

EÇA DE QUEIRÓS, OUR CONTEMPORARY. INTRODUCTION TO VOLUME 27, N.3, OF *ALEA. ESTUDOS NEOLATINOS*

Elena Palmero González 

Universidade Federal do Rio de Janeiro, Rio de Janeiro, RJ, Brasil

November 2025 marks 180 years since the birth of Eça de Queirós, one of the most important writers of literature in the Portuguese language and author of indisputable classics of world literature. We talk about classics and immediately think of the Italo Calvino's beautiful definition (1993) when he noted that they are books that exercise a particular influence over our imagination, whether as records, or as hidden remnants of the layers of our individual or collective subconscious; books that provide a meaningful experience; that, in each rereading, bring back the same sense of discovery as the first reading; that never exhaust everything they have to say; that arrive carrying all their previous interpretations, traces of cultures through which they passed; that, the more we believe we know them, the more original, unexpected and innovative they become in their rereading. Classics, to Calvino, are books towards which you cannot remain indifferent; books that replace the noise of the present with a hum that persists through time, and as a result they always provoke renewed critical discourse, as with the work of this Portuguese master.

Eça de Queirós is one of the authors that Harold Bloom (2003) includes in his conception of genius¹, registering him in his famous list of the most creative writers in universal letters. He is a modernizer, an eternal contemporary, as the guest editors of this issue of *Alea* define in the dossier's introduction.

¹ For Bloom, genius is the capacity of certain writers to expand and illuminate the conscience of their readers, to transform their perception of the world. There is a celebrated phrase in *Genius* (2003), in which Bloom proposes a simple test: if a work, beyond providing entertainment, does not expand our conscience and illuminate it, then the writer is only a talent, not a genius, because it does not touch what is primordial in our being. A genius, according to his perspective, does not only entertain, but also illuminates, transforms, and expands the reader's understanding of themselves and the world. Cf. BLOOM, 2003, p.37

In homage to the Portuguese writer on his 180th birthday, Alea dedicates this issue to his oeuvre, particularly to what makes it contemporary, thinking about the traces of contemporaneity that Queirosoan writing exhibits and, moreover, the possibilities that open for an updated critical rereading. In line with this, we invited contributions interested in putting the work of Eça de Queirós in dialogue with the artistic practices, theoretical trends and epistemological challenges of the contemporary world, and in return we received a high number of collaborations that, after passing through the evaluation process, allow us to assemble a suggestive summary.

Modernity and realism, power and authority, transgression and order, these are the themes that circulate through the dossier, read through interdisciplinary intersections (literature and anthropology, literature and philosophy, literature and ecology), original intellectual approaches (Eça and Simmel, Weber or Marx), innovative theoretical treatments and analyses that unveil the contemporaneity of the work of Eça de Queirós. These critical rereadings confirm, once again, the classic quality of his books.

In the Articles section we discuss two intriguing texts. The first analyzes the notions of “sublime image” and “temporality of trauma” in the work of Georges Didi-Huberman, in conversation with thinkers like Freud, Warburg and Benjamin. The text traces the evolution of the “sublime” concept from Antiquity to its modern reformulation, highlighting its connection with trauma (the central motive in 20th-century art and literature), and studies the ambiguous relation that Didi-Huberman’s art historical works share with this concept. Accordingly, the article highlights Didi-Huberman’s resistance to explicitly adopt the concept of the sublime, preferring approaches that emphasize the complex materiality and temporality of images. The study shows how the French thinker’s work develops an archaeology of images that connect art, trauma and history, defying totalizing narratives and revealing the fractures of modernity.

In the second text of this section, we encounter an original work of critical-autobiographical profile, which summarizes the trajectory across more than 50 years of Roberto González Echevarría’s scholarship on Cuban writer Alejo Carpentier’s monumental oeuvre. We know González Echevarría as Carpentier’s most lucid and incisive critic, and that Carpentier is the writer who most systematically appears in the Cuban critic’s work. We also know that both maintained a deep friendship, full of tensions due to the intellectual place they occupied in the clashes of Cuban cultural politics in the seventies and eighties. In this sense, the Alea reader has the privilege of enjoying what the critic himself calls a voyage to his Carpenterian seed and his farewell to the great novelist.

In the Interviews section, the reader will find a dialogue between three researchers from Universidade de Coimbra and Prof. Dr. Carlos Reis, Professor Emeritus in the Faculty of Letters at this traditional Portuguese university. The conversation touches on familiar topics in the works of Reis, particularly his studies on the oeuvre of Eça de Queirós and his more recent interest in studies of intermediality, highlighting his “Last Lesson” at the Universidade de Coimbra, on 28 September 2020, on the occasion of his retirement, when the master returned to the theme that began his academic life at the university, the oeuvre of Eça de Queirós, by proposing an intermedial rereading of Queiroian fiction. Closing the conversation, it becomes evident that studies of intermediality do not appear to conclude with the farewell conference in the classroom, but configure ongoing interest in the eminent professor, who we thank for his participation in this issue of Alea.

To end the issue, in the Translation section, we publish a translation from Spanish to English of the story *Catalina la maga*, by Cuban writer Luis Cabrera Delgado, one of the most important figures of Cuban and Latin American children’s literature, who recently passed away, at the age of 80 years. A psychologist by training and with a prolific trajectory as a narrator, dramaturg, screenwriter, journalist and critic, Cabrera Delgado left behind more than 50 published books, with his acclaimed oeuvre of children’s literature being translated into Russian, German, Portuguese, Italian, and, now, into English. The work of translation into British English of the story *Catalina la maga* demonstrates the challenges of accessing a specialized area within the vaster camp of literary translation: children’s literary translation, an often overlooked area, requires from the translator a special disposition to capture four crucial elements in linguistic analysis: style, meaning, aptness and music, as the translators explain in their introduction to this valuable work of translation. We would like to take this chance to thank the writers’ heirs for their gesture of authorizing the translation and publication of *Catalina la maga* in Alea’s pages, and we dedicate this work to the memory of Luis Cabrera Delgado.

Researchers who contributed to this issue are from diverse Brazilian institutions: Universidade Estadual de Campinas, Universidade Católica de Minas Gerais, Universidade Federal de Ouro Preto, Universidade Federal do Paraná, Universidade Estadual do Paraná, Universidade Estadual Vale do Acaraú, Instituto Nacional da Propriedade Industrial and Universidade Federal dos Vales do Jequitinhonha e Mucuri. We have also relied on the collaboration of researchers from universities in Portugal (Universidade de Lisboa, Universidade de Coimbra, Universidade de Trás-os-Montes e Alto Douro, Universidade da Beira Interior, Universidade NOVA de Lisboa, Universidade de Porto, Universidade de Aveiro and Universidade de Évora);

Italy (Università Degli Studi di Padova and Universidade de Turim); the United States (University of Massachusetts Amherst and Yale University) and the United Kingdom (University of Essex). We thank everyone for their valuable contributions.

We extend our thanks to the team of reviewers who participated in the manuscript evaluation process and especially to the Guest Editors, Prof. Dr. José Vieira and Prof. Dr. Carlos Nogueira, for their collaboration in the call for the dossier, their valuable words of introduction and their enthusiastic participation in every step of preparing this volume. As always, we hope that the volume will please our readers, because it is they who continue to give our work meaning.

References

- BLOOM, Harold. *Gênio. Os 100 autores mais criativos da história*. Translation: José Roberto O'Shea. Rio Janeiro: Objetiva, 2003.
- CALVINO, Italo. *Por que ler os clássicos* (2.ed). Translation: Nilson Moulin. São Paulo: Companhia das Letras, 1993.

Elena Palmero González. Professor of Hispano-american Literature at Universidade Federal do Rio de Janeiro (UFRJ). PQ researcher at CNPq. BA in Hispanic Philology (1983) and PhD in Philological Sciences from Universidad Central de Las Villas (Cuba, 1997). Postdoctoral associate at Université Paris IV-Sorbonne (France, 2005-2007), Universidade de São Paulo (Brazil, 2016), and senior postdoctoral associate (CAPES) at Yale University (United States, 2017). She is the Editor-in-chief of the journal *Alea: Neolatin Studies* and leader of the research group Inter-American and Transatlantic Literary Studies (UFRJ). Her areas of research are Comparative Literature and Literary History, with an emphasis on Cuban and Latin American literature and inter-American literary relations.

Email: elenacpgonzalez@gmail.com