

---

## Introduction

### Journeys to the future: prophecies and projections

#### Doi

<https://doi.org/10.37508/rcl.2026.n55a1432>

Ruy Belo wrote that “The Portugal of the future is a country / where the pure bird is possible” (Belo, 2009, p. 266). The author of *Toda a Terra* was, as they say, an artist ahead of his time, and his words not only envisaged a Portugal that did not yet exist, but also brought forth, with the lyrical act itself, a country yet to come. In his own way, the poet wrote the future.

Thinking, dreaming, writing, imagining, predicting the future are tasks that have always been tackled in literature. Whether in prophetic tomes, utopian discourse, freeform fantastical imagination, or the projections of science fiction, future time has always been a matter of keen interest. In Portuguese literature, there is no shortage of works that look to the future, using it as a focal point to inspire different ways of thinking about history, from the remarkable *História do futuro* (History of the future), by Father António Vieira, to Fernando Pessoa’s reinterpretations of the prophetic Sebastianist myth, from the vision of the machine of the world in Camões’ *Os Lusíadas* (The Lusíads) to contemporary literature that projects potential worlds, such as Alexandra Lucas Coelho’s *A nossa alegria chegou* (Our joy has arrived) and Patrícia Portela’s *Hífen* (Hyphen).

This issue of *Convergência Lusíada* features articles that address the ways the future is projected in Portuguese literature, allowing for comparative dialogues along the way: from topics that address prophecies and teleologies to modern visionary poetics; from futuristic aesthetics to dystopian narratives of the West; from science fiction time travel to all manner of texts that reflect on the destiny of individuals, societies, and humankind. This dossier, we believe, presents a critical overview of the role of the future in Portuguese literature, as well as the connection between prophetic visions and human projections of the future, which help us shed light on today, connecting it to yesterday and tomorrow. We would like to invite you to join us on these forays into the future.

Our journey begins with “Portugal entre o mar e o sonho: a metamorfose épica de uma nação” (“Portugal, where the sea meets the dream: The epic metamorphosis of a nation”), by Rafael Santana. It consists of an exercise in reading embedded in a canonical triad from Portuguese literary space: Luís de Camões, Father António Vieira, and Fernando Pessoa. To reflect on the question of messianism in Portugal, the complementary terms of land and sea feature as a fundamental topos for reflections that runs through the work of all three writers. Focusing mainly on the visions and revisions of *Os Lusíadas*, Santana also casts critical insights on *A história do futuro*, *Mensagem*, and on works by Garrett, Cesário, and others to form, together with Camões’ epic, an infinite web of citations, noting how the prospects for an imperial future shifted over the centuries from a “political/military” project into a fog-shrouded dream on the “mystical/poetic plane”.

Also following in the wake of Camões is “Há futuro antes do fim do mundo: A fala do Velho do Restelo e o colapso climático” (“There is future before the end of the world: The speech of the Old Man of Restelo and climate collapse”), in which Kigenes Simas rereads the episode of the Old Man of Restelo, from *Os Lusíadas*, in light of the contemporary climate crisis. Drawing on Reinhart Koselleck’s

categories of experience and expectation, Simas interprets the Old Man's speech as foretelling a historical time verging on catastrophe, with mercantile and colonial expansion accelerating the course of history toward the abyss. By drawing a parallel between the presentiment of ruin in the 16th century and the environmental crisis witnessed in the present day, the study shows how Camões' criticism of greed and military glory can be reinterpreted as a warning of the planet's ecological depletion, suggesting that a dispute over futures may still be played out before the "end of the world."

In the article "O movimento operário em crônicas de Eça de Queiroz: contradições de um 'socialista sentimental'" ("The labor movement in the chronicles of Eça de Queiroz: Contradictions of a 'sentimental socialist'"), João Roberto Maia revisits this novelist's journalistic writings to reflect on how he interprets the progress of the labor movement in Europe and the United States. In the article, he identifies the mismatch between Queiroz's lucid analysis of the abject poverty and increasingly radicalized class struggle, on the one hand, and his conservative solutions and fear of a revolutionary rift on the other. His analyses of chronicles such as "O inverno em Paris" ("Winter in Paris") reveal the author of *Os Maias* as a "sentimental socialist," who recognizes the structural conflict between rich and poor but remains trapped by class-based prejudice. In this context, modernity emerges as a place of impasses, where the projected future of society wavers between fear of calamity and a perception (albeit irresolute) of the need for change.

Daniel Vecchio brings José Saramago's *Blindness* closer to a Marxian reading of the crisis in contemporary capitalism in "A revolução não faltou ao ensaio: a cegueira branca e o risco do capitalismo atemporal" ("Revolution didn't miss the rehearsal: Blank blindness and the risk of timeless capitalism"). The study interprets "blank blindness" as a metaphor for the "arationality" of a system that dehumanizes individuals, while identifying the experience of the

group of blind people as the emergence of a post-revolutionary “natural-spontaneous community,” inspired by the Marxist notion of precapitalist forms of sociability. Perceiving in the end of the novel the genesis of a new community organism, Vecchio argues that Saramago merges dystopia with utopia: the breakdown of society becomes an opportunity to imagine different ways of living that defy the state and market logic, opening the prospect for a new future in the midst of devastation.

Also rehearsing ways to survive the Apocalypse, Ana Beatriz Affonso Penna, in “A morte contra o apocalipse em Manuel de Freitas” (“Death against the apocalypse in Manuel de Freitas”), reads de Freitas’ poetry as a critical reflection on a future whose organization no longer hinges on promises of redemption but on an apocalypse disseminated in everyday life. In an analysis that draws on Guy Debord, Jacques Derrida, Peter Pál Pelbart, and the notion of “society of the spectacle,” the text shows how Freitas’ poetic language transits between communication and depletion, life and survival, challenging the commodification of the word. The persistent presence of death, far from signifying only negativity, is analyzed as a counterpoint to the precariousness of existence under the neoliberal logic, configuring a gesture of resistance that insists on naming all that is insignificant and ephemeral in a constrained future horizon.

In the article “A biblioteca imaginária de Afonso Cruz” (“The imaginary library of Afonso Cruz”), Carlos Roberto dos Santos Menezes undertakes a combined analysis of *O vício dos livros* (Addiction to books) and *Jalan Jalan: uma leitura do mundo* (Jalan Jalan: a reading of the world), by Afonso Cruz, focusing on how his writing uses libraries and travel to think about experience and time. Based on memories of reading, anecdotes, essayistic reflections, and travel accounts, the study shows that Cruz’s personal library is an archive in motion, where books and trajectories come together to form an imaginary cartography of the world and of himself. Reading

is thus revealed for its power to reorganize the past and the present, as well as to project possible futures, as it rewrites in narratives the legacies that feed contemporary Portuguese-language fiction.

“O 25 de abril e a disputa de utopias no campo da cultura: ressignificar o passado para projetar o futuro” (“April 25 and the dispute over utopias in the field of culture: Reframing the past to project the future”), by Daniel Laks, Mariana Albani de Carvalho, and Bruna Matos Calheta, shifts the focus to post-April 25 Portugal – after the Carnation Revolution, in 1974 – especially the recent dispute surrounding the memory of this historic event. Taking epigraphs from the records of ceremonial sessions of parliament and concepts such as “crisis of civilization” and “updated utopia,” the article shows how, in their discourse, the right and far right are endeavoring to rework the meaning of the revolutionary past to forge new antidemocratic projects for the future, highlighting the way in which aesthetic and political imaginaries intersect in the struggle for hegemony over what is “real” and what is to come.

Wrapping up the thematic part of the dossier is Paulo Ricardo Kralik Angelini’s article “Reinventar futuros: a cidade hostil e um novo *flâneur* na narrativa portuguesa hipercontemporânea” (“Reinventing futures: The hostile city and a new *flâneur* in hypercontemporary Portuguese narrative”). In it, Angelini analyzes several 21st-century Portuguese novels that represent the big city as a space of burnout, oppression, and the breakdown of community ties, linking this to the emergence of a new type of *flâneur*, or street idler, who, having lost interest in the shop windows of capitalism, eschews the city logic in search of new ways of inhabiting space. Discussing works by Joana Bértholo, Manuel Bivar, Catarina Gomes, Rui Couceiro, Ivone Mendes da Silva, Filipa Fonseca Silva, Catarina Costa, and others, the study shows how some solitary figures who eke out a precarious living in a tech-swamped, hyperproductive world are exchanging the urban centers for the city limits or even the countryside, reconfiguring nature as a mechanism for survival

and the reinvention of time. Drawing on Walter Benjamin, Marc Augé, Robert Park, Zygmunt Bauman, Byung-Chul Han, and Gilles Lipovetsky, as well as commentaries by Ana Paula Arnaut, Paulo Medeiros, Carlos Reis, and Alan Shapiro on the hypercontemporary, the article suggests that by exposing the bankruptcy of the city and the very idea of the future, these narratives posit utopian micro-displacements, in which the acts of meandering, slowing down, and valuing fauna and flora become ways of resisting the hypercapitalist experience of the present.

The section *Varia* begins with Rui Tavares de Faria and his text “Notícias da Índia... Gil Vicente e a desmistificação do triunfo da expansão ultramarina portuguesa no Oriente” (“News from India... Gil Vicente and the demystification of the triumph of Portuguese overseas expansion in the East”), a thought-provoking exercise in reading *Auto da Índia*. Divided into three sections (“The Departure,” “The Absence,” and “The Return”), the article dissects Vicente’s play, recognizing its pioneering de-monumentalizing attitude toward the navigations, and demonstrates how the playwright fashions a sharp critique of the exploitation of the Orient through his keen observations of 16th-century Portuguese society. A document of its time, this famous work by the “father of Portuguese theater” is found, in Farias’ text, to harbor hidden layers concerning the “great discoveries,” drawing the conclusion that this classic text has the power to inform new perspectives that take account of the historical failures in Portugal’s overseas enterprises.

The following article, by Alexandra Tavares dos Santos Barroso and Mônica Genelhu Fagundes, is “Descalça vai uma Ninfa: a propósito de um vilancete de Camões” (“A nymph goes barefoot: On a villancico by Camões”). In it, the authors offer an interpretation of Camões’ poem “Descalça vai para a fonte” (“She goes barefoot to the fountain”) based on Aby Warburg’s conception of the nymph. The figure of Leanor is analyzed as a surviving image that transcends time and artistic forms, relating Warburg’s concept of the

*pathosformel* to the character's movement and expressiveness. The study examines how the poem portrays the coexistence of erotic and spiritual dimensions, revealing how Camões' poetry incorporates and transforms previous visual and symbolic traditions. In this way, the text highlights the presence of the nymph as a figure of permanence and metamorphosis in art and literature.

In "Machado poeta na imprensa oitocentista: o primeiro suporte e o soneto à Petronilha" ("Machado the poet in the nineteenth-century press: The first publication and the sonnet to Petronilha"), Cristiane Nascimento Rodrigues revisits Machado de Assis' first literary work published in the Brazilian press: "Soneto à Ilma. Sra. D. P. J. A." ("Sonnet to the Honorable Mrs. D. P. J. A."), published in 1854 in *Periódico dos Pobres*. Rodrigues reconstructs the historical and rhetorical context of this newspaper printed by A. M. Morando, highlighting the pedagogical and moralizing function behind the publication of verses and chronicles in Brazilian society during the reign of Pedro II (1840-1889). The analysis of the poem reveals a poetic discourse that celebrates female virtues within the norms of bourgeois society while already foreshadowing the formal and critical awareness of this as-yet youthful author, in dialogue with classical tradition and the ideology of his time.

Finally, "As mulheres em Malheiro Dias: de Iracema a Maria do Céu" ("Women in Malheiro Dias: From Iracema to Maria do Céu"), by Andreia Castro and Marianna Pais, addresses the intertwining of modernity, memory, and writing, examining how literature can be a space for resistance and reinvention of historical time. In their comparative reading of contemporary authors, Castro and Pais analyze the ways in which literary discourse opens itself to becoming, whether by reworking the past or devising possible futures. In line with the proposal for this dossier, the article affirms the potential of literature for symbolic prophecy, where the act of narrating the present is can also be a way of imagining what does not yet exist.



Thus, this dossier brings together a plurality of reflections that traverse the past, interrogate the present, and project possible futures, reaffirming the primacy of literature for criticism, invention, and resistance. The articles demonstrate that literary imagination, when it engages with crises, impasses, and social transformations, is as fundamental as it ever was for thinking about historical time and reinventing future horizons as we tackle the challenges of contemporary times. By bringing together a diversity of perspectives, this collection confirms the importance of literary writing and criticism as active forces in the dispute over meanings and the shaping of possible futures.

Paulo Braz

Federal University of Rio de Janeiro

Rodrigo Valverde Denubila

Federal University of Uberlândia

## REFERENCES

BELO, Ruy. *Todos os poemas*. Lisbon: Assírio & Alvim, 2009.