

THE POWER OF FRAMES: THE TEMPORALITY OF PHOTOGRAPHY AND PORTRAITURE IN THE WORK OF EÇA DE QUEIRÓS

O PODER DAS MOLDURAS: A TEMPORALIDADE DA FOTOGRAFIA E A RETRATÍSTICA NA OBRA DE EÇA DE QUEIRÓS

Kathryn Bishop-Sanchez

University of Wisconsin, Madison

— George! It's the timeless art of seduction! You've got to join in the dance! She sends you an enticing photo, you send her one right back! [...] Well as you know, I've always been something of a photog...

Seinfeld, Season 8, Episode 5 (Oct. 17, 1996)

ABSTRACT

This article discusses the inclusion of paintings and photographs in three novels by Eça de Queirós, namely *O primo Basílio*, *Os Maias* and *A tragédia da Rua das Flores*, as narrative snapshots that immortalize key moments in the literary texts. Inspired by the cinematic “framing” of Abbas Kiarostami’s last film *24 Frames*, my discussion focuses on how the image contained in the painted portraits or photographs have meaning beyond what they portray, and how the respective narratives enable a reconstruction of what led up to and follows the creation of the framed image.

Keywords: narrative frames, photography, portraiture, Eça de Queirós, Abbas Kiarostami

RESUMO

O presente artigo analisa a inclusão de pinturas e de fotografias em três romances de Eça de Queirós, designadamente *O primo Basílio*, *Os Maias* e

A tragédia da Rua das Flores, como instantâneos narrativos que imortalizam momentos-chave em textos literários. A partir do “enquadramento” cinemático de *24 Frames*, o último filme de Abbas Kiarostami, a minha análise foca o modo como a imagem de retratos pintados ou fotografias assumem significado para além daquilo que retratam, e também o modo como as respetivas narrativas permitem uma reconstituição daquilo que antecedeu a criação da imagem enquadrada e daquilo que se lhe segue.

Palavras-chave: molduras narrativistas, fotografia, retratística, Eça de Queirós, Abbas Kiarostami

1. In what would be the Iranian director Abbas Kiarostami’s final film, *24 Frames* (2017), the static camera creates four-and-a-half-minute vignettes by successively lingering on one painting and then a series of twenty-three photographs, each “frame” paired with digitally reconstructed sequences depicting the imaginary moment immediately before and/or after the still image was taken, and in the case of the opening image the prequel to the scene of Pieter Bruegel’s iconic snowy landscape, “Hunters in the Snow” (1565). Creating a dialogue between painting/photography and cinema, Kiarostami’s brilliant experimental project questions and blurs the boundaries of these different artforms as the segments beckon the viewer to follow along on an eerie, slow-paced journey through the twenty-four individual frames that give the film its title. While *24 Frames* lasts 114 minutes, time on screen appears to stand still. The steadily held camera pierces a succession of openings delimited by physical contours such as a windowsill, an open door or a car window, and that reveal the central point of the shot, determining what the viewer can see. Looping themes of reverie, mystery, abandonment or desolation capture the imaginary world of wintry landscapes with

falling snow, rain or howling wind, bodies of water, open fields or urban landscapes and therein the fleeting presence of birds, a cat, cows, horses, deer and other wildlife, the recurring presence of crows and occasional, mostly unwelcome, humans. Is it photography that has become cinematic, or cinema that has been turned into photography? Undoubtedly, Kiarostami's last film experiment both reinforces and challenges the temporal limits of painting and photography. The introductory comment, credited to the director himself and written across a black screen at the film's opening, indicates this artistic conundrum: "I always wonder to what extent the artist aims to depict the reality of a scene. Painters capture only one frame of reality and nothing before or after it" (Abbas Kiarostami, *24 Frames*). As Ahmad Kiarostami has mentioned in interviews about his father's work, Abbas Kiarostami allegedly preferred photography over cinema because he felt photography was the only place where a story could be told without worrying about time.¹

I begin this essay through this image of the provocative aperture of Kiarostami's lens to bring to the forefront the concept of time vis-à-vis the framing of photographs and portraits as contained within another art form: the literary narrative. My analysis will focus on the work of Eça de Queirós whose frequent references to the art of painting, paintings and how he viewed his own literary work as ambitiously wanting to 'paint' Portuguese society, "a minha ambição seria pintar a sociedade portuguesa" (Queirós, 2008: 35), has already been noted by literary critics.² Here, however, through

1 Ahmad Kiarostami in a live interview at the UCLA Celebration of Iranian Cinema, May 13, 2018 and the Gene Siskel Film Center Q&A after the screening of *Certified Copy*, Chicago, October 23, 2019.

2 See the work of Adriano de Gusmão (1945), "Eça e a Pintura," in Lúcia Miguel Pereira (ed.), *Livro do Centenário de Eça de Queirós*, Lisboa / Rio de Janeiro: Edições Dois Mundos, 653-

the Kiarostami paradigm, my purpose takes a different approach. Focusing on the last decades of the nineteenth century, a time period predating the popularity of the moving image when photographs, daguerreotypes, miniatures and painted portraits were in vogue, my discussion centers on the moments captured in Eça's literal frames of painted portraits and photographs and how the narrative either permits reconstructions or elides what happened prior to or following these immortalized moments. While removed from the present action of the narrative plot – equivalent to the active filming of a camera – these frames capture stories that hark back to the narrative and are left to the interpretation of readers and/or diegetic characters. These frames are snapshots of time that render the human subject present in relation to the narration, whether temporarily absent or deceased, creating through the art of portraiture and photography a dichotomy between time passing or standing still.

Naturalistic painting's divine force was this capacity to link the image to the present and produce the illusion of immortality. As Roland Barthes theorized in his "Rhetoric of the Image," the image (that etymologically links to the root *imitari* or to copy) is "re-presentation, which is to say ultimately resurrection" (Barthes, 1977: 32). He writes: "Now even—and above all if – the image is in a certain manner the limit of meaning, it permits the consideration of a veritable ontology of the process of signification. How does meaning get into the image? Where does it end? And if it ends, what is there *beyond*?" (Barthes, 1977: 32). Decades before Kiarostami would play with similar considerations, the *beyond* (emphasized by the author

78; Silva, Garcez da (1986), *A pintura na obra de Eça de Queirós*, Lisboa, Caminho, and the online text by Carlos Francisco de Moraes (2010) "Discursos literário e pictório em diálogo: a arte do retrato queirosiano," *Espéculo. Revista estudos literários*, <http://www.ucm.es/info/especulo/numero46/requeiro.html> (accessed 28/07/2019).

in the original) intrigued Barthes in his attempt to comprehend images and their “ineffable richness” (Barthes, 1977: 32). Naturalist paintings with their mimetic reflection of reality, and photographs through their ability to reproduce faithfully reality to “analogical perfection” (Barthes, 1977: 17), despite differences of color, lighting, size or perspective, created an awareness of the past in the present. The concept of time and its passing, along with the meaning that is *beyond* the frame, are key to the appreciation of portraits and photographs in literary texts, which examples from Eça’s novels will serve to illustrate below.

2. In Walter Benjamin’s essay “Small History of Photography” (1931), he writes:

Despite all the skill of the photographer and all the good planning in the pose of his model, the viewer feels irresistibly compelled to seek out the tiniest spark of concurrence, a here and now, in such an image, with which actuality has seared, so to speak, the characters in the image. We are compelled to find the inconspicuous place in which, in the essence of that moment which passed long ago, the future nestles still today, so eloquently that we, looking back, are able to discover it. It is indeed a different nature that speaks to the camera than that which speaks to the eye; different above all in the sense that a space saturated by a person who is conscious is superseded by one saturated unconsciously. (Benjamin, 2015: 67)

This long but significant quote emphasizes the separation between that which the photographer purposely includes in the photograph (applicable also to a painter and his/her work) and how the viewer perceives the image, aiming to link it to the present and thereby overcoming the temporal separation between the moment captured

in the image and the time it is viewed. The phrase “it is indeed a different nature that speaks to the camera than that which speaks to the eye” resonates with Barthes’s perhaps more straightforward disquisition, several decades later:

The type of consciousness the photograph involves is indeed truly unprecedented, since it establishes not a consciousness of the *being-there* of the thing (which any copy could provoke) but an awareness of its *having-been-there*. What we have is a new space-time category: spatial immediacy and temporal anteriority, the photograph being an illogical conjunction between the *here-now* and the *there-then*. [...] the photograph is never experienced as illusion... its reality that of the having-been-there, for in every photograph there is the always stupefying evidence of this is how it was, giving us, by a precious miracle, a reality from which we are sheltered. (Barthes, 1977: 44)

At the core of Benjamin’s “essence of that moment which passed long ago” or Barthes’s “awareness of it [the photograph] *having-been-there*” is the juxtaposition of space and time captured by a photograph from the perspective of the present. Eça’s skillful use of photographs in one of his early novels, *O primo Basílio* (1878), illustrates, long before the articulation of these theories, the immediacy of space that draws the viewer to search for that “inconspicuous place... where the future nestles still...” Emotionally caught between her sense of duty towards her absent husband Jorge and her budding infatuation with the title character Basílio, Luísa gives in to the thrill of having a lover, which she justifies as a sign of fate. Unable to bear the distance and time that separates her from her lover, she enters the study to write a letter and is struck with guilt upon seeing a photograph of her husband: life-size, or at least in her imagination, the one-to-one scale makes his presence all the more real:

Foi ao escritório. Logo ao entrar o seu olhar deu com a fotografia de Jorge – a cabeça de tamanho natural – no seu caixilho envernizado de preto. Uma comoção comprimiu-lhe o coração; ficou como tolhida – como uma pessoa encalmada de ter corrido que entra na frieza de um subterrâneo; e examinava o seu cabelo frisado, a barba negra, a gravata de pontas, as duas espadas encruzadas que reluziam por cima... (Queirós, n/d: 182)

The feeling of guilt that consumes Luísa in the study (“Aquele quarto estava tão penetrado da personalidade de Jorge,” Queirós, n/d: 182), the convincing reality of his *having-been-there* that lingers into the present, reappears in her first rendezvous with Basílio in their secret love nest “Paraíso.” The narrator’s meticulous description of the room Basílio pays for by the hour portrays the passage of time in every corner, the worn-out steps, the soiled bedding, the yellowed mattress, the gnawed mat with wine stains... Two images catch Luísa’s eye: a fantastical picture of a blue-robed flying figure scattering flowers and a large framed photograph that fascinates her the most, depicting a short and stout individual in white trousers who sits with his legs spread apart, a hand on his knee and the other on a truncated column. Below the frame hung a crown of everlasting flowers, “como sobre a pedra de um túmulo” (Queirós, n/d: 197). The man in the photograph appears to be staring straight at Luísa, grinning with a sense of satisfaction. In syntony with the Paraíso’s environment, this portrait of the unknown poser belongs to the décor’s long-gone more glorious days. Its presence marks the passage of time, and the narrative’s insistence on its description, without so much as an indication of its origin, elides all logical explanation. There is nothing *beyond* the isolated image of this “piloto ao domingo” (Queirós, s/d: 197), or any narrative clues to reconstruct the narrative surrounding the bizarre crown of flowers attached to

it, even in one's wildest imagination. As Luísa gives in somewhat reluctantly to Basílio's seduction, she cannot shake the penetrating eyes of the timeless photograph, "vendo constantemente voltada para si a face alvar do piloto" (Queirós, s./d.: 198).

In both of the scenes described above, the veracity of the image in the frames captured through the photographic medium, despite the very different figures portrayed, reinforces the patriarchal gaze. The true-to-life image of her husband and the unknown "pilot" eerily make themselves present in her illicit love affair. The photograph of her husband accompanies the development of Luísa's amorous scheming. In a pivotal moment of the novel when she resolves that the only solution is for her to run away with Basílio given that her maid Juliana has found her love letters, Luísa packs a small bag of belongings but hesitates as she is about to leave:

Ergueu-se; mas parecia que alguma coisa de subtil e de forte a prendia, a enleava... (...) Veio ao toucador, mexeu nos pentes, abriu as gavetas; de repente entrou na sala, foi ao álbum, tirou a fotografia de Jorge, meteu-a toda trémula no saco de marroquim, olhou ainda em roda como desvairada, saiu, atirou com a porta, desceu a escada correndo. (Queirós, s./d.: 254)

It is as though the force of the photograph pulls her back. With the photograph as a tangible representation of "temporal anteriority" (Barthes, 1977: 44) merged with the space of the present, carrying the photograph of her legitimate husband could, at least psychologically, possibly minimize the illegitimacy of Luísa's intended departure. As Jane Rabb discusses, in the nineteenth century the novelty of the daguerreotype and then the photograph was that they contained the promise of "a permanent proximity of loved ones" (Rabb, 1995: xxxv). Despite Luísa's intention to leave her husband, the photograph

maintains a link to him, and by association, his body that is represented in the photograph and with whom she feels she still has a point of contact, as ironic and illogical, or even hypocritical as it may seem, perhaps also lessening her guilt. As Théry-Guillou and Thoizet write, “Le portrait est ainsi lié au corps qu’il représente: il en garde les principaux aspects sensuels et donne l’illusion à la personne qui le regarde, le touch, l’entend ou le sent, de percevoir un être vivant” (Théry-Guillou and Thoizet, 1996: 41). Similar to the miniature portraits, that were also popular at the same time, the photograph could be easily, and discretely, transported. Luísa slips Jorge’s photograph into her leather bag and runs out of the house. Much to her shock and disappointment, however, Basílio, is not at all convinced at the idea of taking Luísa to Paris. His feelings towards Luísa are summarized as pity and desire, but not love: “sem a amar, apetecia-a: era tão bem feita, tão amorosa, as revelações do vício davam-lhe um delírio tão adorável” (Queirós, n/d: 260). In his hotel room, alongside his boxes of cigars, a few books and issues of the *Figaro*, lie a photograph of Luísa and one of a horse. The banality of this association, i.e. Luísa’s photograph lying on his bedside table alongside that of a horse, emblemizes his true intentions: “Não lhe faltava mais nada senão partir para Paris com aquele trambolhozinho!” (Queirós, n/d: 261). At some point, Luísa had engaged in what Kramer, quoted in the epigraph of this paper, rightly referred to as “the timeless art of seduction” (*Seinfeld*, Season 8, Episode 5), giving Basílio a self-portrait, no doubt unexpecting of its ultimate debased outcome.

3. A decade after the publication of *O primo Basílio*, in d’*Os Maias* (1888), one of Eça’s most typically naturalist novels with its intense focus on heredity, the genealogy of the Maia family is linked through its representation in portraiture. Two seemingly insignificant portraits of times gone by are mentioned in the opening chapter

of the novel. The first is of Afonso da Maia's mother-in-law, the countess of Runa, made by none less than the renown romantic painter John Constable, and that portrays the countess "de tricorne de plumas e vestido escarlate de caçadora inglesa, sobre um fundo de paisagem enevoadá" (Queirós, 2017: 64). Carlos Francisco de Morais comments that the "bela tela auxilia a dar o tom de sóbria, sólida e antiga elegância que marca o Ramalhete e a vida de Afonso da Maia" (Morais, 2010). Yet here we should add that despite the soberness of the painting and its setting, it hangs symbolically in a room that is infrequently used, implying that the painting, regardless of its famous author, is only rarely viewed, and the countess's fabulous triple crown of feathers and bright red English hunting dress have long fallen from the spotlight. While no further commentary is provided on this particular painting, following his wife's passing, Afonso da Maia fears for their son Pedro's sanity because of his resemblance to the grandfather of his deceased wife, also on the Runa side of the family, here giving substance to the weight of naturalism's motif of heredity. One day it suddenly dawned on Afonso that Pedro was physically similar to his wife's deranged grandfather who hung himself from a fig tree thinking he was the Biblical Judas:

E havia agora uma ideia que, a seu pesar, às vezes o torturava: descobrira a grande parença de Pedro com um avô de sua mulher, um Runa, de quem existia um retrato em Benfica: este homem extraordinário, com que na casa se metia medo às crianças, enlouquecera – e julgando-se Judas enfocara-se numa figueira..." (Queirós, 2017: 76)

While nothing is said of the portrait per se except for this passing reference, his wife's grandfather's suicide is cause for Afonso to fear for their son. The physiognomic likeness, a defining point of naturalistic portraiture, operates here on several levels as it links

Pedro's possible insanity to his maternal great-grandfather. As Joanna Woodall discusses, "physiognomic treatises provided systems whereby a person's character could be deduced from his (and less commonly her) external appearance. (...) It relied on symptomatic or indexical (pointing to) relationships between 'external' likeness and 'internal' identity..." (Woodall, 1997: 6; 11). A similar symbolic role is endowed in the portraits Eça weaves throughout the rest of the narrative, their elision, explicit mention or description. Afonso's grandson Carlos appears unexpectedly in Lisbon with an architect-interior designer from London to whom he hands over "as quatro paredes do Ramalhete, para ele ali criar, exercendo o seu gosto, um interior confortável, de luxo inteligente e sóbrio" (Queirós, 2017: 63). The first and only reference to portraits during the Ramalhete remodel is a brief mention of the second-floor corridor "guarnecido com retratos de família" (Queirós, 2017: 65). As it is well known, the family portrait of Carlos's father Pedro in particular becomes a crucial piece of the narrative. When Maria Eduarda first visits Ramalhete, she wanders through the rooms, especially intrigued by the silver tray overflowing with photographs of women from Carlos's past, a prelude to the discussion around his father's portrait: "a coronela de hussardos de amazona, madame Rughel decotada, outras ainda," all fleeting affairs that Carlos dismissively compares to "quartos de estalagem onde se dorme uma vez" (Queirós, 2017: 475). Most significantly, in the small dining room, not yet remodeled with the pearl and golden satin that Carlos had picked out for the walls, is where he had recently placed a portrait of his father, "uma tela banal, representando um moço pálido, de grandes olhos, com luvas de camurça e um chicote na mão" (Queirós, 2017: 477). When compared to Constable's "bela tela" of the aristocratic maternal great-grandmother, the "tela banal" depicting a pale, wide-eyed youth points to a generational decline as reflected through the portraits.

As Marlène Guillou-Théry and Evelyn Thoizet discuss in the first part of their study *Galérie de portraits dans le récit*, “en tant qu’objet, le portrait pictural ou photographique déclenche des actions et noue des drames; en tant que représentation d’un personnage, il produit des situations romanesques complexes, mettant en jeu les relations entre l’artiste, l’observateur et le modèle” (Guillou-Théry and Thoizet, 1996: 6). Without knowing whom the portrait represents, Maria Eduarda stares at it with curiosity:

Depois reparou no retrato de Pedro da Maia: e interessou-se, ficou a contemplar aquela face descorada, que o tempo fizera lívida, e onde pareciam mais tristes os grandes olhos de árabe, negros e lânguidos.

– Quem é? – perguntou.

– É meu pai. (Queirós, 2017: 477)

As Maria Eduarda examines even more closely the portrait she concludes that Carlos resembles not his father, but extraordinarily, *her* mother, something she has thought of often: something about his forehead, his nose, but mostly his mannerisms, his smile, the way he sometimes seems distant and forgetful (Queirós, 2017: 478). What is of narrative interest here is that it is not the portrait that is present that reveals the dramatic dénouement, but Carlos’s *non*-resemblance with the portrait of his father that evokes the image of Maria Eduarda’s mother. The revelation that comes from this dissimilitude gives a new twist on the dramatic force of the portrait that Guillou-Théry and Thoizet theorized as the “forte valeur dramatique du portrait [qui] tient à sa fonction de révélateur” (Guillou-Théry and Thoizet, 1996: 62). In this crucial scene, the faded image of Pedro da Maia goes beyond the object that is contemplated to include the character who observes the painting, Maria Eduarda, “le personnage contemplant”

in the terms of Guillou-Théry and Thozet (Guillou-Théry and Thozet, 1996: 62).

The fact that there is no portrait of the mother is likewise symbolic: portraits of Carlos's father represent what is re-presentable, the paternal family line, void of his mother's disappearance and subsequent illicit affairs. But even this portrait will be temporarily cast aside. At the end of the novel, when Carlos da Maia returns to the family home of Ramalheite in the company of his lifelong friend Ega, he finds his father's portrait on the floor, even more weathered with the passing years: "com as suas luvas de camurça na mão, os grandes olhos árabes na face triste e pálida que o tempo *amarelara mais*" (Queirós, 2017: 693, my emphasis). Almost giving the portrait a livelihood similar to that of Oscar Wilde's Dorian Gray, the narrative ambiguously comments on the portrait's and its subject's aged look. The portrait, as Aristotle discussed, epitomized re-presentation in its most literal sense. Here Carlos's bittersweet pleasure comes from beholding the portrait and, despite its deteriorated condition, its likeness to what he perceived of his father whom he only remembered through this portrait. The position the painting is found in is likewise important, "esquecido e voltado para a parede," as though left abandoned in a corner. Similar to the portrait of the Countess de Runa, Pedro da Maia's portrait had long been forgotten, defeating the purpose of their existence, as expressed again in the words of Guillou-Théry and Thozet "le portrait est bien évidemment avant tout un objet destine au regard" (Guillou-Théry and Thozet, 1996: 39). The fact that Carlos recuperates the abandoned painting, instills new life into it and through the protagonist's gaze the portrait regains existence. But Carlos doesn't dwell on the portrait at hand. Placing it on the dresser and destiné wiping off the dust, his thoughts turn to the family patriarch, his grandfather Afonso who raised him, and he exclaims: "– Não há nada que me faça mais pena do que não ter um

retrato do avô!” (Queirós, 2017: 693). The father’s portrait is a weak substitute for one of his grandfather, but Carlos will take it with him to Paris. As Jane Woodall writes, “The desire which lives at the heart of naturalistic portraiture is to overcome separation: to render a subject distant in time, space, spirit, eternally present. It is assumed that a ‘good’ likeness will perpetually unite the identities to which it refers” (Woodall, 1997: 8). There is no portrait of the grandfather, leaving the memory of Afonso a negative narrative space. Yet as readers we can only wonder which image would a portrait of the family patriarch have captured: Afonso of his youthful days, happily wed to a Runa, or having endured the weight of the family saga, episode after episode? Unlike Kiarostami, Eça most likely would not have been able to use the photograph or the picture without being concerned with the passing of time.

4. In no work by Eça de Queirós is the act of painting, portraits (or the lack thereof) and the missing stories they would tell, more prominent than in his unrevised novel *A tragédia da Rua das Flores* published posthumously. The whole narrative centers on the *making of* a portrait of one of Eça’s most developed female protagonists, Genoveva/Madame de Molineux. Despite multiple attempts, studies, much discussion and preparation, the portrait never materializes. In this sense, following the Kiarostami technique that frames this analysis, it is as though the novel constitutes the building up to an ultimate frame that is never made. As Ofélia Paiva Monteiro summarizes, “O retrato não chega, contudo, a concretizar-se, já porque Camilo se não decide quanto ao modo de representar o seu modelo, já porque—razão definitiva do aborto do projeto—ele resolve, perante a mesquinhez portuguesa, mudar radicalmente de vida: (...) decide partir sozinho para o Brasil” (Monteiro, 2013: 244). On the other hand, Eça’s unpolished story uses the momentum of a painted

portrait for several narrative motifs, culminating in the painter Camilo Serrão begging Vítor to bring his model to his 'atelier' for the future of his career as a painter depends upon it. Prior to this build-up, the motif of the portrait furthers the love interest between this mysterious widow who came from France and her much younger suitor, Vítor.

Orphaned and living with his uncle Timóteo, Vítor first sees Genoveva at the Teatro da Trindade, in what constitutes the opening scene of the novel. Following this intriguing encounter, during a restless night Vítor sees his father in a chaotic dream populated by this budding love-interest, historical figures from Michelet's *History of the French Revolution*, and a herd of white ram. The narrator suggests that his father's dream appearance most probably resembled a portrait hanging in the dining room as that was the only knowledge Vítor had of him: "... seu pai *que apenas conhecia do retrato*, que ali estava na sala de jantar, seu pai, vestido como um Convencional, o olhar sepulcral, uma trança de cabelos negros de mulher, apertada contra o peito" (Queirós, 2018: 73, my emphasis). More consequential for the outcome of the plot is Vítor's complete lack of knowledge of his mother's physical appearance, without so much as a family portrait. Turning his nose up at soup for lunch, Vítor is chastised by his uncle who tells him that "caldo de cobra" (Queirós, 2018: 76) was all he ate for a full year when he was taken ill with tuberculosis because of heartache. Much to Vítor's utter surprise, his uncle Timotéo admits to having fallen in love with Vítor's mother when she was fourteen years old and despite her cutting short his serenade with a bucket of dirty, cold water, Timotéo recalls her beauty fondly: "Tua mãe tinha então catorze anos. Mas era alta, forte, com um cabelo até aos pés: parecia ter vinte e dois. Era formosa, c'os diabos. Tu não podes saber, não deixou retrato" (Queirós, 2018: 76).

This simple phrase, “Tu não podes saber, não deixou retrato,” is the essence of the novel and also serves as a sort of the moral justification for what will develop into an incestuous love affair between Vítor and, unbeknownst to him, his mother Genoveva/Madame de Molineux. Naturally, without a portrait or photograph, Vítor does not recognize his mother whom he had only known as an infant, and when she reappears in his life, under a new identity and name as Genoveva/Madame de Molineux, their romantic involvement leads to the dramatic ending of the plot that lends to the title the concept of a tragedy. Given the absence of his mother’s portrait, it is all the more interesting that the narrator compares Vítor’s intense examination of Genoveva in the theater box during the opening scene of the novel to studying a famous painting, “admirava-a (...), estudando-a com a aplicação que se dá a um quadro ilustre” (Queirós, 2018: 56). For Vítor, more naturally inclined to be a sentimental romantic poet than a lawyer practitioner, the contours of her neck and breast surpass the beauty of a statue or an engraving, “a linha do pescoço e do seio excedia o que ele observava no peito das estátuas, ou de gravuras” (Queirós, 2018: 56).

The main thrust of the storyline is Vítor working towards reconstituting the missing portrait of his mother, using his amateur painter and friend Camilo Serrão as a means to displace his rival Dâmaso. With Dâmaso as Genoveva’s partner, he occupies the position of Vítor’s father in what has all the elements of an oedipal triangle, despite Vítor ignoring Genoveva’s true identity through the end of the plot and even following her tragic suicide. Timóteo’s words of wisdom, uttered early in the narrative, long before Vítor’s involvement with Genoveva, ring true until the end: “Ignoras um par de coisas, ignoras!” (Queirós, 2018: 79). Through the narrative point of view of Timóteo, who, smoking his pipe, glances up from time to time at the oil painting of Vítor’s father and his brother Pedro that

hangs in the living room, the narrative fills in the information about the family's past and a detailed description of the portrait: "era uma face pálida e comprida, com um longo bigode preto caído aos cantos da boca, o cabelo comprido, a testa branca, alta gravata de cetim preto" (Queirós, 2018: 80). This detailed description of the portrait creates a narrative pause, "le temps de l'histoire continue à s'écouler tandis que le temps du récit s'immobilise sur le portrait décrit" (Guillou-Théry and Thoizet, 1996: 53). This portrait was taken in the tumultuous years of the Maria da Fonte polemic (1846-1847), an event that resonated with Pedro's domestic turmoil in an unhappy marriage. The portrait, capturing this moment, fixes Pedro in the prime of his young adulthood, prior to his wife's departure and his fatal illness in Angola. That which Guillou-Théry and Thoizet indicate regarding the aging process, here is also valid in relation to Pedro's illness and final days, "sa représentation picturale, qui correspond à un moment donné de son évolution, diffère forcément de ce qu'elle [une personne vivante] est devenue" (Guillou-Théry and Thoizet, 1996: 119).

When Vítor first sets his eyes on Genoveva at the Teatro da Trindade, five days after she arrived in Lisbon, he too is at the prime of his young adulthood, at age twenty-three years old. It is certainly not mere repetition that the narrative emphasizes Genoveva's fear of aging through comments by other protagonists, often in her favor. One acquaintance compares her affectionately to a crab who walks backwards and does not look a day older than 25 (Queirós, 2018: 347); in another moment, the narrator justifies her urgency to marry Vítor because her youth was fleeting and her skin was showing signs of future wrinkles (Queirós, 2018: 402). Camilo Serrão, in his desperation to have her portrait launch his artistic career, begs Vítor to bring Genoveva, so he can immortalize her by his brush strokes, implying the fleeting nature of life and beauty (Queirós, 2018: 404). The portrait, hélas, is never made, and in the final frame of the novel,

after Genoveva learns that she is Vítor's mother, his perception of her changes to that of a disheveled pale, old woman, immediately prior to her falling to her death from the balcony (Queirós, 2018: 442).

These examples, chosen among others in Eça de Queirós's novels, are some of the most emblematic of the artistic portrait and literary references to frames in his work. If a writer like Eça de Queirós makes recourse to the art of portraiture and photography, could it also be that it sheds light on his own creativity? Along with several of his literary characters, Eça is known to have attempted painting in Neuilly in 1892, as did the main protagonist of *Os Maias*, Carlos, who “tentou num *atelier* improvisado, a pintura a óleo...” (Queirós, 2017: 138). This aside, most importantly in Eça's work the physical description of photographs and paintings – or their absence – serves to accentuate iconic moments of the novels, often gesturing towards that which is only implied or indicated within the texts, creating a visual shorthand for plot advancement and revelation. Oftentimes it is through the narrative details, the writer's ingenious “estética do pormenor” (Reis, 2002) that the reader may recreate the moments, à la Kiarostami, that lead up to or follow the image contained by the frame. Continuously aiming to establish a dialogue between his primary artform of the written word and the painted portrait and photography, these novels also showcase Eça's attempt to immortalize his gallery of characters through and *beyond* these literary moments in time.

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