

## Realism's Reality Check and Deleted Referents in Eça de Queirós

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**Abstract.** This essay gives the reader a sample of some of the hidden truths behind the final published Queiroisian texts in terms of transformed, eliminated, and camouflaged protagonists and references. Irene Fialho discusses examples culled from the manuscripts of *O Conde d'Abranhos* and *A ilustre casa de Ramires* as a means to illustrate how Eça, despite his blatant claim to reflect closely reality through his Realist mode, skillfully disguised referents at the margins of society, such as prostitutes and homosexuals, along with fellow writers and politicians. In the case of the manuscript of the essay "Idealismo e Realismo," Fialho demonstrates how an editorial omission (here the important reference to an anthology entitled *Cancioneiro alegre* edited by Eça's fellow contemporary Camilo Castelo Branco), can drastically change the original meaning of a text.

In an essay written in 1879, commonly known as "Idealismo e Realismo" ("Idealism and Realism"), Eça de Queirós exposed his concept of the Realist movement as follows: "[...] the difference between Naturalism and Idealism lies in this: the later is the adulteration of nature, the former its confirmation" (E1-295, fl. f).<sup>1</sup> The author also states: "In the past, a romantic novel did not study but invented Man; today, in our novels, we study social reality" (E1-295, fl. d).

Despite the "good intentions" that the author mentions in this theoretical disquisition, Eça chose to exclude a significant portion of Portuguese reality

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from his novels, avoiding references that, through a simple analysis of supposedly fictitious characters and episodes, would easily point to the recognition of people and real life situations. As well as generally avoiding obvious realist references, Eça also disguised characters and situations, so that only someone able to read these subtleties in between the lines could identify their real life referents. Eça's fictional camouflage mostly disguised characters at the edge of society, characters whose deviant behavior marginalized them: prostitutes, homosexuals (both male and female) and other unmentionable figures of the nineteenth century: Portuguese politicians and Eça's fellow literary colleagues.

In the novel *O Conde d'Abranhos*, Eça gave the same last name to three characters who are part of the political gallery: Gorjão. The name occurs for the first time when the protagonist, Alípio Abranhos, a deputy of the Reformist Party, answers with a joke to a colleague of the minority Party formed by Nationlists, Gomes Gorjão, who "[...] with [his hair undone], red in the face, his fist raised, verbally attacked the government [with brutal eloquence] in brusque sentences" (E1-285, fl. 93).

The second occurrence is the last name of the President of the Chamber of Deputies, who at first is referred to by the name of António Carneiro. A few pages further on, this character, of no real importance for the development of the plot, is alluded to by the name of President Gorjão (E1-295, fl. 97b).<sup>2</sup>

Gorjão Saragoça is the only one of this threesome who keeps the name in the published editions of the text, along with the characteristics indicated in the manuscript. Because of this, he is the only "Gorjão" recognized until now by Queiroisian scholars:

[...] a deputy, tall as Hercules, with a hoarse voice, asked if he could speak. It was the famous Gorjão Saragoça—and his presence on the platform, where he had planted himself, with his fiery eyes glaring under his thick eyebrows, abundantly disclosed the infamous plan of the Majority [...]. He was, among the Nationalists, the swordfighter of the Party. During twenty years he had been, in this country, a pope! His black beard gave him a ferocious look: and when he walked down the Chiado, his hat covering one eye, swishing his cane, he struck fear into the hearts of the townspeople [...]. (E1-285, fls. 109-10)

We have, therefore, in the same novel, three politicians whose last name, according to Fonseca and Roquette's *Diccionário* (1881), is of Spanish origin and derives from *gorja*—throat—a word well suited to Portuguese spokesmen

and members of Congress at the time. In the manuscript of *O Conde d'Abranhos*, however, there is another individual who belongs to the same family, though this time not a politician but a wealthy farmer. In folio 14, Zagalo, the Count of Abranhos' secretary and biographer, talks about Amália Abranhos, the devoted aunt of Alípio, widow of "a rich landlord of Amarante," a certain "Amâncio Gorjão—[a forty year old man, absent-minded and of weak temperament, who suffered from a skin disease, appeared anaemic, and who two years after the wedding died]". By cutting out this whole paragraph Eça eliminated Uncle Amâncio.

However, in *A tragédia da Rua das Flores*, there is a character with a major role in the narrative, the painter Artur Gorjão, who later becomes Camilo Serrão. Eça gives a physical description of this protagonist:

He was short, very thin, and a bit of a hunchback. His uncontrollable movements were like those of a frail skeleton. His head was enormous. Above his salient and convex forehead was a rigid mass of coarse hair that resembled a thick comb. His skin was dry. He had a twisted nose, a thin-lipped mouth covered by a small moustache that curled up on one side, and, in two deep arches, two splendid eyes sparkling with life. (79)

And his moral portrait, the portrait of an artist, reads as follows: "He was, as he used to say, searching for the true essence of Art, convinced that, as soon as he were to find it, he would create magnificent oeuvres, renew Portuguese painting, have followers, fill the museums with sublime paintings, and live in posterity" (79).

This particular Gorjão cannot be taken for any of the homonyms found in *O Conde d'Abranhos*; nor do any of these five protagonists share any similarity with the shy attorney Gorjão, the bureaucrat who works with Victor da Silva at Dr. Caminha's office, also in *A tragédia da Rua das Flores*.

As it is well known, in 1877 Eça de Queirós wrote a letter to Ernesto Chardron, his publisher, proposing the publication of a series of twelve books, a "Gallery of Portugal in the nineteenth century," under the generic title of "Scenes of Portuguese Life." Each one of these texts was meant to portray a particular aspect of contemporary Portuguese society, and Eça already had titles for the different volumes. Among these titles was *O grande homem* [*The Great Man*], possibly changed into *O Conde d'Abranhos*; another *A illustre família Estarreja* [*The Illustrious Estarreja Family*], a title very close to *A*

*ilustre Casa de Ramires* [*The Illustrious House of Ramires*]; and a third, *O Gorjão—Primeira Dama* [*Gorjão—The First Lady*]. This last one leads us to think that it would be the title of a book meant to study homosexuality, as the writer discreetly tells the publisher. None of these twelve books were published during Eça's lifetime, not even the labor-intensive *A Capital!* [*To the Capital!*]. In this novel, during a sequence at the Hotel Universal, Melchior introduces Carvalhosa, a deputy, to the main character, Artur. Artur had met Carvalhosa before, in Coimbra, during his University years: "he was illustrious for the vices that had given his face an ill, yellow tone, [...] and some of his speeches in the Academy meetings, proclaimed with a melodious voice, open vowels and exaggerated syllables, had given him his first achings for Parliamentary glory" (E1-287, 6b). To fulfil his ambitions, Carvalhosa "venerated those in power, impetuously bowing to all authoritative figures, from Policeman "A" to Minister "B" [...]. He was very tall, always wore polished boots, and walked with difficulty. He showed the passing of the years with fingers burned by cigarettes and weak kidneys" (E1-287, 6b). If, in this sequence, Eça deletes some of the suspicious characteristics of Carvalhosa, in the next version of the novel they disappear almost completely, modified by the author during the revisions of the text. Also in *A Capital!*, similar transformations occur with the portrayal of the family environment where "mister Venâncio," Rabecaz's nephew, lives.

Some years later, we will find another Gorjão, this time in *A ilustre casa de Ramires*. In this scene, João Gouveia is talking about the elections for the new Governor of Monforte, "[...] António Moreno, whom he had met many times in his bedroom in Coimbra, dressed as a woman, with a revealing nightgown, and his lovely face covered with facepowder!" (103). António Moreno is not mentioned again in the narrative, but it is interesting to recall the scene when João Gouveia, "[...] holding the aristocrat's arm [Gonçalo Mendes Ramires], remembered the night when José Gorjão, very drunk, with a top-hat and swinging a revolver, demanded furiously that Father Justino, who was also drunk, marry him and Antoninho in front of a statue of Our Lady of Good Death!" (103). In this episode, though Eça does not refer specifically to a case of homosexuality, it is definitely implied. Could this mean that the writer was attempting to return, on a smaller scale, to the theme of a book previously planned in 1877? It is also interesting to note that António Moreno was "[...] righteously called Antoninha Morena in Coimbra!" (Queirós, *A ilustre casa* 103). This reference, nowadays long forgotten, was a house-hold name during the last half of

the nineteenth century in Lisbon: Antónia Morena was the *madame* of a brothel at Rua Larga de S. Roque, with a second, intimate door, on the side of Rua das Gáveas. João Pinto de Carvalho writes that Antónia Morena,

after being fatigued by desire's vibrations and lust, [...] temporarily transformed into a repentant Magdalene, disguised herself with prudence, so naturally akin to her prostitutional *coquetterie*, and became a brothel matron, the first to import *cocottes* from Spain. [...] Relinquishing her courtesan crown, Antónia Morena specialized as a go-between, and, in 1869, had a permanent box at the São Carlos theater" where she installed her protégées for the evening show. (75-79)

And on this note, in *A tragédia da Rua das Flores* (E1-306-B, fl. 12 b) "Mme. de Molineaux wanted to know who were those ladies sitting in... in... in the twentieth box of the second level" (E1-306-B, fl. 12b). They were, of course, the Spanish girls of Antónia Morena, the "*demimonde*," as Dâmaso replies, without fully processing the fact that the *demimonde* was sitting in a theater box by his side.

On several occasions in *O Conde d'Abranhos*, Eça almost reveals Antónia Morena as his source of inspiration to his readers, beginning to write her name twice in the manuscript, "a Ant...," but then appears to have had second thoughts, erased the beginning of the name and preferred the fictitious "Camila Pelada," living at Beco dos Cavaletes (E1-285, fl. 39-39b).<sup>3</sup>

Given the importance of prostitution and the differences that separate each class of prostitutes in nineteenth-century Portuguese society, even Abranhos, while in Coimbra undercover, would indulge "in the altar of the Venus Aphrodite," a goddess rather distinct from the backstreet "Venus da Viela" ("Venus of the Alley"), who rendered services to Abranhos' fellow students (E1-285, fl. 35b). Later on in the text, in Lisbon, on the same night that Alípio Abranhos is nominated Navy Minister, the cousin of his wife the Countess, leaving the house at Largo do Quintela, was so enthused with the good news "that, to celebrate the event," - as the narrative's biographer Zagalo recalls, "spent all night at the [brothel]," naturally entering through the door on Rua de S. Roque on his way up to the Chiado (E1-285, fl. 147b).

Having discussed some examples of deleted referents in Eça's fiction, we will now turn to his essay "Idealismo e Realismo." This text appeared in 1929 in the volume *Cartas inéditas de Fradique Mendes e mais páginas esquecidas*, though part of this essay had previously been published in 1880 as "Note



to the 2<sup>nd</sup> edition” of the novel *O crime do Padre Amaro* (in its third version).

The manuscript of “Idealismo e Realismo” found in the Biblioteca Nacional in Lisbon includes, under the same reference, E1-295, two different autographed versions of the text, that from now on will be referred to as Ms. E1/295-A (including two folios identified as  $\alpha$  and  $\beta$ ) and Ms. E1/295-B. When compared with the published “Note to the 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition” of *O crime do Padre Amaro*, both manuscripts reveal many variants, as well as a significant reduction of the text, visible at the naked eye. The comparison of the 1929 published text with the manuscripts also reveals many structural differences. The editor of the 1929’s text decided to publish *his* interpretation of the two drafts, and chose to follow a logical sequence, inexistent in the manuscripts. He maintained elements common to both texts but also inserted several parts taken from the “Note to the 2<sup>nd</sup> edition” that are not in either of the two manuscripts. This choice, i.e. to include elements taken from the text his father published, can be justified by the editor’s need to add credibility to his edition. Had he not added those phrases very few sections would have overlapped, hence his concern.

In this specific case, the posthumous editor’s interference is characterized by transformation and elimination, and in particular the deletion of an explicit reference to the volume *Cancioneiro alegre de poetas portugueses e brasileiros*, an anthology of Portuguese and Brazilian poets, edited by Camilo Castelo Branco, and published by the Livraria Internacional of Ernesto Chardon in April 1879—the year of Eça wrote *O Conde d’Abranhos*, “Idealismo e Realismo” and a revision of *O crime do Padre Amaro*.

Eça de Queirós’s relation with Camilo’s *Cancioneiro alegre* began out of curiosity. In a letter to Chardon, sent from Dinan, France, on July 10, 1879, Eça thanks the publisher for sending a page from Camilo’s book and asks “What is this *Cancioneiro alegre*, that I see so frequently advertized in the Bibliografia? I would like to see it” (*Correspondência* 1216). A month later, in a letter written from Bristol dated August 7, he writes “I have received the *Cancioneiro* and thank you; I’m earnestly waiting for Camilo’s books” (*Correspondência* 1220).

Grateful for Chardon promptly sending the anthology, Eça seems to have disliked Camilo’s critiques of his work, slyly included in Camilo’s appreciation of the poetry of Guerra Junqueiro, Eça’s friend. Camilo writes:

[...] Mr. Guerra Junqueiro, in a recent text, appears to believe that ancient

Portuguese is necessary for those writing in the nineteenth century. When he discusses Mr. Eça de Queirós's work, he writes, judiciously: "Unfortunately, Eça de Queirós ignores the abundance of possibilities of the old Portuguese language, when managed by a modern spirit." (10)

And further down Camilo continues: "Mr. Eça de Queiros is amazingly generous with his friend who criticizes his prose. 'The great modern poet of the Peninsula,' writes Eça referring to Guerra Junqueiro taking grand geographic liberties, Eça the author of *O Primo Basílio*—the most doctrinal novel ever published in Portugal" (11).

Taking advantage of the opportunity to publish a text where he could respond to the criticism that had intensified towards his work in Portugal and in Brazil following the publication of *O Primo Basílio*, Eça included in the original manuscripts an answer to an addressee he refers to as Mestre ("Master"), and to whom he had dedicated, nine years earlier, *O mistério da Estrada de Sintra*. He does this by explicitly mentioning Camilo's scathing comments, through direct quotation and identification in the footnotes.

In November 15, 1879, Eça writes another letter to his publisher. He was working once again on his project *A Capital!* and wanted to know the size of the published text. Then he tells Chardron: "You told me a while ago that it would be the same format as the *Cancioneiro alegre*. Unfortunately, that book never reached me. I have enquired after it at the post offices of London and Paris, but to no avail" (*Correspondência* 1224).

It thus seems apparent that between August and November 1879, Eça de Queirós not only lost Camilo's book, but also forgot that he had received it, acknowledged it, and quoted from it, or at least this is what he wants to make believe. It is a known fact that the drafts of his essay "Idealismo e Realismo" and the "Note to the 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition" of *O crime do Padre Amaro* had to have been written during those very same months. This means that they are contemporary to the manuscript of *O Conde d'Abranhos*. Another clue leads us to the same conclusion: the name of Alípio Abranhos' first wife, Virgínia, is the name of the "little bourgeoisie girl, from downtown Lisbon, in 1879" (E1-295A, fl. g), who was the example Eça used to illustrate the Idealist and Realist writing processes, and reveals, depending on the method used, two different natures and personalities. The Realist writer, after watching and describing Virginia, gives the reader "a lesson in social life" (E1-295, fl g. v). Due to the coincidence of these dates and the almost simultaneous composition of two

texts that differ in genre, the *virginal* name would enable the author to come to the same conclusion and demonstrate that “a lesson in the present would remain in the future as an historical document” (E1-295A, fl. g. v.).

When in 1929 it was presented to the public, “Idealismo e Realismo” no longer contained the explicit reference to *Cancioneiro alegre*. Implied in the imperfect paraphrase of a quotation from an old book, it no longer held any danger of being recognizable, but served rather as a form of dissimulation.

For more than six decades, and after many reprints of the text based on the 1929 edition, this editorial habit of reproducing the same basic text has kept precious information from the readers that would contribute to the real spirit in which Eça wrote “Idealismo e Realismo,” an attitude that does not correspond to a response to Machado de Assis’ comments on Eça’s text, criticism that Machado published, as it is well known, in the newspapers *O Cruzeiro* (Rio de Janeiro) and *A Actualidade* (Oporto), in 1878.<sup>4</sup>

If, in 1880, Eça de Queirós chose not to include in his “Note” any mention of the *Cancioneiro alegre*, perhaps to avoid provoking a direct polemic with Camilo, some years later he would take a similar approach when he chose to leave unpublished the undated letter nowadays known as the “Letter to Camilo Castelo Branco,” that responds to Camilo’s “Notas à procissão dos moribundos” (“Notes to the procession of dying men”) that had been published in the newspaper *Novidades* and in the compilation *Óbulo às crianças* (*A Gift to the Children*). In 1929, when a dispute between the two writers was forever more an impossibility, the reference to Camilo’s criticism suffered the brunt of censorship frequently applied to Eça’s posthumous texts, a censorship justified in the name of literary, political or social polemics. If we want to see—and recognize—the real allusions eliminated from Eça’s texts, it is necessary to analyze his manuscripts down to the very last detail, without doubt a most painstaking and daunting task.

When Eça de Queirós decided to leave unpublished, or semi-published, manuscripts that he then held onto until his death, he probably thought he had erased forever episodes, characters, and thoughts that once, during the process of writing, had been put to paper. Elements from the past, deleted or dissimulated for fear of contemporaneous reaction, have turned out to be a “lesson in the present, that will remain in the future as an historical document.”



## Notes

<sup>1</sup> Manuscripts mentioned in this paper belong to Lisbon's Biblioteca Nacional Archive of Contemporary Portuguese Culture and are part of the Eça de Queirós collection. I quote from E1-285 (*O Conde d'Abranhos*), E1-287 (*A Capital!*) and E1-295 ("Idealismo e Realismo"). All translations are my responsibility.

<sup>2</sup> In this particular case, most editors have preferred to correct the author's "mistake": "Gorjão" disappears and the character is referred to as Antão Carneiro in the 1925's edition and Antunes Carneiro in the 1970's text.

<sup>3</sup> We have no knowledge of a "Beco dos Cavaletes" in Lisbon. However, in Mouraria there was a "Beco dos Cavaleiros" where poor prostitutes lived.

<sup>4</sup> Carlos Reis and Maria do Rosário Cunha mention in the "Introduction" to their edition of *O crime do Padre Amaro* that one of the reasons that lead Eça to leave "Idealismo and Realismo" half published was the text's "vivacity, that would seem excessive, in contrast to the serious tone of the criticism it was supposed to answer, a critique signed by a writer (Machado de Assis) Eça respected [...]" (81).

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