Journalism and Literature in the Egyptian Revolution of 1882: Eça de Queirós and the News in the Plot of Intrigue

José Maurício Saldanha Álvarez

Abstract
This article analyzes the news reports written by the Portuguese novelist and journalist Eça de Queirós about the crisis in 1881-1882 that resulted in the bombing of Alexandria, Egypt, by a British fleet. First, following Barbie Zelizer, we examine the communication of this historical event by analyzing how the news reports covering the event were written, taking into account the literary form commonly used during the period. For Zelizer, figures could not be trusted, and the plot and storyline were preferable. Second, as proposed by Hallin and Mancini, we analyze media practices during the period and compare the practices of the British and Luso-Brazilian print media. Eça appropriated information broadcasts by British journalists and reformulated them for his readers, emphasizing the key issues that lurked beneath the events of 1881-1882. Third, we analyze how the Egyptian army and Colonel Arabi went from being demonized to a position of heroes in modern Egypt through reports by the Brazilian periodical Gazeta de Noticias that were published in 1882 in Rio de Janeiro and were considered the culmination of its journalistic activities.

Keywords
modern history, communication studies, international relations, journalism, orientalism

Prologue
In 2014, as the present article was completed, the international press reported that the Egyptian people had elected the former commander-in-chief of the armed forces, General Abdel Fattah al-Sisi, as President. His victory, gained with the support of the army and acclaimed by the people, suggests that military activism in Egypt is an in extremis strategy of intervention into national politics. In November 2011, when the popular uprising against the government of President Osny Mubarak put the country’s national stability at risk, the Egyptian army intervened. For some analysts, the army’s ostensible presence in politics at a crucial moment in the country’s history represented the possible beginning of a military dictatorship. However, that was not how it appeared to the actors involved. An Egyptian citizen interviewed by the American journalist Wendell Steavenson (2011) described the army as “the servant to the people and popular desire.” In the newspaper Al-Jazeera, the journalist Soumaya Ghaniushi described the chant that reverberated around Egypt’s squares in the early days of the intervention: “The people and the army are one hand.” Sara Salem described the intervention of the Egyptian army and the depositions of O. Mubarak and M. Morsi as part of the national tradition dating back to the events of 1881-1882, which are the focus of our article:

The Egyptian military continues to draw upon a history of revolutionary legitimacy, and many view it as a patriotic institution. The 1881 “Arabi revolution” against the British, the Free Officer’s movement, and Egypt’s wars with Israel reinforce the military’s important historical role within the popular imagination.

Introduction
On July 11, 1882, the bombing by a British fleet that destroyed the port city of Alexandria, Egypt, was reported to the world as an exercise of legitimate reprisal against a nationalist government that was hostile to the international order and responsible for the anarchy prevailing in the country. The leader of the popular uprising and of the army, Egyptian Colonel Ahmed Arabi Pasha (ca. 1840-1911), was blamed by the British press for stimulating turmoil in Egypt and instigating the riot that took place in Alexandria on June 11, resulting in the killing of hundreds of people. The uprising served as the foundation for Great Britain to consider Egypt to be in a state of anarchy, justifying the military intervention that occurred on July 11.

1Universidade Federal Fluminense, Niteroi, Brazil

Corresponding Author:
José Mauricio Saldanha Álvarez, Universidade Federal Fluminense, rua Professor Lara Vilela 126 S. Domingos, Niteroi 24210-490, Brazil. Email: saldanhaalvarez@hotmail.com
Among the buildings destroyed by the riot are the consulates of the Empire of Brazil and the Kingdom of Portugal. The announcement led the readership in Rio de Janeiro to want more information about the events. One section of this media audience comprised Brazilians, whereas another included wealthy and influential members of the Portuguese colony established in Rio, which was then the capital of Brazil. A leading newspaper in the city, the Gazeta de Notícias, commissioned the famous Portuguese writer Eça de Queirós (1845-1900) to deliver a set of news reports describing the events to the Brazilian audience. In this essay, we analyze the reconversions of the British communications that were drafted with intense jingoistic and imperial content for a critical and demystified reading.

The Brazilian audience was composed of fiction readers who would only read news reports if they were written as a novel with plots and subplots. For Paul Ricoeur (1983), a plot of intrigue suggests human actions, where the characters produce what Roland Barthes (2003) defined as fantasmes d’écriture, that is, the drive to write for the enjoyment of the author and the reader, resulting in the pleasure provided by the Roman [novel]. To satisfy readers endowed with this new reading sensibility, Eça de Queirós abandoned the conseptual epistolary form in his 1881-1882 news reports. He began to write in a chronicle form, giving wing to the imagination and constructing texts of unquestionable aesthetic value (Peixinho, 2010).

At the time, Eça enjoyed great literary success in Brazil and was at the height of his career in terms of being a novelist and journalist (Mónica, 2003). As a writer, his work was included by Bloom (2002) in the Western canon, and he was defined by the essayist Peter Gay (1986) as the most “refined and cosmopolitan Portuguese novelist” (pp. 176-178) of the 19th century. At this point, we recall the lessons of Zelizer, Bird, and Darnton that point to the reception of journalistic news reports as part of historical learning based on the reading of fiction. As these authors and James Curran suggest, when analyzing the history of news and journalism, we cannot ignore the relationships among the system in which the news is produced, its reception circuit, and, finally, the media system itself (Zelizer, 2008).

According to Hayden White’s (1987) analysis of the nature of narrative, it seems that Eça emphasized “the question of culture and, possibly, even the nature of humanity itself” (p. 1). Any news that represented reality was metamorphosed by the ability of the journalist as an author to transform it into a plot by mediating means and fictional strategies. Following Underwood’s (2008) argument about Henry Fielding (1707-1754), a famous British writer of the 18th century, we think that the Brazilian and Portuguese reading audiences were somehow aware of “the dichotomy between journalism as an organ of the truth (which could produce great falseness) and fiction, the medium of fancy (which could tell important truths that journalism did not)” (p. 53). For this audience, “figures always lie.”

In short, we consider the existence of a media system according to the analyses of Hallin and Mancini that defined the relationship between imperialist policy and the communications produced by the British press. Meanwhile, in Brazil, newspapers were family-owned, and they slowly conquered a sparse audience. The media systems in Portugal and Brazil resembled the Mediterranean, or polarized pluralism; in both countries, newspapers appeared late and weak (Azevedo, 2006). In Portugal, despite the narrow environment and without the burden of slavery, unlike Brazil, the role of the newspaper and journalist became what Ana Peixinho (2010) called the “emerging social force of the nineteenth century” (p. 91).

The Century of Revolution and the Spread of Modernity

The 19th century began with a dual revolution that changed the world through the acceleration of economic, social, and political connections among continents and countries (Hobsbawm, 1962). The industrial revolution that started in England resulted in the continuous production of technological tools. It transformed the processes of production of material goods and services and led the global economy to become increasingly connected and interdependent (Jones & Warhman, 2002). Meanwhile, the political revolution that began in France triggered social changes that challenged ignorance, superstition, and despotism. With these advances, some scholars began to consider the possibility of “upgrading” non-European countries, peoples, and institutions through education and progress represented by transplanted techniques.

The dual revolution changed the face of a world that, until the end of the century, was part of a narrow international network. Libertarian political practices immigrated as solidarity networks among the oppressed or as “cross-colonial links,” as Bayly (2009) describes, referring to movements among the Irish, Bengalis, and Egyptians against British rule (p. 11). Ideas and cultural flows resulting from modern ideology landed in ancient countries, such as Portugal, and contemporary ones, such as Brazil (Touraine, 1992). It should be emphasized that Brazil, which gained independence from the Portuguese colonialist empire in 1822, was still adjusting to the new international division of labor. Its elites aspired to be modern in the asymmetrical world of the first half of the 19th century while preserving their privileges at home. The elites retained slavery until 1888, inhibited the emergence of the middle class, concentrated the land in latifundium structures, and supported the monarchical political system (Costa, S/D).

In the last years of the 18th century, the modern world that emerged from the dual revolution gave rise to a new type of war that was waged on a global scale where the antagonists sought to gain economic, political, and cultural supremacy. In 1798, England and France waged their first imperialist confrontation when General Napoleon Bonaparte chose
Egypt, a Middle Eastern country, as an expansionary target. French troops were joined by a committee of scholars and Orientalists whose arrival greatly impacted Egypt, where they came into contact with local residents and gave rise to the first local newspaper (Said, 1979).

General Napoleon Bonaparte, after arriving in Alexandria on July 1, 1798, threatened the trade route between Great Britain and India. He intended to introduce some enlightenment and modern measures into the country and to relieve it from delays, misery, and, in the opinion of the time, the most abject barbarism. Great Britain, seeing its Indian possession threatened, reacted. The British won important naval and military victories in the Levant, such as the Battle of Aboukir Bay on August 1, 1798. It defeated Bonaparte and increased its military, economic, and political presence in the region, benefiting from the Napoleonic wars, which provided a decisive boost to the British economy (Arrighi & Silver, 1999).

Although it was a small episode in the millennium's history, the arrival of modernity was significant (Mansfield, 2003). Following the short Napoleonic adventure, Egypt returned to the Ottoman Empire, despite the growth of British influence from the securing of India (Hobsbawm, 1962). The position of the Khedive, the supreme ruler of the country under the Ottoman aegis, was occupied by the Albanian mercenary Muhammad Ali (1769-1849). Ali embarked on an independent path. He increased industrial and military forces and undertook conquest campaigns that were aimed at transforming Egypt into a regional power (Karsh & Karsh, 2001). In 1838, the Portuguese newspaper O Panorama published an article about Ali's Egypt, describing him as a “cultured” (1838, vol.II, 394) ruler whose work allowed the country to progress. Although defeated by the government of Prime Minister Lord Palmerston (Marsot, 1984), who considered Ali an “ignorant barbarian” (p. 138), among the unsuccessful projects he conceived was the construction of a canal linking the Mediterranean to the Red Sea.

Meanwhile, because of the crisis of 1848, Europe became more economically connected. Its merchant banks raised abundant funds and turned into a vital source of social power (Landes, 1958). The European stock exchanges became regulated, and the industrialized nations used their finances to structure the world into a vast and complex financial network (Kenwood, Graff, & Lougheed, 2014). As Harvey (2004) notes, the spread of European capital to other regions of the globe consolidated a global market whose ability to constantly innovate destroyed, internally and externally, the cultural heritage of the past. The crises that would eventually shake the banking system remained stable, increasing its popularity and ability to attract the middle classes. In the banks, the middle classes had an essential complementary source of prosperity. Moreover, beginning in 1850, the speedy advancement of communications and transportation allowed access to hitherto inaccessible areas situated within these countries and continents. The subsequent prosperity surges and inevitable recessions also helped to spread the tentacles of the banking system (Bayly, 2009). Around 1880, the return on investment in the system in the form of dividends created great excitement among savers in the face of telegraphed news of crises and breakdowns in confidence in local actors, such as Arabi Bey in Egypt in 1882 (Marlowe, 1974).

The Media System of Objectivity and Jingoism, a State of Mind

According to Daniel Bougnoux (1998), information is “an utterance or a message of general interest, which supposedly emanates from the anonymous world order, while communication originates from companies or identifiable groups and clearly serves private interests” (p. 146). Eça de Queirós wrote his news reports by dissecting the communications originating from the British press and eliminating from the original writings the elements that comprised a Eurocentric and jingoistic discourse. This semantic and symbolic core was integrated into the education of English journalists and their journalistic context. It transformed information that celebrated British power into communications with exhilarating images of its military strength. Economic interests, such as the financial sector, markets and jobs, were less visible, although extremely important. The basic political issue was the production of a symbolic world where economic, political, and social reality was not misleadingly fixated on numbers because figures always lie in those fields. The issues were woven by opinions, intentions, and social representations that were constructed and remade through the clashes of politics (Bougnoux, 1998). Thus, as Schudson notes, the representational function of the media in transmitting the ideas of others is “voicing,” if not authoring. (Schudson,1996,p.42) Or, as Mikhail Bakhtin (2004) writes, it is an exercise in “ventriloquating” (p. 302).

Could the information reported by journalists and newspapers in a media system such as the British have been different? It does not seem easy to counteract the nationalistic and Eurocentric unanimity that enveloped communications produced in 1882, although it was never total and coexisted with dissidence. Prime Minister Gladstone himself was reticent regarding public acclaim, preferring to follow his own conceptions rather than the voice of the “fourth power” or of the streets. Barbara Harlow presents the British opposition to the brutalities and mistakes caused by the imperial actions of the country and is therefore sympathetic to local and independent causes such as Tipu Sultan, in India, or Arabi, in Egypt. Harlow “argued with strict upholders of imperial law and order.” Even aid operations, such as that intended to save General Gordon in Khartum (which Gladstone opposed), created divisions in public opinion (Harlow & Carter 2003). When General Gordon refused to leave Khartum when surrounded by the Mahdi’s Sudanese forces, Gladstone struggled to avoid falling into the trap of war, as occurred in 1882 in the bombing of Alexandria. The English press vehemently
demanded a military expedition through editorials and exalted headlines, apparently echoing social opinion. The voice of the streets and of the monarch himself insisted that the honor of the country demanded the rescue of General Gordon (Harlow & Carter, 2003). Nevertheless, Gladstone was reluctant and only relented unwillingly.

Siebert, Peterson, and Schramm’s theoretical model of the media aims to explain the relationship among the media, social reality, and the British environment over the years. This debate shows the importance of contextualizing how the press acts and works; it not only reflects society but also “takes on the form of the social and political structures of the environment within which it operates” (Siebert, Peterson, & Schramm, 1956, pp. 1-2). Simplifying, we could define a media system as a network of newspapers that as a whole provides a dramatic and convincing image to a national audience (Curran, 2008, p. 28).

Eça de Queirós had deep knowledge of the British press, of which he was an avid reader. He lived in the United Kingdom from 1874 to 1878, acting as Consul of Portugal in Newcastle and Bristol. Every morning, he spent hours reading periodicals, including political journalism that did not care about objectivity and visibly displayed its contamination by political and ideological values. Eça decided to practice a new literary journalism, and as both an excellent journalist and a remarkable writer, he was well received by his audience and kept a close relationship with it on both sides of the Portuguese-speaking Atlantic (Soares, 2011, p. 28).

The notion of objectivity, the touchstone of the ideals of journalism, was popular from its origin in the 1830s until the years following World War I. Employed in the journalistic context, objectivity seems to represent the adoption of a position of distance from a subject rather than neutrality with regard to it. Perhaps the best theoretical approach to this debate is the notion of “contextualization” as employed by Iskandar and El-Nawawy (2004, p. 320) in their article on the journalism of Al-Jazeera and its coverage of the Iraq war. Contextualization corrects some issues arising from the notion of objectivity by considering that media audiences are opinionated and are invested in the content transmitted. Therefore, if journalists are trained to reach the truth underlying the context, their audiences will inevitably always be contextualized. Contextualization is understood as a situational position that produces a collective sentiment that unites participants engaged in the same “context.” The context may be cultural, religious, political, or economic. Therefore, “It is precisely this contextualization that aggravates and complicates the pursuit of ‘objective’ coverage within the news media setting” (Iskandar & El-Nawawy, 2004, p. 320).

In Eça’s case, the jingoistic political view was shared by the audience in the circles of power and by society and professionals, creating a “political parallelism” that produced, in a “ventriloquating” manner according to Bakhtin, the news that the jingoistic audience wanted to read (Schudson, 1996, p. 28). Eça had experience in both media systems: “In aristocratic regimes, the struggle was to obtain, if not the favor, at least the smile of the Prince. In our democracies, the eagerness of most mortals is to reach in seven lines the praise of the newspaper” (Eça de Queirós, 1997, vol. IV, p. 171).

Knowing well the power of the press, Eça recognized that it was more than a “fourth power.” It was the power itself, and it had the power to transform and shape its readers. One day, a friend confided in Eça that he wanted to start his own newspaper and asked for advice. Above all, Eça suggested caution to his friend; a newspaper, he answered, is a remarkable means of education, but it is also a means to diffuse hatred and prejudice.

**Journalism: A Means to Inform and Educate**

Throughout the 19th century, in England, France, and even in the United States, newspapers unified the public through news dissemination and the consumption of printed culture (Campbell, 2001). During the critical juncture of the liberal revolutions in Portugal and Brazil, the press was essential to the debate of ideas that Isabel Vargues (1997) called public opinion. Newspapers in the 19th century, besides being a fourth power, were also a tool for education and entertainment (Briggs & Burke, 2002). Illustrating this point, Hazel Dicken-Garcia (1989) reproduces the opinion of the Quarterly Review, an American periodical in the 19th century, which considered that a periodical “is the greatest agent in promoting civilization in modern times” (p. 138). Brazilian newspapers at the time of the country’s independence in 1822 reached a tiny audience. In the last decades of the 19th century, however, they carried great weight in shaping national public opinion (Alvarez, 2011). Newspapers such as Gazeta de Notícias reached a small yet influential audience and produced their work with care and workmanship, hiring “men of letters of great renown” for this purpose (Sodré, 1966).

Journalism, however, was different from one country to another. In France, for example, journalism was opinionated and passionate, and the number of periodicals published in Paris almost reached a saturation point in 1840 (Terdiman, 1985). France’s politics influenced Portuguese journalism, which relied on epistolary and personal and passionate engagement. This paradigm lasted in Portuguese journalism until at least 1870 (Tengarrinha, 1989). In contrast, the American press informed its readers more than the European press, even providing larger paper surfaces. During the American Civil War (1861-1865), thanks to the use of the telegraph and newspaper correspondents at the battlefront, American journalism developed an objective writing style and tripled its informative volume (Bulla & Borchhardt, 2010).
The Painful 19th Century in the Portuguese-Speaking Atlantic

The press in Portugal emerged from the revolutionary movement of 1820 with their newspapers covering and opining about the debates waged during constitutional conferences (Vargues, 1997). The country had experienced decades of intense political turmoil that resulted in an opionated press (Tengarrinha, 1989). The 1830s were steeped in oscillating tensions and witnessed the rise of intellectuals such as Almeida Garrett (1799-1854) and Alexandre Herculano (1810-1877). Both men embodied the intellectual leadership that used the press to spread their ideas (Mesquita, 2006); they associated literature with journalism and debated projects for the political and social renewal of Portugal (Tengarrinha, 1989). For an intellectual, publishing books provided undeniable proof of one’s talent. While the circle of readers expanded and ideas about modernity spread, the Portuguese press and intelligentsia, both marked by French influence, turned the newspaper into an effective means for the dissemination and uncompromising defense of their ideas (Tengarrinha, 1989).

José Maria Eça de Queirós was born on November 25, 1845, with leadership and individualism marked as traits of his temperament (Mónica, 2001). In 1851, amid the turbulent environment of Portuguese politics, Marshal Duke of Saldanha (1799-1876), a bulwark of the constitutional monarchy and a prestigious military leader, released a pronouncement. Thus, the fruitful period known as the Regeneration began (Machado 1986). Another important character of the period was Fontes Pereira de Melo (1819-1887). A military engineer known for his impressive knowledge of weapons, Fontes is identified with the struggle for the modernization of Portugal that was funded by the aggressive collection of tax revenues (Mónica, 2009).

In 1861, Eça de Queirós enrolled in law studies at the University of Coimbra at a time of great political unrest in Portugal (Magalhães, 2000). The unstable political situation intensified the political debate, which was supported by the circulation of periodicals (de Oliveira Marques & Serrão, 2000). Among these periodicals was the objective Diário de Notícias, which initiated the “industrialized press” in Portugal when it appeared in December 1864. Eça began his career with the newspaper Gazeta de Portugal where, along with miscellaneous news, the presence of books within its pages represented the growing “social relevance of reading” (Peixinho, 2010, pp. 20-21). In Portugal, the political struggle achieved a new dimension when, in 1865, “regenerator and historic” politicians united in a single front, to which Eça de Queirós’ father was opposed. A judge arranged for a friend, the industrialist José Eugenio Maria de Almeida, who was the founder of an opposition newspaper in Alentejo, to leave the newspaper’s direction to Eça (Mónica, 2003). The young man, after graduating as a lawyer in 1867, headed to Évora to take over the production of the newspaper, where he abandoned writing about sentimental items and developed reliable analyses. In these analyses, Eça dissected the politics and economy of Portugal and the world, and he became aware of the growing influence of international finance in poor countries. Poor countries wishing to modernize fell into a trap of bank interests, going into debt while obtaining doubtful results for their development (Reis & Peixinho, 2010, pp. 20-21).

In 1866, Eça left Évora and headed to the country’s capital, Lisbon. There, he associated with Ramalho Ortigão, his former teacher and longtime friend (Mónica, 2001). Sometime later, the celebrated Casino Lisboense conferences took place, which were begun in 1871 by a group of intellectuals that included Eça. Almost all of these individuals were former University of Coimbra students who formed the so-called Geração de 70 (Generation of ’70), about whom Antero de Quental pontificated (1842-1891). The group harshly attacked the Portuguese status quo and economic stagnation, leading the authorities to ban the conferences. Meanwhile, Eça and Ramalho launched a newspaper called As Farpas (The Barbs), a revolutionary pamphlet that was the Portuguese version of the French periodical Les Guêpes (The Wasps) published by the French journalist A. Karr (Mónica, 2001). With the consolidation of the Portuguese liberal regime, national public education became more consistent (Mónica, 2001). The entry of the Portuguese press into the industrial production system occurred with the Diário de Noticias in 1865, which reduced the price of copy and raised funds through the inclusion of advertising. In 1869, Eça traveled to Egypt at the invitation of the Khedive government to attend the opening of the Suez Canal, upon which he published an interesting news report in January 1870 in the Portuguese newspaper Diário de Noticias (Alvarez, 2011). This contact with the Levant, which lasted only a few months, provided material for several later works.

The growth of the press in Brazil also occurred after 1870 thanks to the country’s economic expansion (Lustosa, 2003). In the last decades of the century, newspapers from the country’s capital, Rio de Janeiro, were read by a growing audience; in 1881, 95 new periodicals appeared and, in 1882, 64 more. The number of readers grew and with them grew an
interest in international politics, such as the *Scramble for Africa*, the struggle for the possession of Africa by the imperial powers (Barbosa, 2010).

**Egyptian Eve**

In 1859 in Egypt, the successors to Mehmet Ali, with the help of the French diplomat Ferdinand de Lesseps, began the construction of the Suez Canal; they overcame both the hostility of the British government and a hostile natural environment. Khedive Ismail (1830-1895) modernized the country but made tremendous expenditures that were funded by the successful production of excellent quality cotton and abundant credit loaned by British banks. Canals, railroads, and ports were built, creating an infrastructure that modernized the country (Mansfield, 2003). According to David Landes (1958), Egypt’s national debt rose from 300,000 pounds to the stupendous figure of 91,000,000 pounds. Egypt, in 1876, was considered easy prey for foreign domination because its large amount of debt made the country’s institutions fragile (Karsh & Karsh, 2001; Landes, 1958).

When Egypt became bankrupt, the British bankers who held the debt pressured their government to safeguard their investments. In the wake of the ensuing political crisis, Khedive Ismail abdicated in favor of his son, Tewfik. However, the draconian measures imposed by the financiers made the country a hostage of the foreign powers. Egypt’s tax revenues began to be managed by an International Debt Committee, the *Caisse de La Dete Publique*, whose management was entrusted to foreign employees, one English and the other French. In addition to customs taxes, crippling taxes were imposed on the people who were allocated for debt repayment. This policy despoiled and impoverished the country, dismantling its institutions and halting the payment of high wages to foreigners (Landes, 1958). Meanwhile, many European citizens were hired as local administrators instead of Egyptians, increasing local opposition to the actions of the foreigners and sparking a nationalist debate. A colonel, Ahmed Arabi, excited the debates with his easy and burning oratory. He extolled his moral qualities, passionate leadership, and the military ability (Wright, 2009).

However, as the crisis grew, the discontent raised the tone of the popular Egyptian outcry for reforms and the end of foreign tyranny. Officials of Fellah origin gathered to plot and find solutions to resolve the crisis. A colonel, Ahmed Arabi, excited the debates with his easy and burning oratory, and he gained increasing popularity because his preaching reflected popular complaints.

Given the nationalist agitation, the Khedive, supported by foreign diplomats, ordered the arrest of Arabi. According to Eça, after ordering the arrest of the rebel colonel, the Khedive sat down to read: “By opening his *Times* or his *Journal des Débats* (because this Prince is cultured), he could rejoice in seeing that these two ponderous bodies of the European opinion considered him as a denigrated potentate and full of nerve ”(vol. II, 561). Shortly thereafter, the arrest was pardoned, and the colonel returned to his troops, who then surrounded the Khedive in the government palace and demanded political reforms. Immediately, European newspapers criticized Arabi. They denounced his military coup as a state of anarchy. Given evidence that Arabi did not present a phenomenon who voted en masse for the first time (Curran, 2002). The vote was translated into support for actions that upheld the British imperial politics (Joll, 1990) that were becoming enveloped in jingoism. J. A. Hobson (1858-1940), in his classic work *Psychology of Jingoism* (1901), defines this “state of mind” as “that inverted patriotism whereby the love of own nation is transformed into the hatred of another nation, and fierce craving to destroy the individual members of that other nation is no new thing.” Hobson saw in that sentiment a form of primitive passion that could be modified and intensified by certain conditions of modern civilization, including widespread nationalistic education.

**The Army as the “parti militaire” and Colonel Arabi Pasha**

In his newspaper reports about the British bombing of Alexandria, Eça de Queirós recorded and analyzed the first act in the active participation of the Egyptian army in the country’s politics. The army was an institution that was part of the personal property of the ruler, the Khedive, who employed it as an instrument of power. It was composed of locally recruited soldiers, while the officialdom had a heterogeneous composition until 1881. The top officials were of Turkish-Circassian origin and comprised an elite army that received promotions, awards, and high wages. There were also foreign mercenaries, including a group of American veteran soldiers from both sides of the Civil War. Finally, there were officials of Fellah origin, that is, peasants, who were passed over for promotions, received meager wages, and usually served in insalubrious posts such as faraway Nubia and Sudan. This was the origin and trajectory of Colonel Ahmed Arabi. However, most of the British who knew him extolled his moral qualities, passionate leadership, and military ability (Wright, 2009).

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written program of reforms because that was not how one proceeded in Egypt, Eça hastened to explain, contextualizing the hero and his motivations:

In a Muslim country, under the law of the Quran, there are no (programs) [...] Arabi brought three or four ideas that, if there were a decent Europe enabling their realization, could be the beginning of a new Egypt, an Egypt possessing itself, an Egypt governing itself, an Egypt for the Egyptians, not a race subjected to the family of Mehmet Ali, much less a frank refectory for starving Europeans. (Eça de Queirós, S/D, vol. II, p. 562)

Eça was indignant at his European journalist colleagues who ridiculed Arabí’s proposals. In his view, the colonel did not dissociate from the people, much less from his Muslim background, nor his Fellah roots:

Certainly, Arabi is neither a Mazzini nor a Louis Blanc. He is an Arab from the old school who reads only one book, the Quran. But, as a man, he possesses qualities of intelligence, heart, and character, which even those that are fighting so brutally against him dare not to deny. And, as a patriot, he is at the level of the great patriots. (Eça de Queirós, S/D, vol. II, p. 563)

The successive demonstrations of force that the military conducted in 1881 with strong popular support provided clarity that Arabi represented a political force that was in complete harmony with the outcries of the people (Cole, 1996). The military received the decisive support of the clergy, the guilds, the intelligentsia, the urban masses, and the notables and peasants of the villages. The consul of the Empire of Brazil in Alexandria, who was carefully following the crisis, reported to his superiors in Rio de Janeiro that the agitation actually represented “l’évenement au pouvoir du parti militaire” [an event showing the power of the military party] (Arquivo Histórico do Itamaraty [AHI], ministério das Relações exteriores [Itamaraty Historical Archives, Brazilian Foreign Office], 1881-1887, bookcase 237, shelf 1, packet 20).

By 1881, the financial and political crises in Egypt seriously jeopardized British interests. The imperialist debate and the employment of military forces received a major boost when social and electoral reforms in England undertaken by the premier B. Disraeli (1804-1881) and subsequently continued by W. E. Gladstone (1809-1898) put voting within the reach of workers. The expansion of the mass press provided this audience with a jingoistic and chauvinistic discourse that it received with pleasure. Public opinion influenced the English political process through enthusiastic support for overseas military measures (Claeys, 2004, p. 198). Snyder (1991) notes that the Midlothian campaign, conducted in 1880, led W. E. Gladstone to power as Prime Minister, and he became “the first at modern mass politics after the Second Reform Bill of 1867 vastly widened the franchise” (p. 50). Aiming to consolidate his electoral bases, Gladstone started a political campaign to contain Egyptian nationalism through incremental imperial actions that would result in the conquest of Egypt (Mansfield, 2003).

The European powers, especially Great Britain, were fearful of losing income from Egyptian debt repayments and the precious Suez Canal and supported Khedive Tewfik as the bulwark of their policy. Hated by the nationalists because of his association with foreign interests, this support further angered the Egyptians. Conversely, British financiers, colonial circles, and the government feared that the actions of Arabi could also contribute to enflaming their possessions in India, where the Muslim population was large. An intense discrediting campaign conducted in the English press demonized Arabi, turning him into a “bête noire.” To teach a lesson and restore its prestige, it was now necessary for the British government to take forceful and punitive measures. The decision was made to send a battleship fleet to Alexandria commanded by Admiral Seymour (Harrison, 1995).

Eça de Queirós: Personal Orientalism and Journalism as a Mission

Eça was an Orientalist in a sincere way, the Iberian way, that is, he analyzed the question of the East as part of his own identity (Álvarez, 2012). Because of the postulates in the seminal work by Edward Said, we realize that Eça was an Orientalist from a different strain. He was not an “agent of the Empire” or a Western scholar as described by Said (1979), whose work resulted in an amalgam composed of “dogmatic views of the East” as an “ideal and unchanging abstraction” or of “various types of racism, imperialism and the like” (Said, 1979, p. 83). In the Oriental writing produced by Eça, there is a knowledge that represents an active “recognition” of the otherness of invaded Egypt. This capacity to understand otherness by Eça was established in him through his training and was also a symptom of Iberian Orientalism, which sought its mirror image in the East.

Eça was already a celebrated writer when he accepted the invitation of the major Brazilian newspaper Gazeta de Notícias do Rio de Janeiro to draft a set of five news reports.
on the crisis in Egypt. His collaboration with this newspaper was not only long but also advantageous. By becoming a “war reporter” (Mónica, 2001, p. 29), Eça established the use of the chronicle form, arousing in his audience the literary comprehension of a text in which, as Boucharenec and Deluche (2001) note, the journalist declares himself a writer and novelist, reclaiming journalistic writing.

Eça’s reports on the Anglo-Egyptian crisis were a result of his long career as an active journalist and observant diplomat. They were also a reflection on the context of the international tensions at the end of the century, whose lessons would be extremely valuable to both Brazilian and Portuguese audiences. His news reports were written and published between August and October 1882 and contextualized in a chronological sense, the crisis at the beginning of 1881 until the bombing in the following year. This arrangement facilitated Eça’s development of the plot, allowing him to weave through all of the episodes and their protagonists. He followed a synchronic method of contextualization of immediate events, interconnecting them diachronically and retrieving passages from his visit for the opening of the Suez Canal (Alvarez, 2011).

The sources used by Eça were the most prestigious British periodicals, whose information stoked their audience and pushed the reluctant English liberal politicians into military action. The heterogeneity of the British audience at the time must be taken into account because many of the voters who supported Gladstone’s cabinet came from the working class (Winstanley, 2006). The prestigious London newspapers provided raw material for the newspapers in the provinces, spreading the festive mood of celebration of national unity. In his book published in 1910, J. A. Hobson, a contemporary author to this type of press, states that readers “had drawn their facts and their opinions from a variety of independent sources,” expanding the action of the public sphere. For him, the most important of these sources was “the press, the most potent instrument in the modern manufacture of public opinion” (Hobson, 2010/1901, p. 109).

In the face of the national unanimity driven by a foreign war, criticizing it publicly was not easy. A denunciation could be taken as a betrayal or simply ignored by the editorial room because the public would reject the paper (Knightley, 2004). The media system required patriotic news that exalted British qualities and military gallantry in the battlefield and the sporting firmness of their officials. The correspondent for the Morning Post wrote a phrase that synthesized the times: “It is a good thing to be an Englishman. These foreigners start too quick and finish quicker” (Knightley, 2004, p. 69).

**The Tensions Grow, the Cauldron Boils**

The Consul of Brazil in Alexandria recorded the arrival of a naval division consisting of British and French warships on May 20 (AHI 0.1881 to 87, bookcase 237, shelf 1, packet 20). This military presence provided a new impetus for foreigners who, feeling protected, behaved provocatively. However, the Egyptians were not intimidated; on the contrary, feeling insulted and provoked, they began to boil over. Eça, with irony, describes the same event:

> France and Britain were there, with lit wicks, watching Alexandria with camaraderie, as they had been in the past years in Cairo, a pen behind their ears, inspecting with camaraderie the Egyptian finances ( . . . ). So the two flags, of England and France, were actually two enormous promissory notes, hoisted at the top of the battleships. (Eça de Queirós, S/D, vol. II, p. 560)

Eça described Alexandria as a city whose western portion, dominated by the harbor, was European, whereas the eastern part was Oriental, miserable, and colorful. During his 1869 stay, Eça found the spark that would erupt on the sunny morning of June 11. During an interview with a Greek citizen, the Greek began to belittle the Egyptians. His rude manners incensed the Portuguese writer:

> What a crook, what a villain! The good thing was to hear him speaking of Egypt as a conquered country, a land of helots that had the obligation of dressing him, shoeing him, filling his bag, that applauded him around the table, all Europeans “[ . . . ] L’arabe, monsieur—this suspicious character told me in a French from the Piraeus—ce n’est qu’une infecte canaille.” The infectious bastard was you, livid Greek! (Queirós, S/D, vol. II, pp. 671-672)

In this dazzling eastern city, the worst of the West and the best of the East were found:

> in each corner of a live music café, cluttered with the soiled Maltese, who yell, smoke, drink alcohol [ . . . ] Everywhere, the game; a tenacious rascal, a small wheel, a bench and, in the middle of the street, the cheat is installed [ . . . ].

Because of this dissolution,

> the traveler of taste and education had to flee pretty quickly from this atmosphere, finding refuge in some silent Muslim café at the water’s edge, quiet. There, at least there were only Arabs who seriously smoked their *chibuk*, talking to each other politely, behaving with dignity. (Queirós, S/D, vol. II, p. 571)

**The Bombing of Alexandria, Between Information and Communication**

Although the British fleet remained anchored, the minds of the local Egyptian and foreign populations were set alight in a crescendo. Literate Egyptians read in their newspapers the intensification of the campaign against foreigners (Wright, 2009). June 11 began as a quiet summer morning in the ancient and charismatic city on the eastern Mediterranean. Alexandrian cafés were filled, and the movement of the
people filled the streets. An arrogant foreigner, most likely a Maltese, brutally assaulted a young Egyptian, whose reaction called for the support of his countrymen. The initial fight resulted in a furious explosion against all visible foreigners, and dozens were killed. The fight was portrayed in the European media as a “massacre by infidels,” as if only Christians and Europeans had been murdered. Eça opposed this exaggeration vehemently, totaling human losses on both sides and confirming, “figures do not lie.” The computed figures confirmed the death of 35 Europeans and approximately 300 Egyptians. This difference, Eça explained, was because “it is known that the Arabs had only clubs and that the Europeans had guns.”

In the following weeks, the impact of the riot travelled the world. The escalation of British pressure on Egypt led Colonel Arabi, as the minister of war, to reinforce Alexandria’s defenses. Admiral Seymour and his officers observed with growing concern the progress of construction, day and night, as if they were in Boston in 1775 before a new Bunker Hill. The government of Lord Gladstone urged the admiral to issue an ultimatum to cease the construction of forts. Around this document, a semantic civil war broke out. Although Gladstone avoided the trappings of war, the admiral lit the fire and demanded submission from the antagonists. The Prime Minister insisted that the admiral withdraw the term “surrender the forts” from the document because it seemed excessive. It was enough to write, “the construction should cease immediately, etc., or the fleet would open fire.” (Eça de Queirós, vol.II, p.577). Some historians believe that the moderate statement coming from London aimed at only neutralizing the coastal forts was changed by Admiral Seymour who, fearing for the safety of his fleet, sent the ultimatum. However, as expected, the Egyptian government refused to consider his terms. The forts were on their land, and their construction would continue.

Admiral Seymour decided to bomb the city on July 11, 1881. Although Gladstone hesitated regarding the military semantics, an action of force was perhaps appropriate. He also faced a resurgence of Irish nationalism, whose leaders viewed Arabi’s fight with sympathy and supported it. Irish and Hindus shouted together: “Egypt for the Egyptians!” The celebrated Irish intellectual Lady Augusta Gregory (1852-1932) wrote a vigorous article in the Times in October supporting Arabi (Lennon, 2008).

Eça described the eve of battle ironically: “They were alone, face to face under the peace of the heavens, a large British fleet and a harmless city that it, to satisfy the eager-ness of a mercantile nation of shopkeepers, would coolly raze the next morning”(vol. II, 578). The bombing leveled much of Alexandria and killed hundreds of innocent people. The resulting destruction and the firepower of the fleet scared Arabi’s army, who retreated inland, leaving Alexandria ruined and delivered to the people’s fury.

The news, reconfigured by Eça de Queirós thanks to his gifts as a novelist, inserted real issues into a novelistic intrigue. According to Hayden White (1975), when a set of events is put into a code of motives, the reader has before him a story because “the chronicle of events has been transformed into a complete diachronic process, about which one can then ask questions, as if he were dealing with a synchronous structure of relationships” (p. 6). It seems to us that the irony that was so unique to Eça transitioned into satire, which together with the novelistic story would compose “mutually exclusive means of putting into a plot the processes of reality” (White, 1975, p. 5). In this case, the protagonists in the report, from the Khedive to Admiral Seymour to the bankers and Arabi, acquired the force of romantic characters endowed with a “strong mimetic relationship with reality” (Peixinho, 2002, p. 83).

**Conclusion**

The epilogue of the drama has the British army landing and conquering Egypt in what was described as a “tidy little war” (Wright, 2009, passim). The Khedive, festively received the conquerors of the country as its liberators. Arabi was arrested, tried, convicted, and exiled to Ceylon. Eça de Queirós died in Paris in 1900. In 1889, the monarchy in Brazil was overthrown, and a republic was proclaimed. The modern world showed its connection to the late 18th and early 19th centuries, beginning the imperialist clash with Egypt as the reward. Modern notions of space and the public sphere helped to develop the press and the world news circuit based on the industrial revolution and the revolution of media systems in communications. Although London-based European finance reterritorialized the world, Egypt continued the modernizing project of Mehmet Ali and opposed British interests, whose commerce with India was essential. The construction of the Suez Canal increased the rampant spending by Khediva Ismail, encouraged by European finance. The country’s bankruptcy placed it under the responsibility of a commission that hijacked national revenue to pay the debt. Egyptian aspirations for modernizing reforms and the end of foreign guardianship resulted in a coup led by colonel Ahmed Arabi Pasha. The liberal British government, pushed by the press and the financial sector in addition to popular clamor, proclaimed that an alleged state of anarchy prevailed in Egypt. The government also used the loss of European lives that occurred in the June 11 riot as a pretext to attack Alexandria.

Because the consulates of the Empire of Brazil and the Kingdom of Portugal were destroyed in the June 11 riot in Alexandria, a newspaper from Rio de Janeiro commissioned the Portuguese consul, journalist, and writer Eça de Queirós, to write a set of news reports about the events in which Eça denounced the deceptive discourse that criminalized the peoples and nations affected by the actions of imperialism. At that time, a military action was a type of “imperial remedy” against the opponents of Eurocentric modernization and the destabilizers of the political, financial, and mercantile order of the European powers (Winseck & Pyke, 2007,
In his libertarian and anti-imperialist writings, Eça de Queirós once again stands out as the inextricable link, as Elsa Miné (1986) explains, between the novelist and the political journalist.

Therefore, we can conclude our article by returning to Underwood’s statement about Fielding and the audience. The Brazilian audience, who read novels and celebrated Eça, knew him as the receiver of the “dichotomy between journalism as an organ of truth (which could produce great falsehood) and fiction as a medium of fancy (which could tell important truths that journalism did not)” (Underwood, 2008, p. 53). It was not enough to report the news with the coldness of statistics and with only graphs and tables. It was also essential to employ plot, emotion, engagement, and especially conviction. Again, “figures always lie,” and words, as Barthes (1973) notes, are what give life to an event.

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**Author Biography**

José Maurício Saldanha Álvarez is a professor in the Universidade Federal Fluminense, Brazil. He is currently writing an essay on the relationship between the United States, Brazil, and Portugal in the 19th century, and another one on the French War in Indochina.