MORAL INSANITY IN ROBERT BROWNING'S "SOLILOQUY OF THE SPANISH CLOISTER"

Pelin KUT BELENLİ*

Abstract

Robert Browning's dramatic work "Soliloquy of the Spanish Cloister" (1842/1971) is an example of the psychological school of poetry in the context of Victorian poetry since the persona is portrayed as someone who feels an irrational and intense hatred towards a peer of his. The emotional state of the persona can be explained with moral insanity, a type of insanity defined by a Victorian psychologist, James Cowles Prichard. In this article, Prichard's definition of and explanations for moral insanity as a type of insanity are used as reference points in the literary analysis of Browning's "Soliloquy of the Spanish Cloister." The poet's use of the dramatic monologue, a major form in the poetry of psychology, is also scrutinised in this article regarding the advantages it offers for the effective psychological portraiture of the fictional character. As the literary analysis in this article shows, since the soliloquist is depicted as an individual with an emotional weakness, defect, or disorder, namely excessive hatred or rage, he resembles the patients of moral insanity. Furthermore, this study shows that there are no defects in the intellectual capacity of the speaker, which makes his case closer to the cases of moral insanity.

Key Words: *Robert Browning, "Soliloquy of the Spanish Cloister", Moral Insanity, Victorian Psychology, Dramatic Monologue.*

ROBERT BROWNING'İN "SOLILOQUY OF THE SPANISH CLOISTER" ADLI ESERİNDE AHLAKİ DELİLİK

Öz

Robert Browning'in "Soliloquy of the Spanish Cloister" (1842/1971) adlı dramatik eserinde şiir kişisi, bir dengine karşı yersiz ve yoğun bir nefret duygusu hisseden bir şahıs olarak tasvir edildiği için bu şiir Viktorya Dönemi şiiri bağlamında bir psikolojik şiir ekolü örneğidir. Şiir kişisinin duygu durumu, Viktorya Dönemi psikologlarından James Cowles Prichard tarafından bir delilik türü olarak tanımlanan ahlaki delilikle açıklanabilir. Bu makalede, Prichard'ın bir delilik türü olarak ahlaki delilik için yaptığı tanım ve açıklamalar, Browning'in "Soliloquy of the Spanish Cloister" eserinin edebi analizinde referans noktaları olarak kullanılmıştır. Şairin psikolojik şiirin temel formlarından biri olan dramatik monoloğu kullanması da bu makalede kurgusal karakterin etkili psikolojik portresi için bu tekniğin sunduğu avantajlar açısından incelenmektedir. Bu makaledeki edebi analizin gösterdiği üzere, şiirde kendi kendine konuşan kişi, aşırı nefret veya öfke olarak adlandırabileceğimiz bir duygusal zayıflık, kusur veya bozukluk yaşayan bir birey olarak tasvir edildiği için ahlaki delilik hastalarına benzemektedir. Ayrıca, bu çalışma, şiir kişisinin entelektüel kapasitesinde bir kusur olmadığını ve kişinin durumunun ahlaki delilik vakalarına daha yakın olduğunu göstermektedir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: *Robert Browning, "Soliloquy of the Spanish Cloister", Ahlaki Delilik, Viktorya Dönemi'nde Psikoloji, Dramatik Monolog.*

*Asst. Prof. Dr., Department of English Language and Literature, Faculty of Arts and Sciences, Kütahya Dumlupınar University, KÜTAHYA.
e-mail: pelin.belenli@dpu.edu.tr, (https://orcid.org/0000-0003-1046-9139)

1. INTRODUCTION

A considerable number of Robert Browning's literary works and his poetic career are marked by a deep interest in human psychology. As Browning frequently expressed in his prefaces, letters, and literary works through the words of his personae, his main interest as a poet "lay" in the portrayal of the "soul" of his fictional characters. To Browning's contemporaries, the technique of the dramatic monologue was the poetry of psychology (Faas, 1988: 20). Renowned for his distinct use of the technique of the dramatic monologue in his poetry, Robert Browning employs various nuances that can be created with this poetic technique for the purpose of depicting people with certain psychological disturbances or personality traits, such as people suffering from moral insanity. These nuances can be observed especially in language, including the punctuation, word choice, exclamations, voice, and speech. The portrayal of character and personality is achieved through these. The dramatic speakers of Browning's monologues are—figuratively speaking—on stage, displaying their thought processes and emotions through their speech—language—, hence revealing their personalities and mental or emotional states. The poet shapes the speech of the speakers in his dramatic monologues in such an intricate manner on the page that each monologue becomes a colourful portrait of an imaginary person with an emotional or mental disturbance. Browning designs the layout of the poems—how the lines, couplets, and stanzas appear on paper—in accordance with the purpose of unveiling the mind of the speaker, chooses the punctuation marks carefully so as to signify the changes in the emotions of the character, and adds exclamatory words to the monologues of his speakers to represent the specific emotion that affects the character. In an age when the mental science flourished and had close relations with literature, Robert Browning's dramatic monologues provided vast contributions to the new Victorian school of "psychological poetry"[1] (Faas, 1988: 31).

Moreover, the mental science of the nineteenth century and Victorian literature had mutual influence on one another. They both inspired and nourished each other. While some Victorian doctors or scientists studied certain literary works and fictional characters and used them as examples in their scientific works, Victorian authors, including poets, were inspired by the cases of people with psychological defects written down by the doctors of the time (Faas, 1988; Shuttleworth, 1996).

With the rise of the mental science, specific types of insanity were classified and defined by many prominent Victorian doctors or mental scientists. They analysed patients and their cases, made observations, and subsequently noted down their evaluations. Further research enabled them to name and define new types of mental diseases. One of these doctors, James Cowles Prichard, M.D, defined insanity and its types after years of observation and evaluation of patients and by referring to French and German veteran physicians and psychiatrists, such as Philippe Pinel, "the French Pioneer of psychiatry", Jean-Etienne Esquirol, "Pinel's student" (Wetzell, 2000: 19), and Heinroth.

Among many other psychologically-concerned dramatic monologues by the poet, Robert Browning's dramatic work "Soliloquy of the Spanish Cloister" (1842/1971) is an example of the psychological school of poetry (Forman, 1869; Faas, 1988: 3) in the context of Victorian poetry since the persona is portrayed as someone who feels an irrational and intense hatred towards a peer of his, which can be explained with his "moral insanity", a type of insanity defined by a Victorian psychologist, James Cowles Prichard.

Prichard defines types of insanity and exemplifies each type with several cases in *A Treatise on Insanity and Other Disorders Affecting the Mind* (1835/1837). Prichard's work was very influential on future mental studies because of his references to highly regarded European psychiatrists and because Prichard himself was an outstanding scientist. In this article, Prichard's definition of and explanations for "moral insanity" as a type of insanity will be used as reference points in the literary analysis of Browning's "Soliloquy of the Spanish Cloister."

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1 The term "Psychological School of Poetry" was used by Forman in 1869 to refer to monologues in which "some particular point of interest in the history of a human soul is taken up. The soul, whether historical or fictitious, generally speaks for itself all that is spoken—the artist invariably refraining from any appearance as a spokesman." Faas borrows this term in his *Retreat into the Mind: Victorian Poetry and the Rise of Psychiatry* and uses it to define the type of poetry in which "the prime mode is a new kind of monologue fusing lyrical with dramatic and epic elements" (1988: 3). He also maintains that this poetry is "under the leadership of Robert Browning" (1988: 3).

2. INSANITY AND MORAL INSANITY IN VICTORIAN PSYCHOLOGY

With the developing professionalisation of medical practice in the early nineteenth century, attitudes to mental disorder changed, and this gave way to new categorisations of insanity (Shuttleworth, 1996: 42, 49). James Cowles Prichard's category of moral insanity "was founded on an intransigent model of psychological continuity: decisive changes in behaviour patterns could offer evidence of lunacy, even though the behaviour itself was judged socially acceptable" (Shuttleworth, 1996: 49). To efficiently define insanity and its various types, Prichard stated the following in *A Treatise on Insanity and Other Disorders Affecting the Mind* (1835/1837):

> It has been said, with perfect accuracy, that insanity is a disorder of the system by which the sound and healthy exercise of the mental faculties is impeded or disturbed. The definitions adopted by several modern writers have nearly this meaning, though expressed in various terms. Yet this statement cannot be considered as a sufficient definition of insanity, for while it probably comprises every form of that disorder, it includes also many morbid affections. (13-14)

Suggesting the need to expand the definition of insanity so as to include many different morbid affections as subcategories of insanity, Prichard undertakes the professional mission to make his own categorisations and definitions of types of insanity. To enrich and illustrate his statements, he relates several cases as examples to each type. He also shares his close observations of his patients anonymously and refers to several other contemporary British and European doctors.

The "principle forms or varieties of insanity," as classified by Prichard (1835/1837) are "moral insanity," which is a kind of "emotional insanity," "monomania," that is "partial insanity," "mania," or "raving madness," and "incoherence," in other words "dementia" (16-17). Prichard classified these types of insanity in accordance with their emotional and intellectual nature. Among these types, only "moral insanity" was an emotional type, that is an insanity regarding the emotions, the rest were termed "intellectual insanity" (16), related to the intellect. As Prichard cited in his work, moral insanity was originally initiated by the French doctor Pinel as a type of insanity which he called *manie sans délire* (1835/1837: 57), that is "mania without delirium," a concept which "can be looked upon as the beginning of the scientific study of personality disorders" (Sass and Felthous: 2007: 10). Moreover, today it is generally believed that Prichard's "moral insanity" (1835) was the forerunner of the contemporary concept of psychopathic (sociopathic) personality (Whitlock, 1982: 57).

Prichard further defines the concept of "moral insanity" as a type of "madness consisting in a morbid perversion of the natural feelings, affections, inclinations, temper, habits, moral dispositions, and natural impulses, without any remarkable disorder or defect of the intellect or knowing and reasoning faculties, and particularly without any insane illusion or hallucination" (1835/1837: 16), and there are numerous varieties moral insanity (24). It is observed in disorders of "passion, feeling, or affection" or "moral disposition" (Prichard, 1835/1837: 18). Prichard states that this type of madness has two most frequent forms: the first form is related to "morbid violence of passions and emotions", and the second one is related to "depression" or "simple melancholy" (18-19). In the former one, the cases are characterised by "preternatural excitement of the temper and spirits" (24), and "[i]ndividuals thus affected are always in high spirits, active and boisterous, full of projects and enterprises," and "the disordered condition of the mind displays itself in want of self-government, in continual excitement, an unusual expression of strong feelings, in thoughtless and extravagant conduct" (25). However, the second form is characterised by "dejection without illusion of the understanding" (19).

In most cases of moral insanity, the individual "follows the bent of his inclinations; he is continually engaging in new pursuits, and soon relinquishing them without any other inducement than mere caprice and fickleness" (Prichard, 1835/1837: 21). Eventually, the full corruption of his affections, the antipathy, and maybe even enmity, externalised towards his close companions, arouse greater alarm (21). Such individuals chase their "wild projects and speculations" and always have a plausible reason to put forward for their behaviour (21). Furthermore, people who suffer from this disorder are extremely good at supporting an argument upon a matter within their sphere of knowledge, and they are renowned for the vast ingenuity they show in stating reasons for the bizarreness of their conduct (21). Therefore, their manipulative skills are evident. However, since they "think and act under the influence of strongly influenced feelings", their liability to error both in "judgement and conduct"

are apparent (21). Still, it should be noted that Prichard does not limit his definition of moral insanity with "preternatural excitement of the temper and spirits" (24). He emphasises that there are many other "disordered states of the mind" which can be evaluated under the general term moral insanity (24). Yet, they are not going to be included here since they will be irrelevant in the analysis of Browning's poem.

Moral insanity was regarded as a type of "partial insanity" both in the popular and scientific literature of the time (Shuttleworth, 1996: 51). Patients of moral insanity were believed by Prichard and the other doctors he followed not to have any disfunctions or malfunctions in the intellect. Their insanity rather resided in their emotions, inclinations, and temper. Some of Browning's characters in *Dramatic Lyrics* (1842) and *Dramatic Romances and Lyrics* (1845), such as the murderous and pitiless female speaker of "The Laboratory," Porphyria's silent, yet insidious lover, the arrogant and punishing duke in "My Last Duchess," and the furious and hateful monk in "Soliloquy of the Spanish Cloister" all show common characteristics with patients of the first type of moral insanity defined by Prichard. The personality traits and attitudes of the dramatic speaker of the "Soliloquy of the Spanish Cloister" can be observed and understood in the light of the explanations for moral insanity by Prichard. In the poem, the speaker's morbid hatred and rage are further embellished with his temper, which make his case similar to the first form of moral insanity, the one that is related to excitement and violence caused by a certain morbid emotion. The above-given definitions and explanations by Prichard are used in the literary analysis of Browning's "Soliloquy of the Spanish Cloister" in this article.

3. ROBERT BROWNING, PSYCHOLOGY, AND THE TECHNIQUE OF THE DRAMATIC MONOLOGUE

Although Browning does not have an explicit statement about his poetry's "psychological" qualities, most of its content, themes, and subject matter—such as human emotions, psychological states, and mental disturbances—are related to the topics covered by psychology as a discipline. Many critics and Browning scholars categorise him as a "psychological poet" or a "great psychologist," either by referring to specific components and elements in his poetry which are somehow related to the human psyche or by simply stating that his work is "psychological". To illustrate, as Jeffrey argues, for his artistic achievement in "true inner realism", Browning deserves the title of a great "psychologist of literature" (1956: 348). A Browning scholar, Stefan Hawlin, refers to the psychological subjects frequently used in Browning's poetry drawing attention to the fact that the poet grew up in the aftermath of Romanticism and developed a poetry rather novel in form and style, on subjects including murder, hatred, decadence, heroism, and romance (2002: 1). Browning's poems are also about basic human feelings, such as "disappointments, misunderstandings, jealousies, and desertions" (Hawlin, 2002: 29). These are all subject matter regarding human instincts and emotions which were and are also frequently handled subjects of Victorian mental science (and of today's psychology).

Furthermore, Browning had a collection of books on various subjects, but he was especially interested in books on art, history, and murder cases (Neville-Sington, 2004: 58). The poet's interest in murder tales, cases of abnormal psychology, and reprehensible people or behaviour is evident in their recurrent use, especially in his dramatic works, which further illustrates his inclusion of psychological matters into his poetry. In this regard, "Browning's poetics of the dramatic monologue even rests on the impossibility of truthfulness and his best monologues are probably those whose speakers are 'reprehensible'" (Perquin, 2001: 9). The poet's library has been his primary source of inspiration for the colourful gallery of characters in his dramatic monologues. Artists, historical figures, and murderers in the books in his library almost come to life in his dramatic monologues as uneasy artists, egotistical historical figures, and even-tempered or self-righteous murderers in the form of dramatic speakers. "Bishop Blougram's Apology," a poem published in *Men and Women* (1855/1981a), summarises the poetics of Browning's dramatic monologues with these lines: "Our interest's on the dangerous edge of things. / The honest thief, the tender murderer, / The superstitious atheist, demirep / That loves and saves her soul in new French books" (Browning, 1855/1981a: ll. 395-398)[2]. Accordingly, Browning achieved a significant place in Victorian poetry because of his mastery in "psychological portraiture" (Luebering, 2010: 168).

A significant point of interest in understanding the connections of Browning's poetry with psychology is his frequent use of the technique of the dramatic monologue. The question "Why did the poet favour this poetic

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2 In this study, the poems have been quoted with line numbers instead of page numbers. Accordingly, "I" footnote references indicate "line", and "ll" stands for "lines."

technique?" is at least partially answered with the commonly accepted definitions of this literary term. As defined in the *Oxford Dictionary of Literary Terms* (1990/2015), the term "dramatic monologue"[3] is:

> [a] kind of poem in which a single fictional or historical character other than the poet speaks to a silent 'audience' of one or more persons. Such poems reveal not the poet's thoughts but the mind of the impersonated character, whose personality is revealed unwittingly; this distinguishes a dramatic monologue from a lyric, while the implied presence of an auditor distinguishes it from a soliloquy. (Baldick: 1990/2015: 106)

The emphasis in this definition should be put on the words "mind" and "personality" if one is to associate this term with psychology. It is evident that, in a dramatic monologue, the poet can create a character whose mind and personality he can delve into as fits the purpose of the poem. Moreover, with the technique of the dramatic monologue, it is possible for the poet to "invent [a] dramatic situation" (Neville-Sington, 2004: 18) and to choose a critical moment in a specific character's life in which this person, as a dramatic speaker, reveals "his character, the whole course of his existence, and sometimes the spirit of an entire period in the world's history" (Phelps, 1915: 79) by speaking individually with the permission of the poet.

Since—as the title of "Soliloquy of the Spanish Cloister" suggests—the poem chosen for analysis in this article is a "soliloquy," the definition of the term "soliloquy" and its relation to the dramatic monologue should also be given here. In the *Oxford Dictionary of Literary Terms*, the term "soliloquy" is defined as:

> [a] dramatic speech uttered by one character speaking aloud while alone on the stage (or while under the impression of being alone). The soliloquist thus reveals his or her inner thoughts and feelings to the audience, either in supposed self-communion or in a consciously direct address. Soliloquies often appear in plays from the age of Shakespeare, notably in his *Hamlet* and *Macbeth*. A poem supposedly uttered by a solitary speaker, like Robert Browning's 'Soliloquy of the Spanish Cloister' (1842), may also be called a soliloquy. Soliloquy is a form of monologue, but a monologue is not a soliloquy if (as in the dramatic monologue) the speaker is not alone. (Baldick, 1990/2015: 336)

As understood from the above-cited definitions of the dramatic monologue and soliloquy, a poem written in the form of a soliloquy can also be referred to as a dramatic monologue. Therefore, "Soliloquy of the Spanish Cloister" is handled both as a soliloquy and as a dramatic monologue in this article.

Language is the primary medium through which the dramatic speaker's personality traits are unveiled in Browning's dramatic monologues. Hassett associates Browning's love of "highly textured utterance" with "his belief that man's use of language has much to do with the conditions of his soul" (1982: 24). In Browning's dramatic monologues, the dramatic occasion is narrated merely from the subjective perspective of the monologist, and therefore, it is an unreliable account of the situation or event told in the poem. However, by this means, the "imaginary speaker" who directs his/her speech to an "imaginary audience" unintentionally reveals his/her psychological state to this "silent interlocutor" (Cuddon, 1977/1999: 237-239). Through the medium of the dramatic monologue, Browning occasionally makes a murderer narrate his "chilling tale of murder" (Neville-Sington, 2004: 18), as in the case of "Porphyria's Lover", or a jealous and angry woman plan the death of the man she loves and hates by ordering a particular poison from a pharmacist, as in the case of "The Laboratory", or makes a hater tell about his abhorrence of a specific person in detail, as in the case of "Soliloquy of the Spanish Cloister". While permitting these speakers to tell these dark and eccentric stories which disclose their temperament and character, the poet also implies and points out the speakers' emotional weaknesses, deficiencies, perversions, or disorders.

Moreover, Browning's love of human voices is evident in his use of "syntax, pace, juncture, and sound to capture the effusiveness of unguarded utterance or the restraint of manipulated and manipulating speech" (Hassett, 1982: 24). Indeed, Browning's monologists' distinctive use of language-especially the choice of words, intonation, style of expression, use of syntax, punctuation, exclamatory words, broken and unfinished sentences

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3 For a more comprehensive and detailed definition of the term, see Cuddon, J. A. (1999). *The Penguin Dictionary of Literary Terms & Literary Theory*, 4th ed., (Revised by C. E. Preston), Penguin, London. (Original work published 1977)

or words-uncovers the speaker's emotions, sensations, and even abnormal thoughts and judgements. For instance, the excitement felt by the speaker is reflected in the pace of the poem, while the anger is emphasised by the use of exclamatory words and punctuation marks, which is most apparent in "Soliloquy of the Spanish Cloister" (1842). Thus, the problematic, deficient, or perverted sides of the speaker's emotional state are unveiled through an expressive speech in many of Browning's dramatic monologues.

Since the technique of the dramatic monologue is an appropriate form of writing for the representation of inner action in poetry, Browning used it as his medium of expression by employing its features which make it the best possible option among alternatives to "paint the soul" (Browning, 1855/1981b: l. 193). It is also necessary to emphasise that it is essential how Browning employed the characteristics of the technique of the dramatic monologue in the portrayal of the mind and personality of his fictional characters. Following the early part of his poetic career, which is marked by poetry based on the depiction of solipsistic and contemplative characters, Browning prefers representing figures with dangerous and harmful potentials due to emotional defects or disorders. Accordingly, in many of the shorter dramatic works that he published, especially in *Dramatic Lyrics* (1942/1971), Browning concentrates on one specific aspect of the speaker's psychological state and temperament, portrays the persona preferably at a certain moment in their life, and represents one particular dramatic situation in which they find themselves. Browning's dramatic speakers usually wish to persuade either themselves or a listener—who is silent and whose presence is merely implied in their speech—that their manner, deed, action is/ was rightful. Manipulation is an evident ability of many of his personae which they employ in order to persuade their silent listener or implied audience. Browning draws psychological portraits of people with "moral insanity" in many of his shorter dramatic monologues, such as "Porphyria's Lover", "My Last Duchess", "The Laboratory", and "Soliloquy of the Spanish Cloister", making a further step in his development as a poet of the psychological school of poetry, after the long, confessional works of his early poetry, such as *Pauline* (1833), *Paracelsus* (1835), and *Sordello* (1840). Intense jealousy, the feelings of inferiority or superiority in extreme states, or the feelings of hatred and abhorrence, all of which are highly likely to result in aggressive, homicidal, violent, and criminal tendencies or behaviour, are the predominant disorders, defects, or perversions of both Browning's monologists and the sufferers of moral insanity. Browning's evident interest in the mysterious, dark, and evil qualities of the abstract realm of the human personality is reflected in two major different ways in his dramatic monologues. In the first one, the monologists are made to speak of their disturbed emotional states, mental states, or deeds by the poet. In the second one, their disturbed emotional states, mental states, or reactions/behaviours are unravelled through the monologists' silence, pauses, exclamations, and the nuances in their diction telling about the monologists' body language, reactions, intentions, and thought processes. Furthermore, imitation of natural speech is common in most dramatic monologues (Cuddon, 1977/1999: 237). In "Soliloquy of the Spanish Cloister", Browning employs this natural speech to reveal the speaker's emotional state, marked by his excessive hatred for Brother Lawrence.

As Neville-Sington also underlines, Browning "spoke through his characters—many of them obscure figures from the past—but always with sharp psychological insight" (Neville-Sington, 2004: 18). Therefore, these dramatic monologues also demonstrate the poet's interest in depicting humankind's inner world. The unravelling of the psychological state of a persona is the central characteristic of Browning's monologues that differentiates them from the dramatic monologues written by others. In an article entitled "Authority and the Rebellious Heart," the emotional, sensational, and impulsive characteristics of Browning's monologists are highlighted to a certain extent:

> They possess a phenomenal capacity for passionate emotion, combined with a childlike [92/93] reliance on instinct. These qualities put them in conflict with conventionalised modes of social conduct. Whether it be Fra Lippo, or Rabbi Ben Ezra, or David in 'Saul,' or the Grammarian, or Childe Roland, Browning's heroes are always the children of their intuitions. (Johnson, 1952/2000: para. 4)

Indeed, in Browning's dramatic monologues, what is in the foreground is rather the dramatic speakers' perception of the world and their own self, and their sensations and change, both of which come from the way they perceive a particular event, person, or object. Thus, their misplaced and excessive reliance on passions, emotions, and instincts while making their decisions; adopting deviant, aggressive, or violent behaviours; and

giving extreme reactions to people, situations, or events make their state fall under the category of a specific type of insanity as accepted or defined by the Victorian medical doctors: "moral insanity."

Due to the variety in technique in Browning's dramatic monologues, different scholars have made several definitions of this technique as a literary term, and all have taken into consideration the works written by Browning as examples of the dramatic monologue. Honan provides a comprehensive list of these scholars, ranging from Bliss Perry to Edward Dowden, from Arthur Symons to Claud Howard, who used these brief definitions for the term dramatic monologue: "soliloquy," "soliloquys of the spirit," "pseudodialogs," "a dialogue of which we hear only the chief speaker's part," "a dramatic scene in the history of a soul," "monodrama," "a drama of the interior," "subjective drama," and "introspective and retrospective drama" (Qtd. in Honan, 1961: 109-110). All these terms have been used interchangeably to define Browning's dramatic monologues. They are important for this study in that they affirm the variety of technique in the poet's monologues and point to the psychological qualities of this poetic technique.

4. ABOUT "SOLILOQUY OF THE SPANISH CLOISTER"

First published in *Dramatic Lyrics* (1842), "Soliloquy of the Spanish Cloister" is among Browning's dramatic monologues and an actual example of a soliloquy in verse. Contrary to many Browning monologues, in this work there is not a real historical specificity, there are no clues as to when the speaker might have lived, and the Spanish cloister is an anonymous monastery (Sharma, 2010: 51). The monologist—not based on a real-life figure—is an imaginary Spanish monk who pours out his deep hatred for and abhorrence of a fellow monk, Brother Lawrence. The feelings of hatred and abhorrence are the traits that mark the monologist's psychological state, and Browning highlights them in this monologue.

The dramatic speaker and Brother Lawrence live in a monastery or convent in Spain and have a shared social space, together with other fellow monks in the convent. As it can be deduced from his statements and exclamations in the poem, it is the monologist who is discontent with this shared area due to his antisocial and "sociopathic" (Whitlock, 1982: 57) feelings towards Brother Lawrence, to express in contemporary psychological discourse. There is no hint in the poem regarding the presence of an interlocutor that is meant to listen to the monologue. In other words, the speaker's utterances show that he is merely talking to himself, and the absence of an auditor is why this poem was entitled as a soliloquy by its poet. Although the monologist curses and directs his insulting words towards Brother Lawrence as in: "Hell dry you up with its flames!" (Browning, 1842/1971: l. 8), it is evident in the following utterances of the monologist that Brother Lawrence does not hear him speak. However, occasionally, there are slight nuances in his speech that sound like direct addresses to a listener. Firstly, throughout the poem, the speaker endeavours to discredit Brother Lawrence while he also asserts that he is doing what is right, unlike Brother Lawrence. This attempt to carry on a hypothetical conversation through reasoning and manipulation creates the feeling that there might be an implied listener in the poem, although apparently, the monk is merely talking to himself. Secondly, the speaker's narration of his observations and experiences also makes it sound as if there is a listener in the poem. In this regard, the poem carries the characteristics of a dramatic monologue.

For Robert Browning, all life was a conflict between dichotomies, such as good and evil, instinct and intellect, and the masculine and the feminine, and the poet was to try and resolve the artistic dilemma caused by the awareness of these binaries: moral and aesthetic (Guimarães, 2010: 3). Indeed, his dramatic monologues present Browning's gallery of portraits, which show that moral, emotional, or mental deficiencies or weaknesses may be experienced by any person, regardless of their gender or social status. This idea goes in accordance with the Victorian awareness that insanity may lurk any time, in any bosom (Shuttleworth, 1996: 15). From this perspective, it is interesting that Browning draws a character from the clergy in "Soliloquy of the Spanish Cloister" and depicts him with an emotional disorder.

5. THE ANALYSIS OF "SOLILOQUY OF THE SPANISH CLOISTER"

One substantial similarity between the portrayal of Browning's monologist in "Soliloquy of the Spanish Cloister" and the definition of moral insanity made by Prichard is the well-functioning of the intellectual capacity

of the monologist in contrast to the malfunctioning of his emotional capacity. Since there is no problem with the intellect or knowing and reasoning faculties of the monologist—as in the cases of the patients of moral insanity—, he does not utter nonsensical words or sentences. On the contrary, he can make up full and logical sentences and develop and maintain a perfectly sensible and meaningful speech or monologue. For instance, when he spots Brother Lawrence in the monastery, he reacts by himself as follows: "G-r-r—there go, my heart's abhorrence! / Water your damned flower-pots, do! / If hate killed men, Brother Lawrence, / God's blood, would not mine kill you!" (Browning, 1842/1971: ll. 1-4). This diction is evidently marked by vocatives, exclamations, rhetorical questions, and his speech can be defined as natural. However, there is no hint which suggests that these words put together in this order make no sense. On the contrary, the diction is so passionate that it fully conveys the feeling of the monologist. Another feature which shows that there is no defect in his intellect is that he is even sarcastic in his style. Sarcasm is a sign of good intelligent capacity (Huang, Gino, and Galinsky, 2015). The speaker's tone is sarcastic almost throughout the poem. Furthermore, he has comprehensive skills and sense to understand, figure out, predict, calculate, or even speculate on the thoughts and feelings of other people. To illustrate, while he watches Brother Lawrence (Browning, 1842/1971: 17-24), the speaker sees that "[Brother Lawrence's] lily snaps" (l. 24), and the speaker enjoys this with the exclamation "He-he!" (l. 24) because he perceives or assumes that Lawrence is upset. He inclines to act or react to other people according to his questionable assumptions about what or how they think or feel. Besides, he has somewhat effective persuasive and rhetorical skills with which he inclines to manipulate people's judgement and sympathy: He watches Brother Lawrence's table manners at the meal and makes a comparison of this monk and himself: "When he finishes refection / Knife and fork he never lays / Cross-wise, to my recollection, / As I do, in Jesu's praise" (ll. 33-36). These lines show the speaker's self-fashioning (in Stephen Greenblatt's term) as he displays a conscious effort to show himself as a man with proper table manners and as a respectful religious man who pays his tribute to Jesus at the meal, while degrading Brother Lawrence. With a canny and quick-witted character, this monologist—or patients of moral insanity—diverges from the sufferers of the other types of insanity defined by Prichard, such as raving madness and dementia.

The sufferers of moral insanity show "bouts of extreme violence but with no signs of psychosis" (Whitlock, 1982: 57). Accordingly, one marked similarity between Browning's monologist and the patients of moral insanity is that both have disorders or defects in their emotions, affections, tempers, impulses, passions, habits, or inclinations. Moreover, these complications mostly make the subject highly prone to violence. In other words, although the sufferer of moral insanity has attacks of excessive savagery or brutality, s/he does not fall into a state of "raving madness", which means full mania, "which affects all the intellectual faculties" since in this type of insanity the mind is in a perpetual state of "confusion and disturbance" (Prichard, 1835/1837: 61). Hatred, anger, aggression, obsession, inferiority complex, ego complex, and "morbid jealousy" (a term coined by the nineteenth-century French and German psychiatrists), known as "delusional jealousy" or "Othello syndrome" in modern psychology (Kingham and Gordon, 2004: 207), are among the emotional problems that are commonly encountered in the cases of Browning's dramatic speakers. Signs for such psychological problems in the mood of the monologists are frequently evident in Browning's dramatic monologues. Accordingly, the monologist of "Soliloquy of the Spanish Cloister" is depicted with a disturbed emotional state that demonstrates one specific emotional reaction against a particular circumstance. The focus in this dramatic monologue is on the fact that the speaker is under the influence and control of a particular feeling or impulse, namely hatred, which is possibly accompanied by the feelings of jealousy and anger; and that emotional state is either the reason for or the result of the circumstances in which the speaker is. The dominant feeling or the impulse that shapes the speaker's mood is about a person and the social relation/interaction with that person, namely Brother Lawrence. Similar to painting, in which the artist captures a moment, in these dramatic monologues, what is being painted with words is a particular occasion or a moment that a character goes through. With this insight, Browning concentrates on a single issue concerning a peculiar character in this work.

As a clergy member, the monologist in the poem—who is a monk—is ironically an embodiment of dishonesty, degeneration, hypocrisy, and sinfulness. As Patterson argues, "the narrator's rage is founded purely on a carnal emotion such as hatred" (2000). The monk's speech strikingly discloses his violent and irrational hatred for an adversary, who actually is a man innocently minding his daily routine in the cloister. Moreover, it is evident in

some parts of his speech that it is the monologist who is "immoral," as he owns a "French novel" (Browning, 1842/1971: ll. 57-64), symbolic of his interest in obscenity and immorality, and, as he mentions pledging his soul to Satan merely to make sure that Brother Lawrence goes to hell when he dies (ll. 65-72). As Orr further explains, "[t]he speaker has no ground of complaint against Brother Lawrence, except that his life is innocent: that he is orderly and clean, that he loves his garden, is free from debasing superstitions, and keeps his passions, if he has any, in check" (1892: 120). However, the monk thinks that Brother Lawrence is just a spiteful person who could die of his envy. Projecting his own jealousy onto Brother Lawrence, the monk reflects his disturbed state of mind as he fancies trapping him somewhere (Orr, 1892: 120).

The speaker's intense abhorrence of Brother Lawrence causes him to lose his temper and curse, swear, insult, and even "damn" (Browning, 1842/1971: l.2; l.51) Brother Lawrence in several instances throughout his speech. He accuses Brother Lawrence of "gluttony and lechery," but his examples show that it is actually himself who is "guilty of these sins" (Sharma, 2010: 53). The monk morbidly detests Brother Lawrence, who merely waters his pots and innocently drinks his orange juice, as the speaker recounts his tale of hatred, anger, and rage by trying to justify his feelings in a manipulative manner. This pure hatred results from the disturbance of the monk, who is filled with feelings of jealousy and anger. His aggression seems like a problem of anger management and self-control. It is like a disorder in his temper, just as stated by Prichard in his definitions of moral insanity. The discrepancy between his identity as a clergyman and his manners draws a fascinating psychodramatic portrait. Thus, Browning's speaker displays symptoms of moral insanity that is driven by a morbid perversion of his feelings.

As Lane emphasises, "Browning amplifies (as would Freud) that we hate more easily than we love, and that extreme experiences corrode the social tie by destroying its central tenets" (Lane, 2004: 137). The poem creates a dramatic atmosphere with intricate details that enrich the portrayal of the speaker's mental reality. The noticeable outpour of the monologist lasts until the end of the poem, where he eventually thinks of pledging his soul to Satan, quite ironically for a clergy member. Moreover, the language of rage is used in this poem (Patterson, 2000). When skillfully employed, the language of rage can be an accurate sign of profound emotion; and in this regard, rage signifies both violent anger and extreme intensity. Therefore, "many different emotions can reveal themselves in the guise of rage" (Patterson, 2000). Patterson (2000) further clarifies what he means by the language of rage with references to the use of punctuation in the poem, such as the use of the exclamation mark and question mark. Moreover, in his speech, the monk uses nonverbal sounds, such as "Gr-r-r" (Browning, 1842/1971: ll. 1, 72), "Oh" (ll. 6, 41), "He-he!" (l. 24), "Whew!" (l. 17) and colloquial expressions such as "you swine!" (l. 72) and "Swine's Snout" (l. 16). These exclamatory expressions and syllables reflect the speaker's excited feelings. There is no crucial turning point in the attitude of the monologist. In other words, there is consistency in the speaker's dominant emotion throughout the poem. However, this consistency does not mean that his feelings towards Brother Lawrence are non-violent and proper, considering the norms of society. Although the speaker does not report any cases of murder that he has committed, his utterances disclose that he imagines his personified "hate" kill Brother Lawrence. The speaker is plotting mischief. Prichard explains that in certain instances of this type of insanity, "[t]he individual, as if actually possessed by the demon of evil, is continually indulging enmity and plotting mischief, and even murder, against some unfortunate object of his malice" (Prichard, 1835/1837: 27). In the poem, the unfortunate object of the speaker's malice is Brother Lawrence, and the speaker's enmity for the object forces him to plot against the object, fantasise about the object's death, or strongly wish for his death: "If hate killed men, Brother Lawrence, / God's blood, would not mine kill you!" (Browning, 1842/1971: ll. 3-4). The speaker is even plotting Brother Lawrence's damnation—with a sinister tone, as if "possessed by the demon of evil" in Prichard's terms—because he wants to make sure that he goes to hell when he dies:

There's a great text in Galatians,

Once you trip on it, entails

Twenty-nine district damnations,

One sure, if another fails;

If I trip him just a-dying,

Sure of heaven as sure can be,

Spin him round and send him flying

Off to hell, a Manichee? (ll. 49-56)

This dramatic occasion illustrates the influence of the excited feelings of the monk on his conduct. They perplex the monologist's knowing and reasoning faculties which thus become defective. This depiction of the dramatic speaker in the poem echoes Prichard's comments on the liability of the morally insane patients to error in conduct (1835/1837: 21). The monk, similarly, acts under the command of his emotional faculties that turn him into a corrupt clergy member. His intense excitement over the possibility of succeeding in damning Brother Lawrence is evident in the above-cited stanza. His excessive hatred and inappropriate language prove unbecoming behaviour for a Christian and a supposedly religious man. Moreover, the discrepancy between his position as a man of religion and his interest in damnation is also apparent.

Brother Lawrence's presence within the same space with the monk and his mere sight are unbearable for the speaker due to the strong detestation he feels. Therefore, he continues to despise, degrade, and make fun of Lawrence by using a sarcastic tone:

At the meal we sit together:

Salve tibi! I must hear

Wise talk of the kind of weather,

Sort of season, time of year:

Not a plenteous cork-crop: scarcely

Dare we hope oak-galls, I doubt:

What's the Latin name for "parsley"?

What's the Greek name for Swine's Snout? (emphasis original) (Browning, 1842/1971: ll. 9-16)

The speaker's overflowing feeling of abhorrence while listening to the monk talking about the weather, season, crops, and Latin at the meal is salient in the above-cited lines. His emotion takes control of him so much that he mockingly imitates Brother Lawrence's question: "*What's the Latin name for 'parsley'?*" The italics, the tone, and the diction convey that the monologist hardly contains himself to tell Brother Lawrence what he feels and thinks, yet he is conscious that he must contain himself in public. As a reply to Lawrence's question, he wants to ask him the Greek name for "Swine's Snout" (l. 16) sarcastically, an insulting idiom directed at Lawrence. However, as the poem's title clarifies, the monologist's angry and sarcastic question, "What's the Greek name for Swine's Snout?" (l. 16) is just a part of his soliloquy, and Brother Lawrence does not hear it. In this poem, Browning employs italics to demonstrate every word which the speaker mocks, "mock" meaning "to imitate derisively" (Gainer, 1963: 158). This also qualifies the monk's attitude as passive aggression, which also draws attention to his lack of courage, and therefore, his hypocrisy. He is not honest with Brother Lawrence, and he is not bold enough to talk to him directly about his feelings. Through the monk's self-revealing outpour of emotions in the above-cited lines, Browning also reveals some differences between the characters of the two men: while Lawrence is eagerly involved in the conversation at the table as a sociable person, the speaker is totally indulged in listening and making fun of Lawrence in his mind or by himself. Furthermore, he cannot help but obsessively observe every move the monk makes in a manner to detect his so-called faults:

When he finishes refection,

Knife and fork he never lays

Cross-wise, to my recollection,

As do I, in Jesu's praise.

I the Trinity illustrate,

Drinking watered orange-pulp-

In three sips the Arian frustrate;

While he drains his at one gulp. (Browning, 1842/1971: ll. 33-40)

The speaker's intention of portraying Lawrence as a person without proper manners is apparent in his depictions of his observations at the meal. He criticises and condemns Lawrence's table manners to degrade him and feel that he himself is a better person. Meanwhile, to sound more realistic and honest, he adds that his memory might be failing him, that he cannot recollect his thoughts whether Lawrence lays the knife and fork crosswise in the name of Christ, forming the sign of a cross, symbolic of the Christian faith. Although he is not sure about it, he still criticises Lawrence, which suggests that he tries to find excuses to justify his hatred for him. Moreover, the speaker highlights that he does lay his knife and fork crosswise, with a boastful tone, as if it proves his perfection in his religious faith and deeds. He also underlines that he drinks his orange juice in three sips, signifying or commemorating the Holy Trinity of the Christian faith, again symbolic of his purported responsibility towards his religion. Indeed, he mentions that Brother Lawrence drinks his juice in one gulp as if it is an unacceptable, disrespectful deed. It is evident in this stanza of the poem that the monologist compares and contrasts himself with Brother Lawrence in terms of social manners, religious faith, and knowledge.

However, the monologue also unveils the speaker's own moral hypocrisy. His religious faith and understanding of religious ethics would have helped him tolerate a fellow's alleged mistakes and faults if he were a true Christian. Biblical tolerance, which is regarded as a valuable virtue in Christianity and which underlines "gentleness" and "respect" towards others, is not a virtue that the monologist has. Moreover, the speaker's inappropriate character for a clergyman is manifest in his wish to trap Brother Lawrence into damnation (Browning, 1842/1971: ll. 49-56), in his interest in reading French novels (l. 57), in his thought of selling his soul to Satan (ll. 65-66), and in the violent hatred that is unravelled in his angry speech. His use of slang can be exemplified with line 72, in which he calls Brother Lawrence a "swine." His foul language shows that the monk is not a polite man. The discrepancy between his conduct and his position as a man of religion results from his emotional disorders.

The monologist of the poem, thus, prefers denigrating Brother Lawrence to justify his rage against him. Moreover, the motive behind his wish to fashion an adversary is to set a binary, that is, to invent someone worse than himself so that he will look better. As a person who wishes to gain dignity in public, he invents a so-called immoral person with a lack of manners as his adversary. Perhaps, his intention is self-fashioning through othering. Although he presents himself as a righteous person and condemns Brother Lawrence for immorality, it can be easily recognised that the faults he accredits to Lawrence are actually his own (Sharma, 2010: 51). The monk can use his intellectual faculties properly, thus proving a manipulative master with fine rhetorical skills. These characteristics mirror Prichard's ideas on the morally insane people's capability of "accounting for and justifying the state of moral feeling under which they appear to exist" (1835/1837: 21). Although his intellect is flawed due to his morbid feelings, it can demonstrate his mental agility through the effective use of language and fine self-representation.

5. CONCLUSION

Browning's shorter dramatic monologues—following his long, introspective early poems—mostly form portraits of fictional individuals who show common characteristics with patients of moral insanity. The dramatic speakers of these monologues are characterised mainly by few or a single emotional defect, weakness, or disorder. The dramatic speaker's emotional peculiarity in such monologues is framed through the dramatic concern of the poet, showing how these characters experience it. Accordingly, the discussion and literary analysis in this article have illustrated that Browning aptly depicts the speakers' emotional, sensational, and affective disorders through their unintentionally self-revealing speech. This article has also demonstrated that, to achieve this, Browning employs the technique of the dramatic monologue as the most appropriate poetic technique to unveil the weaknesses, defects, or disorders in these characters' emotional faculties. This technique helps the poet depict the monologist's reaction, acts, behaviours, or feelings concerning a particular dramatic occasion or

a dramatic moment. This occasion is often a critical one that affects the speaker emotionally. In many of such monologues by Browning, the speaker is depicted as experiencing excessive self-esteem, pride, ego, jealousy, hatred, anger, obsession, perceptual possessiveness, or other similar intense emotions.

To conclude, as the literary analysis in this article has shown since the soliloquist of "Soliloquy of the Spanish Cloister" is depicted as an individual with an emotional disorder, namely excessive hatred or rage, he resembles the patients of moral insanity. The language used by the dramatic speaker shows that he is under the control of this morbid emotion. Evidently, this emotion is triggered by the common social space that the speaker shares with his adversary. His choice of words and use of exclamations, vocatives, slang words, or insults illustrate that this intense emotion heavily affects his decisions, behaviour, and utterances. However, while delving into his mind, the speaker endeavours to achieve self-justification, self-persuasion, and a good self-representation. That is, he makes certain utterances purposefully to either justify himself or degrade his adversary. In that sense, as this study has revealed, as opposed to his emotional defects, he demonstrates mental agility through effective use of language and rhetorical skills, similar to the cases of the patients of moral insanity. The speaker does not use nonsensical or irrational language. He can form full, sensible, logical sentences that eliminate the possibility of a defect in his intellectual capacity, which makes his case closer to the cases of moral insanity.

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