

Fátima Rodrigues. *Cesário Verde. Recepção Oitocentista e Poética*. Lisbon: Cosmos, 1998.

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This wonderful work of scholarship, though no longer new to the market, bears revisiting especially in light of recent tributes marking 150 years since the birth of Portuguese poet Cesário Verde (1855-86).

Fátima Rodrigues' book *Cesário Verde. Recepção Oitocentista e Poética* seeks to provide a framework for a corpus that has enjoyed an extraordinary intertextual longevity in the Portuguese canon from Modernism through Post-Modernism and that continues to enthuse and surprise readers today. Cesário's *avant la lettre* art, and indeed at times his very person, emerge as largely misunderstood and marginalized by his contemporaries, seemingly incompatible with the confined parameters of reading and socio-cultural norms of his time. The author notes the point of overlap between nineteenth-century misinterpretations and that which would be most prized in his work by future generations: "Apercebi-me de que a negativização de Cesário pelos seus contemporâneos incidia quase sempre nos traços que a leitura posterior convocaria para demonstrar a modernidade desta poesia" (29).

After a thorough introduction, in which Rodrigues presents an overview of key moments in twentieth-century cesarian criticism, the book is divided into two principal sections: "Recepção de Cesário no século XIX" and "Poética: estudo do discurso metapoético," which are followed by a succinct conclusion, an extensive bibliography and a substantial appendix.

Part I of the study meticulously documents and analyzes references to Cesário Verde's work by major critics of the period, including Ramalho Ortigão and Guerra Junqueiro, probing the at times scandalous reception his poems received and identifying and defining points of rupture from the poetic norms. Part II, which explores a complementary field of analysis, is divided into two areas of inquiry: "O lugar da escrita" and "O lugar do sujeito poético," which explore the pride of place that poetry and poetics take in the Cesarian lyric, providing valuable insights into Cesário's own

reflections upon his work, and thus elucidating his astonishment at the harsh criticism and obvious misunderstanding it received by contemporaries he admired.

Worthy of a special mention in addition to the meticulous textual references throughout the book is the extensive appendix, a product of Rodrigues' rigorous archival work and a great gift to today's cesarian scholar. It consists of transcriptions of numerous nineteenth-century texts and is organized in two parts, the first "Sobre Cesário," a compilation of articles and excerpts from newspapers of the period and the second "Homenagens," a selection of poems dedicated to Cesário soon after his death. As a further convenience, one might perhaps have hoped to find reproduced alongside these some of the admittedly more readily available epistolary exchanges between Cesário and friends such as Macedo Papança and Silva Pinto, which greatly inform and are often referenced in this project.

This well-organized book not only provides a solid critical framework for Cesário Verde's work, but in doing so, it presents us with a window onto the history of criticism for the period, a valuable tool, not only to those interested in Cesário, but to all scholars of nineteenth-century Portuguese literature and thought. What emerges from Rodrigues' parallel and mutually enlightening investigations is an *obra lírica* that defies ready classification as Realist, Romantic, Parnassian or Naturalist but that reveals itself as part of a coherent and utterly unique poetic project, by an artist with a radically original concept of poetics, one that, while very much the product of its generation, reveals a transfigurative vision that would stand the test of time.

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