses to depict the change in the attitude of the nuns:

What does the body that lives through helpfulness
To women for Christ's sake? The kiss turns bite,
The dove's note changes to the crow's cry: judge!

(X, 858, 34-36)

Although Pompilia is not imaged as a dove in this passage, the frequent images of her dove-like qualities cause the contrast between her character
and the hypocrisy of the nuns to be particularly outstanding in the Pope's
image.

The ambiguous Tertium Quid uses the dove image in connection with
Pompilia, but his image is consistent with his role as weigher of evidence;
he reveals neither sympathy nor antipathy as he depicts Guido's attempt
to kill Pompilia:

And last, Pompilia rushes here and there
Like a dove among the lightnings in her brack,
Falls also....

(IV, 723, 60-62)

Tertium Quid attributes no dove-like qualities to Pompilia, as her
sympathizers do, but only points out the similarity between her actions
and the actions of a dying dove.

Although Guido uses bird images in connection with Pompilia, he does
not use the dove image. He uses first the image of the hawk in presenting
to the court the expectations he had of his wife. Pompilia was not a
pigeon, "Venus' pet," he stresses, but a hawk he "bought at a hawk's
price and carried home/ To do hawk's service." He has paid his price
and awaits his "penny's worth"; he may hoodwink, starve, and train her,
and if she proves unsatisfactory, twist her neck. No one can blame him,
he says, that he did not treat her as he would a finch (V, 735, 48-62).
If he does mishandle her, "no one should weep "How he roughs the turtle
there" (V, 736, 15-20). In this image he reveals his conception of
marriage and of his wife's place, equal to that of a hawk he has bought;
his attitude toward his wife is clarified through two additional images
in his second monologue: Pompilia, he reveals, angered him because in
her quiet submission after her parents left, she was like a "brood-bird
when you saunter past her eggs"; she obeyed but merely counted the minutes
until she was told to depart (XI, 832, 62-66). Guido compares her lack of affection to a pullet's inability to lay eggs; the pullet is made to brood on a chalk ball, and, if the nest is not soon stocked, the animal is killed. Similarly, Guido would punish a wife who would not feign the love that brings about true love (XI, 883, 77-81).

Bird images are used of the Comparini as well as of Pompilia, but none of these images present the Comparini sympathetically. Tertium Quid speaks of the parents as ravens to whom the Pope gives meat, but insists that the Pope should plant his foot on these "selfish worthless human slugs" instead (IV, 707, 55-62). This is just the kind of judgment that would be expected from the aristocratic party even before he has considered the facts of the case. Guido's contempt of the Comparini is exhibited in an extended image: he depicts the life at Arezzo as a "perfect gooseyard cackle of complaint/ Because I do not gild the geese their oats," and states that he opened the wicket and swept the geese out (XI, 881, 19-24). When he thought he had triumphed, however, he learned his error:

The creatures, I turned forth, clapped wing and crew
Fighting-cock-fashion,—they had filched a pearl
From dung-heap, and might boast with cause enough!

(XI, 881, 34-36)

Not only are the Comparini and Pompilia depicted unfavorably in bird images, but Guido and his brother as well. The Pope warns that "as the gor-crow treats/ The bramble-finch so treats the finch the moth" as he points out that Guido's scheme to drive the Comparini away was matched by their revelation of Pompilia's birth (X, 347, 28-39). The comparison is not, as Cool points out, quite apposite, but the characterization of Guido as a crow is consistent with the Pope's judgment of the murderer in Book X.
Guido's two brothers are characterized as fowls by Half-Rome, who relates that Paolo, the regular priest, found that with his webbed foot he could swim "with the deftest on the Galilean pool" (II, 670, 46-49) and that Girolamo, "also a fledgling priest," was even greedier than was Paolo (II, 671, 10-14). Tertium Quid echoes the image of the youngest brother Girolamo who advanced quickly within the church:

The youngest caught the sympathetic flame,
And, though unfledged wings kept him still i' the cage,
Yet he shot up to be a Canon, so
Clung to the higher perch and crowed in hope.

(IV, 711, 15-18)

The disdain which Browning attaches to the image of the crowing cock, illustrative of pride, is indicated in two images used in connection with the lawyers. Browning himself in Book I describes the vain Bottini's actions as he reads his speech to himself:

The tall wight stands a-tiptoe, strives and strains,
Both eyes shut, like the cockerel that would crow....

(I, 664, 44-45)

Bottini, however, ironically uses the same image in imagining Archangeli's response to the Pope's judgment: "Imagine how Archangeli claps wing/
And crows! (XII, 201, 38-39). Bottini's own pride is revealed in this image with which he depicts Archangeli's pride at having kept the Fisc at bay for a month.

In the bird images of Other Half-Rome, Caponesacchi, and Pompilia herself, as well as that of Fra Celestino, Pompilia's instinctive traits are revealed in addition to the characteristics of peace usually associated with the bird. These traits seem to be related to those Browning had in mind when he described his wife as "half-bird." Bottini, however, first twists the image for his purpose to depict Guido's crime, and later
changes the image to depict Pompilia as a raven. Tertium Guid's ambiguous position keeps him from attaching any of the usual associations to the dove image. Guido uses other fowl images to reveal his feeling that his wife should expect no better treatment than would an animal that he has bought. The Comparini are depicted as ravens and as geese by Tertium Guid and by Guido, as they disclose their hatred of the parents. Guido is appropriately judged by the Pope to be like a crow, and his two brothers are depicted as fowls trying to advance in the church. The cock-like quality is also evident in the two lawyers, both of whom are portrayed as crowing cocks. The fowl images of brood-bird and hawk, used in connection with Pompilia by Guido; of the crow, used of the Convertites and of Guido; of the raven, used of the Comparini; of the cock, used of Guido's brother and the lawyers, are all used to indicate undesirable qualities; in contrast, the dove figure images Pompilia's instinctive goodness.

Unlike the fish imagery, which is used chiefly to depict Guido, and the bird imagery, used chiefly to depict Pompilia, serpent imagery is used frequently by Pompilia's sympathizers to depict Guido and by Guido's sympathizers to depict Pompilia. In addition, serpent images are used to portray other characters. Figures which are included under the category of serpent are snake, cockatrice, and dragon images as well as general images of serpents.

The serpent image is first used to depict Guido in Book I as Browning quotes the Fisc who prosecutes Guido; "Crest over crest crowning the cockatrice," he proclaims about the murderer (I, 651, 77). Tertium Guid, taking a less firm stand than Bottini, uses the image in commenting on the opinions of Pompilia's supporters, who would claim that she is totally innocent; if they are correct, Tertium Guid remarks, then the crime was
committed for nothing. The wife's supporters insist that "Hell broke loose on a butterfly/ A dragon born of rose-dew and the moon!" Yet, Tertium Quid insists, the "monster" is a mere man (IV, 726, 53-57). Though he reports the words of Pompilia's sympathizers, he refuses to admit that one of his circle, vouched for by the governor, could be a dragon.

Caponsacchi, on the other hand, sees Guido as a dragon threatening Pompilia in an image that reveals not only the worth of Pompilia but also the character of Guido. Caponsacchi images St. George rescuing a princess from a dragon. He is not, he insists, an "officious priest would personate Saint George/ For a mock Princess in undragoned days."

There was, he continues, a princess and a dragon, and there should have been a Saint George also (VI, 775, 4-14). Caponsacchi's serpent images, however, do not merely depict situations which idealize Pompilia; he continues his characterization of Guido as he depicts the murderer in hell with Judas Iscariot. The two, he says, "are at one now": "The cockatrice is with the basilisk!" (VI, 777, 15-30).

While Caponsacchi's images of Guido as a dragon depict him as having power over his wife, Pompilia sees her husband as a serpent when she thinks of him holding back Caponsacchi: "the lamb prone,/ The serpent towering and triumphant" (VII, 799, 19-29). It is when she sees him threatening her "angel" that she conceives of Guido as a serpent and that she can rise to action.

Fra Celestino, in the sermon enclosed in the Fisc's letter in Book XII, confirms the image of Guido as serpent. Pompilia, he states, was made weak because she lacked "the first apprenticeship to sin"; the egg turned snake, he continues, "needs fear no serpentry" (XII, 905, 22-26). As he states his belief that, had Pompilia been sinful, she could have devised a way to
defend herself, the monk expresses both his contempt of Guido and his sympathy for the guiltless Pompilia.

Not only Guido but his family as well are characterized as serpents. Guido, when he mentions the rumor that he sought to lure Pompilia to embrace sulphur, snake, and toad, seems to include both himself and his brother as the torturous items that, according to rumor, he tries to force upon her (V, 754, 59-69). Half-Rome, recording rumors that arose from the loud objections of the Comperini, states that Guido's mother was recognized as the "true novercal type,/ Dragon and devil (II, 672, 73-74)."

The serpent image is applied to Pompilia both by her opponents and by her supporters. Half-Rome characteristically uses the image to indicate the guilt he sees in Pompilia. Speaking of Violante's adoption of Pompilia, he points out that, had someone offered to Pietro to "crush a snake" in the breasts of the parents by strangling the babe, Pietro would have responded violently; the witnesses can now judge, Half-Rome insists, that the offer should have been accepted, and Violante should also have been removed (II, 669, 74-670, 2). Half-Rome continues the snake image as he uses the legend of the slaying of the python by Apollo in connection with Caponsacchi and Pompilia; Caponsacchi, Half-Rome states, sent his "god-glance" after his shaft while Pompilia, the snake, "writhe transfixed through all her spires" (II, 676, 22-25). Finally, Half-Rome uses the snake image to depict Pompilia at her death: "Viper-like, very difficult to slay," she "wretches still through every ring of her, poor wretch" (II, 684, 22-24). He does, unlike Guido, show some pity for Pompilia despite his three serpent images of the girl.

Guido uses the serpent image in his first monologue to convince the court of the torture Pompilia caused him. To depict Pompilia's attitude
toward him, he images her as a cockatrice hatched from a seemingly pure egg. Because of her failure to submit to his wishes, he claims the right to stamp on the creature (V, 735, 1-5). In his second monologue he reveals his resentment toward her in an image that he uses to depict her quiet, irritating obedience: had he ordered her to cut her hair, she would have obeyed without protest:

\[ \text{My, snap} \]
\[ \text{The scissors, and at once a yard or so} \]
\[ \text{Had fluttered in black serpents to the floor...} \]

(Guidos iambic pentameter, lines 19-21)

Guido admits in a serpent image, however, that, though there may be no truth to the story of Pompilia's and Caponsacchi's escapade, there was truth to the jealous husband. That which seemed a serpent's sting was a sting only to Guido:

\[ \text{A thousand gnats make up a serpent's sting,} \]
\[ \text{And many sly soft stimulants to wrath} \]
\[ \text{Compose a formidable wrong at last} \]
\[ \text{That gets called easily by some one name} \]
\[ \text{Not applicable to the single parts,} \]
\[ \text{And so draws down a general revenge,} \]
\[ \text{Excessive if you take crime, fault by fault.} \]

(Guidos iambic pentameter, lines 42-48)

Thus, though he may consider their flight to be like a serpent's sting, the name "serpent" would not be applicable to the various parts of the event, nor is the name applicable to the characters.

Tertium Guid attributes the image of a serpent to a listener in an imagined quotation in which Guido's ineffectual action at the inn is contrasted with the performance of Caponsacchi, who was transformed into a knight, and the timid action of Pompilia, who sprang at her husband "like a pythoness" (IV, 720, 71-74). The Pope echoes this image as he points out that a thorn comes to the aid of the rose: in both Pompilia...
and Caponsacchi, courage was born to defend them in the crisis, and,
although Guido was armed when he came to the inn, he was helpless before
Pompilia, the "poor trampled worm" who "Springs up a serpent" (X, 848,
59-62). While, in Tertium Quid's image, the emphasis is on Guido's slowness
of action, in the Pope's similar image the stress is on the gift of
God which allowed Pompilia to resist the coward. These two images recall
the passage in which Pompilia describes Guido as a serpent towering over
Caponsacchi and remembers that she gained strength for action when she saw
the danger to Caponsacchi. Even a worm, she comments, must turn to have
God observe the wrong done to it (VII, 799, 19-29).

Bottini, on the other hand, depicts Pompilia not as a simple, help¬
less creature but as a wily eel:

For to the last Pompilia played her part,
Used the right means to the permissible end,
And, wily as an eel that stirs the mud
Thick overhead, so baffling spearman's thrust,
She, while he stabbed her, simulated death,
Delayed, for his sake, the catastrophe,
 Obtained herself a respite....

(IX, 838, 66-72)

Supposedly defending her perfection, the Fisc instead uses an elaborate
simile of Pompilia, the eel, playing her wily role of the drama.

Not only does Guido use the serpent image in connection with Pompilia,
but finds it especially suitable to her mother. As he recalls the events
of the night of the murder, he tells the court that, had either Pompilia
or her father opened the door, he would have paused; instead, he met Violante:

...as if in turning from the Cross,
With trust to keep the sight and save my soul,
I had stumbled, first thing, on the serpent's head
Coiled with a leer at foot of it.

(V, 747, 54-57)
The court, he states, knows the rest of the case:

You know the rest and how the folds o' the thing,
Twisting for help, involved the other two
More or less serpent-like: how I was mad;
Blind, stamped on all, the earthworms with the asp,
And ended so.

(V, 747, 61-65)

He excuses the manner in which he was caught, sleeping with his bloody weapons beside him, by stating that his soul was "safe from the serpents" (V, 747, 72-73). His attempt to exonerate himself for the murders is shown to be insincere in Book XI in the revelation of his firmly implanted hatred of Pompilia; the image is merely part of an attempt to sway the court.

Although the Pope uses the serpent image to depict certain aspects of the murder case, he also uses it in revealing his philosophy, and Browning's as well. The Pope echoes Browning's statement that human testimony is worthless in an image he uses to illustrate his statement that at the final judgment we will neither be questioned nor reply:

None of this vile way by the barren words
Which, more than any deed, characterise
Man as made subject to a curse: no speech--
That still bursts o'er some lie which lurks inside,
As the split skin across the coppery snake,
And most denotes man!

(X, 844, 64-69)

Browning's idea of life as probation is also expressed by the Pope in his consideration of the temptations that beset Caponsacchi. The Pope prays for temptations, "reluctant dragons," that man may meet to triumph:

O Thou whose servants are the bold,
Lead such temptations by the head and hair,
Reluctant dragons, up to who dares fight,
That so he may do battle and have praise!

(X, 854, 57-60)
The serpent image, then, is used by Bottini to emphasize Guido's guilt, by Caponaccchi to stress the danger to which Pompilia was subjected, by Pompilia to depict Guido threatening her rescuer, and by Fra Celestino as a contrast to Pompilia's goodness. Both Half-Rome and Guido record the rumors that Guido's family are serpent-like creatures. Half-Rome stresses Pompilia's guilt by means of his images of her as a serpent while Guido stresses the torture she and her family caused him, though he later admits in a serpent image that the charges against her may be false.

Bottini displays his rhetorical ability in describing Pompilia as playing a role, "wily as an eel," but fails to portray her purity. By the Pope, on the other hand, Pompilia is depicted as having been given the strength of a serpent to withstand Guido. The Pope, in addition, uses the serpent image to express Browning's belief of the falseness of human testimony and of life as a period of probation in which man is to be tested.

Browning in Book I indicates more clearly through the beast images than through any other animal images the conception that he held of the case. As he tells the story of the Old Yellow Book, Browning narrates the murder with a vivid image of were-wolves tracking their prey:

Glimmeringly did a pack of were-wolves pad  
The snow, those flames were Guido's eyes in front,  
And all five found and footed it, the track,  
To where a threshold-streak of warmth and light  
Betrayed the villa-door with life inside,  
While an inch outside were those blood-bright eyes,  
And black lips wrinkling o'er the flash of teeth,  
And tongues that lolled—Oh God that madest man!  
They parleyed in their language.

(I, 657, 35-43)

He continues the image as he depicts the wolves first at the open door, and when their "wolf-word" is accomplished, back in the night again (I, 657, 48-54). Not only does he depict the wolves, but he relates the
confusion that followed over what was wolf and what sheep until the shepherd spoke out:

There prattled they, discoursed the right and wrong,
Turned wrong to right, proved wolves sheep and sheep wolves,
So that you scarce distinguished fall from fleece;
Till out spoke a great guardian of the fold,
Stood up, put forth his hand that held the crook,
And motioned that the arrested point decline...

(I, 657, 69-74)

The extended image of the wolves reveals that Browning believes Guido to have the nature of a predatory beast, and Pompilia clearly falls into the category of sheep; the importance Browning places on the testimony of the Pope, the "guardian of the fold," is also indicated. Even after the Pope's judgment, Browning continues, some spectators in their talk detected a "touch of wolf in what showed whitest sheep," and a "cross of sheep redeeming the whole wolf" to "Vex truth a little longer" (I, 657, 77-82). Finally the whole affair, "The fact that, wolves or sheep, such creatures were," was forgotten (I, 658, 5-4). Browning indicates that a judgment can be made on the case, and emphasizes in another image of a beast of prey the judgment he makes of Guido's role. The murderer who speaks in his second monologue is, according to Browning, "part man, part monster," a screaming "tiger-cat" who had earlier concealed his beastly nature (I, 665, 48-57).

Browning's distinction of the parties of the case as sheep and wolves attains added significance in relation to Tertium Quid's quotation of the decision of the court at the trial that followed the flight. The court, Tertium Quid states, pronounced neither an acquittal nor a condemnation:

Each of the parties, whether goat or sheep
I' the main, has wool to show and hair to hide.

(IV, 721, 58-59)
Tertium Quid, like the court, arrives at no decision, and the image he uses, with the Biblical distinction of goats and sheep, is less descriptive than Browning's distinction between sheep and wolves. Browning's use of the wolf-image in reference to the Pope's judgment emphasizes not only the separation of the two parties, but also the wolfishness of Guido.

Other Half-Rome, sympathetic with Pompilia and with her father as well, uses varied beast images in describing Guido. He attributes one of these to Pietro, quoting the statement that the father made when he heard the news of Pompilia's true birth:

Ay, let him taste the teeth o' the trap, this fox,
Give us our lamb back, golden fleece and all,
Let her creep in and warm our breasts again!

(III, 693, 30-52)

Other Half-Rome visualizes Guido's treatment of Pompilia as the action of an "uncaged beast" whose cruelty forced her to search for help from the Governor and the Archbishop to "take the claws from out her flesh" (III, 697, 10-16). Guido's plan to force her to run away drove her parents to seek help from the Governor:

Thus when, in the first roughness of surprise
At Guido's wolf-face whence the sheepskin fell,
The frightened couple, all bewilderment,
Rushed to the Governor....

(III, 697, 35-38)

This image of the sheepskin is echoed, and its truth confirmed, in Book XI by Guido's admission that he has worn a sheepskin-garb.

Other Half-Rome attributes beast imagery to Pompilia and Guido as he imagines Guido's response to Pompilia's testimony against him. To her charge that she is liberated from the "beast below the beast in brutishness," Guido can only groan his comment about the "restif lamb" who bowed gratitude while she meditated mischief (III, 701, 11-25). While Other Half-
Rome feels that Pompilia is an innocent lamb, and not, as Guido claims, one planning mischief, he is in agreement with her statement of Guido's beastliness; he considers Guido's response to his foiled plot to have revenge on the wife to be "the wildcat's way" (III, 701, 40-41).

Caponsacchi uses a beast image to express his feeling that Guido is too evil to have possessed such a wife as Pompilia; for such a beast as Guido to have Pompilia, he insists, would be absurd (VI, 771, 41-44).

Pompilia, in relating of her marriage, recalls that her friends have asked her "How comes that arm of yours about a wolf?" and pointed out the snake lying at her feet (VII, 780, 57-68). She reveals her naivete in her comment that only after hearing her friends' remarks did she realize that her existence was different from any other woman's.

The truth of the statement that Other Half-Rome attributes to Pompilia, that Guido is a "beast below the beast in brutishness" is confirmed in the images of the Pope. The shepherd who judges the case finds no excuse for Guido's crime:

Not one permissible impulse moves the man,  
From the mere liking of the eye and ear,  
To the true longing of the heart that loves,  
No trace of these: but all to instigate,  
Is what sinks man past level of the brute  
Whose appetite if brutish is a truth.  
All is the lust for money....

(x, 846, 77-85)

In his lust for money, the Pope states, Guido planned his beastly crime of feasting on Pompilia, the helpless lamb, while he plundered the wealth of the Comparini:

Edged in a month by stronuous cruelty  
From even the poor nook whence they watched the wolf  
Feast on their heart, the lamb-like child his prey....

(x, 847, 8-10)
The Pope's judgment which places Guido below the brutes is particularly significant in relation to Archangeli's lengthy argument defending Guido on the ground of precedents cited from Aelian of animals that punish unfaithful wives. Archangeli's arguments are ridiculous in the light of the Pope's judgment that Guido's motive was merely a lust for money, a motive below the level of a brute for which even beastly precedents cannot be cited for justification.

Having found Guido the "midmost blotch of black" at Arezzo, the Pope judges the remainder of his family by means of beast images. The Abate, the "fox-faced horrible priest," is the master, "all craft but no violence," in comparison to whom Guido's "mere wolfishness looks well." Young Girolamo is "neither wolf nor fox," but "part violence part craft" (X, 850, 66-651, 14). The Pope returns to the wolf image in denouncing the Archbishop's failure to aid Pompilia. She cries "Protect me from the wolf," but the Archbishop, depicting Guido as "rough, heady, strong, / Dangerous to disquiet" in the "darkness of his den," refuses to heed the fawn who "limps up bleeding to my foot" (X, 857, 72-73). The Archbishop, the Pope implies, recognized Guido's nature and Pompilia's helplessness, but refused aid. This image echoes Other Half-Rome's image of Pompilia seeking relief before the authorities from Guido's beastliness.

The Pope's judgment of Guido's beastliness is confirmed in Guido's second monologue, and the difference in the beast images of Guido's two speeches illustrates the difference between the monologues. In his first speech, Guido emphasizes his position in the church; he has been a beast of burden in the church, he claims, while others have "thrown their careless hoofs up at her call." He hopes that the fact that he bent his "back of docile beast" will influence the court in his favor (V, 728, 31-43). He is not content with the mere image of the beast of burden,
but reveals his pride in a passage in which he suggests that Pompilia should have confessed that she lured the lion, Guido, to her parents (V, 736, 64-71). The lion image which he presents before the court shows Guido in a more favorable light than does the image of himself as a wolf, his true nature.

In his monologue Guido first attempts to convince his visitors of his lamb-like innocence and of the falseness of the Pope's judgment:

And now what does this Vicar of our Lord,  
Shepherd o' the flock,—one of whose charge bleats sore  
For crook's help from the quag wherein it drowns?  
Law suffers him employ the crumpled end:  
His pleasure is to turn staff, he calls a wolf,  
Back and back, down and down to where hell gapes!  

(XI, 871, 26-32)

Guido objects that the church wishes him to admit the guilt which the Pope has proclaimed. The "self-styled shepherd," he insists, is a thief, and there is no reason that he should "compliment the thief/ With shepherd's title" and "lick the prong that spits him" (XI, 871, 60-67). He suddenly gives full expression to his hatred:

My Abate, scarcely thus!  
There, let my sheepskin-garb, a curse on't, go—  
Leave my teeth free if I must show my shag!  

(XI, 871, 68-70)

At this point he reverses his former wolf image; he no longer claims lamb-like innocence but begins to use beast images that depict his own maliciousness. He expresses his anger that the church did not force him to choose between giving up his wolf instincts and entering the fold submissively, but allowed him to hide his wolfishness:

But you as good as bade me wear sheep's wool  
Over wolf's skin, suck blood and hide the noise  
By mimicry of something like a bleat,—  
Whence it comes that because, despite my care,
Because I smack my tongue too loud for once,
Drop baaing, here's the village up in arms!

(XI, 876, 50-55)

Had he now the chance to choose, Guido continues, the church should get "a growl through the white fangs" in answer to its beckoning (XI, 876, 60-61). He shifts the image to portray the Companini as shepherds in suggesting the method they should have adopted when they found that they instead of Guido had been cheated: When the shepherd, intending to get wool, discovers the wolf beneath the fleece, he should, instead of plucking the whisker he spies, protest that the type of sheep he has discovered is superior to the old kind. Similarly, the Companini should have treated their situation wisely before they found the sharp rows of teeth (XI, 880, 82-881, 15).

The climax of the series of wolf images in Guido's second monologue is reached in Guido's expression of the kind of life he desires after death. He wants no childish punishment or pain, but the kind of fate Ovid could foresee, in which a weak soul would end in water and a strong "become a wolf for evermore!" (XI, 891, 46-54):

Let me turn wolf, be whole, and sate, for once,—
Wallow in what is now a wolfishness
Coaxed too much by the humanity
That's half of me as well! Grow out of man,
Glut the wolf-nature,—what remains but grow
Into the man again, be man indeed
And all man? Do I ring the changes right?

(XI, 891, 57-63)

He reveals his utter depravity in his desire to "wallow" in wolfishness, to "Glut the wolf-nature," for, although he realizes that he might in the future become "all man," his chief desire is that he can once sate his wolfishness. He has fully confirmed the judgment expressed by Browning and the Pope of his beastly nature.
The picture Guido portrays of being caught in his crime by the church is in accord with the revelation he has made of his wolfishness. Because of his lamb-like wife's bleating, the wolf is at bay; and he realizes that his "wolf-nature" would be relieved of a pang were he able to break the backbone of his enemy at his death (XI, 894, 65-77). His recognition that "the wolf owns some kinship with the fox" recalls the Pope's judgment not only of Guido as a wolf but of his brother Abate, the "fox-faced" creature.

The Comparini do not escape comparison with beasts. Tertium Quid reports that Guido's followers claim that the couple, "Being selfish beasts throughout," could blame only themselves for their fate (IV, 715, 19-20). Guido uses the image of the three-headed monster ("How name you the whole beast?") to depict both the Comparini and Pompilia: though Pompilia's head may be that of a simple kid, he sees the lion in the midst, and realizes that the wife cannot be dissociated from the brute he calls Chimaera (XI, 880, 18-56). He continues by describing Pietro as the "stalled ass," and asks if his visitors have stooped to "bestialize" themselves by flattering such a creature (XI, 880, 50-67). His true opinion of the Comparini is revealed in these images, but in relating the tale which he would have told had he been successful, he images the parents as "so many tiger-cats" with Pompilia and Caponsacchi (XI, 837, 40-45). The simile of tiger-cats is, however, no more disparaging than the image of the Etruscan monster: his hatred for the Comparini is shown in all these beast images.

Caponsacchi is portrayed as a beast less frequently than is Guido. Other Half-Rome uses the image favorably to emphasize the Canon's bravery:
he is both lamb-pure and lion-brave in his rescue of Pompilia's son
(III, 685, 73-75). Other Half-Rome's image does not carry any connotation of beastliness; only in his bravery is Caponsacchi like a lion. Half-Rome's lack of sympathy with Caponsacchi, on the other hand, seems to be caused by his knowledge that a certain man, a cousin or friend of his listener, has been showing attention to his own wife. Accordingly, his strong feeling against Caponsacchi, who was in a position similar to that of the man he wishes to warn to stay away from his wife, is revealed in his beast images which consistently portray the priest as a fox. Speaking of Guido's suspicions of his wife's falseness, Half-Rome lists "the smell o' the fox" as one of the things the Count recalls (II, 676, 50-55). The Count's friends merely laughed to try to free him of his jealousy, and ridiculed his fears about Caponsacchi:

The Canon? We caress him, he's the world's,
A man of such acceptence—never dream,
Though he were fifty times the fox you fear,
He'd risk his brush for your particular chick,
When the wide town's his hen-roost! Pie o' the fool!

(II, 676, 66-70)

Half-Rome emphasizes the worldly qualities of the priest in addition to stressing the fox-like features which he attempts to prove. Pompilia as well as Caponsacchi seems to be included in the next fox image, in which Half-Rome points out that, though Guido thought he could easily impose punishment, the murderer finds that though he, the badger, shows his teeth, the "fox nor lies down sheep-like nor dares fight" (II, 677, 19-25). Half-Rome, in quoting Law, also identifies Caponsacchi with the fox who "still finds the stench" of the husband's forged love letters (II, 680, 48-50).

Guido identifies Caponsacchi with a wolf in suggesting to the court that his own actions are justifiable, although he may have been cowardly:
Does that deprive me of my right of lamb
And give my fleece and flesh to the first wolf?

(V, 740, 41-42)

The association of Caponsacchi with the wolf Guido later reveals himself
to be cast an ironic tone to the passage.

While derisive bird images are applied to Archangeli by Bottini and
to Bottini by Browning, Archangeli uses beast imagery to refer to his
fellow lawyers. Bottini, he states in his monologue, is a "beast, one
barbarous" (VIII, 804, 72). He elaborates the image in describing his
opponent as a ferret:

He's a lean-gutted hectic rascal, fine
As pale-haired red-eyed ferret which pretends
'Tis ermine, pure soft snow from tail to snout.

(VIII, 804, 95-97)

A few lines later, he emphasizes his opponent's beastly qualities by asking
"Do you suppose I don't conceive the beast?" and exclaiming "Plague of the
ermine-vormin!" (VIII, 805, 4-5). These uncomplimentary images which
picture Bottini as a weasel pretending to be ermine are similar to Guido's
images of himself as wolf under sheepskin; and, as Bottini writes frankly
in Bock XII, he reveals his beastly nature in a fashion similar to Guido's
final admission of guilt. Archangeli not only conceives of his opponent as
a beast but, in considering his strategy in his speech, associates himself
with a fox:

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?12

(VIII, 805, 75-77)

On the contrary, the fox-like Archangeli defends Guido by "Burying nose
deep down i' the briery bush" (VIII, 805, 78-79). Archangeli also uses
the fox image to depict his associate Cencini to whom he writes after the
execution. After the formal letter he addresses Cencini as "old fox" in telling him to show the clients the other side of the letter and in rebuking him for sending his proofs too late (XII, 899, 69). Archangeli indirectly shows his own fox-like nature in a Biblical image the second time he addresses Cencini, "brother of my breast," as a "fox whose home is 'mid the tender grape" (XII, 900, 9-10).15

In addition to the images in which Pompilia's lamb-like innocence is pointed out in contrast to Guido's wolfishness, images of Pompilia as a lamb are used both by speakers who defend and who condemn her. Half-Rome uses the image in a sardonic manner in telling of Pompilia's escape: the "lamb-like innocent of fifteen years," he points out, had "simply put an opiate" in the drink of the household to make her escape secure (II, 677, 60-62). Guido points out the parallel between her situation at the time the Comparini disclosed her identity, and that of a sheep when the cry of "wolf" has been heard in the sheepfold (V, 738, 1-2). Then the sheep dares not bleat, nor would one expect Pompilia's forward action with Caponsacchi. Guido sees no lamb-like helplessness or purity, but a sheep who has not acted as, according to convention, she would be expected to act. Guido uses the lamb images sardonically, in the manner of Half-Rome, in his comments on Caponsacchi and the punishment given the priest at the trial after the flight:

What did he else but act the precept out,  
Leave, like a provident shepherd, his safe flock  
To follow the single lamb and strayaway?14

(V, 741, 60-62)

Guido returns to the lamb image in attempting to appeal to the sympathy of the court in his justification of the murder of Pompilia: had Pompilia
opened the door for him, he states, he might have paused:

Had but Pompilia's self, the tender thing
Who once was good and pure, was once my lamb
And lay in my bosom, had the well-known shape
Fronted me in the door-way....

(V, 747, 35-38)

In his final monologue, however, Guido reveals that he cherishes no affection for "the tender thing"; the only lamb-like quality he recognizes is her bleating for help that brought him to his downfall (XII, 894, 65-66).

Tertium Quid uses the image of the lamb neither to support nor to defame Pompilia in relating the case to his hearers, but merely to image her position of helplessness at the time the Comparini left her at Arezzo subject to Guido's revenge: Pompilia is a "pet lamb" whose "first bleat, when he plucks the wool away" will "strike the grinner grave" (IV, 714, 55-59). The fools, Tertium Quid relates, forgot that Guido could work his revenge upon the Comparini through their pet lamb:

These fools forgot their pet lamb, fed with flowers,
Then 'ticed as usual by the bit of cake
Out of the bower into the butchery.

(IV, 714, 67-69)

Other Half-Rome, characteristically, uses the lamb image to reveal his sympathy with Pompilia, and, unlike Tertium Quid, with the Comparini as well. He imagines Pietro asking for the return of his lamb after Violante has revealed her true birth (III, 693, 50-52). And, relating Guido's response to Pompilia's accusation of her husband's beastliness, he points out that Guido deliberately falsified the evidence that the "restif lamb" was meditating mischief while expressing gratitude (III, 701, 17-23).

In quoting the messenger who came to him with pleas for Pompilia, Caponsacchi reveals the appearance that Guido wished to present to bring
the priest into his trap. The messenger asked if Caponsacchi would do nothing to "cure the wound, assuage the throe/ o' the sweetest lamb that ever loved a bear?" (VI, 760, 38-39). The lamb of this image, the temptress, Caponsacchi relates, drew no response from him. Caponsacchi quotes Pompilia using a lamb simile on the way to Castelvetro to describe to him her life with Guido, but Pompilia gives a meaning quite different than the meaning of the messenger to her image:

My husband used to seem to harm me, not...
Not on pretense he punished sin of mine,
Nor for sin's sake and lust of cruelty,
But as I heard him bid a farming-man
At the villa take a lamb once to the wood
And there ill-treat it, meaning that the wolf
Should hear its cries, and so come, quick be caught,
Enticed to the trap: he practised thus on me
That so, whatever were his gain thereby,
Others than I might become prey and spoil.

(VI, 769, 57-66)

To this helpless lamb, the lure by means of which Guido's revenge would effect others, Caponsacchi has responded. The priest himself depicts Pompilia's helplessness in a fawn-image; on the flight, when he suggested stopping to rest, her expression became like that of a fawn when, "Tired to death in the thicket," she feels the "probing spear o' the huntsman."

Her cry, too, was like a fawn's when she pleaded to continue the trip (VI, 768, 59-65).

Pompilia images herself as a lamb in recalling her response to her wedding. When Violante instructed her about the arrangements for the ceremony and her behavior afterwards, she relates, she saw no more sense in what her mother said than "a lamb does in people clipping wool," but lay down and let herself be clipped (VII, 783, 69-71). The lamb image indicates the innocence and lack of suspicion in her character that allow both the Comparini and Guido to use her for their advantage. Referring to
her present situation, Pompilia compares herself with a trained goat she once saw in the Square: the animal, a "shuddering white woman of a beast," climbed upon a pile of sticks which, one by one, were removed from under her until she stood on only four (VII, 786, 50-60). Similarly, Pompilia states, her memory of the four years at Arezzo have vanished from her mind; her prayer to God, her hope in a hand to guide her, and the promise of her child are all that she remembers. By this memory she is held up "amid the nothingness."

The Pope reveals his sympathy with Pompilia, as Duffin has pointed out, in the image in which he depicts her as the "lamb-like" prey on which Guido feasts while the helpless parents watch (X, 847, 6-10). In addition, he depicts Pompilia as a sheep within the hand of God, the shepherd. Recalling Guido's futile attempts to defame her, the Pope asks, "O God,/ Who shall pluck sheep Thou holdest, from Thy hand?" (X, 848, 3-6).

In these images the Pope echoes and confirms the truth of the image Caponsacchi quotes in which Pompilia describes herself as a lamb used for purposes of revenge on others. The Pope twice echoes Caponsacchi's image of Pompilia as a helpless fawn: first as he describes the Franceschini family, especially the mother who no more curbs the cruelty of her sons than a "she-pard thwarts her playsome whelps" who try "their milk-teeth on the soft o' the throat/ O' the first fawn" that is flung in the covert (X, 851, 24-34); and next as he quotes the reply of the Aretine Archbishop who throws back to wolf-like Guido the fawn that "limps up bleeding" for protection (X, 857, 72-78). The Pope uses a lamb image in stating his intention to pronounce judgment on this Archbishop:

Ah, but I save my word at least for thee,
Archbishop, who art under me i' the Church,
As I am under God—thou, chosen by both
To do the shepherd's office, feed the sheep—
How of this lamb that panted at thy foot
While the wolf pressed on her within crook's reach?
Wast thou the hireling that did turn and flee? 16

(X, 852, 20-26)

The Pope's image recalls Browning's image of the "great guardian of the fold" who judges the case while others merely prattle; according to Browning, the Pope is a true shepherd, but according to the Pope, the archbishop has not fulfilled his "shepherd's office."

The Pope's conception of the case as revealed in the lamb images is especially outstanding in contrast to the lack of perception disclosed in the lamb image of the casuistic Bottini. The lawyer's superficial view and lack of true sympathy with Pompilia are indicated in the image of Pompilia as a frisking lamb:

I dare the epic plunge—
Begin at once with marriage, up till when
Little or nothing would arrest your love,
In the easeful life o' the lady; lamb and lamb,
How do they differ? Know one, you know all
Manners of maidenhood: more maiden she.
And since all lambs are like in more than fleece,
Prepare to find that, lamb-like, she too frisks—
O' the weaker sex, my lords, the weaker sex!

(IX, 824, 56-64)

Pompilia, though she is lamb-like, has in this image neither the quality of innocence nor of helplessness attributed to her by her true sympathizers; and the picture Bottini paints of a playful, capricious lamb who is a mere maiden like all maidens, is far from the portrait of "saintship" that he claims to depict. As he uses the image of a "wily eel" to display his powers of argument, so he also uses the lamb image to show his skill.
The chief significance of the beast images is to depict Guido as a predatory beast; Other Half-Rome, Caponsacchi, Pompilia, echo Browning's view of Guido's beastliness, and the Pope, the shepherd, confirms the judgment. Guido tries to conceal his depravity while protesting his innocence in Book V and at the beginning of Book XI, but the wolfishness he displays throughout the last part of the monologue is introduced with his statement that he will throw off his sheepskin. Guido reveals his hatred of the Comparini in beast images, and Half-Rome's personal situation colors his fox images of Caponsacchi. The fox-like characteristics of the lawyers of the case which is indicated by their actions is confirmed by Archangeli's images. In contrast with the images of predatory beasts, the lamb image is frequently applied to Pompilia, sardonically by Half-Rome and Guido, by Tertium Quid to depict her helpless situation, and sympathetically by Other Half-Rome and Caponsacchi. Pompilia's lamb image reveals her naïveté and her goat image her faith. The Pope's lamb images depict not merely her perilous situation but also her innocence in contrast to Guido's beastliness. In contrast, Bottini's failure to depict the innocence of Pompilia is exemplified in his image of Pompilia as a frisking lamb.

Like the lamb images, figures of plants, and especially of flowers, are used chiefly to portray Pompilia, both by parties who favor her and
by those opposed to her. Half-Rome first uses the image to refer to the whole Comparini household which, upon Pompilia's marriage, "was to strike fresh root/ In a new soil" in which the family would have a "novel name" and an "alien glory" (II, 671, 68-70); Half-Rome's purpose is to indicate the expectations of the transplanted Comparini that their fortune would be improved. Half-Rome again images the process of transplanting in relating the judgment of the court after the inn incident:

For the wife,—well, our best step to take with her,
On her own showing, were to shift her root
From the old cold shade and unhappy soil
Into a generous ground that fronts the south
Where, since her callow soul, a-shiver late,
Craved simply warmth and called mere passers-by
To the rescue, she should have her fill of shine.

(II, 681, 7-15)

The sympathy the court expressed with Pompilia is not at all the sympathy of Half-Rome, who considers the sentence much too light.

When Guido uses the plant figure, he turns it against his wife. He indicates as well his far-from-ideal conception of marriage in the image of his wife as a purchased tree:

With a wife I look to find all wifeliness,
As when I buy, timber and twig, a tree—
I buy the song o' the nightingale inside.

(V, 734, 29-31)

He objects that Pompilia broke the pact from the first day of the marriage, refusing to cleave to him either in body or in soul. As Duffin points out, this image is an example of Guido's rising to a brilliant figure but failing to see its falseness. Guido's hatred of Pompilia is expressed in the speech which he says should have been his wife's. In the passage she refers to herself not as the flower or young tree her supporters picture her to be but as a "mengrowth of infectious mistletoe" (V, 737, 4). The
images of the lily and rose are turned against her and Caponsacchi in
Guido's description of the letters he claims to have found:

...letters, to-wit,
Love-laden, each the bag o' the bee that bore
Honey from lily and rose to Cupid's hive,—
Now, poetry in some rank blossom-burst,
Now, prose....

*(V, 741, 1-5)*

The lily and rose he depicts are not flowers of freshness and purity;
Instead, emphasis is on the rankness of the products of the flowers.

In his second monologue Guido reveals the reason for his hatred
Pompilia in three plant images. In telling of his wife's feeling of
repulsion for him, he states that a "little saucy rose-bud minx can
strike/ Death-damp into the breast of doughty king" merely by a gesture
that indicates that, though he is regal, he is not young (V, 876, 71-76).
Pompilia's repulsion has the same effect on Guido as does the "rose-bud
minx" on the king. In discussing his marital situation, he expresses his
impatience with the advice given him to give Pompilia time to learn to
love or at least endure him. He feels that he is too old to wait for
the plant to grow, and wants the already-blossoming rose:

Go preach that to your nephews, not to me
Who tired i' the midway of my life, would stop
And take my first refreshment, pluck a rose:
What's this coarse woolly hip, worn smooth of leaf,
You counsel I go plant in garden-plot,
Water with tears, manure with sweet and blood,
In confidence the seed shall germinate
And, for its very best, some far-off day,
Grow big, and blow me out a dog-rose bell?

*(XI, 879, 77-880, 4)*

He continues his argument against the advice he receives by pointing out
that, were his wife to become a rose, the prize would repay his toil;
but the bud "Bit through and burned black," whose "best grace was the
slug outside/ And the wasp inside its bosom," does not deserve the name
of "rose." She should claim "no immunity from a weed's fate," for she is a "nullity in female shape" (XI, 880, 5-19). The disgust stated toward Pompilia in this passage is further expressed in the final plant image of the monologue, in which Guido states for the last time his hatred of the Comparini and his wife, whose "pale poison" his "hasty hunger" took for food (XI, 895, 76-81):

A strong tree wants no wreaths about its trunk,  
No cloying cups, no sickly sweet of scent,  
But sustenance at root, a bucketful.

(XI, 895, 82-84)

Pompilia is to Guido only a "cloying cup" around the "strong tree" that he considers himself to be.

Tertium Quid, although he takes no definite stand, makes use of plant images to reveal some sympathy for Pompilia. The first image, depicting Pompilia as a rose "above the dung-heap," is used to defend the Comparini's adoption of Pompilia:

And then the sudden existence, dewy-dear,  
O' the rose above the dung-heap, the pure child  
As good as new created, since withdrawn  
From the horror of the pre-appointed lot  
With the unknown father and the mother known  
Too well....

(IV, 709, 25-30)

The Comparini are justified because they have preserved the rose, the "pure child," from the squalid life she would otherwise have led. Tertium Quid uses a second flower image to depict Pompilia at the age of twelve. Despite the lie "at the base of all," Tertium Quid finds that the Comparini are devoted to the girl who has become a lovely lily-like creature:

The strange tall pale beautiful creature grown  
Lily-like out o' the cleft i' the sun-smit rock  
To bow its white miraculous birth of buds
I* the way wandering Joseph and his spouse,—
So painters fancy: here it was a fact.
And this their lily,—could they but transplant
And set in base to stand by Solomon's porch
'Twixt lion and lion!—this Pompilia of theirs,
Could they see worthily married, well bestowed,
In house and home!18

(IV, 710, 20-29)

Despite his dispassionate nature, as Duffin points out, Tertium Quid must salute the beauty he sees in the lily-like virgin the Comparini wish to transplant and set in the vase of a well-bestowed husband.19

The Fisc displays his usual casuistry and lack of perception in his plant image. He relates that when the Comparini were driven away, Guido had achieved his end of having his wife alone, without disturbance, and of enjoying "the nuptial bower no soul can see." His plan is prepared so that "forth from plain each pleasant herb may peep,/ Each bloom of wifehood in abeyance late" (IX, 825, 30-45).20 Bottini continues by describing the relationship that, contrary to the husband's expectations, may have developed between Guido and his wife:

But what if, as 'tis wont with plant and wife,
Flowers,—after a suppression to good end,
Still, when they do spring forth,—sprout here, spread there,
Anywhere likelier than beneath the foot
O' the lawful good-man gardener of the ground?
He dug and dibbled, sowed and watered,—still
'Tis a chance wayfarer shall pluck the increase.
Just so, respecting persons not too much,
The lady, foes allege, put forth each charm
And proper floweret of feminity
To whosoever had a nose to smell
Or breast to deck: What if the charge be true?

(IX, 825, 44-55)

Pompilia's accusers report that, after suppression, Pompilia, despite the care of the gardener, Guido, displayed each "proper floweret of feminity" to any "chance wayfarer." In his usual manner of defense, Bottini does not try to prove untrue the charge against Pompilia's
character, but attempts instead to justify her by maintaining that her
guilt would have been greater had she given her favors to only a select
few rather than to anyone who might pass by. No butterfly can brag that
he was preferred to Guido, Bottini insists, because the cup lay open to
"gnat, midge, bee and moth as well (IX, 825, 65-68); as the lawyer states
that Guido has no reason to complain, he shows his lack of interest in
defending Pompilia's character.

Other Half-Rome, on the other hand, uses numerous plant images to
depict his sentimental conception of Pompilia's beauty and purity. He
opens his monologue with the statement that Pompilia is "living yet"
despite her "flowerlike body" that one would think would "frighten at a
bruise" (III, 685, 45-51). He continues his conception of Pompilia as
a flower in commenting on the crowd who visit Pompilia and on the artist
Maratta's statement of Pompilia's beauty. Four years earlier, Other
Half-Rome states, the woman who now draws praise leaned "flower-like from
out her window" without notice. Only when someone points out that a rose
was fought for by two jealous people does the crowd notice its perfection
and cry, "Just one keepsake-leaf for us!" (III, 686, 36-48). Other Half-
Rome expresses his sympathy for Pompilia in his next plant image in which
he pictures her growing within the protective circle of the Comparini:

Two walls that go about a garden-plot
Where a chance sliver, branchlet slipt from bole
Of some tongue-leaved eye-figured Eden tree,
Filched by two exiles and borne far away,
Patiently glorifies their solitude....

(III, 688, 34-38)

Year by year this "chance sliver" grows, until a "light tuft of bloom"
shows to be "Done good to or else harm from outside" (III, 688, 39-49).
In contrast with the idyllic existence that he imagines Pompilia to have
led with her family, Other Half-Rome points out that Guido had employed his life in "culture of Rome's most productive plant—/ A cardinal" (VI, 683, 56-58). The speaker then continues the image of Pompilia-as-plant, changing the terms to emphasize the purity of Pompilia that the Abate discovered. Pompilia was a virgin shielded from the world, a "Lily of a maiden, white with intact leaf," that was "Guessed thro' the sheath that saved it from the sun" (III, 689, 53-54). To express the response of Violante to the Abate's offer of marriage, Other Half-Rome returns to the image of Pompilia as a tree within the walls of the Comparini:

And so Violante rubbed her eyes awhile,
Got up too, walked to wake her Pietro soon
And pour into his ear the mighty news
How somebody had somehow somewhere seen
Their tree-top-tuft of bloom above the wall,
And came now to appraise them the tree's self
Was no such crab-sort as should go feed swine,
But veritable gold, the Hesperian ball
Ordained for Hercules to haste and pluck,
And bear and give the Gods to banquet with—
Hercules standing ready at the door.

(III, 690, 9-19)

Suddenly, Other Half-Rome relates, the tree became "veritable gold" in the eyes of Violante because of the Abate's suggestion of the marriage of Pompilia and Guido. Half-Rome returns to the rose figure to image the beauty as well as the perfection of Pompilia as he reflects on the many who have adored her on her deathbed. Had they known her earlier, he maintains, they too could have saved her:

Well, had they viewed her ere the paleness pushed
The last o' the red o' the rose away, while yet
Some hand, adventurous 'twixt the wind and her,
Might let shy life run back and raise the flower
Rich with reward up to the guardian's face,—
Would they have kept that hand employed all day
At fumbling on with prayer-book pages? No!

(III, 696, 2-8)
Other Half-Rome's last flower figure, in contrast to the preceding, describes the impression the letters Caponsacchi received gave him of Pompilia. These letters were so passionate, Caponsacchi insisted, that he turned "from such over luscious honey-clot/ At end o' the flower" (III, 696, 29-33). Guido's plot, Other Half-Rome decides, was responsible for the picture Caponsacchi first had of Pompilia as an "over-luscious" flower.

In addition to his own images, Caponsacchi uses two plant images in quoting Pompilia. Her life is imaged as a tree which Guido destroys by burning her peace, joy, hope, and fear:

He laid a hand on me that burned all peace,
All joy, all hope, and last all fear away,
Dipping the bough of life, so pleasant once,
In fire which shrivelled leaf and bud alike, 21
Burning not only present life but past,
Which you might think was safe beyond his reach.

(VI, 762, 21-26)

Not only is her present life shrivelled by Guido's actions, but also the bud of the past as well. Pompilia reveals her naivete in a tree image quoted by Caponsacchi in which she explains that her decision to flee was caused either by her fear of Guido's ensnaring others into his trap or by an instinct, such as that of a tree "which turns/ Away from the north wind with what nest it holds." She bases her statement merely on what she has been told by a woman on the way: "The woman said that trees so turn" (VI, 769, 73-770, 1). While the tree images Caponsacchi quotes convey no connotation of possession of characteristics other than instinct, Caponsacchi expresses Pompilia's preciousness in an image describing his first view of her. The experience, he recalls, was similar to finding the golden apple in the garden of the Hesperides while feasting on hedge-fruit:
As if, i' the fabled garden, I had gone
On great adventure, plucked in ignorance
Hedge-fruit, and feasted to satiety,
Laughing at such high fame for hips and haws,
And scorned the achievement: then come all at once
O' the prize o' the place, the thing of perfect gold,
The apple's self: and, scarce my eye on that,
Was 'ware as well o' the seven-fold dragon's watch.

(VI, 765, 10-17)

While Other Half-Rome, in imaging the Hesperian ball, relates the changed opinion Violante held of her daughter on learning of Guido's offer, Caponsacchi discovers Pompilia's worth by experiencing a spiritual feeling for her. Although the church reproved him, he recognized the voice of authority in the "thing of perfect gold." Caponsacchi's final rose image expresses his wish to see the evolution of right to wrong in the world through not only the "main currents of the general life" but also by "small experiences of every day." He wishes "To learn not only by a comet's rush/ But a rose's birth" (VI, 779, 2-8). His experience with Pompilia has taught him something of the "rose's birth."

Pompilia frequently reverts to the plant image to express her relationship with the Comparini. By stating that Violante wished to rescue her from harm, she excuses the lies that were told about the birth: Violante's intentions were good, and she therefore thought that her statements were not real lies. In adopting Pompilia, Violante did rescue the bud from the wild beast whose prey she would otherwise have been:

Well, God, you see! God plants us where we grow.
It is not that because a bud is born
At a wild brier's end, full i' the wild beast's way,
We ought to pluck and put it out of reach
On the oak-tree top,--say "There the bud belongs!"

(VII, 782, 66-70)
With the image of the "wild-briar slip," which indicates her true birth, Pompilia also defends Violante's arrangement of the marriage compact. Violante, Pompilia insists, thought she saw a God-given opportunity to plant the child where she could best grow:

...she, instead of piercing straight
Through the pretence to the ignoble truth,
Fancied she saw God's very finger point,
Designate just the time for planting me
(The wild-briar slip she plucked to love and wear)
In soil where I could strike real root, and grow,
And get to be the thing I called myself....

(VII, 783, 10-16)

Pompilia exhibits her own purity that cannot comprehend evil in her continuation of the image. She knows, she states, that Violante intended the marriage to be for the girl's good; she is sure that giving up the "wilding flower-tree-branch" rust have caused Violante pain (VII, 783, 22-26). Pompilia uses an image of ripened fruit in relating her conversation with the Archbishop, who uses a parable to dispute her claim that to yield physically to Guido without spiritual union would be sinful. He refers to Pompilia as a flower-fig that refused when the voice of authority commanded it to open and "regale the fig-pecker--/ The bird whereof thou art a perquisite"; when the fig refused and the bird left it, three hundred thousand wasps and bees feasted on it. The Archbishop's moral, based on the conclusion that "Such gain the fig's that gave its bird no bite," is that Pompilia should embrace her husband so that she will tempt no others and therefore will no longer be disturbed by the brother Girolamo (VII, 789, 21-46). Pompilia finds the parable to be false, however, for the brother's boldness increases, and she determines to trust no longer in man but only in God. Pompilia's final plant image expresses her faith in Caponsacchi, her deliverer who is to her a saint. She recognizes her own simplicity as she explains that, though her view of Caponsacchi
may not be the view of the saints, her fault must be imputed to her
bud-like soul:

If I call "saint" what saints call something else—
The saints must bear with me, impute the fault
To a soul i' the bud, so starved by ignorance,
Stinted of warmth, it will not blow this year
Nor recognize the orb which Spring-flowers know.

(VII, 798, 27-51)

In the Pope's monologue the plant image is given its greatest
significance, for in the flower image he includes all the qualities
he finds that constitute Pompilia's purity of soul. The first image,
the rose, is used to depict both Pompilia and Caponsacchi, and the thorn
refers to the courage that God gave them so that they could give evidence
of how he would have the world "go white":

...so a thorn
Comes to the aid of and completes the rose,—
Courage to-wit, no woman's gift nor priest's,
I' the crisis; might leaps vindicating right.

(X, 848, 48-51)

In his judgment of Pompilia, however, the Pope's flower image becomes
identified with the perfection of Pompilia alone. He declares that he
sees everywhere the intellect, energy, and knowledge of man, but that
these qualities do not equal the "marvel of a soul like thine, earth's
flower/ She holds up to the softened gaze of God!" (X, 852, 46-52). He
points out that although Pompilia did not know much, nor move the world,
and although she will not be remembered in history, she is the one flower
in his garden because of her purity, faith, right, and pardon (X, 852,
53-66):

At least one blossom makes me proud at eve
Born 'mid the briers of my enclosure! Still
(Oh, here as elsewhere, nothingness of man!)
Those be the plants, imbedded yonder South
To mellow in the morning, those made fat
By the master's eye, that yield such timid leaf,
Uncertain bud, as product of his pain!
While—see how this mere chance-sown cleft-nursed seed
That sprang up by the wayside 'neath the foot
Of the enemy, this breaks all into blaze,
Spreads itself, one wide glory of desire
To incorporate the whole great sun it loves
From the inch-height whence it looks and longs! By flower,
By rose, I gather for the breast of God... 

Herford points out that "The old Pope mournfully reflects that his seven
years' tillage of the garden of the Church has issued only in the 'timid
leaf and uncertain bud,' while the perfect flower, Pompilia, has sprung
up by the wayside 'neath the foot of the enemy, 'a mere chance-sown
seed.' Pompilia is especially to be admired because she has sprung up
without constant supervision by the gardener, but has grown up beneath the
foot of the enemy. The Pope's image of the "chance-sown cleft-nursed
seed" is similar to Pompilia's image of herself as a "wild-briar slip";
but, while Pompilia reveals the purity in her thoughts, she does not try
to convince others of her goodness through her image. The Pope, however,
reveals his sympathy with Pompilia; he portrays her not merely as a
briar-slip but stresses her development into the perfection of a rose.

The image also has a resemblance to Guido's expression of disgust with
Pompilia, the "coarse woolly hip" that he is counselled to plant but which
does not deserve the name of rose. Guido, the gardener, wishes to pluck a
rose rather than Pompilia; the Pope, the gardener, would gather the rose
he recognizes for God. Bottini's image of the flower that, after suppression,
will "sprout here, spread there," rather than beneath the foot of the
gardener, Guido, is recalled by the Pope's image (IX, 825, 44-55); the
contrast in the Pope's image and the lawyer's indicates the vast difference
between the gardener who tills the souls of men and the lawyer who strives and strains, "like the cockeral that would crow" (I, 664, 44-45).

The Pope uses his final image of Pompilia-as-flower to indicate the "perfect beauty of the body and soul" which were perhaps revealed to Caponsacchi as he rescued Pompilia. As a hidden "unsuspected flower" may be revealed in the midst of a storm, so Pompilia's perfection may have been disclosed:

As when a thundrous midnight, with black air That burns, rain-drops that blister, breaks a spell, Draws out the excessive virtue of some sheathed Shut unsuspected flower that hoards and hides Immensity of sweetness,—so, perchance, Might the surprise and fear release too much The perfect beauty of the body and soul Thou savedst in thy passion for God's sake, He who is Pity.

(X, 854, 45-51)

Plant images are used to characterize Caponsacchi, Guido, and the Pope as well as Pompilia, and the use that the two lawyers make of the image indicates something of the character of these speakers.

Pompilia characterizes Caponsacchi in two plant images, which show how her attitude toward the priest changed. When she first decided to try to escape with him, she recalls, she decided to "touch an unripe fruit" (VII, 794, 66). In revealing the feeling that she develops for the priest, she conceives of the acts of her rescuer as flowers:

He is ordained to call and I to come! Do not the dead wear flowers when dressed for God? Say,—I am all in flowers from head to foot! Say,—not one flower of all he said and did, Might seem to flit unnoticed, fade unknown, But dropped a seed, has grown a balsam-tree Whereof the blossoming perfumes the place At this supreme of moments!

(VII, 801, 75-82)
While she prepares herself for death, Pompilia thinks of herself as surrounded with flowers, the words and deeds of her rescuer. The blossoming of the seeds of the flowers still "perfumes the place" while she thinks of her "one friend." The Pope includes Caponsacchi in the image of the rose to whom God gives the thorn of courage so that the right can be victorious (X, 848, 48-51), and also associates the priest with a rose in the judgment of his part in the case:

And surely not so very much apart
Need I place thee, my warrior-priest,—in whom
What if I gain the other rose, the gold,
We strive to imitate God's miracle,
Great monarchs with, good rose in its degree?

(X, 853, 48-52)

Nowhere, however, does the Pope stress the comparison of Caponsacchi with a plant to the degree to which he stresses Pompilia's flower-like nature.

Guido characterizes himself as a plant in his first monologue before the court; the contrast between his use and the Pope's use of the image in reference to the murderer is significant. Guido recalls the advice his followers gave him to enter the church without becoming a priest so that he would be allowed to marry:

Be not the vine but dig and dung its root,
Be not a priest but gird up priesthood's loins,
With one foot in Arezzo stride to Roma,
Spend yourself there and bring the purchase back!

(V, 729, 50-55)

As Guido is advised not to be the vine, but to tend the root of the church and to bring the profits to Arezzo, Other Half-Rome's image of Guido employed in culture of "Rome's most productive plant—/A cardinal," is echoed (III, 682, 56-58). Guido uses a tree metaphor in stressing the inefficacy of the punishment given Caponsacchi and Pompilia for the flight: the law has merely broken his own "tree of life from root to branch"
instead of lighten his load (V, 751, 12-22). The image Guido attributes to his fellows is echoed as the Pope states the plea he hears in behalf of Guido:

What is the last word I must listen to? 
Perehance—"Spare yet a term this barren stock; 
We pray thee dig about and dung and dress 
Till he repent and bring forth fruit even yet."

The answer to his question is negative. The plea he hears is not for mercy in the hope of future repentance, but is made in behalf of the society whose main prop is the supremacy of the husband over the wife. It is clear, however, that the Pope considers Guido barren stock which cannot be given mercy. He is not a fruitful vine, nor does he tend the roots of the vine as his fellows suggested, but is merely barren stock which can bring forth no fruit.

The Pope reveals his character in plant images as well as in his image of himself as gardener as he considers his decision on the case. He first depicts his life in a tree image in comparing his life, which is almost over, with Guido's, who would seem to be destined to live longer but who will die the next day. The Pope realizes that he is older than the seventy years "Appointed overweight to break our branch" and that on his "loaded branch" he carries all the world's burden: "He lifts the cases of the whole world on a 'loaded branch' for which a bird's nest were a 'superfluous burden."

Yet he must consider the consequences that would befall him were he to die before Guido:

Say, then I stand already in God's face 
And hear "Since by its fruit a tree is judged, 
Show me thy fruit, the latest act of thine!"
For in the last is summed the first and all,—
What thy life last put heart and soul into,
There shall I taste thy product." I must plead
This condemnation of a man today.

(X, 844, 55-61)

In these images the Pope reflects his desire to judge himself on the basis of the murderer's fruits. He carefully considers the consequences of his actions to determine whether he would wish to be judged by God for the fruit which he produces. He has stated his conviction, however, and the conviction of Browning that it is the "seed of act" that God appraises rather than the "leafage and branchage" that the world admires; therefore he reviews the seeds of his act (X, 843, 72-82).\(^ {30} \)

Several of the plant images of Archangeli and Bottini are important in revealing the character of the two lawyers and disclose a similarity between the two. Archangeli refers to the case as a "flower o' the field" so glorious that no Solomon was even clothed to match it, which he plans to set in the cap of Cinone (VIII, 803, 43-46).\(^ {31} \) The scriptural metaphor of the lilies reveals not the beauty nor the worth of the case but merely Archangeli's pride in his ability to win in the highly-publicized trial. He reveals the falseness of his argument in his reference to the Christian dogma which, he states, allows man to become enraged when his self-respect has been injured. He images "this Christian dogma" as a "law-bud/ Full-blown now," which will soon "bask the absolute flower/ Of papal doctrine in our blaze of day" (X, 810, 15-15). The Fico introduces his speech with a statement of his desire to read his argument so that he could decorate it with flowers that will not bloom on paper:

If I might read instead of print my speech,—
Ay, and enliven speech with many a flower
Refuses obstinate to blow in print,
As wildings planted in a prim parterre...  

(IX, 822, 16-19)
These flower images substantiate Browning's statement in Book I that law, the elaborate machine, is fashioned to "unchoke, pump up and pour apace/Truth till a flowery foam shall wash the world" (I, 665, 42-45).

The variation in the plant-images is similar to that of the animal images. Half-Rome's images of the growing plants indicate his complete lack of sympathy with the Comparini and Pompilia. Guido's image of the purchased tree reveals his conception of marriage, and the image of infectious mistletoe expresses his hatred of his wife. He turns the image of the lily and rose to her disfavor in speaking of the forged love letters, and only in the rose-images of his second monologue does he reveal that his young wife's repulsion caused his feeling of hatred and that he did not have the patience to try to develop her feeling toward him. Tertium Quid uses the rose and lily figures to emphasize the beauty of the girl in contrast to her origin. The Fisc's casuistry is displayed as he is willing to admit that Pompilia may have strayed from her gardener, Guido. The images of the golden apple, the rose, the growing tree, and the lily express Other Half-Rome's conception of Pompilia's beauty and purity. Caponsacchi quotes tree images in which Pompilia reveals the destructive effect Guido had on her and in which she considers her instinct to turn from him to be like the instinct of a tree. Caponsacchi recognized her true worth and her effect on him in the images of the golden apple and the rose. Pompilia exhibits her purity in her simple portrayal of herself as a "wild-briar slip" raised by the Comparini, and in the image of the bud she recognizes her limited experience. The Pope, on the other hand, images her as a perfect rose which has grown from a mere "chance-sown seed" among the briars of his garden, and, similarly, as an "unsuspected flower" having perfect beauty of both body and soul. Pompilia expresses
her feeling for Caponsacchi in the image of his actions as flowers, and
the Pope approves of his actions in rose images. Guido's image of himself
as a broken tree is intended to procure the sympathy of the court, but the
Pope discloses that Guido's tree is merely "barren stock." The Pope's
images of himself as a tree reveal not only his age and the burden he bears
of the whole world, but his careful consideration as well of the judgment
he, the gardener and shepherd, must make. The flower images of the
lawyers in connection with their speeches disclose only pride and concern
with trivial matters rather than with the truth of the case the outcome
of which they attempt to determine.
CONCLUSION

In conclusion, we again posit Browning's own question which he asks in the final lines of *The Ring and the Book*: "Why take the artistic way to prove so much?" And again we come to Browning's answer: the glory and good of art is that truth can be spoken "obliquely" through art; therefore a book may have meaning beyond the facts. The three levels of imagery discussed in this study exemplify Browning's belief of the function of poetry. In the titular ring image he explains the process by which he transforms the mere facts of the case into a circle of poetic truth which will tell a truth beyond the facts. The gold ring contains the facts, but is molded by the alloy of the poet's soul to reveal truth obliquely. The chief truth he wants to deliver through art, he tells us, is that human testimony is false, that human estimation is only "words and wind." Thus, he forms the circle of monologues from which a central truth can be perceived. In the dominant images of the monologues, accordingly, Browning reveals "obliquely" how close each of the speakers comes to the mere facts of the case and, in addition, to truth beyond the case. In the images, he gives an indication of the degree to which each speaker's statements are mere "words and wind." In Archangeli's monologue, the food image and related thoughts of possible wealth which recur to his mind as he prepares his speech reveal, first of all, his material and physical nature. The imposition of the thought of food on the matter at hand which results in the comparison of his case to a fry indicates that his interest in the case is merely in delivering a speech that will win for him the same glory that he hopes the fry will bring. The food images
within the speech, consequently, reflect his casuistry. The dominant image discloses that Archangeli's approximation of the facts is almost as negligible as his perception of higher truth. On the other hand, Bottini's use of images to decorate his speech reveals his vanity as he conceives of his oration as an artistic masterpiece. In the application of his images, moreover, he gives evidence of approximation of neither fact nor higher truth, for, though he claims to prove Guido's guilt by portraying Pompilia's saintship, throughout his monologue he attempts to exhibit his power of argument by conceding that, despite her possible guilt, Guido's guilt is indisputable. His imagery indicates clearly that his speech is "words and wind." Guido's anatomical imagery, in contrast, displays his preoccupation with the physical aspects of his torture and approaching death as he attempts to persuade the court of his innocence in Book V and as he in Book XI reveals his deeply-rooted hatred of Pompilia. Through the false parallel he makes in Book V between the Vigil-torture and the torture imposed by his wife, and through his emphasis on physical details related to his coming death in Book XI, he indicates that his nature is physical, not spiritual. Although he knows the facts of the case, in the imagery of Book V he reveals that his purpose is to sway his hearers, and in Book XI his dwelling on details of anatomy indicates that his account of the tale is biased and that he can perceive no higher truth in the case. In the Pope's monologue, on the other hand, the almost instinctive white light images which the wise old man uses both in pronouncing judgment on the case and in his philosophical reflections are not deliberate decorations, as are Bottini's and Guido's, nor are they affected by other matters which are important in his mind, as are Archangeli's and Guido's. Instead, they are used as he sincerely
considers not only the case before him but also its application to the world; the principal images in his monologue express his faith in an ultimate source of light which has been shed on the chief character, the perfect Pompilia. Browning indicates through the dominant imagery that the Pope is a character whose words are not only "words and wind," for he has approached ultimate truth as closely as is humanly possible.

The artistic way of revealing truth is exemplified further in the images that recur throughout the poem as they too reveal the falseness of human testimony but point toward a poetic truth. In the various contradictory images of the speakers of differing views, the falseness of many of the images is clear. Guido, for example, cannot be both an innocent lamb and a predatory wolf. Yet the circle of poetic truth brings an answer to most of the contradictions and resolves the problem. The images of Guido as a helpless fish are shown to be false both in his revelation of his own treacherous nature in Book XI and in the Pope's statement of his guilt. Similarly, the images of Guido as a poisonous serpent are shown to be accurate, and in the Pope's monologue the judgment of Pompilia as "perfect in whiteness" indicates that the only serpentile quality that can be attributed to her is a sudden transformation into strength and courage. The dove-like purity of Pompilia is testified to by Fra Celestino as he expresses a judgment of the same goodness that the Pope discovered. Because the wolf-like nature of Guido is stated by Browning, later judged by the perceptive Pope, and finally confirmed by the murderer himself, his earlier images of his lamb-like innocence are shown to be mere "words and wind," as are the protestations of his supporters. Similarly, the lamb-like quality of Pompilia is confirmed through the Pope's monologue. Through the various meanings attached to the flower image, the contradictions
and falseness of human testimony are exemplified, but the many images which present Pompilia as a beautiful flower are confirmed in the image of the Pope in which he states that she is the one flower he gathers for God. Through the imagery of The Ring and the Book, then, Browning has illustrated "obliquely" not only the lesson that human testimony is mere words and wind but also that through the artistic method of poetry, truth can be revealed.
NOTES

CHAPTER I

1. All references to *The Ring and the Book* are to the number of the book, the page number, and the line number in *The Complete Poetical Works of Robert Browning*, ed. Augustine Birrel, New York, Macmillan, 1925.


11. Herford, p. 245, cites a letter of March, 1861, by Mrs. Browning in which she mentions her husband’s interest in sculpture.


13. de Reul, pp. 262-265.


CHAPTER II

1. Esther Matson, "A Triad of Symbols," Poet Lore, XXXI (Summer, 1920), 287, points out the fascination the circle image had for Browning.


5. A. O. Drachmann, "Alloy and Gold," Studies in Philology, XXII (July, 1925), pp. 420-422, points out the difference between the first objective telling of the case and the second subjective account in Book I. The supposedly objective account, however, in Browning's interpretation of the facts, not merely the facts of the Old Yellow Book, although there is no attempt to pass judgment.

6. "Malleable" was coined by Browning. Cook, p. 19, states that "malleable," from malleolus, "little hammer," is more suitable in this passage than "malleable," from malleus, "hammer," "the workmanship of the poet's fancy being delicate like that required in fashioning an Etruscan ring."


9. William T. Going, "The Ring and the Browning," Modern Language Review, LXXI (Nov., 1936), 493-495. The sonnet is as follows:

A golden ring is in thy thought
To plight us evermore, dear—
But see—my finger is too thin
For such a gaud to shut it in—
The smallest ring that ever was bought
Would drop off sooner than it ought,
We should hear it fell on the floor, dear.

May, let thy love achieve the thing
You seek to token for, dear—
Her lock thy fingers in with mine,
And press them soft, a moment's sign,
And the touch shall remain a living ring
Which ever shall fit and ever shall cling—
Which shall drop off nevermore, dear.


16. Ibid., p. 28.

17. Henry Charles Duffin, *Amphibion*, p. 275, quotes this passage as a good image for the nature and process of clear thinking.


CHAPTER III


5. Numbers 11:5-6. "We remember the fish, which we did eat in Egypt freely; the cucumbers, and the melons, and the leeks, and the onions, and the garlick: But now our soul is dried away: there is nothing at all, beside this manna, before our eyes."


7. The accounts of the feeding of the five thousand in Matthew 14:17, Mark 6:38, and Luke 9:13, mention five loaves, two fishes, and twelve remaining baskets. When Christ in Matthew 16:9,10, relates of the five thousand, he mentions five loaves; of the four thousand, seven loaves.


10. Minnie Gressham Machen, *The Bible in Browning*, p. 207, points out as a parallel I Corinthians 5:1,2. "For every one that useth milk is unskilful in the word of righteousness: for he is a babe. But strong meat belongeth to them that are of full age." She also suggests the relationship of Hebrews 5:13,14, to the passage.

11. Proverbs 30:8. "Remove far from me vanity and lies:...feed me with food convenient for me."


19. Machen, pp. 161, 192, notes two passages from the Bible which are echoed in these lines:

   Luke 12:4,5. "Be not afraid of them that kill the body,...But I will warn you whom ye shall fear: fear him, which after he hath killed hath power to cast into hell."

   I Corinthians 5:5. "To deliver such an one to Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus."


21. Dowden, p. 266.

22. Machen, p. 170, points out John 5:20,21, as a source for this phrase: "For every one that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reproved. But he that doeth truth cometh to the light, that his deeds may be made manifest that they are wrought in God." The Pope, then, is the one who "doeth truth."


24. Machen, p. 209, traces these lines to James 1:27. "Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world."


CHAPTER IV

1. The reference is to the leviathan passage in Job 4:1,2. "Canst thou draw out leviathan with an hook? or his tongue with a cord which thou lettest down? Canst thou put an hook into his nose? or bore his jaw through with a thorn?"


3. Minnie Gresham Machen, The Bible in Browning, p. 114, traces the passage to Psalm 68:15. "Though ye have lion among the pots, yet shall ye be as the wings of a dove covered with silver and her feathers with yellow gold."


7. Cook, p. 45, comments that the illustration is not a happy one because Pompilia makes a poor python. To Half-Rome, however, she seemed python-like.

8. Machen, pp. 36-37, comments on the wolf, sheep, and goat images in the poem: "In the many passages in which Browning makes a figurative use of sheep and wolves, there is... 'crossing and re-crossing of images.' Now he seems to have in mind the tenth chapter of St. John's Gospel, where the fold is the Church, the shepherd is Christ himself, the thieves and robbers are the imposters, and the wolf the enemy of the flock. The figure shifts, and the 'wolf in sheep's clothing' (Matt. 7:15) represents the hypocrite; again, Christ's parting command to Peter to 'feed my sheep' (John 21:16) is brought out, or perhaps the apostolic injunction in Acts, 'Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock over which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood. For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock.' Yet again the sheep and wolves represent the good and bad, with evident reference to the judgment of Christ as set forth in Matt. 25:31-46, although the wolves should correctly be goats. In other places, Browning frequently uses sheep and goats as synonymous with good and bad men.
9. The argument by example of beasts occurs twice in the Old Yellow Book. Sproti, p. 25 (ed. Hodell), gives examples of beasts who kill unfaithful wives, and the writer of Pamphlet 10, on an anonymous pamphlet, p. 120, cites Aelian's example of the avenging elephant. The argument is drawn out at length by Archangeli, as Louise Snitslaar, Sidelights on Robert Browning's The Ring and the Book, 1 p. 111, points out.

10. Cook, p. 44, points out that the fox, first identified with Capenzachchi, here includes Fompilia.


12. Ibid., p. 224.

13. Song of Solomon 2:15. "Take us the foxes, the little foxes, that spoil the vines: for our vines have tender grapes."

14. Luke 15:4. "What man of you, having an hundred sheep, doth not leave the ninety and nine in the wilderness, and go after that which is lost, until he find it?"


16. Machen, pp. 175-174, points out two sources. The latter is particularly significant:
  John 21:17. "Jesus saith unto him [Peter], Feed my sheep."
  John 10:15. "The hireling fleeth, because he is an hireling, and careth not for the sheep."


18. Machen, pp. 24-25, points out that sculptured lions were not a feature of the design of Solomon's porch, and concludes that Browning was confused with the ivory throne of Solomon. The throne is described in I Kings 10:18-20. "Moreover the king made a great throne of ivory, and overlaid it with the best gold, The throne had six steps, and the top of the throne was round behind: and there were stays on either side of the place of the seat, and two lions stood beside the stays. And twelve lions stood there on the one side and on the other upon the six steps: there was not the like made in any kingdom." Machen concludes that the error was a more inadvertence by Browning because it is evident from the first stanza of "Solomon and Balkis" that the poet knew about the ivory throne. It is also possible that Browning deliberately had his speaker make the error.


20. The Fisc's statement, "Conf er a passage in the Canticles," seems to refer, as Machen, pp. 125-126, points out, to Song of Solomon 4:16. "Awake, 0 north wind; and come, thou south; blow upon my garden, that the spices thereof may flow out. Let my beloved come into his garden, and eat his pleasant fruits."
21. John Kester Bonnell, "Touch Images in the Poetry of Robert Browning," MLA, XXXVII (Sept., 1922), 596, points out these lines as examples of touch images "not fully apprehended if read as merely visual."

22. Cool; p. 211, comments on the optimistic tone Browning gives a familiar proverb in these lines.


24. Mrs. Sutherland Orr, A Handbook to the Works of Robert Browning, p. 106: "Pompilia is doubly virtuous because she is a mere 'chance-sown,' 'cloth-nurtured' human weed, owing all her goodness to herself."

25. Duffin, p. 158, points out this image as one in which the Pope reveals his sympathy with Pompilia.

26. Edward Dowden, Robert Browning, p. 262, comments on the significance of the rose image: "Pompilia is conceived by Browning not as a pale, passive victim, but as strong with a vivid, interior life, and not more perfect in patience than in her obedience to the higher law which summons her to resistance to evil and championship of the right. Her purity is not the purity of ice but of fire. When the Pope would find for himself a symbol to body forth her soul, it is not a lily that he thinks of but a rose."

27. Luke 15:7, 8, is the source of both the Pope's and Guido's (V, 728, 49-55) images. "Then said he unto the dresser of his vineyard, behold, these three years I come seeking fruit on this fig tree, and find none: cut it down; why cumbreth it the ground? And he answering said unto him, Lord, let it alone this year also, till I shall dig about it, and dung it."


30. E. D. H. Johnson, The Alien Vision of Victorian Poetry, p. 126, states that in these lines "The Pope voices Browning's conviction that men are to be judged not by their actions, but by the motives which generate those actions."

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