

Variation and game rules in *The Steps to Parnassus**

João Dionísio

ORCID: 0000-0002-5211-0290

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The interpretation of literary manuscripts, especially rough drafts, benefits from an approach that avoids both the pitfalls of unrepresentative atomistic microanalysis, as well as the perils of too general views solely based on acknowledging the existence of writing operations (namely, accretions, deletions and reorderings). To profile the middle road between these two approaches it is not without interest to briefly recall different takes on the notion of connected variant («variante liée»). The notion was first put forth by Almuth Grésillon as any variant that emerges due to the pression of textual or contextual data, the consequence of this pressure being the need to substitute Y for X¹. More recently, Grésillon and Jean-Louis Lebrave have adopted a more restrictive approach to the scope of connected variants, having established that they are the result of language constraints (namely, morphological, lexical, syntactical) or the grammatically mandatory outcome of a first variant. In turn, unconnected variants would be classified as free variants². This view was included in Grésillon's major work

¹ Almuth Grésillon, 'Les variantes de manuscrits: critères et degrés de pertinence', in *La publication de manuscrits inédits*, ed. Louis Hay and Winfried Woesler (Berne: P. Lang, 1979).

² Almuth Grésillon and Jean-Louis Lebrave, *Tendances actuelles de la linguistique française: numéro spécial de la revue Le français moderne publié à l'occasion de son 75e anniversaire*. (Paris: Conseil international de la langue française, 2008).

*Éléments de critique génétique*³, in which the connected variant is defined as a change that obeys to language constraints or that incorporates the linguistic effects of a free variant over the remainder of the sentence. A free variant is there said to be any instance of rewriting or change, except what is determined by grammatical, syntactical or orthographical changes. As stated by Daniel Ferrer, whereas this has a heuristic value in the field of linguistics, it is seemingly less productive in a broader theoretical framework. Therefore, Ferrer reactivated the view also held by Grésillon in 1979 when she claimed that, strictly speaking, there are no free variants. Additionally, while calling for a broadening of the scope of connection, inspired by Wittgenstein's games theory⁴, Ferrer suggested a closer look on the structure of the draft in order to see how the connections within the textual genesis are dynamic, causing new changes and evolving with every change⁵. It goes without saying that when Grésillon, Lebrave and Ferrer reflect upon concepts such as those of connected variants, they are thinking of variation *in presentia*, i.e., the situation in which two or more documented textual alternatives are considered by the writer in the genesis of a given work. Apart from this situation, the literary game can also be profiled through the analysis of variation *in absentia*, that is, the situation in which, although only one alternative is written down, the genetic critic can check it against a more familiar alternative. Variation *in absentia* may be relevant to the analysis of textual genesis *per se*, but also to the interpretation of material aspects of the writing process (e.g., change of layout, replacement of pen, substitution of writing support, and so forth). Occurrences of variation *in presentia* and *in absentia*, as defined here, would thus contribute to map out the literary game being played by the writer.

The middle road approach to literary genesis, I would like to argue, depends upon the identification of a game which can only be profiled after the identification of its rules, which – in turn – can only be singled out after the scrutiny of the game's textual and documentary components. This is to say that neither the game nor its rules can be pinpointed beforehand because they are only to be grasped in the process of text reading and document observing. Moreover, the game is never fully known due to the fact that one is never thoroughly aware of the number and nature of its rules, the consequence being that the discovery of a previously unaccounted rule may alter our perception of how different rules interact and thus may lead to a different understanding of the game that is being played.

In order to illustrate this view, I will focus on a work by M. S. Lourenço (1936-2009), a Portuguese polygraphic author and analytical philosopher who translated Wittgenstein's most relevant treatises into Portuguese and published a number of poetry volumes in considerably different styles. The title of the collection of essays that will be taken in consideration in this article, *Os Degraus do Parnaso* ('*The steps to Parnassus*'), is inspired by the musical treatise *Gradus ad Parnassum*, by the Austrian composer Johann Joseph Fux (c. 1660 – February 1741). The double thesis underlying these essays is that literature is a learnable art and that, since language is a musical fact, literature belongs to the domain of music.

³ Grésillon and Lebrave, 291.

⁴ Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Philosophical investigations*, ed. G.E.M Anscombe and R. Rhees, trans. G. E. M Anscombe (Oxford: Blackwell, 1953), §§ 7 and 33.

⁵ Daniel Ferrer, *Logiques du brouillon modèles pour une critique génétique* (Paris: Éd. du Seuil, 2011), 169–70.

A brief historical overview of the publishing history of *Degraus do Parnaso* should first refer to 1989, when, in a recently founded conservative newspaper, *O Independente*, Lourenço began a predominantly weekly column in which he wrote about such disparate subjects as the styles of Wittgenstein, the end of literature, cultural policies, or the premiere of a play by Thomas Bernhard in Austria. Besides, a few semi-fictional pieces were also published in this column. The set of 25 texts were two years later collected and published in a book which was awarded the literary prize «D. Diniz». Afterwards, though in a less systematic way, Lourenço kept on writing short prose pieces of a kind similar to those collected in *Degraus do Parnaso*, which first came out in another newspaper, *Público*, and in the literary journal *Colóquio-Letras*, and were eventually inserted in a wholly revised version of *Degraus do Parnaso*. The new (revised, reordered and larger) version, published in 2002, bore the label ‘full text edition’. Both book versions, the 1991 and the 2002, having been taken as autonomous works, became part of the collected edition of Lourenço’s literary *oeuvre*, which was published in 2009, the year he passed away.⁶

Among other extant documents that are relevant to the history of *Degraus do Parnaso*, a special reference should be made to a set of page proofs of the first edition and, most importantly, to the handwritten versions of all but one text of the very first edition. These versions probably represent the first writing stage of this collection of essays and can be found in two notebooks: *Harmonielehre* (siglum *H*) and *Notizbuch* (siglum *N*), named after the first words on their front cover labels.

After this passing presentation of *Os Degraus do Parnaso*, its publishing history and document witnesses, let us go back to the view of genetic interpretation as a practice that is based on the identification of a game. I will start out with two expected textual rules regarding the work by M. S. Lourenço and check the text in one of the above mentioned notebooks against them; afterwards I will move on to the trial and error identification of documentary rules in the other notebook.

The first rule can be phrased as «The author is expected to write in Portuguese». This rule is established because the text was meant to be published in a Portuguese paper and addressed to readers who, if not exclusively Portuguese, are all either native speakers of Portuguese or proficient in the language. It so happens that the section of the *N* notebook that includes the essays belonging to the collection begins with a page bearing the title «Os Degraus do Parnasso», the last word being wrongly spelt in Portuguese (figure 1).

This word should have been spelt with a single *s*, but it was written down with a double *s*, a spelling with phonemic consequences: intervowel single *s* represents a fricative alveolar voiced sound; whereas intervowel double *s* represents a fricative alveolar voiceless sound. This spelling is not an occasional occurrence, for in the notebooks *H* and *N* the word is consistently written down with a double *s*, a spelling that is also kept in the title of the column of the newspaper

⁶ Some of the essays have circulated in other languages as well. An English version of four of them, under the title «Before the Barbarians», was included in *A revisionary history of Portuguese literature*, published in 1996. Another one was translated into German and came out in the issue 353/354 of the Austrian journal *Literatur und Kritik* (Lourenço 2001). In 1997, Helen Tartar, the then editorial director of Stanford University Press, wrote a letter to Lourenço, stating that the Faculty Editorial Board had accepted to publish an English translation of *Degraus do Parnaso*. Correspondence was exchanged, Leland Robert Guyer prepared preliminary English versions of a few chapters, but, apparently because Stanford UP altered its publication plans, the translation has never been made (cf. M. S. Lourenço archive at the National Library of Portugal, Esp. 62, docs. 394 and 405).

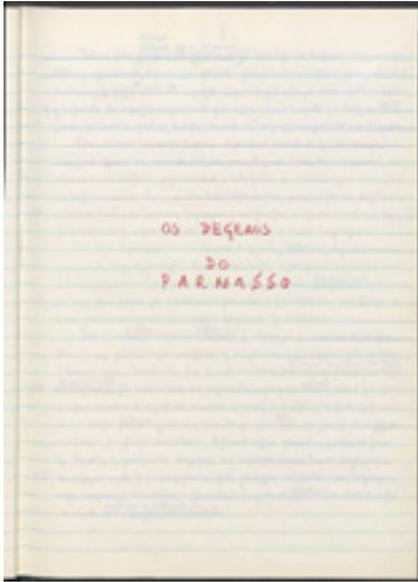


Figure 1. Notebook N, 36r, the title page before the drafts of *Os Degraus do Parnaso*.

publication, right from the beginning until the 22nd out of 25 essays. But even when the very last column comes out, with the title of the column corrected to standard Portuguese orthography, the text itself still includes the word with a double *s* spelling (figures 2 and 3).

Likewise the remaining proofs of the first edition bear witness to the conflict between what looks like idiosyncratic and prescribed orthography (figure 4).

The genetic (and editorial) interpretation of this conflict is mandatory if one wants to identify the spelling rules of the game being played. That will allow us to answer the question on how much of Lourenço's Portuguese is Portuguese and thereby to fine-tune rule 1: to what extent can we expect the author to write in Portuguese? A full analysis of the two notebooks suggests that the misspelt title of the series of essays is but one case among several others of orthographic confusion. These include the following: in the draft of essay 6, one reads «neblina» with a second *e*, instead of «neblina» (meaning thick haze or fog), possibly due to the interference of the German word «Nebel» (fog, mist); in the draft of essay 13, there is an occurrence of «halucinações»,

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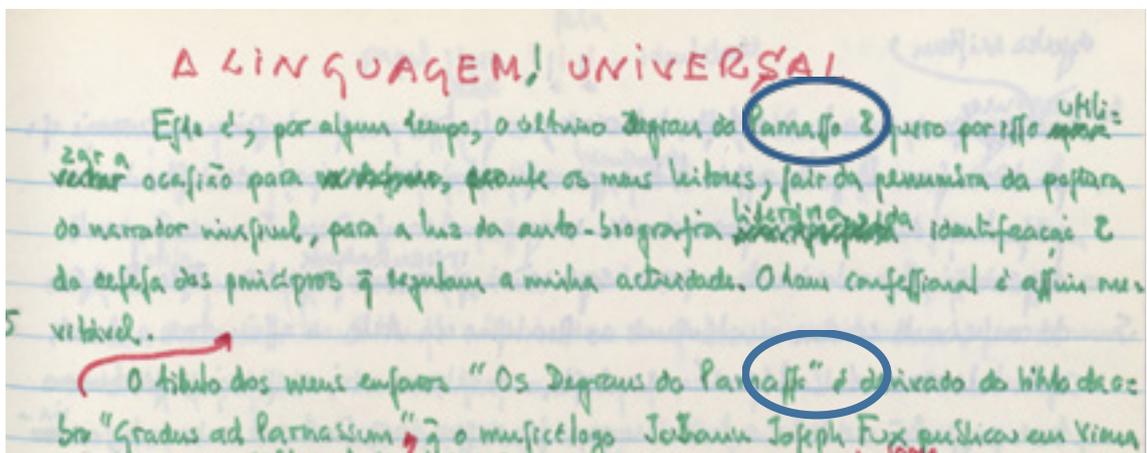


Figure 2. Notebook N, 81r. Draft of the last essay. «Parnaso» spelt with double *s*.

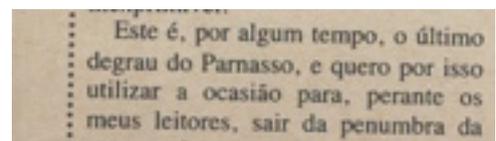


Figure 3. The last column of *Os Degraus do Parnaso*, with the title correctly spelt, but in the second paragraph the last word still written down with double *s*.

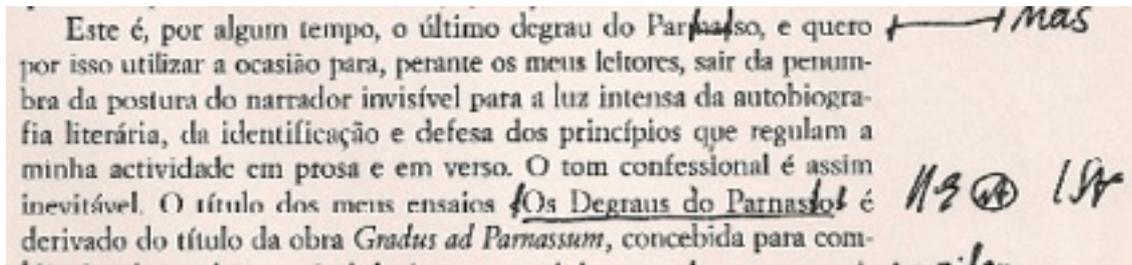


Figure 4. Proofs of the 1st edition of *Os Degraus do Parnaso* (last essay), with the correction of the double s.

starting with an *h*, whereas the Portuguese word would be «alucinações» (intrusion of German «Halluzination», or English «Hallucination»); similarly, in draft 18 one comes across «juxtaposição», written down with an *x*, as in German or English («juxtaposition»), whereas the correct Portuguese form is «justaposição»). Besides, a number of names are seemingly germanized: the surname of the Canadian literary studies scholar Northrop Frye (1912-1991) is converted into Frey in draft 17; the surname of the Russian composer Alexander Scriabin (1871-1915) becomes Skrjabin in draft 20, the voiceless occlusive /k/ being represented in Portuguese orthography by *c* and the semivowel /j/ by *i* (as in English). In draft 21, the disputed resort city of Yalta, renowned for the post II World War conference on the geopolitical reorganization of Europe, is likewise spelt «Jalta», after the German spelling. Taking these data into consideration, one might say that the way M. S. Lourenço writes in Portuguese is strongly pervious to other spelling systems, namely the German one. Most linguistic interferences of this kind were corrected into standard Portuguese spelling in the newspaper and book editions, but they bear witness to something more relevant than a curious idiosyncrasy. They point to a *modicum* of multilingualism, also documented in syntactical features, and in metadiscursive words regarding the organization of some essays, as key to the genesis of *Os Degraus do Parnaso*.

Incidentally, in the debut novel of his son, M. S. Lourenço is the inspiration source for the father of the narrator, Nuno. At a given moment in the novel, Nuno's father misreads the name of an appetizer while glancing at a restaurant menu. This appetizer, which is one of the gastronomic specialties of Lisbon (clams boiled in a sauce made of olive oil, garlic, cilantro, salt, pepper and dry white wine), goes by the name of Bulhão Pato, a Portuguese writer (1828-1912) who was very partial to this first course. Although the name of the appetizer is widely known in Portugal, the character fails to make sense of what he is reading: « – This menu is incomprehensible. What can clams... style be ... what is this? is it “Burlão Pato”? Is it cooked with duck meat [«pato» is ‘duck’ in Portuguese]? I don't understand. § A trait of Nuno's father was the general impression emanating from him that he had arrived in Portugal for the first time in his lifetime less than an hour ago.» (F. Lourenço 2002: 99)⁷.

Let us turn now to rule 2, which reads: «The text is expected to be referential». In an essay included in *Degraus do Parnaso* on Salome as a literary and pictorial matter, Lourenço mentions a book that, strictly speaking, does not exist. Because it is a Dover publication, because

⁷ The Portuguese text is: « – Esta ementa é incompreensível. O que será amêijoas à ... o que é isto?... será “burlão pato”? Será que é confeccionado com carne de pato? Não estou a perceber. § Uma das características do pai do Nuno era a impressão geral, que dele emanava, de que chegara a Portugal pela primeira vez na sua vida há menos de uma hora». Note that the change of Bulhão into Bulrão may result from a two-step process: 1) pronouncing the *h* in Bulhão as a sound similar to the aspirate German *h*, the consequence being that, instead of a palatalized *l* (represented by the digraph *lh* in Portuguese), the word is pronounced with a glottal fricative which, perhaps for caricature purposes, is voiced, rather than unvoiced; 2) through adjacent metathesis, turning Bulrão into Burlão.

it includes graphic work reproduced in the English version of Oscar Wilde's *Salome*, the reader feels sure it must be *The early work of Aubrey Beardsley*, with a prefatory note by H. C. Marillier, published by Dover in New York, in 1967 (figure 5).

But, contrary to one's referential expectations, the text in the notebook always mentions, not Aubrey (with a *b*) Beardsley, rather Audrey (with a *d*) Beardsley. Accordingly, it is Audrey that appears in the newspaper publication, in the page proofs and in the first edition (figure 6).

The unexpected proper name «Audrey» might have emerged for a number of reasons. For instance, a rather common b/d letter reversal due to some kind of reading directionality problem commonly associated with some forms of dyslexia. There is indeed a case of such a graphical reversal in the draft of essay 12, when Lourenço is writing down the word «adoração» ('adoration'), but pens a *b* after the initial *a*, correcting it then into a *d* (figure 7). This one occurrence is clearly not enough to claim that directionality issues account for the presence of «Audrey» instead of «Aubrey» in all document witnesses up to the first edition.

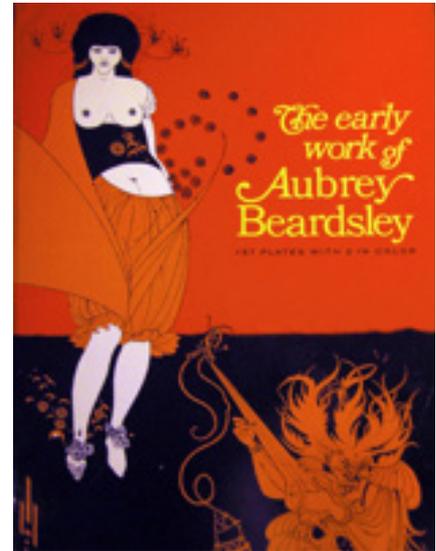
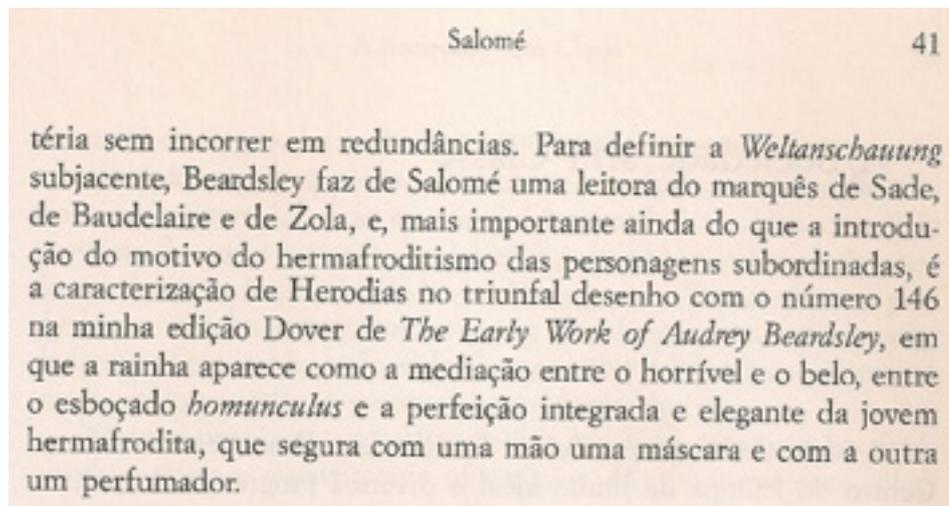


Figure 5. Cover of *The early work of Aubrey Beardsley* (Dover edition).

Figure 6. 1st edition of *Os Degraus do Parnaso*, p.41: Aubrey misspelt as Audrey.



This change may also be due to a banalization, the least current name – Aubrey – giving its place to the more current – Audrey. In fact, «Aubrey» reaches 57 million hits in Google, while «Audrey» almost triples this number⁸, and this is in line with what Martin West says about «the tendency to banalize, to erode away the unusual form or expression in favour of the everyday» (West 1973:

⁸ This in 2015. On June 29 2020, the proportion had not significantly changed: «Aubrey» produced 112 000 000 hits, whereas «Audrey» reached 269 000 000.

22)⁹. While this is true, the question one might raise here is «usual» to whom, and in what circumstances? Surely it is odd that a diagnosis of trivial banalization would apply in the case of a scholar and writer who is all but too familiar with Beardsley's work. It would also seem perhaps too far-fetched to imagine the contamination of the most famous of Audreys, the actress Audrey Hepburn, in the *Salome's* cover, thus accounting for the name transaction. But the slim, bony face of the cover figure in Beardsley's book and of the beautiful actress are not altogether at odds (figure 8).

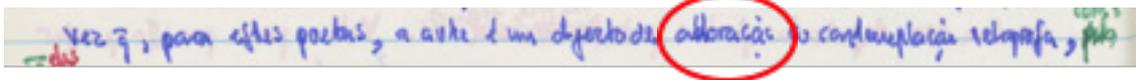


Figure 7. Notebook N, 40v, line 4. Lourenço seems to have penned the word «adoração» with the digraph *ab*, having corrected the second letter into a *d*.

Possibly more to the point, one cannot fail to realize that the cover of the first edition of *Degraus do Parnaso* is a pastiche of the 1st English edition of *Salome* showing a hermaphroditic figure (figures 9 and 10), a trait to be taken into consideration when dealing with the gendered renaming of Aubrey Beardsley. This might help us to answer the question about how much of Lourenço's referential writing is indeed referential and to fine-tune rule 2: is the text expected to be fully referential? Although it is, such expectation conflicts with incongruities that seem somewhat in line with Lourenço's partiality to subjects such as ghosts, *Doppelgänger* and hallucinations.

The next rules are different in kind, for they pertain to the documentary dimension of the game. As far as this dimension is concerned, there seems to be no rule corresponding to grammar or referentiality, first and foremost because there are no imposing external criteria leading the writer to make a specific decision as to the layout, writing tools, modes of annotation, and so forth. To a certain extent, documentary rules depend extensively on individual usage, at least much more so than what we have seen in textual rules. This is why I would like first to present some traits of the «Harmonielehre» notebook, the one I will focus on from this moment onwards.

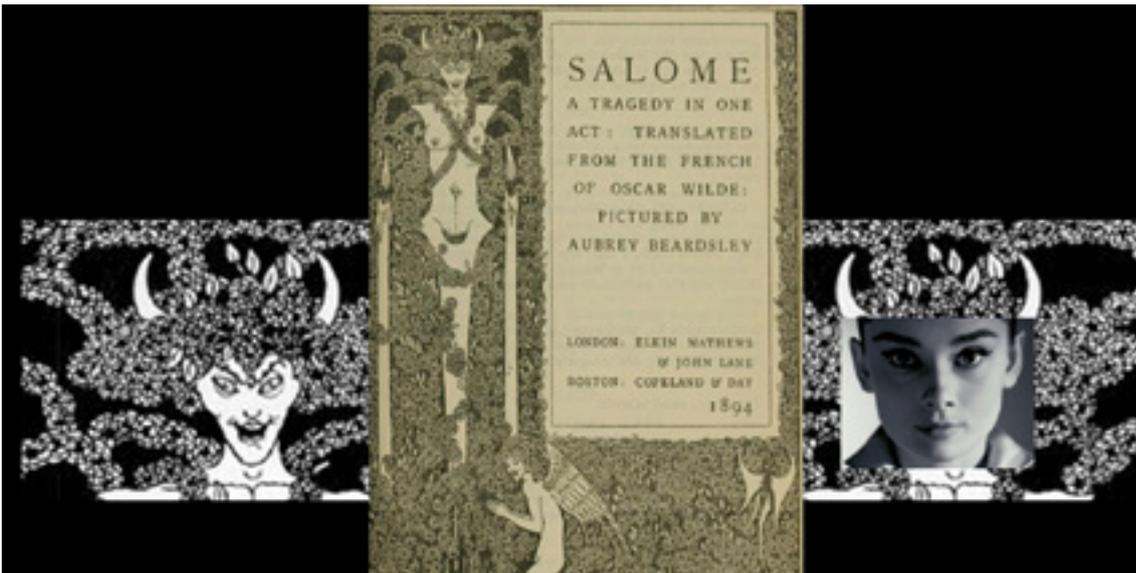
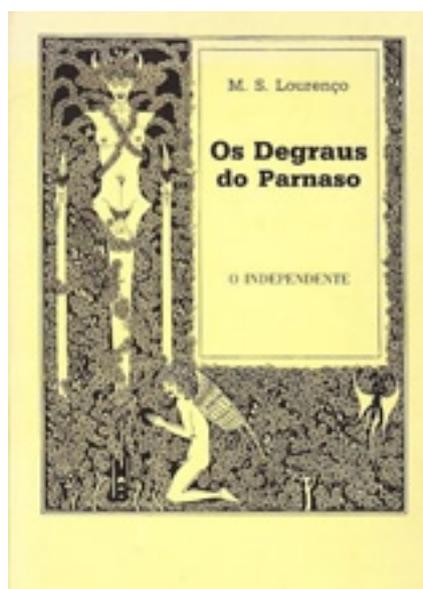
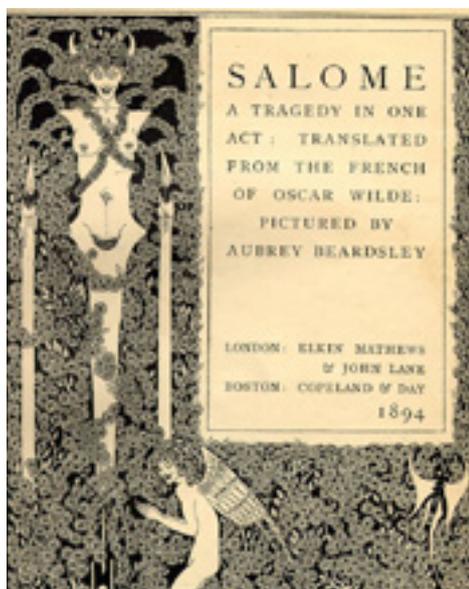


Figure 8. Cover of the 1st edition of Oscar Wilde's *Salome* (English translation) and montage with a picture of Audrey Hepburn by Jack Cardiff (1956, detail).

⁹ Note that the number hits of the lesser used name (Aubrey) on Google shows that one can hardly call it an unusual form.

It is an A4 notebook whose content is incompletely mentioned on its cover by means of an adhesive label: «Harmonielehre | III | Skizzen». It should have 100 leaves, but counting out the flyleaves, only 94 remain. As to its content, there are seemingly three sections: 1. some observations on musical harmony; and, also regarding musical harmony, a handful of remarks about the «Stufentheorie» (scalestep theory); 2. a philosophical essay, announced on the label by the word «Skizzen» ('sketches'), bearing the title «Innsbrucker Vortrag», about the nature of understanding, originally in German (pages 1 to 4) and changing into English from the last paragraph of p. 4 on until p. 34; 3. versions of the first nine essays included in *Degraus do Parnaso*, each one of them with its own pagination, the remaining pages of the notebook unused.



Figures 9 and 10. Covers of Oscar Wilde's *Salome* (English translation) and M. S. Lourenço's *Os Degraus do Parnaso* (1st edition).

The explicit dates in notebook *H* are concentrated in the first section, going from December 31 1983 to February 3 1984. As it is plausible that the versions of the essays that belong to *Degraus do Parnaso* were written shortly before their publication in the newspaper, the last section of the notebook was probably penned between 27 January 1989 (when the first essay in the notebook was published) and some time before 31 March (when the last essay in *H* came out).

There can be no doubt that part of the first section of this notebook is based on the reading Lourenço made of the second volume, titled *Harmonielehre*, of the book by Erich Wolf *Die Musikausbildung* (cf. in particular p. 63 and following). There was a copy of this book in Lourenço's library, which can now be perused at the School of Arts and Humanities of the University of Lisbon. This copy bears the following annotation on the title-page: «M. S. Lourenço | Innsbruck – 1983», a date which is consistent with the use of the notebook towards the end of 1983. It is also beyond doubt that the second part in this section hosts observations made after the author read Arnold Schönberg's *Harmonielehre* (again there is a copy of this book, purchased in 1984, in Lourenço's library)¹⁰. As to the philosophical essay in section 2, it is a draft of a paper on mechanical models in the framework of the philosophy of consciousness, presented by M. S. Lourenço at the Institut für philosophische Forschung und interdisziplinären Dialog, Innsbruck, in 1988. A revision of

¹⁰E. Wolff, *Die Musikausbildung*, Wiesbaden: Breitkopf & Härtel, 1979 (Library of Faculdade de Letras da Universidade de Lisboa, ULFL119584, A 15-MSL); A. Schönberg, *Harmonielehre*. [Wien]: Universal, 1966? (Library of Faculdade de Letras da Universidade de Lisboa, ULFL121192, A 72-MSL).

this paper was published as «Modelos mecânicos na filosofia da consciência», *Crítica. Revista do Pensamento Contemporâneo*. 6, Wittgenstein, a linguagem e a filosofia, Maio, 1991, p.49-80.

Coming after the philosophical essay in section 2, the drafts of *Degraus do Parnaso* in the notebook follow one another in a series that matches, from essay 2 to essay 10, the publication sequence in the newspaper and later on the chapter structure in the 1st book edition. The notebook does not contain essay 1. It should be noted, however, that immediately before the first existing essay, between 56v and 57r, one can identify remnants of a few pages that have been cut out (figure 11). The observation of these stubs leads to estimate that four leaves were removed, three of them with the first essay of *Degraus do Parnaso* (under normal conditions each draft takes three leaves) and another one possibly holding the general title of the series (as happens in notebook N, f. 36r).

After this cursory presentation of the «Harmonielehre» notebook, trying to discern the writ-

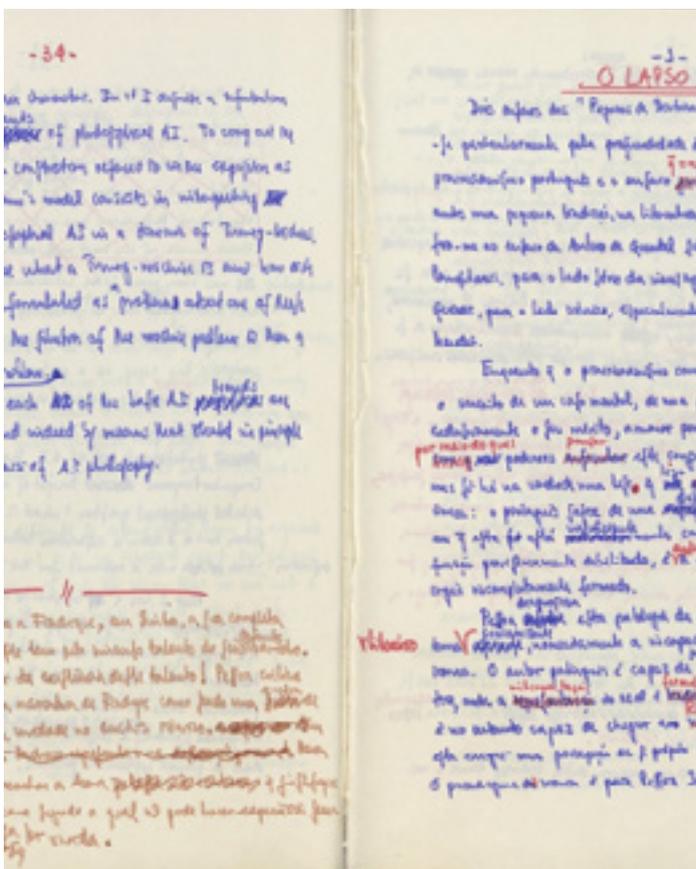


Figure 11.
Notebook H,
stubs between
56v and 57r.

ing stages these texts have undergone may be in order. Since every essay, which starts always on an odd page and usually takes 5 pages, was penned with colour felt tip pens, observing how the colours follow one after the other is instrumental for a general view of the writing process. Therefore, it is convenient to list some more or less current features of the writing and revision of the *Degraus do Parnaso* drafts in this notebook:

1. Almost all writing tools are used indiscriminately for the writing and for the revision.
2. The colour of the first paragraph is almost always blue.
3. Each colour used on the writing stage is applied to more or less developed textual sequences, going from at least a few words to a number of paragraphs.

4. In each sequence, corrections are usually made by no more than two colour markers different from the one used for the writing.

5. The colour of the correcting markers is frequently the same as the colour used for the writing in subsequent zones.

6. When in the same writing sequence there are corrections by two markers, one of them is always red.

7. The titles, penned in red, are always placed on top of the first page of each essay. In general they apparently adjust to the space made available after the inscription of the page number and before the first line of writing.

These seven tentative observations may serve as the basis for a trial identification of rules according to the connection between spatial information and writing instrument variables. The more clear-cut the connection, the closer we are to the identification of a rule; the more blurred the connection, the more distant we are from the identification of a rule.

Since in the case of the title it always appears on top of an odd page before the first paragraph and it is always written down by a red marker, there is a rule linking the title function and the red colour, besides, of course, the placement on the upper margin of the first page.

Things are different when one moves on to the first paragraph. Eight out of nine essays have the first paragraph written in blue, only one in another colour. The single exception to the possible rule according to which the colour of the first paragraph is always blue happens to be the essay on Salome whose first paragraph was written with a red marker. Whereas the blue marker plays the starting function in purely documentary terms, i.e., it looks like an arbitrary decision as to its textual meaning, the deviation from this rule with the intervention of the red marker specifically in «Salome» seems to be motivated by an aspect of the subject the essay deals with. Suffice it to recall the account Vincent O'Sullivan gave of the genesis of Oscar Wilde's play: after Wilde started writing the play in his lodgings in Paris, he interrupted this work to go to the Grand Café, «where he informs the leader of the orchestra, 'I am writing a play about a woman dancing with her bare feet in the blood of a man she has craved for and slain'» (Tydeman & Price 1996: 16). Such a minimal description of the play suggests the strong chromatic impression it deploys which is associated with the red colour. Should this assumption prove correct, the rule can be formulated as excluding or including a colour other than blue in the first paragraph. Although this rule can only be perfectly phrased after taking into due consideration the evidence from notebook *N*, for the time being I prefer an inclusive formulation: the first paragraph is always written in blue or in an otherwise motivated colour.

Finally, an observation about the stages of writing and revision. This is the third and last case I will be referring to and it is the most difficult to grasp, the most difficult to describe and, consequently, the one whose observation is least prone to generate a rule because of the number of its variables. Unlike the first and second cases (title and first paragraph), one is not dealing here with text in prefixed positions, but rather in relative positions: before and after something. Likewise: there is no clearly predominant colour similar to blue in the first paragraph; there is no fixed length for the intervention of each colour marker; because the revising colour frequently coincides with the writing colour used one or two portions below, there is a material connection between the two stages, but one is not sure as to which of them happened first (the revision of the preceding portion or the

writing of the ensuing portion)¹¹. Similarly, owing to the fact that the same tools are used for most of the writing and the revision, when we are before the same writing tool playing these two roles, it is hard, if not impossible, to decide whether a correction took place instantly during, say, the first writing action or, afterwards, during the revising process¹².

However, none of these unanswered questions prevents the observer from getting a glimpse of Lourenço's, say, ideal *modus scribendi*: he pens down a writing sequence A, introducing instant corrections; changes writing tool, revises the previous sequence and writes down sequence B, introducing instant corrections; changes tool, revises sequence B and writes down sequence C, making instant corrections, and so forth. Schematically, this could be thus presented: A | ArB | ArBrC | BrCrD...

Thus, for instance, on p. 3 of the essay «Salomé», paragraph 1 is written with a light green marker, with a few corrections in red having been introduced; red is the colour of the following paragraph which goes on to the top of the following page; some corrections have been inserted with another green marker, green being the colour of the following paragraph (figure 12).

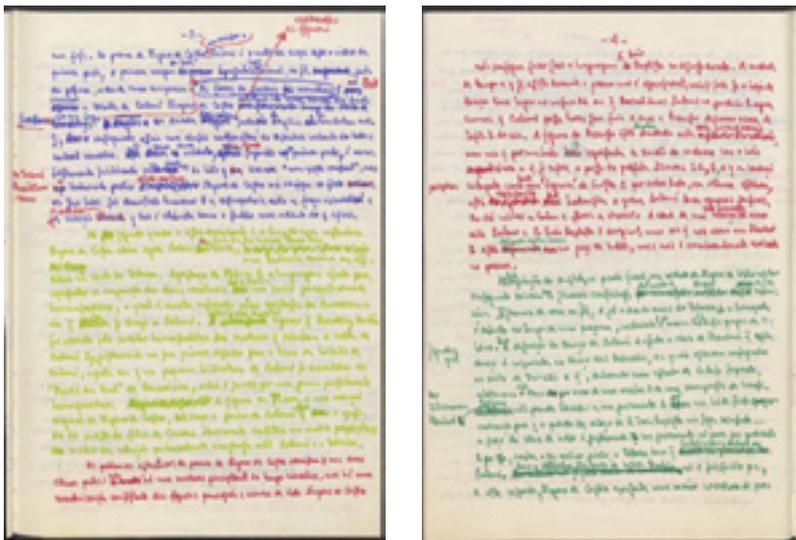


Figure 12. Notebook H, f. 77r-77v. The paragraph on page 3 penned by a light green marker was revised by a red marker, red being the colour of the following paragraph which continues to the top of page 4. Then a green marker inserted some corrections, green being the colour of the upcoming paragraph.

This step by step method shows that writing and revision follow one another according to the rhythm of the changes in colour markers and it is plausibly complemented by a global revision carried out with a red marker, which is also responsible for the insertion of the title. Above all, Lourenço seems to write in a gradual progression mode, «ascending step by step», as Johann Josef Fux states in the preface to his *Gradus ad Parnassum* («quâ pedetentim tyrones tanquam per scalam scandere, atque ad artis huius adptionem pervenire possent»)¹³.

To conclude, while variation *in presentia* plays a key role in textual genetics, the scrutiny of words and passages in the drafts that do not appear in the published version are not without importance

¹¹Now there is ground to think that the revision takes place before the writing of a new sequence (cf. Dionísio & Pimenta forthcoming).

¹²All these are questions without definite answers, challenging a markup approach that seeks to do justice to a genetic account of the writing process.

¹³This is how Fux presents his work on the practice of writing music: «a simple method by which the novice can progress gradually step by step to attain mastery in this art» (transl. Alfred Mann, 1971: 17).

for an analysis of text as process. Accidentals, such as spelling peculiarities, and trivial mistakes go frequently through editorial correction so that the end result meets orthographic standards and textual transparency. In the case of the M. S. Lourenço's *Os Degraus do Parnaso*, an effect of such editorial standardization is that phenomena of linguistic contamination and meaningful slips are only accessible through a perusal of the extant drafts. These drafts also enable the reader to make sense of the material dimension of text as process, namely the writing instruments used by Lourenço and the layout that frames the preliminary versions of this work. The way in which writing and revision are intricately enmeshed in these drafts is analogous to the gradual progression endorsed in Fux's treatise on musical harmony as the method to attain mastery in composition. In light of the above, the acknowledgment of textual and material constants and variables allows for the understanding of literary genesis as a game, the rules of which call for tentative identification.

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KEYWORDS

the genesis of the text

VARIATION

ABSTRACT:

The article, inspired by Daniel Ferrer's view of genetic variation as a process built of many interconnections, rather than a series of free operations subordinated to other operations, presents literary genesis as a game of variation. The rules of the game can only be tentatively discern by identifying its components from text and document. In the article, I devote special attention to the analysis of variations *in absentia*, i.e. a situation in which, although only one version of the text is written, it can be compared with a version that is closer to the reader (or more expected). Variation *in absentia* is essential for analyzing both textual and material aspects of the writing process (e.g. page layout changes, pen changes, replacing writing aids). In this article, I follow this kind of variation from the sketches of *Os Degraus do Parnaso* (*The Steps to Parnas*), a collection of essays by the versatile writer and analytical philosopher M.S. Lourenço (1936–2009). Accurate interpretation of textual and material constants and variables, in terms of spelling and the use of writing tools, leads to the conclusion that cases in the text (elements that, according to W.W. Greg, affect only formal presentation) are not always accidental in literary genesis.

the materiality of the text

RANDOMNESS

NOTE ON THE AUTHOR:

João Dionísio - lecturer at the Faculty of Literature (University of Lisbon), where in 2010–2013 he led the course of text criticism. He works at the Linguistics Center of the University of Lisbon (CLUL) as a member of a philological group and focuses his research on text science. He prepared an electronic edition of the medieval work *Loyal Counselor* [*Leal Conselheiro*] (<http://digital.library.wisc.edu/1711.dl/IbrAmerTxt.LealConselIntro>), belonging to the canon of Portuguese literature, and prepared three volumes of critical editions of Fernando Pessoa (1993, 1997 and 2004). He coordinated the inventory of M.S. Lourenço (held at the National Library of Portugal). In 2013–2016 he was the president of the European Society for Textual Scholarship. |