

## The Art of Drama According to Browning and Pessoa

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**ABSTRACT:** In this article we analyze Robert Browning's and Fernando Pessoa's interpretations and understandings of the concept of *drama*. Both writers, other than privileging the dramatic procedure of creation in literature, explored the limits of literary genres in their attempts to establish themselves as dramatic poets. Through an analysis of theoretical texts by Browning and Pessoa, we verify the points at which their conceptions both converge and diverge. To conclude, we discuss the relation of the English writer's dramatic monologues to the heteronymic project.

**KEYWORDS:** dramatic monologue, Fernando Pessoa, Robert Browning

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### 1.

I shall live by forgetting myself. This assertion could be applied to the poetic projects of some of the main exponents of modern poetry. Such an assertion is founded on impersonality, defined as when the poet expresses the individuality of other selves, which should not be confused with their own. Accordingly, the statement that begins this section could also relate to Fernando Pessoa, whose conception of flight from personality led him to formalizing in heteronymy (or heteronymism<sup>1</sup>) his detachment from any pretense of unity of the individual. However, the assertion does not refer to any particular poet of modernity, despite being formulated by one. In fact, it is a verse from the poem "Browning resolve ser poeta"<sup>2</sup> ("Browning Decides to be a Poet") in which the mechanism of lyrical expression to which the persona of Jorge Luis Borges's poem aspires is synthesized: he endeavors to assume the position of different personae in order to make clear that the voice materialized in the poem does not correspond to the author's.

Writers have already begun to explore the affinity between Browning's and Pessoa's writings; they include Adolfo Casais Monteiro<sup>3</sup> and Georg Rudolf Lind,<sup>4</sup> as well as Georges Güntert,<sup>5</sup> based on brief statements made by Jacinto do Prado Coelho,<sup>6</sup> who devoted himself to the topic. More recently, George Mon-

teiro<sup>7</sup> has dedicated a short essay solely to this subject, and Odorico Leal de Carvalho Júnior has provided an analysis in a chapter of his master's thesis.<sup>8</sup> What has been concluded thus far is that, on the one hand, the bond reflects the position of the Victorian poet as a common precursor of Pessoa and the generation of Eliot, Pound, and Yeats, which is also characterized by the systematic use of literary masks as a means to problematize the authorial stance. On the other hand, this affinity highlights a specific element in the two writers' relation to one another: the fact that both Browning and Pessoa, besides favoring the dramatic procedure of literary creation, aimed at establishing themselves as dramatic poets. But what does this designation mean? What concept of drama does it mobilize? With this in mind, the purpose of this essay is to analyze the notion of drama fostered by the two writers by verifying its ramifications in Pessoa's theoretic horizon—bearing in mind that the Portuguese poet used Browning's work as one of his references. We will thus try to offer a closer view of the adjective *dramatic* as used by Pessoa, as well as the way in which he characterized himself: “sou um poeta dramático” (I'm a dramatic poet).<sup>9</sup>

## 2.

In the introduction to the *Poetical Works of Robert Browning*, of which Pessoa possessed a copy, Charles Forward notes that the dramatic element is almost always predominant in his poems.<sup>10</sup> Not only did Browning's contemporaries share a similar opinion, but the author himself also suggested this, as indicated in the publication of his second book, *Paracelsus* (1835). The time period when this book was published aligned with Browning's initial emphasis on the presence of the dramatic element in the structure of his work. Here, the adjective does not define what concerns the most current concept of *drama* (a dramaturgic text to be staged); it is seen rather as a principle guiding literary creation. Taking this into account, it is crucial to make a further examination of the aspects of this notion by focusing on the concise preface accompanying the first edition of the text.

Initially, Browning anticipates the possible restrictions to which *Paracelsus* could be subject as a result of the peculiar notion of drama it bears: “I am anxious that the reader should not, at the very outset—mistaking my performance for one of a class with which it has nothing in common—judge it by principles on which it was never moulded.”<sup>11</sup> There is a reason for such a disclaimer. Apparently, the text preserves a rather traditional dramaturgical structure, especially

with its presentation consisting of five parts that could be related to the acts of a Shakespearean tragedy. As Browning explains shortly thereafter, the work constitutes “an attempt [. . .] to reverse the method usually adopted by writers [. . .]; instead of having recourse to an external machinery of incidents to create and evolve the crisis I desire to produce, I have ventured to display somewhat minutely the mood itself in its rise and progress.”<sup>12</sup>

In other words, *Paracelsus* does not refuse the fundamental principle of drama—the action—but rather dislocates it: no longer a product of external events, the conflict arises from previous tensions whose development and explosion are expressed by the characters through speech rather than actions. As we shall see, Pessoa’s static theater dialogues with this dramatic model.

So far, the fundamentally lyrical conception of theater is clear. The problem is that, according to Browning’s assertions, we do not necessarily have a play before our eyes: “I have endeavoured to write a poem, not a drama”; nor would it be a dramatic poem in the sense of a drama in verses to be staged: “I do not very well understand what is called a Dramatic Poem.”<sup>13</sup> In spite of the external appearance and even the text dynamics, far from the standard dramaturgical model without denying it as a whole, Browning conceives *Paracelsus* solely as a poem. It is possible to see some arbitrariness in this procedure, which is thought of, above all, as a strategy to depart from the tradition of a genre and, therefore, liberate the poet from observing certain principles inherent in it. Curiously, the theoretical assumptions to which the writer alludes fail to contradict the current ideas in Europe during the first decades of the nineteenth century.

Clyde de L. Ryals<sup>14</sup> argues that the philosophical empirical tradition, appealing to causality during investigations of moral and physical phenomena, changed the way dramatic action was conceived. When the absolute nature of external events was questioned, the relation between the action and character came to be inverted: the first element ceases to embody the second and thus becomes subject to it. In other words, the action, although not negated, is seen as deprived of meaning when the mental states that prompted it are not considered. As stated by John Henry Newman in 1829, “The action then will be more justly viewed as the vehicle for introducing the personages of the drama, than as the principal object of the poet’s art; it is not in the plot, but in the characters, sentiments, and diction, that the actual merit and poetry of the composition are found.”<sup>15</sup>

Although Browning feared *Paracelsus* would be misunderstood, the play was well received. John Forster published his extensive review, “Evidences of a New

Genius for Dramatic Poetry,"<sup>16</sup> and the renowned actor William Charles Macready was soon in touch with the writer, encouraging him to devote himself to drama. The fact that Macready assumed management of Covent Garden in 1837 was a key event that motivated Browning to write his first play in the strict sense of the term, *Strafford: A Tragedy*, which would be staged in that theater.

The first edition of this play was also accompanied by a brief preface, whose beginning inverts the previous premise: "I had for some time been engaged in a Poem of a very different nature, when induced to make the present attempt."<sup>17</sup> Even though *Strafford* assumes the form of a drama to be staged, Browning once again establishes the strategy of relativizing the tradition of a genre. If in *Paracelsus* the reader is confronted with a text that resembles a play but is, in fact, a poem, the situation now involves an actual play that wishes to be understood also as a poem. Thus, a decrease in boundaries between the genres is produced, and was fully attained in *Dramatic Lyrics* (1842). This experiment was foreseen, in a way, when Browning anticipated the failure of his first foray into theater: "While a trifling success would much gratify, failure will not wholly discourage me from another effort: experience is to come, and earnest endeavours may yet remove many disadvantages."<sup>18</sup>

In fact, *Strafford* was very far from the success the playwright originally desired, as the play saw only five presentations. Despite the existing affinity between Browning's dramatic conception and those of his contemporaries, the play's failure revealed the distinguishing characteristic of the author's work: the emphasis on the development of a soul<sup>19</sup> that weakened the plot beyond the public's acceptable limit. Regardless of the diminished nature of the action, the lyrical intensity, a focal point of actors and playwrights when creating a character, still presupposed the construction of the plot. This is highlighted by James Patton McCormick, when contrasting Browning's next experience in the theater, with specific regard to *King Victor and King Charles* (1842), and to successful plays such as *Richelieu* (1839), by Edward Bulwer-Lytton. McCormick notes in this contrasting analysis that what separates Browning from his contemporaries is that Bulwer-Lytton's work is characterized by "misplaced letters, mistaken identities, the cloak-and-dagger intrigue of courtiers trying to usurp the throne, and several subplots involving romantic love surging violently across the stage."<sup>20</sup> Regarding Browning's work, this series of intrigues is never fully accomplished onstage, but is rather symbolically present in the scenes throughout the play, suggested by the narration of the characters. This often results in the audience

members' displeasure, because they are unable to see the characters' intense mental action reflected in physical action, such as with fights involving guns, for example.

Browning owes most of his failure as a popular playwright to these factors. Let us hold back, however, one last aspect of the preface to *Strafford*, which dialogues more clearly with the purpose achieved in his book *Dramatic Lyrics*: the idea that this play would be one of "Action in Character rather than Character in Action."<sup>21</sup> The notion of soul-in-development pervades a great deal of Browning's literary efforts. This is most evident in the body of poems he would later gather for *Dramatic Lyrics*, in which the introduction reads, "Such Poems as the majority in this volume might also come properly enough, I suppose, under the head of 'Dramatic Pieces'; being, though often Lyric in expression, always Dramatic in principle, and so many utterances of so many imaginary persons, not mine."<sup>22</sup>

By convention, readers are accustomed to referring to these poems as *dramatic monologues*. But the author himself, in fact, never actually used that term; nor did he adhere to the generic designation of "dramatic lyrics," as can be seen from the following titles: *Dramatic Romances* (1845), *Men and Women* (1855), and *Dramatis Personae* (1864). The expression is, thus, a critical category, used not because of its previous theorization by the poet, but as a result of the clarifying power it grants to the reading of those poems. There is no consensus as to what effectively constitutes these texts that unite lyrical and dramatic elements; therefore, it is necessary to accurately determine the conception of dramatic monologue. Because our purpose is not to set critical parameters for its understanding, we will discuss some fundamental characteristics of the form by comparing the poetics of Browning and Pessoa. But first, we will analyze the question of "drama" as it is developed in the work of Pessoa.

### 3.

There are several allusions to the dramatic element of Pessoa's poetry in his letters and critical-theoretical texts, as well as in his "Tábua bibliográfica" (Bibliographical table), published in 1928, which allows for the elucidation of specific aspects of his notion of drama. Regarding his letters, three are noteworthy: in the first, Pessoa mentions to Armando Côrtes-Rodrigues the "propósito de lançar pseudonimamente a obra *Caeiro-Reis-Campos*," whose speech "é sentido na pessoa de outro; é escrito dramaticamente, mas é sincero [. . .] como é

sincero o que diz o Rei Lear, que não é Shakespeare, mas uma criação dele.”<sup>23</sup> In a different letter to João Gaspar Simões, Pessoa clarifies: “O ponto central da minha personalidade como artista é que sou um poeta dramático; tenho, continuamente, em tudo quanto escrevo, a exaltação íntima do poeta e a despersonalização do dramaturgo” (The central point of my personality as an artist is that I’m a dramatic poet; in everything I write, I always have the poet’s inner exaltation and the playwright’s depersonalization).<sup>24</sup> Finally, the poet declares to Adolfo Casais Monteiro, “O que sou essencialmente—por trás das máscaras involuntárias do poeta, do raciocinador e do que mais haja—é dramaturgo” (What I am essentially—behind the involuntary masks of poet, logical reasoner and so forth—is a dramatist).<sup>25</sup>

Besides these three, another letter is equally relevant, written to Francisco Costa. In it, Pessoa states his belief that both men share the same aesthetic criterion:

Pouco importa que sintamos o que exprimimos; basta que, tendo-o pensado, saibamos fingir bem tê-lo sentido.

Não é Shakespeare, talvez, o maior poeta de todos os tempos [ . . . ] mas é o maior expressor que houve no mundo, o mais insincero de quantos poetas tem havido, sendo por isso mesmo que exprimia com igual relevo todos os modos de ser e de sentir [ . . . ]

Para mim, pois, a arte é essencialmente dramática, e o maior artista será aquele que, na arte que professa—porque em todas as artes, condicionado isto pela “matéria” delas, se podem fazer dramas, isto é, sentir dramaticamente—mais intensa—profusa e complexamente viver tudo quanto não é ele, isto é, que mais intensa, profusa—e complexamente exprimir tudo quanto em verdade não sente, ou, em outras palavras, sente apenas para exprimir.<sup>26</sup>

What is presented here is the characteristic Pessoaan idea that, in art, expressing a sentiment is not equivalent to feeling it. In art, the sentiment is thought of and then pretended—that is, it is felt by means of imagination. Therefore, it is no surprise that Pessoa highlights Shakespeare as “o mais insincero de quantos poetas tem havido.” This sincerity he claims for the poetic craft is aesthetic and not factual. It is also important to note the assertion that “a arte é essencialmente dramática,” in the sense that in any sort of artistic manifestation, it is possible to write dramas, even though they are not shaped as a dramaturgical text. This is because, according to this notion, writing dramas is fundamentally

O primeiro grau da poesia lyrica é aquelle em que o poeta, de temperamento intenso e emotivo, exprime espontanea ou reflectidamente esse temperamento e essas emoções. É o typo mais vulgar do poeta lyrico; é tambem o de menos merito, como typo. A intensidade da emoção procede, em geral, da unidade do temperamento; e assim este typo de poeta lyrico é em geral monocordio, e os seus poemas giram em torno de determinado numero, em geral pequeno, de emoções. Porisso, neste genero de poetas, é vulgar dizer-se, porque com razão se nota, que um é "um poeta do amor", outro "um poeta da saudade", um terceiro "um poeta da tristeza".

O segundo grau da poesia lyrica é aquelle em que o ~~temperamento~~ ~~poeta~~ ~~é~~ ~~mais~~ ~~intellectual~~ ~~ou~~ ~~imaginativo~~, pode ser mesmo que só por mais culto, não tem já a simplicidade de emoções, ou a limitação d'ellas, que distingue o poeta do primeiro grau. Este será tambem typicamente um poeta lyrico, no sentido vulgar do termo, mas já não será um poeta monocordio. Os seus poemas abrangem assumptos diversos, unificando-os todavia o temperamento e o estylo. Sendo variado nos typos de emoção, não o será na maneira de sentir. Assim um Swinburne, tam monocordio no temperamento e no estylo, pode contínuo escrever com igual relevo um poema de amor, uma alegria morbida, um poema revolucionario.

O terceiro grau da poesia lyrica é aquelle em que o poeta, ainda mais intellectual, começa a despersonalizar-se, a sentir, não já porque sente, mas porque pensa que sente; a sentir estados de alma, que realmente não tem, simplesmente porque os comprehende. Estamos na antecâmara da poesia dramatica, na sua essencia intima. O temperamento do poeta, seja qual fór, está dissolvido pela intelligencia. A sua obra será unificada só pelo estylo, ultimo reducto da sua unidade espiritual, da sua coexistencia com o ego mesmo. Assim é o ~~temperamento~~ ~~poeta~~ ~~é~~ ~~mais~~ ~~intellectual~~ ~~ou~~ ~~imaginativo~~ Tennyson, escrevendo por igual Ulysses e The Lady of Shalott; assim, e mais, é Browning, escrevendo o que chamou "poemas dramaticos", que não são dialogados, mas monologos revelando almas diversas, com que o poeta não tem identidade, não a pretende ter e muitas vezes não a quere ter.

O quarto grau da poesia lyrica é aquelle, muito mais raro, em que o poeta, mais intellectual ainda mas igualmente imaginativo, entra em plena despersonalização. Não só sente, mas vive, os estados de alma que não tem directamente. Em grande numero de casos, cairá na poesia dramatica, propriamente dita, como fez Shakespeare, poeta substancialmente lyrico erguido a dramatico ~~poeta~~ pelo espantoso grau de despersonalização que attingiu. Num ou noutro



Pages of typescript with an essay on the degrees of lyric poetry, BNP/E3, 18-50f.

caso, continuará sendo, embora dramaticamente, um poeta lírico. É esse o caso de Browning, etc (ut supra). ... Nem já o estilo ~~maximá~~ define a unidade do homem: há só o que no estilo há de intelectual a denota. Assim é em Shakespeare, em quem o relevo inesperado da phrase, a subtiliza e a complexidade do dizer, são a única coisa que aproxima o Fallax de Hamlet do do Rei Lear, o de Falstaff do de Lady Macbeth. É assim o Browning através dos Men and Women e dos Dramatic Poems.

Supponhamos, porém, que o poeta, evitando sempre a poesia dramática, externamente tal, avança ainda um passo na escala da despersonalização. Certos estados de alma, pensamentos e não sentidos, sentidos imaginativamente e por isso vividos, tenderão a definir para elle uma pessoa ficticia que os sentisse sinceramente.





equivalent to *feeling in a dramatic way*; that is, it is far from any sentiment originating from the empirical "I."

In this letter, Pessoa not only presents a particular conception of artistic creation, but also foregrounds a criterion of objective value, established in the allusion to Shakespeare. In offering such a conception, Pessoa occasionally defines the sort of poetry he writes in those texts that attempt to theorize literary creation. This is the case of two distinct texts whose titles have been ascribed by their editors after the arrangement of the book in which they appear: "Os heterônimos e os graus de lirismo" ("The Heteronyms and the Grades of Lyricism") (undated) and "Os graus da poesia lírica" ("The Grades of Lyrical Poetry") (possibly from 1930). In both texts, the fluidity between lyrical and dramatic poetry is examined by listing the successive degrees of depersonalization required for the full transition from the first to the second. Following this reasoning, such "desdobramentos de personalidade ou, antes, invenções de personalidades diferentes"<sup>27</sup> would allow the poet to be "vários poetas, um poeta dramático escrevendo em poesia lírica." This would lead to "poesia dramática, sem, todavia, se lhe dar a forma do drama, nem explícita nem implicitamente."<sup>28</sup> Later, Pessoa speculates: "Suponhamos que um supremo depersonalizado como Shakespeare, em vez de criar o personagem de Hamlet como parte de um drama, o criava como simples personagem, sem drama. Teria escrito, por assim dizer, um drama de uma só personagem, um monólogo prolongado e analítico. (Let us suppose that a supremely depersonalized writer such as Shakespeare, instead of creating the character of Hamlet as part of a play, had actually created him as simply a character without a play. He would have written, so to speak, a one-character play, a prolonged analytic monologue.) Não seria legítimo ir buscar a esse personagem uma definição dos sentimentos e dos pensamentos de Shakespeare, a não ser que o personagem fosse falhado, porque o mau dramaturgo é o que se revela."<sup>29</sup>

Even though Pessoa's ideas regarding drama and the dramatic develop in more than one direction, the specific creation of characters deserves a privileged place. This is synthesized in a fragment composed of only two sentences: "O romance é uma explicação dum carácter; o drama é apenas a criação dele."<sup>30</sup> This definition, however, does not dismiss the development of the action nor the building of the plot, for in another text Pessoa would consider inadequate the "introdução em um drama de uma cena em que, por grande que seja a força ou a graça própria, a acção pára ou não progride, ou, o que é pior, se atrasa."<sup>31</sup> The

several fragments that constitute his unfinished “Ensaio sobre o drama” (“Essay on Drama”) distinguish the foundation of the dramaturgical text within the harmony between the three elements of character, action, and plot: “Toda a obra dramática, no seu conjuncto organico, se compõe de tres partes: a psychologia das personagens; a psychologia da sua interacção, e a construcção do enredo, por meio, e atravez, da qual essa interacção se produz.”<sup>32</sup>

These ideas, however, do not correspond to the ideas Pessoa put into effect. When he claims, to Casais Monteiro, that he is essentially a playwright, this designation refers to the poet, the creator of heteronyms, rather than the artist behind a play such as *O Marinheiro*. In fact, Pessoa’s concept of drama is so ahead of the conventions of the genre that Teresa Rita Lopes, when referring to the writer’s relations with symbolist drama, notes that Pessoa tried to distance himself from traditional notions of theater and dramaturgy by committing himself to the creation of a new drama—free, in its structure, from the characteristics common to the dramatic genre.<sup>33</sup> Lopes emphasizes that, regardless of the connection with that movement, *O Marinheiro* (*The Sailor*) presents greater formal and psychological refinement than do the plays written by Maeterlinck in this period. Nonetheless, Lopes points out that it is in Pessoa’s heteronymic work that his dramatic genius is manifest, not only expressing detachment, but also overcoming the symbolist model. In other words, in Pessoa’s work, drama is performed in full “outside” drama. In this sense, the following Pessoaan statements are revealing: “Álvaro de Campos é o personagem de uma peça; o que falta é a peça”;<sup>34</sup> “Façamos de conta, ao escrever versos, que estamos escrevendo uma peça.”<sup>35</sup>

Certainly, in his future work, Pessoa assigned a prominent place to drama itself. *O Marinheiro*, the only play he finished, highlights the level of importance that the accomplishment of such an extensive theatrical work would assume in his artistic-literary projects. Were this not true, it would make no sense that, almost two decades after publishing the work, Pessoa would see it as “sujeito a emendas”;<sup>36</sup> nor would the poet have engaged in writing tens of other dramas if he did not aspire to become a playwright who disrupts the logic of drama “inside” the drama and who, through the creation of heteronyms, redesigns it beyond the drama. Thus, Pessoa’s work relativizes the categories “playwright” and “dramatic poet,” because he desired both the creation of drama outside drama (the heteronymic and oronymic production) and the composition of dramas that, being dramas strictly speaking, are not attached to the main con-

ventions of the genre (the action is practically nonexistent, and empty dialogue occurs between characters of little or no distinction).

Here, the paradox is designed as syllabus: the theater of poetry, the poetry of theater; the play whose features are more lyrical than dramatic, the poem whose features are more dramatic than lyrical. Pessoa's ideal of poetic creation, in which the notion of drama is refracted, is guided by a purpose of conjunction based on both the overcoming of clear boundaries between lyrical and dramatic genres and the certainty of the impossibility of giving birth to works perfectly adjusted to the tradition of a genre.<sup>37</sup>

#### 4.

Pessoa makes specific references to Browning in his prose. For example, in "A nova poesia portuguesa sociologicamente considerada" (1912), the Victorian poet integrates, along similar lines with Coleridge and Shelley, the group of "figuras que, sem serem supremas, são [. . .] grandes indiscutivelmente."<sup>38</sup> Around 1916, when proposing the edition of an anthology of Portuguese "sensationalist" poetry to an English publisher, Pessoa initially mentions Browning: "Suppose English romanticism had, instead of retrograding to the Tennysonian-Rossetti-Browning level, progressed right onward from Shelley [. . .]." Shortly after this, the "Elegy" of Teixeira de Pascoaes is presented as "certainly transcend[ing] Browning's 'Last Ride Together' as a love-poem."<sup>39</sup> Another unflattering opinion emerges in a recently published note: "Browning parece pensar em voz alta sem ter mais de poeta do que obter rimas."<sup>40</sup> A reference also appears in a letter to João de Castro Osório (then director of Lusitânia Editora), in which Pessoa offers to translate, among many other authors' poems, the "most important poems" of Robert Browning.<sup>41</sup> Although Pessoa claims these translations are in an advanced stage of development, one finds in his files, among several lists of English anthologies, merely a list of five of his poems<sup>42</sup> as well as some sketches of "The Pied Piper of Hamelin." Arnaldo Saraiva argues, however, that Pessoa would also have been responsible for the anonymous translation of "Up at a villa—down in the city" present in the twentieth volume of *Biblioteca internacional de obras célebres*.<sup>43</sup>

The most significant allusion to Browning is found in a text already mentioned, "Os graus da poesia lírica," in which the degrees of lyric poetry are listed. There, Pessoa elaborates a literary axiology guided by the criterion of depersonalization. Examples in English perpetually recur, and the author asserts that the

first degree is characterized by “aquele em que o poeta, de temperamento intenso e emotivo, exprime espontânea ou refletidamente esse temperamento e essas emoções” (the one in which the poet, of intense and emotive temperament, expresses spontaneously or reflectively that temperament and those emotions); this is the “tipo mais vulgar do poeta lírico [. . .] e o seus poemas giram em torno de determinado número, em geral pequeno, de emoções.”<sup>44</sup> A range of themes and emotions distinguishes the poet belonging to the second degree, who is still close to the previous one. Despite this specific characterization, the poet of the second degree does not necessarily express how to feel the emotions evoked by the work; Swinburne would represent this category of poet.

Browning arises as the preeminent example of the third-degree poet, in which the depersonalization is already foreseen to the extent that the emotions represented in the poem have their origin in what the poet feels “não já porque sente, mas porque pensa que sente” (no longer because he does feel, but because he thinks he feels). In other words, the poet feels with the imagination, not with the heart. This idea, which aligns with the one Pessoa presented to Francisco Costa, places the drama beyond the dramaturgical structure, propelling the following action: “Estamos na antecâmara da poesia dramática, na sua essência íntima. O temperamento do poeta, seja qual for, está dissolvido pela inteligência. A sua obra será unificada só pelo estilo, último reduto da sua unidade espiritual, da sua coexistência consigo mesmo. Assim é Tennyson, escrevendo por igual ‘Ulysses’ e ‘The Lady of Shalott,’ assim, e mais, é Browning, escrevendo o que chamou ‘poemas dramáticos,’ que não são dialogados, mas monólogos revelando almas diversas, com que o poeta não tem identidade, não a pretende ter e muitas vezes não a quer ter.” (We are in the antechamber of dramatic poetry, in its essential intimacy. The poet’s temperament, whatever one it is, is dissolved by intelligence. His work will have only the unity of style, the final residue of his spiritual unity, of his coexistence with himself. Thus Tennyson, writing both “Ulysses” and “The Lady of Shalott,” and even more so, Browning, writing what he called “dramatic poems,” which are not dialogic, but monologues revealing diverse souls with whom the poet neither identifies nor pretends to and many times has no desire to so identify.)<sup>45</sup>

In these statements by Pessoa, only his reference to poems that include no dialogue must be corrected. In the poem “In a Gondola,” for example, presented in *Dramatic Lyrics*, voices of a man and a woman alternate and perform a brief, yet tragic love scene. By contrast, in the poem “In a Balcony,” published in

*Men and Women*, the dialogic structure is built in terms that truly resemble a dramaturgical text, presenting not only three characters—Norbert, Constance, and the Queen—but also a love triangle that allows the conflicts among them to develop. This is maintained throughout the nearly 1,000 verses that constitute the text.

When contemplating the fourth degree, “muito mais raro” (a much rarer thing),<sup>46</sup> in which the poet is fully depersonalized, Pessoa mentions Browning once again. However, Pessoa does not necessarily place Browning in the highest rank, because that is reserved for Shakespeare. The fourth-degree poet not only uses the intellect to feel emotions that he does not have, but is also capable of living them—an ability that, in many cases, leads to

poesia dramática, propriamente dita, como fez Shakespeare, poeta substancialmente lírico erguido a dramático pelo espantoso grau de despersonalização que atingiu [as did Shakespeare, substantially a lyric poet raised to the dramatic level by the astonishing degree of depersonalization he attained]. Num ou noutro caso continuará sendo, embora dramaticamente, poeta lírico. É esse o caso de Browning, etc. (ut supra) Nem já o estilo define a unidade do homem: só o que no estilo há de intelectual a denota. Assim é em Shakespeare, em quem o relevo inesperado da frase, a sutileza e a complexidade do dizer, são a única coisa que aproxima o falar de Hamlet do do Rei Lear, o de Falstaff do de Lady Macbeth. E assim é Browning através dos *Men and Women* e dos *Dramatic Poems*. [No longer does style itself define the unity of the man, but only what the style possesses of intellect. That's how it is with Shakespeare, in which the unexpected exaltation of phrase, the subtlety and complexity of expression, are the only things that link Hamlet's speech with that of King Lear, Falstaff's with Lady Macbeth's. The same is true of Browning's *Men and Women* and his *Dramatic Poems*.]

The fact that Browning is present in both the third (in which the poet “começa a despersonalizar-se” [begins to depersonalize himself]) and the fourth degree (in which the poet “entra em plena despersonalização” [becomes completely depersonalized])<sup>47</sup> exposes the inconsistency of the system Pessoa proposed. Even though the high ranking assigned to Shakespeare indicates the supremacy of the fourth degree over the third, it is clear that the determining factor in this fourth degree concerns both: “Num ou noutro caso continuará sendo, embora dramaticamente, poeta lírico” (emphasis added).

The theoretical inconsistency of this unfinished text, so to speak, can be confirmed even in the following and last degree. Although the fifth degree is not clearly distinguished from the previous degree, the poet, alien to the dramaturgical structure, endeavors a slight tip in the scale of depersonalization: “Certos estados de alma, pensados e não sentidos, sentidos imaginativamente e por isso vividos, tenderão a definir para ele uma pessoa fictícia que os sentisse sinceramente” (Certain states of soul, intellectualized but not felt, felt imaginatively and therefore lived, tend to define for him a fictitious person who feels them sincerely).<sup>48</sup> Other than this distinct last sentence, the others refer to the quality described in the previous degree (the states of the soul, felt by imagination, are vivid to the poet).

Pessoa had already related Shakespeare to Browning. In another recently published text, Pessoa compares them: “Shakespeare é apenas um grande artista porque é um grande poeta; [ . . . ]; nos modernos da-se a dissociação: ou são, como Browning, grande poetas sem ser grandes artistas.”<sup>49</sup> Nevertheless, in “Impermanence,” Pessoa praises the ability to create imaginary characters possibly assimilated by Browning from Shakespeare: “We see the same care for universal men in Shakespeare, who penetrates their natures and their waking souls, [ . . . ] and in Browning, who penetrates their *separate types*.”<sup>50</sup> In the same essay, however, Pessoa does not refrain from predicting the poet’s future oblivion: “Browning, Byron will disappear altogether, even, perhaps, to the very names.”<sup>51</sup>

In a way, Pessoa himself was responsible for the disappearance of Browning’s work. In “Os heterônimos e os graus de lirismo” (“The Heteronyms and the Grades of Lyricism”), a text related to “Os graus da poesia lírica” (“The Grades of Lyrical Poetry”), the Portuguese poet clearly elects Shakespeare as a sort of harbinger in relation to the purpose of creating poems that would constitute a “drama de uma só personagem, um monólogo prolongado e analítico” (a one-character play—a prolonged analytic monologue).<sup>52</sup> This time, however, there is no mention of Browning, and this did not go unnoticed by George Monteiro: “Oddly, Pessoa fails to mention the one poet—Robert Browning—who had done exactly, over and over again, what Shakespeare had not done, that is, create single-character ‘plays.’ Browning’s creations could be seen—and they probably should be—as the immediate predecessors for Pessoa’s heteronymic creations.”<sup>53</sup>

In fact, there are affinities between Pessoa’s and Browning’s poetic projects: both poets were committed to developing a conception of drama that dismantled boundaries between genres. This specific development of drama thus caused

dramatic poetry to acquire other features besides the “vulgar or more obvious form of drama—scene & dialogue.”<sup>54</sup> In this process, in which the two poets elaborated strategies to relativize the tradition of a specific literary genre, inventing souls was chosen as the privileged way of expression and, therefore, emphasized dramatic monologue.

The use of this form of drama can be identified in hundreds of texts throughout literary history, since, at least, Ancient Greece—hence Pessoa’s discovery of “poesia lírica posta na boca de diversos personagens”<sup>55</sup> in Aeschylus’s dramas.<sup>56</sup> Specifically concerning the English-speaking tradition, we can refer to this form’s beginnings, in poems such as *The Wanderer* and *The Seafarer*, and even in the versified stories of *The Canterbury Tales* by Chaucer.<sup>57</sup> Thus, in a broader sense, the soliloquies in Shakespeare’s plays can be likewise understood as dramatic monologues, a notion also suggested by Pessoa when he imagined the hypothetical creation of Hamlet as a “simples personagem, sem drama” (simply a character without a play) and speculated that Shakespeare would have written “um drama de uma só personagem, um monólogo prolongado e analítico.”<sup>58</sup>

Studies on the genre of dramatic monologue normally tend to consider Browning’s poems as a reference. This is because in his poems, the lyric form is established as self-sufficient and no longer associated with a greater dramatic or narrative context. The principle of dramatic monologue is then set as a technique that allows for the formalization of the discourse of an individual character. However, this character is then made alien to the poet, by addressing one or more people (occasionally itself). Therefore, one finds a moment of communication encapsulated in the text in which the reader has access to a scene that, although independent of a broader context, does not refrain from assuming that context, and thus offers a universe of suggestions from which the “state of soul” of that subject, in Pessoa’s terms, is designed.

Through the multiplicity of subjects that arise from Browning’s monologues, which cover a wide range of themes and epochs, Browning satisfies the longing for totality already seen in his previous works. Such is the case in *Pauline*, his first published poem, in which the speaker claims to himself “a centre to all things, / Most potent to create, and rule, and call / Upon all things to minister to it; / And to a principle of restlessness / Which would be all, have, see, know, taste, feel, all—/ This is myself.”<sup>59</sup> In *Paracelsus*, in the moment when the title character asks Aprille to “[t]ell me what thou wouldst be, and what I am,” she

answers him with a lengthy exaltation of the "eternal, infinite love," in which the desire "to perfect and consummate all" is prominent.<sup>60</sup>

Thus, the many literary masks created by Browning lead the reader through a universe of historical periods as distinct as the Italian Renaissance ("Fra Lippo Lippi"), the English Civil War ("Cavalier Tunes") or the fights for independence in Algeria ("Through the Metidja to Abd-el-Kadr"). Browning mobilizes myths of Ancient Greece ("Artemis Prologizes") and folk tales ("The Pied Piper of Hamelin"); and involves monks ("Soliloquy of the Spanish Cloister"), noblemen ("My Last Duchess"), soldiers ("Incident of the French Camp"), and other poets as well ("Rabbi Ben Ezra").

The reader familiar with Pessoa will be able to recognize, in this wide range of characters, the foreshadowing of the notion "sentir tudo de todas as maneiras" (to feel everything in every way) discussed by the Portuguese poet. This is not only seen in the words he ascribed to Álvaro de Campos, according to the text signed in his own name, in which he argues to "[a]bolir o dogma da personalidade: cada um de nós deve ser muitos."<sup>61</sup> George Monteiro even identifies in the Pessoaan formulation, "um drama em gente, em vez de em actos" (a drama in people, instead of acts),<sup>62</sup> an echo of the expression used in the preface to *Stafford*: "Action in Character rather than Character in Action." This suggests the indebtedness of the heteronymic project to Browning's work.

Despite his speculation about the presence of Browning's dramatic monologues in the creation of Pessoa's heteronyms, Monteiro emphasizes the element that distinguishes Pessoa from Browning: Pessoa's characters are writers and, therefore, able to create the poems wherein they will be known. Something similar can be stated regarding Shakespeare's characters, obviously not outlined as writers, but whose precedence Pessoa claims when he "erases" the reference to Browning in his text on the heteronyms and the degrees of poetry. Although Shakespeare's soliloquies can be read as autonomous poems, they were not written with the intention of being categorized as such: far from being conceived as self-centered forms, they guide the action in the play in which they are implemented, presenting a less lyrical purpose than a dramatic one. Browning's poems, in turn, despite functioning as independent plays, refer to the circumstance wherein they originated and from which it is possible to reconstruct the broader scene in which they are placed. In Pessoa's poetry, however, it is the poem itself that configures the scene.



Pessoa's poetic project also exhibits particular differences in comparison to Browning's. Regarding the position in which the two poets endeavored to situate themselves within the universe they had created, Browning alluded to his dramatic poems as "performances," that is, plays in which he himself would have been the actor.<sup>63</sup> Pessoa, on the other hand, by involving his own name in the context of heteronymy, did not seek to maintain his distance from it, but rather to mingle himself within it, shaping a literary mask with the same physiognomy of the empirical "I."

By radicalizing the procedures of Browning's monologues when creating the heteronyms, Pessoa distanced himself from one of the models that possibly inspired him. It is curious, however, that he comes close to this model in *Mensagem*, exactly the work that, in its appearance, is so distinct from heteronymy, thus demonstrating the true length of the axis of comparison between the two poets.

*Mensagem* is a rather epic work—whether for its prophetic or messianic tone or for its grandiloquent discourse—in which the lyrical expression is, nevertheless, dramatic in essence. The arrangement of voices continuously staged in the poem brings it closer to the Browning monologue. This occurs when the author employs historical figures that assume the role of speaker and arouse the revision of past events through the outflow of emotions, even when the first person singular is not used. Because the reference in the title to these characters releases the multiplicity of voices that represent ghosts from a glorious past, the characters then enter the discourse of the poem and have a dialogue among themselves.

Therefore, throughout *Mensagem*, both the dissolution of the unity of the speaker, presented in the diversity of personae evoked in the work, and the stability of literary genres is articulated in so far as the epic element is added to the dramatization of the lyrical expression proposed. This articulation thus highlights the reconciliation of the convergence of poetry and drama also desired by Browning. From this perspective, the one collection of verses published by Pessoa in Portuguese can be read as a materialization of his literary project, which, among other factors, is based on a dynamic approach to and detachment from tradition.

#### NOTES

1. As emphasized by Cabral Martins and Richard Zenith, Pessoa never use the word *heteronymy*. See Fernando Pessoa, *Teoria da heteronímia*, ed. Fernando Cabral Martins and Richard Zenith (Lisbon: Assírio & Alvim, 2012), 111. However, in the famous letter to

Adolfo Casais Monteiro, dated January 13, 1935, he employs “heteronymism.” See Fernando Pessoa, *Correspondência 1923–1935*, ed. Manuela Parreira da Silva (São Paulo: Companhia das Letras, 1999b), 341; Pessoa, *Cartas entre Fernando Pessoa e os directores da presença*, ed. Enrico Martines (Lisbon: Imprensa Nacional–Casa da Moeda, 1998), 254. On this matter, see also Jerónimo Pizarro, “Obras ortónimas e heterónimas,” in *Pessoa existe?* (Lisbon: Ática, 2012), 73–95.

2. Here is the original verse: “Viviré de olvidarme.” Jorge Luis Borges, “Browning resuelve ser poeta,” in *Obras completas III, 1975–1985* (Buenos Aires: Emecé, 1989), 82.

3. Adolfo Casais Monteiro, “Pessoa e Pound,” in *A poesia de Fernando Pessoa*, 2nd ed., ed. José Blanco. (Lisbon: Imprensa Nacional–Casa da Moeda, 1985), 121–24.

4. Georg Rudolf Lind, “A Hierarquia dos poetas e das artes,” in *Estudos sobre Fernando Pessoa* (Lisbon: Imprensa Nacional–Casa da Moeda, 1981), 238–40.

5. Georges Güntert, “Na amaldiçoada sala dos espelhos do eu,” in *Fernando Pessoa: O Eu Estranho*, trans. Maria Fernanda Cidrais (Lisbon: D. Quixote, 1982), 124–28.

6. Jacinto do Prado Coelho, “Fernando Pessoa, pensador múltiplo,” in *Páginas íntimas e de auto-interpretação*, ed. Georg Rudolf Lind and Jacinto do Prado Coelho (Lisbon: Edições Ática, 1966), xxviii.

7. George Monteiro, “Drama in Character: Robert Browning,” in *Fernando Pessoa and Nineteenth-Century Anglo-American Literature* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2000), 58–66.

8. Odorico Leal de Carvalho Júnior, “Browning, precursor comum: Vereda que se bifurca,” in *Lírica impessoal e Modernidade: T. S. Eliot e Fernando Pessoa* (Belo Horizonte: Faculdade de Letras da Universidade Federal de Minas Gerais, 2010), 108–34. Naturally, we do not intend to be exhaustive with these mentionings, but it is necessary to add João Almeida Flor, “Discursos de alteridade,” in *Robert Browning, Monólogos dramáticos* (Lisbon: Na Regra do Jogo, 1980), 11–18; and João Barrento, “Monólogos dramáticos: alteridade e modernidade,” in *O Espinho de Sócrates: Expressionismo e Modernismo* (Lisbon: Presença, 1987), 103–11.

9. Letter to João Gaspar Simões, dated December 11, 1931. Pessoa 1999b, 255; Pessoa 1998, 178. Translation: Pessoa, Fernando, *The Selected Prose of Fernando Pessoa*, ed. and trans. Richard Zenith (New York: Grove Press, 2001), 235.

10. Charles W. Forward, *Poetical Works of Robert Browning*, intro. (London: Peacock, Mansfield, 1912), 8. Pessoa’s private library is currently digitized and accessible at <http://casafernandopessoa.cm-lisboa.pt/>. A printed version of the catalog may also be consulted: Jerónimo Pizarro, Patricio Ferrari, and Antonio Cardiello, ed., *A Biblioteca particular de Fernando Pessoa I* (Lisbon: D. Quixote, 2010).

11. Robert Browning, *Poetical Works: 1833–1864*, ed. Ian Jack (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1980), 38.

12. Browning, *Poetical Works*, "Preface," 38.
13. *Ibid.*
14. Clyde de L. Ryals, *Becoming Browning: The Poems and Plays of Robert Browning, 1833–1846* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1983), 31.
15. A. S. Cook, ed., *Poetry, with Reference to Aristotle's Poetics* (Boston: Ginn, 1891). Quoted in Ryals, *Becoming Browning*, "Paracelsus," 32.
16. *New Monthly Magazine* XLVI (Mar. 1836), 289–308.
17. Robert Browning, *Poems and Plays, 1833–1844*, ed. Ernest Rhys (London: J. M. Dent, 1936), 133.
18. *Ibid.*, "Preface," 133.
19. Years after the first publication of the long poem *Sordello*, in 1840, Browning wrote in the preface to this work, "My stress lay on the incidents in the development of a soul: little else is worth study." In Franklin T. Baker, ed., *Browning's Shorter Poems*, 4th ed. (New York: Macmillan, 1917), xiv.
20. James Patton McCormick, "Robert Browning and the Experimental Drama," *PMLA* 68, 5 (Dec. 1953), 984.
21. Browning, *Poems and Plays, 1833–1844*, "Preface," 133.
22. Forward, *Poetical Works of Robert Browning*, intro., "Dramatic Lyrics," 271.
23. Letter dated Jan. 19, 1915; Pessoa 1999a, 144.
24. Letter dated Dec. 11, 1931; Pessoa 1999b, 255; Pessoa 1998, 178. Translation: Pessoa, *The Selected Prose of Fernando Pessoa*, ed. and trans. Richard Zenith, 235.
25. Letter dated Jan. 20, 1935; Pessoa 1999b, 350; Pessoa 1998, 266. Translation: Pessoa, *The Selected Prose*, trans. Zenith, 250.
26. Letter dated Aug. 10, 1925; Pessoa 199b, 84–85.
27. Fernando Pessoa, *Obras em prosa*, ed. Cleonice Berardinelli (Rio de Janeiro: Nova Aguilar, 1976), 85; *Páginas íntimas e de auto-interpretação*, ed. Georg Rudolf Lind and Jacinto do Prado Coelho (Lisbon: Ática, 1966), 105.
28. Pessoa 1976, "[Os heterônimos e os graus de lirismo]," 87; Pessoa 1966, "[Umas figuras insiro em contos . . .]," 107.
29. Pessoa 1976, 87; Pessoa 1966, 107–8. Translation: Monteiro, "Drama in Character," 58–59.
30. Fernando Pessoa, *Páginas sobre literatura e estética*, ed. António Quadros (Lisbon: Europa-América, 1986), 60.
31. Pessoa 1986, "Introdução à estética," 19.
32. Fernando Pessoa, *Apreciações literárias de Fernando Pessoa*, ed. Pauly Ellen Bothe (Lisbon: Imprensa Nacional–Casa da Moeda, 2013), 58.
33. Maria Teresa Rita Lopes, *Fernando Pessoa et le drame symboliste: Héritage et création*, 2nd ed. (Paris: Foundation Calouste Gulbenkian, 1985), 109.

34. Fernando Pessoa, *Livro de versos: Álvaro de Campos*, ed. Teresa Rita Lopes (Lisbon: Estampa, 1993a), 15.
35. Fernando Pessoa, *Escritos autobiográficos, automáticos e de reflexão Pessoal*, ed. Richard Zenith (São Paulo: A Girafa, 2006), 367.
36. See letter to João Gaspar Simões, dated January 10, 1930: “Respondo agora à sua pergunta sobre o publicarem na *Presença* ou em separata algumas das minhas antigas produções. [ . . . ] O Marinheiro está sujeito a emendas: peço que, por enquanto, se abstenham de pensar nele. Se quiserem, poderei, feitas as emendas, dizer quais são: ficará então ao vosso dispor,” in Pessoa 1999b, 190; Pessoa 1998, 115. On the genesis of this play, see Claudia J. Fischer, “Auto-tradução e experimentação interlinguística na gênese d’ ‘O Marinheiro’ de Fernando Pessoa,” *Pessoa Plural* 1 (Spring 2012), 1–69.
37. On this issue, Kenneth David Jackson’s hypothesis is that “Pessoa invented and refined a technique of adverse genres, playing content against formal conventions [ . . . ] part of a paradoxical juxtaposition whereby poetic genres selected from different historical periods in the Western tradition are filled with an incongruent and inauthentic content, subverting the familiarity of generic expression.” In K. David Jackson, *Adverse Genres in Fernando Pessoa* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), 15–17.
38. Fernando Pessoa, *Crítica: Ensaios, artigos e entrevistas*, ed. Fernando Cabral Martins (Lisbon: Assírio & Alvim, 2000a), 10.
39. Undated letter, possibly 1916. Pessoa 1999a, 235. In “[Prefácio para uma Antologia de Poetas Sensacionistas],” attributed to Álvaro de Campos, a similar formulation is read. See Pessoa 1966, 145–46.
40. Pessoa 2013, 71.
41. Letter dated June 20, 1923. Pessoa 1999b, 13–15.
42. “Rabbi ben Ezra,” “James Lee’s Wife,” “Prospice,” “Evelyn Hope” and “The Pied Piper of Hamelin.” See Patricio Ferrari “Meter and Rhythm in the Poetry of Fernando Pessoa,” 2012, 385–86.
43. See Arnaldo Saraiva, *Fernando Pessoa poeta-tradutor de poetas: Os Poemas traduzidos e o respectivo original* (São Paulo: Nova Fronteira, 1999), 5–58.
44. Pessoa 1976, 274; Fernando Pessoa, *Páginas de estética e de teoria literárias*, ed. Georg Rudolf Lind and Jacinto do Prado Coelho (Lisbon: Ática, 1967), 67. Translation: Monteiro, “Drama in Character,” 60.
45. Pessoa 1976, 275; Pessoa 1967, 68. The following quotes refer to the same pages. Translations: Monteiro, “Drama in Character,” 61.
46. Translation: Monteiro, “Drama in Character,” 61.
47. Translation: *ibid.*, 63.
48. Translation: *ibid.*
49. Pessoa 2013, 72.

50. Fernando Pessoa, *Heróstrato e a busca da imortalidade*, ed. Richard Zenith (Lisbon: Assírio & Alvim, 2000b), 238.
51. Pessoa 2000b, 243.
52. Pessoa 1976, 87; Pessoa 1966, 108. Translation: Monteiro, "Drama in Character," 59.
53. Monteiro, "Drama in Character," 59.
54. Letter from Browning to John Kenyon, dated October 1, 1855. Quoted in Ryals, *Becoming Browning*, "Afterword," 249.
55. Pessoa 1976, 86; Pessoa 1966, 106.
56. In Pessoa's copy of *The Lyrical Dramas of Æschylus* (1906; repr. Aug. 1917), the translator, John Stuart Blackie, defends "how essentially the lyrical element predominates in their construction [in the construction of the Æschylean pieces]." See John Stuart Blackie, transl., *The Lyrical Dramas of Æschylus*, 6th. ed. (London / Toronto: J. M. Dent, 1917), 17. <http://casafernandopessoa.cm-lisboa.pt/bdigital/8-176>.
57. See Caroline D. Eckhardt, "Genre," in *A Companion to Chaucer*, ed. Peter Brown (Oxford: Blackwell, 2002), 180-94; C. David Benson, "The *Canterbury Tales*: Personal Drama or Experiments in Poetic Variety?," in *The Cambridge Companion to Chaucer*, 2nd ed., ed. Piero Boitani and Jill Mann (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 127-42; and Barry Windeatt, "Literary Structures in Chaucer" in *The Cambridge Companion to Chaucer*, 214-32.
58. Pessoa 1976, 87; Pessoa 1966, 107-8. Translation: Monteiro, "Drama in Character," 59.
59. Forward, intro., "Pauline: a fragment of a confession," 5.
60. *Ibid.*, "Paracelsus," 37.
61. Pessoa 1993b, "[A sensação como realidade essencial]," 141. Translation: Pessoa, *The Selected Prose*, trans. Zenith, 71.
62. Pessoa 2000a, "Tábua bibliográfica," 405. Translation: Monteiro, "Drama in Character," 64.
63. See the preface to the edition of 1888 of *Pauline*, there designated as "the first of my performances."

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