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## Introduction

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Elected Macquaire Dictionary's word of the year in 2019, "cancel culture" is defined in this publication as

the attitudes within a community which call for or bring about the withdrawal of support from a public figure, such as cancellation of an acting role, a ban on playing an artist's music, removal from social media, etc., usually in response to an accusation of a socially unacceptable action or comment (Macquaire Dictionary, 2019).

Not only is this a timely and important topic of discussion, as denoted by the choice of the term as word of the year by the prestigious Australian compendium, but its definition encapsulates some elements that deserve special mention. First, cancel culture occurs "within a community", which requires us to think of it not as a process of individual judgments, but as a phenomenon whereby communities strengthen their social ties through the judgment and execration of public figures – or even anonymous individuals, who find themselves reviled overnight. At a time when much of our experience of the common good has been hijacked by big corporations in social media "communities" (or mock communities

based on likes, shares and superficial comments), it is also on these platforms that cancel culture gains momentum most quickly.

Fame and infamy are equally meteoric in spaces of this ilk, where cancellation can occur “in response to an accusation of a socially unacceptable *action* or *comment*”, to quote the definition in the Macquaire Dictionary (2019). Action and comment, doing and saying, are two forms of agency in the world that are subject to collective judgments and virtual canonizations or lynchings, which occur at a speed that outpaces any capacity for critical reflection. Of more immediate interest to scholars of literature, for whom every act is also speech, and vice versa, is the way cancel culture is being increasingly exercised not just against public and/or mainstream media figures, but also against writers, filmmakers and figures from the arts in general.

Cancelled due to events in their lives, their stances on public issues or even the content or expression of their works, many of these creators are no longer being studied, or else their works have been narrowed down to a single interpretation. The impoverishment of perspectives on the cultural and artistic output of these individuals ends up stifling critical reflection, limiting the potential for the “distribution of the sensible” (Rancière, 2009) – and therefore the aesthetic and political experiences that only art can offer.

Under this paradigm, rather than fostering “collective intelligence” (Lévy, 2003), as promised in the 1990s, offering humanity great opportunities for progress through networked knowledge, the internet has come to engender a “swarm mentality” (Han, 2018), or herd mentality, allowing any expression of approval or disapproval to go dangerously viral without a second thought. For this reason, many researchers see cancel culture as a radical extension of outrage culture, in which opinion transitions to massification, public judgment and the summary imposition of sanctions in a matter of a few clicks, triggering potentially disastrous results.

This phenomenon, which seems to have become almost the norm in our historical time, has intrigued some leading contemporary thinkers, including Christian Dunker and Maria Rita Kehl in their most recent interviews on YouTube, in which they highlight, with deep concern, the dangers inherent to trivializing this type of behaviour. These reflections then beg a question concerning cancel culture in the field of literature, namely, the extent to which issues intrinsic to the current-day “self” transcend the history of the arts and therefore justify the decision to shun certain works of literature, particularly if we consider the undeniable cultural legacy epitomized in the classic themes, some of which are millennial, in the great works from the past.

Any work of literature, as a product of human creativity, will always transcend the “self” of its author or reader. According to Barthes’ premise of the death of the author, it matters little who produces it: a work of art will always be simultaneously greater and lesser than the “self”. Faced with this dilemma, the empirical author is, so to speak, no more than a small bead, a tiny sphere, in the vast rosary of humanity. Thus, everything they write becomes greater than their own story. Essentially, when an author’s work goes out into the world, it (the work) catalyses something potentially magnificent in response to all the revisitings and reinterpretations that occur in different times and spaces, depending on who is willing to read it.

And although late modernity or postmodernity is again idealizing the creative figure, the human being – the author themselves – is still always one step removed from the delightful magnificence of creation itself, which eternally attracts literary and cultural analysis and reflection. Yet according to the logic that drives cancel culture, an author’s work can be discredited by the choices and actions of the empirical subject, rather than being reinterpreted under new theoretical and methodological paradigms that emerge as cultural change occurs.

Given the urgency of these discussions in a hypermediatized world, where artists can be aggrandized or ostracized with equal speed in the mass media, this edition of *Convergência Lusíada* focuses on the issue of *culture and cancellation*, with a special focus on the canon of Portuguese literature, in dialogue with other Portuguese-language literatures and cultures.

Opening this volume is “A sociedade do cancelamento ou a literatura como o incancelável” [“Cancel society, or literature as uncancellable”], by Luis Maffei, which discusses how the idea of cancellation, previously applicable only to events (e.g., cancelling a class, a celebration, etc.), is now applied to people (cancelling an artist, an “influencer”, etc.). Maffei stresses in his argument that this transformation is inseparable from the digitalization of social relations, especially via the internet, which has become a space where culture – always an arena where meanings have been disputed by subjects and identities – is constrained by an identitarianism capable of silencing or “cancelling” debate. In the field of literature, he argues, “[w]hen cancelling reaches literature, not only does it tend to curb debate, but it also undermines the equality that literary texts propose between writer and reader. The becoming proposed by literature, having overcome the form/content dichotomy, is impeded by cancellation, even while offensive content in literary works can always be deplored.”

In the article “O processo de marginalização de António Botto: poesia, homoerotismo e hostilidade crítica” [“The marginalization of António Botto: poetry, homoeroticism and critical hostility”], Oscar José de Paula Neto continues this debate in the form of a case study of early twentieth-century Portuguese literature. While discussing the work of other contemporary authors who addressed non-cis-heteronormative sexual practices, the article focuses on Botto’s work and its “cancellation” by the cultural milieu and literary critics of his day, with their strong Catholic overtones. While reporting on a phenomenon from the Portuguese literary system over a century

ago, brought into the public arena in the mainstream press, the article reminds us that cancel culture long predates digital social media, taking the form of boycotts, ostracism and all manner of public vilification.

Also reflecting on the antecedents of cancel culture in Portuguese literature is “Judith Navarro (1910–1987): uma voz silenciada/cancelada(?)” [“Judith Navarro (1910–1987): a cancelled/silenced voice(?)”]. In it, Jorge Vicente Valentim brings together the ideas of cancelling and silencing to consider how the author of *A Azinhaga dos Besouros* was, like other Portuguese writers, rendered invisible in hegemonic literary criticism both during her lifetime and after her death, especially concerning her identification with the neo-realist school. Valentim points out that in the case of Navarro, this invisibility was not rendered by another form of cancelling or brutal policing of her daily life: censorship. Indeed, despite the ideological apparatus of the authoritarian Estado Novo regime, Judith Navarro’s texts were never targeted by President Salazar’s censors, which just goes to show how invisible her work was, in that it did not even attract the attention of the state police force.

In the article “Entre Literatura e Política: o jovem Fernando Pessoa e os seus descontentes” [“Between literature and politics: the young Fernando Pessoa and his discontents”], Marcelo Alves da Silva takes a similar approach to the issue of cancellation, addressing a period in Portuguese literature prior to the existence of social media. However, his analysis does not deal with an author who was silenced or cancelled, but with one who, in his texts, cancelled (or, to use a lexicon more common in the field of literature, “discredited”) others. More specifically, it investigates the mechanisms of vilification Pessoa used in his value judgments of cultural and literary expression in Portugal’s First Republic and France’s *belle époque*. Silva interprets Pessoa’s literary judgments as political stances that violated the clauses of the social contract, as occurs in cancel culture.

“O cancelamento do romance: uma reflexão crítica sobre leitura e censura” [“The cancellation of the novel: a critical reflection on reading and censorship”], by Germana Araújo Sales and Jeniffer Jesus da Silva, discusses control and surveillance in the field of literature today and in the 1800s. Specifically, it analyses how, at different times, different segments of Brazilian society developed a mistrust of the novel as a genre or even argued for its censorship. Whatever guise they may take over the centuries, attitudes of this kind are always a reaction to something in the novel or work of fiction that subverts or lays bare controversial aspects of society. The responses they elicit from conservatives invoke morality as a pretext for ideological surveillance, just like individuals are cancelled on social media or certain works of literature are cancelled from school curricula. In the latter case, the researchers note, the actors responsible for the cancelling are politicians, education professionals, or parents of students with agendas ranging from “moral values to issues of political representation, in both cases taking conservative ideological positions regarding the power of books to influence students, children, or adolescents”.

Also addressing contemporary literature, “Isabela Figueiredo: revolucionária ou reacionária?” [“Isabela Figueiredo: revolutionary or reactionary?”], by Joaquim Mamede de Carvalho e Silva Neto, provokes us even in its title to take an ambivalent stance when reading the work of this Portuguese fiction writer, who addressed such controversial topics as colonialism, female sexuality and Oedipal parenthood, notwithstanding any risk of boycott or censorship. In his text, Silva Neto proposes that the novels *Caderno de memórias coloniais* (2009), *A gorda* (2016) and *Um cão no meio do caminho* (2022) deflect any dichotomous reading of these topics, for which he draws on both analysis of the texts themselves and the writer’s own comments on her work, as in the podcast *Podfest*, when she stated that she couldn’t care less about the risk of being

cancelled. As Silva Neto argues, for Isabela Figueiredo “literature reflects the complexity of human experience, exposing both merits and flaws, so it is not up to the writer to censor their creations, but to portray the diversity of human nature, including those who are not morally irreprehensible”.

In “Joaquim Manuel Magalhães: 50 anos da mais radical poética da destruição” [“Joaquim Manuel Magalhães: 50 years of the most radical poetics of destruction”], Tereza Tavares discusses the work of the important Portuguese poet and critic, whose career spanned from the mid-1900s to the early 2000s. Discussing the particularities of his output, Tavares analyses what she calls his “poetics of destruction”, which she identifies in different aspects of his poetry, such as the images of debris, decay and degradation he uses as metaphors to express his criticism of contemporary times. At the level of utterance, Tavares analyses this poetics of destruction in the unusual way he produced his 2010 work *Um toldo em vermelho* [A Red Awning]. In the book, which compiles fragments of some of the poems published during his (then) 36-year literary career, Magalhães declares all the rest of his work to be eliminated – or (why not?) *cancelled*, to expand the semantic scope of the term. This operation of transformation and annihilation, quite unprecedented in Portuguese literature, was one he repeated in 2018 (in *Para comigo* [To with me]) and 2021 (in the edition of *Canoagem* [Canoeing]), as discussed in detail in the article.

In addition to the dossier on culture and cancellation in the contemporary context, this volume of *Convergência Lusíada* also brings together powerful articles in the miscellaneous (*Vária*) section, which present the results of recent research on Portuguese literature, as described below.

The text we chose to open this section was “Castilho e a Geração de 70: um ‘cancelamento’ a ser revisto” [“Castilho and the 70s generation: a ‘cancellation’ worth revisiting”], in which Ana Cristina



Comandulli and Ida Alves highlight something mentioned several times elsewhere in the dossier, but not in the context of nineteenth-century literature. Indeed, if we understand cancelling not just as the mass media phenomenon witnessed today, but as taking *other forms*, such as attempts to silence, deface, ostracize, oblivate, delete and censor, then the nineteenth-century writer António Feliciano de Castilho is a prime target of this procedure. After enjoying widespread success in the first half of the nineteenth century, he was harshly criticized, reviled and ultimately *cancelled* by younger writers whom he, as an educator, had helped to train. The authors of the study argue that in the 1800s “writers and other public figures were undervalued through a lack of recognition of their work, negative criticism in newspapers and magazines, and even the use of caricatures and other attacks to belittle the work of the person in question”. Such was the case of Castilho, who suffered a process of erasure imposed by younger and better-known artists from the so-called 70s Generation. This was both radical and, as Comandulli and Alves argue, unjust, since Castilho was a man who always stood for popular education and, more importantly, was always deeply concerned about the advent of the professional writer (which was, we might recall, a nineteenth-century invention). His body of work, with its different influences, reflects a just concern: that literature should underpin the education of the new society that had emerged (that of the nineteenth-century bourgeoisie), making it a vehicle of education and pedagogy. This is why Castilho was so committed to supporting and encouraging the work of female writers, who researchers are only now beginning to unearth. In this regard, Comandulli and Alves write: “as a youth, Castilho frequented the salons held by the Marquise of Alorna and Francisca Passolo da Costa, which were instrumental in his advocacy of women in the Portuguese literary milieu of his day”. Disagreeing with the view that Castilho’s radical erasure was in any way deserved, the article



questions the perennity of values imposed by literary history and criticism to argue that his “cancellation” in nineteenth-century Portuguese literature – a disregard for his work that continues to this day – should be reappraised, at the very least to gain a better understanding of this defender of public education for the masses and “entrepreneur of letters”.

The following article, “Gândavo e a *História da província Santa Cruz*” (“Gândavo and the *History of the Province of Santa Cruz*”), by Paulo Pereira, focuses on the first Portuguese publication entirely dedicated to Brazil, entitled “History of the Province of Santa Cruz which we Commonly Call Brazil”, by Pero de Magalhães de Gândavo, dated 1576. The study retraces the history of this work and its editions, both in Portuguese and in translation, observing that the more than seven-decade lag between the arrival of Europeans in Brazil and the publication of *Gândavo* is evidence of the little regard the Portuguese paid to this territory in light of the promise of riches from the Orient. The study also highlights the different orientations in the work: historiographical, covering the discovery of Brazil to its division into two general governments after the death of Mem de Sá; geographical, detailing its climate, geography and natural resources; anthropological, describing the indigenous people and some aspects of their cultures; and propagandistic, indicating how Portuguese America could be a potential source of interest and profit for those who came to occupy it.

Following this is an article by Bruno Gomes Rodrigues titled “A construção de uma nova versificação portuguesa, 1777–1784” (“The construction of a new Portuguese versification, 1777–1784”). In it, Rodrigues presents three treatises on versification published in the last quarter of the eighteenth century: *Regras da versificação portuguesa* (Rules of Portuguese versification) (1777), by Francisco José Freire; *Tratado da versificação portuguesa* (Treatise on Portuguese versification) (1777), by Pedro José da Fonseca;

and *Tratado da versificação portuguesa* [Treatise on Portuguese versification] (1784), by Miguel do Couto Guerreiro. Underlying the analysis is the premise that, under the strong influence of the post-Pombal cultural scene, these works proposed a new form of Portuguese versification based on Manoel da Fonseca Borralho's *Luzes da poesia descobertas no oriente de Apollo* [Lights of poetry discovered in Apollo's East] (1724). Beyond the distinctions between the three treatises, the author draws attention to the disconnect between theme, meter and rhythm in them all, which, he suggests, "seemed to provide more room for poetic development than for a normative desire", making way for new forms of experimentation in Portuguese-language poetry.

The next article brings us forward to the twentieth century with the essay "Fernando Lemos em coleção: entre a poética da imagem sobreposta e o manejo da forma" ["Fernando Lemos in collection: between the poetics of superimposed images and the handling of form"]. In it, Lucas Elber de Souza Cavalcanti analyses the themes, language and materialities in the multimodal career of the Portuguese-Brazilian photographer, designer, publicist and poet Fernando Lemos, whose work straddled surrealism and abstractionism. The discussion, which begins with a review of Lemos' biography and work, takes as its corpus six of his works in the private collection of Maria Eugénia and Francisco Garcia, which represents a significant portion of the fine arts in Portuguese modernism. Based on this corpus, it discusses "the convergences and departures of the surrealist photographer and the power of his work, which was not limited to one language". Beyond discussing the six works themselves, the article also reveals how the Garcias' personal collection is itself a source of interpretation in that it invites a certain reading of Fernando Lemos under their personal, affective curatorial gaze.

Completing this issue of *Convergência Lusíada* are three reviews bringing news of recent academic publications on Portuguese literature, highlighting important contributions to the field by researchers from Brazil and elsewhere.

In “O que há num nome, Ana Luísa Amaral?” (“What’s in a name, Ana Luísa Amaral?”), Marlon Augusto Barbosa and João Victor Sanches da Matta Machado review *O que há num nome: estudos sobre a obra de Ana Luísa Amaral* (What’s in a name: studies on the work of Ana Luísa Amaral), edited by Tatiana Pequeno, Monica Figueiredo and Ida Alves. In their critical analysis, the reviewers emphasize what remains of a writer after their death: ultimately, readings of that author’s work, or second-hand readings of the kind presented in this book in homage to the Portuguese poet. Inspired by reflections by Derrida and Flávia Trocoli, the text argues that death does not annul the words of the other but allows them to live on, and that when readers quote and analyse a work they end up giving the author a kind of second life.

The second review, by Rodrigo Felipe Veloso, is of *Autobiografia não escrita de Martha Freud* (Unwritten autobiography of Martha Freud), by Teolinda Gersão, a novel that is also “a cross between fiction and reality, in which Martha’s life becomes a space for the writer to discuss issues of gender, identity and the very function of writing”. In order to give voice to Freud’s wife, the work draws on real material, such as letters between herself and Sigmund, to fabricate a personal diary account of this character. In this account, Martha grapples with the reality of life as a bourgeois woman in patriarchal Europe, while her husband enters the annals of history for his revolutionary approach to the unconscious. Among other things, the review highlights the astute use of language in a fictional work of self-writing; the text’s non-linear structure, like the memory of a woman nearing the end of her life; and the meaning-laden silences in the narrative.

The author of the third review, Luís André Nepomuceno presents *Le Livre de L'Inde de Duarte Barbosa* [Le Livre de L'Inde by Duarte Barbosa], translated, introduced, and annotated by Michèle Guéret-Laferté and Rafael Afonso Gonçalves, who correct factual errors, omissions and other issues they identified in other editions and translations of the work. The review highlights not only the quality of Guéret-Laferté and Gonçalves' work but also the importance of Duarte Barbosa's book (as it became better known) as "the richest and most fascinating trove of information on the East" in the context of Portugal's sixteenth-century maritime expansion. Nepomuceno's review also features some of the key events in Duarte Barbosa's life, as well as the history of different editions of the work, with their successive errors, corrections and comparisons.

We hope our readers enjoy the rich collection of critical texts this issue offers, with their diversity and depth of perspectives on different aspects of Portuguese literature in relation to other Portuguese-language literatures. The works in this volume not only shed light on some fundamental aspects of the phenomena and works analysed but also raise new questions, paving the way for future research in the field.

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