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JOURNEY AS ALLEGORY OF READING IN THE DRAMATIC MONOLOGUES OF ROBERT BROWNING

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NATIONAL UNIVERSITY OF SINGAPORE

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SUMMARY

The symbolic and the figurative are two necessary features in allegory. As such, an allegory of reading Robert Browning's dramatic monologues insists on the close reading of metaphor. My thesis demonstrates an alternative allegorical reading – one that is based on close reading of metaphor *and* metonymy. This is done by addressing the journey as a trope so that it can be apprehended as metaphor and more importantly as metonymy. My research explores the journey as a trope that provides the trajectory from the literal to the figural; from metonymy to metaphor.

In *Allegories of Reading*, Paul de Man posits that the 'mastery of metaphor over metonymy owes its persuasive power to the use of metonymic structures' (15). He also believes that in passages where there is 'superiority of the "symbolic" metaphor over the "literal" prosaic, metonymy is reasserted in terms of chance and necessity' (70). My study of Robert Browning's dramatic monologues offers possibilities of dislodging the metaphor from this perceived superior position. This is done by deploying a modified version of de Man's 'relay of tropes' when addressing journey as metaphor and metonymy. The transition from metonymy to metaphor is a journey all on its own, and the most significant instance is how Browning transforms the concrete 'Old Yellow Book' into an abstract metaphor, the Ring. Browning's sojourn to Florence produces a parallel, allegorical journey of Browning's creative process. Browning and his critics do not mention metonymy when discussing the Ring figure in the poem; instead they refer to the Ring as a metaphor, and none of them, including Browning himself, have examined the metonymic thrust behind the metaphor.

My position is that Browning's poems overturn the rules of synecdoche and metonymy by transforming them into metaphors through a series of substitutions and

displacements, those that de Man refers to as the ‘relay of tropes’. The relay is possible through the *reading* of the poems. During reading, the poems reveal the unreadability – and unwriteability of that reading. The Ring metaphor is the strongest metaphor for Browning’s art, and the trajectory from the ‘Old Yellow Book’ to the Ring metaphor goes through several levels: first as the actual book, which is then referred to as the Book in the poem. The Book helps unravel the story, and ‘alloyed’ by Browning’s creativity, the poem is shaped. The Ring itself appears nowhere in the poem, not even as a metaphor for Pompilia’s story or Guido’s trial, but as a metaphor for Browning’s art. It is a deeply embedded metaphor because it represents the composition of the poem itself and is Browning’s own journey as he writes his longest poem. The trajectory from the purely concrete and literal (the Book) to purely abstract metaphor (the Ring) is a journey that begins with metonymy (Browning’s chance find in Florence) and ends with the Ring metaphor.

Thus, throughout this thesis, close metonymic reading is deployed, together with the application of de Man’s transfer of tropes, to open a space for comprehending the journey as trope and allegory of reading Browning’s poetry. This thesis eventually presents the possibility of the journey functioning as an allegory of Browning’s aesthetic demonstration that metonymy is indeed the driving force behind the power of metaphor. To present this position, this thesis begins with the simplest, most literal of journeys in the initial discussion, and, thrust by de Manian ‘chance and necessity’, is eventually led to apprehending the journey as allegory of reading the dramatic monologues of Robert Browning.

(578 words)

Abbreviations

AR: Paul de Man. *Allegories of Reading: Figural Language in Rousseau, Nietzsche, Rilke and Proust*.

BI: Paul de Man. *Blindness and Insight*. *Essays in the Rhetoric of Contemporary Criticism.*

RB: Robert Browning. *The Ring and the Book*.

LOTR: J. R. R. Tolkien. *The Lord of the Rings.*

I dedicate this thesis to two women:

She whom I care about deeply, who took Robert Browning away from me

and

Suchen Christine Lim who returned Browning back to me.

Chapter One

Introduction

> Paying attention: almost anyone can do it; and it's not requisite for reading, but reading well? At any rate, attention, properly paid, will, over time, with personally productive tendencies or habits of focus and repetitions of thought remembered into generally applicable patterns, beget method.
>
> We have now reached close reading good and proper.
>
> (Andrew DuBois, *Close Reading* 2)

The reviews of yearly publications on the poetry of Robert Browning in the 21st century are attended to mainly by two Browning scholars, Mary Ellis Gibson (up to 2004) and Britta Martens (2006 onwards). I will therefore draw up a short summary of the general topics discussed in the last decade so as to set the parameters within which my thesis is situated.

The decade's publications can be divided into two very broad areas: a small group whose work involves editing and annotating Browning's poetry, and a larger group, which contribute to scholarship through critical engagement with his poetry. The second group can be subdivided into two smaller groups: one critically explores themes in Browning's poetry while the other deploys the use of critical methodologies from which to interpret Browning's poetry. It is in this latter group that my thesis is situated, and thus I will allocate more space to its summary, following my short review of the decade's publications.

Gibson and Martens note that Browning scholars have been sustaining the effort to promote Browning's poetry as readable texts, and this is seen in the recent publications of anthologies of his primary works. All of these works contain new

introductions and new or added annotations. The most substantial and complete of these works is the Longman series in three volumes edited by John Woolford, Daniel Karlin and Joseph Phelan, entitled *The Poems of Robert Browning*. The third and final volume was released in 2007, and all three volumes cover every poem Browning wrote. Stefan Hawlin and T.A.J. Burnett devoted their efforts to Browning's longest work, *The Ring and the Book*, completing the publication of *The Poetical Works of Robert Browning: The Ring and the Book* in 2004. This was also published in three volumes by Clarendon Press. Of note too is the Oxford University Press publication of *The Major Works* in 2005, edited and annotated by Adam Roberts, with an introduction by Daniel Karlin.

The thematic publications can be divided into several categories according to whether they address the personal and the biographical, the religious and the spiritual, and art and aesthetics. At the turn of the century, Martin Garret published two books that deal with the Brownings' personal lives: *Elizabeth Barrett Browning and Robert Browning: Interviews and Recollections* in 2000 and *A Browning Chronology* in 2001, which also covers Barrett-Browning. In 2006, Philip Kelley, Scott Lewis and Ed Hayes published *The Browning Correspondence*. There are also critics who address religious issues, such as Christopher Keirstead, who discusses Victorian attitudes towards Catholicism and the Franco-Prussian war in 'Stranded at the Border: Browning, France and the Challenge of Cosmopolitanism in *Red Cotton Night-Cap Country*' (*Victorian Poetry* 43.4, 2005). Browning's cast of bishops, monks and popes of course invite articles on religion, and amongst them 'Bishop Blougram's Apology' is especially popular. However, 'Fra Lippo Lippi' is more commonly discussed because of Lippi's dual role as cleric and artist. Thus, the poem is represented in

articles that address both religion and aesthetics[1]. On the topic of aesthetics, Woolford's *Robert Browning* (2007) is worth mentioning because the work examines a range of issues such as the binaries of aesthetics and the grotesque. This is important to my thesis because it discusses the art poems and how the grotesque is a form of entrapment and sovereignty. The idea of the aesthetic alongside the grotesque was explored in 1994 by Isobel Armstrong in *Victorian Poetry: Poetry, Poetics and Politics*, and in his book, Woolford makes a sustained argument for the significant role of the grotesque as aesthetic in the poetry of Browning. There are of course numerous other books and articles exploring Browning thematically, but I will not list them here as they do not feature on the radar of my thesis. I have read them and deemed them of little relevance to my thesis.

The third group, which is the field in which my thesis is situated, is populated by publications that deploy critical theories, and these can be divided broadly into several methodologies. There are period studies in which critics engage with theorists from the nineteenth century such as Hazlitt and Carlyle, and later studies that draw on critical theories such as queer theory, feminism, body politics, influence and intertextuality. There are also two articles on cognitive psychology. However, all these contributions will not be mentioned here because they are too numerous. It is more economical to leave these out and instead mention the group of critics who by their criticism put my thesis at stake. This latter group of writings forms a body of works that address language and structure and deploy various critical methodologies.

In her 2002 review, Mary Ellis Gibson observes that there is 'continuing interest in Browning's role as precursor to modernism' (*Victorian Poetry* 40.3, 303). She cites Sarah Wood's *Robert Browning: A Literary Life* (2001) and Stefan Hawlin's

---

[1] Leonee Ormond believes that Browning's art poems, especially 'Andrea del Sarto' and 'Fra Lippo Lippi' are 'about the craft of poetry, and about Browning as its practitioner' ('Browning and Painting', 210).

The Complete Critical Guide to Robert Browning (2002) as two significant works that place importance on literary theory, as seen in their applications of theory to Browning's poetry. Since 2001, more Browning critics have begun to discuss language and structure as well as truth and meaning. In his close reading of *Fifine at the Fair,* 'A Note on Meter, Music and Meaning in Robert Browning's Fifine at the Fair', published in *Victorian Poetry*, 39 (2001), Donald Hair examines the effect of sound and rhythms on the reader. In 'Weak Monosyllables in Iambic Verse and the Communication of Metrical Form', also published in 2001 (*Lingua*, 111 [2001]), Nigel Fabb chose to read one poem closely and break it up linguistically so as to address Browning's deployment of verse (structure) and language. John Woolford discusses language and expression in '"The Mesmeric Effort": Picture, Language and Silence in Browning's Theory of Representation' (*Browning Society Notes*, 27 [2000]), and he focuses on the reader. Woolford also deploys close readings of two lesser discussed poems 'In a Gondola' and 'Rudel to a Lady of Tripoli', and he presents the idea that even these poems have latent structures that lend themselves to readings that deploy methodologies not yet in use during Browning's time. This puts my own thesis at stake, since I am a belated advocate of Browning as an early proponent of post-structuralist theory[2]. Another example is Pamela Neville-Sington's Jamesian reading of Browning published in 2005, entitled *Robert Browning: A Life after Death* (2005). In *Victorian Poetry as Cultural Critique: The Politics of Performative Language* (2003), E. Warwick Slinn explores the performative aspect of Browning's monologues and how this 'foreground[s] constitutive language through poetic devices' (28). Catherine Maxwell also explores language and literary

[2] Patricia O'Neill places Browning in the twentieth century and discusses Modernism alongside Browning's poetry, though she observes that his optimism 'diminished his value' (*Robert Browning and Twentieth Century Criticism*, 55).

conventions in Browning to enable a reading of gender in *The Female Sublime from Milton to Swinburne: Bearing Blindness* (2001). The Browning scholar and reviewer Mary Ellis Gibson observes that both Slinn and Maxwell do not 'lose sight of cultural dynamics [while] privileging language' (*Victorian Poetry*, 41.3 [2003], 395).

There are also some critics who address truth and meaning in the poetry of Browning[3]. As far back as 1941 C. Willard Smith did a very close reading of *The Ring and the Book,* detailing and analyzing Browning's use of the imagery of the star in an effort to give meaning to a particular recurring symbol (*Browning's Star Imagery: The Study of a Detail in Poetic Design).* In 1969, Mary Rose Sullivan saw the necessity of exploring truth in poetry in *Browning's Voices in 'The Ring and the Book': A Study of Method and Meaning*. It is no surprise that these two critics, amongst others, chose to deploy close reading on this very long poem because of Browning's own famous admission in the Ring poem that 'art may tell a truth / Obliquely' (XII, 859-860). The title of William Earl Buckler's 1985 book, *Poetry and Truth in Robert Browning's The Ring and the Book* is self-revealing in the critic's quest for truth in Browning's poetry. Michael Meredith addresses Browning's predilection for embellishing historical facts in 'Flight from Arezzo: Fact and Fiction in *The Ring and the Book*' (*Studies in Browning and His Circle* 25 [2003]) and this is important in my thesis because I discuss in it 'embellishment' in relation to the poems 'Andrea del Sarto', 'Fra Lippo Lippi' and the Ring. J. Hillis Miller explores Browning's idea of truth when he observes Browning's necessary failure in proving the 'unavailability of God' (*Victorian Subjects*, 59), by declaring how art tells truths obliquely and by installing the pope monologue (Book X) in the poem as the final voice of judgment. Miller

[3] Penelope Gay discusses truth in Browning's poetry on music and his 'emotional commitment to music' ('Browning and Music', 222).

suggests that Browning 'implicitly admits failure' (59) in the Ring poem, but observes in 'Fra Lippo Lippi' that Lippi's, and therefore Browning's '[t]ruth as reproduction leads to truth as revelation' (202). In his article '"Transformations of Disgust": Guido, Metaphor, and the Search for Stability in Book IX of *The Ring and the Book'* published in *Studies in Browning and His Circle*, 23 (May, 2000), Michael DiMassa begins his criticism by addressing the question of the importance of metaphor in Guido's second of two monologues (Book XI). He claims that Browning's poetry contains 'metaphoric wealth' (136), a phrase borrowed from Umberto Eco's *Semiotics and the Philosophy of Language* (89). Earlier, DiMassa had already identified the importance of metaphor in his close reading of animal imagery across a range of Browning poems in his doctoral dissertation, published as '*My Barbarous Illustrations': Animal Imagery in the Poetry of Robert Browning* (1999). Straying from the Ring poem, Michael Johnstone uses language to explore truth in Browning's lesser known poem 'A Death in the Desert', proposing that Jesus can be seen 'figuratively as the element of language that shifts constantly in relation to truth, [or] "God", that he ultimately qualifies' in 'Truth Has a Human Face' (*Victorian Poetry* 38.3 [Fall 2000], 365). Finally, Kerry McSweeney's *What is the Import? Nineteenth-Century Poems and Contemporary Critical Practice* must be mentioned because he argues strongly that meaning is not the sole aim in establishing a poem's value, and he uses 'A Toccata of Galuppi's', 'Master Hugues of Saxe-Gotha' and 'Childe Roland to the Dark Tower Came' to present his case. McSweeney's case is relevant here because, although it does not feature at all in the body of my thesis, it acts as a challenge by forcing it to dissect Browning's poems in order to find aims other than 'meaning' in Browning's poetry.

So far, I have outlined the field in which Browning critics who address metaphor and meaning are situated. My own thesis addresses metaphor and literal language and their intrinsic structures and processes. It is also an experiential approach, and the justification for it is best articulated by William Earl Buckler's admission that

> narrower, thematic approach[es] to *The Ring and the Book*'s poetic center [have] proved so inadequate, it seems appropriate to try the large, experiential approach by examining, not what the poem says or is said to say, but what it does, how it actually works, 'Nor wrong the thought, missing the mediate word' (XII, 857). By examining how Book VII [the Pompilia monologue] works, we should come as close as possible to seeing how the whole poem works.
>
> (*Poetry and Truth in Robert Browning's The Ring and the Book*, 163)

My thesis focuses on Browning's dramatic monologues because of their prosaic verse and its puzzling metaphors[4]. I address the literal and the figural in his poetry. Thus Paul de Man's model of reading Proust in *Allegories of Reading* plays an important role in my thesis.

As a result, another group of critics who are important in the landscape of my study include those who explore de Man's philosophy alongside artistic works. They are important because in the writing of this thesis, I am a belated visitor to the group whose task is to apply de Man's various models of allegories of reading to their chosen texts. Rei Terada defends de Man's theories from the accusations of being cold by appearing to ignore emotions. Terada argues in 'Pathos (*Allegories of Reading*)' that de Man 'works out his entire argument using emotions as examples, so that *Allegories of Reading* offers not just a weirdly affective view of reading, but a

4 Ida Beth Sessions offered a comparison of the many dramatic monologues in 1947 ('The Dramatic Monologue', *PMLA*, 62: 503-76).

hermeneutic theory of emotion' (40). Jose Maria Rodriguez Garcia too defends de Man in 'Literary into Cultural Translation', published in *Diacritics: A Review of Contemporary Criticism,* where he points out that de Man's own students such as Gayatri Spivak and Homi Bhabha went on to make 'urgent claims of postcoloniality' after they had 'eschewed the teasing out of expectations and critical assumptions in de Man's text-focused readings', thus proving that de Man's theories do go 'beyond pure textuality' (18). My thesis echoes Terada's sympathy, specifically in Parts II and III, where I discuss sovereignty and entrapment in Browning's art poems and the Ring poem by deploying de Man's model of reading Proust. Two other critics subtly imply that de Man's theories are not emotionless by exploring texts that deal with the human mind and flesh combination: Christopher Morris' '*Psycho*'s Allegory of Seeing' in *Literature/Film Quarterly* (1996), and Larry Scanlon's 'The Authority of Fable: Allegory and Irony in *The Nun's Priest's Tale*' in *Critical Essays on Geoffrey Chaucer* (1998). Two more critics credit de Man for promoting interest in post-structuralism, with Jim Hansen arguing the case against structuralist writing in 'Formalism and Its Malcontents: Benjamin and de Man on the Function of Allegory' (2004), and Suzanne Knaller's article in *The Germanic Review* (2002) entitled 'A Theory of Allegory beyond Walter Benjamin and Paul de Man'.

Although Herbert Tucker does not mention de Man, I mention his book chapter 'Browning as Escape Artist' in *Browning in Contexts* (1998), edited by John Woolford, because of his observation that the poem 'Fra Lippo Lippi' 'proved a comparatively easy mark for deconstruction' and suggests that some 'contemporary forces got into the Victorian poet when he framed this character' (3). In 1989, David Shaw had already identified Browning as an early 'deconstructionist' in his article 'Browning's Murder Mystery: *The Ring and the Book* and Modern Theory' (*Victorian

Poetry, 27.3-4 [Autumn-Winter 1989]), in which he identified Tertium Quid and Guido as the 'deconstructionists in *The Ring and the Book*' and that in 'interrogating the Old Yellow Book, Browning seems to be writing and reading simultaneously like a Victorian Derrida' (97).

Finally, since my thesis reveals my intent in addressing metaphor and metonymy, I must mention Anne Hiemstra's article 'Browning and History: Synecdoche and Symbolism in *The Ring and the Book*', published in 1985 in *Studies in Browning and His Circle*. Where Hiemstra explores the historical bases of the poem, my thesis attempts to understand structures and processes in the language of poetry through the journey trope, which I will address later in this introduction.

The first of five sections of my introduction thus lays out the field – or map – in which my thesis is situated. The rest of my introductory chapter below is structured into four further sections. In the second section directly after this paragraph, I present my approach, its development and the main thrust of my argument. The third section presents my chosen poems, how they are relevant to my thesis, and the justification of my selection of Robert Browning's poetry. The fourth section presents my choice of literary theories and how they act as theoretical support for my reading of Browning. The fifth and final section will chart the trajectory of my chapters and illustrate the structure of my thesis.

My approach is based on close readings of Browning's poems. As mentioned earlier, I am interested in figural and literal language in his poetry, and to do close readings of any large body of poems, one needs a focus. Thus, I chose to explore metaphor and metonymy specifically. I attempt to open up Browning's poems and to fit his figural and literal expressions into tropes of metaphor and metonymy. My thesis is partly inspired by Andrew DuBois' quotation at the beginning of this chapter, in

which he claims that close reading requires paying sustained attention to texts. Harold Bloom believes that if 'there is a function of criticism at the present time, it must be to address itself to the solitary reader, who reads for herself, and not for the interests that supposedly transcend the self' (*How to Read and Why*, 23) and to do this, one must 'not attempt to improve [one's] neighbour or neighbourhood by what or how [one] reads' (24). My thesis takes Bloom's advice to read for myself, and DuBois' advice on sustaining 'habits of focus and repetitions of thought remembered' into general 'applicable patterns' (*Close Reading*, 2).

My thesis would like to claim on Browning's behalf that much of his work lends itself to a close analytical approach and that a close reading of his poetry reveals structures and processes from which certain theoretical methods may be founded. This is in essence what DuBois is saying, namely that close reading begets method. Thus began my attempt to prove that Browning's poetry foreshadows Paul de Man's efforts to valorize metonymy over metaphor in *Allegories of Reading*. To do this, I used a schema neatly summarized by John William Phillips based on terms popularized by Roman Jakobson and Ferdinand de Saussure, as shown in the table below. These terms fall either on the paradigmatic axis or the syntagmatic axis. I present below the schema that places metaphor and metonymy on two separate axes.

Paradigmatic Axis	Syntagmatic Axis
(Metaphor)	(Metonymy and Synecdoche)
↕	→
System	Process
Structure	Operation
Langue	*Parole*
Selection	Combination
Signifier	Signified
Absent	Present
Similarity	Contiguity

These axes are referred to throughout my thesis. This schema is taken from John Phillips' *Contested Knowledge* (135), and the terms it contains form an integral part of my close reading of Browning's dramatic monologues.

Here, it is important for me to give some background on why I chose the Phillips table above by first addressing Paul Ricoeur and Roman Jakobson. Ricoeur believes that

> No bridge can be laid directly between the Saussurean signified and the extra-linguistic referent; one must detour through discourse and pass through denotation of the sentence in order to arrive at denotation of the word. This detour alone allows one to interrelate the denotative operation at work in metaphor and the predicative operation that gives it the framework of discourse.
>
> (*The Rule of Metaphor: The Creation of Meaning in Language*, 146)

Although I am attracted to Ricoeur's position that there is no space – or 'bridge' – that can link the signified and the referent, I prefer to turn to Jakobson's model of two axes because Jakobson gives equal attention to both metaphor and metonymy. Moreover, because I am interested in de Man's suggestion that metonymy may be the vehicle that gives metaphor power, the Jakobson model is relevant. Furthermore, Jakobson's claim that 'any linguistic sign involves two modes of arrangement,' namely, 'combination' and 'selection' ('Two Aspects of Language and Two Types of Aphasic Disorders', 119), and this is in keeping with my intention to read Browning closely according to de Man's idea of the metaphor-metonymy tension. The scheme that I eventually chose is the table constructed by Phillips above, and I did close readings of Browning's poetry based on that schema. This is what I term a 'metonymical' reading since it is neat and structured and it allows me to explore figures and signs that fall on both axes – or on neither – so that I may attempt to apprehend them.

The choice of this strict and restrictive schema is to ensure that the literal and the figural can be separated neatly. This is important especially during the initial exploration of the physical journeys in Part I. Parts II and III involve poems that are much more complex in that these tropes are more fluid and resist identification and categorization. Although the simple schema that was imperative in Part I produced problems, it opened the way to another reading—the deployment of de Man's relay of tropes. Thus, simplicity in Part I was the necessary trigger that not only weeded out what is straightforward and metonymic but also presented questions of what creates the fluidity between metonymy and metaphor.

Before I address the third part of my introductory chapter with the justification of my choice of poems for close reading, I would like to state my position. My position is that Browning's poems overturn the rules of synecdoche and metonymy by turning them into metaphors through a series of substitutions and displacements, those that de Man refers to as the transfer or relay of tropes. The relay is possible through the *reading* of the poems. During reading, the poems reveal the unreadability – and unwriteability of that reading. Thus, throughout this thesis, close metonymic reading is deployed together with the application of de Man's transfer of tropes to open a space for comprehending Browning's journey as trope and allegory of reading his poetry. This thesis eventually presents the possibility of the journey trope functioning as an allegory of Browning's aesthetic demonstration that metonymy is indeed the driving force behind the power of metaphor. To present this position, this thesis begins with the simplest, most literal of journeys in the initial discussion and thrust by the de Manian 'chance and necessity', is eventually led to apprehending the journey as allegory of reading the dramatic monologues of Robert Browning.

I will now justify my choice of Browning's poems. The dramatic monologues of Robert Browning tend to be long and prosaic. What makes his poetry prosaic is important and even necessary in my thesis because of my intention to find out whether it is metonymy that makes his metaphors more powerful. I chose Robert Browning because his poems are founded on the tension between metaphor and metonymy from which the journeys of reading and writing can be interpreted. The motif of the quest that is commonly featured in nineteenth century writings can be found in the dramatic monologues of Browning in the form of the journey. However, the journey in Browning's poetry cannot be considered a true motif because it does not occur repeatedly throughout his dramatic monologues. Rather, the journey is embedded in his poetry as a trope rather than a motif because it functions both as metaphor and metonymy. The journey as metaphor is important in many of the poems not only because of the evidence of a physical journey but because of the necessary presence of the journey guised in different forms, such as trial, flight and escape. The journey eventually became a trope for my own allegory of reading, though I did not set out with the intention to do this. It is Browning's poetry that allowed the interplay of the literal and the self-reflexive process of the journey in my thesis.

In my attempt to read Browning other than metaphorically, I decided to do what I call a 'metonymic' reading. This is where I deployed my schema, by breaking up the poems, especially journeys in the poems, and separating metaphor from the other tropes. This is to filter out the non-metaphors to be slotted onto the syntagmatic axis. I chose the three poems 'How They Brought the Good News from Ghent to Aix', 'The Pied Piper of Hamelin' and 'Childe Roland to the Dark Tower Came' with the aim of addressing movement in the journeys as well as the movement of the poems. The exploration of the journey poems revealed many agents that resist movement, and

thus my thesis was led to address poems that deal with inertia and stasis. This is why the next group of poems to be addressed are three of Browning's art poems, 'Andrea del Sarto', 'My Last Duchess' and 'Fra Lippo Lippi'. I chose art because art is generally believed to be able to stop time and movement. The close readings of the journey and art poems then set the platform for the discussion of *The Ring and the Book*, which contains many references to journeys and art.

My choice of methodology is a close reading deploying a modified version of Paul de Man's model of his reading of Proust in *Allegories of Reading*. As mentioned earlier, my initial method was to separate images and agents in Browning's poetry into paradigmatic and syntagmatic axes using the Jakobson schema as tabulated by Phillips, so as to do very close reading. I found this to be appropriate since in *Close Reading*, amongst the many proponents of close reading, Andrew DuBois specifically identifies Paul de Man as one who understands its importance deeply, though he admits that de Man is 'not exactly the great defender of this practice' (*Close Reading* 2). Since it was DuBois who first inspired me to embark on reading closely, it is almost fortuitous that he mentions de Man. Thus, my thesis was led by such incidents. I would like to say that Robert Browning pays close attention to acts of reading and repeatedly produces poetry that foregrounds close attention to reading. Because of this, my schema and my modified de Man model worked fairly well in the initial chapters of my thesis. Problems, or perhaps, opportunities began to appear in the final section, Part III, when Browning's later poem, *The Ring and the Book* was discussed.

Before I begin a short discussion of de Man, let me first address my own ideas on some of the terms he uses frequently in *Allegories of Reading*. Paul de Man believes that the 'task of literary criticism' is to challenge the general belief that there is an 'intrinsic, metaphysical superiority of metaphor over metonymy' (16). De Man,

after reading Proust, encourages modifications of his model to be applied to close readings of any other text, such as Milton, Dante or Hölderlin. In the same paragraph, de Man also mentions the average reader 'caught in naïve metaphorical mystification', and this is where my thesis addresses the tendency to read Browning's dramatic monologues metaphorically rather than to explore the metonymic processes latent in his poetry. De Man also admits that metaphors 'are much more tenacious than facts' (5), though he does not specifically suggest that metaphors are more tenacious than metonymy. This is where my thesis attempts to explore the power and strength of metonymy and the syntagmatic axis in moving the journey and the poem. De Man is also aware of the 'seduction of the metaphor' (71), and this is also relevant in Part II of my thesis, in which the discussion of Browning's art poems will address the insidious role of the seductive metaphor in relation to entrapment and sovereignty. This is why de Man's reading of Proust in his chapter 'Reading Proust' in *Allegories of Reading* provides the main methodology for my close reading of Browning. It is not – and cannot be – the exact model, but a modification of his model to suit particular novels or poems, as encouraged by de Man himself. His method explores how inside and outside properties such as metaphors of heat and coolness are separated but can be associated with action and repose/stasis through metonymy (65-67). My modified version borrows the outside/inside association by addressing stasis in the journey trope and how stasis is brought about by entrapment and enclosure.

De Man is appropriate to my thesis because, while there have been many critics who discuss Browning's metaphors, few have addressed metonymy or the prosaic style of his poetry. There are also discussions of metaphor and metonymy such as those by Ricoeur and Jakobson. However, it is de Man who questions the attention metaphor receives in literary texts, though he does this in only one chapter

of one book – his Proust chapter in *Allegories of Reading*. My thesis therefore alludes heavily to de Man's Proust chapter because it is this chapter that addresses the role of metonymy in a literary text most closely in *AR*. Moreover, few, if any, critical readings have been published on literature and metonymy other than de Man's very detailed reading of Proust. Of his four chosen authors, Rilke, Nietzsche, Rousseau and Proust, it is Proust who writes in the most lyrical style, and this is why de Man chose to find the elusive metonymy that he claims plays the dominant role in the tension between metaphor and metonymy. Furthermore, it is the Proust chapter that also deals with enclosure, and this is keeping with my thesis of addressing journey as allegory of reading where Parts II and II of my thesis grapple with stasis and inertia through entrapment and enclosure. However, I must repeat that this does not mean that I ignore the other parts of *AR* – de Man's discussion of Rilke and Rousseau are also relevant in my reading of Browning, and they are mentioned in the body of my thesis too: Rilke is relevant to Part II of my thesis, in which I address art and what de Man terms 'subject/object polarity' (*AR*, 35), while Rousseau's stolen ribbon from Marion supports my reading of *The Ring and the Book*.

I must again reiterate the importance of de Man's Proust chapter in my thesis—not only because metonymy is in the foreground but because it is also relevant to the basis of my reading, namely, that my reading of journey in Browning's poem is an allegory of reading. I now mention two de Man scholars who support my assumption that de Man is generally more interested in metaphor than in metonymy, other than in the Proust chapter. J. Hillis Miller supports my statement when he says that de Man addresses 'metaphor in Nietzsche and in Rousseau, and […] reading in Proust' ('"Reading" Part of a Paragraph in *Allegories of Reading*', 157). Martin McQuillan believes that de Man asserts that 'it is difficult to maintain fixed

boundaries between different kinds of rhetorical tropes' and that at best 'the transition from one rhetorical figure to another is fluid' (*Paul de Man*, 17). McQuillan refers to de Man's 'reversal of the figural order' through chiasmus (*AR*, 37) where de Man plays with the literal and the figural when he discusses Rilke's poem in relation to the violin and its body. De Man does not mention metonymy nor synecdoche, saving metonymy for the Proust chapter. In my metonymical reading of Browning, I attempt to find spaces in the transitions between metaphor and metonymy by using the journey as my dominant trope, those spaces which McQuillan identifies as 'fluid'. This is addressed in Chapter Twelve, in which I mention the possibility of The Ring as the 'purest' metaphor for his art. However, the Browning narrator himself uses the word 'alloy' in Books I and XII when referring to the creation of the Ring metaphor, foregrounding his own resistance to the concept of a 'pure' and unalloyed metaphor.

I now address the fifth and final part of my introductory chapter, summarizing the order of my chapters. The structure of my thesis is divided into three parts, and these three parts are divided into smaller chapters, with each chapter devoted to the close reading of one dramatic monologue. Part I features three journey poems, Part II features poems on art and part III discusses seven books out of the twelve from *The Ring and the Book*. I will discuss Chapter Two from Part I in great detail because this chapter is the springboard from which the later chapters develop.

Part I Chapter Two examines the poem 'How They Brought the Good News from Ghent to Aix' because this is the simplest poem and the one with the shortest, fastest and most urgent of Browning's journeys. This chapter explores the relationship amongst the three domains: journey and interruptions, metaphor and metonymy, and the acts of reading and writing. It discusses how the unfolding of the poem mirrors acts of reading and writing. This poem was also selected because it is filled with

concrete images, and this leaves little space for obscurity of imagery. This chapter strips the poem by dividing it into lexical groups that can be defined as metaphorical or metonymic because they occupy the fields of the two binary axes of the paradigmatic and the syntagmatic. The chapter ends with a realization that journeys cannot exist without accidents. The Ghent journey is metonymic, and its accidents are in a sense metonymic too. Accidents prevent the movement of journeys, thus foregrounding the presence of stasis and inertia, although in some contexts, accidents may facilitate journeys. This chapter further discovers that the unfolding of the Ghent poem depends on temporality and utterance because the journey of the poem cannot be apprehended without taking into consideration the voice that utters the monologue. The Ghent poem has no choice but to move in the trajectory that it does, and this implies that Browning may not really have full control over that trajectory, though the completed poem itself does give the impression of speech that has a natural flow. Part I Chapter Two thus posits that the poem has a natural flow *despite* the deployment of unnatural artifices and that the relationship of the poem and the poet almost always depends on the struggle between metaphor and metonymy. Where reading and comprehending is paradigmatic, writing remains on the syntagmatic axis and is therefore metonymic. Therefore, very early in the thesis, in Chapter Two, the close reading of the Ghent poem reveals the impossibility of writing one's reading. The dramatic monologue cannot be apprehended or realized at the point of writing. Therefore, there may be such a concept as 'unwriteability', which echoes de Man's theory of unreadability.

The next chapter, Part I Chapter Three, opens up another journey poem, 'The Pied Piper of Hamelin', which recounts two similar and consecutive journeys, the journey of the rats into the river and that of the children into the bowels of the

mountain. The exploration of this poem reveals that the poem remains inexorably metonymic throughout, and this is found mainly in the two journeys, in which almost every step of the journey is stubbornly metonymic. This chapter also addresses paradigmatic and syntagmatic axes in relation to metaphor and metonymy. The voice as utterance is a bigger feature in this poem than in the Ghent poem, and this is due to the monologue within the monologue which is featured once during each journey. The journey of the rats sees a sole surviving rat which escapes drowning and lives to tell its tale. The journey of the children sees a lame child who, because of his disability is left behind, and thus also survives to retell the journey. Further evidence of privilege given to voice and utterance are seen when the persona utters concern and anxiety when describing the reactions of the citizens as they helplessly watch the children run after the piper. This is significant because first, the persona is hardly capable of articulating the desperation of the citizens, nor can he articulate the wonder of the piper's music. Browning leaves the articulation to the surviving rat and the lame child. Second, although the two journeys are uninterrupted, there is already a foreshadowing of the themes of stasis and of entrapment which are featured in later poems such as the art poems and *The Ring and the Book*. In the closing paragraphs, this chapter refers to Franz Kafka because of his observation that every journey is fraught with the possibility of accidents. The journeys in 'The Pied Piper' do not record any accidents and therefore the trajectory of the journeys is inexorable. However, the forward movement is sustained through the workings of metonymy. This chapter concludes by confirming the unwriteability of the voice by the presence of stasis and inertia. The conclusion opens up a space for discussing 'Childe Roland to the Dark Tower Came' in relation to stasis and inertia, which are themes that run through Parts II and III.

Part I Chapter Four presents various critics who read the Roland poem metaphorically. Harold Bloom himself does this implicitly when he refers to Roland's journey as an 'ordeal' and a 'trial' (*A Map of Misreading*, 106 and 108). However, Browning himself, when questioned, declared that the poem had 'no allegorical intention' (quoted in DeVane, 229). Yet, Bloom suggests that the Roland poem contains powerful metaphors. These metaphors are discussed in this chapter alongside the presence of metonymic processes latent in the poem. This chapter also discovers how movement is prevented during journeys, that is, mainly through metaphor. This is seen in the images of deadness, stasis and inertia, through which the poem opens up spaces for synecdoche and metonymy to exist but disallows them from sustaining and flourishing. This final chapter in Part I is important because it is this poem that introduces stasis and inertia in journeys and also paves the way for the discussion of entrapment and sovereignty in Part II.

Part II contains three chapters that discuss Browning's three art poems: 'Andrea del Sarto', 'My Last Duchess' and 'Fra Lippo Lippi'. Stasis and entrapment, which prevent forward movement, are discussed in this Part. The three poems featured contain sustained images of inertia, entrapment and stasis. 'Andrea del Sarto' is discussed first because it is the earliest of the three poems, and the other two echo these very same images. In the Andrea poem, there is a 'hand-in-hand' imagery that extends to other concrete images which point to entrapment and enclosure, such as the cloth, the frame and the window. The cloth, which Andrea's own family name 'del Sarto' represents, plays different roles and has different meanings in the other two poems. In the Duchess poem, it is deployed by the duke to stamp his sovereignty, and in the Lippi poem, as a tool for flight and freedom. The enclosure is an important

figure in my thesis because it is in keeping with de Man's idea of the inside/outside tension that exists when there is an interplay of tropes.

The Duchess poem is placed at the heart of my thesis, a position which is identical to that of the duchess, namely, trapped in a frame. While exploring this poem, my thesis was led to call upon ideas from Emmanuel Levinas' 'Reality and its Shadow', James Heffernan's 'The Museum of Words' and Leon Battista Alberti's *On Painting*. Because Andrea del Sarto and Father Lippi are historical figures, the work of Giorgio Vasari is discussed alongside the poems. However, this is not done to address biographical authenticity but to explore the significance of Browning's embellishments. Emmanuel Levinas' theory on verisimilitude in 'Reality and its Shadow' is also significant in Part II of this thesis because of the art poems discussed in that section. Levinas believes that 'reality', what Ferdinand de Saussure refers to as the 'referent', is never static, and when an artwork is commissioned and realized, the likeness, or verisimilitude, is apparent not because of the Saussurean referent but because of its likeness, or its 'shadow'. According to Levinas, it is this 'shadow' that is permanent in the memory and therefore manifests in the reproduction of verisimilitude in any particular work of art. However, the most significant part of my thesis is that Levinas believes that the characters in an artwork are forever 'suspended' and have no 'future and they are destined to live forever in a world of repetition ('Reality and Its Shadow', 141). This is discussed alongside my choice of art poems and the Ring poem.

The discussion of Levinas in turn led my thesis to James Heffernan's thoughts on 'My Last Duchess' and ekphrasis. Essays on painting by John Ruskin and Leon Battista Alberti were also called upon, and as mentioned earlier, Giorgio Vasari features a good deal in Part II because my thesis addresses truth told obliquely in art.

As Browning tends to embellish the lives of Andrea del Sarto and Father Lippo Lippi, Vasari is called upon so that I may examine the extent of Browning's embellishment of truth. It is only after writing Part II that I found that the combination of the structuralist schema and the post-structuralist de Manian theory of unreadability worked well in that it encouraged symbiotic readings. I was then led to look into yet other methods, including the historical and the biographical, as seen in the Alberti and the Vasari accounts.

Part III is devoted to discussing seven monologues from *The Ring and the Book,* and it is divided into four chapters. The initial two chapters address entrapment and enclosure. Chapter Eight discusses how entrapment and enclosure are insidious in their roles of foregrounding sovereignty, while Chapter Nine discusses enclosure as a means of security and eventual escape and flight. The discussion of journey as flight then returns to the figure of the journey as metaphor and metonymy in Chapter Ten. The final chapter of Part III, Chapter Eleven addresses Browning's own journey on several levels: his physical journey to Italy to chance upon the 'old yellow book', the journeys of Guido, Caponsacchi and Pompilia in the Ring poem and Browning's journey as allegory in his dramatic monologues. Browning's journey is the most significant one of the three in my thesis because in reading Browning, my thesis is able to chart the trajectory from metonymy to metaphor. The concluding chapter follows after Chapter Eleven.

The structure of my thesis was not conceived before the writing of the thesis. It came into being during my close reading of Browning's dramatic monologues. Each chapter unfolded, or revealed itself after the previous chapter was written. This means that my own method of reading, which began in the first chapter by reading the Ghent poem metonymically instead of literally or metaphorically, opened up a situation in

which the writing of the chapter succeeding it came naturally or automatically after the first chapter was written. This decision is itself metonymic, and it is in keeping with the trajectory of the kind of journey that Browning's three journey poems are forced to follow. Although it seems that this thesis is structured around chance, it may actually be intrinsically embedded in Browning's poetry. I mean to say that the element that allows chance to come into play is embedded in his poetry. This is similar to Derrida's 'My Chances/*Mes Chances*: A Rendez-vous with Some Epicurean Stereophonies', in which he suggests that it is possible that his choice of title was 'imposed' (1) upon him and that whatever free will he had in the choice is an 'illusion'. In his preface to *AR*, de Man too speaks of chance when he outlines the structure of his chapters, where he claims that his choice of Proust and Rilke as examples is 'partly due to chance' (*AR*, ix).

> The choice of Proust and of Rilke as examples is partly due to chance, but since the ostensible pathos of their tone and depth of their statement make them particularly resistance to a reading that is no longer entirely thematic, one could argue that if *their* work yields to such a rhetorical scheme, the same would necessarily be true for writers whose rhetorical strategies are less hidden behind the seductive powers of identification.
>
> (*Allegories of Reading*, ix)

Similarly, my metonymic reading of the journey poems in Part I of my thesis enforced my choices for Part II, which consists of Browning's art poems. Part III of my thesis is devoted to *The Ring and the Book,* and this in turn was realized only after my reading of the art poems in Part II. This is the reason why the three Parts do not stand independently as three connected themes under one umbrella but are parts that develop from the one before. This is also why, though the Ghent and the Roland poems are discussed very closely in Part I, they still remain important features in Part

III, in which the Ring poem is being discussed. Each chapter unfolded only after the previous chapter was completed. My reading of the poems also reveals that Browning's poetry unfolds in the fashion that Derrida suggests and that choice is 'imposed' in a way that makes free will an 'illusion'. The movement of the poems takes on a trajectory that is so fluid that we acknowledge Browning's poetic genius. However, an application of my modification to de Man's method reveals that Browning probably had no choice but to develop the poems into what they eventually became.

Part I

The Journey Poems: Movement and Stasis

Chapter Two

‘How They Brought the Good News from Ghent to Aix’

Chapter Three

‘The Pied Piper of Hamelin’

Chapter Four

‘Childe Roland to the Dark Tower Came’

Part I, Chapter Two

'How They Brought the Good News from Ghent to Aix'

> Metaphors are much more tenacious than facts, and I certainly don't expect to dislodge this age-old model in one short try.
>
> (Paul de Man, *Allegories of Reading*, 5)

The poem 'How They brought the Good News from Ghent to Aix' is an early poem, and it is also a simple poem. I have chosen to read it first because of this very simplicity. The whole poem is about one journey by three horsemen and it is told by the sole survivor. Before I begin, it must be mentioned that the poem is associated with another kind of journey, the one that Browning himself undertakes. In *The Dramatic Imagination of Robert Browning: A Literary Life*, Richard Kennedy and Donald Hair observe that this poem was written while Browning was on a journey from Sicily to Naples (32, 104). Perhaps it is by chance that Browning had decided to compose a journey poem while on a journey. It is also appropriate to begin my thesis with this poem as it addresses both the paradigmatic and syntagmatic axes in that the dramatic monologue form is about both *langue* and *parole*. Yopie Prins observes that when Browning was first invited to record a poem on Edison's new invention, he chose to recite this poem ('Voice Inverse', 49). Prins also notes that Browning forgets some of the words, so instead of the watchman crying out 'good speed' with the wall echoing 'speed', Browning 'attributes a speaking voice to the wall: "Speed! Cried the wall …"' (49). Because of his accidental mistake, the Ghent poem is now associated twice with metonymy, chance and accident. Furthermore, the poem is burdened with a problem that did not exist at the time it was written. Through his accidental removal

of certain words and *not* uttering certain words, Browning presents other meanings in the poem. Browning's accident in leaving out some words fragments the meaning. Accidents and fragmentation are metonymic, and these also change the effect of the poem. The journey becomes more sinister and urgent when the guard is taken out of the poem and instead, the wall wishes the riders '[god] speed!' In several of his short stories (which will be discussed later in this chapter), Kafka observes that accidents and interruptions inevitably happen during journeys. Interruptions are metonymic but they can also be metaphorized. This chapter thus explores the relationship amongst these groups: journeys and interruptions, metaphor and metonymy, and acts of reading and of writing.

The methodology I am deploying in this chapter is two-fold. The first component is based on a modification of Paul de Man's reading of Proust in *Allegories of Reading: Figural Language in Rousseau, Nietzsche, Rilke and Proust* (*AR)*, in which he discusses the interplay of metaphor and metonymy. In his chapter 'Semiology and Rhetoric', de Man points out that although the text privileges metaphor over metonymy, it undermines its own assertion by proving that metaphor is superior to metonymy with a series of metonymic structures (*AR*, 14-15). De Man believes that after his reading of Proust, 'we can no longer believe the assertion made in the [Proust] passage about the intrinsic, metaphysical superiority of metaphor over metonymy [and] there is absolutely no reason why analyses of the kind suggested here for Proust would not be applicable, with proper modifications of technique to Milton or to Dante or to Hölderlin. This will in fact be the task of literary criticism in the coming years' (16-17). In *Ends of the Lyric* Timothy Bahti observes that literature 'is made up of tropes' and suggests rather harshly that 'anyone who resists this knowledge should not be in the business of professionally reading literature'. Bahti

cites de Man as one of 'the most influential readers of poetry [to] have taken it as a given' (11).

With some modifications, a similar reading of Browning is attractive because there is a critical tendency to either read his poetry too literally or to over-metaphorize his poems. Earlier critics tend to read his poems too literally and dismiss his metaphors as 'trash, of the worst description, and unreadable' (*Robert Browning, The Critical Heritage*, 6). On the other hand, later critics tend to over-metaphorize his poetry, and 'more and more frequently there appear[ed] references to the poet's originality, his bold imagery and his resourceful imagination' (8). It is generally admitted that Browning's imagery is obscure and difficult. However, we tend to overlook the fact that many of his poems deal with simple, concrete images. One such poem is 'How They Brought the Good News from Ghent to Aix', in which the long journey from Ghent to Aix is described in specific concrete details. This poem is the first to be discussed here so as to allow me to use it as a springboard for the analyses of other poems in Part I of my thesis.

There are few metaphors in this poem, and even this simplest of Browning poems can be over-metaphorized, as seen in my own attempt to read journeys in Browning's poems as an allegory for reading and writing. Since de Man believes that 'a vast thematic and semiotic network is revealed that structures the entire narrative that remain[s] invisible to a reader caught in naïve metaphorical mystification' (16), it is possible that it is readers such as myself who tend to mystify metaphors in Browning's poetry.

I now begin my reading of the Ghent poem using my schema as tabulated by John Phillips (*Contested Knowledge*, 135) and based on the Jakobson model, as discussed in my introductory chapter. First, I break the poem up into small groups that

may be identified as lexical fields. There are about a dozen references to the natural environment, including midnight, moonset, twilight, star, morning, sun, mist, haze, river, cloud and sky. Half of these are not concrete and physical and therefore can only be comprehended as concepts. Another group consists of concrete, man-made constructions such as gate bolts, wall, postern, church-steeple, dome-spire, buffcoat, holster, jack-boots and belt. A third group consists of verbs, and although these do not strictly constitute imagery, they can be placed in a loosely-termed lexical field of 'movement'. This lexical field is itself divided into two types of movement. There is positive, forward movement and regression leading to stasis and inertia. The verbs that belong to positive, forward movement are: gallop (mentioned four times), stride, pace, turned, rebuckled, leaped, (ears) pricked out, butting, shook upwards, heave, flocking and poured. The verbs that manifest stasis and/or regression are: undress, echoed, sank (mentioned twice), sunk, shortened, stood (three mentions), bent back, chained, slack, heave, cast loose, fall, shook off and let go. The fourth and largest group consists of anatomical parts of the horse. This group is unified by a metonymic structure and is therefore syntagmatic, much like the second group of man-made constructions. The first and third groups, on the other hand, follow the paradigmatic axis. The first group contains images of natural environment, more than half of which are intangible and can only remain as concepts. They can never materialize or be made concrete, and they include 'morning' and 'sky'. They have dual functions too. On the one hand, they can all be comprehended literally, functioning as signifiers pointing to designated concepts. On the other hand, they can all also function purely as metaphors. The third group of verbs is placed on the paradigmatic axis because they are not unified by contiguous means. For example, the horse cannot stride and

stand at the same moment: it either strides or it stands. The properties of this lexical field are unified by means of substitution.

Referring to de Man's suggestion that the power of metaphor is supported by metonymy, I investigate both stances—the metonymy over metaphor preference, and the metaphor over metonymy preference. If metonymy is to be privileged, one has to look at the context of the poem and the meanings in it. In my reading of 'Ghent', I identified images of natural environment. These function as signposts along the riders' journey. The objective of the ride is to carry the news, at all costs, to Aix, so the speaker in the poem is concerned with his horse and its health and fitness. Metaphors therefore play a secondary role in this journey as they only inform the reader of the time and distance that have elapsed. It is a system of signs (or signposts) that measures distance with time and time with distance. Time and distance on their own are meaningless without the context in which they are placed. For example, if we were to remove all the verses that refer to the suffering of the horses, then the lines 'Past Looz and past Tongres, no cloud in the sky / The broad sun above laughed a pitiless laugh' (39) give the effect of stillness and lethargy. The vehicle for movement and urgency comes from the previous stanza, in which there are three lines that describe the mare Roos' last few steps:

> Of her chest, saw the stretched neck and staggering knees,
> And sunk tail, and horrible heave of the flank,
> As down her haunches she shuddered and sank.
>
> (ll. 34-36)

The mare comes to a standstill and her journey is over, but the other riders carry on. Only when they pass Looz and Tongres under the 'pitiless' sun do we comprehend the urgency of the ride. In this reading of metonymy being superior, it is the concentration and intensity placed on the horses' various anatomical parts that supports the poem and gives significance to the journey. This intensity is seen in the graphic descriptions

through the use of verbs, which are placed in the paradigmatic, metaphorical system discussed earlier. This is where the scales are tipped in favour of the metaphor as the verbs are what supports the important position of the metonymic group of body parts in the poem. However, the scales are tipped back into equilibrium if we take into account the fourth lexical field, the group that consists of metonyms of human-constructed structures, such as the jack-boots and the dome-spire.

On the other hand, in the metaphor-as-preferred position, the symbols of natural environment we see in the previous paragraphs must all be seen as metaphors rather than abstract signifieds and mere signposts. Metaphorizing them produces a different effect on both poem and reader and thus, my reading too. An example is that of the sun, which in Stanza IV may be read literally as the morning sun itself.

> At Aershot, up leaped of a sudden the sun,
> And against him the cattle stood black everyone,
> To stare thro' the mist at us galloping past,
> And I saw my stout galloper Roland at last.
>
> (ll. 19-22)

The speaker tells us that there is a 'mist' and only when the 'sun' shone suddenly is he able to see his horse. It is some distance from the beginning of his journey before he is able to see, which must means that he began the journey *not* seeing, making him blind to the road and its path. The sun here plays a dual role in that first, it allows the rider to see the horse and the path. Second, in an allegorical reading of the journey as an act of reading, it is here that the speaker as reader begins to comprehend the poem. The notion of the sun as a source of illumination is not new. Its contribution to illumination whilst in the act of reading is already suggested by Paul de Man in *Allegories of Reading*. In reading Proust's *Du Côté de chez Swann,* de Man suggests that although Marcel reads, actual discourse is not allowed to begin because he stays in his room away from the sun. '[O]nly when he has been sent into the garden will the

principal and very systematically structured discourse on reading be allowed to develop' (*AR*, 58-59).

When the symbols of natural environment are comprehended metaphorically, the metonyms that make up the horse's anatomy begin to recede in the shade and into darkness because it is only when the sun rises and the haze is lifted that the suffering and heroism of the horses become apparent. Where the suffering of the horses aids the urgency and movement in the metonym-preferred argument, its presence in the poem now puts the brakes on the flying signposts and thus the movement of the horses. The paradigmatic group of verbs still fulfills the role of moving the journey and the reading however, because there are two kinds of verbs, the motions of forward movement and that of stasis/regression, the journey is rendered uneven. The horses move forward with such verbs as 'gallop' and 'butt', but many more verbs have connotations of stalling and stopping, such as 'sunk', 'fall' and 'heave'. Eventually with the help of these verbs, the journey is completed, with the horse standing still. On the other hand, the metonymic group of man-made constructs also belongs to the lexical field that contains the heroic qualities of strength and courage, such as 'holster' and 'church-steeple'. Stefan Hawlin observes that the poem is not only 'passionate, positive and heroic' but 'celebratory' (*Robert Browning*, 66) as well, and thus the role of these 'heroic qualities' in the poem is important especially when we take into account that these are the very qualities that help take the rider and the horse to Aix. Amongst these four lexical groups then, no one group is more important than the other as they all play supporting roles to each other in the attempt to complete the journey. The weighing scales that carry metaphor and metonymy on either side are now back in equilibrium.

The problem of the question as to whether metonymy or metaphor is preferred is brought about by the semantic structures intrinsic to the poem. This problem is also highlighted because of the relative absence of metaphors, especially that of difficult and obscure metaphors. The poem is not difficult to understand because its literal meaning is quite transparent. This means that one cannot be mistaken that 'Ghent' is a story about a rider's journey across the miles to bring a very important piece of good news. Meanings are comprehended based on context and since context belongs to the same syntagmatic group as metonyms, an attempt to read the poem metonymically may be justified.

The motif of the journey or the quest is common in nineteenth century literature, and although this is not as apparent in nineteenth century poetry, the dramatic monologues and the acts of speaking and telling allow the speakers to embark on quests. Very superficially, the quest is about telling one's story, as in 'Ghent', in which the speaker tells us of his mission to carry the news. Similarly, although the duke in 'My Last Duchess' does not undertake a physical journey, he also has a quest, or a motive. Although the journeys in Browning's dramatic monologues are not always physical, but the journey in 'Ghent' clearly is, and this is where it is easy to see that the Ghent journey moves on a syntagmatic axis. The title of the poem itself announces its position on the syntagmatic axis with its very first word 'How', and this reminds the reader of a school essay which deploys the pattern of rhetorical development known as 'process analysis'. A process analysis essay depends on metonymy because all its paragraphs must link to each other or it will not be a 'process'. The subject matter of the Ghent poem, however, reveals that this is not a high school essay practice in process-analysis writing but that it could possibly be seen as a kind of short story. There is a sense of excitement in the content of the title

mainly because of the place names ‘Ghent’ and ‘Aix’, which are relatively unknown to most readers[5]. A good guess would be that they could possibly be provincial towns in Europe. The association with Europe also gives the reader a sense of excitement, especially if one knows that Browning wrote the poem in the nineteenth century. This means that Ghent and Aix are not only provincial but also that the story told is set in a time when there was probably a lot of darkness and trouble and the ‘good news’ that ‘they’ are bringing must be of great significance for the story to be told through a poem[6]. The title therefore promises a process, and since process belongs to the syntagmatic axis, which in turn promises coherence and therefore, it promises meaning. The place names of the provincial towns not only invoke a sense of excitement. The towns themselves are in a sense metonyms because they are parts that belong to a country. They can be seen as metonymic also because the linearity of the journey forces these towns to be linked to one another in a chain. The movement of the journey is itself supported by the combination of two syntagmatic properties, temporality and speech, and the combination itself works syntagmatically. This process now begins to resemble a chain of causes and effects. Since the voice of the poem chooses to underline the urgency of the story, it is compelled to choose a chronological sequence of narration. This seems the sensible thing to do. However, the poem’s burden[7] is in presenting a convincing case of the urgency in the very long

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[5] Adam Roberts believes that according to Browning, there is no specific or historical occasion behind the poem (*Robert Browning, The Major Works*, 746). Woolford and Karlin agree and add that Browning was not necessarily correct in the place names and the position of the towns mentioned on this particular route. Furthermore, they point out that when Browning adopted or modified some of the forms of the place names to suit the rhythm of the poem, he was ‘cavalier about linguistic consistency’ (*The Poems of Robert Browning*, 240-241).

[6] Adam Roberts suggests that ‘the route mapped out is not exactly practicable, but the emphasis is more on the immediacy of the ride than any [other] precise details' (*Robert Browning, The Major Works*, 747).

[7] The idea that a poem is able to ‘bear a burden’ comes from de Man’s observation of the burden of Proust’s text in ‘reassur[ing] Marcel about his flight away from the “real” activity of the outside world’ (*AR*, 64).

journey without having to stretch the poem into an epic. It must tell its story in a few stanzas without which the sense of urgency is lost. If the poem is short and swift, there is the possibility of losing the sense of distance by compromising temporality. If the poem is too long, the urgency is diluted. The poem's speaker, or perhaps Browning himself, chooses to foreground urgency[8]. He then has to find ways to illustrate the vast distances and spaces that are involved in the journey. All these circumstances form the basis of the unraveling of the poem, or the trajectory (forward movement) of the poem. This means that even before the speaker begins his story, the process is set almost solidly and the trajectory of the events has no choice but to follow the sequence that the poem has established before the speaker has even begun to utter the first sentence.

This 'metonymic' reading has so far revealed that instead of using properties on the paradigmatic axis as structures, those on the syntagmatic axis are deployed. This reading also demonstrates that the journey in the poem and the unraveling of the poem are now dependent on temporality and utterance working together. The voice is dependent on the passing of time to give urgency to the news. How time passes in the poem is supported by the riders passing the towns, which can be seen as properties in a metonymic operation. However, the genuine movement of the journey, which gives importance to the urgency, really comes from two important components of time, that of time passing inexorably and of accidents that happen along the way while time is passing. The journey and the poem are now in states of stasis and cannot move until they deploy a relay of systems that include the two lexical groups that belong to the paradigmatic axis – those qualities that belong to the lexical field of natural

[8] Browning himself admitted in a letter to that 'attention was meant to be concentrated' on the journey, and he described the ride as a 'tolerably big spider-web of a story' (*Times Literary Supplement*, 8 Feb. 1952, p. 109).

environment and verbs that describe incidents or accidents. The properties in the group of natural environment have qualities that are mostly intangible, including haze, cloud and sun and some are even physically absent, such as morning, twilight and midnight. The verbs are definitely intangible and physically absent. The movement of the journey, and the poem, even if the movement is forward, is itself intangible, and without the support of these absent qualities, journey and poem face the prospect of being absent themselves.

Let me now examine more closely the roles of these two groups. The signifiers in the natural environment illustrate temporal movement. The poem is forced to look to them to signify the passage of time. The arrangement of twilight, moonset and sunrise are a 'given'. One does not have the choice of rearranging this as one wishes because time simply passes in the way it does. For example, it cannot be in the following order: noon-midnight-dusk-sunrise. The incidents that happen to the riders and the horses are then events that happen because time is passing. In 'Ghent', because of the urgency of the news, the horses cannot stop to rest or drink, and because of this, accidents happen. One may suggest that if the horses were 'bionic' they would not need rest and drink, but then the urgency of the news would be diluted because of the lack of danger. In short, the poem has no choice but to move in the way it does.

Ghent' is a simple poem. Its lines are naturally arranged and its aural rhythm is in keeping with the meanings that the poem means to underline. However, the conclusion that 'Ghent' is simple is because of the choices that the voice decides at the start of the poem[9]. The passing of time is syntagmatic and so is the cause-and-

[9] Robert Langbaum foregrounds the voice in dramatic monologues and encourages readings that more than simply 'describe the handful of Browning and Tennyson poems' used as 'models' (*The Poetry of Experience*, 76).

effect nature of the accidents that happen to the horses. These accidents belong to a single chain of events, and this chain would not have existed if not for the journey. The frustration, or the burden of the poem, is in maintaining a natural flow in verse which cannot be done without the support of a pre-arranged body of constructed rules. The natural flow of the speech, much like the journey it articulates, depends on the arrangement of these rules, which on the surface seem natural. However, from a sociolinguistic point of view, even this pre-arranged body of constructed rules evolves over time and use. Since the rules are set diachronically, then, as mentioned earlier, the future of the poem is already set even before the first utterance. Ironically, the writing appears natural because of the deployment of unnatural and unwriteable artifices.

This does not mean that Browning deliberately set aside four lexical groups within which he placed his various images and ideas. This is how the poem neatly refuses to privilege metaphor or metonymy and yet still allows one to be preferred over the other without bias. Whether the poet thinks of poetic structures is unquestionable. What is beyond his control is the option that his speaker has chosen to foreground in the poem. This option in 'Ghent' is the urgency of carrying the news in the shortest time over the longest distance. With this choice, the poem has no other path but to follow the journey it does. The choice determines the writing, and once that is determined, there is no choice for the writing but to follow a trajectory that is beyond the choice of writing itself. So as Yeats asks, how we can tell 'the dancer from the dance'[10] (*The Variorum Edition of the Poems of W. B. Yeats*, 446), here we are asked who writes the text, the poet or the poem?

[10] The concluding line is from the poem 'Among School Children'.

Browning's letter in reply to Ruskin may provide a clue as to how Browning admits that he feels a loss of control as to how to direct the poem:

> I *know* that I don't make out my conception by my language, all poetry being a putting in infinite within the finite. You would have me paint it all plain out, which can't be; but by various artifices I try to make a shift with touches and bits of outlines which *succeed* if they bear the conception from me to you.
>
> (quoted in *Robert Browning, The Critical Heritage*, 15)

Ruskin expects poetry to be 'all plain', which points to the lack of symbols. As mentioned earlier, Browning's contemporaries tended to want to read his poems too literally. The fact that Browning tells Ruskin that he (Ruskin) 'would have [Browning] paint it all plain out' shows Browning's resistance to an over-literal interpretation, especially when he uses the word 'paint'. The word 'paint' certainly does not agree with 'plain' since painting deploys the use of symbols, and Browning intends to continue with his style of writing by making shifts and touches with his 'various artifices'. Browning understands the 'unwriteability' of poetry, which is why he defers to the structures and relays of systems that govern the shape of his poetry. Like the speaker-rider in 'Ghent', Browning's 'shifts' and 'touches' can be seen as 'accidents' that happen during the journey. Ironically, although these shifts and touches appear conscious, they are actually accidents that occur because the system forces them to happen. When Browning says that his efforts succeed if his 'outlines' bear the conception from him to the reader, he is already aware of the existence of readers far in the future, and he admonishes Ruskin for avoiding the possibility of the effect on readers in general. Browning says that he 'cannot begin writing poetry till [his] imaginary reader has conceded licences to [him], which [Ruskin] demur[s] at altogether' (14-15). Browning is therefore willing to give way to language in order to

make meaning, although meaning has already been conceptualized in his consciousness long before he begins to write. Browning's reference to the imaginary reader illustrates his trust in the reader. But a more important message is that he has an instinctive trust that his readers will allow him to trust the choices he is about to make. Browning is quite willing to trust the structures, syntax and language that he has no control over in his quest to transfer his ideas from concept to poem. Browning is not unlike Rilke, who as de Man observes, 'often played on the ambiguity of a double-faced relationship towards others, leaving in abeyance which of the two, the poet or his reader, depended in which to nourish his strength' (*AR*, 20). However, there are other relationships that exist too, such as that of poet and poem, and poem and reader. These relationships are built on structures that are preconceived, as mentioned earlier.

This is an intended modified application of de Man's technique of what he calls differentiating between 'the rhetorization of grammar and the grammatization of rhetoric' (16). According to de Man, '[e]verything orients the trope[s] towards the seduction of the metaphor [; however,] as soon as one follow Proust's own injunction to submit the reading to the polarity of truth and error (a gesture that can be repressed but never prevented), statements or strategies that tended to remain unnoticed become apparent and undo what the figure seemed to have accomplished' (*AR*, 71-72). At this point, however, a puzzling issue about de Man's allegorical reading of Proust can be discerned. In his reading, de Man implicitly favours metonymy over metaphor, or rather, he illustrates how the Proust text reveals its implicit preference for metonymy over metaphor in a trial of error. De Man himself says that '[m]etaphors are much more tenacious than facts, and [he] certainly [didn't] expect to dislodge this age-old model in one short try' (5). He wants to prove that metaphor can only be foregrounded

by the metonymic vehicle, and he proves this by using the metaphorical vehicle himself through an allegorical reading of Proust. It is difficult to conclude whether de Man himself means to prove that the Proust text privileges one set of tropes over another or whether he means to play with our senses and our comprehension of his allegorical readings.

So far, after my reading of the Ghent poem, my thesis is already experiencing a slight problem with unity. The 'Ghent' poem becomes even more problematic despite the poem's ability to provide images that can be categorized into two broad groups, one syntagmatic and the other paradigmatic, thus making it continuous and whole. First, unlike in the Proust passage, in 'Ghent', it is difficult to discern if metaphor or metonymy is in the foreground because both are given almost equal attention in the poem. In traditional criticism, this balance is welcome since the poem satisfies the requirements of structural symmetry and semantic unity and possible unification, in which the opposing sets of syntagms and paradigms seemingly co-exist without problems.

This is especially welcome in a poem that belongs to a larger body of poetry that is notoriously dense and obscure. Leaving the discussion here will not solve the answer as to why I chose to read Browning's dramatic monologues in the first place and why I chose to use the 'Ghent poem' as the first poem for close reading. At the simplest level, I could probably ask: 'so, what is this important news that must reach Aix for this town to be saved, and saved from what or whom?' It is not just about finding symmetry and unification or to find various answers to open-ended plots or to search for meanings behind strange symbols. It is just as important in my thesis to question the effect of the poem on my readings of Browning's other poems and on why his poetry is written in the way it is. Does the structure of a poem or its

unraveling give the poem meaning? What about the voice and how it is written into the poem, the dramatic monologue? More importantly, the interplay of these tropes gives impetus to the movement of the poem and thus questions the act of writing what the voice says. The writing of the voice (speech or *parole*) cannot be experienced and realized simultaneously. In the 'Ghent' poem, because it is easy to break the text into four general fields, it was necessary to look at these fields in an attempt to see how they combine to make the poem whole. Furthermore, the poem as a dramatic monologue gives the illusion of the possible simultaneity of speech and writing. In a sense, the structuring of 'Ghent' is metonymic because its four parts make the organic whole, which incidentally, is exactly what de Man is arguing against.

Why should my thesis be obsessed with which of metaphor or metonymy is superior? Why should I worry about making the poem 'whole'? Here, I go back again to why we read poetry and why we read Browning. Without examining these tropological structures and their relationship with each other, it is difficult to translate the meanings from concept to action. By this, I mean that one cannot prove one's comprehension and understanding of the message or meaning of the poem (whatever that may mean to each reader) if one cannot translate understanding of the concepts presented in the poem into some sort of articulation or writing. To borrow Saussure's model, during the act of reading, the message passes from text (the written poem, and therefore, language) to concept (into the reader's mind), where it can remain and be lost, or it can be articulated (Saussure's *parole* or speech) during discussion. The braver readers of poetry then attempt to put the utterance back into language by writing critiques of the poem. Here, Derrida is called upon to help articulate my worry. He claims that '[y]ou cannot read without speaking, speak without promising, promise without writing, write without reading that you have already promised even

before you begin to speak, etc.' (*Memoires for Paul de Man*, 100). Like the metaphor-metonymy conundrum, the relationship between text and utterance, or voice (since we are discussing the dramatic monologue), is much like a weighing scale in that either one may tip the scales at any time.

At this point, then, it looks possible that the relationship between poet and poem may depend on metonymy and that the relationship between poem and reader may be supported by metaphorical structures. This could also mean that writing sits on the syntagmatic axis and reading depends on the paradigmatic one. To explore this further, more poems will be dismantled, as was done with 'Ghent', beginning with 'The Pied Piper of Hamelin', which was composed two years earlier, in 1842. Both were written in the earlier part of Browning's career, and although they belong to different volumes, thematically, they are similar in that both may be read as poems for children, with seemingly simple rhythms and language[11]. The two poems are different in that the properties in the lexical fields in 'The Pied Piper' do not quite fit as neatly as they do in 'Ghent', and this reveals more problems and questions as to how the journeys move.

Like this chapter, the next chapter will feature many 'statistics'. However, I will justify this by quoting John Woolford, in his analysis of the deployment of pronouns in Browning's 'Caliban-upon-Setebos', namely, that '[s]tatistics help. In reference to "Caliban", the word "I" appears nineteen times in the poem as against thirteen for "he"' ('Self-consciousness and self-expression in Caliban and Browning', 89). Very close reading of long poems necessitates the use of such 'statistics'. This also helps in shaping the process and in structuring my thesis, which has to be

[11] In his study of the Brownings' personal lives, Edward Guiliano entitles his article after a line from the Ghent poem: '"And into the Midnight We Galloped Abreast': Reconstructing the Brownings' Library and Possessions (*Studies in Browning and His Circle*, 11.2), illustrating how the simplest of Browning's poems are used to address his complex poems and his personal life. A simple poem such as the Ghent poem is thus synecdochically linked to his later poems and his personal life.

permanently aware that it struggles with metaphor and metonymy, which are situated on the paradigmatic axis (structure) as well as the syntagmatic (process) one.

Part I, Chapter Three

‘The Pied Piper of Hamelin’

> My grandfather used to say: “Life is astoundingly short. To me, looking back over it, life seems so foreshortened that I scarcely understand, for instance, how a young man can decide to ride over to the next village without being afraid that—not to mention accidents—even the span of a normal happy life may fall far short of the time needed for such a journey.”
>
> (Franz Kafka, ‘The Next Village’)

The figure of the journey is not as straightforward in ‘The Pied Piper of Hamelin’ as in the Ghent poem. The first is undertaken by the rats as they follow the piper to the river, and the second by the children into the gaping hole in the hill and into Transylvania. There is also mention of other journeys, such as those the piper recounts as he travels across Asia and Africa to rid towns of vermin. The children’s happy sojourn to the hill is the most important section of the poem. Without this journey, the poem’s title is meaningless since the power of the poem is in the telling the story of the piper’s magical ability to take the children away, and not only to influence vermin. This is why the poem does not discuss at length the piper’s success in ridding Tartary of gnats or Asia of ‘vampyre-bats’ (ll. 90-92). However, the poem devotes many lines to the description of the rats’ journey to the river, and it is this passage that underlines the importance of the children's journey. The two are linked by a process in which the children’s passage could not have happened had the passage of the rats not occurred. The two journeys are in one sense metonymic since one is the cause and the other is its effect, and they are both temporally contiguous. Like ‘Ghent’, the two journeys are linear and therefore sit on the syntagmatic axis, and they

can be seen as two continuous journeys. From this point of view, they cannot be substituted.

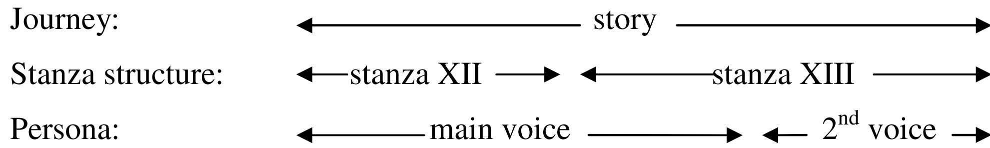
However, 'Pied Piper' is more complex because the two journeys can also be placed on the paradigmatic axis, where both journeys are similar and can therefore be substitutable. Both journeys are similar in that they are told by several voices. The first is the voice of the poem-persona, who describes the movement of the rats and the children, and how they respond to the call of the pipe. The second and third voices are much more significant because they are not the voices of the main persona in the poem but the voices of the surviving rat and the lame child. This structural similarity makes the journeys substitutable. Moreover, either journey can be seen as a symbol of the other. Either journey can also serve as a warning of the other, thus thrusting both back into contiguity with each other. The two journeys can therefore be metaphors of each other, or a part of two pieces that make a whole. Similarly, like 'Ghent', the poem refuses to allow for the identification of whether metaphor or metonymy is privileged. Because of this uncertainty, as with 'Ghent', my formalist attempt at dismantling the passages into different lexical fields that are either syntagms or paradigms is appropriate here because it is from this that the properties that force the movement of the journeys and the poems can hopefully be identified.

The two journeys are important in the poem not only for the purposes of dismantling the poem and exploring the impetus of the movement. The poem itself places importance on these journeys. The structure of the poem is not symmetrical in that there are fifteen stanzas of unequal numbers of lines, the two longest stanzas being the seventh and the thirteenth stanzas. The numbers seven and thirteen are also significant, and this will be dealt with shortly. For now, it is enough to mention that Stanza VII recounts the passage of the rats to their doom, except for one very strong

rat that manages to survive because it swims across the river and lives to tell its tale. Stanza XIII is the second longest stanza in the poem. The second journey is actually split into two stanzas (Stanzas XII and XIII) and therefore becomes metonymic. The wholeness seen in the rats' journey can now be seen as symbolic, which is the normal interpretation in most cases anyway – how else to interpret such an event as millions of rats scrambling frantically towards the river at the sound of a pipe? The symbolism of the numbering of stanzas is now also a little clearer. The telling of the journey and subsequent drowning of the rats is given to the seventh stanza, and since seven is a numeral that has a positive connotation, it could mean that it is good that the rats have drowned and the town is rid of the menace. On the other hand, in the stanza with the unlucky number XIII, it is a great misfortune that the children have disappeared without a trace. Furthermore, misfortunes tend to work metonymically, and this is echoed in the structure of the poem itself, in which the children's journey is split into two, so this journey can be seen as doubly metonymic.

The children's journey remains stubbornly metonymic throughout. As if the breaking up of the journey into two stanzas is not enough to foreground fragmentation, the two voices in the children's journey do not fall neatly into each stanza. The first voice begins telling the children's journey and ends with the aural description of happy children running after the 'wonderful music with shouting and laughter' (line 207). It must be noted here that 'shouting' and 'laughter' are also synchronic. The voice continues the story in the following stanza with the ominous number by describing the reaction of the mayor and the council. 'Mayor' and 'council' are synecdoches since the mayor is head of the council. They are also metonymic through their proximity to each other when they gather at meetings, as is the case in the poem. This stanza is then broken up in the middle, when the main

persona recounts the lame child's words in direct speech. Visually the processes look like this:



The stanzas and the voices are thus linked syntagmatically because they overlap and cannot be substituted.

Let me now break the two stanzas up to see how many lexical groups belong to the syntagmatic and the paradigmatic axes. The section that describes the emergence of the rats from every nook and cranny echoes the rhythm of the galloping horses in 'Ghent' in that it is aural and primal. These qualities are mainly supported by the choice of syntagmatic processes. The children's journey begins before the piper blows his first note.

> Once more he stept into the street
> And to his lips again
> Laid his long pipe of smooth straight cane
> And 'ere he blew three notes (such sweet
> Soft notes as yet musician's cunning
> Never gave the enraptured air)
>
> (ll. 191-196)

At this point, the reader is already aware that the children are in danger, not because the text is giving away any clues but because of the title of the poem, which is metonymic. The word 'pied' is the description of the patterned suit the piper (and most clowns) wear. A 'piper' is one who plays a flute-like instrument, so why is this

piper a piper and not a flautist or flutist? The piper's magical and sinister ability[12] (the poem refers to it as the 'musician's cunning' in line 195) has a similar emotional power that a trained flautist's music is able to produce. However, the word 'piper' has a baser connotation than 'flautist'[13]. Within the syntagmatic axis where rhymes belong, the connotation produces various inversions. The words 'flautist' and 'flutist' echo the words 'flaw' and 'floor' as well as 'flew' and 'flu'.

The title of the poem itself, which seems simple, actually demonstrates a carefully constructed metonymic system which has the power to force events to occur and multiple meanings to be embedded. The alliteration 'pied piper' foregrounds several future events. First, the repetition of the vowel 'I' occurs twice, and we later hear the voices of two other personas. Second, with the deployment of alliteration and assonance at the very beginning, the poem announces its mode of telling, that is, through metonymy. The metonymic use of the title, which includes 'Hamelin', announces an anticipation of the well-known fairy tale. The effect is similar to what affects anyone who hears or sees the word 'Titanic' and immediately thinks of the liner that sank in 1912; such is the power of metonymy.

To continue breaking the journey up into lexical groups, it can be observed that the lines that recount the children's journey are filled with verbs, naturally, since physical journeys involve movement. In the discussion of the 'Ghent' poem earlier in this chapter, I showed how the verbs belong to the paradigmatic axis because they all describe the horses' actions, and these are actions which move or delay the journey, such as 'pacing' and 'shuddering'. In the children's journey in 'Pied Piper' however,

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[12] Observing Kate Greenaway's illustration of Browning's piper (published by Viking in 1976), Irena Kohn suggests that the piper slings his pipe as if it were a rifle, held 'at about the same proximity to his body' as a soldier would carry his sword ('"The Book of Laughter and "Unforgetting"" in *Partial Answers* 4.1 [January 2006]).

[13] Edward Berdoe too comments in *The Browning Cyclopedia* that a similar tale is told of a fiddler of Brandenberg who led the children into Marienberg, where they were swallowed up (339). Berdoe comments that the Brandenburg 'fiddler' is not referred to by the more refined term 'violinist'.

the verbs are linked to one another syntagmatically through rhymes, and they are neatly divided into aural subgroups, where similar sounds are placed in contiguity: rustling, bustling, justling, hustling, pattering, clattering, clapping, chattering, scattering, running, sparkling, tripping and skipping. The final line of the stanza is a lone verb, 'shouting'[14]. These verbs also allow the children to perform a combination of actions simultaneously instead of making the choice of performing one action in place of another. For example, a child could 'justle' (jostle) and bustle while his feet are pattering, and, in the process, clattering his wooden shoes. He can also, while running, have sparkling eyes and be shouting. This lexical group is thus doubly metonymic, and the poem's will to remain within the syntagmatic axis gives the journey a fluid movement not seen in the 'Ghent' poem. The result is that the children are ushered into the hole in the mountain. The poem's title initially provides anticipation of the children's fate, that is, the story is already concluded in its telling because the outcome is known. However, the task of the poem is to ensure that this journey has facility and fluidity of movement, and it does this by 'over-metonymizing'.

More evidence of this is seen when another group of rhymes are found further in this journey in Stanza XII. The voice of the poem interrupts its own utterance in its anxiety to describe the reactions of the adults. The poem also differentiates this group of properties from those associated with the children in two ways. The first is that not all the rhymes in this passage are verbs. They are bound together purely by the sound (assonance) of the words: stood and wood, cry, by and eye, back and rack, beat and street, and so on. The second and more significant difference between the groups of rhymes is the verb form. The verbs associated with the adults are either in the simple

[14] The term 'shouting' is syntagmatic too since the act is that of uttering (*parole*).

present or simple past tense, while those associated with the children are more powerful in moving the children's journey because all of them are in the present continuous tense. The use of the present continuous allows for the fluid movement of the children's journey. Where there is a sense of happy movement in the children's passage, there is a sense of deadness and stasis in the lines that describe the adults' reactions. The choice of rhymes lack the power of movement seen in the first set (describing the children) because this set of rhymes is linked only by word-sound and not by semantic associations, as seen in the first set, such as running and dancing. It is not surprising that the adults are rooted to the spot and can only watch helplessly while the children follow the piper. The direction of the children's route is given too. The poem tells us that just before the children reach the River Weser, the piper makes a sudden shift from west to south and heads towards the hills. The south-westerly direction defies both syntagmatic and paradigmatic rules of going forward (easterly direction) and in substitution, going downward. However, the poem's resistance does not stop the children's journey, and they dance inexorably towards the portal in the mountain and disappear.

Although the children's physical journey ends here, the lame child's voice can also be considered as part of the journey because his story recalls the presence of the journey once again. He relives the experience of being influenced by the force of the piper's words. It is significant that the lame child tells us that it is the utterance of the piper's words and not the sound of his pipe that convinces the child that his 'lame foot would be speedily cured' (line 250). There are also promises of 'pleasant sights' (line 238) in a 'joyous land' (line 240).

> "Where waters gushed and fruit-trees grew
> "And flowers put forth a fairer hue,
> "And everything was strange and new;
> "The sparrows were brighter than peacocks here,

"And their dogs outran our fallow deer,
"And honey-bees had lost their stings,
"And horses were born with eagles' wings:
(ll. 242-248)

On the surface, this section of the poem is convincing in the persuasion of the power of the piper's pipe. However, the survivor who does not enter this 'promised' land reveals that it is the piper's words that are the more powerful. The sound of music works symbolically in that there is no set musical phrase that articulates a fixed idea as spoken language is able to do. For example, the piper needs to play three notes before the rats and the children are mesmerized[15]. The poem does not reveal what these three notes are, and even if the musical arrangement is for example, 'do-la-sol', there will always be thousands of other musical pieces which contain the 'do-la-sol' phrase that have not moved animals and children out of their positions to jump into rivers or head for the hills. This does not mean that music is less powerful since the poem has already declared that the sound (or the utterance?) of the pipe is persuasive in the first place. The child's lament is testimony of the higher importance of the utterance of voice, which again allows the poem to sustain its position on the syntagmatic axis.

The insistence of this passage to remain firmly on the syntagmatic axis is seen in the use of anaphora in lines 243-249, where the lame child begins successive sentences with 'and'. This may be in keeping with a child's ploy to sustain interest. However, anaphora functions metonymically because it is similar to a child's word game where each child repeats a word but changes only a letter in that word. After a series of turns, the word may be a completely different term. In the case of anaphora, the repetition of the first 'and' forces a continuation of the lines and therefore forces a

[15] Penelope Gay, however, cites 'Master Hughes of Saxe-Gotha' as a poem that is deliberately 'denigratory of music's power to speak' ('Browning and Music', 223).

return to the initial spot or position. In the poem, this position is the image of the piper's 'promised land'. The effect is that this unseen image is repeatedly confronted and layers of details are then superimposed onto the original image, making the 'promised land' more whole and less fragmented.

Finally, the smallest lexical group in these two stanzas is the synergistic group of parts of the children's faces: cheeks, curls, eyes and teeth (204-205). Nothing is mentioned of their bodies, unlike in 'Ghent', although the previous lines tell us that the children are happy through the use of verbs that describe their body movement. Unlike 'Ghent' too, these two stanzas, XII and XIII, contain no lexical groups that belong to the paradigmatic axis. It remains inexorably on the syntagmatic axis and yet allows for metaphorical readings of the journey itself. The insistence on staying on this axis is also seen in the rats' journey, although the deployment of the syntagms are slightly different.

The journey of the rats to the river is also told by two voices in Stanza VII. The first voice is that of the poem's persona, and the second is the persona himself, who interrupts his own utterance to recount the lone surviving rat's 'commentary'. This commentary is retold to us in the first-person narrative style using the pronoun 'I'. The first part as told by the poem's persona contains the one group of adjectives that belong to the paradigmatic axis and two groups on the syntagmatic axis. One of the latter groups contains family members of the rats: fathers, mothers, uncles, brothers, brothers, sisters, husbands and wives. Another group contains words that rhyme, such as stept, slept and adept, smile and while, and wrinkled, twinkled and sprinkled. In this same group are some pairs of rhyming verbs that are linked to each other semantically too, and the first such pair comes from the moment the pipe makes it first sound in the poem.

And ere three shrill notes the pipe uttered,
You heard as if an army muttered;
And the muttering grew to a mighty rumbling;
And out of the houses the rats came tumbling.
(ll. 106-110)

The first real movement of the poem comes the moment the pipe 'utters', and before line 106, there is a lack of positive action. All the actions described in the first 105 lines are centered around energies that collapse inwards. This is seen in the arrival of the rats into the houses and into every nook and cranny in Hamelin. The poem concentrates on the invasive nature of the vermin, whereby inner spaces are forced open and their properties pillaged. The rats enter homes and 'fought the dogs and killed the cats, / And bit the babies in the cradles' (ll. 11-12). In keeping with the syntagmatic process, the poem illustrates the invasion from outside to inside in the first two stanzas. It takes just the first four lines to establish the geographical position, when we are told that

Hamelin Town's in Brunswick,
By famous Hanover city;
The river Weser, deep and wide,
Washes its wall on the southern side.
(ll. 1-4)

The visual impact is seen when the poem presents a blank canvas, where parts of the picture are slapped on quickly, and in four lines the picture is complete. The four lines establish the geographical positions in this order: Hamelin Town, Brunswick, River Weser, town wall[16]. By the second stanza, the poem quickly moves into the homes of the citizens, where there are

Rats!
They fought the dogs and killed the cats,

[16] Woolford and Karlin point out Browning's error whereby Hamelin is situated in Hanover and not Brunswick. They also observe that Browning is erroneous in the positioning of the river, which is westerly and not southerly, in lines 3-4, where the 'Weser, deep and wide, / Washes its wall on the southern side' (*The Poems of Robert Browning*, Vol. III, 133).

And bit the babies in the cradles
And licked the soup from the cooks' own ladles
(ll. 10-13)

The first few lines of Stanza I contrast with those of the second stanza in terms of outside/inside spaces. Unlike the Proust text, Browning's poem at this point has no problem linking inside with the outside. This problem appears in the middle of the poem and will be addressed later. The two spaces of outside and inside are reconciled when the poem tells us of the rats arriving from the outside and entering the homes. Moreover, the unequal number of lines devoted to these two stanzas also acts as a means to link these two spaces. Stanza I has nine lines while stanza II has twenty. Since the ninth line of the first stanza is '[f]rom vermin, was a pity', the first line of stanza two, which begins with one word, 'Rats!' should, for the sake of structural symmetry and semantic cohesion, be the tenth line of stanza I. The fact that the word 'Rats!' is first mentioned in the first line of the second stanza illustrates the rats' power in invading inside spaces, while the word 'vermin' transforms the rat metonymically from the generic to a specific type of vermin. Once inside, the rats systematically bore through spaces from outside towards inside again, this time within the closed space of the households, when after fighting and killing the domestic pets, they

Bit the babies in the cradles
And ate the cheeses out of the vats,
And licked the soup from the cooks' own ladles,
Split open the kegs of salted sprats,
Made nests inside men's Sunday hats,
And even spoiled the women's chats.
(ll. 12-17)

What is systematic is that the rats first 'fought the dogs', which protect the home and 'killed the cats' (line 11), which kill vermin. They then enter the cribs to bite the

babies and raid the vats to eat the citizens' food. They then get bolder and invade more private spaces by licking off utensils and 'split open' kegs of preserved fish meant for future sustenance. Subsequently, there is the ultimate invasion, when they enter men's hats and interrupt women's chats. Hats cover the head, which is the repository of reason and knowledge. 'Chat' is a metonym of the genus 'communication', which is cut off when the women's chats are drowned by the 'shrieking and squeaking / In fifty different sharps and flats' (ll. 19-20). Line twenty hints at the role music will eventually play by referring to 'sharps and flats'. Twice later, of course, the piper will blow his initial three notes. The piper's utterance as more effective than his music was discussed earlier in this chapter, but in line twenty, music is the more powerful of the two as it drowns the spoken word. In a menacing way, the music is discordant too. It is difficult to decide here whether music is really more powerful since it is generated by utterance anyway, with the rats producing the discordant music by 'shrieking and squeaking'. As in 'Ghent', there is urgency, but this urgency does not have the impetus that moves the journey(s) in the poem. Instead, there is a desperate and helpless climate that prevents movement. This is seen in the subsequent stanzas before stanza VII, and de Man's idea of the impossibility of action in sheltered spaces in the Proust text is echoed in Stanza III, where the angry and helpless citizens storm the Town Hall to demand action. What is starkly different from the Proust text is that Marcel hides in the cool, dark chamber 'in the depths of which [he] felt that [he] could bury [himself] and remain invisible even when [he] was looking at what went on outside' ('Swann's Way', 63). On the other hand, Hamelin's cradles are already invaded by the rats (line 12) and, instead of the cool security Marcel experiences, the houses are filled with a frenzy of destructive activity and discordant sounds. There is much impotent energy in the actions. However, this

energy is concentrated and contained within closed spaces and, at this point in the poem, impossible to get rid of. The containment of such negative energy is also seen when the citizens themselves create discordant sounds by outshouting each other in the Town Hall (Stanza II). Although there are no direct references to rats in the Town Hall, there is a sneaky presence of 'vermin' when the citizens realize that 'to think [they] buy gowns lined with ermine' (line 25). Ermine, or stoats, could also be considered 'vermin' since they attack poultry on farms. Ironically, removing them will encourage the population of rats since they attack rats too. Stanza IV too suffers from impotent energy, where the council and the mayor are at a loss as to how to rid the town of the rats. However, Stanza V is the important link that helps bridge the confined spaces in the homes and the Town Hall in the previous stanzas to the outer space in open Hamelin. This stanza heralds the arrival of the piper in his pied gown of two of the brightest primary colors: yellow and red. These colors have the effect of contaminating the clean white ermine worn by the people inside the confined space. Furthermore, the piper's eyes are described as 'sharp […] like a pin', therefore underlining the piper's invasive ability. A councilor in the Town Hall confirms this when upon seeing the piper, he declares:

> "It's as [if] my great-grand sire,
> "Starting up at the Trump of Doom's tone,
> "Had walked this way from his painted tombstone!"
> (ll. 67-69)

The deadness and quiet of the tombstone together with the silence that surrounds the piper's historical background thus enter the closed space where impotent energies attempt to find an opening into the outer world. The following stanza, number VI contains the piper's short speech on how he freed the Cham and the Nizam from gnats and bats. The rhymes of these two lines underline the ease with which the piper is

able carry out the tasks, and the mayor ends the stanza with a promise of fifty thousand guilders, although the piper's asking price is only a thousand guilders.

As mentioned earlier, the real movement begins in stanza VII when the piper puts the pipe to his lips. The original wholeness of Hamelin life is broken by the invasion of the rats from outside to inside and the lives of the citizens as a collective whole collapse and they are trapped within their private spaces. In the larger context, they are prisoners in their own homes and in their own town. A stranger from the outside enters their town and the Town Hall (which metonymically points to authority and governance) and through rhetoric, persuades them to allow him to return the spaces back to them. The interior spaces are filled with the energy of voices and utterances that are useless because there is no action. In Stanza VII, the sound of music is valorized over the utterance of voice when upon hearing the first three notes, the rats come tumbling out of the spaces within the houses. However, like the lame child's testimony that it is the piper's voice that is more persuasive, the surviving rat also confirms that it is the voice that causes it to run out into the open:

> "And it seemed as if a voice
> "(Sweeter far than by harp or by psaltery
> "Is breathed) called out, 'Oh rats, rejoice!
> (ll. 135-137)

The rat itself admits that the voice is 'sweeter' than the music of the harp or the 'psaltery', which is an ancient stringed instrument that is a close relative of the dulcimer. In Coleridge's 'Kublai Khan', it is the music of the dulcimer that gives the Khan the inspiration to "build that dome in air / That sunny dome! those caves of ice!" (ll. 46-57). It can be argued that the music, emanating as sounds from the pipe is so much more powerful than that of the dulcimer or the harp that it takes on a voice

that is much more persuasive than the voice uttered by a human[17]. The truth, however, remains that in this poem, the sweetest music (and music communicates symbolically) has to switch its communicative medium into linguistic utterance before it can be effective. More discussion on the significance of this voice will be explored in the next few paragraphs.

At this point, it is appropriate to return to dismantling Stanza VII into lexical fields. This is the stanza devoted solely to the journey of the rats, and it contains lexical groups that include many that sit on the syntagmatic axis but only one that resides on the paradigmatic axis. Another two groups are interesting because they are multi-metonymic, and these two groups are found in the section where the surviving rat 'speaks'.

First there is a group of rhymes seen at the end of each line, such as pipe, tripe, ripe and gripe, flasks and casks, psaltery and psaltery, and nuncheon, luncheon and puncheon. Flasks and casks are doubly metonymic because both belong to the lexical group of storage containers, and so are nuncheon and luncheon because they are meals or drinks taken at particular times of the day. The word 'puncheon' means a barrel for storing wine, so semantically it belongs to the flask/cask pair. However, the poem refers to the puncheon as a 'sugar-puncheon', so it is also linked to nuncheon and luncheon because of its reference to food. There are many such crossovers in this section, as will be demonstrated later.

The next group contains verbs which belong to the syntagmatic axis because they can all be performed in combination, such as 'moving away', 'leaving ajar', 'drawing the corks' and 'breaking the hoops'. Each verb in this group is given one

[17] There is an association between magicianship and artistic power and Woolford and Karlin note that this is link to the poet's visionary power, a common theme throughout Browning's work (*The Poems of Robert Browning*, 133).

line and each of them sits between the anaphoric 'and' and nouns that are multi-metonymic:

> And a moving away of pickle-tub-cupboards,
> And a leaving ajar of conserve-cupboards,
> And a drawing the corks of train-oil-flasks
> And a breaking the hoops of butter-casks:
>
> (ll. 131-134)

'Pickle-tub-cupboards', 'conserve-cupboards', 'train-oil-flasks' and 'butter-casks are multi-metonymic because first, they rhyme. Second, they are linked by dashes, and third, they are synonyms. 'Pickle' and 'conserve' are similar because both are foods that are preserved. Train-oils are any fatty oils derived from animals and are similar to butter, which is made from animal milk. Here, the poem packs these four lines full of properties from the syntagmatic axis. Anaphora is again deployed here, and its purpose is to underline the fluidity of the exodus. These four lines, like the opening four lines of the poem, present a visual picture by splashing the images in succession, using anaphora as a brushstroke. These four lines are also similar to the lame child's vision of the piper's 'promised' land, which deploys anaphora too. The pictorial effect is similar in that the surviving rat is promised a land full of ripened foods, where cupboards, flasks and casks burst open, their contents ready to be consumed by the rats. The production of the images of vitality and life in these 'promised' lands differ from the lame child's 'promised' land in that the lame child hears the piper's voice through the piped notes. Although the poem provides images of the rats' promised land, the rat is only able to hear sounds, and in translating them into his 'commentary' (line 126), it allows the poem to present those very images. The 'commentary' is also referred to as 'the manuscript' in the poem.

> Save one who, stout as Julius Caesar,
> Swam across and lived to carry
> (As he, the manuscript he cherished)
> To Rat-land home his commentary:

(ll. 123-126)

It is puzzling that Browning chose to use the words 'manuscript' and 'commentary' when it is obvious that rats do not write. Whatever the reason, there is no doubt that the two words are placed in such a way that one deliberately follows the other in two lines. 'Manuscript' refers to written text, and therefore the poem unconsciously refers back to itself by recounting the rat's story in written poetry. 'Commentary' can be both textual and oral, and here too, there are references to text and voice. Again here, the poem, by insisting on journeying syntagmatically, is in keeping with Derrida's idea of the 'promise' inherent in the acts of reading (*Memoires* 100). The rat's account outdoes the lame child's in this sense because there is textual evidence in the manuscript along with the utterance of the tale. The four lines are crammed with syntagms (ll. 131-134) and therefore seem to run naturally because of those very properties that are syntagmatic. The effect of harmony is produced by laying down line after line of linked processes. What seems to sound natural is unnaturally constructed through these processes. Even the rhythms produced are deliberately constructed through choices selected metonymically. The links run across these syntagmatic properties in many combinations, like capillaries in a body, and there is even a concentric pattern where a metonym sits inside another, as seen in Stanzas III and IV, where the mayor (who has authority over the Corporation) and the Corporation members sit inside the Town Hall. It is little wonder that they cannot force action from within until the circles are pierced through by an outside force.

The word 'bored', which is a synonym for 'pierce', appears near the close of the surviving rat's commentary, in line 114. Although the rat's commentary is not a physical journey, it is still considered a part of the journey because it recounts the

mental picture of the ‘promised’ land of ripened fruits and richly flavored foods. The rat begins with

> At the first shrill notes of the pipe,
> I heard a sound as of scraping tripe
> And putting apples, wondrous ripe,
> Into a cider-press’s gripe;
>
> (ll. 127-130)

The rat then goes on to say how it senses in the music a voice that urges it to run out to a place where there are huge storage containers bursting with food. It claims that this voice is likened to a huge barrel (puncheon) waiting to be opened:

> “And just as a bulky sugar-puncheon,
> “All ready staved, like a great sun shone
> “Glorious scarce an inch before me,
> “Just as methought it said, ‘Come, bore me!’
> “---I found the Weser rolling o’er me.”
>
> (ll. 141-145)

Here, the voice invites the rat to invade its bursting belly, but before the rat is able to do this, it finds itself piercing the waters of the Weser instead. Again, there is the image of stored energies in an enclosed space trapped until a foreign entity invades its walls. One cannot ignore the lone image of the sun either, which is deployed as a simile and works as a metaphor. The sun is described as ‘great’ and shining, and is impenetrable, which is perhaps why the sugar-puncheon cannot be ‘bored’ through. In contrast, the River Weser's water is easy to enter and, magically, it is easier to walk into the depths of Koppelberg Hill than it is to bore into a wooden barrel of preserves.

While on the topic of metaphors, it is timely to mention the lone paradigmatic group, which is made up mostly of adjectives are concentrated in three consecutive lines:

> Great rats, small rats, lean rats, brawny rats,
> Brown rats, black rats, Grey rats, tawny rats,
> Grave old plodders, gay young friskers
>
> (ll. 111-113)

These lines are spoken by the poem's main voice, and they do not do much to move the journey along, unlike the group of metaphors in 'Ghent', which act as signposts and contribute to the urgency of the journey. However, by means of transference and substitution, this small group is able to stamp the importance of its place in the poem.

So far, the only powerful property on the paradigmatic axis is the metaphorical sun. Music is the other property that works metaphorically, and this is seen in the word 'psaltery', which is linked, although by rhyme, to 'drysaltery'. This quaint word is full of different meanings. The one that is important is that drysaltery is a nineteenth century trade that deals with chemicals including glue, drugs, dyes and colourings. 'One vast drysaltery' (line 138) is the rats' 'promised' land and in this land are dyes and colourings. The colours mentioned in the poem are those worn by the creator of these 'promised lands', the piper in the red and white gown and scarf, and that which describe his eyes as 'blue' (ll. 60 and 104).

Colours are also mentioned in another part of the poem, and they are concentrated in the small lexical group of adjectives that describe the rats as being of at least four different colours (line 112). The role of colours is usually positively deployed, but in this poem, they are negatively deployed. To humans, a drysaltery would be useful for its role in many industries besides the dyeing of cloth. However, in the poem, the drysaltery is seen as the space that is heaven to the rats. Furthermore, blue, a colour normally associated with the Virgin Mary, becomes desecrated when the piper is said to have blue eyes and when the mayor turns 'blue' upon hearing the piper demanding his thousand guilders. White is not mentioned, although ermine is. The poem not only marches on syntagmatically, it also allows for the presence of metaphors if only to illustrate the metaphor's inferior position to that of the metonym.

Thus far, the poem doggedly tries to stay within the syntagmatic axis by awarding very little space for metaphors and paradigmatic properties to exist. In the 'Ghent' poem, there are many accidents that happen along the journey, and although the 'Pied Piper' poem contains no accidents, it depends on interruptions and decisions instead. The town is initially interrupted by the invasion of the rats. Next, the discussion in the Town Hall is interrupted by the arrival of the piper. In Stanza XIII, while giving instructions to the citizens, the mayor is interrupted by the piper's demand for money:

> "Go," cried the Mayor, "and get long poles,
> "Poke out the nests and block up the holes!
> "Consult with carpenters and builders,
> "And leave in our town not even a trace
> "Of the rats!"---when suddenly, up the face
> Of the Piper perked in the market-place,
> With a, "First, if you please, my thousand guilders!"
> (ll. 148-154)

Decisions in the poem are made because of these interruptions. Twice the mayor makes instant decisions. The first is made because of the piper's interruption, and the second decision is the one that also decides the collective fate of Hamelin. Thus, the journeys propel the poem towards its conclusion and the poem's fate is Kafkaesque in its tragic-comic confusion. In the Kafka short story 'A Common Confusion' (*Complete Short Stories*, 430), a decision is made which shapes the outcome of the future. Kafka's character A.'s behavior is described as 'incomprehensible' (429), which is similar to the mayor's decisions. A.'s decision not to speak to B. when he had the opportunity leads him to a tiring ten-hour return journey by which time he must have been so tired that he stumbles as he ascends the stairs in his anxiety to meet B. His stumbling is an accident and an interruption and thus, he misses his chance to stop B. from leaving the house. The result is that the two do not meet for the interview. For his part, the mayor makes a decision by breaking his promise and

dismissing the piper's original price of a thousand guilders and instead reduces the price to fifty. The consequence of the mayor's decision is of course more serious than the darkly comical one faced by Kafka's A. The difference is that the interruption comes first to the mayor, who then makes the decision which he pays for in consequence. A.'s interruption comes after his decision to rebuff B. in the form of an accident, which he may have contributed to himself, had he not rebuffed B. to travel to H.

More evidence of the metonymic quality of interruption is seen in another of Kafka's short stories, 'A visit to a Mine', where at the close of the story, the narrator claims that he and his mining colleagues 'shall not do much work [today]; the interruption has been too interesting [and] we shall not be here to see them coming back' (407). This story has two common parallels with 'Pied Piper', the first being the short journey through the mine by a solemn line of engineers, all as faceless as the rats. The story is told in strict order from the first engineer to the tenth, but the one that is foregrounded is that of the office porter, who trails the procession. He is the butt of the miners' jokes but 'remains an unsolved riddle for [them] to respect' (407). The porter is last in the line with 'nothing to do', yet like the piper, he is the most noticeable. The second similarity is that the miners are thrown into inaction merely by the interruption of the procession. They decide to 'stand gazing after the gentlemen' although their excuse is that their shift is almost over and the spectacle is too interesting to ignore. The final line uttered by the miner is something the mayor has yet to learn—that decisions, interruptions and consequences are connected. The miners are already aware of this in the last line when they know that they will 'not be here to see [the procession] coming back'. The miners are aware of the 'pastness' of

interruptions, but the mayor and the citizens are not. When they see the piper change directions upon reaching the Weser's bank, they instead become hopeful:

> Great was the joy in every breast.
> "He never can cross that mighty top!
> "He's forced to let the piping drop,
> "And we shall see our children stop!"
>
> (ll. 222-225)

The next few lines see the children walk into the 'wondrous portal' and disappear. The Kafka stories seem to comment on journeys in Browning's poetry, and this is nothing new since Borges acknowledges Browning's influence on Kafka when he finds 'prefigurations' of Kafka in Browning's 'Fears and Scruples' (*Labyrinths* 200). Borges comments that the poem 'foretells Kafka's work', and he believes that 'every writer *creates* [Borges' italics] his own precursors' (201). Bloom also believes this to be so, as seen in his claim that 'Borges is a great theorist of poetic influence; he has taught us to read Browning as a precursor of Kafka' (*The Ringers in the Tower: Studies in Romantic Tradition*, 212). Browning himself would have agreed with Borges when, as mentioned earlier in this chapter, he tells Ruskin of the relationship between himself and the unseen and future reader.

Why bring Kafka into a discussion that attempts to dismantle Browning's 'Pied Piper' into syntagmatic and paradigmatic axes? Kafka's journeys and stories work syntagmatically too, and his texts tacitly agree with de Man, a late source in comparison to Kafka, that there is power in metonymy. His text 'creates' or recreates Browning's texts too. Nobody has yet found out why the place where A. and B. are supposed to meet in 'A Common Confusion' is called H. and not C., D., or F. Is this possibly Hamelin, the town whose citizens deserve a few interruptions in their lives? Can my thesis arrogantly assume that Kafka's town of H. refers to Browning's Hamelin?

There are more similarities. The lowly but arrogant porter in 'A visit to the Mine' is a subversion of the piper. Browning's piper leads the rats and the children while Kafka's porter trails behind the procession of engineers and is the 'clown' as the miners laugh at him within his earshot and behind his back. Furthermore, their monikers are syntagmatically linked by alliteration (the letter 'p' in both 'porter' and 'piper), and they are semantically linked by the lowly status of their professions. The lack of objectives in the Kafka's short stories mirrors that of the 'Ghent poem' too. Browning's poem does not reveal what the good news is, while in 'A Common Confusion', A. and B. do not mention what the discussion is about. Although Kafka's 'A visit to a mine' demonstrates that the engineers are there to inspect the mine because of an order to bore (another invasive image) new galleries within, it does not identify what kind of minerals they are looking for. No reasons are offered for the engineers' odd behavior either. As with Browning, these stubbornly metonymical texts invite various metaphorical readings. This brings to question once again the unwriteability of poems and texts. Must writers and poets depend helplessly on metonymy so that journeys can move within the text and the poem?

Before I end this chapter, I would like to mention the fact that the Piper poem is an early Browning poem which foretells Browning's later predilection for using historical characters in his dramatic monologues. This point is pertinent because my thesis addresses questions of truth and half-truths. Browning tends to embellish the truth, claiming that art may reveal truths, although obliquely. Although the Piper poem is not based on historical fact, his re-telling of the Hamelin myth reveals a truth that is found much later, as in Bernard Queenan's research in 1978 published in *Children's Literature, namely,* that the

> suggestion contained in the Browning poem, that the children of Hamelin became in time the ancestors of the

> inhabitants of Saxon towns in Transylvania, or elsewhere in Eastern Europe, may reflect a historical fact.
>
> ('The Evolution of the Pied Piper', 114)

Who knows in near and distant futures what other truths may be revealed in his many poems.

I end this chapter by addressing the journey trope again. Of all Browning's poems, 'Ghent' and 'Pied Piper' are two poems which deploy the figure of the journey or quest as the vehicle of movement. A third poem, 'Childe Roland to the Dark Tower Came' too has the quest as its motif. However, the quest that Roland undertakes does not take the form of the journey in the same way as the two previous poems do in that the poem does not specifically provide a route with specific place-names and signposts. Like 'Ghent' and the two Kafka short stories, the motive of the quest in 'Childe Roland' is not as significantly important as the journey to the Dark Tower is. The journey that Roland undertakes is a series of landscapes that are filled with images of horror. There are images of the grotesque and the grisly; however, Roland does not face the kind of mortal danger faced by the riders in 'Ghent' and the children in 'Pied Piper'. The progress of the two earlier poems is forced forward by metonymy because the poems are filled with processes that contain properties that are contiguous. However, the presence of accidents and decisions, which are metonymic in nature, ironically turn against the very processes which move the journey forward. What is doubly ironic is that without accidents and decisions, the two poems cannot flow and cannot exist. For the poems to move forward, one syntagmatic property (journey as sequential, not as metaphor) must be interrupted by other sets of syntagms. The journey in 'Ghent' especially demonstrates how accidents interrupt the journey, and without these accidents, the poem could not have been written with the kind of urgency illustrated. However, there is a lack of metonymic pressure (with the

lack being in the pressure rather than in the presence of metonymy itself) in ‘Childe Roland’ that is seen in ‘Ghent’ and ‘Pied Piper’.

Part I, Chapter Four

'Childe Roland to the Dark Tower Came'

> I cannot evade for long my own obsession with *Childe Roland to the Dark Tower Came* [and] ask myself this question: why am I obsessed by the *Childe Roland* poem, or rather, what does it *mean* to be obsessed by that poem?
>
> (Harold Bloom, *Modern Critical Views: Robert Browning*, 1)

Roland's journey is generally interpreted as metaphorical, and in *The Complete Critical Guide to Robert Browning*, Stefan Hawlin observes that 'Childe Roland' is 'the single poem most resistant to criticism in *Men and Women*, partly because of the way in which it seems to imitate the myth-like intensity of some of the great Romantic poems' (94). He notes that the poem is often associated with Romantic imagination and, generally, critics interpret Roland's journey as a dream or a nightmare. In her article '"Childe Roland to the Dark Tower Came": A Nightmare Confrontation with Death', Joyce Meyers is convinced that the poem is about the experience of dying. Thus, she believes that upon arrival at the Dark Tower, Roland faces death. Dallas Kenmare, on the other hand, believes that poets 'are true realists' (*An End to Darkness*, 43) and that

> Browning, as honest as Shakespeare, also revealed life, so far as any artist is able, in its totality. For this reason, the material, the physical, the ugly and the obscure appear in his work side by side with the spiritual, the beautiful and the simple. In this sense, Browning is no 'modernist', but what great artist is, or can be thus restricted? The genius belongs to all time, not only to the contemporary scene, and well knows that life includes soul as well as body, beauty as well as ugliness.
>
> (*An End to Darkness*, 42)

Kenmare believes that poets cannot help but see reality (he stresses reality, and not realism) and, fortunately for most readers and critics, the task of reproducing the likeness of reality lies in the poet's realm because of their 'high degree of development of the intuitive faculty, which sees "things unseen"' (43). In saying that Browning revealed life 'in its totality', he places Browning's poetry in paradigmatic structures. By claiming that Browning is a realist, he credits Browning's accuracy in copying life through substitution. Therefore, Kenmare himself is implicitly metaphorising Browning's poetry too.

Harold Bloom observes that the journey in 'Childe Roland' is metaphorical when he refers to Roland's journey as an 'ordeal, his trial by landscape' (*A Map of Misreading*, 106) and an 'ordeal-by-landscape' (118). By referring to Roland's journey as an ordeal and a trial, Bloom agrees with Browning that Roland's real task is in finding the Dark Tower and not what he does after it is found. As in the Ghent poem, the journey is more significant than the duties that come after. Bloom is also assuming that the journey is metaphorical because trials and ordeals are experienced when the totality of events are participated in by the poems' personas, although he points to synecdochic processes present in the poem. Browning himself implicitly admits that the poem is an experience when he seems to deliberately demur in his reply to what Roland's quest actually is by providing vague answers to direct questions. When asked whether there were any specific allegorical meanings in the poem, he replied, 'Oh, no, not at all. Understand I don't repudiate it either. I only mean I was conscious of no allegorical intention in writing it' (quoted in DeVane, 229). When asked if the meaning of the poem could be described pithily as 'He that endureth to the end shall be saved', Browning demurred again and replied, 'Yes, just about that' (231). If Browning is to be taken seriously, then Joyce Meyers' position

that the poem is about the experience of dying and of death cannot hold. However, 'Childe Roland' is a poem that the poet and all critics tend to – or are forced to - interpret as an 'experience', which is why the poem is always interpreted metaphorically.

Although Bloom admits implicitly that the poem begs metaphorical or allegorical interpretation, he also observes the presence of metonymy in parts of the poem. He remarks that any 'quest is a synecdoche for the whole desire; a quest for failure is a synecdoche for suicide' (*A Map of Misreading*, 109). However, Bloom's assertion in those lines has its foundation in a metaphorical interpretation when he points out that failure is a synecdoche for suicide since it is possible that failure could be synecdoche *and* metaphor for various conditions other than suicide. He is more accurate in asserting that the quest is 'synecdoche for the whole desire', however, this can only be applied to 'Childe Roland' and not to 'Ghent' or 'Pied Piper' since the quests or journeys in the latter two are fated and fatal and the success of those quests are dependent upon accidents. Although Bloom mentions synecdochic processes several times in his interpretation of the poem, he foregrounds the presence of metaphor even as he avoids mentioning the word 'metaphor' directly in the initial part of his chapter entitled 'Testing the Map: Browning's *Childe Roland'*. An example is when he observes 'Browning's enormous skill at substitution' (106). He sees

> Roland's landscape [as] a kind of continuous metonymy, in which a single negative aspect of every thing substitutes for the thing itself. When the dialectic of restitution seeks to operate in this middle part of the poem, it substitutes for this emptying-out-by-isolation with a hyperbolic vision of the heights; yet this is a nightmare Sublime.
>
> (*A Map of Misreading*, 106)

We are not told what 'thing' itself is being substituted by the negative aspects in the poem. Further into the paragraph, Bloom deploys the word 'substitutes'. His

perspective of synecdoche is not definably syntagmatic, unlike my schema; his straddles both the syntagmatic and the paradigmatic and as such hovers on the boundary of metaphor. Bloom's reference to 'nightmare Sublime' is itself paradigmatic because both nightmare and the sublime point to absent referents. Later, on page 113, Bloom observes properties existing on both the syntagmatic and the paradigmatic axis when he remarks that '[f]resh creation is a catastrophe, or a substitution'. Bloom does not deny the presence of metaphor in his reading of the poem. However he seems to side-step its strong presence by substitution of words, such as references to transumptive schemes and figures (114) in the poem, and Roland's trumpet having transumptive relations with Romanticism (115). Later in his chapter, the metaphor is addressed more openly with the discussion of the Dark Tower, and even there, it is referred to as 'Roland's perspectivism, his metaphoric juxtapositions between inside and outside' (112). A page later he suggests that both Browning and Roland do not end 'with limiting and so with failed metaphor', thereby crediting them with the ability to invent powerful metaphors. However, Bloom claims on page 113 that there are also 'limitations of metaphor' when he explains why the 'Tower *is* Dark' (Bloom's italics). Bloom's explanation will be dealt with in greater detail later in the chapter. But for now, it can be noted that perhaps like de Man, Bloom knows the power of metonymy over metaphor but is forced to deploy paradigmatic structures to illustrate this power.

Where critics generally view the poem as a metaphor, John Woolford and Daniel Karlin have instead concentrated on sourcing the influences and allusions of the poem. They believe that like Coleridge's *Kubla Khan*, the poem is an imperfect record of a dream. Woolford and Karlin believe that it is important to achieve a clear

distinction of the texts that are explicitly referred to in the poem, and they have listed them in *The Poems of Robert Browning, Vol III*, published in 1991[18].

It is now time to take the poem apart to see how it forces metaphorical interpretations when the title alludes to a quest or a journey that seems temporally contiguous. Although Roland follows the route directed to him and finally arrives at the Dark Tower, the movement of the poem depends mainly on properties that belong to the paradigmatic axis. This is seen when the journey is interrupted by sudden appearances of metaphoric images rather than by metonymic incidents. The movement of the poem, and thus the journey in the poem, is told to us by whole images of growth stunted by stasis. Roland's journey begins only after a life-time of 'world-wide wandering' (line 19) and a 'search drawn out thro' years' (line 20). Even at this stage, unlike the riders in 'Ghent', he does not know the route to the Tower, and unlike the rats and the children in 'Pied Piper', he is not compelled by music or voice to move towards his destination. The first few stanzas are filled with verbs that discourage movement, such as lied, suppress, waylay, ensnare and hides. These verbs are different from those seen in the two earlier poems in that they are not ascribed to physical movement or to the mortal bodies of humans or horses. They signify absent referents and can only be comprehended as concepts. Yet, they are considered negative because they encourage delay and stasis. Roland himself attempts to put the stops on his own journey because he deliberately chooses the route directed by the 'hoary cripple' (line 2), whom he completely distrusts, when he reveals that his 'first thought was, [the cripple] lied in every word' (line 1). The 'hoary cripple' himself represents stasis since he can only stand guard and point the road with his staff. Furthermore, he is crippled. Throughout the poem, Roland's journey is not so much

[18] The list includes *King Lear*, *The Bible, Pilgrim's Progress, Fairy Tales, Romance and Chivalry* and *Inferno* (241-244).

presented as a 'continuous metonymy', as observed by Bloom, but in whole images that are constantly substituted by other whole images, all within Roland's vision and imagination. These images substitute each other and are linked only by their grotesqueness and the constant weight of stasis that prevents forward movement. The irony is that without delay and stasis, the journey cannot continue. Delay and stasis are brought about by Roland's refusal or inability to see, and it is also ironic that it is only when he refuses to see that he is able to move forward. In the poem, the journey moves forward when a new image appears, superseding the previous one, and this happens when Roland does not or cannot see or does not want to move. The position that Roland takes is what Bloom refers to as Roland's '*will-to-fail*, his perverse and negative stance that begins the poem' (italics Bloom's, *A Map of Misreading*, 107).

This is perhaps why, although his first thought is that the cripple is a malicious liar, he nevertheless follows his advice. This is the first of many occasions in the poem when Roland resists movement. He expects to fail, and this is seen in Stanzas IV to VI, in which Roland compares himself to a dying man who, upon facing tears and receiving farewells from friends, feels obligated to end his life's journey as it is too shameful and embarrassing to continue to live. Roland admits that he is not as 'fit' as the greater knights 'who to the Dark Tower's search addressed' (line 40) and that his best hope is to 'fail, as they' did (line 41), which implies that Roland is seeking failure.

Roland's decision to seek failure allows him to see the first image of the landscape. In Stanza VIII, he says that his whole day 'had been a dreary one at best, and dim / Was settling to its close' (ll. 46-47). Roland's day of wandering was coming to a close without his seeing or perceiving anything. Yet at dusk, after he has decided

to take the cripple's advice, he suddenly sees a flash of 'the plain catch its estray' (line 48). Bloom suggests that 'Roland is an estray',

> the word 'founded on *extra* + *vagare*, to wander beyond limits or out of the way. Roland is an estray, a hyperbolic wanderer, whose dominant trait is extravagance, the Binswangerian *Verstiegenheit*, the state of having climbed to a height from which one cannot descend safely.
>
> (*Map of Misreading*, 110)

The metaphorical forces its way into prominence in the poem when Bloom substitutes the estray for Roland[19]. Furthermore, the poem presents the double paradigmatic properties of darkness and absence of vision to allow Roland to perceive a new image 'a pace or two' (line 50) after he steps into the thoroughfare. Furthermore, when Roland looks back over his shoulder to look at the safe 'road,'t was gone' (line 52), and the dreary road he had been travelling the whole day had turned into nothing, 'grey plain all around: / Nothing but plain to the horizon's bound' (ll. 52-53). In this stanza, the poem prioritises metaphor when it disallows Roland to see his own past footsteps after he is able to see a new image. The total substitution of one landscape for another does not allow contiguous movement in his journey and forces the journey to continue through 'landscape', to borrow Bloom's reference, as mentioned some paragraphs earlier.

The poem is also specific in associating decay, death and stasis with vision and movement, and Roland moves closer to the Dark Tower by not seeing and not looking. Unlike the two poems discussed earlier, the symbols in 'Childe Roland' are not arranged in neat lexical fields that obediently function systematically to move the journeys forward. Roland's journey is different in that he moves via visions of landscape. Each landscape is superimposed by the next, and there are several changes

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[19] Adam Roberts refers to 'estray' as a 'stray animal', but unlike Bloom, he does not associate 'estray' with Roland (*Robert Browning, The Major Works,* Vol III, 756).

of landscapes till Roland finally and suddenly sees the Dark Tower. The poem contains many concrete images that can be read literally. However, where properties on the syntagmatic axis force movement in the two earlier poems, these very properties take a back seat. In five stanzas beginning from Stanza X, when Roland is given the first glimpse of the landscape, symbols of nature are described in terms that parallels Roland's journey, the first being the inability of plants to grow since 'nothing throve' (line 56). Hardy plants that attempt to exist, such as the thistle, grows 'ragged' (line 67), and any thistle stalk that dares to grow 'above its mates' had its head 'chopped: the bents / Were jealous else' (ll. 68-69). These two lines are the first of many which ascribe human qualities to everything that is non-human in the poem's landscape, and this topic will be discussed in detail later in this chapter.

For now, it is important to note that the growth of the tall thistle with the chopped head points to Roland's journey. The thistle that grows taller than its mates is able to see above, but before it can see too much, it is prevented from doing so. Throughout the poem Roland too has to grapple with seeing and not seeing. In the first landscape that Roland experiences, Roland is forced to see and experience the lack of growth where

> Penury, inertness and grimace,
> In some strange sort, were the land's portion. "See
> "or shut your eyes," said Nature peevishly,
> "It nothing skills: I cannot help my case:
> "'T is the Last Judgment's fire must cure this place,
> "Calcine its clods and set my prisoners free."
> (ll. 61-66)

In the poem, nature is ascribed with the human ability to observe and speak. However, like Roland, its power of movement is stunted and it admits that it cannot help itself and has to depend on the destruction and removal of life above the ground so that the unseen 'prisoners' below can be set free. It refers to how its clods must be calcined,

that is, burnt to powder, thus blending the separated lumps of earth into a whole. Like Roland, nature has to lose sight of what it can see to be able to free itself and move onto the next landscape. In this first landscape that Roland experiences, his journey is not only hindered by stunted plants and the lack of greenery but also by the poem's metonymic weakness. Although this first landscape lacks life, it is a complete and whole image. It is difficult to classify the properties that inhabit the landscape into lexical fields that fall on the syntagmatic axis. Even the image of the lone dead horse is whole, with 'his every bone a-stare' (line 76), in contrast to 'Ghent', where the horse is fragmented into many body parts. The dead horse's head is given attention in two lines, and even the head is presented as a whole, complete image: 'With that red gaunt and colloped neck a-strain, / And shut eyes underneath the rusty mane' (ll. 80-81). Signifiers that describe the landscape and its inhabitants are also words that point to signifieds that are absent because they are abstract. Moreover, they discourage growth, encourage stasis and are perceived as negative, including the words nothing, ignoble, penury, inertness, grimace, jealous, harsh, pashing, stiff, stupefied and wicked. The concrete images of the plants and the horse suffer a difficulty of movement and growth, as do the absent images of nature. All the symbols are personified too. Nature speaks to Roland 'peevishly', the plants are referred to as 'prisoners' by Nature, the grass 'grew as scant as hair / In leprosy', and the mud resembles congealed 'blood'. Even Roland himself attributes the human quality of wickedness to the dead horse, which he observes 'must be wicked to deserve such pain' (line 84). The image of the landscape lacks the force of metonymy and is made so whole that Roland's journey seems to be in stasis and he is unable to move forward. The many references to decay, dying and not seeing also prevent Roland's movement. Moreover, the 'stiff blind horse' (line 76) is described twice as not being

able to see, with its ‘shut eyes’ (line 81). With these implicit orders to not see, Roland chooses to shut his eyes in line 85 and turn his thoughts to his heart, which is seen in Stanza XV.

The first landscape that Roland experiences up to Stanza XV is the second of many steps that he takes from spaces that swing between outside and inside, the first being the change from the ‘dreary landscape’ he passes through before he meets the ‘hoary cripple’. From the outside, he enters the second landscape, as described in the previous paragraphs, through experience, or what Bloom refers to as ‘trial’ or ‘ordeal’. By Stanza XV, Roland moves into an even more inner or inward space when he shuts his eyes to recall ‘earlier, happier sights’ (line 87) from his past experiences. The images he sees are images of his already knighted friends. This third landscape he enters is fully replaced by the one he is situated in by a substitution of reversals. Where the second landscape is bereft of human life, human attributes are found in non-humans. However, in the third landscape, when Roland closes his eyes, he sees his friends, and he describes them with non-human attributes. His friend Cuthbert’s features are described with the colours of the sun and the earth, his ‘reddening face / Beneath its garniture of curly gold’ (ll. 91-92). Cuthbert’s hair is golden, and it is also the metal gold itself, which is lifeless when compared to the leprosied grass and chopped heads of thistle grass trying desperately to grow. Cuthbert’s hair cannot grow as it has no life because after all it is only a garniture. A garniture is also an old-fashioned term for ornaments normally attached to clothes, and it may also mean a harness for horses, so Cuthbert is thus prevented from moving. The deadness of the properties of the two metals, gold and iron (meant for harnessing horses) are later borrowed by Roland’s other friend Giles. Giles, the other knight, ‘the soul of honour’ (line 97), is given human traits. However, this is in the past because he is

subsequently hanged for being a traitor. In his imagination, Roland sees Giles as an upright soldier, 'frank as ten years ago' (line 98) when he was first knighted, but suddenly 'the scene shifts' (line 100). But the shifting scene is not Roland's conscious action, and the poem underscores this by using metonymy to cut off, or interrupt Roland's thoughts when Roland sees 'hangman-hands' (line 100) pinning a parchment onto Giles' breastplate. Giles is also denied movement, not only because his life has ended but because the parchment on his body echoes the lifelessness seen in Cuthbert's hair of gold and harness. The poem does not refer to what is written on the parchment but continues to attribute human senses to non-living things: 'His own bands / Read it' (ll. 101-102). It is not Roland who reads the parchment but the 'bands'. He chooses to refuse to see more of Giles and turns away, claiming that

> Better this present than a past like that:
> Back therefore to my darkening path again!
> No sound, no sight as far as eye could strain.
> Will the night send a howlet or a bat?
> I asked: when something on the dismal flat
> Came to arrest my thoughts and change their train.
> (ll. 103-108)

Roland prefers experiencing the present nightmare rather than recall the memory of his friends' fate. He prefers his 'darkening path', and in turning away from looking at one landscape, he is confronted with another. Another reversal occurs where a 'petty yet so spiteful' (line 115) little river suddenly appears and assumes human qualities. It is also given some animal qualities as it appears before Roland as 'unexpected as a serpent comes' (line 110). The reversals continue in Stanza XX, in which Roland sees shrubs as '[l]ow scrubby alders' kneeling over the river while '[d]renched willows flung themselves headlong in a fit / Of mute despair, a suicidal throng' (ll. 116-117). The suddenness of the appearance of the river, shrubs and plants present a whole

image that totally substitutes the previous landscape. The poem allows little room for the presence of strong groups of metonyms to flourish[20], and the absence of accidents is ensured by human beings in stasis and by dying shrubs and trees. The image of dying trees appears again later, in another landscape that Roland experiences, where

> Came a palsied oak, a cleft in him
> Like a distorted mouth that splits its rim
> Gaping at death, and dies while it recoils.
> (ll. 154-156)

There is a difference between the two types of trees that reside in the separate landscapes. The feminine suicidal willow is soft, bending and yielding to death, but the second tree is the once big, strong (but now 'palsied') oak that resists death in futility. The sturdy oak, in contrast to the bending willow, is also accorded the masculine pronoun 'him' when Roland sees that there is a 'cleft in him / Like a distorted mouth' (ll. 154-155). As the poem progresses, there is less movement and more deadness where the willows are dying and the oak is 'palsied'. The landscape that Roland is forced into when he opens his mind is total and whole because the willows and shrubs surround the river in masses; yet they are unable to stop the flow of the river:

> The river which had done them all the wrong,
> Whateve'er that was, rolled by, deterred no whit.
> (ll. 119-120)

Roland, however, manages to cross the river, and in one stanza, another landscape appears inside the waters. This whole landscape is concentrated inside the river, and in the poem Roland experiences this in one stanza, simultaneously forcing a metaphorical reading of his experience when he stands at the edge of the little river:

> Which, while I forded, ---good saints, how I feared

[20] Metonyms do exist in the poem, such as the cut-off thistle heads. However, these tropes discourage a future of growth and forward movement.

> To set my foot upon a dead man's cheek,
> Each step, or feel the spear I thrust to seek
> For hollows, tangled in his hair or beard!
> ---It may have been a water-rat I speared,
> But, ugh! it sounded like a baby's shriek.
>
> (ll. 121-126)

Several things happen within the stanza when Roland enters the watery landscape that hides beneath the river. First, the river, which Roland perceives initially to be 'petty' and spiteful' eventually allows him to see through its waters and thus to experience yet another trial. Despite his fear, Roland knows he has to cross the river and he tries to avoid treading on the faces of the dead below. In this landscape, he is forced to look at the horrific faces so as to avoid stepping on them, and this stanza epitomizes the whole of his journey—namely, that he has to look and see so as to avoid looking and seeing the very images he is afraid to look at and see.

Second, in this stanza also, metonymy and metaphor fight to move and also to paralyse the poem. The dead face in the stanza is described in synecdoche with 'cheek', 'hair' and 'beard'. Roland tries to avoid them and to step on the 'hollows' between the faces. The rhymes in this stanza, as in all the other stanzas, belong to the syntagmatic axis because of the combination of sounds. However, the assonance within these rhyming words forces an interpretation that is in keeping with the poem's determination to remain non-metonymic. Three of the rhymes contain assonance which echo the word 'see': cheek, seek and shriek. The remaining three echo the word 'ear' and what the function of the ear is (to hear): feared, beard and speared. The metonymic relations of these rhymes are insidiously overcome by the very results they produce and repeat, with the words to 'see' and to 'hear'. Thus, third and finally, the poem uses metaphor to underscore the necessity of seeing and/or not seeing and of hearing and/or not hearing.

The idea of movement in journeys in relation to seeing and not seeing in this compact stanza finds support in a belated[21] twentieth century novel, J. R. R. Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings*, when Frodo, Sam and Gollum journey towards Mount Doom (Tolkien's belated 'Dark Tower'), where the landscapes are extended versions of the landscapes surrounding the Dark Tower. This is seen especially in Part II of Tolkien's novel, appropriately titled *The Two Towers*, a direct allusion to Roland's sudden vision of 'two hills on the right, / Crouched like two bulls locked horn in horn in fight' (ll. 176-177). There are many allusions to the Dark Tower's landscapes, but the allusion to this 'petty' river is the one that Tolkien explores in relation to seeing and not seeing.

In the *The Two Towers*, when Frodo, Sam and Gollum cross the Dead Marshes, they find that they can see below their feet, inside the bog, the mangled faces of dead men, Orcs and Elves, and Sam cries out that '[t]here are dead things, dead faces in the water. Dead faces!' (*Lord of the Rings*, 653). It is no accident that Tolkien chooses to allow Gollum and the Hobbits to see only faces, not bodies, and this alludes directly to Browning's 'dead man's cheek', 'beard' and 'hair'. Gollum explains that the flickering light that Sam sees beneath the faces is 'fell light', which is the light that damns the warriors by disallowing their bodies to be at one with the earth so that their faces are left in the marsh and they can never rest in peace. They, like Roland's precursors, are a kind of 'living dead' because they can see belated questers. It is also significant that in both poem and novel, the dead men are dismembered at the neck. It is possible to interpret this as follows: the face is the part of the head that sees, hears, thinks and speaks. The head is the part of the body where imagination and creativity as well as reason and logic reside, while the body is

[21] Belated in relation to Browning and to Anglo-Saxon epic.

generally representative of sensibilities. The body, however, can act upon what the head thinks and speaks. Furthermore, in both poem and novel, the faces are looking upward. This is a terrible punishment because the failed and weak questers are eternally forced to see belated questers forging ahead, trampling over and on them during their journeys. They are forced to see but cannot move to action, as symbolized by the absent bodies. Unlike 'Ghent' and 'Pied Piper', where fragmentation forces movement in journeys, the fragmentation of whole bodies symbolizes a stasis that resists all movement. Where properties on the syntagmatic axis take the foreground in the two earlier poems, their presence in 'Childe Roland' is weak. Their presence forces metaphorical interpretations, as seen in the fragmentation of bodies. However, the presence of fragmentation, and therefore of metonymy, does nothing to push movement in the poem. If anything, it discourages movement because the bodies are missing.

As mentioned earlier, Roland chooses not to see, and in not seeing, he is presented with another trial, another landscape and eventually, he arrives at the Dark Tower. Similarly, Frodo is a reluctant quester, and it is he who eventually arrives at Mount Doom, leaving stronger, braver questers behind. Failed sojourners in the poem are great warriors, such as Cuthbert and Giles and the other unnamed heroic knights in 'The Band' (line 39). The dead faces in the novel do not belong to ordinary folk either but are shadows of great men, as Gollum explains:

> All dead, all rotten. Elves and Men and Orcs. The Dead Marshes. There was a great battle long ago, yes, so they told [me] when [I] was young. It was a great battle. Tall men with long swords, and terrible Elves, and Orcses shrieking […] You cannot reach them, you cannot touch them. […] I tried once; but you cannot reach them. Only shapes to see perhaps, not to touch.
>
> (*LOTR*, 653)

Gollum, unlike Roland, wants to see the dead faces and touch them, but he claims he 'cannot reach them', yet he instructs Frodo and Sam to 'not look in when the candles are lit' (*LOTR*, 653). Gollum's determination to see prevents him from moving forward in his journey, and this is why it is symbolic that he is doomed to live in underground caves for 600 years. On the other hand, Frodo is successful because like Roland, his journey can only move forward when he looks away from one image or landscape, thus allowing the next landscape to replace the previous one.

Frodo's journeys are described more concretely than Roland's because of the Ring that Frodo carries, and it is the workings of Frodo's Ring that may explain how Roland's metaphorical journey is able to move forward instead of spatially. The idea of seeing and not seeing is closely related to outside and inside spaces, and in *LOTR,* this association is made apparent by Frodo's relationship with the Ring. Like Roland, Frodo does not want to see horrific images. However, he feels uncontrollable urges to slip the Ring on his finger. With the Ring on, he cannot be seen, but he is forced to see horrific landscapes and figures. These landscapes, like those in 'Childe Roland', appear and disappear suddenly, and in *LOTR*, these appearances and disappearances occur only when the bearer puts on and takes off of the Ring. With the Ring on, Men, Elves and Orcs cannot see Frodo, so his physical being enters an inside realm. However, he is able to see images that are unseen by them, that belong to the outside, physical space. Furthermore, when Frodo is under the cover of the Ring, his nemesis, the Eye of Sauron, situated in the inside space of the Dark Tower, is able to identify Frodo's exact geographical position. Throughout the novel, Frodo struggles with putting on and taking off the Ring, and this concrete object helps him see the images and landscapes he wants to avoid seeing. The absence of the thing that forces Roland

to look at or look away makes it difficult to define what that thing actually is. Perhaps there is nothing.

In the novel, Frodo eventually arrives at Mount Doom because he has been walking throughout his journey. In the poem, except for the river crossing, there is a lack of evidence of walking and bodily movement. The verbs of forward movement so prolific in 'Ghent' and 'Pied Piper' are absent in this poem, and so are the verbs of stasis seen in 'Pied Piper'. Roland's journey moves by substitutions of landscapes that flux between inside and outside spaces. This is seen after Roland crosses the river, when the underwater landscape inside the 'petty' and 'spiteful' little river which holds the trapped faces of past heroes comes to an abrupt end. In a sudden moment, in the next stanza, Roland arrives at the bank opposite. However, the poem takes only one stanza to compress a whole landscape in two inner spaces—inside the river and also into the past. In an earlier stanza, when Roland enters an inner landscape in his mind, it is also the landscape of the past, with Cuthbert and Giles in that landscape. Similarly, in the compact Stanza XXI, where he crosses the river, there are horrific images to force him to look away by looking forward to a 'better country' (line 128) once he has 'forded' the river. The stanza allows metonyms to sneak in only to be used metaphorically since the faces cannot speak. Furthermore, metaphors push their way into the foreground when Roland thrusts his spear into the 'hollows' so that he can avoid stepping on the faces. The 'hollows' between the faces also symbolize empty spaces from which noise and voice are excluded, and voice, or utterance, belongs to the syntagmatic axis. To underscore the plight of the voiceless warriors, the speared water-rat's cries 'sounded like a baby's shriek'. They are more human; they are able to move, and at least, they alive although dying. This stanza is compact, but it contains a landscape that is whole. This stanza is also only one of several that make

direct references to Roland's physical movement when he 'forded' (line 121) the river and 'reached the other bank' (line 127). Once he reaches the other bank, Roland steps out of the inner space of the river and of the past to what he hopes is 'a better country' (line 128).

The new landscape that appears after he crosses the river is nebulous. Where the previous landscapes are amorphous, this landscape has descriptions of indistinct shapes being trapped in definable enclosures:

> Who were the strugglers, what war did they wage,
> Whose savage trample thus could pad the dank
> Soil to a plash? Toads in a poisoned tank,
> Or wild cats in a red-hot iron cage---
>
> The fight must so have seemed that fell cirque
> What penned them there, with all the plain to choose?
> No foot-print leading to that horrid mews,
> None out of it. Mad brewage set to work
> Their brains, no doubt, like galley slaves the Turk
> Pits for his pastime, Christians against Jews.
>
> (ll. 129-138)

Although Roland emerges from the inside space of the watery landscape onto dry land, the land itself is a self-contained paradigmatic but formless structure, where there is no evidence of anyone going into or out[22]. This formless structure cannot be broken by any properties on the syntagmatic axis because the landscape is 'dank soil' which has been trampled into a 'plash' (mire). The 'strugglers', presumably earlier warriors who fought fiercely, are given animalistic attributes when they are compared to poisoned toads and suffering wild cats trapped in intractable enclosures. The landscape in its totality is a 'cirque', an arena where gory fights are staged. It is also described as a 'horrid mews', which provides several metaphorical meanings of

[22] Presumably those who entered this realm before Roland, such as his companions and other questers, have entered it but now cannot leave. Roland himself observes that there is '[n]o foot-print leading to that horrid mews, / None out of it' (ll.135-136).

entrapment. Originally French, the word ‘mews’ refers to the moulting of hawks and falcons. It also refers to the caging of such birds when they are kept for breeding and falconry. Such birds are tethered, and there are often partitions in the mews to avoid the risk of infection between the birds. The warriors are compared to brave birds favoured by royalty but are reduced to desperate toads and wild cats when they are cornered in a fight. Another reference to animal entrapment is found in this stanza, when Roland observes that the strugglers are ‘penned’ in the landscape. A stanza later, in Stanza XXIV, the animalistic image of the human is reduced to total inanimation, thus completing the entrapment of the human being, when inanimate man-made objects assume human attributes:

> What bad use was that engine for, that wheel,
> Or brake, not wheel---that harrow fit to reel
> Men’s bodies out like silk? with all the air
> Of Tophet’s tool, on earth left unaware,
> Or brought to sharpen its rusty teeth of steel.
> (ll. 140-144)

The reversal is further grounded when even man-made tools are also given human attributes, as when the ‘brake’ (a toothed machine for processing flax) is described as having ‘teeth of steel’. The brake and the wheel are able to ‘reel [human] bodies out like silk’. Wholeness overcomes fragmentation when the fragmented bodies are compressed together to form threads and cloths of silk.

As the poem progresses, the landscapes that Roland experiences become more nebulous as the images within morph and integrate into each other, thereby providing landscapes which become more whole and less fragmented. This is seen in how Roland views the land in Stanza XXV, when he first sees ‘a bit of stubbed ground, once a wood, / Next a marsh, it would seem, and now mere earth’ (ll. 145-146). At

this time in the journey, there is an absence of dying and decaying plants except for the 'palsied oak' with the cleft, which is already dead:

> Bog, clay and rubble, sand and stark black dearth,
> Now blotches rankling, coloured gay and grim,
> Now patches where some leanness of the soil's
> Broke into moss or substances like boils;
> (ll. 150-153)

The bog, clay, rubble and sand are blended together, and any space in between is also filled by moss or 'substances like boils'. The several landscapes that replace one another become more shapeless and contain less life, as the landscape takes on an indefinite shape. It is at this point that Roland observes that evening has arrived, but he is 'as far as ever from the end' (line 157). It is also here that Roland again cannot see because of the dusk, and he cannot 'point [his] step further' (line 159). Just as he is about to enter into the dark inside space of the night, in a landscape that has no life, he is suddenly given a vision when a 'great black bird' (line 160) flies by, forcing him to look up, and thus he sees the mountains. The bird and the mountains appear suddenly, in the dark and when Roland least expects it. As mentioned earlier, his journey is moved through substitution of landscapes and also through the movement of outside and inside spaces. This is seen in his admission of how he experiences being entrapped in an enclosed space and is subsequently able to see the vision. He is able to see and comprehend the whole landscape in a flash:

> When, in the very nick
> Of giving up, one time more, came a click
> As when a trap shuts---you're inside the den!
>
> Burningly it came on me all at once,
> This was the place! Those two hills on the right
> (ll. 172-176)

Bloom observes that 'paradoxically, this entrapment alone makes possible a fulfillment of his quest' (*A Map of Misreading*, 111-112). However, he does not say how entrapment alone makes Roland's fulfillment possible. What he does suggest is that '[m]etaphors for art as an activity tend to center upon a particular place, where a heightened sense of presence can manifest itself' (112). This heightened manifested presence is the place where the Dark Tower is, but it may not be a physical place. This is why critics have generally suggested that the Dark Tower is a vision rather than a physically present tower. The Dark Tower is described in a few deflating lines:

> The round squat turret, blind as the fool's heart,
> Built of brown stone, without a counterpart
> In the whole world.
>
> (ll. 182-184)

The Dark Tower is only a small short, round, brown 'turret' standing amongst majestic hills. Here, it is relevant to recall an earlier quote in this chapter, in which Bloom asserts that the 'the Tower *is* Dark'

> because its stands for the possibilities and therefore also the limitations of metaphor as such, which means for the blindness of all inside/outside perspectivisms. The paradox of perspectivism, as outlined in [Bloom's] previous chapter, is that it depends wholly on the subject/object dualism, while attempting to be a way of seeing more clearly.
>
> (*A Map of Misreading*, 113)

Bloom's failed metaphor is a necessary trope in the poem, without which the poem remains in stasis. Throughout the poem, the presence of metonymy is overcome by substitutions and reversals. Even at the close, when Roland sees the Dark Tower, he compares his experience to a sailor who is told by the 'tempest's mocking elf', who points to the 'unseen' rock (ll. 184-185). Roland's journey ends with yet another direction pointed out to him, the first being the hoary cripple's. The cripple's direction is a metonymic one (he points to the 'ominous tract'), but when Roland finally sees

the Dark Tower, he describes the experience as a metaphorical one, which is metonymic anyway, with the tempest elf pointing (metonymically) the 'unseen shelf' to a sailor (metaphorically, because 'shelf' and 'sailor' are left open to symbolic interpretations). Roland initially disbelieves the metonymic direction, and yet he follows it. At the close of the poem, he deploys metaphors to articulate his indescribable experience.

Bloom's interpretation of the final three stanzas is that Roland, like Browning, demonstrates strength in belatedness. The strength of the poem, however, outdoes its protagonist and its poet. Roland's belated journey foresees future journeys, in which he will be positioned as a precursor in a cycle of repetition, as represented in the poem by the repetition of substituted landscapes. Bloom asserts that repetition is contiguous and thus metonymic. However, when compared to 'Ghent' and 'Pied Piper', the metonymic relations in 'Childe Roland' are weak, and they submit themselves to whole substitutions. Roland's journey is structured like a map, and this is the main difference between his journey and those in the previous two poems. The poem itself is belated, looking at its precursor journey-poems and seeing all. Roland misreads all the time, and each subsequent misreading is a failure when he cannot act upon the vision revealed to him in each landscape. Even the final landscape of absolute vision and hearing eventually eludes him. He cannot articulate the knowledge bestowed on him and can only blow his slug-horn. Roland is empowered with an insight that, as de Man observes,

> has to undo the explicit results of a vision that is able to move toward the light only because, being already blind, it does not have to fear the power of this light. But the vision is unable to report correctly what it has perceived in the course of its journey.
>
> (*Blindness and Insight*, 106).

Roland finds it impossible to articulate his experiences, which is perhaps why the poem ends. He cannot 'report correctly' what he experiences during his journey, and when in one moment he sees and knows, he is unable to describe the experience the way he comprehends it. According to Bloom, Browning too had a moment of absolute vision while composing the poem, and Browning too had to 'yield' to this 'momentous […] vision' (*The Ringers in the Tower: Studies in Romantic Tradition*, 40). This implies that Browning too had resisted seeing and had to eventually surrender to that moment of vision. Browning's vision is articulated through the Roland poem as Roland's own vision in turn is uttered through the music which announces his arrival: '*Childe Roland to the Dark Tower came*'. Like the piper's pipe, the utterance comes through the music and is therefore second-hand. But it is an utterance (*parole*) nevertheless. Perhaps its poet, Browning, sneaked metonymy and the syntagmatic axis in at the final moment, thus proving what de Man attempts to do with his reading of Proust decades later, namely, that metonymy is insidious in its latent presence within any poem or novel and that metonymy is more tenacious than metaphor.

Roland's horn is no ordinary bugle. It is a slug-horn, which, according to the Oxford dictionary, has two meanings. The first is that it is an old-fashioned term, which has been corrupted to the present 'slogan'. The slogan is doubly metonymic because, first, it is in the nature of slogans to be uttered repeatedly. The slogan is also a metonymy because it is very often a compact idea standing for a larger issue. The second meaning of 'slug-horn' is that it is a trumpet[23]. Roland's horn is more powerful

[23] Adam Roberts defines 'slug' as a cow's horn that is stunted or deformed, and he suggests that the idea of 'making a trumpet out of a deformed piece of nature has clear resonance for the poem as a whole' (*Robert Browning, The Major Works*, Vol. III, 757), presumably because it is in keeping with the recurring images of deformed nature in the poem.

than the piper's flute because Roland knows, unlike the piper, that he is belated *and* a precursor all at once. The piper blows and his music speaks to the children and the rats, and even after they follow him, he does not experience the vision that Roland does. Roland's horn does not pretend to influence belated questers because his slug-horn does not address anybody in particular. It announces that 'to the Dark Tower [Roland] *came*', and not 'comes', and Roland's presence is thus already past. His journey is indescribable and unwriteable, and is kept that way with the lack of contiguity in the poem.

According to Bloom, Roland's journey is a trial by landscape, and Roland's ultimate trial, his 'true ordeal', is not by landscape but by the 'return of precursors' (*Map of Misreading*, 114). Bloom means to say that the journey is a trial by landscape, but the reward (punishment?) is the true ordeal, that is, the trial-by-return-of-precursors. Roland is subjected to repetitive failures and his 'reward' is the ultimate vision of his precursors, who are swathed 'in a sheet of flame' (line 201). The precursors are not isolated but fragmented parts of a whole, an entity made whole by the 'sheet of flame'. Roland's repetitions of failures are also metaphors for repetitions of reading, misreading and re-misreading. Roland wills repetition and he wills failure, but he does not will his own journey. This is done by the poem, which is the repository for tropes that jostle with one another for the driver's seat. Roland's final vision contains the ultimate trope fight, where two metaphors appear suddenly before Roland, the first being the nondescript brown turret that is the Dark Tower and the second being the sheet of flame with the vision of precursors. The Dark Tower is a metaphor for that vision, and that vision is also a metaphor for precursors. These two metaphors appear together in Roland's single moment of vision, thus fragmenting the wholeness of the vision. Furthermore, these two metaphors are next to each other

inside Roland's vision, thus there exists at the close of the poem, a comic situation[24] in which two metaphors become synecdoches that point metonymically to one another. Additionally, Roland's slug-horn, in its corrupted form, the 'slogan', lends itself to both *langue* and *parole* since slogans are often used in banners as texts, and as discussed earlier, they are often uttered repeatedly. A poem that is generally read as strongly metaphorical does indeed then depend on metonymy as its impetus for movement, although this is achieved with the necessarily accompanying stasis.

To conclude this chapter on my reading of *Childe Roland to the Dark Tower Came*, of the three poems addressed in Part I, the Ghent and Pied Piper poems are strongly metonymic, while the Roland poem, being strongly metaphorical, presents a strong case for de Man's idea that metonymy provides the foundation of the metaphor. Metaphor is strong in the poem because of the power of metonymy which is embedded in the poem, which can be seen in the seemingly unimportant roles of the cripple, the elf and the two mountains. These silently point to journeys that Roland undertakes so that he finally arrives at the ultimate metaphor of the Dark Tower. The movement of the poem, and thus its journey, is facilitated by metonymy. The power of metaphor in the poem is seen in the succession of super-imposed dreamscapes substituting one another, where there is no possibility of returning back to the previous image. The Roland poem thus works in the manner of a palimpsest, and this is where Part II of my thesis comes to the fore, with poems that feature art, which in turn foregrounds entrapment, enclosure and stasis. The necessary binaries of journey/movement, which is stasis, will be examined in Part II.

In reply to Bloom's quote at the beginning of this chapter ('what does it *mean* to be obsessed by this poem?'), I find that this thesis is forced, if not subtly persuaded,

[24] It is possible that this poem can be read as a kind of Absurdist farce.

to be obsessed with this poem in later chapters. It is possible, then, that in reading the Roland poem as an allegory of my own reading, Browning's later poems discussed in Parts II and III are compelled to refer back to the values and insights which this poem presents. This chapter thus becomes necessary not by my own choice but because it puts itself in the foreground after the completion of the two initial journey chapters. Moreover, this poem is the link between journey and entrapment. It also plays a role in flight and freedom after entrapment, and most significantly, its tropes echo the belated poem *The Ring and the Book,* which occupies the final part of the thesis and also contributes to the conclusion.

Now to close Part I. The three journey poems discussed in Part I have one common figure, that of the journey and how movement is initiated and sustained. The discussion of the journey in 'Childe Roland' as a map and a trial/ordeal allows a further exploration into two areas. The first is that it allows for an examination of how other Browning poems without obvious sojourners journeying through the poem can also be seen as cryptic maps and trials. The second is that if these journeys are considered acts of reading, writing and interpretation, then other Browning poems may reveal more insights into the problems of unreadability and unwriteability.

Part II

The Art Poems: Stasis and Movement

Chapter Five

‘Andrea del Sarto’

Chapter Six

‘My Last Duchess’

Chapter Seven

‘Fra Lippo Lippi’

Part II, Chapter Five

'Andrea del Sarto'

> To represent the limbs of a body entirely at rest is as much the sign of an excellent artist as to render them all alive and in action.
>
> (Leon Battista Alberti, *On Painting*, 73)

In this section, Part II, which contains three chapters, three poems will be discussed in detail with regard to the relation between entrapment and reading and between writing and interpretation. The three chosen poems do not feature physical journeys, but they are poems which feature speakers on trial. The poems also feature journey as flight and escape. The accidents that problematise journeys seen in the previous part take shape as stasis and entrapment in this chapter. 'Andrea del Sarto', 'My Last Duchess' and 'Fra Lippo Lippi' are poems that, critics generally agree, comment on art, and they are included in this part for the reason that the speakers and auditors involved in these poems undertake some sort of flight and are in some way related to stasis and entrapment. Journey becomes flight when one is trapped in the first place. This is best exemplified by the Alberti quote at the beginning of this chapter, namely, that movement and inertia are somehow two sides of the same coin, much like journey and stasis. These poems are also chosen because they comment on art and lend themselves to interpretations of interpretation.

In the poem 'Andrea del Sarto', Andrea can hardly be considered a sojourner as he does not move out from the interior of his own dwelling. His experience is not a map, like Roland's, but a trial of self-seeking failure and a will-to-failure. In the poem, Andrea deliberately stays inside enclosures, while bitching about his contemporaries whose 'reach' naturally exceed their 'grasp / Or what's a heaven for?'

(line 97) and dreaming of reaching ‘a heaven that’s shut to’ him (line 84). These two lines reveal two qualities that pervade the poem, that of enclosed places and the concept of the absent. Heaven is not within his reach, and therefore is absent, and his paintings are soulless because, like de Man’s Proust-Marcel and unlike Browning’s Lippi, he refuses to leave the secure confines of the house. Closed spaces and the absent both belong to the paradigmatic axis, and this is in keeping with Andrea’s idea of perfection in art. To explore this in detail in the poem, I will provide a short background from which an explication can be made as to how closed spaces and the absent undermine Andrea’s pursuit of perfection. This background looks briefly at Giorgio Vasari’s account of the painter, written in 1550 and from which Browning was inspired to write the poem, and also Ruskin’s thoughts on perfection in art and architecture.

According to Vasari in ‘ANDREA DEL SARTO, A most excellent Painter of Florence’, Andrea was a profound genius without equal during his time. However,

> a certain timidity of spirit and a sort of humility and simplicity in his nature made it impossible that there should be seen in him that glowing ardour and that boldness which, added to his other qualities, would have made him truly divine in painting; for which reason he lacked those adornments and that grandeur and abundance of manners which have been seen in many other painters. His figures, however, for all their simplicity and purity, are well conceived, free from errors, and absolutely perfect in every respect [and although his drawings are] simple, all that he coloured is rare and truly divine.
>
> (*Lives of the Painters, Sculptors and Architects*, Vol. I, 823)

Vasari praises perfection in art, which he likens to the divine, although he admits that the error-free paintings of Andrea lack the life and soul which can be observed in the works of Andrea’s contemporaries. Vasari does not attempt to explain the reasons for

the absence of the 'grandeur and abundance of manners' in Andrea's figures, although he provides some fodder for Browning's imagination with his descriptions of Lucrezia's abusive role in developing Andrea's 'timidity of spirit'. Vasari writes that upon marrying her, Andrea 'had more than enough to do for the rest of his life, and much more trouble than he had suffered in the past' (831). Yet there is evidence that he worshipped Lucrezia and this is seen in many of his paintings, in which 'almost all the heads of women that he made resembled her' (836). Vasari also concluded that although Andrea had many disciples, many did not stay with him, and that it was not Andrea's fault but that of his wife, 'who, tyrannizing arrogantly over them all, and showing no respect to a single one of them, made all their lives a burden' (854).
Andrea bore the abuses because he was 'more influenced by the sighs and prayers of his wife than by his own necessities' (838), and Vasari felt that he 'must conclude, then, that Andrea showed poor spirit, […] contenting himself with little.' (855). There is a subtle hint that Andrea is masochistic, and this is perhaps why Richard D. Altick refuses to accept the 'received interpretation that Andrea is simply the victim of timidity or weakness'. This, to Altick, seems to 'fall far short of the whole truth' ('"Andrea del Sarto": The Kingdom of Hell is within', 225). The discussion in this chapter tends to agree with Altick when he suggests that Browning succeeds in expressing a 'picture of a man whose capacity is tragically insufficient for even his momentary comfort' (225) and that Andrea suffers from self-deception. Like Roland, he does not or cannot see.

Opposing Vasari's opinion that a soulless painting with technical perfection can be called 'divine' is Ruskin's insistence on imperfection in art as a quality closer to the divine. Referring to the ornaments in a typical English room, he observes that 'these perfectnesses are signs of a slavery' (*On Art and Life*, 15) that copies faithfully

but lack the 'signs of life and liberty of [the] workman' (16) who fashions the work of art. He reiterates later that the 'demand for perfection is always a sign of a misunderstanding of the ends of art' (26). Just as Vasari immortalizes Andrea's paintings in his account, Ruskin looks to Turner and Andrea's rival Michelangelo as great artists who were able to finish works with 'exquisite care' for 'it requires consummate knowledge to finish consummately, and we must take their thoughts as they are able to give them' (22). Browning's Andrea, as Altick observes, has the knowledge but is unable to transfer this knowledge into his figures. Furthermore, Ruskin warns that 'consummate finish' is not to be confused with perfect art and that 'no great man ever stops working till he has reached the point of failure' (26). Andrea's relationship with failure is two-fold in that he knows he has failed even though he has obtained technical perfection, and according to Altick, this self-knowledge is tragic, thus the title of his chapter, '"Andrea del Sarto": The Kingdom of Hell is Within'. Altick examines Andrea's tragedy on spiritual, ethical and psychological grounds, but he is also sympathetic to the fate that Andrea faces although he does not go as far as to see him as heroic. Rather, Altick prefers to credit Browning with poetic 'artistry [that] intensifies the ultimate psychological revealment', this revelation pointing to Andrea's 'full emotional depth' (226).

My chapter is also interested in Andrea's life as a failure, although it will not go as far as to consider it a tragedy, as claimed by Altick (who suggests that Andrea's life is tragic and mentions this several times, on pages 226, 229 and 238). In this chapter, I intend to develop Altick's idea of the importance of the word 'within' in his title chapter in relation to the journey trope discussed in the earlier chapter, with the accompanying problems of stasis and enclosed spaces. Altick's persuasion is that Andrea's failure is psychological and emotional, and he points to a series of enclosing

structures that pervade the poem, which he calls 'hand-within-hand' images which are necessary in sustaining 'an irony initiated in the early stages of the poem' (230). This is of course in keeping with my interest in movement and stasis, as seen in Part I, which have now regressed into entrapment in Part II with my discussion of the art poems. At the beginning of the poem, Andrea takes Lucrezia's hand in his and likens their cupped hands to a woman snuggling against a man's breast (ll. 21-22). Altick observes an extension of this image throughout the poem:

> [t]he symbolic meaning is determined by whose hand holds whose or what, and in this case, God's hand encloses Andrea's (49), whose hand encloses Lucrezia's (14, 21-2), which will enclose the money Andrea expects from the patron (8-9) and which she in turn will hold for the cousin.
>
> ('"Andrea del Sarto": The Kingdom of Hell is within', 230)

In the poem, the extended hand-within-hand image is supported by other images of closed spaces and entrapment, and it points to Andrea's pursuit of Lucrezia's attention and love. The qualities in Lucrezia that he wants directed at himself are those that are missing in his figures, such as desire, life, animation and soul. Andrea pursues these elusive qualities in Lucrezia, believing that they can bring life to his paintings. However, the more he pursues, the more these qualities elude him. In the poem, these qualities are doubly absent for Andrea in that they are intangible and can only work as metaphors and symbols for him, and they are absent from his relationship with Lucrezia. Like the failed questers in 'Childe Roland', he is doomed to see and desire what he cannot appropriate. Throughout the poem, Andrea attempts to entrap Lucrezia while he gives her permission to leave him, and the pull and push is generated in the poem by means of the tension of movement between enclosed and outside spaces and of the tension between paradigmatic and syntagmatic properties.

The framing or attempted entrapment by Andrea can be observed in the first three lines, when Andrea attempts to persuade an unwilling Lucrezia to sit down.

> But do not let us quarrel any more,
> No, my Lucrezia; bear with me for once:
> Sit down and all shall happen as you wish.
>
> (ll. 1-3)

However, even before the first three lines are uttered, the poem already elicits sympathy for Andrea, and this sympathy runs throughout the poem because of the epithet given to the 'faultless' painter in the title. This means that before the poem begins, the whole poem orientates itself to sympathise with the speaker. Browning is a poet who chooses his titles carefully, and this is seen, for example, in the longish title 'The Bishop orders his Tomb at St. Praxed's Church', where the word 'orders' orientates the poem as to how the speaker is to be perceived. The tone of authority in the word 'orders' is absent in 'Andrea del Sarto (called 'The Faultless Painter')'. Yet there is metonymic persuasion in the title because the Andrea title lends itself to being an address while the Bishop title lends itself to being a statement. This title states that he is ordering his tomb at St Praxed's, thus ordering the poem to place the power in the Bishop, who will be in authority. In 'Andrea del Sarto', the title takes the authority away from Andrea by announcing him to be a faultless painter, thus giving another kind of power to the poem. As the Bishop 'orders', he speaks—he is given the authority of speech. Andrea is silent in the title, and the passive verb underscores his lack of authority and power. Nonetheless, both are subjected to the power of language. Andrea is also objectified in the title. The Bishop title is a complete sentence while the Andrea title is incomplete and fragmented, the complete form possibly being '[This is the life of] Andrea del Sarto [often] (called 'the faultless painter'). The wholeness of the Bishop title extends to his full life and his soon-to-completed tomb. The fragmentary title accorded to Andrea points to his incomplete life. By the time

Andrea utters his opening lines, the poem forces a judgment on the two quarrellers: the auditor Lucrezia must be in the wrong because Andrea is ‘faultless’. That Browning is deliberate in his choice of words is also seen in how he refers to Andrea as ‘faultless’ and not ‘excellent’ or ‘perfect’, which are the words Vasari used to describe Andrea and his work. In these titles, Browning uses the metonymic tool to produce pre-conceived moral states in his speakers. By the time Andrea utters his first three lines, he is more convincing as the wronged lover in the quarrel because he is ‘faultless’, which also means ‘blameless’. Furthermore, the tone of the first line is pleading and placating. The second and third lines of the poem bear power and strength, and these qualities could have given Andrea more aggression, but this power is diluted because of the title and the opening line. The title is therefore a strategy to keep Andrea as blameless (faultless) as possible so that his attempt to entrap Lucrezia is justified. He is after all, the wronged party.

However, these three opening lines betray the first signs of Andrea’s attempt to restrain Lucrezia. Even before the poem has journeyed more than a few lines, Andrea tries to capture Lucrezia and make her sit. He tries to stop her movement when he tells her to ‘bear with me for once’, that is, to stop, stay and to ‘sit down’ to listen to him. His desire for her to ‘sit’ is not only for her to listen but to later sit for his paintings. His ‘No, my Lucrezia’ is not emphatic or aggressive, although the word ‘No’ is strategically placed where it must be capitalized. The first mention of enclosure comes early in the poem, in line eight, when Andrea promises to ‘shut the money into [Lucrezia’s] small hand’. He intends not to ‘put’ the money into her hand but to ‘shut’ it in, perhaps in the futile hope that she will not fritter this money away on the cousin. The money is also a kind of bribe to make her stay, and it is also a symbol of her love, which he has to buy anyway. In his chapter ‘“Andrea del Sarto”:

The Kingdom of Hell is Within', Altick points out that her name 'is etymologically suggestive of profit and riches' (229). Unfortunately Lucrezia's commercial power does not extend to Andrea. She is a lucrative commodity only for her cousin in the poem, and according to Vasari's account, for her father and her sisters. The money, if 'shut', also points to Andrea's own attitude towards his art-pieces, when, once technical perfection is achieved, the art is completed and does not need improvement. Andrea reveals this when he 'boasts' that he is able to 'paint a little thing' (74) that others 'dream of, all their lives / ---Dream? Strive to do, and agonize to do, / And fail in doing' (ll. 69-71). The irony is in the context on which Andrea's boast is based—he mentions the 'little thing' painted to remind Lucrezia of her 'carelessly passing with [her] robes afloat' (75) and messing his still-wet painting[25].

While on the topic of 'robes', Andrea's name 'del Sarto' alludes to a family line of tailors and dealers in cloth, and it can be inferred that Andrea's attempts to protect, shelter and ultimately entrap Lucrezia are successful since in the poem she is wearing a robe. The robe, ironically, turns on its own master because it is soft enough to cover Lucrezia but not strong enough to keep her from wandering. It is also soft enough to cover her modesty without hiding her curves, her erotic 'serpentining beauty, rounds on rounds' (line 26), which Andrea is able to see and desire but can hardly touch and cannot own. His hunting tool, the robe, thus turns against its owner, making him more aware of the prize it catches but that its owner can never keep. The robe in which Andrea dresses Lucrezia is also the one that is in complicity with Lucrezia's careless treatment of Andrea's artworks. Andrea knows that his 'boast' is hollow when he admits that 'the others [who] strive' (line 73), 'yet do so much less' (line 77) produce far superior works because 'less is more' (line 78). This is in

[25] Woolford and Karlin note the recurring topic of the relationship between painter and subject, and they cite poems such as *The Ring and the Book*, 'A Woman's Last Word', 'Any Wife' and 'The Statue and the Bust', although it is observed that there is none so obsessive as Andrea (*The Poems of Robert Browning*, Vol III, 297).

keeping with Ruskin's claim that the best works of art are never complete and that 'if we pretend to have reached either perfection or satisfaction, we have degraded ourselves and our work' (*On Art and Life*, 39). In the poem, Andrea has reached satisfaction with regard to his paintings because they are technically perfect. However, he has not reached satisfaction with regard to his personal fulfillment as man and husband. He is blind to Ruskin's observation of the value and beauty of Gothic art, which shows signs of 'life and liberty', and blind to Vasari's recommendation of 'boldness' and force in paintings. Nowhere in the poem does Andrea long for these qualities in his paintings. However, he longs for these very qualities he sees in Lucrezia to be directed at himself. There is no doubt that Andrea objectifies her, and this is seen in how he wants to her to sit for his commissioned work. However, there is a deeper implication in this objectification. The poem does not reveal Andrea's intention to project Lucrezia's warmth and enthusiasm for life in his paintings. This, of course, does not mean that Andrea has no such intentions. His attempt to trap Lucrezia so that he is able to draw out her qualities shows that he desires them. However, his attempts backfire because during the process of entrapment, those very qualities cannot escape her. My suggestion of entrapment finds support in Loy D. Martin's suggestion that Andrea's 'consistent recourse to images of enclosure and possession reveals a hermetic mind incapable of meaningful intercourse' (*Browning's Dramatic Monologues*, 145).

Throughout the poem, Andrea struggles to win her smiles and her love, knowing that she will eventually go out to meet the cousin later. The poem itself struggles to help Andrea. To examine this, the idea of outside space and enclosure/entrapment must be examined in close detail. In my previous paragraph, there is the example of the hand-in-hand image which Andrea himself generates when

Lucrezia eventually agrees to sit down after the quarrel, he takes her hand in his and tells her ‘Your soft hand is a woman itself, / And mine the man’s bared breast she curls inside’ (ll. 21-22). Andrea uses synecdoche and metaphor to present his idealistic image of his masculine ability to protect her. Her hand inside his deploys the use of synecdoche, but the image of the woman curling inside the man’s chest is the metaphor of the larger hand-in-hand image. It must not be missed that the second line contains another synecdoche, that of the man’s ‘bared breast’. The two compact lines are successful in presenting the image and concept of protection and love, meaning that the image is complete. However, when the image of the hand-in-hand is placed next to the image of the woman curled inside the man’s breast, there is a loss of certain qualities in Andrea’s original idea of protection (man using his body to protect woman). Andrea’s original idea, or ideal, is having Lucrezia physically close to him so that they will be ‘both of one mind, as married people’ (line 16). Andrea is unconsciously using metonymy, seen in desiring nearness to Lucrezia, to attain wholeness, seen in ‘one mind’.

The end-image of Lucrezia curling inside his bared breast lacks the force of the thought that is so powerful in the hand-in-hand image. This is because in the first image of a hand inside a hand, both are complete beings. The hand inside is ‘woman itself’, and the outer hand, the man. The second image is disconcertingly incomplete because Andrea’s hand is only ‘the man’s bared breast’, not a whole man. However, ‘she [who] curls inside’ is a whole woman. The objectification of the woman continues in such an image because the man’s breast becomes the frame and the woman is then the main subject. It can be supposed that Andrea conceived this image because his heart, as seen in(side) the man’s bared breast, is empty and he would like to fill it up with her heart. In this case, his desire to entrap her whole being is revealed

when her whole person curls in his bared breast, next to his heart. The paradigm (metaphor) is thus formed when the image within the image is linked through metonymy. It is certain that Andrea's metaphor will fail because his metaphor turns back on its creator to symbolize the near impossibility of Andrea receiving any kind of response from Lucrezia. Her being objectified in the image encourages her flight from enclosure because she becomes the subject of a painting and art works are meant to be looked at. Andrea already knows this, yet he wants her to sit in for his paintings, knowing that her real physical self is already 'everybody's moon, / Which everybody looks on and calls his' (ll. 29-30)[26]. The Duke of Ferrara knows the power of good art too, and perhaps this is why it is not an artist like Andrea who paints Ferrara's last duchess, but Pandolf, an artist who could possibly be one of those whom Andrea describes, 'strives' and struggles in comparison to him.

The hand-in-hand image is only one of several images of enclosure. Another is Andrea's efforts to place Lucrezia within frames other than the one described in the previous paragraph. He does this continually in the poem in an effort to immortalize her. Since he cannot capture her qualities concretely on canvas in the way that Pandolf has immortalized all the sensuous qualities of the duchess for the duke, he attempts to immortalize her in a more concrete way. In an extension of the hand-in-hand image, Andrea makes a bold attempt to use not one but two hands to 'frame [Lucrezia's] face in [her] hair's gold' (line 175). Andrea's attempt to capture her face reveals a double anxiety, that of catching the transient beauty afforded to him while she is physically near him, and also of the lucrative value of his painting if he is able to capture the essence of the beauty emanating from her person at that moment. Her hair is described as 'gold', and presumably, if he is able to capture her essence, he will not

[26] This line perhaps hints at Andrea's 'weary jealousy', according to Leonee Ormond ('Browning and Painting', 192).

only be rewarded by the monetary worth the painting generates but he may also be able to capture a part of her physicality that hopefully may translate into soul and life in his paintings. The word 'gold' is superlative, it is precious. However, it is ironic that this could be the quality that will endure since gold is also malleable and therefore changeable. It is metal and thus non-organic, and it is lifeless. Andrea is therefore trying to capture the quality that is lifeless, and it is no wonder that, if this quality can be transferred onto canvas, his figures will not be imbued with the force of life and soul. Lucrezia herself gives Andrea the opportunity to frame her at the beginning of the poem when, after the quarrel, she sits by the window to look out for the cousin. However, he lets this opportunity slip by going into the frame himself and sitting by the window with her to hold her hand and 'look a half-hour forth on Fiesole / Both of one mind' (lines 15-16). In his eagerness to be 'of one mind' and of course of 'one heart' with her, he steps into the frame, thus becoming part of the content of the frame and trapping himself within.

Another instance of Andrea's love for closed spaces is seen when he says that the convent-wall 'holds the trees safer, huddled more inside; / The last monk leaves the garden; days decrease' (lines 43-44). These two lines illustrate Andrea's struggle against admitting his own fear when 'the last monk' leaves the convent to face the autumn, presumably walking out to meet danger since the trees inside the walls are 'safer'. In the previous chapter, de Man's reading of Proust was discussed, in which Marcel prefers an '"inner world" associated with shelter, bowers and closed rooms' (*AR*, 65). Andrea, like Marcel, is the reader reluctant to leave the sheltered enclosure, and they are in contrast to both Father Lippi, who breaks out of the monastery, and Browning's Caliban, who is prisoner in his own home, which is not sheltered but an open, sunny isle. Marcel does leave the closed room eventually, but he goes out into

the garden and into another enclosure too because he does not want to 'leave off [reading] his book':

> As I did not wish to leave off my book, I would go on with it in the garden, under the chestnut-tree, in a little sentry-box of canvas and matting, in the farthest recesses of which I used to sit and feel that I was hidden from the eyes of anyone who might be coming to call upon the family.
>
> (Marcel Proust, 'Swann's Way', from *Remembrance of Things Past*, 63)

Marcel, however, finds some sort of enlightenment in going out of the house despite entering another enclosure in the garden, the 'sentry-box' and 'hiding-hole'. Earlier in my Roland chapter, I made references to how Roland gets to see the next landscape only when he refuses to see. Similarly, Marcel goes out into the garden with the intention of not seeing since he does not want to leave off his book; he, however, obtains 'philosophic richness' (63). It is akin to the 'momentous vision' (*The Ringers in the Tower: Studies in Romantic Tradition*, 40) that Bloom claims happened to Browning when composing the Roland poem. The Saint Praxed bishop goes a step further by ordering his own tomb after he has already seen everything in his life. Andrea however, is destined not to see.

Andrea's idea of safety within enclosed spaces is reinforced regularly throughout the poem, not least when he confesses in line 145 that he does not dare leave the house for fear of hearing criticism of his work. Andrea thus attempts to suppress speech and utterance, and the implication here is that his own text, in the form of paintings, does not have the power of utterance. Andrea places preference in this power of speech when he refuses to listen to criticism from 'Paris lords' in the street (line 146). However, inside the sheltered walls of the French king, he is willing to hear them, since they are praises:

> The best is when [the Paris lords] pass and look aside;
> But they speak sometimes; I must bear it all.
> Well may they speak! That Francis, that first time,
> And long festal year at Fontainebleau!
> I surely then could sometimes leave the ground,
> Put on the glory, Rafael's daily wear,
> In that humane great monarch's golden look, ---
> One finger in his beard or twisted curl
> Over his mouth's good mark that made the smile
> One arm about my shoulder, round my neck,
> The jingle of his gold chain in my ear,
> I painting proudly with his breath on me,
> All his court round him, seeing with his eyes,
> Such frank French eyes, and such a fire of souls
> Profuse, my hand kept plying by those hearts—
> And, best of all, this, this face beyond,
> This in the background, waiting on my work,
> To crown the issue with a last reward!
>
> (ll. 147-164)

This passage illustrates several of Andrea's problems, which centre around the struggle between closed spaces and stasis, or in Andrea's case, stagnation. Loy D. Martin observes that while 'other monologues organize deictic gestures to imply an unbounded ostensive world, Andrea is capable of these verbal gestures only within his fixed enclosures. Kept "inside," his reality is immediate and definite. He can observe Lucrezia, among the other objects in his chamber, in technical detail' (*Browning's Dramatic Monologues*, 145). Compared to Roland's map, Andrea's map is a maze that has no exit. Andrea's map tends to run concentrically from outward to inward and outward again. In the poem, Andrea will not leave the house, yet he has left it previously. He leaves his hometown to work in the French court before the marriage, although this is not specifically mentioned in the poem. In France, he claims to 'sometimes leave the ground' (line 151) because he was certain of putting on 'glory, Rafael's daily wear' (line 152). The association of Rafael's garment with Andrea's sartorial name will be explored in detail later in the chapter with the discussion of absence and metaphor in this poem. Andrea's inability to produce paintings that are

alive is seen in this passage too, when his own patron the French king wears the recurring Browning symbol of deadness seen in 'Childe Roland' and in this poem, that of gold emblems. Andrea admires the 'humane monarch's golden look' (line 153) and this line illustrates the fact that the French king holds a clue that reveals Andrea's recurring problem, that of being perfect yet soulless. Andrea observes that the king is 'humane' and associates him with the highest quality, that of gold[27].

According to Vasari, the French monarch found no fault with Andrea. However, this passage illustrates both the French king's blindness to his own imperfect image and that of Andrea's inability to imbue those imperfections in his paintings. The passage above is questioning if there really exists some 'humane' qualities in the king with the 'golden look[s]' because he pays Andrea to paint what he wants people to see. Andrea too admits that the king looks over his shoulder while he paints, and Andrea reveals his own love for fame and money when he mentions the 'jingle' of the king's 'gold chain' in his ear. The final four lines of the passage (ll. 156-159) are damning when it is revealed that Andrea allows himself to be the king's puppet. The king uses Andrea's own ploy of entrapment and enclosure when he places his arm 'about [Andrea's] shoulder' and 'round [his] neck', breathing into his ear and jingling his gold chain by his ear, a reminder to Andrea to paint according to the monarch's wishes. The two references to 'gold' attributed to the king take on opposing meanings here. The first one, his 'golden look', has two meanings. One is that the king may be good-looking. The other meaning is slightly suspect and probably the more accurate, namely, that Andrea finds that whenever the king looks at his paintings, Andrea will be rewarded with gold. The second reference to the gold chain supports the latter argument. The chain itself is a symbol of the king's power to

[27] Leonee Ormond notes that lines 147-164, which she calls the 'golden' passage as it is full of references to 'gold', is used to make a direct contrast with Andrea's own 'grey' situation ('Browning and Painting', 186)

imprison. Altick's hand-in-hand metaphor is thus broadened to include the king's hand, or more accurately, his whole arm enclosing Andrea, and Andrea is therefore doubly entrapped by the hands of two powerful beings, God and the king.The symbol, and therefore the metaphor of the chain dangling by Andrea's ear, is comforting since it does not physically bind him. What imprisons him is deployed through metonymy, with the king's arm over his shoulder and his neck. The king's arm acquires a stronger force because the word itself ('arm'), both as a verb and a noun, carries connotations of weaponry and power, therefore making Andrea's neck more vulnerable. The syntagmatic property of the fragmented image of entwined body parts then becomes a metaphor for two further meanings, that the king has control over Andrea, and that as an image, it is fragmented. This, ironically, cancels out wholeness. It also points to the lack in Andrea's paintings, where he demands perfectness and wholeness in the form and structure of painted limbs (ll. 111-115) but is himself unable to move and work freely because of the king's arm and his symbolic chain. Andrea places importance in wholeness, yet he cannot present a totalizing image in his paintings because the soul is missing, thus his painting cannot be whole. The closer he is to perfection and wholeness, the further his reach of 'a heaven that's shut to' him (line 84). Andrea thus tastes glory in the French court, but he has yet to reach true glory 'nearer heaven' (line 87). Perhaps Andrea realizes this, and he runs back to Lucrezia upon receiving her letter in the hope of re-igniting his inspiration through his muse.

Unfortunately Andrea runs back to the safety of his four walls, where, like a 'weak-eyed bat no sun should tempt / Out of the grange whose four walls make his world' (ll. 169-170). Andrea's secure 'four walls' indicate his obsession with 'framing' Lucrezia so that she can 'make his world'. This is supported later in the poem when Andrea gives an interpretation of his New Jerusalem of four 'great walls':

> Meted on each side by the angel's reed,
> For Leonard, Rafael, Agnolo and me
> To cover---the first three without a wife,
> While I have mine!
>
> (ll. 262-265)

Andrea sees himself as the fourth side of the wall, without which the building will be incomplete. Andrea illustrates his anxiety over the less-than-perfect with his wishes to be the wall that makes the building a perfect four-sided structure, much like the frame of his paintings, by being the 'cover' (line 264), which is of course a reference to enclosure too.

Probably the most important image of enclosure is seen when Andrea believes that his and Lucrezia's fates are 'in God's hand' and he muses 'how strange now, looks the life he makes us lead; / So free we seem, so fettered we are!' (ll. 49-51). Andrea believes that God will look after his future when he looks at the past. This particular image of enclosure and entrapment leads this discussion to the links between the concept of closed spaces and the absent. The absent in the poem works as a metaphor and a future that will always elude the creator, who in this case is Andrea. For the significance of the absent and the future to be foregrounded, a closer reading of this particular idea of the lovers' fate being 'in God's hand' must be explored.

Andrea believes that God 'laid the fetter', yet he tells Lucrezia, and perhaps himself, to 'let it [the fetter] lie' (line 52). Andrea's family name del Sarto is significant here because he wants to be symbolically clothed, twice in this image—first by God's hand and second by God's 'fetter'. As these are symbols, the referents are of course absent. Furthermore, Andrea himself admits that he is near enough to God and heaven, so God and heaven are absent in Andrea's practical earthly world. Similarly, Andrea uses sartorial and therefore metaphorical references when he says that Rafael is clothed in glory, his 'daily wear' (line 152). Andrea's fondness for

perfection and wholeness again comes to the fore, and this is in keeping with resistance to freedom and movement. Whenever he manages to petrify his subject in perfect form, he goes no further to improve its essence by giving it force of life. It is little wonder Vasari describes Andrea's human forms as 'divine', which suggests an absence of corporeal qualities. This absence is further supported by the idea mooted at the beginning of this paragraph, that the image of Andrea's fate in God's hand is significant because it is the link between closed spaces and the absent. The hand-in-hand images have all involved human body parts or human-constructs, such as money. However, 'fate' in 'God's hand' is absent and cannot be concretized. Thus it can be seen that the largest, all-encompassing frame (God's hand) is that which is absent and unseen and is never 'now' and never complete since fate is something that includes all that is past, present and future and can never be merely 'present'. Andrea seems to welcome this absence. He seems to gravitate towards absence and incompleteness while in pursuit of perfection and completeness.

Andrea's resistance to freedom and movement is also evident when he looks into the past by asking Lucrezia to look away from the window and back into the chamber and 'all that's behind us' (line 54). Andrea's tendency to dwell on the past is significant because he also tends to procrastinate. One such example is his delay in painting for Lucrezia's 'friend's friend' till 'to-morrow' (ll. 5-10) in an attempt to make her sit so that he is able to hold her hand. The concept of the future is always absent because by the time one reaches it, it becomes the present. The concept of the past, however, is different because it has to travel through a presence to become a past. What Andrea is trying to do here is to delay his painting, and in doing so he is delaying the act of producing a *text*. It can be observed that Andrea is able to paint freely and willingly when the king speaks to him while he is painting. Andrea's

painting is created while the subject speaks to the painter, thus text and utterance work simultaneously for him in that sense. When painting Lucrezia, Andrea finds it difficult to paint when there is a lack of utterance from her.

Here is where the poem as a text struggles and fails to help Andrea. As dramatic monologues, Browning's poems are simultaneously utterance and text. In the passage where the king speaks to Andrea, there are three lines which begin with the letter 'O'— 'One', 'Over' and 'One' (ll. 154-156). This is where the poem as a text helps utterance by presenting a visual appearance of an open mouth. Furthermore, when uttered, 'One Over One' is a simple mathematical calculation that equals to One, which provides yet another 'O' and is also a whole number. There is a lot going in these three lines for the defence of the paradigmatic axis. Unfortunately, when written in numerical form, One Over One Equals One appears as six flat lines resembling six mouths tightly shut: 1/1=1. To extend this idea a little further, if the first word of the few lines before and after the three 'O' lines are read downwards, it would be uttered as 'I Put In One Over One The I':

> I surely then could sometimes leave the ground,
> Put on the glory, Rafael's daily wear,
> In that humane great monarch's golden look, ---
> One finger in his beard or twisted curl
> Over his mouth's good mark that made the smile
> One arm about my shoulder, round my neck,
> The jingle of his gold chain in my ear,
> I painting proudly with his breath on me,
> (ll. 151-158)

Visually, there are three 'closed mouths' before and two after the three open ones. There are many more subtleties in meaning when reading the lines this way. For one, to put it numerically, it would look like this: 'I Put In 1/1 The I', which would obliterate the 'O's. This reading also forces a right-angle pattern, one going horizontal and the other vertical. These eight lines resemble the image of a painting frame, and

intriguingly, the visual structure resembles Andrea's idea of the New Jerusalem, three straight walled sides and one exposed, to be covered by Andrea himself. Unfortunately, the poem fails to help Andrea become the fourth wall since Browning did not have in his time the luxury of a word processor that would have allowed him to justify the right hand margins. Andrea's paintings resemble this incomplete frame in that the content is perfect, just as the poem's meaning is complete but the frame that holds the contents is weak.

In reading Rilke's poem, 'Am Rande Der Nacht' ('At the Borderline of the Night'), the 'moment of synthesis corresponds exactly to the modulation of the assonances from the ī sound (ten times repeated in the first eight lines) to the ě sound (ten times repeated in the last four lines)' (*AR*, 35). Here de Man foregrounds the importance of utterance and sound, and this is important, especially in Browning's Andrea poem because Browning works with the dramatic monologue. In discussing language and sound, however, de Man states that '[o]ne should also draw attention to the detailed precision in Rilke's selection of metaphorical analagons' (35). Therefore, in reading this poem, de Man is actually hinting at metonymy at work when he says there is stress in 'the perfect coalescence of the metaphorical narration with the sound-pattern of the poem' (35), although he does not mention metonymy itself. Furthermore, he foregrounds metonymy a paragraph later, but again does not mention it, when he encourages Rilke's readers 'to be guided by the rigorous representational logic of the metaphors' (35). A metaphor's meaning is arbitrary and therefore varied, and Rilke's representation works logically through metonymy. Otherwise, it will not be logical because of the lack of cohesion and contiguity. However, in my reading of the Andrea poem, I identify metonymy as the vehicle that produces my interpretation

of the frame, and this particular reading illustrates a missing link to a complete whole in Andrea's frame. Something is always missing in Andrea's frame.

This brings the discussion back to the beginning of this chapter, where I suggested that Lucrezia's flight is inevitable the more Andrea tries to 'frame' her. The poem fails to help Andrea complete the frame in as much as Andrea himself fails to do so. His own framing techniques and hunting/entrapment weaponry forsake him, and this is suggested in the poem's structure, as explained above. Furthermore, the entire monologue is uttered by Andrea within the confines of his home. The contents of the monologue contain the stories of Andrea's two failures, that of his relationship with Lucrezia and his failure as a painter. In this sense, the poem traps Andrea within its structure since during the entire monologue Andrea stays inside his home. The question is whether Browning deliberately traps Andrea through the poem or whether the contents of the poem (that is, Andrea's life story) dictate the terms that result in Andrea's entrapment within the poem. The poem ends with Andrea staying inside the house while Lucrezia walks out of the house with his blessing. Andrea breaks the frame that holds Lucrezia's picture by encouraging her to walk out. The final sentence 'Go, my Love' illustrates Andrea's generosity and increases his sympathy meter. However, what is more significant is that this line also cuts short Andrea's speech because with Lucrezia leaving, Andrea cannot continue talking or the poem will cease to be a dramatic monologue. With Lucrezia leaving the house and simultaneously leaving the poem, several images of entrapment and enclosure are broken. The first is that the window frame which Lucrezia sits at is broken because by going out of the house, she is now on the other side of the frame, with Andrea remaining inside. The other image is Altick's hand-in-hand image which, with the closing line of the poem 'Go, my Love', is rendered useless because Lucrezia cannot remain enclosed even

with concrete images deployed, such as gold coins, the human hand, and Andrea's protective breast. Andrea's belief that he is in God's hand is the one that damns Andrea and his paintings since it is the only metaphorical property (and therefore absent) in the series of receptacles that hold other receptacles.

At this point, it is fitting to begin a close reading of 'My Last Duchess' since this poem too deals with enclosed spaces, and this will be done in the next chapter.

Part II, Chapter Six

'My Last Duchess'

> Art then lets go of the prey for the shadow.
>
> (Emmanuel Levinas, 'Reality and its Shadow' 141)

The setting of the poem, like the Andrea poem, is situated entirely in the interior of the speaker's abode. This is in keeping with the theme of entrapment in the Andrea poem. In 'My Last Duchess', the Duke of Ferrara makes no attempt to go beyond his gate. In terms of a physical journey, the entire monologue sees the speaker taking only a few dozen steps, and the significance of his journey in my thesis is that it begins with the duke standing before a framed painting and ends with him standing before a bronze sculpture. Like Andrea, the duke is attracted to the spirit and energy of his wife's personality. A disturbing point must be addressed here because, where Andrea is the innocent, faultless painter, the duke is a murderer, and as Robert Langbaum observes, readers of the poem tend to avoid moral judgment:

> When we have said all the objective things about Browning's *My Last Duchess*, we will not have arrived at the meaning until we point out what can only be substantiated by an appeal to effect—that moral judgment does not figure importantly in our response to the duke, that we even identify ourselves with him.
>
> ('Sympathy versus Judgment', 28)

Langbaum argues for the suspension of moral judgment 'as a measure of the price we pay for the privilege of appreciating to the full this extraordinary man' (29). His conclusion is that judgment should be suspended because it 'is largely pyschologized and historized' (42) and thus becomes relativised. He asserts that in a constantly changing age, 'judgment can never be final'. His thesis is therefore a defence of

Browning's characters such as the duke, the bishop and Pophyria's lover. It is difficult to find an essay that denies that the duke is powerful and that his power and charisma lie in his rhetoric. For example, as early as 1898, James Fotheringam observed that 'the finest, the most "dramatic" in [Browning's] quality of drama, [are] "My Last Duchess", and "The Bishop Orders his Tomb" (*Studies of the Mind and Art of Robert Browning*, 191). Then, in 1993, James A. W. Heffernan commented that what 'makes this poem truly remarkable in the history of ekphrasis is its speaker' (*Museum of Words*, 141), thus avoiding judgment on the duke in two realms, that of art and that of literature. Finally, as recently as 2002, Stefan Hawlin, in compiling *The Complete Critical Guide to Robert Browning*, suggests that the duke has the ability to 'project an image of himself as grand, sophisticated, flexible of attitude and manner, a connoisseur, a complete man' (63), although Hawlin is aware that it is through Browning's use of irony that the duke is successful in presenting this image.

However, Langbaum insists that it 'is because the duke determines the arrangement and relative subordination of the parts that the poem means what it does' (29). Langbaum does not say that it is Browning who determines the arrangement and relative subordination of parts, but that it is the duke who does so. In Part I, I discussed the possibility that the movement of the poem is determined by the interplay of tropes and that neither Browning nor his speakers are given choices in the trajectory of the journeys because of the inherent properties of language and rhetoric in the poem. However, my reading of 'My Last Duchess' finds support in Langbaum's position. Andrea and the duke find it necessary to trap their wives in paintings. By their actions, the two speakers try to prove that their journeys and their monologues will come to an end if these women are not entrapped. In Andrea's case, as discussed, this backfires on him when Lucrezia walks out on him. In the duke's case, ironically,

his desire for sovereignty and power can be satiated only after he loses control and relinquishes power. My reading of 'My Last Duchess' is that the poem is about sovereignty in entrapment. This refers not only to the duke's attempts at reigning over the present and all in his presence but also his own future and the future of all those in his presence. Ferrara's monologue is therefore not about valorizing his previous duchess but ensuring control over his future duchess.

When examined alongside the journey trope and enclosed spaces, this poem reveals a more complete allegory of reading, writing and interpretation than the previous poems discussed. The poem's three participants, the duke, the envoy and Pandolf carry out acts of reading, writing, criticism, interpretation and reinterpretation. The duchess, the object of the painting also carries out these acts, although they are told to us by her husband. But they are acts anyway since her actions are interpreted first by Pandolf and later by the duke, who interprets Pandolf's interpretation. My discussion of the poem will first involve a close reading of the poem in relation to entrapment. From there, an analysis of how sovereignty and power are imperative in the acts of reading, writing and interpretation, and why obliteration is necessary in making these acts successful and persuasive.

The two works of art featured in 'My Last Duchess' are similar in that both are specially commissioned works ordered by the duke. The sculpture is a concrete, three-dimensional entity cast in bronze and is a mythic character fleshed out permanently in metal. Conversely, the painting is a two-dimensional canvas that portrays a once living woman. The duke uses the painting as a vehicle for communication with the envoy, and on the innocent vehicle, beauty and danger are the passengers. Similarly, the bronze sculpture is also a work of art that is beautiful, but the power lies within the subject, that is, in the myth of Neptune. Because the duke is cunning and

manipulating, it must be inferred that his mention of the sculpture is also deliberate. The warning here is not as detailed since the duke chooses to devote only two and half lines in reference to Neptune, enough for the envoy to be aware that he has to notice the sculpture.

Throughout the poem the duke's speech demonstrates a desire for total sovereignty and control, and this extends even to readers of this poem since the entire monologue is uttered by the duke and any reading of the poem is forced to discount the voices of other characters involved in the poem. The duke's desire for sovereignty extends to the future because what he is really trying to control is his own future and the future of his next duchess. By recounting the activities of the previous duchess he is dictating the terms the next duchess should follow. There is no proof in the poem of the previous duchess' actions, and the envoy and the poem's reader have little choice but to believe the duke's interpretation. This points to the possibility that the duke is really not concerned with the behavior of his previous duchess but with that of his next duchess. His discourse of the past is really a plan to control the future. The past itself is fully under his control, and this poem, like the Andrea poem, is filled with references of entrapment. The most obvious one is that the duchess' likeness is captured on canvas, framed and hung on the wall. This is innocent enough since it is assumed that such subjects are honoured to have their likeness captured and displayed. However, it is revealed in lines 9-10 that the picture of the duchess is actually hidden behind a curtain, and during the monologue, the duke draws the curtain specifically for the envoy to see. This revelation is presented in the poem as an 'aside' because the line is placed in parenthesis, so it becomes both visually and aurally less important. However, this is a ploy to place this very line in the foreground as it is the only line that is placed in parentheses. In utterance, this sentence breaks

into the natural rhythm of the speech, thus placing aural distinction on this particular line. Visually the symbolic meaning of the revelation of the curtain hiding the painting underscores the depth of entrapment the subject of the painting undergoes since parentheses play the role of enclosure and exclusion. This specific set of parentheses thus plays the role of exclusion subversively by including this particular line. This means that although the painting and the curtain that protect it are things which the duke speaks about lightheartedly, they are important vehicles that transport his threatening messages. The flippant treatment of the present and the past which are represented in concrete objects is an investment of a particular future that the duke wishes to control. This future, of course, has everything to do with his next duchess and this future is absent since the future is never now and can never be concrete since even concrete objects existing in the future can never be concretised in the present. The curtain also plays a significant role in illustrating the duke's sovereignty over his subject because it is the instrument that allows the duke to show or hide the painting. This control over the viewing of the painting extends to the duke's admission throughout the poem of the freedom and restraint that the duchess possesses and which he dictates.

There are several connections between the curtain as entrapment that are related to the duke's control over his previous duchess. One is that the curtain is made of material that is soft. A few lines later, there is another reference to cloth when the duke quotes Pandolf as saying that 'Her mantle laps / "Over my lady's wrist too much"'. The symbol of the cloth is an echo of the Andrea poem, and the reference to cloth as cover is more disturbing when employed by the duke. Andrea's family name, in a sense, 'allows' him to provide clothes as protection, as discussed earlier in the previous chapter. The duke claims that he covers the painting to protect it. Two effects

are produced by this action. The first is that he presents himself as a lover who cares about the memory of his previous duchess by protecting the painting, which is a substitute for the dead duchess. The second is to make dramatic and more profound his threat, the threat, of course, referring to the demands that his next duchess should meet. This is done by allowing the envoy's gaze to fall on the painting in one sudden moment. The unveiling of the portrait by the drawing of the curtain thus fulfills multiple roles, which also foreground the duke's own multiple intentions. The curtain protects but entraps. The cunning of the duke is such that the envoy's gaze takes a journey from outside into inside (the envoy has to enter the abode and into a particular room where the painting is hung) and from pure objectivity to intense subjectivity. The dramatic move by the duke in drawing the curtain positions the envoy as a reader whose eyes wander by bookshelves and is confronted by another person, who places a book or picture under his nose suddenly and begins to preempt interpretations by providing an interpretation before the reader is able to do it himself. The curtain also provides a sense of theatre and drama in that the duke is the producer and the sovereign in full control. An envoy who enters the abode of the future groom would expect to negotiate dowry: he does not expect to be shown the likeness of the very person his master's daughter is about to replace. Thus the movement from the outside to inside meshes both the physical and the subjective. The envoy makes the physical movement from the exterior of the house into the rooms of the duke, and once lured inside, his physicality becomes unimportant and his subjective view of the duchess becomes important to the duke. The monologue forces the envoy to form subjectivities that are not entirely his own. The persuasive art of the duke is thus more than the clever manipulation of rhetoric: it is also strategic placement of visuals with the intent of manipulating perception and interpretation. Once inside, the envoy and

the curtain belong together under the duke's control, and both are physically present and concrete.

The envoy is associated with the curtain metonymically because of his nearness to it. The two can never be metaphors of each other since substitution is impossible if not ridiculous. Here, the burden of the poem is to provide a link between the intent of the duke, which is his control of his future and his next duchess, and how he is to control the envoy's perception and interpretation of the subject behind the curtain. It is here that it becomes necessary for the poem, with its own compact form filled with tropes, to help the rhetoric of the duke. The poem helps the duke's cause by moving the non-concrete, that is, the subjectivity that is situated behind the curtain to move outwards into the concreteness of the envoy's world. The poem does this with the interplay of tropes, as suggested by de Man in his reading of Proust. In Part I of this thesis, de Man's challenge against the priority of metaphor over metonymy was deployed with modifications. This chapter explores another of de Man's ideas, which links properties of inside and outside through the borrowing of qualities that are inherent in both realms. In his examination of the outside and inside, de Man also explores the associated qualities of heat against coolness and action against repose (*AR*, 65-67). He discusses the possibility that 'repose can be hot and active without however losing its distinctive virtue of tranquility, than the "real" activity can lose its fragmentary and dispersed quality, and become whole without having to be any less real" (66). De Man explains this by illustrating how two metonyms, as seen in two 'neighboring images' (66), possess the power to transfer meanings from the one to the other so that the two eventually become associated with each other as metaphors. Furthermore, de Man strives to seek unity in his reading of Rilke's poem entitled 'Am

Rande Der Nacht' ('At the Borderline of the Night'). He suggests that the poem accomplishes 'synthesis' by

> the unity of a consciousness and of its objects, by means of an expressive act, directed from inside to outside, which fulfills and seals this unity. The subject/object polarity, which remained vague and ambivalent at the beginning, is clearly designated when the poem explicitly confronts the subject, no longer with the indefinite immensity of the first line, but with the objects, the particular things that are contained in this wide space.
>
> (*AR*, 35)

Referring again to 'My Last Duchess', it is the poem and not just the duke's rhetoric that helps transfer meanings from one realm to another. The nearness of the envoy to the curtain, as mentioned at the beginning of this paragraph, is a metonymic one. They are also linked to each other in another metonymic sense in that they are both concrete in the physical realm and therefore can be grouped under an identical lexicon which still allows them to remain on the syntagmatic axis. The subject of the painting contains many properties that are non-concrete and are therefore absent. These properties, all in the realm of subjectivity and perception, can never be concrete and physical, but they can be made known to the present; they can be brought into the present through gazing, reading and interpretation, all acts which exist only while these actions are being carried out.

So at this point, there are two groups. The first is the concrete world, where the envoy and the curtain are situated, and the second is the inside of the painting, where the subject with all its accompanying qualities that beg interpretation is situated. The subject can only come into the present when the envoy perceives and comprehends the painting. This is where the curtain is the important vehicle that helps the continuation of the de Manian idea of the relay of tropes. The curtain on the

outside is linked to the subject (the last duchess and her mantle) by the curtain's form, the cloth. Conversely, the subject of the painting in the realm of the non-concrete is linked to the curtain and in the outer realm by the thing that the duke refers to influence the envoy's perception, that which is the duchess' mantle, which is used as a cover. The mantle is also the very thing that fails to protect the duchess' modesty, and because it fails to do so, it also fails to protect her from the duke's insane jealousy and histrionic misinterpretation.

The curtain and the mantle, now connected by their form since it is the cloth that gives them their structure, are soft and pliant. They are also similar in that both take on the roles of covering and protection in that the mantle protects the duchess' modesty and the curtain protects the painting. The protective role is problematic because the intent behind the utilization is devious. The problem with the use of the curtain was discussed in the previous paragraph, but the problem with the mantle is more disturbing because of the misreading of its role. The significance of misreading will be discussed later in this chapter, but for now, it is necessary to concentrate on the duke's deliberate misreading[28] of his previous duchess' behavior and of Pandolf's work of art. In the poem, for the envoy, the curtain exists as a physical object while the mantle is only a representation. The mantle itself (the referent) is absent, and unlike the curtain, cannot be physically handled by the duke. However, the representation of the mantle can be misread by the duke, and he does deliberately misread it so as to put both his previous duchess and Pandolf in a compromising position. From the poem, one can tell that the bare wrist of the duchess is hardly immodest since she is asked by the duke himself to sit in the presence of a male stranger to have her face and form scrutinized. The duke is by no means illiterate; he

[28] Porphyria's lover too misreads in 'his own mad fashion', according to Earl G. Ingersoll in 'Lacan, Browning and The Murderous Voyeur' (*Victorian Poetry*, 28: 154).

would certainly have had some knowledge of the art of painting, and he would clearly understand Leon Battista Alberti's instruction to Renaissance painters:

> [W]hen painting living creatures, first to sketch in the bones, for, as they bend very little indeed, they always occupy a certain determined position. Then add the sinews and muscles, and finally clothe the bones and muscles with flesh and skin. But at this point, I see, there will perhaps be some who will raise as an objection to something I said above, namely, that the painter is not concerned with things that are not visible. They would be right to do so, except that, just as for a clothed figure we first have to draw the naked body beneath and then cover it with clothes, so in painting a nude the bones and muscles must be arranged first [and as] Nature clearly and openly reveals all these proportions, so the zealous painter will find great profit from investigating them in Nature for himself.
>
> (*On Painting*, 72)

The duke is aware that in commissioning the painting, he is exposing his duchess to Pandolf's 'painter's gaze'. The artist's eye, according to Alberti, works rather like a lecher's gaze in reverse. In reality, the artist's eye is forced to carry out the lecher's gaze before he can carry out the Alberti technique because to see the bones, the artist has to look through the clothes and through the naked form holding the muscles to see the bones and their positioning. He then works outward from bones to flesh and muscle and then to the clothes.

In the poem, it is never clear whether the mantle slips off the duchess' wrist accidentally or whether she pulls the mantle up to seduce Pandolf. The duke claims that Pandolf

> chanced to say "Her mantle laps /
> "Over my lady's wrist too much."
>
> (ll. 16-17)

However there are no other witnesses to verify what really happened. Any kind of interpretation is subjective, and the duke's misinterpretation is no different. The duke

succeeds in making his intent known, however, the poem's burden of supporting the duke's rhetoric lies in how the misinterpretation of the innocent mantle is transferred from the past into the painting and the present. The subject in the painting is in a sense in repose (and therefore has properties of coolness, according to de Man) because she is only a representation. The properties of heat and action reside on the other side of the curtain where the envoy stands because, being present, he is predisposed to action. The poem's duty in helping the duke is to transfer the cool inaction of the subject out onto the envoy as (mis)perception and (mis)representation. De Man's transfer of such properties is made possible because of the heat that the painting represents. In the painting, the duchess' blush, the 'spot / Of joy' (ll. 14-15) is caught on canvas. 'Joy' is of course associated with brightness, and a blush is always created with the heat of blood rushing to the skin's surface. Another line purportedly uttered by Pandolf according to the duke, '"Paint / "Must never hope to reproduce the faint / "Half-flush that dies along her throat"' (ll. 17-19), is problematic because the involved parties, Pandolf and the duke, already know that art can never capture the essence of the present. This is something Andrea del Sarto knows only too well too. The problem with the line is that it is not known whether there really is a blush on the cheek and neck of the duchess, or is the duke conjuring these images in his crafty running commentary to the envoy. It is also possible that there is a blush. Moreover, this still leaves the unanswered question of the circumstance that set off the blush. Was the room too warm, or was the duchess genuinely bashful or, genuinely seductive?

Blush or no, there is energy in the painting of the duchess, and although one may argue that the duke invented it, it is unlikely to be so because the duke explains the blush in response to the envoy's question on 'how such a glance' (line 12) came upon the picture. This is seen when the duke tells the envoy that he is 'not the first /

[to] turn and ask thus' (ll. 12-13). The subject in the picture thus contains some sort of heat in the form of the energy captured on canvas, and this is the very essence that Andrea fails to capture. Herbert Tucker explores the duke's mention of the duchess' look and asks if it is really the painter who knows how to represent such a look, or glance. Tucker thus questions not only artistic talent but is interested in exploring the energy and passion emanating from the object herself, which allows these qualities to be represented (*Browning's Beginnings: The Art of Disclosure*, 178-179). It can be believed that the duchess is well represented, blush, glance and all, which is why the silent envoy asks about it. Thus the outer concrete world of the envoy and the curtain are linked to the inner, absent world of the painting through the energy in the painting. This energy has qualities of heat and action that are associated with the concrete world.

It is important to continue to explore how the inner and outer worlds are further linked, and to do this, a closer look at the various postures of gazing in the poem is required. The presence of many references to looking and glancing can be observed very early in the Duchess poem. In the second line, the word 'Looking' begins the line, when the envoy is invited to 'sit and look at her' (line 5), and the subject has an 'earnest glance' (line 8), to name two examples. The curtain and the mantle still play significant roles too. Earlier, it was discussed that they are covers to protect and entrap, and that in relation to the gaze, the curtain and the mantle prevent any form of seeing or being seen. The curtain prevents the envoy from seeing the painting immediately, but it also prevents the gaze of the likeness of the duchess gazing back at him. The duke thus tries to claim sovereignty over his painting, and he dictates the terms of how his previous duchess should or should not be gazed at. His fear and jealousy that 'her looks went everywhere' (line 24) is not unfounded since

the likeness captured on canvas is so true to the original that 'strangers' (line 7) such as the envoy have stopped to query about her blush and her 'look'.

In discussing ekphrasis and Browning's 'My Last Duchess', James A. W. Heffernan observes that the duke is 'neither the painter nor the poet nor the painted duchess herself, [he] *owns* the painting and […] completely controls the conditions under which it may be seen' (*Museum of Words*, 141). Heffernan also observes that the duke owns both the duchess and her likeness when he uses the possessive pronoun 'my' (142). His short discussion of the poem is concerned with the difference between 'glance' and 'look', and it ends with the conclusion that, against the duke's persuasive and clever rhetoric, the 'deepest irony of the poem is that for all its silence, the painted face speaks far more eloquently than the Duke does' and that even 'after her death, her image stubbornly declines to obey his word' (145). My own discussion of the poem agrees with Heffernan's conclusion that the painting itself (and good artwork in general) is more powerful than rhetoric. In his discussion, Heffernan places the bronze statue of Neptune in the background. Presumably, this is because, as noted earlier in this chapter, the duke himself points to the statue in an offhand manner or as an afterthought. However, in my discussion, the Neptune statue is essential in the duke's rhetoric because though owned by the duke, the statue's silent presence, like that of the painting of the duchess, overturns the duke's sovereignty over his possessions. This will be discussed with reference to Levinas' discussion of art, criticism, the absent and the future, all of which support my discussion of the duke's attempt to will the future and how, in obliterating the past and mangling the present, he destroys his own chances of gaining sovereignty over the future. Levinas is important in this chapter because, where Heffernan does not foreground Browning's Neptune, Levinas contrasts this by using the example of a stone sculpture (Laocoön)

as an example of great art and verisimilitude, and more significantly in my thesis, of entrapment.

In ‘Reality and its Shadow’, Levinas goes against the acknowledged belief that images produced by art and poetry offer anything useful to humanity and discourse. He also believes that artworks live on because of criticism and that it is the continuing discourse of a particular work that keeps artworks alive. This is not to say that Levinas believes that criticism is superior to the object it comments on because he refers to criticism’s relationship to *difficult* art as a ‘parasitic’ one (130) and because critics justify themselves by

> an irresistible need to speak [even] when the artist refuses to say about artwork anything in addition to the work itself [and] still has something to say when everything has been said, that can say about the work, something else than that work.
>
> (‘Reality and its Shadow’, 130).

The duke’s intent and rhetoric seem to agree with the above, and his behavior follows other ideas explicated by Levinas in ‘Reality’, such as that of dying, death and the horrible state of subjects being suspended without a future. This horrible state is that which Levinas refers to as ‘the meanwhile, never finished, still enduring – something inhuman and monstrous’ (141). In commissioning both the painting and the ordering of the death of the duchess, the duke is capturing the ‘shadow’ of the duchess’ being. Levinas suggests that reality is never ‘being’ itself: it is its image, or the shadow that is the mirror of reality itself, and there is a ‘doubling’ of this reality. Reality, according to Levinas, always escapes itself because the instant of the now is always instantly gone and what remains is the shadow, or the image. The shadow is what the painter remembers and reproduces. Both the duke and Andrea covet these shadows of their wives. Unfortunately for Andrea, his paintings do not fully capture that shadow and

some essential living quality is missing. As for the duke, he is successful despite not being the creator of the image, but he is also an example of the 'prey' in Levinas' statement that art 'lets go of the prey for the shadow' (141). The difference between the Levinasian prey and the duke is that Levinas is referring to responsible and ethical criticism while the duke willfully applies irresponsible misreading. There are two areas in Levinas' discussion that demonstrate the duke's intent and actions. The first is the notion of entrapment, and the second is (ir)responsible and (un)ethical criticism.

In the first area, that of entrapment, the duke knows the Levinasian paradox of an artwork that 'realizes [the paradox] of an instant that endures without a future' ('Reality and its Shadow', 138). Both Andrea and the duke know that their wives, like Levinas' 'reality', can never be totally possessed, but their 'shadows' can be captured eternally in artistic form. The snag is that this instant captured is an eternity in two opposing ways. It is eternally enshrined, as seen in Oscar Wilde's Dorian Gray's exchange of his image, and yet it is a false eternity, or a false everlastingness. The paradox is that the instant is locked in an artwork and lives forever but they cannot submit to change because of the very mechanism, or form, that allows them to live forever. Levinas quotes two positive examples: they (Laocoön and Mona Lisa) are universally known and also known to be examples of good enduring artworks.

Artworks are good and enduring because the artist is able to give them an 'aspiration for life which moved Pygmalion' (138). Coincidentally, or by chance perhaps, Levinas' two examples parallel the two artworks featured in the Duchess poem in terms of form and subject. The first example is that of Mona Lisa, whose smile is 'about to broaden [but] will not broaden' (138) and thus is committed to 'smile eternally'. Although much more famous for her smile, the glance or the look in Mona Lisa is as important because a smile is never genuine enough unless it involves

a slight crinkling of the corner of the eyes. The eyes of Mona Lisa confirm that her smile is genuine and not forced, unlike the fake plastic smiles seen on the faces of magazine models. In 'My Last Duchess' the duchess is the duke's Mona Lisa. He is intrigued by the duchess' looks, but unfortunately, they went 'everywhere' (line 24), according to the duke. The duke mentions both the glance and the look in the poem, and Norman Bryson, who has published various discussions on the gaze, suggests that compared to the gaze, 'glance proposes desire' (*Vision and Painting*, 121), although he is not referring to the Browning poem. James Heffernan, by contrast, focuses on the glance and the gaze. He admits he uses the word 'gaze' by design even though there is no mention of 'gaze' in the poem to argue that there is indeed an undercurrent flow of desire and sensuality in the duchess' look (*Museum of Words*, 144). My reading agrees with that of Heffernan's. However, his reading of the poem does not take into account the gaze of the audience towards the painting, presumably because Heffernan is interested in ekphrasis per se, and the gaze and the glance of the audience is not relevant to him.

In my reading, the gaze of Pandolf, the duke and the envoy are important because I proposed earlier that the poem has inherent qualities that help the duke relay his threat from the interior of the painting outward onto the envoy. The duke is not incorrect when he says that the duchess' looks 'went everywhere' because the likeness of her painting is still looking and glancing long after she has died. The irony is that this Levinasian 'shadow', which is forever fixed in an eternal 'meanwhile' by the very fixity of its position, refuses to die or be extinguished. Similarly, although the duke has full control over the curtain that covers the painting, he may not have had that sort of control over the mantle covering the duchess' wrist while she was alive. Even after death, the falling away of the mantle is forever in a fixed position, threatening to

expose more flesh, but never really doing so. It is the galvanizing effects of the gaze and of the movement of the mantle threatening to slip off the duchess' wrist and expose her exquisite arm that forces action in the seer and the audience. So, although the likeness of the duchess is made of oils and textured on canvas with brush strokes, the shadow, with all its qualities of the de Manian heat and action, replaces the coolness and inertness of the artwork.

This does not prevent the duke from his 'fascistic' use of art. Having done away with his previous duchess, he wants to control the future duchess by controlling the interpretation of the painting of the previous one. The language of art he deploys is actually the language of the desire for control. In the second line, he says the image of the duchess looks 'as if she were alive', underlining the fact that she is not. Later, he says that the curtain is 'drawn' for the envoy. The word 'drawn' is of course used correctly, but it is also synonymous with the corpse of a hanged person being drawn. It is also the past tense of the verb 'to draw', or to sketch, an artistic action. The word 'drawn' is also a verb associated with the preparation of attack, such as when one draws a pistol from its holster or a sword from its scabbard. Later, the duke says that the artist's paint

> "must never hope to reproduce the faint
> "Half-flush that dies along her throat."
>
> (ll. 18-19)

These two lines reveal two death threats. One is that the next duchess should never hope to be the next 'last' duchess or she will not be alive to 'reproduce'. The word 'reproduce' is also synonymous with life. This is juxtaposed with death in the next line, as he describes the blush that 'dies' (line 19) along her throat, the throat, of course, being the most popular part of the body to attack with intent to kill. These four examples are all found in the first half of the duke's monologue, which illustrates his

underlying intent. The subversive rhetoric deploys the metalanguage of art, with its subtext loaded with threat. The duke's own rhetoric is an art itself, but it is cleverly used as a criticism of art, of the painting.

Levinas urges responsibility in criticism, and the duke demonstrates the opposite by blaming the object of the painting as well as the artist for irresponsible representation. The duke desires total sovereignty over all things under his roof, and the irony is that the very materials and things that he uses to illustrate his sovereignty, such as the curtain and the mantle, are those that have to fall away to illustrate this very sovereignty. That is to say, the mantle must fall away, exposing the vulnerability of the duchess, and this therefore exposes the duke's attempt at protection. The curtain has to be drawn and must expose the painting of the memory of the duchess he purports to protect. In short, the artifices that the duke depends on are the ones that have to break down and cease to support him before he is able to illustrate his sovereignty. And after this occurs, this sovereignty rings hollow.

More damning evidence of the duke's hollow sovereignty is the seemingly insignificant artwork that belongs to the duke himself and that he identifies with, that of Neptune '[t]aming a sea-horse, thought a rarity, / Which Claus of Innsbruck cast in bronze' (ll. 55-56) for him. Earlier, I mentioned the fact that Levinas discusses two enduring works of art that parallel the duke's artistic properties, the first being the Mona Lisa and the second, the marble sculpture of Laocoön, which Levinas observes will 'eternally [be] caught up in the grip of serpents' (138). The duke's bronze sculpture is similarly caught up in action, taming a sea-horse. The duke uses the word 'taming', which gives the impression that Neptune eventually succeeds in overcoming the sea-horse, and there is no reason to believe that the duke is misinterpreting because Neptune the Sea God can surely overcome a weak sea-horse. The duke points

the sculpture out to the envoy by design, and he chooses to talk about it only after the envoy sees the painting. The ploy is metonymic since he points to the statue, and it is also strategic. The envoy would surely have seen the sculpture before the painting because he has to enter the house to see the painting. By the time the duke is ready to show off the sculpture, his intent has already sunk in. The sculpture is the final salvo, and the envoy has to see that the duke is Neptune himself, subjugating anyone in his way. The duke and Neptune are symbolically connected and therefore linked via the paradigmatic axis. However, in the poem, they are also connected on the syntagmatic axis via their physical proximity. The duke sees himself as a sovereign over his wife and property, while Neptune is a sovereign and the God of the seas. Neptune tames the seas and all its inhabitants, and the duke attempts to tame his wife. According to the Levinasian 'meanwhile', the Neptune referred to in the poem will eternally be locked in a struggle to tame the sea-horse. Knowing that Neptune will eventually tame the sea-horse is a certainty because of the legend, but it is not foregrounded in the duke's statue because Neptune is stuck in the position of the 'meanwhile'. The one instant captured on bronze is of Neptune going through the process of taming the sea-horse.

Similarly, while the duchess is living, the duke struggles to tame her. He succeeds by killing her, and this very act ironically gives eternal life to the very qualities he wants extinguished, as Levinas suggests. This is seen because it is always the shadow, the image that endures, and not the being, or reality itself. Levinas proposes that reality is itself and its shadow. The instant of being passes in that instant but its shadow endures in the memory of the seer. In short, the observer remembers the shadow, and if he were to reproduce the thing he sees, it will be that shadow and

not reality. The being, the reality, would already be gone because it would already be something else, and only its shadow remains.

The Neptune referred to in the poem is a particular statue that exists only in the poem since the fictional 'Claus of Innsbruck' (line 56) cast it in bronze for the duke. This Neptune will forever be fixed in the 'meanwhile' of struggling with the sea-horse just as its owner is eternally struggling to control his duchesses. The duke is identified with this particular bronze Neptune, but where Levinas' Mona Lisa is associated with the duchess through Pandolf's painting, Levinas' Laocoön is also associated with the duke through Neptune. Like Neptune, Laocoön also struggles with a sea animal, the only difference being the *known* future of the myths behind Neptune and Laocoön. Myth dictates that Neptune will most likely subjugate whichever sea-creature he struggles with, and this is what the duke identifies with. The myth of Laocoön is that he dies after struggling with the sea-serpents, so there is no future for Laocoön beyond the struggle. Similarly, the duke has no control over his future with the next duchess. Who is to predict whether the next duchess is going to behave as the previous duchess did and will eventually be put away, thus returning the duke back to the horrible 'meanwhile' of the struggle within the present and never controlling the future? Myth also dictates that it is Neptune that sent the sea-serpents to kill Laocoön, so being associated with Neptune *and* Laocoön puts the duke in the precarious position of seeing the future as Neptune is able to do but not attaining it as Laocoön is fated to suffer. Comparing the two artworks in the poem, it is the painting that invites discourse and interpretation with the duchess' glance. The likeness of the duchess and Mona Lisa are inviting, as seen in their smiles and their glances. However, it is very likely that Neptune's and Laocoön's jaws are grimacing during their struggles and that their eyes won't be glancing at the audience. Their eyes are likely to be trained upon

the sea-horse and the sea-serpent. The Duke of Ferrara, associated with Neptune and Laocoön, thus loses the audience and his control and sovereignty.

Neptune's and Laocoön's struggles mirror the duke's struggles to control his future—and his failure, and there is yet further evidence in the poem pointing to this failure. The notion of entrapment is similar to that in the Andrea poem, even though the Duchess poem is far shorter, with only 56 lines. Where Andrea allows Lucrezia to go out of the house to meet her cousin, the duke also boasts of the freedom he grants the duchess, as seen in how she is allowed to ride 'round the terrace' (line 29). The boast itself is an attempt to show off his sovereignty over the duchess by implicitly saying that he has the authority to allow such a permission to be granted. However, the duke's lines recounting his generosity are full of implications: 'the white mule / She rode with round the terrace---all and each / Would draw from her alike the approving speech / Or blush, at least' (ll. 28-31). The interpretation of the duchess as riding on a 'white mule' and bestowing kind words on everyone can be interpreted as alluding to the story of Lady Godiva, whose husband holds absolute power over his hamlet. The duke says that she rides around the 'terrace', which could mean several things. One meaning may be a verandah or a patio, but of course during the Renaissance, the terrace would be a much larger area, occupying the space between the confines of the home and the walls that protect the terrace and the home. So the duchess has the freedom to ride her mule but within the confines of the Ferrara estate. The second meaning is that of the agricultural terrace, where the hillside is terraced to prevent water from flowing away. Without water, the area will be infertile and dry, so there is a need to keep the land inside rich with nutrients. This agricultural preventive measure is entrapment nevertheless.

Another seemingly innocent line tossed in to warn the envoy of the power of the duke's sovereignty is when he recounts the story of ‘[t]he bough of cherries some officious fool / Broke in the orchard for her’. The ‘orchard’ is of course owned by the duke and is an area cordoned off specially to grow fruits. Although this is spoken in an off-hand manner, the duke is saying that the duchess was so free with her generous smiles and glances that some besotted fool would dare to break into the orchard just to present her with a bunch of cherries. The mention of the orchard may also be an allusion to the Garden of Eden and the ‘officious fool’ the serpent which offers the fruit to the duchess. The duke thus fights with the many serpents which tempt his duchess, and this points back to my earlier discussion of how he ultimately loses the struggle, as Laocoön does with the sea-serpents sent by Neptune.

The duke’s deliberate misinterpretation of his artworks is a kind of allegory of irresponsible reading and criticism. This is seen in how he misinterprets Pandolf’s reading (writing) of the duchess. Where Ferrara is the irresponsible critic, Andrea is the naïve reader, as seen in his misreading of Lucrezia’s smiles, which he mistakenly reads as smiles meant for him when they obviously mean that she is happy that the cousin has arrived. ‘My Last Duchess’ is thus a poem that includes every interested party in the discourse of any particular artwork: the duchess as the subject, Pandolf the artist (author) and in a sense, a reader because he reads the subject[29]. The duke of course represents the irresponsible critic, and the envoy the belated reader and potential critic. The duke’s role is the most important, and Browning foregrounds this by placing him as the speaker of the dramatic monologue. This poem thus may be Browning’s warning against such irresponsible criticism. A powerful misinterpretation

[29] Woolford and Karlin observe that ‘relations between artist, model, patron and artifact’ are dealt with in a number of Browning’s poems, ‘most notably in “My Last Duchess”’ (*The Poems of Robert Browning*, Vol. III, 297).

will surely influence belated readers, especially those, such as the envoy, who have yet to see the painting or even know of its existence.

The Duchess poem is in a sense a microcosm of the later, longer and more mature poem, *The Ring and the Book*, where all the performers mentioned in the previous paragraph are featured: the objectified as subject, the poet, the critic and the reader, and the future critic and reader, with both of the latter exposed to misinterpretation. The inside and outside spaces of the poem as seen between the painting and the onlookers (the envoy and Ferrara) give way to more complex spaces in the Ring poem. An example is Pompilia's balcony as the lumimal space where both Caponsacchi and Guido objectify her. The balcony is also the space where the journey manifests itself in its many tropological possibilities. This will be discussed in detail in Part III.

To conclude, this chapter is about stasis in journeys, through entrapment and its disturbing shadow, sovereignty. The next chapter is the final chapter of Part II and addresses how journey and movement can be re-ignited, with a close reading of 'Fra Lippo Lippi', where journey is synonymous with flight and freedom.

Part II, Chapter Seven

'Fra Lippo Lippi'

> We need a footnote to know what Vasari contributed to Browning's "Fra Lippo Lippi," just as we need footnotes to know what Craven and Gluck and their reproductions contributed to *Pictures from Breughel*.
>
> (James Heffernan, *Museum of Words* 171)

One of Browning's speakers, who plays the role of reader-critic who can be compared and contrasted with Andrea and the Duke of Ferrara is Fra Lippo Lippi. Like Andrea, Lippi was a living artist, whose biography was written by Giorgio Vasari. Vasari reveals that Lippi, like Andrea, also finds his muse in a woman who eventually became his de facto wife and who bore him a son. What is interesting is that the name of Lippi's woman is also Lucrezia, although Browning does not mention this in his poem. The name Lucrezia also appears in *The Ring and the Book.* However, the significance of Browning's recurring Lucrezia will be addressed in Part III. For now, my close reading of 'Fra Lippo Lippi' will concentrate on three elements which have been featured in the previous two poems, 'Andrea del Sarto' and 'My Last Duchess'. The first is the role of drapes, which leads to the discussion of cloths and clothes. The second is the female subject in paintings, and the third is sovereignty and its loss. The loss is important because it makes way for the continuation of journey and movement. This discussion aims to explore how these three topics are deployed in the poems as both metaphor and metonymy, which will then allow for the discussion of Browning's predilection for embellishing truth. The embellishment of truth is important because Part III of my thesis discusses *The Ring and the Book*, which is also the poem in which the Browning persona boldly admits that he uses 'the artistic

way to prove so much' (XII, 841) and that art 'remains the one way possible /Of speaking truth, to mouths like mine at least' (XII, 843-844).

In the previous two poems, the role of cloth is insidious in the sense that it is used to cover and entrap. In 'Fra Lippo Lippi', the material is mentioned only three times and, in some way, all of these mentions have to do with the production of creativity and are themselves products of creativity. In the Andrea and Duchess poems, the speakers remain in their houses the entire time, while at the start of the Lippi poem, Lippi is found cornered in an alley and becomes the object of attention to a few watchmen sent out by his employer. Lippi reveals that he has escaped his 'prison' by using bedcovers and curtains shredded and knotted into a ladder. The revered curtain in 'My Last Duchess' is treated with disrespect by Lippi, but Lippi is no less theatrical in his treatment of the curtain than the duke is of the curtain covering the painting of his previous duchess. Lippi's penchant for theatricality is recorded by Vasari and embellished by Browning. It is from Vasari's account of Lippi's escape from Cosimo de Medici's house that Browning probably drew his inspiration for the poem[30]. Vasari reports that Medici had Lippi locked up in his house to complete a painting as Lippi already had the reputation of giving 'little or no attention to the works that he had undertaken' (line 437) once he met with a woman who took his fancy[31]. Furthermore, Lippi would spend all his time painting his fancied subject, thus leaving his commissioned works incomplete. Vasari reveals that Lippi had 'cut some ropes out of his bed-sheets with a pair of scissors and let himself down from a window'. Vasari's one line corresponds to Browning's account in Lippi's words:

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[30] De Vane, however, believes that it is the painter/biographer Baldinucci who may be the source of Browning's Lippi's commitment to the representation of reality in art (*Browning's Parleyings,* 172).

[31] Woolford and Karlin observe that, like Jules in 'Pippa Passes', Lippi idealises the object of his affections (*The Poems of Robert Browning*, Vol. III, 297).

> Into shreds it went,
> Curtain and counterpane and coverlet,
>
> All the bed-furniture---a dozen knots,
> There was a ladder!
>
> (ll. 61-64)

The treatment of the curtain by Browning's Lippi is irreverent. The curtain in the Duchess poem functions as a protection for the painting and is also a symbol of imprisonment for the duchess. The duke whips the curtain aside to reveal the painting to the envoy for dramatic effect. There are similarities between the two poems with regard to the treatment of cloth. In the Duchess poem, the painting reveals the threat of the mantle slipping off the Duchess' wrist. In the Lippi poem, there is no reference to clothing or mantle threatening to expose flesh. However, according to Vasari's account, there are specific references to draperies and hands. When Messer Carlo Marsuppini commissioned the painting of the 'Coronation of Our Lady', the picture had the Virgin Mary surrounded by many saints, and Lippi

> was told by the aforesaid Messer Carlo to give attention to the painting of the hands [and] seeing that his works were much criticized in this respect, wherefore from that day onwards, in painting hands, Fra Filippo covered the greater part of them with draperies or some other contrivance, in order to avoid the aforesaid criticism.
>
> ('Fra Filippo Lippi' from *Lives of the Painters*, 438)

However, Browning chose to ignore Vasari's historical Lippi's anxiety about painting bare hands and, if anything, Browning's Lippi boasts of his near-perfect representations of the uncovered human form, with many references to arms, legs, bodies and faces. These many references to body parts will be explored towards the end of this chapter with regard to metonymy and metaphor. Where the paintings in the Andrea and Duchess poems contain subjects subtly enticing the onlooker, Lippi's paintings do not flirt by presenting possibilities of enticement. The honesty in his

paintings can be seen in the less-covered forms of his subjects, and Lippi himself declares that the way to truly represent the soul of the subject is to paint the body in its glory. This is seen in Lippi's discussions of the various subjects of his paintings, such as Herodias, the Prior's niece, the Madonna and St Lucy. These too will be discussed later in this chapter. For now, it is useful to continue the discussion on clothes and the similarities and discrepancies between the poem and Vasari's account.

There are four points of comparison and contrast, and all are interlinked. Where Vasari glosses over the way Lippi escapes by shimmying down from simple 'ropes' made with sheets, Browning uses the complicated 'ladder'. Second, Vasari did not reveal the use of any other materials but the bed-sheets, whereas the poem sees Lippi using curtain, counterpane, coverlet and bed-furniture. Third, in the Vasari account, Lippi uses a pair of scissors to cut the bed sheets, whereas in the poem, Lippi 'shreds' the materials. Finally the window is mentioned in Vasari's account, where Lippi 'let[s] himself down from a window', but there is no mention of a window in the poem during the escape. A window is only mentioned in other contexts.

Examining these differences, it is clear that Browning deliberately embellished Lippi's story. First, the Vasari rope is a simple device that is a more plausible means of escape than Browning's complicated ladder since escape is not something someone takes his time over if he were to escape in a hurry and undetected. A ladder takes time and skill to fashion out, and thus Browning focuses implicitly on Lippi's creativity. Moreover, in two instances in the poem, Lippi mentions his 'serge gown' and his 'rope', referring to his priestly cassock and the rope, serving for a belt, that 'goes round' (ll. 104, 367). The context of the first mention of the rope is associated with comfort and food in his belly, when he was a young, cold and hungry beggar in the street. He subsequently entered the friary, where the 'warm serge' cassock kept him

warm and he wore the 'rope' in the style of a belt. The cloth and the rope enclose him in security and comfort. However, the second mention of the serge and the rope reveals a certain regret in the older Lippi, when he is 'caught up with [his] monk's-things by mistake', when he is caught in the midst of female company. The rope around his waist is thus a restricting device in more ways than one. The rope that is his priestly belt prevents him from pursuing his amours, and if his wandering ways are a metaphor for his need for creative freedom, the rope chokes this creativity. This points back to Lippi's preference for the complicated ladder in Browning compared to Vasari's simple rope[32]. Escape is important for Browning's Lippi, but creativity is even more important, such that he would sacrifice escape-time for it. Creativity and freedom are also featured at the close of the poem when Lippi attempts to buy his freedom by offering to paint a picture for the warden, to be completed and delivered 'six months' hence' (line 389).

Second, in Vasari's account, there is only one type of material, the bed sheets, while in the poem four types of materials are mentioned. In his later poem, *The Ring and the Book*, Browning admits that he takes poetic license when retelling the trial of Count Guido. In 'Fra Lippo Lippi', Browning does this too, and in a way, Lippi's creativity points to Browning's own creative expansion of Vasari's account. Browning's Lippi is more creative than Vasari's Lippi when he takes every bit of cloth, including the curtain, to fashion a ladder, which illustrates his ability to improvise and also his compulsive urge to use any and every material to satisfy his creative urge. Strangely, this is in keeping with Vasari's mention of Lippi's insatiable urge to draw on every conceivable space when he was a boy studying to be a friar, where 'in place of studying, he would never do anything save deface his own books

[32] Browning's Lippi is shut in the room for three weeks while Vasari's Lippi has been in the room for only two days (*Lives of Painters*, 438).

and those of the others with caricatures' (*Lives of Painters*, 435-436). Furthermore, where Vasari's Lippi uses a pair of scissors to cut the sheets, Browning's Lippi tears all the materials to shreds, thus illustrating the raw energy with which he attacks the available materials. One can imagine the strength needed to shred curtains and duvets. The product is also more organically formed because of the lack of implements used.

The presence of the curtain also has a meaning that is central to this thesis because of its other role, that of theatricality. As mentioned earlier, Lippi treats the curtain differently from the way the duke treats it. Lippi strips the curtain and destroys it but later constructs another kind of curtain, a stage curtain, which is made of hardier material—the wooden scaffolding painters use to climb onto while painting the walls of churches. Lippi asks a fellow friar: 'How looks my painting, now the scaffold's down?' (line 325). The scaffold is of course a necessary tool in the painting of the Saint Laurence at Prato (ll. 323-324) because without it, Lippi would not be able to reach the higher walls in the church. However, he treats this tool as a curtain that has to be drawn or taken down so as to present the painting, or in theatre, to present the drama. Lippi thus subverts the expected function of the curtain and the creative tool. In the escape scene, the curtain is used as a creative tool when Lippi transforms it into a ladder. Later in the poem, Lippi uses the creative tool, the scaffold, as a curtain. In this sense, the curtain in the poem replaces the window in Vasari's account. The hard square window in Vasari is replaced by a soft, pliant curtain that Lippi shreds, and here again Browning underlines Lippi's creative power. The role of the window is also important. For Vasari, it is to foreground Lippi's escape, but for Browning, it signifies creativity in flight. The journey trope in the poem thus becomes escape and flight, and this is in keeping with Andrea's Lucrezia's desire to leave and the Ferrara duchess' supposed penchant for wandering out of the house.

The four points of contrast between Vasari and Browning enumerated and explored in the previous paragraphs discussed creativity and theatricality. I mean to say that Browning deliberately embellishes the facts to specifically foreground creativity in the poem. In a way, the Lippi poem is an early experiment of Browning's later and mature embellishment, the fashioning of the Ring in *The Ring and the Book*, which will be discussed in detail in Part III. My suggestion is supported by more evidence in the Lippi poem and, more importantly, by Leon Battista Alberti's list of rules on artistic form. In Book I of *On Painting*, Alberti places great importance on surfaces. He begins by discussing points and straight lines and how if 'many lines are joined closely together like threads of a cloth, they will create a surface' (38). It is interesting that Alberti uses the metaphor of the threads of the cloth to discuss lines that cross each other to produce surfaces, especially in a piece of writing on art that is based on mathematical measurements and exactions. Surfaces, being ever important to Alberti, are reiterated twice in the first four paragraphs. This is first seen in the first line of his third paragraph, where he states: '[b]ut let us come back to surfaces' (38), and second, in the first line of his fourth paragraph: '[l]et us come back to surfaces again' (39), and later that: '[w]e must now speak of the other property of surface, which, if I might put it this way, is like a skin stretched over the whole extent of the surface' (39). If the surface is likened to a piece of cloth, then the stretched skin is also a kind of cloth material since one of the properties of cloth is stretchability.

In relation to clothes, Alberti advises that when drawing humans, if

> suitable, let some be naked, and let others stand around, who are half-way between the two, part clothed and part naked. But let us always observe decency and modesty. The obscene parts of the body and all those that are not very pleasing to look at, should be covered with clothing or leaves or the hand.
>
> (*On Painting*, 6)

The role of clothes and the hand, according to Alberti, is to protect the modesty of both the subject and the audience. However, Vasari's Lippi goes further and makes use of the clothes in such a way as to imbue his paintings with a verisimilitude that is confounding. Vasari describes the beautiful clothes of friars, and he twice uses the word 'draperies' as if they were curtains with folds hanging elegantly: 'draperies in the form of friars' gowns with most beautiful folds', other works that 'contain [the] most admirable draperies and heads' (*Lives of the Painters*, 441), and 'good execution of both the draperies and in the expressions of the faces' (441). Vasari's Lippi is also reported to be ahead of his time when it comes to the design of costumes, and Vasari observes that there are 'certain figures with garments little used in those times, whereby [Lippi] began to incite the minds of men to depart from that simplicity which should be called rather old-fashioned', which shows Lippi to be a kind of early fashion designer.

Browning does not reveal the name of Lippi's de facto wife, but Lucrezia is mentioned and described by Vasari in detail, and the pertinent point about opening a discussion of Lucrezia is because of the context in which Lippi meets Lucrezia for the first time, which involves the sartorial. Having spotted her in a convent where she was a ward, or novice, Lippi succeeded in persuading the nuns to allow Lucrezia to sit for him and

> with this opportunity he became even more enamoured of her, and then wrought upon her so mightily, what with one thing and another, that he stole her away from the nuns and took her off on the very day when she was going to see the Girdle of Our Lady, an honoured relic of that township, being exposed to view.
>
> (*Lives of the Painters*, 439)

The girdle is of course an intimate piece of clothing for any female, and it is comical and fitting that Lucrezia should run off with Lippi on the day of the viewing of the

Girdle of Our Lady. It is also the very day that, in all probability, he will get a glimpse of Lucrezia's girdle. It may be that this is the only day that she is able to run away because of the opportunity of walking out of the convent. However, the significance of the day and the event remains.

The Girdle is also mentioned in another poem, *The Ring and the Book*, which will be featured in the next chapter. Coincidentally, it also appears in the monologue of another priest, Caponsacchi, who also runs off with a young girl. The context in which the Girdle is mentioned features many of the tropes featured in this thesis. In his monologue (Book VI), Caponsacchi is in the midst of preparing his journey with Pompilia as they escape from Pompilia's abusive husband Guido. Caponsacchi has just acquired a 'swift horse' (VI, 1095) and has gone back to his room to await the right time to leave. Upon entering the room, he sees an open book of Thomas Aquinas' work, the *Summa Theologica*, and the host who provides the horse observes this of Caponsacchi, who

> "Shut his book,
> There's other showing! 'T was a Thomas too
> Obtained,—more favoured than his namesake here,—
> A gift, tied faith fast, foiled the tug of doubt,—
> Our Lady's girdle; down he saw it drop
> As she ascended into heaven, they say:
> He kept that safe and bade all doubt adieu.
> I too have seen a lady and hold a grace."
>
> (VI, 1009-1105)

The host plays on the name 'Thomas', who according to Thomas Collins and Richard Altick, is the disciple St Thomas, who doubted the Assumption of the Virgin Mary and according to legend, 'remained skeptical until she threw down her girdle to him; he was then cured of doubt' (*The Ring and the Book*, n., 346). The host associates Caponsacchi with the two saints, St Thomas, the disciple who doubts, and St Thomas Aquinas, whose was never able to complete the *Summa*. Earlier, Caponsacchi doubts

if the letters addressed to him from Pompilia pleading for help were really written by Pompilia. He later believes that Pompilia really did seek his help, but he only believes when he stands below her window and is told to pick her up at a certain place and time and to leave a handkerchief if she does not appear at the window for fear of Guido's presence (VI, 888-891). Caponsacchi needs concrete evidence, and only upon seeing Pompilia and hearing her request himself does he set out to plan the escape. Just as St Thomas the disciple needed the evidence of the Lady's Girdle to believe in her Assumption, Pompilia also requests that Caponsacchi leave some evidence behind to prove that he really means to rescue her, and the evidence is also in the form of the sartorial.

The association with Aquinas is more subtle and dark. It is subtle because the host notices Caponsacchi shutting the book as symbolic of Caponsacchi's own belief after he has seen Pompilia and therefore shuts the book because he doesn't need another Thomas to remind him of unfinished work. The shutting of the book is also symbolic of Caponsacchi 'disrobing' and leaving his clerical duties behind to take the risk of running away with Pompilia. The disturbing and darker association with Aquinas is that he never completed the *Summa,* and by shutting the book, Caponsacchi unknowingly foreshadows his own journey, which will be cut short later when Guido successfully catches up with Caponsacchi and Pompilia in the chase.

I have digressed somewhat from the topic of the cloth and curtain in the Lippi poem to the Ring poem's priest Caponsacchi and his relation to the cloth. To continue the topic of cloth and clothes and link this to the next topic of the objectification of women, I will now address the function of the cloth and curtain in the Lippi poem to make the link to the next topic. The curtain in the Lippi poem is important as it is also a form of protection, which protects Lippi from enticement in the streets. Like the

duchess, Lippi's looks 'went everywhere', and this is mentioned by both Vasari and Browning. Vasari claims that Lippi was

> so amorous, that, if he saw any women who pleased him, and if they were to be won, he would give all his possessions to win them; and if he could in no way do this, he would paint their portraits and cool the flame of his love by reasoning with himself. So much a slave was he to his appetite, that when he was in this humour he gave little or no attention to the works he had undertaken.
>
> (*Lives of the Painters*, 437)

In the poem, however, Lippi does not see the faces of the three young women below his window. Instead, he hears the patter of feet, the laughter and the 'whifts of song' (line 52). Lippi hears all these before he sees 'three slim shapes (line 59) and then 'a face that looked up' (line 60). Like the Duke of Ferrara, Lippi does not describe the beauty of the object desired but the reaction of the onlooker. The Lacanian gaze is deployed in both poems in that the onlookers are affected by the object gazed upon. The reaction of the duke is to kill the gaze off along with the object whereas Lippi lets the gaze live on in two ways: by painting it, and by enjoying 'the fun' (line 66). The object gazed upon is important because as artists, Andrea and Lippi produce artworks that feature subjects whose gazes gaze back at them and at other onlookers. To explore this in greater detail, I turn to Vasari's biographical accounts of Andrea and Lippi with the intention of further examining Browning's penchant for embellishing truth.

The paintings of Andrea and Lippi can be contrasted through the lack of force in one and the force of vitality in the other, and the lives of Andrea and Lippi can be compared and contrasted in terms of the love(s) of their lives. The quality of the paintings of these two artists is revealed by the speakers themselves, but the details are more specific in the Vasari account. In the poems, the similarity shared by Andrea

and Lippi is that both are distracted from their commissioned work by women. The difference is that Lippi is able to produce *good* works of art despite these distractions. It almost seems that these distractions allow Lippi a certain inspiration. According to Vasari, Lippi was offered a dispensation by Pope Eugenius to make Lucrezia his 'legitimate wife; but this [Lippi] refused to do, wishing to have complete liberty for himself and his appetites' (*Lives of Painters*, 443). There is no mention of any of the female subjects, such as the Madonna in Lippi's paintings, who resemble his Lucrezia or any of his amours. This is in contrast to Vasari's account of Andrea, in which many of the female subjects had countenances which resembled his wife Lucrezia, and Vasari picked out a particular painting of 'a Magdalene with most beautiful draperies, whose countenance is a portrait of Andrea's wife' (836).

There is another difference in the treatment of the discussion of artistic quality. Vasari praises Lippi's work when he says that Lippi's paintings have a kind of grandeur 'which encouraged those who came after him to give grandeur' too (441). This is precisely what is lacking in Andrea's work, which nonetheless is perfect in terms of form. Vasari also tends to discuss Andrea's works in terms of the physical aspects of bodies and the attitudes of the subjects painted. On the other hand, in discussing Lippi's works, he found great depth of emotional expressions in the subjects. This is seen especially in the discussion of the paintings of two different saints, but both paintings are similar because of the presence of naked flesh. Vasari discusses Andrea's painting of St Sebastian, 'who, being naked, shows his back, which appears to all who see it to be not painted, but of living flesh' (836). Most if not all of Andrea's paintings are said to be almost perfect in form. However, Vasari devotes many lines of detailed descriptions to the stoning of St Stephen by Lippi. What is different from the Andrea paintings is that there express the various emotions

of each and every subject, such as ‘hatred, disdain and anger’, ‘brutality and rage’, and how ‘with a horrible gnashing of teeth, and with gestures wholly cruel and enraged’ (440), St Stephen was stoned to death. These emotions are contrasted sharply with St Stephen’s own countenance of ‘great calmness’ as he ‘is seen making supplication to the Eternal Father with the warmest love and fervor for the very men who are slaying him’ (440). In another painting of St Stephen being buried, Lippi was said to have revealed in those who are burying St Stephen ‘gestures so dolorous, and some faces so afflicted and broken with weeping, that it is scarcely possible to look at them without being moved’, and Vasari believes that ‘all these conceptions are truly very beautiful’. However the most important of Vasari’s observations is that the paintings ‘serve to show to others how great is the value of invention and of knowing how to express emotion in pictures’ (440). Thus according to Vasari, the superior painter is not the one who is able to present likeness and perfectness in physical form but the one who is able to allow emotions to emanate from the subjects and to influence sympathy or like emotions in the observer.

Browning certainly picked these observations up in the Vasari accounts and exploits them in the poems in the way the sartorial and entrapment are treated differently in the two poems. As mentioned earlier, Lippi treats the curtain with much disrespect when compared to the duke. However, when compared to Andrea's, Lippi's treatment of cloth has a deeper significance in that Andrea’s name del Sarto has close associations with the cloth and with dressing. Andrea’s emotional life is one of repression and unfulfilled desires, and although one can say that he is quite emotional as a human being, this does not translate into his art. On the other hand, Lippi takes care not to be emotionally involved with his women, and this is seen in his refusal to

marry Lucrezia[33]. Yet his art is full of life and his subjects have an inner vitality and emotion that arrest the onlooker. This is especially so in the scene where the indignant Prior recognizes his niece's likeness in the alluring Herodias/Salome. This scene is of course another instance of Browning's embellishment of truth.

The lives of these two painters can also be compared and contrasted in the Vasari account as well as in the poems. The point of comparison is that both painters were besotted with women named Lucrezia. This is coincidence enough, but there is a third coincidence in that another Lucrezia is also mentioned in *The Ring and the Book*. The Lucrezia in the Ring poem is tossed in as an aside since the only female character of importance in the poem is Pompilia. However, it is important to this thesis that the Lucrezia in the Ring poem has negative connotations and is also associated with a cleric. In his second monologue (Book XI), the bitter Guido, awaiting his execution, compares Pompilia to several women such as Delilah, Circe and Lucrezia. The Lucrezia in question, according to Collins and Altick, was Lucrezia Borgia, a daughter of Pope Alexander VI before he was anointed pope. Lucrezia is 'formerly credited with "picturesque crimes" and sexual licentiousness but [is] now rehabilitated by historians' (*The Ring and the Book*, 722 n.4). Guido still believes that Pompilia's licentiousness led to his eventual downfall and execution when he associates Pompilia with Lucrezia Borgia:

> O thou Lucrezia, is it long to wait
> Yonder where all the gloom is in a glow
> With the suspected presence?—virgin yet,
> Virtuous again, in face of what's to teach—
> Sin unimagined, unimaginable,—
>
> (XI, 2214-2218)

[33] Lippi is similar to Jules the sculptor in *Pippa Passes,* as Jules sees marriage as 'an impediment' to his artistic achievements (*The Poems of Robert Browning*, Vol. III, 297).

Guido alludes to the Borgia lady to vent his frustration over a misguided perception that Pompilia is really of a licentious nature and that everyone in Rome and Arezzo, like the historians mentioned by Collins and Altick, 'rehabilitated' Pompilia.

The Lucrezia occurrence in the Ring poem is a small 'aside' when taking into consideration the size of the poem. In the Andrea poem, Lucrezia is the main character that moves the poem, and in Andrea's case, it provides stasis. In the Lippi poem, Lucrezia is not even mentioned. However, several female characters are, and many of them are deliberately conflated by Lippi. Therefore, in the Duchess, the Andrea and the Ring poems, there is only one female subject whose fortunes or misfortunes move the poem, or 'make' the picture. There is only one female subject in 'My Last Duchess' and only one painting. Similarly, in 'Andrea del Sarto', the poem gives practically all the space to Lucrezia as the subject of Andrea's paintings. Without Pompilia in *The Ring and the Book*, there would be no journeys and no trials. In 'Fra Lippo Lippi', however, there are many female subjects such as the Prior's niece, Herod's daughter and St Lucy. Browning's embellishment of Vasari's account comes to the fore again to foreground the importance of artistic creativity[34]. The Prior's niece and St Lucy are not mentioned in the Vasari account. However they are linked to Herod's daughter because of the painting of the beheading of St John the Baptist. The conflation of these women into a kind of Lucrezia Borgia is facilitated variously through metonymy and metaphor. The first incidence is the mention of the painting of the presentation of St John's head to Herod. The head, though metonymic, is actually a metaphor that alludes to the fury of a woman scorned. In the poem, Lippi quotes the Prior as sputtering:

[34] Roger Sharrock comments that Browning is conscious of 'tampering with documentary facts' and is deliberate in 'historical colouring' and that this is part of a 'general effort which seeks to ground poetic perception on documentary truth' ('Browning and History', 77).

> "She's just my niece … Herodias, I would say,---
> "Who went and danced and got men's heads cut off!
> "Have it all out!"'
>
> (ll. 196-198)

In his indignation, the Prior is already conflating Herodias and her daughter Salome. The Prior mistakes Herodias for her daughter Salome, the one who danced. However his mistake is not untrue in its allusion to the alluring female figure since Herodias herself was known to be promiscuous. The Prior incriminates himself when he actually recognizes his niece after seeing 'that white smallish female with the breasts' (line 195). Lippi admits that the prettiest face in the painting is the Prior's niece, whom he also refers to as 'patron-saint' (line 209). Furthermore, the niece and St Lucy are conflated at the end of the poem (line 387) when Lippi is with a nameless young lady and is almost caught by her 'hothead husband' (line 383) and he says that she is '[l]ike the Prior's niece … Saint Lucy I would say' (line 387). In this scene, it is mainly through metonymy that the Prior recognizes his niece, as seen in how he sputters about her breasts, which constitute the metonym for her person.

There are many further examples of metonymic elements in the Lippi poem that are similar to those in the journey poems explored in Part I, and they have to do with parts of the body. To discuss the significance of conflation in the Lippi poem, it is important to first explore this metonymy, which is manifested mainly in Lippi's artworks. In the Lippi poem, metonymy is almost always followed by metaphor.

The first mention of body parts in his artistic works is in line 33, where Lippi equates one of the watchmen with the 'slave that holds / John Baptist's head'. The head of St John the Baptist belongs to the syntagmatic axis and is a metonym. But it also points to Lippi's own painting of the presentation of the head to Herod, which is featured in the middle of the poem. The metaphor here is of course the name of John the Baptist, and Lippi means to say that he is innocent of whatever 'crime' his

accusers mean to accuse him of. However, before this metaphor can come into play, it is led by a series of metonyms, a list of body parts that lead up to St John the Baptist's head. In the second line, Lippi tells them: '[y]ou need not clap your torches to my face' (line 2), and he describes how one of the watchmen has '[j]ust such a face' as Judas (line 26). Like the St John metaphor, Judas is symbolic of many meanings. However, Lippi means to refer to hanging when he tells one of the watchmen that he is a sinner for throttling Lippi and will be hanged one day so as to be 'affected' by his own 'gullet-gripe' (line 20). The hanging imagery of Judas later gives way to the image of the beheading of St John. The watchman with the Judas face could also be the 'slave' who holds the head of St John. Thus Lippi does what he does best in the poem: conflating the faces and figures and now, conflating Biblical icons. The pattern is thus metonymy leading to metaphor via conflation. There are many other instances in the poem where Lippi refers to twinkling eyes (ll. 42, 76), lips and teeth (line 243) and hands and feet (line 65) as well as other instances of the face (line 177) and so forth. This is similar to the Ghent poem discussed in Part I, where the body parts of the horses play a role in the movement of the journey. In the Lippi poem, the body parts fall into two categories: one in Lippi's real life, where he sees twinkling eyes, holds a girl's hand etc, and the other in a category that describes his paintings. In the painting, all body parts are mentioned, and more importantly, they include the breast, the arms and the legs.

It is not so much Lippi's life as his paintings that Browning embellishes and moves away from the Vasari account. The original painting of the beheading attracted many admirers and especially Vasari himself, who commended on the historical Lippi's realistic portrayal of the inner soul of sanctified subjects. In the poem, however, there are detractors of Lippi's works who complain about his realistic

portrayal of his earthier subjects. One such detractor is of course the Prior himself. Lippi questions the validity of hiding truths in art[35], whether these truths are too ugly to bear or too beautiful to be real. Lippi's defence is thus to make the "flesh liker and [the] soul more like, / Both in their order" (ll. 297-208). Lippi aims at reality and likeness, using the sensuality of the flesh in his painting to reveal the internal experiences of the subject. Lippi does more than display truths. His paintings help his audience see hidden meaning which would never have been articulated had they not seen on canvas. One example is the Prior's exclamation when he sees Herodias/Salome in his niece. The other monks, or 'the learned', as he refers to them (line 174) while frowning at the sensuality, unconsciously compliment Lippi on the verisimilitude of his paintings:

> "Faces, arms, legs and bodies like the true
> "As much as pea and pea! It's devil's-game!
> "Your business is not to catch men with show,
> "With homage to the perishable clay,
> "But lift them over it, ignore it all,
> "Make them forget there's such a thing as flesh.
> "Man's soul, and it's a fire, smoke … no, its not …
> "It's vapour done up like a new-born babe---
>
> (ll. 178-185)

In this sense, Lippi's drawings of the flesh go much deeper than Andrea's. Vasari has already praised Lippi's ability to portray emotions, and Browning illustrates how Lippi shows *soul* in his characters. In 'Realistic Dialogue in *The Warden* and "Fra Lippo Lippi"', Mia Iwana observes that Browning deploys the use of multiple rhetoric devices to present the Prior's sputtering indignations, including 'ellipsis, repetition, exclamations, rhetorical questions and direct commands' (www.victorianweb.org). Iwana explains that these add a comic dimension to the poem when the Prior finds it difficult to explain in words precisely how a painter is to depict the soul within the

[35] Lippi's philosophy of art and truth is not unlike Browning's own. In *The Ring and the Book*, Browning admits to liberally taking licences in presenting truths in art, especially in Books I and XII.

body without painting the body itself. She also points out that Browning presents the Prior's speech to show us his elevated status and how his commands to Lippi to 'rub it all out!' (line 221) and to 'have it all out!' (line 198) show his displeasure because the paintings have offended his 'traditional moral sensibilities'. In a way, Lippi outdoes himself in his ability to reveal in drawing where his audiences experience the failure of speech. By looking at his drawings, they suddenly spring into utterance. The Prior in dialogue with Lippi also engages in dialogue with his niece through her image in the painting. The physical niece is absent but her presence is felt by her uncle through Lippi's work, forcing him to examine his own priorities. In this sense, Lippi presents the Prior a moral dilemma that already exists but which the Prior finds difficult to face. As he berates Lippi, he simultaneously incriminates his own niece and condemns her. Browning does not reveal if the niece is truly immoral. However, he obliquely presents her as such through Lippi's accurate interpretation in the painting. Ironically, Lippi does not condemn her in words. If anything, he is full of praise for her inner beauty:

> Take the prettiest face,
> The Prior's niece … patron-saint --- is it so pretty
> You can't discover if it means hope, fear,
> Sorrow of joy? Won't beauty go with these?
> Suppose I've made her eyes all right and blue,
> Can't I take breath and try to add life's flash,
> And then add soul and heighten them threefold?
> (ll. 208-214)

Lippi thus makes no judgment, but his artwork invites judgment from others because his power and authority are implicit in his artwork.

The topic of authority addressed in the previous paragraph brings me back to the other two art poems discussed earlier in this chapter and to how these poems are linked. Authority and sovereignty in the Duchess and Lippi poems are dissimilar because Lippi does not judge while painting. By contrast, the duke is *not* the painter,

yet he judges. However, in the Andrea and Lippi poems, a point of comparison can be made over how they react to their employers' attempts at authority over their artwork. Earlier in Part II, Chapter 5, I discussed how the French king has his arm around Andrea's shoulder ('Andrea del Sarto', line 156) and how Andrea needs to be enclosed in security. Lippi, however, does not need the security Andrea needs, yet he is 'imprisoned' in his room because his employer wants him secured in a place where he cannot be distracted. There is also a difference in the treatment of the finished works in both the poems. While Andrea admits the lack of spirit in his works, Lippi's works attract criticism for their overflowing passionate energies, as seen in the passage on the Prior's niece discussed in the previous paragraph. The topic of sovereignty and theatricality is similar in the Andrea and the Lippi poems in that they both have their signatures in particular paintings, and this signature is manifested as their own images embedded into the artworks. The image of the painter on paintings is not only a stamp of ownership: in affixing his image to the painting, the artist also takes part in the scene, rather like an actor on stage. Browning makes no mention in the poem of Andrea's image on his paintings. However, the Vasari account does not concur with this. One difference is that the painting was not a commissioned work but a tile left over after Andrea had completed the painting of St James with two little boys. As there were materials left over, Andrea suggested that Lucrezia sit for him. However she

> may have had something else in her mind, would not stand still; and Andrea, as it were from a feeling that he was near his end, took a mirror and made a portrait of himself on that tile, of such perfection, that it seems alive and as real as nature; and that portrait is in the possession of the same Madonna Lucrezia.
>
> (*Lives of the Painters*, 849)

This self-portrait on a small tile probably best exemplifies the Andrea poem, where Andrea is by himself in a small enclosure and Lucrezia has just walked out to meet the cousin. In another painting of The Assumption of Our Lady, with the Apostles about the Tomb, there is 'in the foreground of the panel, among the Apostles, a portrait of Andrea, so natural that it seems to be alive' (839). Alive it may be, but the painting is unfinished. Andrea did not complete it because 'the wood of the panel split apart several times [and] he would sometimes work at it, and sometimes leave it alone, so that at his death it remained not quite finished' (839) and was subsequently completed by another painter. It is coincidental, or perhaps fated, that the two occurrences of Andrea's images appear in metonymic circumstances: one is a fragment of a larger piece of work and the other is embedded in an incomplete piece of a larger work[36]. However, as mentioned earlier, Browning does not mention Andrea's signatures in his poem.

However, Browning does mention Lippi's signature, and Vasari confirms this. Vasari notes that Lippi drew himself amongst the innumerable figures in the Feast of Herod, where St John's 'severed head was presented'[37] (441). As Lippi 'portrayed himself dressed in the black habit of a prelate', he did not place the image of himself in the foreground since he was just one of the nameless figures in Herod's palace. This is in contrast to Andrea's image of himself amongst the Apostles as if he were the thirteenth Apostle. Andrea's tendency to place himself amongst the greats is also seen in the poem where he considers himself the fourth wall in his vision of the 'New Jerusalem' and where Leonardo, Michelangelo and Rafael make up the other 'three walls' ('Andrea del Sarto', ll. 263-264). However, Lippi is given preferential

[36] According to Leonee Ormond, Browning could have intended to write the poem 'Pictor Ignotus' and other art poems such as 'Andrea del Sarto' and 'Fra Lippo Lippi' by 'a particular series of frescoes' ('Browning and Painting', 187).

[37] Montgomery Carmichael points out that the figure does not represent Lippi but the donor Francesco Maringhi, and he traces Vasari as the one who erroneously identified Lippi ('Fra Lippo Lippi's Portrait').

treatment by Browning when he foregrounds Lippi's happy image in his paintings. Fragmentation is seen in Andrea's positioning of himself also. In the poem, he is the odd fourth painter amongst the greats whereas in the Vasari account, he is the odd and probably unlucky thirteenth amongst the Twelve Apostles. In contrast, Lippi's image blends with the painting, thus preserving the wholeness. In short, one can say that Lippi sits on the paradigmatic axis and Andrea on the syntagmatic one.

In a sense, there is a parallel between Browning and Lippi, and this is seen in the similar ways in which they respond to criticism—that is, with their creative works. In *Robert Browning: A Literary Life*, Sarah Wood suggests that 'Browning quarreled with Carlyle only in his poems' (107), by which she means that Browning's replies to criticism from Carlyle 'did not take the form of logical dispute'. She examines 'Transcendentalism', 'How it Strikes a Contemporary' and 'With Bernard de Mandeville' and suggests that these poems are 'intended criticisms' which eventually journey to 'subjectivity in writing'. She brings to attention the fact that Browning's reply to Carlyle 'is only actualized in his absence [and that] Browning routinely wrote for and to the dead'. In many ways, Browning does write 'for and to the dead'. However, my reading of 'Fra Lippo Lippi' intends to suggest that Browning, like Lippi, writes to and for the future. Browning's poems on art, such as 'Pictor Ignotus', 'Andrea del Sarto' and even 'Bishop Blougram's Apology' reveal the lessons his contemporaries criticised with regard to artistic interpretation and criticism. For example, John Ruskin's thoughts regarding artists' dialogue with the audience is specifically focused on the living, when he exhorts them to engage with the present:

> The best art either represents the facts of its own day, or, if facts of the past, expresses them with accessories of the time in which the work was done. All good art, representing past events, is therefore full of the most frank anachronism, and always *ought* to be. No painter has any business to be an antiquarian. We do not want

his impressions or suppositions respecting things that are past. We want his clear assertions respecting things present.

(John Ruskin, *On Art and Life*, 45)

Browning goes a step further by engaging with the future. In ‘Fra Lippo Lippi’, Lippi entrenches himself into the consciousness of absent seers and auditors who may not even be born when, on being accosted outside a brothel, he promises his captor the watchman a painting which he will undertake immediately and complete in six months (ll. 344-345). Lippi intends to paint God ‘in the midst’ (line 348) and the Madonna and Child and ‘a saint or two’ (line 353) as well as patient Job. Amongst the montage, in a corner, Lippi intends to paint his own image:

Up shall come
Out of a corner when you least expect,
As one by a dark stair into a great light,
Music and talking, who but Lippo! I! ---
Mazed, motionless and moonstruck---I’m the man!
(ll. 360-364)

This at first simply exposes the artist’s desire to be recognized for his own good works. However, Lippi sees into the future by painting his image onto the canvas instead of just flourishing a signature on it as most painters do[38]. The image of his face will thus adorn the wall of a particular house for years to come, and he is therefore able to witness the future.

Furthermore, earlier in the poem Lippi refers to Christ on the crucifix,

Whose sad face on the cross sees only this
After the passion of a thousand years.
(ll. 156-157)

On a religious level, Christ as Son of God is able to see into the future. However, Lippi is referring not to Christ the man who died on the cross centuries back but to the

[38] The plea for freedom of expression in art, although reinforced by ‘some of the poem’s bawdier moments’, comments on the present, that is, the biographical Lippi’s time, and his future, seen in Browning’s Lippi in the nineteenth century. This foregrounds ‘the limits of [Victorian] propriety especially in literary and artistic endeavours’ (*The Poems of Robert Browning*, Vol III, 528).

image of Christ on the crucifix inside the monastery. Thus it is Christ the image and the artwork that allows Christ the man to see.

Moreover, at the close of the poem, Lippi expands this theory in his persuasive account of how his image in the montage is able to generate dialogue between the present and future. He does this by deliberately entangling the plots of his two identities. The first, his corporeal self caught outside the brothel, and the other, his image, to be born in half a year's time. The first is the Levinasian 'reality', and the second, which is his image, is the Levinasian 'shadow'. Lippi overlaps the story of his present situation with a possible future in which his future amour, upon seeing his painting, 'addresses the celestial presence' (line 372) and saves him. Lippi himself intends to hide, by 'shuffl[ing] sideways with my blushing face / Under the cover of a hundred wings' (ll. 378-379). The entanglement therefore continues when the present and future Lippis takes refuge behind the seraphic wings in the painting. Lippi creates confusion between the two to foreground the engagement between the artist as artist and his future and eternal audience. Browning the poet thus speaks through Lippi, although Browning the man may not agree with Lippi's moral excesses.

Like Lippi, Browning certainly speaks to the future. Even before de Man found the metaphor-metonymy tension in Proust and even before Proust himself wrote those tensions in his novel, Browning had already packed his dramatic monologues with these tropes. Perhaps a quote from Alberti will articulate this more clearly. In *On Painting*, he points out that

> The first thing to know is that a point is a sign which one might say is not divisible into parts. I call sign anything which exists on a surface so that it is visible to the eye. No one will deny that things which are not visible do not concern the painter, for he strives to represent only the things that are seen. Points joined together continuously in a row constitute a line. So for us a line will be a sign whose length can be divided into

> parts, but it will be so slender in width that it cannot be split.
>
> (*On Painting*, 37)

In this sense, it is possible that Alberti is speaking of metonymy in art, that is, the notion that the basic movement of art is metonymic. This is in keeping with de Man's idea of the strength of metonymy, and after reading six of his poems very closely, I posit that Browning does depend on metonymy as a vehicle to present metaphors that are enduring. The space between metonymy and metaphor is not just a space, but in Browning's poetry, it is a journey. Metonymy provides the impetus for movement in the poems, and once metaphor is established, as with journeys, it is almost impossible to track back from figural to literal.

In concluding Part II, I refer to the Heffernan quotation at the beginning of this chapter. Did Browning really have a choice in the trajectory of his poem? That is to say, if Browning did stray away from Vasari's account, it may be possible that the interplay of tropes and especially the power of metonymy forced him to write the poem in the way he did. If this is so, it is also possible that Browning's poetry may indeed present another side of truth, told obliquely. There may also be another form of journey that moves obliquely from art to truth.

The next chapter will be the first of the four chapters that make up Part III. Part III will be devoted to the close reading of seven of the twelve books of *The Ring and the Book,* and the themes and tropes discussed will be those that were developed in Parts I and II. These themes and tropes are not as neat as those in Parts I and II, where it was easy to place all the journey and movement poems in one section and all the art and stasis poems in another section. The Ring poem is one of Browning's later works, and perhaps this is why it is difficult to identify which trope belongs to which axis. It may be possible that Browning may have practiced the art of embedding

tropes so well and tightly that his poetry will always have a place in the future for newer explorations.

Part III

The Ring and the Book: Metaphor and Metonymy

Chapter Eight

Art, Stasis and Entrapment

Chapter Nine

Journey, Movement and Flight

Chapter Ten

Journey as Metaphor and Metonymy

Chapter Eleven

Allegory of Reading Browning: Journey from the Book to the Ring

Chapter Twelve

Conclusion

Part III, Chapter Eight

Art, Stasis and Entrapment

She may have 'her robe' but her youth is not her own.

(Sarah Wood, *Robert Browning: A Literary Life*, 155)

Before I begin Part III proper, I provide below a short summary of Parts I and II so as to map out the field on which my three chapters in Part III can be situated.

The three journey poems in Part I feature physical journeys and elements that disrupt journeys, such as accidents. These accidents and digressions lead to stasis in the journeys, and in 'Childe Roland', the digression and the resulting stasis are features that reduce the power of the journey to such an extent that Roland's journey becomes what Bloom refers to as a 'trial of landscape' (*A Map of Misreading*, 106). This led to Part II, which contains poems featuring speakers on trial. These speakers justify entrapment of their subjects. Part I thus features journeys interrupted by accidents where movement is in danger of being inhibited, thus foregrounding stasis. Part II features stasis in the form of entrapment of subjects through artworks.

Part III concentrates on *The Ring and the Book*, a poem that calls to attention many of the components that were discussed in the earlier two Parts, and most importantly, the journey and its necessary opposite, stasis. The physical journeys of Roland, the riders in 'Ghent', and the children and the rats in 'Pied Piper' point to a complex array of journeys in the *Ring* poem. There is Browning's physical journey to Italy, where he found the Old Yellow Book that lends its name to the poem, and there is Pompilia's and Caponsacchi's journey to Rome, which is both flight and an escape. Their flight fails and they do not arrive at their destination, not because of accidents and digressions but through a combination of accidents and the calculated design of

an external force. This external force is Count Guido, whose role in the Pompilia journey is similar to the speakers discussed in earlier chapters. Like the duke, Guido attempts to justify the murders of Pompilia and her parents. Where Roland is on trial by landscape, Guido is on trial in court. In the larger scheme of journeys and trials, Browning puts himself on trial while writing the poem, and this is seen in his many references to the critical reception to the poem he received in England.

All the tropes that will be discussed in *The Ring and the Book* are also those that occur in the six poems featured earlier. They are linked to each other by the roles of the speakers—those who undertake journeys, and those who entrap subjects who try to make those journeys. In short, the tropes of the journey, the sartorial, the frame and the synecdochic hand as enclosure discussed in the earlier poems are all accentuated and bound together in *The Ring and the Book*. The tropes of journey, the accident and the trial in 'Ghent', 'Pied Piper' and 'Roland' reveal questions over whether it is metonymy or metaphor that moves the journeys, and therefore, the poems. In 'Andrea del Sarto', 'My Last Duchess' and 'Fra Lippo Lippi', the tropes of protection and entrapment are seen in the sartorial and the frame, and they reveal questions over whether it is metonymy or metaphor that prevents journey /movement and encourages stasis/inertia. This, however, points to the possibility of concluding that it is metonymy that provides movement for metaphor. In Part I, a traditional formalist reading of the three journey poems was completed only because the tropes could be divided rather neatly into general lexical fields. This was done in what I term a 'metonymic reading' of the poems, whereby I attempted to break the poem into neat lexical fields. Part II was persuaded to move away from such a reading mainly because of the presence of elements that discourage movement and future. However, the tropes discussed in Part I are still features of Part II. My discussion in Part II

looked to an almost biographical method because two of the poems featured historical figures. The deployment of Vasari and Alberti was necessary too so as to apprehend Browning's predilection for embellishing fact to present truth, although obliquely. Therefore, in Parts I and II, I was still able to deploy the conventional structuralist approach.

In the Ring poem, all the tropes that appear in the previous chapters are presented in a way that makes them impossible to be categorized as metonymy or metaphor, though they may be described as both or even as neither. Because all these tropes are intricately linked to one another, metonymical reading becomes difficult because in the poem, no particular trope or lexicon stays on any particular paradigmatic or syntagmatic axis, and this is the challenge in my thesis. However, for the sake of clarity in my discussion of the Ring poem, I classify the tropes into two groups, the journey in a place all on its own, and stasis/entrapment in another web-like space, rather like a tapestry.

The idea of entrapment as a trope that runs through the poems in Part II embodies several elements. There is the sartorial, or the cloth as cover (protection) and trap (enclosure and entrapment), the hand that purportedly protects, and the frames that also entrap. All these elements point to sovereignty and the theatrical in those three chapters in Part II, and they occur again in the Ring poem. The difficulty is that they not only occur alongside journeys but are also enmeshed with the various journeys undertaken. The journeys of the poems in Part I move through metonymy, while metaphors acted as signposts along the journey. In the Ring poem, journey becomes a necessary flight, an escape, a forced journey that is also forcibly ended. Physical journeys in the Ring are akin to those in 'Ghent', 'Pied Piper' and 'Roland' although the journey in 'Roland' becomes metaphor when seen as a trial. The journey

as metaphor is accentuated in the Ring poem although its status as metonymy remains. This is mainly due to the various types of journeys evident in the poem and the complexity of the journeys themselves.

At the very core of the Ring poem, there is the flight undertaken by Pompilia and Caponsacchi, who attempt to escape from Guido. Guido's journey is a chase, a pursuit. Guido undertakes other journeys too. While in prison awaiting execution, he recounts his life as a trial (XI, 143-157) and, conversely, his trial is a metaphorical journey to futile enlightenment. In his two monologues, Guido discusses three journeys: his life journey, the pursuit of his wife and her lover, and his final steps to the executioner's block. All three are recounted in the poem several times and by several different speakers, thus giving the journeys a kind of theatricality earlier seen in 'My Last Duchess' and 'Fra Lippo Lippi'. The flight undertaken by Pompilia and Caponsacchi is also told and retold by different speakers. All the speakers in the poem are in a sense on trial as each one recounts his version of the trial. This includes the pope in Book X, and it is his decision that cuts Guido's life journey short. All these make up the plot, or trajectory, of the poem.

The structure of the poem is such that the trial is enclosed between two monologues spoken by a persona who borrows Browning's own voice and includes his discussion of how the title of the poem came to be. The two monologues, in two Books also discuss Browning's journeys. The title of the poem itself opens up the question over whether Browning really meant the 'Ring' to be seen *only as a metaphor*. Generally, critics from Browning's own time up to the present have accepted the Ring as Browning's metaphor for his own artistic process of story-telling. The discussions by these critics will be explored later. For now, it is important

at this point of my thesis to continue the application of my modified de Manian model and to argue that it is metonymy that makes the Ring metaphor possible.

The Ring cannot exist without the Book. The Book cannot exist without Browning's journey to an old Italian marketplace. To explore the role of metaphor and metonymy with regard to the title and content of the poem, there is a need to closely read the relations amongst the tropes mentioned earlier, that of the journey and that of entrapment. Since this thesis began with journey which led to entrapment, it is natural that it should discuss entrapment in the Ring poem and work outwards to the journey as this will be in keeping with the structure of the poem that is Browning's biggest work.

The entrapment trope in the Ring poem is not a single trope but an umbrella trope which houses several sub-tropes. These sub-tropes support each other and are linked to each other, much like a web. I stress again that for ease of discussion and fluidity of structure in this chapter, I attempt to group the tropes into six general fields, rather like the lexical fields deployed in Part I. These are, in the order in which they will be discussed, first, the sartorial, specifically related to cloth and clothes. Second, follows the hand and the breast (chest). Third will be the door, the trap and the frame. The fourth is present because of the previously mentioned three, and the sub-tropes are sovereignty and the theatrical. The fifth is entrapment in objectification, and this has to do with art and to some extent, it is linked to the idea of the frame. The tropes in the sixth and final group, metaphor and metonymy, are placed together as a pair because they manifest themselves as necessary opposites. The discussions of all these sub-tropes will overlap, just as the spokes of an umbrella hold together the material that protects the person under the umbrella. What complicates matters further is the fact that the journey trope is also involved because the

entrapment umbrella of tropes actually works within the journey trope. Such is the complication of addressing them all.

The sartorial tropes occur in the monologues of the most important personas in the poem. Furthermore, they occur repeatedly throughout their individual monologues. Daniel Karlin notes that Browning tends to 'costume' his characters (*Browning's Hatreds*, 223). Thus he foregrounds the importance of theatricality, and in doing so, tacitly recognizes the function of the sartorial, perhaps not as tropes, but as agents for movement in the poem. In 'Andrea del Sarto', 'My Last Duchess' and 'Fra Lippo Lippi', cloth and clothes are used as protection and power by the personas in attempts to entrap. In the *Ring* poem, of the twenty occurrences in five books, the book that contains the fewest occurrences is spoken by the only female speaker in the poem, who is also the object of entrapment. The book in which this trope occurs most frequently is that of the perpetrator Guido – a total of eight times in two books. It is also not surprising that Pompilia's mention of the cloth has nothing to do with entrapment, and the cloth trope is literally the 'the cloth' of the religious habit worn by her supposed lover, the cleric Caponsacchi. Furthermore, Pompilia's references to Caponsacchi's habit are not her own but are quoted from the gossip of '[p]eople' (VII, 910) and from Guido, who makes references to Caponsacchi's 'cassock' (VIII, 1042). The two references have everything to do with hiding and revelation. The gossip that reaches her ears refers to her affair with Caponsacchi, but couched implicitly in sartorial terms such as 'what of him, / Your friend, whose tonsure the rich dark-brown hides?' (VII, 910-911). It is almost comical that Caponsacchi would want to hide his priestly hairstyle under a priestly cowl, but it can be surmised that Pompilia wishes to underscore her innocence by saying that Caponsacchi is *not* hiding his priestly status since they are not engaged in a love affair. Later in her monologue, Pompilia quotes

Guido's threat to kill Caponsacchi, in which Guido makes two references to the sartorial: 'the sword I wear shall pink / His lily-scented cassock through and through, / Next time I catch him underneath your eaves' (VII, 1041-1043). By mentioning 'cassock', Guido reminds Pompilia that Caponsacchi is a priest and that even his 'cloth' cannot protect him from Guido's fury.

As for Guido, he wears his weapon as if it were part of his daily dress: military accoutrements become him. One other speaker in the Ring poem, the pope, also refers to the wearing of military accoutrements. Where Guido dresses himself with weapons of attack, the pope places importance on the weapons of defence, when he asks

> The loins we girt about with truth, the breasts
> Righteousness plated round, the shield of faith,
> The helmet of salvation, and that sword
> O' the Spirit, even the word of God, — where these?
> Slunk into corners!
>
> (Book X, lines 1567-1571)

The pope's reference to weapons of attack is featured last in his list, after he has enumerated those of defence, thus pushing the weapons of attack, signifying Guido, into the background. The pope uses metaphor in deploying the language of the sartorial while Guido depends on metonymy when he appropriates the weapon and it becomes an extension, or a part, of his body. The pope's metaphorical weapons are 'slunk into corners' while Guido's sword threatens to attack and pierce Caponsacchi's cassock, that piece of cloth which Caponsacchi himself thought was an 'inviolate shield' (VI, 363). This is the extent of Guido's sovereignty gone astray, which leads to his downfall since he was, as the pope observes, 'bound, then, to begin life well' (X, 478). The pope continues his sartorial references to weaponry by revealing that Guido, instead of looking to the 'Church for guide', where he was '[c]ased thus in a coat of proof, / Mailed like a man-at-arms' (X, 480-482), chose the road to perdition.

The sartorial references to weaponry can be divided into two fields: the weapons of attack, which are linked to sovereignty and power, and those of defence, which lead to defeat, revelation and betrayal. The many sartorial references that are linked to attack and sovereignty are associated with Guido, and those that lead to loss are associated with Caponsacchi. Caponsacchi twice claims to be dressed in lay clothes, and he mentions this together with being a priest: 'Being a priest, / Though in a secular garb' (VI, 1577-1578) and 'a priest / I, in a laic garb, a mundane mode' (VI, 1614-1615). Moreover, he twice refers to the cloth in religious terms, the cloth as metonymy for the cleric, and the actions aimed at the priestly cloth, which are those associated with violence. In denying his affair with Pompilia, Caponsacchi declares that he 'had not brought disgrace to the order, played / Discreetly, ruffled gown nor ripped the cloth / In a bungling game at romps' (VI, 1714-1716), and he claims that if he was indeed intimately involved with Pompilia, he would beg the Church to 'unpriest' him, to 'rend the rags o' the vestment' (VI, 1870). Caponsacchi boldly offers to bare himself, and he does this in theatrical fashion, with references to the ripping and rending of cloth. This points back to the Duke of Ferrara, who draws the curtain open in a similarly theatrical way to reveal the painting of his previous duchess. Later, the pope comments on Caponsacchi's garb. He links his attire to theatrical tendencies and deceit when he observes Caponsacchi's white belt and red socks (X, 1163-1164) are nothing but 'discordant garb'[39] (X, 1134), referring to Caponsacchi's life as a

> masquerade in sober day, with change
> Of motley too,—now hypocrite's disguise,
> Now fool's costume: which lie was least like truth
> (Book X, 1130-1133)

[39] The Hamelin pied piper wears discordant garb too, and this is mentioned three times in the poem, when he is described as wearing a 'queer long coat' of half-red and half-yellow (ll. 57-58) and a striped 'red and yellow' scarf to match his 'coat of the self-same cheque' (ll. 81-82). Later in the poem he is also referred to as 'a wandering fellow / With a gypsy coat of red and yellow' (ll. 161-162).

When the pope strips off Caponsacchi's clerical clothes to reveal his hypocrisy, he also breaks Caponsacchi's defence of his claim that his intention to save Pompilia is entirely innocent. Caponsacchi is betrayed by the very cloth under which he seeks protection. Guido's earlier threat to plunge his sword into Caponsacchi's cassock never occurs, and this is just as well since Caponsacchi reveals himself anyway. Ironically, in Guido's second monologue, upon hearing the pope's final decision, Guido uses the metaphor of the sword on himself when he speaks of his execution in military terms, makes references to 'warfare' (XI, 1800) and contrasts himself to a 'brave fighter who succumbs to odds' (XI, 1802). Even more ironic is when his threat to drive his sword into Caponsacchi's cassock returns to haunt him and he later claims to feel the 'stab' while having the 'mantle' folded around his body (XI, 1803-1804).

Related to defeat, revelation and theatricality, and more importantly, to the casting off of clothes is the more dramatic undressing of Guido in two instances. These are similar to Caponsacchi's supposed casting off of priestly clothes, but Guido's is different in that it is an undressing that is forced upon him. In his first monologue, Guido reveals how he was stripped in preparation for 'Vigil-torment' (V, 38), a reference to the torture he underwent earlier. This is confirmed by the Browning narrator in Book I, in which there is a reference to two kinds of torture that Guido goes through, the 'Cord' and the 'Vigil-Torture' (I, 979-980). According to Thomas Collins and Richard Altick, the editors of *The Ring and the Book,* published in 2001, the 'defendant was stripped and tied up' (41). As if the undressing of the criminal is not invasive enough, 'all hair [was] removed from his body' too, so as to allow the skin to come into contact with the instrument of torture directly. Guido's threats against Caponsacchi turn against him when he is forced to 'wear' the 'Cord', which is a thick rope tied round his waist, so that he could be hung up, and this is also a

reference to the thick rope that priests wear around the waist. The Vigil-Torture also borrows the clerical reference, with the Vigil being a common Catholic devotional practice consisting of foregoing sleep, offering prayers and going through rituals, especially during Lent.

However, the Catholic nature of the sartorial descends into the pagan in Guido's map of metaphors and metonymy when the Browning persona makes references to Guido's attire in relation to pagan gods and goddesses. In Book XII, Browning's narrator comments that 'housed amid the folds / Of Juno's mantle lurks a centipede' (XII, 527-528). Juno, although a female, can be associated with Guido because of the fighting spirit in her. In Greek mythology, Juno is also the goddess that is well known for her goat-skin garb[40]. This is further underlined in Caponsacchi's monologue in Book VI when he refers to Guido's 'trick' (VI, 537) as the 'cudgel beneath cloak' (VI, 550). The sartorial reference is also linked to Guido by Browning's narrator in the same Book XII, where the clothes Guido wears upon execution are described in some detail, and this contributes to the theatricality of the trial in a way that is reminiscent of 'My Last Duchess'. The Browning narrator echoes Daniel Karlin's assertion, quoted earlier in this chapter, that Browning's characters are costumed according to their roles, when after the execution Guido's head is shown to the crowd and is reported as

> No face to please a wife!
> His friends say, this was caused by the costume:
> He wore the dress he did the murder in,
> That is, a *just-a-corps* of russet serge,
> Black camisole, coarse cloak of baracan
> (So they style here the garb of goat's-hair cloth)
> White hat and cotton cap beneath.
>
> (Book XII, 196-202)

[40] The Browning narrator mentions that at the execution block, Guido, like Juno, wears 'the garb of goat's-hair cloth' (XII, 201).

The air of theatricality is sustained when the crowds gather round to watch the beheading of Guido and the hangings of his accomplices. The narrator does not describe Guido's face but notes that he is 'handsome, dignified at least' (XII, 194). Instead, it is Guido's clothes that seem important enough to be detailed. It is first noted that Guido wears the same clothes he was wearing when he committed the murders, and they are in the style of a soldier. Guido has double head protection, a white hat covering a cotton cap underneath, the cotton cap probably being a kind of skull cap. This points back to Caponsacchi's tonsure covered by his cowl. Of greater significance is his coarse cloak made of goat's hair, which is a warrior's usual garb. The narrator later alludes to Juno the warrior goddess, often pictured dressed in her warrior garb of 'goatskin' (XII, 568). The Browning narrator warns in Book XII that even the gods and goddesses hide weapons of terror, as seen in the phrase 'housed amid the folds / Of Juno's mantle lurks a centipede' (XII, 537-538), which echoes Karlin's observation regarding Browning's costumed characters, that 'Each statue of a god were fitlier styled / Demon and devil' (XII, 539-540).

Guido's deployment of the sartorial can be further subdivided into two parts. The first is related to Caponsacchi and deals with defeat and revelation, which has just been discussed above. The second is linked to the objectification and entrapment of Pompilia, which is closely related to sovereignty and perhaps the theatrical. The cloth as cover and protection also points to the function of the synecdochic tropes of the hand and the breast, first manifest in Part II Chapter Five, in which I discussed the Andrea poem. Guido's military attire and accoutrements contrast with the clothes he claims are given to Pompilia for protection. Like the duke in 'My Last Duchess', Guido is proud of his lineage, declaring very early in his monologue that the noble house of

> Franceschini's once superb array
> Close round her, hoped to slink unchallenged by,—
> Pluck off these! Turn the drapery inside out
> And teach the tittering town how scarlet wears!
> (Book V, 40-43)

In his earlier monologue (Book V), Guido's assertion that Pompilia is culpable mirrors the duke's accusation regarding his previous duchess. The situation is similar here, as seen in the 'accident to handkerchief in Lent / Which falls perversely as a lady kneels / Abruptly, and but half conceals her neck' (V, 1933-1935). References in his later monologue (Book XI) also strongly echo the duke's in terms of the objectification of Pompilia and the subversive role of clothes as protection. Like the previous duchess, Pompilia is compared to a painting, and this is seen when Guido is criticized for treating Pompilia like a 'daub' instead of 'a Rafael [that he has] kicked to rags' (XI, 2114-2115), to which he replies:

> Perhaps so: some prefer the pure design:
> Give me my gorge of colour, glut of gold
> In a glory round the Virgin made for me!
> Titian's the man, not Monk Angelico
> Who traces you some timid chalky ghost
> That turns the church into a charnel: ay,
> Just such a pencil might depict my wife!
> She,—since she, also would not change herself,—
> Why could not she come in some heart-shaped cloud,
> Rainbowed about with riches, royalty
> Rimming her round, as round the tintless lawn
> Guardingly runs the selvage cloth of gold?
> I would have left the faint fine gauze untouched,
> Needle-worked over with its lily and rose,
> Let her bleach unmolested in the midst,
> Chill that selected solitary spot
> Of quietude she pleased to think was life.
> Purity, pallor grace the lawn no doubt
> When there's the costly bordure to unthread
> And make again an ingot: but what's grace
> When you want meat and drink and clothes and fire?
> (Book XI, 2116-2138)

Throughout this passage, Guido dresses Pompilia in clothes and in colour, and his references of her being painted or drawn parallel the duke and Andrea. Even his

intention to entrap her is evident in the passage and, like the duke, he masks his intent by claiming to protect her and by prettifying her. She is the Virgin in paintings, where his 'gorge of colour, glut of gold', meaning the clothes bought for her with his money, 'glory round' her. This encircling, this entrapping of Pompilia is repeated later where she is '[r]ainbowed about with riches, royalty / Rimming her round'. Although he rims her around with riches as if she were a precious gift, the lines that follow reveal darker intentions: they rim her 'as round the tintless lawn / Guardingly runs the selvage cloth of gold. The word 'guard' refers of course to protection, but the word 'selvage' undoes the protective quality and instead imprisons her since 'selvage' is the thick, strong border found in carpets and curtains and meant to protect the entire material. The theatrical curtain thus exists implicitly in Guido's metaphor, although he does not exploit it as fully as the Duke of Ferrara does. A selvage cloth is made of fine gold thread, and gold is both malleable and inflexible. However, Guido describes his clothing of her in delicate terms when he refers to 'gauze' and 'needle-work' and how she is fragile as a rose or lily.

In this passage, Guido foregrounds the malleability of gold. However, its inflexibility is implicit in the passage when later Guido uses another, stronger metal, iron, to continue his 'border' comparison, the 'bordure'. A bordure is the iron border of the protective shield soldiers use in battle. Unlike Andrea and the duke, Guido does not try to trap Pompilia in a painting but in thick fabric. He uses the metaphor of the selvage as protection for Pompilia, and after imprisoning her, he wants to leave her 'untouched' and 'bleach[ed] unmolested in the midst'. This is a reference to the middle of a carpet or curtain, where the focal point of the carpet or curtain is situated. In a sense, his intention is to give her the Edgar Allan Poe treatment of imprisonment and slow death. Guido also makes references to contemporary painters of Andrea del

Sarto's era such as Titian and Monk Angelico, and this points back to the entrapment of subjects, as discussed in Part II.

In 'My Last Duchess', I pointed out that the envoy is metonymically linked to the painting by his nearness to it. However, in Guido's monologue, his auditors are present but silent. There are in fact two possible auditors to this particular passage in his monologue. The first is the absent auditor of the whole monologue, and the second is the 'instructed' criticizer (XI, 2115) who goads Guido into comparing Pompilia to a painting by referring her to as 'a Rafael' in the first place. In Guido's passage, the 'painting' is pure metaphor: it does not exist and neither do the curtain, the carpet nor the shield. They are metaphors of painting, and the painting, though absent, is a metaphor for Pompilia. Such is the depth of Pompilia's entrapment when compared to the duchess', whose likeness is in concrete form of the painting on the wall. Furthermore, the absent Pompilia is referred to as an absent painting by the absent criticizer, and Guido picks up this metaphor and uses the curtain and carpet metaphor, which links painting to cloth. This is similar to 'My Last Duchess', where the painting and the mantle are linked by the de Manian relay of tropes, which itself is a metonymic process. The disturbing point about the Guido metaphors is that Pompilia moves from painting to cloth and then to an iron shield. Where the duchess was trapped in a painting, Pompilia is set in bronze, and this is in keeping with her fate where she manages to take flight – her several journeys – before her life is cut short by the murder. Her fate is worse than the duchess' because in Guido's passage, she goes through several entrapments till she is finally cast in an iron shield, rather like the Levinasian Laocoön forever trapped in the 'meanwhile'. The shield itself could well be a coat-of-arms, usually cast in metal and hung on the wall, rather like a painting. However, the shield also refers back to weapons of defence and, as

discussed earlier, it is associated with Caponsacchi. This is Guido's unconscious accusation, which is aided by metaphor and not by metonymy, as seen in the Duchess poem.

To continue with the discussion of Guido's attempt at trapping Pompilia, attention must be given to the most telling sign of Guido's claim to sovereignty over Pompilia, which resonates with the duke over his previous duchess. This is when he makes an offhand reference to the marble head of Triton, which he refers to as 'the Mouth-of-Truth' (XI, 188). There are several points of comparison and contrast between the two sculptures. The duke's Neptune is carved in bronze, which is a hard enough material. However, bronze is also malleable under conditions of intense heat. Guido's Triton is made of harder material—marble, which is not at all malleable. In an earlier chapter, a Levinasian reading of the sculpture revealed the duke's inadequacy and the futility of his attempt at sovereignty. Guido's sculpture does not even fit into Levinas' 'reality' because the Mouth-of-Truth is hardly the 'shadow' of what sculptures of Triton normally look like—full-bodied, three dimensional, half man and half fish. The marble Mouth-of-Truth that Guido is referring to is a huge flat marble slab that features only the face of Triton with an open mouth. The duke is closely associated with Neptune since he owns the sculpture. The Mouth-of-Truth is public property, and Guido is linked to it by another supposedly 'chance' happening when he describes the accidental meeting of a friend who describes the execution of a criminal. The question is, is it really by 'chance' that Guido walks by the Mouth-of-Triton while discussing the execution by beheading, or is it the Kafkaesque 'accident' ('The Next Village') or even the Derridian 'encounter' ('My Chances/*Mes Chances*, 2), or is it a conflation of all of them?

Perhaps it is necessary at this point to observe that Guido is discussing the process of someone else's execution while awaiting execution himself (Book XI). Guido recalls the story in flashback while in prison awaiting execution. As his story goes, he is passing by the Mouth-of-Truth, meets a friend, and they begin discussing the process of execution by beheading. The Mouth-of-Truth is silent, but by metonymic association of physical closeness and coincidence, accident or encounter, points to Guido's guilt. The legend behind the Mouth-of-Truth is that truths are revealed when questions are whispered into its rectangular mouth, and there cannot be a more appropriate vehicle for Guido's culpability. This revelation works metonymically because Guido and his friend are discussing the beheading while they are in close proximity to the Mouth-of-Truth. It works metaphorically because by their very proximity, the Mouth-of-Truth would have overheard their conversation. According to legend, the truth will be revealed at that point, and the truth is that Guido is guilty of the murders. In a sense, metonymy is the more important because if Guido had not been physically near the Mouth-of-Truth, the sculpture would not have overheard his conversation.

To sum up this part of the discussion, let us look at the frame-within-frame structure of Guido's passage on Pompilia as an object enclosed by a picture frame, selvage and bordure. Guido himself sits in the cell, speaking and awaiting his final journey to the execution block, while in the larger structure, Browning's narrator retells Guido's monologue. This structure puts Pompilia right in the centre, or in the deepest part of the frame, making her the most objectified and the most entrapped of all Browning's characters in flight. Her position is further entrenched with the presence of the other tropes of entrapment, that of the hand and breast as metonymies of protection (trap), as discussed earlier in Part II. Pompilia's position in the centre of

the poem is similar to the structure of my thesis, where the chapter on 'My Last Duchess' is the middle chapter of Part II. To reiterate the idea of the development of the journey, it is possible that I have contrived to place the Duchess poem in the middle. However, it is quite true that during the course of my close reading in Part I, the Duchess poem naturally fit into the place it did. Only after my analysis of the journey poems in Part I was complete could the art poems in Part II be addressed, with the Andrea poem taking precedence, the Lippi poem concluding the series and the Duchess poem fitting naturally in the middle[41]. Here, it is important for me to reiterate that thus far, this thesis continues to reveal that although metaphor encourages stasis, metonymy provides opportunity for movement.

To further explore all these uncanny 'chance' developments, the next chapter will continue to address more images of entrapment. However, the treatment of this image is diametrically different in that so far, entrapment and enclosure have been linked with sovereignty and authority. In the next chapter, entrapment and enclosure in the form of frames, windows and doors are examined and discovered to be elements of security, hope and possible freedom. Journey finds its movement once again.

[41] A further connection is observed by Woolford and Karlin who suggest that the duchess is possibly an early prototype of Pompilia (*The Poems of Robert Browning*, Vol. II, 158).

Part III, Chapter Nine

Journey, Movement and Flight

> I have been reading and re-reading "Pompilia", and so has everyone I talk with. Not one but thinks it is as noble and lovely as Caponsacchi, and what more can be said?
>
> (D. G. Rossetti in a letter to Browning dated 22 February 1869)

It is to be expected that the hand-breast-trap imagery will be found only in the monologues of Guido, Caponsacchi and Pompilia, the three personas most bound within the tropes of journey and flight. However, what is interesting is that the only other persona to also deploy the use of these images is the pope (Book X). The significance of his monologue in the discussion of the trap imagery will be explored later, after those of Guido, Caponsacchi and Pompilia have been explicated.

In Part II, the Altick hand-in-hand image discussed in relation to the Andrea poem extended to more images of entrapment. In reading the Ring poem, it is impossible to separate the hand as protection trope from the other images, such as the protective breast (both male and female) and the image of the frame as trap as all these are intertwined. The notion of frames specifically in relation to doors and windows will first be explored, and this will lead to the protective hand-breast image immediately after.

The frame image points back to the Andrea poem in that it is an enclosure and also an opening for flight. In the Ring poem, the urgency of flight and escape is more contingent for Pompilia than it is for Andrea's Lucrezia. Of the four monologues that contain frames, Guido and the pope make only one reference each and Pompilia two, while Caponsacchi has the most, with four references. This is perhaps not surprising

because if the window represents flight for Pompilia, Caponsacchi would certainly be in the scene since as with Lippi, it is the window that provides the means of escape. This is perhaps the reason why Dante Gabriel Rossetti believes that Caponsacchi is most 'noble and lovely' ('Rossetti and Browning', 50).

The first mention of the window in Caponsacchi's monologue is quoted from a letter supposedly written by Pompilia, and it warns him to stay away from her window since Guido 'might well be posted there' (VI, 331). In his monologue, Caponsacchi initially thinks that the letters written by Pompilia are a ruse by Guido to ensnare him by luring him to the 'ambush-window' (VI, 693). He also believes that Guido uses Pompilia as bait, although she 'never dreams they used her for a snare' (XI, 716). Caponsacchi eventually goes to the window because, although he suspects that the letters may be forged, he is smitten and arrogant enough to wonder: 'what if the lady loved? / What if she wrote the letters?' (VI, 665-666). It is quite apparent that he was besotted with her the first time he laid eyes on her when she went to church, and when he reaches the window, he sees her 'there at the window stood, / Framed in its black square length, with lamp in hand' (VI, 702-703). He sees her as a painting or a sculpture of the Virgin Mary, and he likens her to 'Our Lady of all the Sorrows' (VI, 707). He even has the urge to kneel before the window, and he has to assure himself 'that she was flesh and blood' (VI, 708). The window is also the place Caponsacchi is to pass by the following night, when Pompilia claims to be 'at the open window', and if she were to be absent, he was to 'drop a handkerchief / And walk by' (VI, 889-891). The window is also an important element because it is a feature that appears later when Guido chases the couple and catches them in the house together, cutting short their journey from Arezzo to Rome.

This particular flight has many parallels with the journey poems discussed in Part I, and the journey trope in this monologue will be discussed in greater detail later in this chapter. For the moment, it is important to mention that this journey is cut short by an incident in which Pompilia, after riding non-stop the whole night, swoons. Caponsacchi does not want to stop as he knows Guido is closing the gap in the chase, and he has a 'foreboding' that Guido will eventually catch up with them, but he 'could not choose' (VI, 1417). The journey is thus cut short because of an incident not within anybody's control (the fainting), and Caponsacchi thus loses control of the movement of the journey. In Part I, the journeys of the three riders in the Ghent poem are also fraught with incidents and accidents, as when two of the three horses collapse before the journey is complete.

There is further evidence of entrapment once the journey is halted. During the time that the journey is interrupted, the events are recounted by Caponsacchi, who deploys the use of painting and frame. This is seen when Guido appears suddenly and is framed at the window inside the enclosed room. Initially Caponsacchi describes Guido in military terms, as he 'took the field, encamped his rights, / Challenged the world: there leered new triumph' (VI, 1435-1436). Guido then rushes into the chamber where Pompilia is sleeping, and it is at this point that Caponsacchi describes the scene with the window as a frame to this little narrative. He himself 'stood i' the door-way' (VI, 1534) to see Pompilia '[w]ax-white, seraphic, saturate with the sun / O' the morning that now flooded form the front / And filled the window with a light like blood' (VI, 1518-1620). When she stands up to face Guido, 'back he fell, was buttressed there / By the window all a-flame with morning-red, / He the black figure, the opprobrious blur' (VI, 1524-1526). Caponsacchi continues his Christian references and sees Pompilia as a sculpture of an angel, 'wax-white' and 'seraphic',

and perhaps this is because the window allows the sun to fall onto her face. The sunlight is compared to blood, and Caponsacchi reiterates this when Guido steps back near the window, which is 'a-flame[d] with morning-red'. Where Guido is a black figure, a 'blur' against the window, Pompilia, who is well inside the room, is a well-defined 'wax-white' seraph.

Their positions are thus as follows: door frame, Caponsacchi, Pompilia, Guido, window frame. Pompilia is placed in the middle. There is contiguity in their positions, and the positioning is therefore syntagmatic. However, from Caponsacchi's point of view, he sees the window framing Guido's blurry black figure, and superimposed on this blur is Pompilia as the main object of the picture, a figure of a white angel against a fuzzy backdrop. Caponsacchi's painting is a metaphor for the innocent in the clutches of the vile. It must of course be mentioned that this is Caponsacchi's monologue, and he *does* think that Guido is vile. However, his description of the scene depends on the tropes that work in his favour and not because he has deliberately manipulated the positions of the window, the door, Guido and Pompilia. This scene, seen as a painting, is the only one that has the element of entrapment. The other references to windows are seen as means of escape. In her monologue, Pompilia reveals that Guido, like Andrea's Lucrezia and Lippi, sees the window/door as a means of flight. Andrea's Lucrezia waits at the window for the cousin, while Guido tells Pompilia that she is 'a coquette, / A lure-owl posturing to attract birds, / 'You look love-lures at theatre and church, / In walk, at window' (VII, 677-680). Pompilia says she tries to 'soothe him by abjuring walk, / Window, church, theatre, for good and all' (VII, 684-685). Later, Pompilia admits that she herself waited at the window, letting 'morning bathe me bright' (VII, 1344), and her maid

Margherita accuses her of standing at the window in the morning, when Caponsacchi has been standing below her window all night.

At this point, a short digression must be made to address the trope of light and dark before we continue to explore the frame trope. Pompilia makes several allusions to how she is attracted to the sunlight, and C. Willard Smith has written an entire book entitled *Browning's Star-Imagery,* in which the star, for Pompilia, signifies Caponsacchi (196), although for other speakers such as Guido and the pope, it has other meanings. It is therefore not just sunlight but starlight that gives her the impetus to carry out her journey. This impetus is similar to de Man's reading of Marcel and sunlight in his 'Reading Proust' chapter in *Allegories of Reading*, where Marcel is forced out of the little room into the sunlight. The link from sunlight to starlight also finds support in Mary Rose Sullivan's suggestion that Pompilia

> sees Caponsacchi as a 'star' sent by God to guide her out of the darkness and misery of her life at Arezzo, and she uses this more sophisticated figure several times, specifically identifying the Canon with the Star of Bethlehem, and eventually broadening the image to include 'light' as a symbol of all truth and goodness as shown forth through Caponsacchi.
>
> (*Browning's Voices*, 93)

Caponsacchi as the celestial light is of course in contrast to the black and dark colours associated with Guido. Such is the depth of darkness associated with Guido that Pompilia is afraid that her son Gaetano's 'soft gold hair [may] turn black' (VII, 1757), and she wishes that the baby not be 'Count Guido Franceschini's child at all— / Only his mother's, born of love not hate' (VII, 1763-1764).

To continue the discussion of the frame trope, it is frustrating to note that it is not Guido who deploys the use of the frames of doors and windows as traps but Caponsacchi and Pompilia because it problematises and goes against the findings of

the previous chapters, in which the murderous duke is the main deployer. The hand and breast as subversive protection tropes in the earlier poems are found in the Ring poem, mainly in the monologues of Caponsacchi, Pompilia and the pope, and hardly any in Guido's. Guido makes only one mention of Pompilia, as a 'tender thing / Who once was good and pure, was once my lamb / And lay in my bosom' (V, 1638-1640). When Caponsacchi makes the hand reference, he likens Guido to an animal that sniffs at Caponsacchi's taunts:

> Till his brain grow drunk,
> As the bear does when he finds a scented glove
> That puzzles him,—a hand and yet no hand,
> Of other perfume than his own foul paw!
>
> (Book VI, lines 544-547)

Here, the hand-in-hand imagery, unlike that in the Andrea poem, is not about protection but instead about hiding and revelation, as discussed earlier in this chapter. The bear, representing Guido, finds a glove that looks like a human hand but does not find the whole person, and peeks into the glove only to find its own 'foul paw'. Both the 'paw' and the 'hand' are synecdoches. Yet the bear, which has a metonymic link to the paw, is itself a metaphor of the hand of its brutal owner. The hand-in-hand image is seen here as hand-in-glove (perhaps in a sneaky, stealthy way?) although the glove doesn't really contain a hand, which is what 'puzzles' the bear. Caponsacchi's hand trope is conflated with the metonymic and the metaphorical. The glove and the paw are both metaphors for Guido, yet they are also metonyms. This can be compared to Caponsacchi's later reference, where as a priest, he acknowledges the Church as the protector:

> "But am not I the Bride, the mystic love
> O' the Lamb, who took thy plighted troth, my priest,
> To fold thy warm heart on my heart of stone
> And freeze thee not unfasten any more?
> This is a fleshly woman,—let the free
> Bestow their life-blood, thou art pulseless now!"

(Book VI, 977-982)

The Altick hand-in-hand metaphor is extended to another body part and becomes the heart-in-heart metaphor. Nevertheless, it is still a metaphor of protection that depends on metonymy to give it power of meaning. Here, Caponsacchi beseeches God to protect him, to fold God's 'warm heart' into his stone cold one (ll. 979-980, above), stone cold presumably because of his priestly vows. He begs to be freed because he is with a 'fleshly woman'. Like Guido's hand, which is metaphor and metonymy for the bestial paw, the Lord's heart hides Caponsacchi's own stony heart, which in turns hides a heart of fire for Pompilia.

Another frustrating point about the poem for my study is Pompilia's references to the hand as protection, which have nothing to do with entrapment, as was seen and discussed in the Andrea and Duchess poems. Her monologue does not reveal an awareness of the hand as enclosure. She *wants* to be enclosed in places of security. She makes several references to these secure, enclosed places in relation to Caponsacchi, though some of these are quoted from the gossip of the town, as when she is told that she is the 'lucky one' as she 'lay so light / For a moment in his arms' (VII, 915-916). Later, she describes her journey and tells Caponsacchi of her 'new path I must tread— / My weak hand in thy strong hand' (VII, 1789-1790). This new path is of course cut short, though she longs for a longer time with him: '"Caponsacchi for my guide!" / Ever the face upturned to mine, the hand / Holding my hand across the world' (VII, 1496-1498). She also imagines Caponsacchi returning to save her and telling her – 'My great heart, my strong hand are back again' – when they are separated and she is sent to the convent after Guido catches up with them. Of course, Caponsacchi never does come back to save her.

Caponsacchi’s own monologue mentions his heart and so does Pompilia in her monologue. She also mentions his protective breast when he ‘put his breast between the spears and me’ (VII, 1780). Just as he sees her as an angel and the Virgin Mary, she too sees him as a guardian angel not only for her own sake, but for Gaetano's, her ‘babe unborn’, and she is therefore compelled to ‘take the angel’s hand’ (VII, 1616-1617). Earlier, I mentioned the fact that Caponsacchi believed that Guido used Pompilia as bait to lure him under the window. In Pompilia’s monologue, she too believes that Guido used their son Gaetano as bait when some men ‘bore him off, / The third day, lest my husband should lay traps / And catch him, and by means of him catch me’ (VII, 206-208). Although barely a woman herself, her instinct to protect Gaetano is seen when, like Caponsacchi, she compares herself to the Virgin Mary: ‘This time I felt like Mary, had my babe / Lying a little on my breast like hers’ (VII, 1692-1694).

Earlier too, I mentioned the fact that Guido does not use the hand-breast-as-protection trope as protection itself. Yet he does deploy it in a different way. In his second monologue in Book XI, while awaiting execution after the pope’s decision, Guido reverses this trope when he appeals to the Cardinal:

> I have bared, you bathe my heart—
> It grows the stonier for your saving dew!
> You steep the substance, you would lubricate,
> In waters that but touch to petrify!
> (Book XI, 2224-2227)

Guido is unrepentant to the last when he refuses to soften his heart even as it is bathed in ‘saving dew’. When compared to the Duke of Ferrara’s monologue, the two Guido monologues lack the power of protection tropes. This could perhaps be explained by the other methods of entrapment he deploys.

However, the most important voice with regard to the hand-heart-breast trap trope is the pope. The pope knows that he has the power of the modern-day judge to send criminals to the gallows at will, but he does not abuse this power:

> And I am bound, the solitary judge,
> To weigh the worth, decide upon the plea,
> And either hold a hand out, or withdraw
> A foot and let the wretch drift to the fall.
> (Book X, 194-205)

The pope uses his hand to save by holding it out. He also uses it to touch 'the hand-bell' (X, 203), which signifies 'a hasty word / To those who wait, and wonder they wait long, / I' the passage there' (X, 203-206). In a few short lines, the passage condenses all the images discussed in this chapter so far—that of true sovereignty, which the pope holds but, unlike Guido and the Duke Ferrara, does not abuse. There are the metaphor and metonymy of the hand as power and protection and the journey trope, which is seen as a trial and which the pope refers to as 'the passage'. Later in his monologue, the pope echoes the Altick hand-in-hand image by extending it to the heart-in-heart when he refers to Pompilia's death and addresses Guido and his accomplices with 'damnation by rebound / To those whose hearts he, holding hers, holds still' (X, 609-610). Although the pope holds power in his hand, he defers to God's more powerful hand when he accuses Guido of snatching the innocent Pompilia from God's protective hand "'O God, / Who shall pluck sheep Thou holdest, from They hand[42]?'(X, 641-642). The pope also likens Pompilia to a 'flower' and a 'rose', whom he 'gather[s] for the breast of God' (X, 1044-45), thus addressing the protective hand-breast trope that points to the ultimate power and sovereignty in God. This echoes the way Andrea sees the hand and the breast, as proposed by Altick. This conflated trope of the hand, heart and breast is both metaphor and metonymy. They

[42] From John 10.28.

are metonyms because they are body parts, and they are also metaphors because they are images of power, protection and enclosure.

The topic of the objectification of Pompilia may seem too sudden to introduce at this point. However, as mentioned earlier, it is part of the umbrella of several interconnected tropes. It is also important because in the exploration of journey and stasis, it is the presence of art and objectification that forces stasis in journeys. It must also be mentioned that there are only three monologues featuring the objectification of Pompilia. Guido and Caponsacchi mention it once in their monologues, and Pompilia three times. Let us begin with Caponsacchi because, although he makes only one reference to the objectification of Pompilia, he does make other references to creativity, and these are important in exploring his role in this web of tropes.

Caponsacchi, like Lippi, reveals his role as a kind of artist, although he is not a painter. According to Caponsacchi, his first encounter with Pompilia was in the theatre when he was with another priest, Conti, and saw 'enter, stand, and seat herself / A lady, young, tall, beautiful, strange and sad' (VI, 498-499). This immediately reminds him of an earlier occasion, when he was in the cathedral and witnessed

> *facchini* bear a burden up,
> Base it on the high-altar, break away
> A board or two, and leave the thing inside
> Lofty and lone: and lo, when next I looked,
> There was the Rafael! I was still one stare,
> When—"Nay, I'll make her give you back your gaze"—
> Said Canon Conti; and at the word he tossed
> A paper-twist of comfits to her lap,
> And dodged and in a trice was at my back
> Nodding from over my shoulder.
> (Book VI, 402-411)

This short passage illustrates several of the tropes seen recurring throughout the poems discussed in this thesis. In the first instance, there is a little journey of the painting by Rafael, sealed in a box, and the journey ends with the painting on a kind

of pedestal, which Caponsacchi refers to as the 'high-altar'. The *facchini,* or porters, then break away a board or two to reveal the painting, which according to Caponsacchi, was so beautiful he was staring at it for some time. This short flashback of the reverie happens between the time when Pompilia walks in to sit in the box seat of the theatre and the time when Conti tells him that he will 'make her give you back your gaze' and tosses a 'paper-twist of comfits to her lap' (VI, 409). Thus Caponsacchi likens Pompilia to a beautiful painting the first time he lays eyes on her, thus objectifying her. Furthermore, Conti tells him that Pompilia is his 'new cousin' and the 'fellow lurking there I' the black o' the box / Is Guido', who is Conti's cousin. This particular scene mirrors the Duchess poem, where the duke exercises his sovereignty over his artworks and guards the painting jealously, covering it with a curtain. Here, Guido the murderer is guarding his property too. This little passage also refers to the gaze between Caponsacchi and Pompilia, and this is also reminiscent of the Duchess poem. Although the reference to the gaze is not uttered by Caponsacchi but by Conti, it is nevertheless quoted by Caponsacchi in his monologue. It is then not untrue that the gaze did occur, at least in Caponsacchi's mind, because he later admits that

> That night and next day did the gaze endure,
> Burnt to my brain, as sunbeam thro' shut eyes
> (VI, lines 434-435)

Earlier, I pointed out that C. Willard Smith concluded in his exploration of star imagery that for Pompilia, the star represented Caponsacchi and, in a mutual understanding, Caponsacchi returns this emotion by comparing her to the sunbeam. Barely a week later, as he is watching the sunset, he makes another reference to sunbeam as he watches 'the day's last gleam outside / Turn, as into a skirt of God's own robe' (VI, 460-461). It may be preposterous to link the 'day's last gleam' to

Pompilia. However, the two references to sunlight appear in the space of fewer than forty lines, and it is possible that Caponsacchi is referring to Pompilia as one who is closest to God and the divine.

The short passage discussed in the previous paragraph (Book VI, 402-411) also echoes de Man's reading of Rousseau with regard to Marion's stolen ribbon. First I present Caponsacchi's case of the comfits so that I am able to address this in relation to Rousseau's (Marion's) ribbon. According to Caponsacchi, it is Conti who threw the comfits onto Pompilia's lap. However, Caponsacchi's retelling of the incident shows two premises: first even had he not thrown the sweets onto her lap, he would like to have done so since the event was sufficiently important for him to recount. Second, if he was indeed the one who threw it onto her lap, the poem succeeds in entrenching Caponsacchi's intention through metonymy. This is because the comfits represent the owner Caponsacchi. However, if Conti had been the thrower, then the meaning would be entrenched first by displacement, when the ownership transfers from Conti to Caponsacchi, and second by metonymy, when Pompilia perceives that the comfits belong to Caponsacchi. My reading is supported by de Man's reading of Rousseau's *Confessions*, where the young Rousseau steals Marion's ribbon. In discussing metaphor, de Man addresses two levels of substitution:

> We have at least two levels of substitution (or displacement) taking place: the ribbon substituting for a desire which is itself a desire for substitution. Both are governed by the same desire for specular symmetry which gives to the symbolic object a detectable, univocal proper meaning.
>
> (*AR*, 284).

De Man believes that this system works because the

> substitutions have taken place without destroying the cohesion of the system, reflected in the balanced syntax of the sentence and now understandable exactly as we

> comprehend the ribbon to signify desire. Specular figures of this kind are metaphors and it should be noted that on this still elementary level of understanding, the introduction of the figural dimension in the text occurs first by ways of metaphor.
>
> (*AR*, 284).

Nevertheless, de Man believes that this is substitution, and metaphor, although 'bizzare, [as] it is odd to take a ribbon for a person' (284). Later de Man suggests that it is neither Marion nor her ribbon that Rousseau really desired but 'the public scene of exposure which he actually gets, [and] the fact that he made no attempt to conceal the evidence confirms this' (285). If anything, Rousseau admits that although there were 'several things of more value' (*The Confessions of J.J. Rousseau, Complete*, 61) that were within his reach, but 'this ribbon alone tempted' him. As he 'took no great pains to conceal the bauble, it was soon discovered' (61). De Man makes no mention of metonymy despite young Rousseau's perception of taking a part of Marion's accoutrement (it is probably used to adorn her hair). De Man's Rousseau is further linked to Caponsacchi when the latter throws off his priestly habit, which includes the rope used to hold his soutane. Both de Man's Rousseau and Browning's Caponsacchi are subjected to 'exposure'—Rousseau is caught with the ribbon but displaces the blame, and in doing so, his love, onto Marion, who is then subjected to exposure. Caponsacchi, on the other hand, is exposed, whether or not he or Conti threw the comfits onto Pompilia's lap, because it was done in a public space. Eventually the ribbon undoes Rousseau as he carries his guilt all his life. Similarly, Caponsacchi is undone when Guido catches him with the sleeping Pompilia in a tavern and is subsequently forced to disrobe, thus losing both soutane and rope.

Caponsacchi's guilt is exposed when he takes pains to defend his intention to take Pompilia away from Arezzo and yet digresses to praise her beauty. However, as

his monologue wears on and as he is being interrogated, he seems to change his mind (in a retrospective betrayal and perhaps subsequent retrospective guilt) about her beauty in an effort to stave off accusations that he is besotted with her and has harboured designs on her:

> She's dead now, Sirs!
> While I was running on at such a rate,
> Friends should have plucked me by the sleeve: I went
> Too much o' the trivial outside of her face
> And the purity that shone there—plain to me,
> Not to you, what more natural? Nor am I
> Infatuated,—oh, I saw, be sure!
> Her brow had not the right line, leaned too much,
> Painters would say; they like the straight-up Greek:
> This seemed bent somewhat with an invisible crown
> Of martyr and saint, not such as art approves.
> And how the dark orbs dwelt deep underneath,
> Looked out of such a sad sweet heaven on me!
> The lips, compressed a little, came forward too,
> Careful for a whole world of sin and pain.
> That was the face, her husband makes his plea,
> He sought just to disfigure,—no offence
> Beyond that!
>
> (Book VI, 1982-1999)

Caponsacchi denies that he was infatuated with her, yet his objectification of Pompilia is obvious in his description of her as a painting, and this is seen especially in how he is concerned about her face. Anything 'outside her face' is trivial: her face shone 'purity', her face was the one Guido 'sought just to disfigure' as though Guido was more concerned with disfiguring her face than with killing her, and her parents. Caponsacchi also describes her facial features and compares them to how painters would criticize them, such as her imperfect brows, which would not be suitable to represent those of a martyr or saint—no mention of Virgins or seraphs here. In this passage, Caponsacchi switches between admission and denial, and after criticising her eyebrows, he praises her eyes, 'the dark orbs', which he thought looked heavenly. This passage is the only one with an obvious objectification of Pompilia. However in

other parts of his monologue, Caponsacchi makes references to creativity. Perhaps, like de Man's Rousseau, Caponsacchi displaces his guilt by transferring these energies into creativity. In Rousseau, this is seen in his *Confessions,* where he had to 'disclose what [he] had to say on this painful subject [that he may] be permitted never to mention it again' (63). Rousseau is in a way closer to Lippi in drawing out their sources of creativity.

Although Caponsacchi is not an artist in the way Lippi is, he nevertheless displays some sort of creativity when he reveals that in his early life, the friars noticed his gift for composing music and lyrics. Caponsacchi was told to 'cultivate / Assiduous that superior gift you have / Of making madrigals' (VI, 330-332) by entering the Church. Upon entering, he 'wrote the rhymes' and was 'as diligent at my post / Where beauty and fashion rule' (VI, 345, 347). This is in keeping with my discussion of Lippi in the previous chapter, in which Vasari hints that Lippi could have been an early fashion designer, with his influence over the style of robes and draperies in his paintings. Caponsacchi appreciates beauty not only in paintings and sculpture but in everything in everyday life too, and this is seen in the way he compares Pompilia to a painting. Later in the monologue, as he muses on Pompilia's death, he says that he will stop composing music and lyrics and that

> Luckily Lent is near:
> Who cares to look will find me in my stall
> At the Pieve, constant to this faith at least—
> Never to write a canzonet any more.
>
> (Book VI, 464-467)

Caponsacchi feels a loss of his creativity after Pompilia dies, and this illustrates his conflation of Pompilia and his creativity, which is another aspect in which he is similar to Lippi. More of Caponsacchi's predilection towards art and creativity is seen in the earlier part of his monologue, where he speaks of churches being built and how,

if there is a ‘chink’ in the wall, he will not add a brick but will ‘stick in a sprig of ivy or root a rose’ to ‘beautify the pile’ (VI, 297-299).

The concluding passages of his monologue support my suggestion that Caponsacchi does associate Pompilia with his creativity when he intends to do his ‘duty and live long’ (VI, 2077) after his exile. He expresses regret at her death because he is certain that had she lived, he could ‘see her learn, and learn by her’ (VI, 2085). However, the lesson he wants to learn from her is passion:

> She and I are mere strangers now: but priests
> Should study passion; how else cure mankind,
> Who come for help in passionate extremes?
> I do but play with an imagined life
> Of who, unfettered by a vow, unblessed
> By the higher call,—since you will have it so,—
> Leads it companioned by the woman there.
> To live, and see her learn, and learn by her.
> (Book VI, 2078-2085)

When Caponsacchi claims that priests should study passion so as to cure mankind, he echoes an earlier wish he had before the journey with Pompilia from Arezzo to Rome, discussed earlier in this chapter, in which he claims to have a ‘stony’ heart (VI, 2225). However, Caponsacchi’s objectification of Pompilia is different from Andrea’s, and the duke’s in that he does mean to protect her and not to entrap her. This is not a judgment on whether he is innocent or guilty of carrying on an affair with Pompilia. Instead, it illustrates the workings of tropes that naturally appear in the poem and that force some sort of evidence. Furthermore, where Andrea’s Lucrezia and the duke’s previous duchess are prevented from flight, Caponsacchi’s references to paintings and Pompilia point towards release rather than entrapment. The fact that he compares her to a Rafael in the box waiting to be released from the box shows two things: first, a painting must be seen and appreciated and gazed upon. Second, it illustrates the theatrical, as when he also mentions how the box is put on the ‘high-altar’ (VI, 403)

and opened by the *facchini*. The scene is somewhat theatrical because Caponsacchi says that only one or two boards were taken away to reveal, or release, the painting, much like the various curtains discussed thus far.

My suggestion regarding Caponsacchi's role in release rather than entrapment is supported by Pompilia's monologue, in which she claims to have first seen him with '[f]at waggish Conti', her 'husband's cousin' (VII, 987, 988). What is significant about Pompilia's version of their first meeting is what she says before she recalls the first encounter. She is thinking of her son Gaetano, and she says how 'I must lay my babe away with God' (VII, 930), meaning that she has to trust God to look after the baby as she knows she is taking her 'last breath' (VII, 932). Her last breath, however

> shall wholly spend itself
> In one attempt more to disperse the stain,
> The mist from other breath fond mouths have made,
> About a lustrous and pellucid soul
>
> (Book VII, 932-935)

This 'lustrous and pellucid soul' is of course Caponsacchi:

> Giuseppe-Maria Caponsacchi! There,
> Strength comes already with the utterance!
>
> (Book VII, 941-942)

She then wishes for him to be there to 'speak' for her (line 946), and it is here that she begins to recall their first encounter. Her account of that encounter matches Caponsacchi's in that the 'twist of comfits' mentioned in Caponsacchi's monologue (VI, 409) and in her monologue (VII, 975) match. The twist of snacks that was thrown onto her lap was indeed tossed by Conti, who seems to be the 'Iago' sowing Guido's jealousy. The Othello similarity is further extended to Iago's wife Emilia, who is represented by Pompilia's maid Margherita. She suggests that Pompilia give her 'a glove, / A ring to show for token! Mum's the word' (VII, 1091-1092) so that she can give Caponsacchi the 'token', which represents Desdemona's handkerchief.

Pompilia’s account also confirms that although Conti deliberately arranges Caponsacchi’s ‘gaze’ to be returned, she herself sees an opportunity for a possible saviour in him. Caponsacchi’s one reference to objectification and his association with art is therefore about his creativity, and this is related to his role in Pompilia's flight. He is the initiator of her flight, and his encounter with her is not an accident; it is contrived by Guido’s cousin Conti.

Still on the topic of objectification, Guido is as guilty of murder as the duke. However, he is not as closely associated with the artistic object as the duke other than by making a reference to the sculpture of the marble Triton or the Mouth-of-Truth, which was discussed earlier in this chapter. In this sense, he is different from the duke, who owns the bronze Neptune. However, his reference to Triton is more closely echoed by Pompilia, who recalls early in her monologue the marble lion with ‘half body rushing from the wall, / Eating the figure of a prostrate man’ (VII, 23-24). The duke is related to Neptune by metonymy and metaphor when he points to and identifies with Neptune in a calculated move to threaten the father of his future duchess. Guido is related to Triton through metonymy when he *encounters* the marble sculpture while walking by and discussing the execution by beheading of Felice. It must be noted here again that Guido’s relation to the Triton Mouth-of-Truth is a foreshadowing of his own beheading. As he passes by Triton, he is discussing execution and the separateness of body parts:

> The wooden half-moon collar, now eclipsed
> By the blade which blocked its curvature: apart,
> The other half,—the under half-moon board
> Which, helped by this, completes a neck’s embrace,—
> Joined to a sort of desk that wheels aside
> Out of the way when done with,—down you kneel,
> In you’re pushed, over you the other drops,
> Tight you’re clipped, whiz, there’s the blade cleaves its best,
> Out trundles body, down flops head on floor,
> And where’s your soul gone? That, too, I shall find!

(Book XI, 226-235)

Guido is even more closely related to Triton (Mouth-of-Truth) than the duke is to Neptune because Guido is eventually beheaded. Furthermore, Triton, the Mouth-of-Truth, is also an incomplete sculpture, with its head and face constituting the whole sculpture and its body missing. Metonymy, while working in the foreground, also works subtly here with the head representing the whole. Even the execution block adopts some human references such as the 'half-moon collar', which of course is referred to as a collar since that is the part of the neck the collar is supposed to 'embrace'. The word 'embrace' is used because there are two collars surrounding the neck, like two arms, which are body parts implicitly present in the passage. Guido's tone seems frivolous, with a rhythm that suggests nonchalance, when he says: '[i]n you're pushed, down flops head on floor'. However, the next line reveals a great sense of regret that is absent throughout his first monologue in Book V and much of his second monologue in Book XI. This revelation is also brought about through metonymy when, after the head is separated from the body, Guido questions the whereabouts of the soul. The separation is deeper when the body is neatly cut up into three parts: the body and the physical, the head and consciousness, and finally the soul, representing the spiritual.

As Guido is linked metonymically to Triton, the same also applies to Pompilia, who like Guido and the envoy in 'My Last Duchess', are linked metonymically to the sculpture or the painting because of the nearness to the object. There are now four objects of art in the two poems: first, the three-dimensional bronze Neptune associated with the duke; second, the flat painting of the duchess associated with the envoy in 'My Last Duchess'; third, the three dimensional half-bodied marble lion associated with Pompilia; and fourth, the flat Triton associated with Guido in the

Ring. This puts Pompilia and Guido in positions that are almost parallel to those of the duke and the envoy, that is, Pompilia and the duke are on a certain platform and the envoy and Guido are in less advantageous positions. The Levinasian model discussed in Part II can be used here to explicate the positions and to explore how these positions are interchangeable. The Guido/Triton Mouth-of-Truth does not have a future according to the Levinasian 'aspiration for life which moved Pygmalion' ('Reality and Its Shadow', 138) because it is not the 'shadow' of Triton. The Triton Mouth-of-Truth, with its rectangular open mouth, is a deliberate distortion of the sculpted Triton, with its resemblance to a huge coin with a head carved on one side. On the other hand, Pompilia's marble lion is in action because it is eating the prostrate man. The frozen action is in keeping with Levinas' observation of Laocoön in his death throes fighting with the serpents (138) and with the duke's Neptune taming the sea-horse. All three sculptures feature actions of attack and resistance. The painting of the previous duchess is also in keeping with the idea of frozen action, with the mantle threatening to slip off the duchess' wrist. This makes Triton the odd figure in the group of four. However, Triton as the Mouth-of-Truth is linked to the duke's Neptune since they are both gods of the sea. If they can be lumped together in a lexical field, they can be said to be linked metonymically. The Mouth-of-Truth is also linked to Pompilia's marble lion by metonymy since neither sculpture is whole. One has only a large flat head in the shape of a large coin and the other has a 'half-body' rushing out from the wall.

More associations of art and its metaphoric-metonymic workings are seen in Pompilia's monologue, when she quotes Margherita. Margherita tells her that Caponsacchi is 'your true Saint George / To slay the monster, set the Princess free' (VII, 1323-1324). Although Margherita is alluding to the legend of the knight in

shining armour, there is an implicit reference to art here because there are many paintings and sculptures featuring St George slaying a dragon. One such painting, according to Thomas Collins and Richard Altick, is Giorgio Vasari's picture of St George in the church of St Maria della Pieve (*The Ring and the Book*, 426). St George is aligned with Laocoön and the duke's Neptune because it is whole and complete, unlike Guido's Triton or Pompilia's marble lion. St George, like Laocoön and Neptune are also in action, fighting enemies, and their role is to protect. Furthermore, the poem also makes a reference to a painting when Margherita mentions yet another biblical figure fighting the dragon – the picture of St Michael in the church of St Francesco in Arezzo. Margherita refers to St Michael in relation to Caponsacchi:

> "Michael's pair of wings will arrive first
> At Rome, to introduce the company,
> And bear him from our picture where he fights
> Satan,—expect to have that dragon loose
> And never a defender!"
>
> (Book VII, 1215-1219)

Margherita of course substitutes the dragon for Satan to allude to Guido.

Probably the most important reference to art and entrapment by Pompilia is that of the tapestry on the wall (VII, 186). Pompilia's identification with Daphne removes her completely from the Levinasian 'aspiration for life' in human characters because in Ovid's *Metamorphosis*, Daphne turns into a tree. Both Guido's and Pompilia's life journeys are cut short suddenly, and their corresponding art forms foreground their subsequent conclusions. The Mouth-of-Truth reveals truths, and so Guido cannot escape the revelation of his guilt. Daphne is a victim of metamorphosis, so Pompilia too is the victim of things that change. Pompilia reveals that throughout her short life, she felt that she had to create, and she does this through imagination even though she knows that it is 'fantastic and impossible' and that she only 'touch[es] a fairy thing' (VII, 200-201). Her journey from the physical world to the

imaginary and back to the harsh physical world with Guido is written in the future of the child Pompilia as she imagines it in her childhood.

The fact that Pompilia is associated with Daphne illustrates how Pompilia objectifies herself when she recalls her childhood days, when a friend from a neigbouring house comes over on 'rainy afternoons' and they both 'agreed to find each other out / Among the figures' (VII, 187-188). The passage is dense with tropes drawn from the umbrella of tropes discussed thus far in this chapter. Pompilia and the neighbour's child Tisbe agree to look at 'the tapestry on the wall' (VII, 186) and they create a story from the patterns of the tapestry. The tapestry itself is an echo of Guido's entrapment tropes discussed earlier, which include the curtain and the carpet. The cloth trope thus occurs very early in Pompilia's life and her monologue. Daniel Karlin's observation of Browning's characters costumed for their roles can further be extended with the presence of the cloth, with Andrea's family name 'del Sarto', the Duchess' mantle and the curtains, and in Pompilia's dialogue, with tapestry. Karlin's interest in what he refers to as the 'image of tapestry' (*Browning's Hatreds*, 33), and his discussion on tropes of hatred contain many of the tropes discussed in this thesis, the most important being the link to journey and stasis.

> Pompilia and Tisbe identify each other respectively with Diana and Daphne, huntress and victim, causer and sufferer of metamorphosis. Both are emblems of chastity, but of radically different kinds. One is a creature of the air, her magical flight symbolizing freedom, her weapons violence and fear; the other's flight (escape) ends in a paradoxical stasis, earthbound yet 'flourishing'. The words *scar, blow, blush,* and *bow* make ghostly appearances in Diana's 'scarf / Blown to a bluish rainbow', an image of sexual shame translated into pursuit and retribution; it is set against the green and brown of the tree, the colours of organic life.
>
> (*Browning's Hatreds*, 33-34)

The many tropes so far discussed in this thesis are all intertwined within the girls' fantasy, and the tapestry itself is an interwoven piece of artistic work that is a metaphor for these interrelated tropes. Pompilia does not reveal what exactly is on the tapestry. However, she does say that there are 'figures'. Their little game is such that they try to identify each other in the tapestry, but it is not a game of identifying themselves. Pompilia associates Tisbe with the huntress Diana, and Tisbe associates Pompilia with the hunted Daphne. It must be mentioned here that Pompilia was only a little girl at the time and she did not know that her future would be one of flight and of being chased. Yet the young Tisbe already identifies Pompilia as Daphne the hunted and the victim. Pompilia's and Tisbe's creative imagination surrounding the tapestry also takes on images of weaponry, and they can also be divided into weapons of attack and defence. Tisbe as Diana the huntress has a 'spear in hand' and a 'hound' (VII, 189, 192). Diana also ties her hair up in a 'half-moon' (VII, 189), which in Guido's monologue refers to the shape of the execution block where the person's neck is cradled as two half moons. Diana's 'half-moon' has therefore the ability to ensnare. Pompilia as Daphne the hunted does not even hold weapons of defence, and her metamorphosis into a tree points to her imprisonment because the tree is rooted to the ground. References to clothes and colours (associated with painting) are also evident in the girls' fantasy. Pompilia sees Tisbe/Diana wearing a 'great scarf / Blown to a bluish rainbow at your back' (VII, 190-191), while Tisbe sees Pompilia/Daphne as 'brown and rough' and filled with 'green leaves / Flourishing out of your five finger-ends' (VII, 195, 193-194). Finally, where Pompilia is rooted to the ground, Tisbe is able to fly, and it is ironic that it is Pompilia who takes flight later in her life. The two girls are of course only identifying each other in Ovid's *Metamorphosis,* and this is all

done in creative child's play. However, the very young Pompilia wisely tells Tisbe that

> You know the figures never were ourselves
> Though we nicknamed them so. Thus, all my life,—
> As well what was, as what, like this, was not,—
> Looks old, fantastic and impossible
> I touch a fairy thing that fades and fades.
> (Book VII, 197-201)

It is at this point in Pompilia's monologue that she thinks of Gaetano and of how the baby is hunted and taken away from her and begins his own little journey early in life. Therefore, from the beginning of her monologue, Pompilia sets the stage for the various journeys by speaking of Tisbe's flight, Gaetano's forced journey and her own entrapment, which sets the stage for her forced escape.

In conclusion, both this chapter and the previous one examined journey and movement and their necessary other faces, stasis and entrapment in art. These two chapters pave the way for a discussion of Browning's own journey as well as his metaphor of the Ring, the signifier with an absent signified and referent, and how it is metonymically related to the Old Yellow Book. The next chapter will thus return to the journey trope, examining it as both metonymy and metaphor in the Ring poem. The final chapter (Chapter Eleven) in Part III will then see a discussion of how Browning's Ring may be seen as a powerful metaphor through the workings of metonymy. This then leads to the conclusion of reading the journey trope as allegory of reading Browning's poetry.

Part III, Chapter Ten

Journey as Metaphor and Metonymy

> The figure aims at the most demanding of reconciliations, that of motion and stasis, a synthesis that is also at stake in the model of narrative as the diachronic version of a single moment.
>
> (Paul de Man, *Allegories of Reading*, 68)

It is now appropriate to examine the journey trope closely in the poem, even though, as de Man observes in the above quote, motion and stasis are 'the most demanding of reconciliations'.

Bloom, in his pronouncement that Roland's ordeal is a 'trial by landscape' (*A Map of Misreading*, 106), opens up many possibilities to other trials. *The Ring and the Book* is the story of Guido's court trial, and his side of the story takes up two of the twelve books in the poem—all other characters save Browning's narrator are given the space of just one book. Because Rome is divided equally into two where Guido's guilt is concerned, two of the books are devoted to the two Half-Romes. Because the two Half-Romes are gossiping about the trial, it is inevitable that Pompilia and her lover Caponsacchi are also put on trial, and their voices are heard in Books VI and VII. Archangelis and Bottinus star in the trial[43] by prosecuting and defending Guido and even the lawyer Tertium Quid, who has no connection with the trial, is given a voice. The pope's deliberation and decision in the closing books decide Guido's fate, but by this time the trial itself has become a spectacle, with many elements of theatricality. Within these narratives, Browning's narrator opens and closes the poem and is explicit in his belief in the power of poetics and interpretation. The common

[43] Although Archangelis and Bottinus were two very able lawyers, John Marshall Gest demonstrates how Browning, with artistic licence, 'converted [them] into buffoons who oppose each other' in Guido's trial (*The Old Yellow Book, Source of Browning's 'The Ring and the Book'*).

trope throughout these books is the journey, and the common situation throughout the poem is entrapment.

Of the seven *Ring* monologues that have been discussed in this thesis, six feature the journey, and my discussion will now be broken up into two parts. The first will consist of the exploration of the journey in the monologues of Guido, Caponsacchi and Pompilia, and the second will concentrate on the journeys mentioned by the Browning narrator in the first and final monologues. This is because the first and final books are spoken by the poem's persona, who does not belong to the plot and is generally believed to be Browning's own voice since it comments on Browning's own journeys and his idea on creativity and truth. In the first part, I will discuss the monologues in this order: Pompilia, Caponsacchi and finally Guido. I begin with Pompilia because she is the one who decides on the journey that leads to her eventual murder and those of her parents. Without her decision to run away to Rome, there would be no trial and no poem. Caponsacchi is next because he is the only character in the poem that discusses this journey in great detail. He takes this journey the most seriously and devotes more than ten pages to recounting the flight from Arezzo up to the time Guido catches up with them. I then discuss Guido, who undertakes two kinds of journey: his trial, and his life as a journey and a trial. This will lead to the two 'bookend' monologues, the first and the final (Books I and XII), where the Browning narrator also speaks of the journey in several forms and where the journey trope is both metaphor and metonymy, as seen in the Ring figure.

Pompilia's monologue is generally fragmented and more digressive than all the other monologues, and this is to be expected since she is dying as she speaks, even though there is a fundamental implausibility in a dying woman being able to say this much. If the monologue represents her life, it is cut brutally short as her monologue is

shorter than Caponsacchi's and Guido's. Her short life too is fragmented when as a mere girl she was forced to marry Guido, and the rest of her young life is full of uncertainties and journeys that are forced. If the monologue represents her journeys, they too are fraught with uncertainties and incidents. The larger importance of her fragmented monologue is therefore both metonymic and metaphoric. The passage where she retells her journey is reminiscent of Browning's earlier poems, which feature the physical journey, as discussed in Part I. In that chapter, the metonymic reading of the Ghent poem involved identifying lexical fields that are either metonymic or metaphoric. Similar but more difficult to categorise are the elements in the Pompilia monologue.

The retelling of the journey by Pompilia begins very late in her monologue, when she is very near death and begins with 'Is all told? There's the journey: and where's time / To tell you now that heart burst out in shine?' (VII, 1528-1529). This chapter will not often feature the kind of close reading applied to the three poems in Part I because, although Pompilia's journey is similar in the tropological arrangement, it is intensely digressive and fragmented. In any case, if it were possible or necessary to do so, then the Pompilia passage on her journey should have been discussed in Part I along with the other three journey poems. Moreover, her monologue also echoes the issues addressed in Part II, so I chose to discuss it only at this point. What is important to discuss here is where the passage alludes to patterns similar to those three poems, especially with the Ghent and Roland poems, and how in the end the Pompilia journey is also a kind of conflation of previous journey poems. It also contains elements of entrapment that are similar to the poems in Part II, and this is how complicated the journey trope has progressed thus far.

First, before launching into a discussion of Pompilia's retelling of the journey, it is important to mention the fact that Pompilia herself reveals her own feelings of joy as she stands on the terrace awaiting freedom. This passage, which occurs about two hundred lines before the retelling of her actual journey, is important to this thesis because of the similarities with the journey poems and with those on entrapment. The terrace is also mentioned in the Duchess poem, where the jealous duke claims that his previous duchess was riding on a white mule and attracting male attention (ll. 28-29). In my discussion of the Ring poem, I suggested that Caponsacchi's objectification is different from the duke's and Andrea's in that his intention is one of release rather than of entrapment. However, the terrace in the Duchess poem and the window in the Andrea poem are entrapment tropes that lead to stasis. However, for Pompilia, the window and the terrace signify flight from entrapment. Her window is more closely associated with Lippi's window, which is a means of escape and flight. I have chosen the word 'flight' to describe this journey and not just 'escape', even though for her it is an escape. However, this little scene illustrates Pompilia's joy in terms of flight because of the imagery she uses, such as flies (VII, 1288 and 1241), birds (VII, 1232 and 1240), the building-sparrow (VII, 1235) and finally, the bird and the fly together: 'My march to Rome, like any bird or fly!' (VII, 1246).

Pompilia's journey itself is vague and almost as dream-like as that in the Roland poem, and although she was full of 'joys' thinking about the journey while on the terrace waiting for Caponsacchi, she cannot remember the details. The following is from Pompilia's journey passage:

> Each place must have a name, though I forget:
> How strange it was—there where the plain begins
> And the small river mitigates its flow—
> When eve was fading fast, and my soul sank
>
> (Book VII, 1531-1534)

Other than Arezzo, Guido's hometown and a place of horror for her, she cannot name any other towns they pass, and does not even mention Rome, her own home and destination. This truncated passage is similar to the Ghent poem in that Pompilia, like the rider, measures the journey by signposts. The difference is that the rider in Ghent uses the names of the towns to illustrate distance and movement. Furthermore, embedded in the Ghent poem are lexical fields of symbols of natural environment, such as the moon, which illustrate temporal movement. As discussed in Part I, the Ghent poem foregrounds the urgency of the journey through the interplay of metaphor and metonymy. In the Pompilia monologue, the urgency is replaced with a kind of dream-like, or nightmare-like, atmosphere more closely identified with the Roland poem. This is brought about by Pompilia's fear of Guido chasing her and catching up with her before she reaches Rome. Her fear is brought about by the environment she passes. Therefore, it is the setting and landscape of these towns that bring memories of Guido. Thoughts of flight and freedom as seen in the imagery of flies and birds when Pompilia is standing inert on the terrace during the day give way to the image of the river slowing down ('mitigates its flow') where the plain begins. Even Pompilia admits that it is 'strange' that she passes an already small river that is petering out in its intensity of flow.

When these two scenes are examined, there is an opposing image. When in stasis on the terrace, she sees flight. However when in flight, she sees movement slowing down. It is not surprising that her 'soul sank' upon seeing the small river slowing down, and together with the vastness of the plain appearing, she begins to think of Guido 'overtaking' her (VII, 1534, 1536). She does not mention his name, and she uses the pronoun 'he', which, in a fragmented way, refers also to Caponsacchi:

And he divined what surge of bitterness,
In overtaking me, would float me back
Whence I was carried by the striding day—
So,—"This grey place was famous once," said he—
And he began that legend of the place
As if in answer to the unspoken fear,
And told me all about a brave man dead,
Which lifted me and let my soul go on!
(Book VII, 1535-1542)

The 'he' who told her that the 'grey place was famous once' would logically be the same 'he' who would be overtaking her, that is, Guido. Yet Pompilia, upon hearing about the grey place being famous for the brave dead man, felt her soul lifted. Thus it can be concluded that the second 'he' who knows of the legend is Caponsacchi and not Guido. The landscape is much like that in the Roland poem, where there are dead heroes, and Caponsacchi and Pompilia stand in between the victors, like the Ghent rider and Roland, who arrive at their destinations, and the dead in the marshes, like Ghent's Dirck and Joris and Roland's friend Cuthbert. Neither Caponsacchi nor Pompilia reach Rome, yet they do not die along the way either. Instead, Guido sends for the magistrate, who orders them to be put into the friary and the convent.

Pompilia's fragmented monologue, which symbolizes her fragmented journey and life, also makes references to entrapment and broken circles:

At that town's approach
By the rock-side,—that in coming near the signs
Of life, the house-roofs and the church and tower
I saw the old boundary and wall o' the world
Rise plain as ever round me, hard and cold,
As if the broken circlet joined again,
Tightened itself about me with no break,—
As if the town would turn Arezzo's self.
(Book VII, 1543-1550)

As mentioned earlier, she does not remember the various towns' names, and upon approaching 'that' town, she sees landmarks, or signs of life, such as house roofs and

the church and tower, which are all metonyms. Again, it is the landscape that reminds her of Guido and Arezzo.

The following passage is quite significant in this thesis, in which I have been discussing entrapment and enclosure, because Pompilia does a metonymic reading when she sees parts of a whole, and both bring back memories of Arezzo. However, once the metonymic relay is successful, her memories are described in metaphor:

> I saw the old boundary and wall o' the world
> Rise plain as ever round me, hard and cold,
> As if the broken circlet joined again,
> Tightened itself about me with no break,—
> As if the town would turn Arezzo's self,—
> The husband there,—the friends my enemies,
> All ranged against me, not an avenue
> To try, but would be blocked and drive me back
> On him,—this other, … oh the heart in that!
> (Book VII, 1546-1554)

Pompilia remembers Arezzo as a 'boundary' and a 'wall' that are 'hard and cold'. This walled boundary is also likened to a 'circlet' tightened around her 'with no break'. In Part II of my thesis, most of the entrapped subjects are 'framed' in angular traps. By contrast, Pompilia sees the frame as a circle, and this is more suffocating in the sense that the circle, since it has no angles, has the ability to enclose and tighten, rather like a rope or a material such as cloth, which is softer and more flexible. Furthermore, the image of the 'circlet' is precisely the shape of the title of the poem, a point that will be discussed in detail later. In using this image, Pompilia is using a metaphor that links two similar, concrete images. First, the nameless town with its concrete buildings reminds her of a suffocating circlet which is like the town of Arezzo, Guido's hometown, with all her 'enemies, / All ranged against' her and driving her 'back / On him'. The other is of course the image of a circle, rather like a rope tightening around her.

Of all the references to this particular journey undertaken by Caponsacchi and Pompilia, it is Caponsacchi who is the most serious in terms of detailing the event, as he claims that

> Sirs, how should I lie quiet in my grave
> Unless you suffer me wring, drop by drop,
> My brain dry, make a riddance of the drench
> Of minutes with a memory in each,
> Recorded motion, breath or look of hers,
> Which poured forth would present you one pure glass,
> Mirror you plain,—as God's sea, glassed in gold
> His saints,—the perfect soul Pompilia? Men,
> You must know that a man gets drunk with truth
> Stagnant inside him!
>
> (Book VI, 1155-1164)

Caponsacchi's intense emotion over the journey is articulated through his use of imagery to describe memory and time. His memory is so deeply embedded that his brain has to be wrung like a piece of cloth to be rid of the memories of her face. He uses the word 'wring' and not 'squeeze' as if those memories have to be wrenched, or forced, out of his brain. Caponsacchi also says that his brain is 'drenched' not with memories but with minutes of a memory. Moreover, he feels that each tiny moment in time is a kind of space and time moving together almost like space-time, since Pompilia's every motion, breath or look is recorded in the 'drench' of minutes[44]. Caponsacchi compresses this memory into a glass, and this is the reverse motion of astrophysical space-time, which moves outwards. Caponsacchi's space-time is, as he says, 'stagnant'. It does not move but has to be wrung out, poured into a glass and if drunk, it remains inert inside the drinker. Caponsacchi thus speaks of the journey within the journey when he uses the image of the 'recorded motion' of memory in his brain which, when wrung out of him, becomes Pompilia's perfect soul, and when consumed again, is truth, and this truth loses that motion and becomes 'stagnant'.

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[44] Guido too mentions being 'drenched' (V, 1038) when he was drugged so that Pompilia could escape with Caponsacchi.

Caponsacchi continues this fluid watery image when told to be calm and to recount the flight with Pompilia:

> Can I be calm?
> Calmly! Each incident
> Proves, I maintain, that action of the flight
> For the true thing it was. The first faint scratch
> O' the stone will test its nature, teach its worth
> To idiots who name Parian—coprolite.
> After all, I shall give no glare—at best
> Only display you certain scattered lights
> Lamping the rush and roll of the abyss:
> Nothing but here and there a fire-point pricks
> Wavelet from wavelet: well!
> (Book VI, 1165-1175)

In this passage, Caponsacchi also continues his insistence on truth and purity when he accuses disbelievers who can't tell 'Parian' from 'coprolite', which according to Collins and Altick, are marble and the 'petrified excrement of reptiles', respectively (*The Ring and the Book*, n.3, 349). He also makes references to incidents (which in the Ghent poem, are accidents) and which he maintains proves that the action of the flight is noble. Caponsacchi likens the journey, and thus the truth behind this flight, to the 'rush and roll' of falling into a dark abyss, and he says that he will only reveal 'scattered lights' and 'fire-point pricks' into this 'abyss'. He therefore associates light with truth, which of course is a common enough metaphor. However, the word 'lamping', which is associated with hunting and glaring lamps, undoes the seeming randomness of 'scattered lights' and nonchalance of tiny 'fire-point pricks'. There is also an association of 'rush and roll' with the 'wavelet and wavelet', as if the journey of travelling down into an abyss imitates the movement of tumbling down as well as that of being tossed about by waves. There was an earlier discussion that Caponsacchi does not intend to entrap Pompilia. However, his passage on the memories of Pompilia somewhat encloses her inside his brain and within himself. His passage illustrates the fact that, although he wants to reveal the whole truth about the

innocence of the relationship, he still refrains from revealing everything, preferring only to shine scattered lights on the journey.

Where Pompilia cannot recall any of the towns passed, Caponsacchi is specific about their place names, such as Perugia, Assisi, Foligno and Castelnuovo (VI, 1203, 1205,1275 and 1400), although later in the journey he forgets a particular place where they stop to change horses and to eat (VI, 1208-1211). In Caponsacchi's monologue, Pompilia mentions Arezzo and Rome in terms of fear of the one (Arezzo) and comfort of the other (Rome, her family home), and this is in keeping with her monologue, in which she admits that she cannot remember any place names and only mentions Arezzo along with memories of horror and fear. Although Caponsacchi's journey passage follows a chronological time line, it is partially fragmented because, in between describing the passing landscape, he also recalls Pompilia's state and their conversation. The urgency foregrounded in the Ghent poem is diluted somewhat by the absence of short phrases and of the rhythmic galloping of the verse that are prominent in the Ghent poem. The horrors of morphing landscapes and unknown terrors in the Roland poem are also absent. These elements in the earlier poems are perhaps unnecessary here since the horror is known—Guido is riding hot on their heels. In the two earlier poems, the journey is significant in the conclusion, that is, the journey must end at the destined place to be of any meaning to the speakers. The Ghent speaker must arrive at Aix to give the good news, Roland must arrive at the Dark Tower to seek his truth, and to a great extent, the rats and the children in the Piper poem must end in the waters or into the mountain portal for the piper to make good his threat and to stamp his sovereignty. For Caponsacchi, the most important part of the journey is not the ride itself but his time alone with Pompilia along with

their conversations. Yet these conversations reveal an urgency to press on ahead as they both know they are being pursued.

This is the most significant difference in their journey when compared to the three journey poems discussed in Part I in that it is one of flight and escape. They journey away from danger and horror while the others travel alongside and towards unknown horrors. Thus for the earlier poems, the journey cannot be considered escape. The conversations are also quite important when discussing the movement of the journey. There is dialogue during the journey, and as in most of Browning's dramatic monologues, the speaker tends to retell someone else's words in direct speech. The first to open the conversation once the journey begins is Caponsacchi, and what is significant is that he speaks in response to her silent looks:

> In the determined morning, I first found
> Her head erect, her face turned full to me,
> Her soul intent on mine through two wide eyes.
> I answered them. "You are saved hitherto."
>
> (Book VI, 1199-1202)

His words are therefore a retelling of his own speech within his monologue. It is also a response to her looks. This is an aberration from the normal Browning dramatic monologue, in which the speaker responds to an auditor supposedly present and non-audible to the reader of the poem. Loy D. Martin suggests that all speakers in dramatic monologues assume that there are auditors and, as a result, their acts of speaking and communication are geared 'towards the problem of social interaction and its fragility' (*Browning's Dramatic Monologues and the Post-Romantic Subject*, 138). In Caponsacchi's main monologue, the auditor is not Pompilia. Yet, in this little passage, the auditor is Pompilia, and twice Caponsacchi responds to her look. The first occasion is on the first morning, as mentioned earlier in this paragraph, and the second is on the morning of the day Guido reaches them, when 'she woke at last' and

Caponsacchi ‘answered the first look’ (VI, 1305, 1306). Her two ‘looks’ are, unlike the ‘gaze’ discussed earlier in this chapter and the previous chapter, looks of fear and terror, and Caponsacchi responds to both by assuring her of the forward movement of the journey, first telling her that she is ‘saved hitherto’ (VI, 1202) and that there is ‘[s]carce twelve hours more, / Then, Rome!’ (VI, 1306). For Caponsacchi, the ‘fragility’ of social interaction, as suggested by Martin, cannot be more tenuous because he has the double predicament of ensuring her safe arrival in Rome as well as having to deal with his own anxiety over their physical proximity in the enclosed carriage.

Caponsacchi also devotes quite a large portion of his monologue on the preceding day of the journey, where he has to wait long hours alone for the start of the flight. He muses to himself that ‘[s]uspense here is the terrible thing’ (VI, 1041), and Caponsacchi’s experience of the waiting is quite in contrast to Pompilia’s, who, standing at the terrace, sees flight and freedom. Caponsacchi does not fear the journey. His suspense is in the waiting before the journey, when his thoughts are on her. He thinks that she may have ‘the fantastic notion’ that he fears the Archbishop and Guido’s sword. The passage before the journey thus begins with inertia and stasis, as opposed to all the other poems, including Pompilia’s monologue.

To conclude the discussion of Caponsacchi’s passage on the flight from Arezzo to Rome, I must link this journey to stasis and entrapment, even though these qualities are quite different from those seen in Part II with the Andrea and Duchess poems. Earlier, I mentioned the fact that Caponsacchi’s passage on the flight is a journey within a journey. It must be mentioned that it also includes entrapment (enclosure) in the journey, and this is seen in the vehicle that Pompilia uses to travel. Caponsacchi has arranged a carriage for her and, while the poem has no evidence of

the entrapment imagery in Guido's two monologues, the enclosure that she remains in is still foregrounded by Caponsacchi. Furthermore, in his contention that there was nothing illicit in their running away together, Caponsacchi likens the carriage to a tomb in which two martyrs are sitting, awaiting death (VI, 1185-1186); however in the tomb, they feel secure:

> "So, through the whole course of the world they wait
> The last day, but so fearless and so safe!
> No otherwise, in safety and not fear,
> I lie, because she lies too by my side."
> You know this is not love, Sirs,—it is faith
> The feeling that there's God, he reigns and rules
> Out of this low world: that is all; no harm!
>
> (Book VI, 1189-1195)

This journey is thus the reverse of all the journey/stasis and enclosure tropes discussed in the six earlier poems, because her journey is a flight, and Pompilia escapes by getting into an enclosure. This also echoes Caponsacchi's earlier reference to Pompilia as a Rafael painting inside a box. However in this journey, she really is the precious painting he places in an enclosure for protection.

Guido's account of the chase is short, and he also mentions the journey back to Arezzo after Pompilia and Caponsacchi have been caught by the magistrate summoned by Guido himself. However, the moments before the journey make for a relatively long passage, presumably because Guido spends so much time on the realization of Pompilia's flight to milk sympathy for himself as the cuckolded husband. However, it could also be that he was '[d]octored and drenched' (V, 1038) the night before, as were the servants of the household (V, 994). What is complex about these passages is the way metonymy and metaphor function in his monologue so as to give movement to his journey/chase. The entire sequence of events is told chronologically, and yet it is digressive, though it is not as fragmented as Pompilia's account and not as intensely focused and detailed as Caponsacchi's. Metonymy plays

a major role in the scene in which Guido discovers the missing Pompilia. Guido learns of the flight in fragments too:

> Bit by bit thus made-up mosaic-wise,
> Flat lay my fortune,—tessellated floor,
> Imperishable tracery devils should foot
> And frolic it on, around my broken gods,
> Over my desecrated hearth.
>
> (Book V, 1030-1934)

Guido likens the news of the flight to a floor 'tessellated' with mosaic pieces, in short, a jigsaw. However, the difference between a jigsaw and a tessellated floor is that the jigsaw can be fragmented and defragmented again to become whole whereas the tessellated floor, once cemented, is permanent. It is an important metonym because of the way tessellations function, that is, via a fixed pattern that is based on symmetry, unlike the jigsaw, which has pieces of random shapes. Interestingly, tessellation cannot function fully as metonymy because its every piece is substitutable, which puts tessellation on the paradigmatic axis, where metaphor sits. On the other hand, every piece of a jigsaw is non-substitutable: one piece missing or placed wrongly and the total picture can never be complete. Whichever it may be, Guido deploys the use of the metaphor rather than the metonym, meaning that for him, the tessellated floor is a metaphor for the news of the flight. This metaphor of the tessellated floor is more effective than that of the jigsaw because the latter can be fragmented. The jigsaw is also a plaything while the tessellated floor is grounded and is associated with the house, ownership and sovereignty, which is really what Guido unconsciously foregrounds in his news-as-tessellation passage.

Guido's passage on the chase is short, and like the Ghent poem, depends on words that belong to the syntagmatic axis to provide movement to both poem and journey:

> Then, set on horseback and bid seek the lost,
> I started alone, head of me, heart of me
> Fire, and each limb as languid … ah, sweet lords,
> Bethink you!—poison-torture, try persuade
> The next refractory Molinist with that! …
> Floundered thro' day and night, another day
> And yet another night, and so at last,
> As Lucifer kept falling to find hell,
> Tumbled into the court-yard of an inn.
>
> (Book V, 1039-1047)

The first similarity with the Ghent poem is that of body parts mentioned in two lines, although these are not the body parts of the horse but Guido's head, heart and limbs. Then there is a digression over two more lines referring to his torture in prison. It then goes back to the chase, and like the Ghent poem, uses verbs that are linked together because they are synonyms of each other, such as flounder, fall and tumble. The passage (and journey) back to Arezzo is also short, and there are more words which hint at the verb to 'fall':

> I was in humble frame of mind, be sure!
> I bowed, betook me to my place again.
> Station by station I retraced the road,
> Touched at this hostel, passed this post-house by,
> Where, fresh-remembered yet, the fugitives
> Had risen to the heroic stature.
>
> (Book V, 1255-1260)

Guido 'falls' into submission, as seen in his 'humble frame of mind' as he 'bowed'[45]. He also stops by every town and inn that Caponsacchi and Pompilia had passed, 'station by station'. This phrase may refer to the Stations of the Cross, normally observed in the Catholic Church during Lent, where there are fourteen stations detailing Christ's Passion and ending with the crucifixion. Collins and Altick suggests that 'Guido's intent is obvious' (*The Ring and the Book*, n.1, 280), meaning that Guido's intent is to identify with the suffering of Christ and so be seen as a victim in

[45] Verbie Lovorn Prevost does a close reading of the word 'stoop' in her study of the poem and notes that Browning deploys this word for 'figurative expressions' (*Studies in Browning and His Circle* 22 [May 1999]). Her article '"Browning's Use of "Stoop" in *The Ring and the Book*' discusses human moral responsibility and humility.

the crime. The reference to the stations could also have other interpretations in addition to the 'obvious' one. If Guido is the pilgrim going from station to station, then he is the sinner. Christ's journey in fourteen stations also points to Pompilia's life journey, where she is victimized by Guido and ends up dying with twenty-two stab wounds. Guido as pilgrim or sinner retraces Pompilia's journey backwards, which is the reverse of the process followed by church-goers during the Stations of the Cross. Thus in these few lines, the poem helps Guido's monologue in bringing his moral status even lower. Guido also admits that the flight of Pompilia made the 'fugitives' rise to 'heroic stature' (V, 1259, 1260), thus finally illustrating his fallen position.

A third short journey is also mentioned by Guido, and this is the 'Romeward' journey (V, 1568), where he finds four accomplices to carry out the murders of Pompilia and her parents Pietro and Violante. This short passage is also digressive, and he has 'no memory' (V, 1568) of the journey other than how they 'flung' and 'ran' and 'reeled / Romeward' (V, 1567-1568). The more important part of the passage is Guido's thoughts as he rides to Rome. The following consists of the entire journey, which is like a poem or sonnet of fourteen lines:

> I have no memory of our way,
> Only that, when at intervals the cloud
> Of horror about me opened to let in life,
> I listened to some song in the ear, some snatch
> Of a legend, relic of religion, stray
> Fragment of record very strong and old
> Of the first conscience, the anterior right,
> The God's-gift to mankind, impulse to quench
> The antagonistic spark of hell and tread
> Satan and all his malice into dust,
> Declare to the world the one law, right is right.
> Then the cloud re-encompassed me, and so
> I found myself, as on the wings of winds,
> Arrived: I was at Rome on Christmas Eve.
> (V, 1568-1581)

The shape of the poem has a pattern of enclosure, where the ride to Rome is mentioned only in the first and final lines. Although Guido has four accomplices with him, he is introspective, and his thoughts are of revenge. Guido appropriates the language of religion and makes references to God to ground his case that it is his noble right to clear his honour by killing Pompilia. Guido uses elements of the natural environment in his journey to enter his thoughts of revenge, as in how the clouds opened around him, and later, the 'cloud re-encompassed' (V, 1579) him and the 'wings of winds' (V, 1580) take him to his destination.

Guido's choice of metaphors serves to undo his own argument in that he claims to be trapped in a cloud of horror, which opens up, and instead of seeing the true light and truth, he sees 'Satan and all his malice', which he is compelled to 'quench'. This is in keeping with the pattern of Guido 'falling', as discussed earlier. In this short passage, Guido in a cloud is released only to descend into the depths of hell with his thoughts on revenge. The release from the cloud is therefore not one that leads to enlightenment or truth. Instead, Guido is released from one enclosure and falls into another. This second enclosure gives impetus to his journey towards Rome, and it is the thought of revenge that really makes the physical journey fly quickly for him. This is later repeated in the final lines of Guido's second monologue, where he asks '[w]ho are these you have let descend my stair' (XI, 2414), with the word 'descend' pointing to Guido's position. Guido's release from the cloud is really a lure into hell and entrapment, and this is seen in his final desperate call to 'let the madman live / Pressed by as many chains as you please pile!' (XI, 2422-2423).

The discussion of journeys by Guido has so far been taken from his first monologue in Book V, except for the final lines of the previous paragraph. There are two different kinds of journey in Guido's second monologue (Book XI). There is

Guido referring to his life's journey, and there is also his account of the process of beheading, which was discussed in the early part of the previous chapter in conjunction with the marble head of Triton, the Mouth-of-Truth. Guido's accounts of journeys tend to be short, and his account of his life journey too is very short:

> Life!
> How I could spill this overplus of mine
> Among those hoar-haired, shrunk-shanked odds and ends
> Of body and soul old age is chewing dry!
> Those windlestraws that stare while purblind death
> Mows here, mows there, makes hay of juicy me,
> And misses just the bunch of withered weed
> Would brighten hell and streak its smoke with flame!
> How the life I could shed yet never shrink,
> Would drench their stalks with sap like grass in May!
> (Book XI, 143-153)

The movement of this passage begins metonymically. Guido at middle age realizes that he has been living on 'overplus', or borrowed time, in his cell but correctly thinks that it is too early to die. He describes his life in terms of fragments. He is not as old as those whose hair is hoary, whose limbs have shrunk and who have lost their youthful muscles, and other 'odds and ends' of the body 'chew[ed]'. The old men are like 'windlestraws', or individual stalks of withered grass, and are randomly mown by death. Here 'death' is personified as a person who by accident mows the younger juicy weed that is Guido and by chance misses mowing a bunch of very dried old weeds.

Although Guido is least concerned about physical journeys and thus devotes few lines to the various journeys, the poem itself is centred on Guido's journey during the trial. The trial is therefore *his* journey. The final book in the poem as told by the Browning narrator features a short passage describing Guido's final steps to the execution block. This journey itself is quite a spectacle, and is in keeping with the images of theatricality and sovereignty discussed earlier in relation to the Duchess

poem. In Book XII, the Browning narrator observes that the 'Count was led down, hoisted up on car' and, as there were five people to be executed, there were five cars, 'one whole car to each man' (XII, 132, 134). This journey passage also features all the tropes from the umbrella trope mentioned earlier: that of Guido in a carriage, trapped in a moving prison destined for the execution block as well as the theatrical manner of the journey, which the Browning narrator refers to as 'the procession', which

> started, too the way
> From the New Prisons by the Pilgrim's Street,
> (Where was stuck up, 'mid other epigrams,
> A quatrain … but of all that, presently!')
> The place Navona, the Pantheon's Place,
> Place of the Column, last the Corso's length,
> And so debouched thence at Mannaia's foot
> I' the Place o' the People.
>
> (Book XII, 138-146)

There are place names which are identified very clearly. Although the short journey is undertaken by a bunch of criminals on their way to execution, the passage deploys the language of religion and drama. It is ironic that the 'procession' begins from the prisons and continues along Pilgrim's Street, thus putting the criminals alongside the holy pilgrims. Similarly, the word 'procession' is usually reserved for solemn religious occasions such as Lent and the feasts of the Virgin Mary and the saints. The procession itself is a spectacle which lends itself to a theatricality that is more sustained than that seen in the Duchess poem, and this is evident when the monologue includes parentheses, which function as 'asides'[46], thus contributing to the theatrical atmosphere. The result is almost a twittering, gossipy tone. Furthermore, the Browning narrator observes that 'minute after minute, some report / How the slow show was winding on its way. / Now did a car run over, kill a man' (XII, 152-155),

[46] In Part II Chapter six, I discussed the strategic use of parentheses by both Browning and the Duke of Ferrara.

thus illustrating every detail, including an event such as a man being 'run over', which has nothing to do with the executions.

The theatricality of the spectacle is encouraged by the main star himself, who, according to the Browning narrator, encouraged the crowd:

> To mount the scaffold-steps, Guido was last
> Here also, as atrociousest in crime.
> We hardly noticed how the peasants died,
> And we remained all ears and eyes, could give
> Ourselves to Guido undividedly,
> As he harangued the multitude beneath.
> He begged forgiveness on the part of God,
> (Book XII, 167-174)

In the Duchess poem, theatricality is linked to the duke's attempt to stamp his sovereignty, and Guido's intention is identical. However, this attempt only serves to undermine whatever sovereignty he seeks to claim. Although Guido's dramatic encouragements have succeeded in persuading the Browning narrator to 'hardly notice how the peasants died', the narrator does not miss observing that Guido was the 'atrociousest' in crime. Guido milks the audience's attention by haranguing the crowd and speaking to God. He makes sure that there is a rapt audience before he 'acts' by begging God for forgiveness. It may not be Browning's intention to associate Guido with Christ. However, through the interplay of metaphor and metonymy intrinsic in the poem, there is this association nevertheless. On the other hand, it *may* be Browning's intention, which is why his narrator in Books I and XII freely deploys these tropes to underscore these associations. The middle part of the short passage leading up to the execution, after Guido has 'begged forgiveness' from God illustrates this:

> And fair construction of his act from men,
> Whose suffrage he entreated for his soul,
> Suggesting that we should forthwith repeat
> A *Pater* and an *Ave*, with the hymn
> *Salve Regina Coeli* for his sake.

(Book XII, 175-179)

There are subtle references which could have been applied to Christ on the day of crucifixion, such as the mention of 'suffrage' which Collins and Altick suggest, is an 'intercessory prayer'. Guido's use of the intercessory prayer is however not to intercede for the mortals he is leaving on earth, but the reverse. He is also begging the crowds to intercede to the Virgin Mary in their prayers for 'his sake'.

Furthermore, earlier, in Guido's second monologue, Guido himself makes references to the Stations of the Cross when he makes his return journey back to Arezzo and visits the towns that Pompilia and Caponsacchi had stopped by. The passage above also lends itself to de Man's reading of Proust on the tension between metonymy and metaphor, when Guido makes his final confession while often

> glancing at Saint Mary's opposite,
> Where they possess, and showed in shrine to-day,
> The blessed *Umbilicus* of our Lord,
> (A relic 't is believed no other church
> In Rome can boast of)—then rose up, as brisk
> Knelt down again, bent head, adapted neck,
> And, with the name of Jesus on his lips,
> Received the fatal blow.
>
> (Book XII, 182-189)

Guido's glancing at Saint Mary's underlines his call to his 'audience' to intercede with the Virgin Mary on his behalf, although of course, the St Mary referred to is not the Virgin Mary but the church which houses the relic, the Lord's *Umbilicus*. Guido thus uses metonymy when glancing at the church which houses the relic. The relic, being an umbilicus, is a cord that attaches mother to child, so Guido is twice removed from the Lord since he has to ask the crowd to bring about Mary's intercession to be able to be close to the Lord. Guido's link to God is thus metonymic, and this idea is grounded at the close of the passage, where he submits to being beheaded. It must also be mentioned that Guido alone takes centre stage in this spectacle and that he is also

different from the other four accomplices in that they are hanged, whereas his decapitated head is 'shown to the populace' (XII, 190-191), as discussed earlier. Guido is beheaded because, according to Collins and Altick, this treatment was 'reserved for nobility while "the rest" had to make do with mere hanging' (*The Ring and the Book*, 741, n.1). The narrative of the eye-witness underscores this privilege and deploys the use of metonymy to achieve this:

> all five, to-day, have suffered death
> With no distinction save in dying,—he,
> Decollate by mere due of privilege,
> The rest hanged decently and in order.
>
> (Book XII, 266-269)

The use of the word 'decollate' refers back to Guido's earlier monologue about his tessellated floor in that the word also means the opposite of 'to collate', which means to put pieces of paper together in some sort of order. Guido's body is not in order, and the eye-witness observes how in contrast to his decollated body, the 'rest [of the murderers] hanged decently and in order'.

Now that I have addressed the journeys of Caponsacchi, Pompilia and Guido, I turn to the 'book-ends' of the poem, Books I and XII which constitute the final chapter of Part III, Chapter Eleven.

Part III, Chapter Eleven

Allegory of Reading Browning: Journey from the Book to the Ring

> Here were the end, had anything an end:
> Thus, lit and launched, up and up roared and soared
> A rocket, till the key o' the vault was reached
> And wide heaven held, a breathless minute-space,
> In brilliant usurpature.
>
> (Robert Browning, *The Ring and the Book*, XII, 1-5)

Browning's own journey and his finding of the 'old yellow book' is not a specific journey to Florence undertaken to find that book. It is an accidental find or a chance find. The Browning narrator specifies several types of journeys in Book I, including Browning's own travels to Italy.

In Book I, Browning travels from England to Florence, where he bought the 'old yellow book' and imagines the journey to Arezzo. Like Guido in Book V, he goes 'Romeward' (V, 1568 and I, 507). This journey passage of about two hundred lines (ll, 479-678) has all the elements of the early journey poems, the Ghent, Pied Piper and Roland poems, and it lends itself to a metonymic reading. It is also significant in the lack of tropes that encourage stasis and inertia, including those of entrapment and enclosure. The passage lends itself to metonymy mainly because of its fragmented nature, with the many stops along the journey. Unlike the other journeys in the Ring poem, the journey extract is not a stand-alone passage but a continuation from an earlier passage while the Browning narrator is reading the 'old yellow book':

> And from that reading, and that slab I leant
> I turned, to free myself and find the world,
> And stepped out on the narrow terrace, built
> Over the street and opposite the church,
> And paced its lozenge-brickwork sprinkled cool;
> Because Felice-church-side stretched, a-glow
> Through each square window fringed for festival.

(Book I, 476-483)

By reading and stepping out to the open on the terrace, the Browning narrator is doing exactly that de Man suggests Proust's Marcel should have done earlier in the Proust novel (*Allegories of Reading*, 58). According to Proust, Marcel had to be exhorted by his grandmother to stop reading in the closeted room and go out into the open. In Book I of the Ring poem, the Browning narrator knows that he can only 'free' himself if he goes out in the open. In this sense, Browning's poem precedes what de Man belatedly reads in Proust. Furthermore, the tension and transfer of heat and coolness suggested by de Man is also seen in the coolness of the brickwork on the exterior of the church and the heat from the light 'a-glow' which emanates from the interior of the church. There is also an immediate metonymic relation between the short journey from the terrace 'over the street' to the church as the narrator steps out from a door and sees the light inside the church through a window, thus echoing the earlier poems featuring the role of doors and windows. However, in this case, the function is one of enlightenment and truth rather than abused sovereignty and entrapment. The 'lozenge-brickwork' echoes Guido's tessellated floor (V, 1030-1031) and is thus metonymic. The word itself is linked together by a hyphen, which could have been a deliberate move by Browning, as with the following line, which has two phrases sharing three hyphens.

The Browning narrator is also led by metonymic pointers, where he says:

> Over the roof o' the lighted church I looked
> A bowshot to the street's end, north away
> Out of the Roman gate to the Roman road
> By the river, till I felt the Apennine.
>
> (Book I, 497-500)

The word 'bowshot' probably means that the 'street's end' is not far as this is only the distance of an arrow. However, it cannot be ignored that it is an arrow that does the

pointing, the arrow having the shape of a pointer or a wind vane. The wind vane image is further grounded by the direction it is pointing towards, which is northward and outward onto the road to Rome. In my discussion of the earlier poems, I showed that there are tropes of entrapment and enclosure seen in windows and interior places. These are also mentioned in this passage, where 'Through each square window fringed for festival, / Whence came the clear voice of the cloistered ones' (I, 483-484). However, the window here is not a frame that traps. Instead, as in the Lippi poem, the window is a source of inspiration and creativity as the clear voices of the singers from within the church float out to the narrator as he imagines the journey in the 'old yellow book'. There are other traps mentioned, such as the town of Arezzo as a huge prison for Pompilia:

> the man's town,
> The woman's trap and cage and torture-place'
> Also the stage where the priest played his part,
> A spectacle for angels,—ay, indeed,
> There lay Arezzo!
>
> (Book I, 501-505)

The story of the murder of Pompilia, being of epic proportions during the Renaissance, is also an epic-sized poem for Browning, and in these few lines, Pompilia's 'trap' is also epic in size. It consists of Guido's whole town as compared to the frames, doors, curtains and robes of the traps in the earlier poems. The stage for her murder and for Guido's trial is also Arezzo, where Caponsacchi the 'priest played his part'. The theatrical is foregrounded too, with the speaker referring to the trial as a 'spectacle for angels'. Thus this epic is fit even for heavenly beings. This is seen further in the passage, where there are more references to the heavenly, 'first, earth's roof and, last, heaven's floor, / Now grate o' the trap, then outlet of the cage' (I, 599-600). The setting of the plot is thus a huge place that includes earth and heaven that

are separated by the roof of one and the floor of the other, thus fragmenting this setting into two.

More references to entrapment are seen when the 'sweetness of Pompilia' and 'her soul' are trapped inside a 'bloated bubble' (I, 555-557). However these features are illustrated through metaphor rather than metonymy. Covers as protection and the breast/chest as security too take on proportions beyond the earthly, when the Browning narrator recalls the chase by Guido and the eventual separation of Caponsacchi and Pompilia, this incident having 'canopied the world with black' (I, 602). The canopy thus acts as a trap, darkening the world like night. Blackness is mentioned again when the bodies of Pompilia and her parents lay 'safe-embosomed by the night' (I, 629). There is of course an irony in the tone of the narrator when he sees the 'corpses' (I, 627) lying safe in the bosom of the night, since the bodies are 'safe' from further stabbings. The Browning narrator refers to the cover of the night as 'safe' because Guido and the four murderers did not know that Pompilia was still alive but only lying still after suffering twenty-two stab wounds, and would have died if not 'safe-embosomed' by the darkness.

There are further instances of elements from the syntagmatic axis, such as the 'step by step' journey the Browning narrator refers to in Book I, line 517, which echoes Guido's 'station by station' in Book V. Towards the end of the recollection of the journey, Guido too 'went on again, the end was near, / Step by step, missing none and marking all' (V, 515-518). The 'end' is specifically the journey from the town during which Guido catches up with Pompilia and Caponsacchi, after which Guido retraces the journey back to Arezzo, his home town, 'station by station'. In the same way, the Browning narrator traces Pompilia's final journey back to Rome, her hometown, after she is ejected from the convent and sent home to her parents. The

Browning narrator claims to be 'marking all', that is, with the intention of remembering everything, presumably for the retelling. Yet he admits with almost postmodernist self-consciousness that

> Why, all the while,—how could it be otherwise?—
> The life in me abolished the death of things,
> Deep calling unto deep: as then and there
> Acted itself over again once more
> The tragic piece.
>
> (Book I, 519-523)

The repetition of the story as played out in the narrator's memory throws up several metonymic elements. First, the replaying of memory through repetition is metonymic, and it is pertinent that the memory replaying, or acting itself 'over again', is not due to the speaker's own volition. The narrator also mentions how the 'act' runs 'round from Rome to Rome' (I, 526), thus metonymically pointing to the circular nature of the journey and also referring to Browning's Ring metaphor. In this sense, the two monologues of the Browning narrator, that is, Books I and XII, are about writing. It is about creating, doing and writing. This is different from the act of reading, which also includes the act of writing. However, writing as metaphor and its process as metonymy is foregrounded here. The writing in the dramatic monologue is the spoken voice, and the voice as utterance is also an important feature in this passage because as *parole,* the voice sits on the syntagmatic axis, where metonymy resides.

A closer examination of the role of the voice and the text will be offered later. For now, I will discuss the tropes in the journey passage (ll. 479-678) as recounted by the Browning narrator in Book I. As pointed out earlier, this passage is similar to the Guido account in Book V. However, as *journey,* it echoes elements in the Ghent and Pied Piper poems, with the presence of tropes that provide stasis and inertia in counteraction to the forward movement of the journey. In the Ghent poem discussed in Chapter Two, the horses meet with accidents along the way, and there is a recurring

'falling' movement where the horses suffer extreme exhaustion and die during the passage, thus abruptly ending the riders' journeys. In the Ring poem, in just the space of a few lines, there are references to the falling, or the stooping position of the star, and this is in reference to Pompilia's fate, to lift her 'soul' 'to whatever star should stoop' (I, 535), and later, to how the narrator 'saw the star stoop, that they strained to touch' / And did touch and depose their treasure' (I, 548-549). As mentioned earlier, the star is significant for Pompilia as it signifies Caponsacchi her saviour, and the image of the stooping star in this passage provides the weight that hampers the journey[47]. According to the narrator, the star did stoop to pick her up, but whether the star is really a metaphor for Caponsacchi or a metaphor for her fate is unclear because, although the star stoops to rescue her, it also deposits her onto Guido's path.

A later reference to stars is also associated with Guido, where the narrator

> Saw the star supposed, but fog o' the fen
> Gilded star-fashion by a glint from hell;
> Having been heaved up, haled on its gross way,
> By hand unguessed before, invisible help
> From a dark brotherhood, and specially
> Two obscure goblin creatures, fox-faced this,
> Cat-clawed the other, called his next of kin
> By Guido the main monster,—cloaked and caped,
> Making as they were priests, to mock God more,—
> Abate Paul, Canon Girolamo.
>
> (Book I, 544-553)

The imagery of the star, although gilded, is fashioned by the 'glint' from hell and further tarnished by Guido's two family members, who, like the four accomplices, are in complicity with Guido in Pompilia's fate. This short extract, like other extracts from the entire poem, is replete with tropes that occur in the earlier poems, and the movement of the poem is affected by the interplay of metaphor and metonymy. More accurately, the metaphors work because of metonymic movement. The extract

[47] This is mentioned in C. Willard Smith's close reading of star imagery in *Browning's Star Imagery: The Study of a Detail in Poetic Design*.

contains many images of intangible elements that function as metaphors, such as the 'star' and 'hell'. However, movement is generated through metonymy, where a whole space that includes the heavens, earth and hell is fragmented and subsequently conflated in a swathe, 'heaved up' and 'haled on', rather like a rushed journey.

Then there is the Browning penchant for the deployment of body parts and other metonymic relays using clothes and entrapment to control movement, such as the 'hand', 'fox-faced' and 'cat-clawed', and 'cloaked and caped'. Guido's two family members, his brother and cousin, the Abate Paul and Canon Girolamo are referred to as goblins and display animal-like movements echoing the rats in the Pied Piper poem. Further evidence of animal imagery and fragmentation through metonymy can also be seen later, in lines 570-572, where there are references to the 'satyr-family', 'a monkey-mien, / Mopping and mowing'. Later ,

> confident of capture, all took hands
> And danced about the captives in a ring
> ---Saw them break through, breathe safe, at Rome again,
> Saved by the selfish instinct, losing so
> Their loved one left with haters. These I saw,
> In recrudescency of baffled hate,
> Prepare to wring the uttermost revenge
> From body and soul thus left them: all was sure,
> Fire laid and cauldron set the obscene ring traced,
> The victim stripped and prostrate: what of God?
> (Book I, 573-582)

These lines are pure metaphor, of course, since there are no animals present, and no dancing evident, and certainly the 'captives' are not circled in a 'ring'. The metaphors are apparent because of metonymy, thus the poem's movement depends firstly on metonymy. The composing of the poem, or the writing of it, thus also depends on the existence of metonymy. In this extract, the 'ring' metaphor has a different function from Browning's own Ring metaphor for his creativity. Yet both metaphors depend on metonymy. The stasis within journey and movement is also foregrounded in this

passage, when there is ‘recrudescency’, a term referring to a reappearance of disease after a period of being dormant. The ring also has the ability of being fragmented since it is made up of a group of fragmented beings, such as the satyr and the goblin. The writing of the poem, as seen in Browning’s Ring metaphor, thus echoes the darker ring within the story: perhaps Browning is aware of this and therefore refers to his creation as the Ring with a capital ‘R’, with Guido’s posse making up the ‘obscene ring’. However, both point to the act of writing. Guido’s ring of mischief-makers and murderers write the plot that Browning embellishes in the poem.

The most important trope in Books I and XII is of course the Ring trope, and Browning specifically chose the metaphor of the ring to symbolize his creative process. The Ring is the one trope in Browning’s poetry that really is a metaphor and a metonym; or at least it is a metaphor born from metonymy, and Browning himself does not mention metonymy, nor do critics when they discuss the Ring figure in the poem. The Ring as metaphor is always in the foreground when there is a discussion of the poem. This is seen, for example, in Paul A. Cundiff’s title ‘The Clarity of Browning’s Ring Metaphor’, published in 1948 in *PMLA*, in which he discusses the Ring metaphor as ‘for seventy-nine years one of the most baffling figures of speech in English poetry’ (*PMLA*, 1276). A decade later, Cundiff again addresses the Ring metaphor and the fact that ‘the critics do well to question the validity of [Browning’s] Ring metaphor’ by quoting A. K. Cook and J. E. Shaw to posit that ‘the more effective the criticism, the less significant the poem should become, and this conclusion [is something] many Browning scholars seem reluctant to draw’ (‘Robert Browning: “Our Human Speech”’, *The Victorian Newsletter* 15 Spring 1959, 1). Cundiff questions the idea of truth in the Ring poem by pointing out the many

embellishments[48], as seen in the 'tempering' quality that the 'alloy' lends to gold (8). The basis of the belief in the lack of truth generally stems from a comparison between the poem and the contents of 'the old yellow book'.

The following years up to 1961 saw other critics challenging Cundiff's elucidations of Browning's metaphor. In the Fall issue of *The Victorian Newsletter*, Donald Smalley praises Cundiff for raising 'again, the many-faceted question of Browning's view of his relations to the *Old Yellow Book* [...] during which a rich and voluminous literature has grown' ('Browning's View of Fact in *The Ring and the Book*', 1). However, not all Browning critics at the time agreed that the Ring figure is praiseworthy, and this was pointed out two years later by George R. Wasserman, who found a group of Ring critics who agreed that Browning's metaphor had been pushed 'too far' ('The Meaning of Browning's Ring-Figure', *PMLA*, 420). Wasserman believes that these critics 'have expected too much of a metaphor', and this statement supports my thesis that Browning's metaphors may work by being prosaic and metonymic. While engaging in the metaphor of the Ring, these critics are really examining the metaphor through metonymy.

One example is Patricia Diane Rigg's *Robert Browning's Romantic Irony in 'The Ring and the Book'* published in 1999. When examining Romantic irony and historicity, she illustrates in her contents page the metaphor of the Ring by naming her various chapters according to 'circles', with Browning in the 'Outer Circle' and subsequent chapters as smaller concentric circles, and ultimately, with the Pompilia monologue at the 'Epicenter'. The structure of Rigg's thesis mirrors that of the Ring, which is circular. The contents thus follow a circle-within-circle structure, and this

[48] There are many instances of 'inaccuracy or perversion of facts', as noted by Roger Sharrock. However 'these seem unimportant beside a general effort that seeks to ground poetic perception on documentary truth on a scale not usually attempted in literature except in the historical and the realistic novel of the nineteenth century' ('Browning and History', 77).

belongs to the paradigmatic axis because any circle begins and ends without touching each other. However, in reality, these structures are linked to each other by their content and their references to the plot, the characters and all other elements, which pervade across all the chapters. Therefore, the totalisation and holistic structure of the contents page of Rigg's book are held, or formed, because of the metonymic processes that have the ability to fragment and defragment these circles.

The basis of all these critics' arguments is that Browning's Ring is a metaphor (and Browning himself considers it a metaphor too). None of them, including Browning himself, have examined the metonymic thrust of the metaphor of the Ring, although Browning does embed metonymic processes in his poetry. First, the discussion of the Ring cannot be generated without considering its relation to the Book. Browning takes the metonymic step in the very first line of the poem by *pointing* to the Ring metaphor, with 'Do you see this Ring?'(I, 1), and thirty two lines later, he refers to the Book in 'Do you see this square old yellow Book' (I, 33). Not only does Browning point to the Ring and the Book, but he links the two through metonymy. The act of referring back to the Book is an act of pointing, thus the relation between the Ring and the Book is metonymic, and the act of referring back and pointing to the Book creates contiguity between the Ring and the Book.

It is possible to see the Ring as the purest metaphor for art or as art as presented in Browning's dramatic monologues. However, it would be presumptuous to conclude that any metaphor can be 'pure' since my thesis has already encountered problems in addressing the status of metaphor. The Book referred to in the poem is also a metaphor for the actual thing itself, which Browning calls 'The Old Yellow Book'. The trajectory from the 'Old Yellow Book' to the Ring metaphor goes through several levels: first as the actual book bought in Florence, which is then referred to as

the Book in the poem. The Book helps unravel the story, and 'alloyed' by Browning's creativity, the poem is shaped. The Ring itself appears nowhere in the poem, not even as a metaphor for Pompilia's story or Guido's trial, but as a metaphor for Browning's art. It is the title of the poem, but it is also a metaphor because it represents the composition of the poem itself. It is Browning's own journey as he writes his longest poem. The trajectory from the purely concrete and literal (the Book) to metaphor (the Ring) is a journey that begins with metonymy (Browning's chance find in Florence) and ends with metaphor. It is thus tempting to say that the Ring is pure metaphor because it is a metaphor that substitutes another metaphor—art, and according to Browning, art represents other abstractions, such as truth[49].

I have come to the end of Part III, and it is this Part that supports my argument that metonymy is the driving thrust that moves the trajectory (journey) towards shaping a powerful metaphor. Before I conclude this chapter and Part III, I must address a small section of Browning's poem in the Ring poem which forms the quotation at the beginning of this chapter. The Browning narrator declares in Book XII that the poem has come to an end, 'had anything an end' (XII, 1). He is naturally referring to Guido's trial, and he deploys a rather odd metaphor for this journey, the 'rocket' that is 'lit and launched' (XII, 2). The trial comes to an end with the execution of Guido, yet the Browning narrator hints that there is no closure, first by doubting that nothing has 'an end' and then by referring to the end as a launch. Browning intends to go far into the future when the narrator sets the rocket off till the 'key[50] o' the vault was reached / And wide heaven held' (XII, 3-4). The poem ends with another kind of journey, this time into the future, by going to another space and time, 'a breathless minute-space' (XII, 4). Browning's reference to space-time is significant

49 *The Ring and the Book*, Book XII, ll. 859-860.
50 According to Collins and Altick, 'key' refers to the keystone of an arch, 'therefore the zenith of the rocket's trajectory' (*The Ring and the Book*, 731).

because it supports my exploration of the journey as allegory of reading Browning. I will discuss the link between Browning's deployment of metaphor and metonymy and his own references to space-time in the concluding chapter. I will also address my exploration of journey as allegory with specific references to metaphor and metonymy and refer it back to Browning's space-time allegory.

To close this chapter, let me provide a very short summary. Part III addresses tropes in the Ring poem that echo in the journey and the art poems explored in Parts I and II. Unlike the journey and the art poems, the Ring poem underscores the importance of utterance and voice, and it is probably the most dramatic of the dramatic monologues discussed in this thesis. This is attributed to the Browning narrator, who is given voice in two of the twelve books in the Ring poem. The next and final chapter apprehends all the findings of my readings in the three Parts.

Chapter Twelve

Conclusion

> You understand very well why I am asking myself such questions as: to whom, in the final analysis, will this lecture have been destined? And, can one speak here of destination of aim? What are my chances of reaching my addressees if, on the one hand, I calculate and prepare a place of *encounter* of if, on the other, I hope, as we say in French, to *fall* upon them by accident?
>
> (Jacques Derrida, 'My Chances/*Mes Chances*' 1)

This concluding chapter is divided into three sections. The first is a summary of the main arguments of my thesis and a reiteration of my claims. The second is a summary and analysis of each of the three Parts. After these two sections, I attempt to conclude succinctly and coherently in the closing paragraphs.

To begin, let me summarise the background which forms the argument of my thesis. My approach deploys the method of close reading of Browning's poetry, which is basically a formalist approach. My approach is also experiential and exploratory, with contexts based on relevant intertextuality. This means that I operate on a premise that allows the findings of that particular premise to open new ways of readings, wherever these lead. My premise is to read Browning closely with a focus on metaphor and metonymy and with the intention of addressing Browning's figural and literal language. I chose a schema based on the elements commonly ascribed to Roman Jakobson and Ferdinand de Saussure, in which there are two axes, the paradigmatic and the syntagmatic. My schema is based on John William Phillips' tabulation (*Contested Knowledge*, 135), which I discussed in my introductory chapter,

and this was applied to the journey poems in Part I so as to deliberately avoid metaphorical readings and to facilitate a ‘metonymic reading’.

My thesis has found that Browning’s poetry not only encourages but also insists on close reading so that it may reveal the challenges of certain methods, such as those I have deployed. In a way, Browning exposes the instability of the act of reading, and especially of writing that reading. More importantly, my thesis has found that writing about my reading of Browning's poems is almost always certain to be unstable. I mean to say that Browning’s dramatic monologues may comment on acts of reading and speaking, but it is the act of writing that is impossible. This thesis has found that writing cannot be realized and experienced simultaneously. Reading is one act and writing is necessarily another, and writing that reading has been impossible in this thesis because my writing is not writing what has been read. However, as this is the concluding chapter, I will endeavour to write that reading anyway. I will now begin my summary of my chapters and their findings.

The journey poems in Part I addressed physical journeys, and the Ghent poem was analyzed first not only because it is short but also because it struggles with the burden of reconciling the many exigent elements that jostle and ultimately work towards movement in the poem. These elements were divided into three broad domains: journey and interruption, metaphor and metonymy, and reading and writing. This was done by what I term ‘metonymical’ reading, where instead of reading images as pure substitutes and metaphors, the poem was broken up into broad ‘lexical’ fields to be examined to see whether they fall on the paradigmatic or the syntagmatic axis so as to facilitate the identification of metaphor and metonymy. I deployed the use of the schema which I mentioned earlier. However, having identified these groups did not lead to a clear answer as to whether metonymy or metaphor is

responsible for the movement of the poem, though it is a little clearer that stoppages or accidents during journeys are metonymic. As a result, it looks likely that in the Ghent poem, though metonymy is the trope that is likely to generate movement, it is also the one that throws a spanner into the works in that it prevents the very movement it generates.

'The Pied Piper from Hamelin' was discussed immediately after the Ghent poem because it features straightforward journeys not unlike that in the Ghent poem. There are two main journeys, and they comment on the importance of voice and utterance, which is seen in how there is a monologue within a monologue and the role of the inner monologue is to tell the journey from another perspective. The two journeys thus have three narrators: the Browning persona, and the two internal narrators. These two narrators are the ones who support my thesis that utterance and voice are in the foreground in the poem. The voice belongs to the syntagmatic axis and is thus considered metonymic. The journey in the Ghent poem shows that the unfolding of the poem depended on temporality and utterance, and the exploration of the Piper poem in Chapter Three did not, or cannot, determine whether metonymy or metaphor provides the strength of the poem. This is why Franz Kafka's two short stories 'A Common Confusion' and 'A Visit to a Mine' were explored in this chapter alongside the Piper poem because of the importance of voice in the stories. The confusion in the story is in the telling and the misreading of that utterance by the auditor. More importantly, Kafka suggests the importance of utterance and voice, and this demonstrates his implicit preference for the syntagmatic axis. 'A Visit to a Mine' was also explored and found to be latently metonymic, thus lending support to the journey as strongly metonymic. The presence of entrapment and enclosure is also evident in these two short stories, and their presence forced my reading of subsequent

poems that address these very issues. 'A Common Confusion' foregrounds the safety of rooms and passages in the interior of the house, while 'A Visit to the Mine' is set indoors and underground. Kafka pays attention to the details of the short journeys and yet leaves space open for metaphorical readings, with the mention of new galleries yet to be 'bored'. Yet he does not elaborate on the contents of these new galleries, by asking, for example what the miners are digging for. This question echoes the Piper poem, in which the children walk into the depths of the mountain, none of them returning to retell the story save the lame child who retells the promises of the Pied Piper as he hears the music but never sees the promised land itself. In this sense, Kafka and Browning invite metaphorical readings by deploying the use of metonymy. This chapter questions whether both Kafka and Browning tacitly agree with de Man on the power of metonymy over metaphor and illustrate these with fiction and poetry, respectively. It also puts the syntagmatic axis in the foreground by placing a preference for utterance.

Although the readings of these two poems cannot conclude with a decision as to whether it is metaphor or metonymy that drives the journey and therefore the poem, the readings themselves point back to the method that allows for the opening of the reading. It is the third poem in Part I, the Roland poem, which provides the important link to Part II and Part III. The Roland poem is in a sense a precursor to the Ring poem in that it features the journey trope in all its elusiveness and its will-to-failure tendency. In the introductory chapter and the Roland chapter, I mentioned the point that when Bloom suggests that Roland's journey is a trial and an ordeal 'by landscape' (*Map of Misreading*, 106 and 118), he implicitly reads the Roland journey as a metaphor. However, in the very same chapter, Bloom also believes that '[a]ny quest is a synecdoche for the whole desire' (109). Roland's physical journey is a kind of quest

since he is a 'childe' awaiting knighthood. Yet Bloom sees this journey-quest as synecdochic rather than metaphorical. Perhaps Bloom's definition of synecdoche is that it is closer to metaphor than to metonymy, and this is seen in *The Art of Reading Poetry,* in which he says that we 'now commonly call synecdoche "symbol"' (2). Here Bloom is saying what I have been ignoring all along, namely, that there *are* places and spaces other than metaphor and metonymy/synecdoche and that these are fluid. This, however, does not explain how Bloom moves away from the journey-quest as metaphor when, on the same page, he defines metonymy as 'contiguity replac[ing] resemblance, since the name or prime aspect of anything is sufficient to indicate it, provided it is near in space to what serves as substitute'. Bloom then mentions the Roland poem as an example of metonymy. Bloom believes that the slug-horn, through its physical proximity to the blower Roland, represents the blower himself. It is possible therefore to assume that, although Bloom considers the journey and the quest as metaphor, he implicitly favours metonymy when discussing truth and meaning in poetry. This is also seen in *How to Read and Why*, in which Bloom believes that the message of the slug-horn is not the poem's concluding phrase in the final line, which is also the title of the poem, '*Childe Roland to the Dark Tower Came*', and as a result, he also believes that the poem is meant to be cyclic. He notes that 'Browning puts a period, not a colon, after "And blew," which evidently means that the concluding "*Child Roland to the Dark Tower Came*" is not the message of the slug-horn' (88). Bloom believes that Roland does not announce his own arrival with the blowing of the horn and that the horn is blowing another message. This is similar to the Piper poem, in which the pipe's message (the music) is interpreted by voice. In the Roland poem, the uttering is muted and the only utterance is that of the Browning persona in the form of the dramatic monologue. The Roland chapter also explores Frodo's

journey in J.R.R. Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings* because Frodo's one important journey echoes Roland's journey. It is almost as if Roland is Frodo's precursor and Frodo is the belated quester, and it is also possible that Tolkien (and T.S. Eliot and Ezra Pound, among others) are Browning's belated poets too.

Part I ends with preference weighing on metonymy and movement and how metonymy helps movement and journeys, and thus the poems. However, it also begs the reading of stasis in journeys and, in particular, entrapment and enclosure, as these were introduced in the Piper and Roland poems and supported by the Kafka short stories and the Tolkien novel. These aspects are best addressed in the art poems because of the seemingly inert nature of art. The art poems discussed in Part II were selected not by careful advanced planning and deliberation but almost by default, or by force, after the completion of Part I. This is different from Part I in that the three poems in Part I were discussed in ascending order of the complexity of the journey. The Ghent poem has the most straightforward journey, the Piper poem has two physical journeys that lend themselves to metonymic and metaphorical readings, and finally the Roland poem has a physical journey that many – though not all – critics tend to read as metaphorical.

The first of the poems discussed in Part II Chapter V is 'Andrea del Sarto'. This is a natural choice because of Andrea's 'will-to-fail' ethic, which Bloom observes in Roland. The Andrea poem is similar to 'My Last Duchess' in that Andrea and the Duke of Ferrara are both subversive in their deployment of tools of protection which ultimately become traps for their intended 'victims'. These tools of protection come in the form of the sartorial and the limitation on freedom of movement seen in artworks. The theme of protection as entrapment is further seen in Browning's use of the hand-in-hand metaphor, which is extended throughout the Andrea poem and,

together with the role of the cloth as protection, the entrapment and enclosure images are introduced in the artworks present in the poem. Other evidence of enclosure consists of the frame of the artworks and the window and door frames but also the interior of houses. All these echo in the poems discussed thereafter, namely, the Duchess poem and 'Fra Lippo Lippi'. Like the Ghent poem, the Andrea poem is a springboard from which the later poems come into view, the difference being that the journey poems feature movement and stasis while the art poems feature sovereignty and authority in stasis.

Part II Chapter Five discusses the several images deployed by Andrea to trap Lucrezia, and it also discusses how his own ploy turns back on him, which is seen in Andrea's own mention of his vision of the 'New Jerusalem'. The geometric patterns intrinsic in Andrea's 'New Jerusalem' figure are not symmetrical because of his interpretation of the artwork, and this in turn points back to his own weak structures in terms of art and creativity. This exploration leads to the Duchess poem, in which there are references to two specific artworks, the painting of the duchess and the duke's Neptune statue. The Andrea poem thus leads the way with the theme of the sartorial by lending his name to this theme, and the duke takes it further with his theatrical deployment of the cloth, when he whips the curtain open to expose the painting of his previous duchess. The Andrea poem and my reading of the poem, in this sense prefigure the Duchess poem and my discussion of that poem.

Part II Chapter Six discusses 'My Last Duchess' and this chapter explores the subversive role of cloth as protection. The first is the painting of the duchess and it addresses her protective mantle slipping off the duchess' hand. The second is the curtain that protects this said painting. This chapter discusses sovereignty as a subversive element in the duke's attempt to exercise authority over his possessions.

More significantly, this chapter addresses acts of reading, writing, criticism, interpretation and misinterpretation. It is the Duke of Ferrara who is guilty of deliberate misinterpretation, and this foreshadows an even grosser and more willful misinterpretation by Guido, the murderer in the Ring poem, which was discussed in the final Part. The Duchess poem features the painting of the duchess and the lesser discussed bronze statue of Neptune, and I explore how the poem is linked to de Man, Levinas and Heffernan. When de Man explores qualities of heat and coolness against action and repose in *AR* and in ‘Reading (Proust)’, he illustrates how two metonyms, as seen in two ‘neighbouring images’ (66), possess the power to transfer meanings from one to another to the point where they become associated with each other as metaphors. The Duchess poem foregrounds this idea twice, the first with the painting and the second with the sculpture. The de Manian idea of the relay of tropes makes it possible to see Neptune the sculpture as metonymy and metaphor, both in association with the Duke of Ferrara. The painting and the sculpture also precedes Levinas’ own examples of painting and sculpture in ‘Reality and its Shadow’, in which he uses the Mona Lisa and the sculpture of Laocoön as examples of the ‘meanwhile’, the ‘meanwhile’ being the position of stasis in the midst of action. The Levinasian ‘meanwhile’ focuses on that one moment of suspended action frozen in works of art, and Levinas also suggests that this one moment damns the subject to a future that never arrives. Browning says this too in the Duchess poem, and while most readings of the poem see the duke as a successful rhetorician and murderer[51], my reading suggests that Ferrara’s attempt at sovereignty ultimately fails when the poem’s intrinsic values that de Man and Levinas theories are applied. This chapter concludes that the Duchess poem is the most significant of all the poems discussed in this thesis

[51] Ferrara and Guido are the only two murderer-speakers discussed in my thesis. However there are others, such as Porphyria’s lover. Michael Mason addresses almost all of them in relation to the ‘voice’ in ‘Browning and the Dramatic Monologue’.

as it includes all parties in any discourse of any artwork. This is seen in the 'last' duchess as subject; in Pandolf the painter as artist, author and reader, since he reads the subject; in the Duke of Ferrara as irresponsible critic who deliberately misreads; and finally, in the envoy who represents the belated reader and potential critic and who may also be a potentially irresponsible critic who deliberately misreads for his own devious ends. My discussion of the Duchess poem thus suggests that Browning uses this short poem as a warning against irresponsible criticism and that he may be articulating what Levinas warns against. Browning says this in poetry, in utterance. This is why he may be compelled to choose the dramatic monologue form and also why this thesis chose only the dramatic monologues of Browning to apply close readings to.

The poem 'Fra Lippo Lippi' was the last of three art poems discussed in Part II. It is important that this chapter be placed last because the tropes discussed in the earlier two poems are treated differently by the character Lippi. In place of entrapment and sovereignty, which provide stasis and inertia, Lippi deploys the sartorial, and the images of enclosure to give movement to journey by seeking flight and freedom. The Lippi poem also addresses the role of cloth, and this chapter contrasts this role with the treatment of drapes and curtains used by the duke. Instead of authority and sovereignty, Lippi's creative use of drapes and enclosures foregrounds creativity and artistic impetus. Browning also uses this poem to generate movement, not only in journeys but in creative pursuits too. A discussion of the many examples of Browning's embellishment of Lippi's life as recounted by Giorgio Vasari revealed that Browning deliberately improvised the facts in Lippi's life and that these embellishments were specifically targeted to foreground movement through creative impetus. This is supported through close reading of the poem, in which many aspects

located on the syntagmatic axis were found to be intrinsic in the poem, thus suggesting that metonymy does contribute to movement. It is significant that it is in Lippi's descriptions of his paintings that Browning takes the boldest artistic licence. This suggests that Browning is saying in poetry what de Man says in theory, namely, that metonymy may be more powerful than metaphor. My reading of the Lippi poem also reveals how Browning engages with the future and with future readers. This echoes back to the Roland poem and is also foreshadowed in the Ring poem. Browning foregrounds the importance of utterance and voice, and this is seen in his choice of the dramatic monologue, which records voice in poetry. The Lippi chapter closes by addressing James Heffernan's question of what Vasari contributed to the poem, and this is pertinent to my thesis because Heffernan does not ask what Browning contributed to the Lippi biography. Instead, he observes that Vasari, like Browning, addresses his own future and speaks to his own future readers through his poetry.

Part II is significant because it addresses the necessary opposite of movement in the journey, that is, stasis. It is during the course of addressing these two opposites that my thesis discovers Levinas' idea of the workings of reality, its shadow and the works of art in Browning's poetry. De Man's idea of the transfer of meanings between tropes is also embedded in the art poems, especially in the discussion of interior and exterior spaces. The art poems also foreground the necessity of stasis during journeys, and this paves the way for an exploration of why and how movement is re-ignited after inertia and whether it can be reclaimed at all. Parts I and II therefore address two groups of poems which are necessary opposites of each other, and these two parts pave the way for Part III, which addresses Browning's longest dramatic monologue, the Ring poem. The Ring poem is a natural, or perhaps an accidental, selection for

Part III because, unlike the two groups addressed earlier, it not only refuses to be classified under any particular trope, lexicon or imagery, but it embraces them all within a complex web.

Part III featured only one very long poem. However, the tropes and images discussed overlap each other and swing fluidly between the paradigmatic and syntagmatic axes. There are twelve books in *The Ring and the Book,* and each book is devoted to one monologue. However, only seven of these books were given close reading in this thesis. The five personas who speak in the seven chosen monologues are the Browning narrator, who speaks in two books, the pope, Pompilia, her lover Caponsacchi and her husband Guido, to whom Browning gives two monologues. The selection of the Ring poem and the specific monologues chosen could only have been discussed in Part III *after* discussing the journey and art poems in the previous two parts. The Ring poem and the seven chosen monologues are in a sense, the belated utterance of the earlier poems.

Part III is divided into four short chapters that are rather like a shorter version of my thesis. Chapter Eight, the first chapter in Part III, discusses journey and stasis/entrapment in the Ring poem, and Chapter Nine discusses movement and flight in journey in the Art poems. Chapter Ten sees a breakthrough in this thesis when my research apprehends the journey as a trope that provides the trajectory between metonymy and metaphor. This facilitates the writing of the final chapter before the conclusion, where my thesis concludes with the exploration of journey as allegory of reading Browning's two very fluid tropes, metaphor and metonymy. The structures of Part III and my entire dissertation are thus related to each other through metonymy, rather like Charlie Kaufman's 2007 film *Synecdoche, New York,* in which a theatre director builds a replica of New York inside the confines of a huge warehouse.

Although Part III Chapter Eight addresses journey and entrapment, it was almost impossible to do what I termed a 'metonymical' reading, that is, a reading that identifies elements which fall into neat lexical fields on the paradigmatic and syntagmatic axes. Thus for the sake of clarity of discussion, that chapter was forced to address these overlapping tropes and images and view them as an umbrella, or a tapestry. Fortuitously, the tapestry image is closely associated with Pompilia, the heroine of the Ring poem. This is discussed in Part III Chapter Nine and is equally important because Pompilia's tapestry is made of cloth with has art work sewn on it. Chapter Eight also addresses more metonymic processes, such as how Guido is associated with the Mouth-of-Truth sculpture purely by chance. Moreover, it is purely by accident that he meets a friend, and they both walk by the sculpture, engaging in a discussion on the procedure for beheading. Voice and utterance were discussed in relation to the legend of the Mouth-of-Truth, namely, that truths are revealed when questions are whispered into its rectangular mouth. Guido's association with the sculpture parallels that of the duke's association with his sculpture Neptune and Levinas' Laocoön. The idea of entrapment and inertia in these artworks thus led to the discussion of entrapment and enclosure in Part III Chapter Nine. However, these also opened space for the exploration of movement and flight in that chapter.

Chapter Nine was devoted to Pompilia as subject just as Part II was devoted to art, with the Duchess poem in the middle chapter and the duchess as subject. What is different from all the other objectified women who are painted is that Pompilia herself identifies with the art work rather than have Caponsacchi or Guido objectify her in a painting. Ironically, it is a female, Pompilia's childhood friend Tisbe, who sees Pompilia as Daphne the hunted in Ovid's *Metamorphosis*. Daphne is eventually rooted to the ground when she turns into a tree, so she is doubly entrapped. She is

trapped in the artwork as a tree. What is significant is that it is Pompilia herself who introduces rootedness and inertia and is subsequently forced to embark on several journeys in her short life. The chapter ends with a mention of Pompilia's account of her baby's forced separation and forced journey, thus leading the thesis to Chapter Ten. It must be mentioned here that my thesis did not choose to address the journey again simply to make my analysis neat and structured. It is Pompilia's mention of her son Gaetano and his forced journey that nudges my thesis in this direction.

Part III Chapter Ten addresses journey as metaphor and metonymy for Guido, as he stands on trial for the murder. However, his own account of the trial and the journey of his life, which includes many physical journeys, are filled with metonymic processes. This chapter places importance on the journey as trial but also on how the journey takes on other forms, including, as seen in the earlier poems, as flight and freedom.

Part III Chapter Eleven addresses Browning's own journeys to Italy as well as various critics' discussions of the Ring as metaphor. My own concerns are with the Ring figure and the 'Old Yellow Book' and how they are linked. The Browning narrator tells us to look at the 'Old Yellow Book', and he points to it before he launches into justifying the Ring metaphor. My argument is that Browning already foregrounds the role of metonymy to give power to the Ring metaphor. The Browning narrator addresses the English public and presumably his detractors in Books I and XII[52]. In this sense, he also favours utterance and voice. However, he has to put this voice into text in the form of the dramatic monologue. The poem as text (*langue)* belongs to the paradigmatic axis, where metaphor also sits, while his voice (*parole*) belongs to the syntagmatic axis, where metonymy sits. Without his physical journey

[52] This is contrary to T.S. Eliot's belief that when reading Browning's monologues, 'We have to be aware that the mimic and the person mimicked are different people' (*On Poetry and Poets*, 1969, pp. 95-96).

and the uttering of that journey, there would be no text. The poem as text is durable and enduring but it lives only because of the necessity of articulation.

The Derrida quote at the beginning of this concluding chapter neatly summarises the trajectory of my thesis—namely, that it is possible that chance plays a role in the unfolding of my chapters and my thesis. At this point, I take the liberty to digress a little. Mary Rose Sullivan, in discussing the Ring poem's various personas, divides her book chapters up in such a way that Caponsacchi and Pompilia share a chapter while Guido has a chapter to himself, in which she discusses his two monologues (*Browning's Voices in 'The Ring and the Book': A Study of Method and Meaning*). Browning himself places Caponsacchi's monologue between Guido's first monologue and Pompilia's only monologue. Can it be by accident that Caponsacchi is always associated with Pompilia, or next to her, or is it possible that the intrinsic workings and tropes of the poem have the power to force structures? The quotation at the beginning of this chapter refers to Derrida's address to his unseen audience as he is writing his paper. The audience he is addressing is of course in his *future*, and as we read his paper, that future has arrived for us but it is already past for him. Derrida also refers to 'those to whom I now speak, I do not know them, so to speak. Nor do I know you who hear me' ('My Chances/*Mes Chances*', 2). Browning too wrote *The Ring and the Book* with an intended audience in mind, and although he does not reveal exactly which individuals he addresses, the poem is nevertheless addressed to the 'British Public' (XII, 835). His poem is divided into twelve monologues, with the first and final book narrated by his narrator's voice (commonly believed to be his own) sandwiching ten monologues. Sullivan observes in her introduction that Browning structured the monologues in a 'tripartite arrangement' (*Browning's Voices in The Ring and The Book*, xiv), in which Guido's first monologue and Caponsacchi's only

monologue are placed together with Tertium Quid, a random lawyer observing the trial. Pompilia's monologue comes immediately after and is grouped together with the monologue of the prosecutor and the defending lawyer. Such is the symmetry of Browning's arrangement, although, as pointed out earlier, this puts Pompilia's monologue adjacent to Caponsacchi's. However, in her own book, Sullivan found it 'convenient to alter Browning's tripartite arrangement of the speeches to consider the linked Pompilia-Caponsacchi monologues and to juxtapose the two Guido speeches for comparison' (xiv). Is it really convenient for Sullivan to structure her book in this way, or is it *necessary* for her to do so since she herself refers to the 'linked' nature of the 'Pompilia-Caponsacchi monologues'? In my own reading of the *Ring* poem, I did not deliberately divide chapters or passages to place any two personas together. Instead, the thesis *led* me to make the choices I made subsequently because I had chosen close reading in the experiential way in the first place. So I had to continue grouping the tropes together, and that led me to the structure this thesis ended up with. Furthermore, after choosing to explore the Ring poem in Part III, Pompilia and Caponsacchi were placed together side-by-side by the force of the poem itself—not to mention the force of my *reading* the poem in the way I did. The grouping of tropes did not begin with the *Ring* poem but with the close readings of six other poems in the initial chapters. Yet by the time this thesis encountered the *Ring* poem, it was forced to place Pompilia and Caponsacchi together.

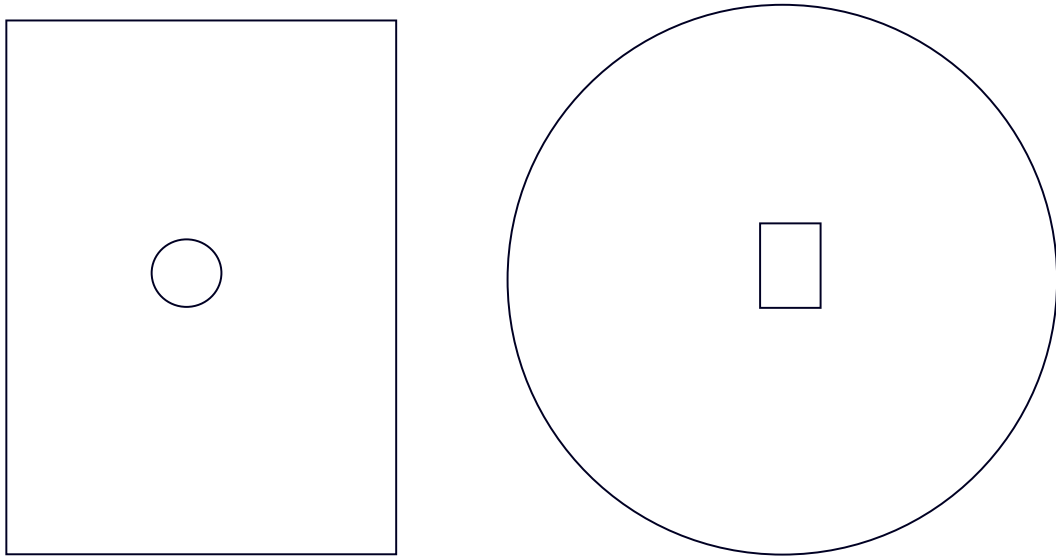
Thus it may also be that Browning did not have a choice in the trajectories of his dramatic monologues. Whatever the force of his writings, the dramatic monologues are addressed to his future readers, as he himself claimed. His writings are therefore not written for himself at the time of writing. This problematises my attempts to address Browning's process of creativity and writing. My own thesis

experienced this problem – namely, that my reading of Browning failed to articulate that reading itself. The challenge is that my reading of Browning undid what my schema and my modified model of de Man sought to accomplish, that is, to identify or name the space that sits between metonymy and metaphor. My thesis is a self-reflexive one, where the journey trope I was initially fascinated with in Browning's poetry led me to read the journey trope alongside my own reading of the journey itself.

However, although my reading did not succeed in identifying and naming the space that sits between metaphor and metonymy, which Martin McQuillan suggests is a 'transition' that is 'fluid' (*Paul de Man*, 17), this thesis has nevertheless opened some questions for further research. That 'transition' in Browning's poetry is a little journey all on its own, and this was discussed in Chapter Eleven—namely, how Browning turns the concrete 'Old Yellow Book' into metaphor, the Ring. De Man's relevance to Browning's poetry thus becomes imperative in the reading of the journey as an allegory of reading Browning. Browning's own physical journey to Florence produces a parallel, allegorical journey of Browning's journey in creating the Ring metaphor from the 'Old Yellow Book'. Throughout this thesis, close metonymic reading of Browning's poems together with the deployment of de Man's transfer of tropes has opened a space for comprehending Browning's journey trope as an allegory of reading his poetry. However, some of the questions generated in the course of writing this thesis open ever more questions. Although Browning uses the word metaphor, as in his Ring metaphor, he never mentions its other face[s], metonymy or synecdoche though these are embedded in his poetry. His poetry therefore gave my thesis a platform for discussing metonymy alongside metaphor, using the journey

trope. Journey is necessarily seen as the trope that provides the trajectory from metonymy to metaphor.

Then there are other questions. While I am reading Browning and reading others reading Browning, where do I stand between these two spaces? This question means that my thesis has lost objectivity and has become deeply subjective. This is especially seen in the way my thesis did not choose the order of the chapters, the poems and the critics and theorists. The process of writing my thesis was based on following where the relevant intertextual connections pointed to. Moreover, there are other questions related to that un-nameable space, that 'black hole' between metaphor and metonymy, which I have just referred to as Browning's allegorical journey of reading. My thesis still questions where or what is that space that refuses to be metaphor or metonymy, and is there really a space? What is its function? Earlier, I pointed out that Bloom himself blurs the distinction between metaphor and metonymy by deploying the words metonymy and synecdoche as if they were metaphors. Perhaps he already knows that it is nameless, or perhaps he does not believe that there is a difference. Yet I will make a final attempt to illustrate the journey from metonymy to metaphor. Let us look at the two figures on the next page:



The rectangular figure on the left represents Browning's poetry and in the process of reading his poems, there are moments of de Manian 'unreadability' when we encounter the shift from synecdoche to metonymy to metaphor. The strongest metaphor in Browning's dramatic monologues is the Ring metaphor, and this is embedded in the text and is represented by the circle inside the rectangle. This figure shows the Ring as metaphor within the text. The Ring is also a metaphor for Browning's art and truth 'told obliquely'. The metaphor, in the telling of truth, then becomes the text because it tells the story of the Book, so the Ring becomes the repository that contains the poem, as seen in the figure on the right. The figure on the right thus illustrates the Ring, which becomes the text (the outer circle) that reveals the truth (the poetry) within.

The book-end titles of the Ring poem are 'The Ring and the Book' and 'The Book and the Ring' respectively, and they can be presented visually by these two figures above. The figures are substitutable too—the left figure may represent 'The

Ring and the Book', with the ring embedded inside the poem, or it may represent 'The Book and the Ring', and vice versa for the figure on the right.

Browning's poems therefore overturn the rules of synecdoche and metonymy by turning them into metaphors through a series of substitutions and displacements, which de Man refers to as the relay of tropes. The relay is possible through the *reading* of the poems. During the journey of reading, the poems ironically reveal the unreadability—and unwriteability of that reading. This thesis has attempted to read and failed to write that reading—and as mentioned earlier, the structure of my thesis mirrors that of the Ring poem, as does the contents of Rigg's book[53]. Charlie Kaufman's writing of Caden Cotard's writing about New York begins with synecdoche and ends as metaphor in the film *Synecdoche, New York*. Kaufman plays with metaphor and metonymy by substituting Schenectady for 'Synecdoche' in his title, and in doing so turns synecdoche into metaphor. Eventually, Kaufman's film encounters the de Manian unreadability when Caden Cotard's two selves mirror each other, begging the Ring and Book question: which Cotard is the metaphor for the referent, who is Cotard himself? Is the 'real' Cotard being subsumed into a mere metaphor, but a powerful metaphor nevertheless, thus substituting the very referent it means to symbolize?

A final word on that frustrating black hole mentioned earlier—and Browning himself mentions space time and rocket journeys in Book XII. A black hole cannot be seen, but its force is palpable and is seen when entire planets and stars are torn and dragged into its core. This is what this black hole is doing to my schema—it has torn metonymy and metaphor so that they often resemble each other, or have become each other, through substitution and displacement. A significant aspect of this black hole is

[53] *Robert Browning's Romantic Irony in 'The Ring and the Book'*, 1999.

the astronomical term known as the 'event horizon'. The event horizon is a boundary surrounding the black hole. Once matter or events pass this boundary, they cannot turn back. Time travels faster inside this horizon than outside it so that the event is already inside the black hole the moment the telescope catches it. This is different from what happens to a star that is billions of light years away in that, the star remains able to send radio signals that are visible on earth. We know how the process ends and where it ends even though we only receive these messages millions of light years later. However, matter and events that cross the black hole's event horizon are lost forever and are not seen ever again, and we do not know their future or if they even have a future.

Perhaps it would be better to refer to this process, this journey from metonymy to metaphor by another astronomical term, namely, the wormhole. This is a term for a bridge between two spaces in space-time and is usually featured in science fiction as a short-cut from one dimension to another. It is not a physical space but a bridge. At least it has a name.

To conclude, let us look at that famous Browning quote again, in which he claims that 'art may tell a truth obliquely'. Perhaps the boundary between art and truth is that still unnamed frustration I have just nicknamed the 'event horizon' or the 'wormhole'. Browning tends to embellish truth, and he is quite proud about this, as seen in the way he conjures the Ring metaphor. His Ring is non-existent, so it sits on the paradigmatic axis. It is not part of the story of the trial of Guido. It sits outside of it. It can be considered to be metonymic because it is the link between the poem and the 'Old Yellow Book'. Yet even without Browning's invention of the Ring metaphor, the poem could still work just as well. Perhaps Browning invented the Ring to illustrate the presence of that event horizon, and my thesis has just found it, more than

a century later, but unfortunately it cannot name it. Or perhaps its name is the common garden variety word 'journey', which functions as a trope and is an allegory of Browning's aesthetic demonstration of de Man's idea that metonymy is indeed the driving force behind the power of the seductive metaphor.

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