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9th International
Multidisciplinary
Congress

Creation,
Transformation
and
Metamorphose



05th - 07th
October 2023

SEVILLE
SPAIN

A poetic laboratory of repetition and transformation: the metamorphosis in Carlos de Oliveira

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Abstract

In the essay "O iceberg" ["The iceberg,"], the Portuguese writer Carlos de Oliveira, while analyzing Afonso Duarte's poetry, approaches poetic writing to metamorphosis, characterized as repeating the forms or creating new but identical forms. Based on that, this paper engenders the relationship between the metamorphic process and the gesture of literary creation, calling upon investigations carried out by Ovid, Emanuele Coccia, Roland Barthes, and Giorgio Agamben, among others. The goal is to understand how some of Carlos de Oliveira's poems construct this dialectical relationship between difference and identity and between repetition and variation, synchronic and diachronically. We thus realize that metamorphosis operates in Carlos de Oliveira as a procedure: the laboratory that contains the "before" and "after" of his books is immense since he has spent much of his life rewriting, re-editing, and republishing his poems and novels (i.e., creating new but identical forms). In his laboratory, metamorphosis takes place in his texts through the slow work of writing, which, despite being continuously done, undone, and redone, is also rarefied: the product of this work is unstable and uncertain, susceptible to alterations and metamorphosis through reading, through readers. Finally, we will analyze the role of reading in this writer's metamorphic process, taking him also as a reader: a reader of himself and so many others.

Keywords: Portuguese literature; Carlos de Oliveira; metamorphosis; repetition; reading