

José Lopes and the Beginnings of Cape Verdean Literature

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Abstract. In the period that extends from the end of the nineteenth century to the 1930s we witness the emergence of a poetry that is at once classicist and Romantic in Cape Verde; prior to this there was a total absence of a literary tradition. The foremost exponent of this kind of poetry was José Lopes, a poet who drew his inspiration from the classics. The poems that he published during his lifetime reveal the poet's penchant for themes derived from classical culture and for mythological, legendary and historical characters that would have been enjoyed as such by people living during the Renaissance. A close reading of this poetry will reveal the intellectual relationship that the poet maintained with the past, which is exemplified by his resorting to the use of historical and mythical and legendary material, be it of Portuguese origin or derived from classical antiquity, and which he transformed and absorbed into long poetic works in which he sang the historical deeds of different protagonists in different circumstances. It is precisely the proximity to Portuguese literature in those regions under Portuguese colonial domination, such as is the case of Cape Verde until independence in 1975, that permits us to seek a possible relationship between these literatures; this would include European literature. At the same time, it is important to distinguish what makes these local literatures specific or different.

One of the questions certain to be raised by those who venture to study the history of Cape Verdean literature will be the circumstances involved in the belated formation of a literature on these African islands.

History maintains that the country was discovered¹ or found in the fifteenth century; Portuguese navigators landed on its largest island in the year 1462. Historical facts are there to confirm all the theses that have been built around the mythical islands of Cape Arsinarius and the history of the formation and development of a Creole society.

It is an odd fact that only four centuries after the official recognition of the islands by the Portuguese Crown, that is to say, only in the nineteenth century, did the first signs of intellectual life appear on the horizon. We see the production and the publication of the first texts of a literary and non-literary nature, texts written mainly in prose and by Cape Verdeans—whether living within the confines of the territory or outside the country—or else by Portuguese citizens, either short-term visitors or people who came to live in Cape Verde. This does not mean that we can speak of literature in the archipelago.²

Most scholars of Cape Verdean literature agree that these are the signs that permit us, today, to place the beginnings of Cape Verdean letters in that century, in effect, confirming that our literary history is made up of a long period of about four hundred years marked by an intellectual vacuum and the absence of a literary tradition.

To clear up this question is the definitive position of Arnaldo França, who is categorical in affirming that

procurar testemunhos da literatura cabo-verdiana anteriores ao início da segunda metade do século XIX é tarefa vã; um que outro escrito de autor ligado à terra pelo acaso do nascimento, ou mesmo com uma genealogia crioula, são insuficientes para povoar o deserto intelectual em que a ilha de Santiago se tornaria após um fugaz fausto observado por alguns no período quinhentista.³

[to look for evidence of Cape Verdean literature prior to the beginning of the second half of the nineteenth century is a fruitless task; this or that bit of writing by an author connected to the country by an accident of birth or through Creole ancestors is insufficient to populate the intellectual desert that the island of Santiago had become after the fleeting grandeur that some observed in the sixteenth century.]

This scholar and critic of our literature admits the possibility that convent manuscripts could have existed prior to this date, but that unfortunately they

have been lost and, for that reason, we should accept the earliest date for the beginnings of our literature to be in the middle of the 1800s. It is in that period that a support system capable of sustaining the development of an erudite literature appears: schools, the printing press and recreational associations.

In an excellent and well-grounded article, Alberto Carvalho talks about the importance of the schooling system and education in general—even though it was also elitist—as well as the proliferation of cultural institutions, such as libraries, reading rooms, museums, and others institutions of a similar nature, in the creation of a Cape Verdean intelligentsia. Especially important in this regard was the *Seminário-Lyceu* [Seminary-Secondary School] on the island of São Nicolau, which made a definitive contribution towards the formation of “*uma classe média de grande poder aglutinador*”⁴ [“a middle class of great cohesive power”]. He shows that the schooling system contributed to the social and human development of Cape Verdeans, and this is vindicated by history. The introduction and development of primary schooling on the islands from 1817 onwards, the later establishment of the *Seminário-Lyceu* in São Nicolau in 1866 and the subsequent incorporation of the *Liceu* in Praia and the *Escola Principal* [“Main School”] within this institution are key events; they functioned as the driving motors behind the “*saber sobre o qual se alicerçaria a consciência da nação*”⁵ [“knowledge upon which the conscience of the nation would build its foundation”].

Citizens and individuals with a solid knowledge, both literary and humanist, graduated from this *Seminário-Lyceu*. They would occupy important positions in the civil service, and in the school system.

Another aspect worthy of the attention of literary historians has to do with the fact that the appearance of literary prose in Cape Verde precedes the appearance of poetry by some years. Arnaldo França mentions several examples of prose works—either published in Cape Verde or published elsewhere by native Cape Verdeans—that reveal the first shimmering signs of a national literature, such as in the case of Guilherme Dantas. He also explains that it was the nature of the society at the time that determined why it was mainly prose that came to be written.⁶ But the oldest literary work in Portuguese-speaking Africa, according to Manuel Ferreira, is a ditty by the Cape Verdean woman, Maria Antónia Pusich, entitled “*Elegia à Memória das Infelizes Vítimas Assassinadas por Francisco de Mattos Lobo na Noute de 25 de Junho de 1844*” [“Elegy to the Memory of the Unfortunate Victims Murdered by Francisco de Mattos Lobo on the Night of June 25, 1844”] and published

in Lisbon of that same year. Most of the texts, be they prose fiction or poetic texts, were published almost exclusively in the *Boletim Oficial do Governo Geral de Cabo Verde*⁷ [*Official Report of the Governor-General's Office in Cape Verde*], the only means of communication available at that time, one that already came with an official literary page where the texts were published, interspersed with legal documents and journalistic texts. Symptomatic of this is the fact that a romantic love story and a historical novel by José Evaristo de Almeida entitled *O Escravo* [*The Slave*], dated 1856, was published in instalments. However, it is widely accepted that the greatest prose writer to have made his appearance on the literary scene, in the period that extends from the end of the nineteenth century through to the first thirty years of the twentieth century, that is, before the appearance of the literary magazine *Claridade*, is Eugénio de Paula Tavares—a journalist, columnist, fiction author and bilingual poet. França says of him:

Mais conhecido como poeta e nesta qualidade como autor de composições em crioulo, [...] é a prosa de Eugénio Tavares pela perfeição da forma, pela plasticidade descritiva dos ambientes, seja a paisagem marítima da fatal estrada da proa América, seja a vida dos campos da sua ilha de rusticidade sadia e fresca, pela recriação de personagens de uma ficção singela mas presa à realidade da terra, e também pelo estilo contundente, fortemente agressivo mas justo, da sua pena de jornalista.⁸

[Better known as a poet and in his guise as the author of compositions in Creole [...] it is Eugénio Tavares's prose, for its formal perfection, for the gracefulness with which he describes different environments—the marine landscape of the fatal sea-lane of the prow *América*, the healthy freshness of rustic life in the interior of his native island—for the invention of characters who though simple fiction are grounded in the reality of that land, and also for the bruised style—strongly aggressive but just—that issued from his journalist's pen.]

It is only with the appearance of a private printing press that poetry will make its appearance, from 1877 onwards. It will acquire exceptional dimensions in the closing years of the nineteenth century and in the first thirty years of the twentieth century. It is during this time that we witness the emergence of a poetry that is at once classicist and Romantic and is best represented by Pedro Cardoso, José Lopes and Januário Leite. Oswaldo Osório, a poet and essayist, concludes his assessment of this kind of poetry with these words:

[...] é no seu conjunto epígona da que se faz em Portugal, tematicamente exógena, academizante porque imitativa na forma e no metro; e o conteúdo, [...] é o produto de consciência fechada em um universo sem acesso ao “evoluir civilizacional” do mundo, em que a única saída reside no exercício e na aplicação do eu na escrita como forma de afirmação pessoal—poesia de sentimento, de dores e de melancolias existenciais excessivas, ambígua mesmo quando pretende o tom ser de desafio ou de recuperação da história. Poesia de herança romântica, dela não colhe, porém, na linha do romantismo iluminista, uma conduta ideológica, uma pedagogia—para se ater à sua corrente sentimental.⁹

[...] in broad terms, the quality is inferior to that which is made in Portugal, its themes are derived from foreign influences, and it is academic in its imitation of form and meter; as for its content (...) it is the product of a conscience that is closed off, inhabiting a universe where there is no access to the “civilizational evolution” of the world, where the only way out consisted of making use of the “I” in writing as a kind of affirmation of self—it is a poetry of sentiments, and the melancholy and pain of excessive existential self-doubts, a poetry full of ambiguities, even when the tone purports to challenge or to reclaim the past. This was the kind of poetry inherited from the Romantics, and yet it does not reap the benefits of an enlightened Romanticism: an ideological way of being, a pedagogy—it chooses, instead, to flow with the more sentimental current of Romanticism.]

He adds:

É um período muito longo que foi ocupado por nomes mais ligados à actividade poética cujas produções se catalogam como “manifestações literárias” facilmente reivindicadas também pela literatura portuguesa.¹⁰

[It was a very long period, one that was dominated by names of people linked to the production of the sort of poetry that could be classified as “literary manifestations” that could have been easily reclaimed by Portuguese literature.]

The first literary efforts of these poets, especially verse, were first printed in the *Novo Almanach de Lembranças Luso-Brasileiro*¹¹ [*New Luso-Brazilian Almanac of Remembrances*], a Lisbon-based publication whose principal readers were Portuguese citizens living in the four corners of the world. It made known the sort of literary and cultural initiatives carried out in the Portuguese-speak-

ing African countries, particularly in Cape Verde, Angola and Mozambique. It was as a result of this publication, because it did bring together a large number of contributors, and significant contributions at that,¹² that these new poets could connect with the world; it guaranteed them a permanent dialogue with interlocutors from other parts and, also, credibility in the heart of the international literary community. Thus this publication has come to acquire capital importance in the study of the so-called “emergent literatures,” although there is no way that this significance could have been foreseen at the time of the appearance of the publication.

The absence of a past and of a literary tradition ensured that poetry would be constructed according to a European model; it was something some of our poets could not escape from, imbued as they were with classical and humanist traditions, the result of their academic training in the then-*Seminário-Lyceu* in São Nicolau. It was here that they were exposed to the Classicist and Romantic Portuguese poets; they would acquire an easy familiarity with these poets.

Guilherme da Cunha Dantas is, admittedly, one of the first genuine poets; an ultra-Romantic in orientation, he is regarded as “*o príncipe dos poetas da minha terra*” [“the prince of poets of my country”] in the words of José Lopes, another poet who made his appearance on the literary scene at the end of the century, and who knew him personally. In an article published in *Vida Contemporânea* [*Contemporary Life*], Lopes expresses his admiration for Dantas:

O Dantas é um romântico. Nascido e educado em plena época do romantismo, seguiu a corrente literária do tempo e foi distinto representante dessa Escola. Mas, engenho poliformo, cultivou vários géneros sem a preocupação exclusiva das chamadas Escolas Literárias.¹³

[Dantas is a Romantic. Born and raised during the full bloom of Romanticism, he followed the literary currents of his day and was a distinguished representative of that school. But, being a man of polymorphous skills, he cultivated several genres without paying exclusive attention to any literary school.]

Two conclusions are self-evident: on the one hand, there is the absence of a literary tradition, and, on the other hand, there is the proximity of Portuguese literature. And it is precisely the proximity to Portuguese literature in those regions under Portuguese colonial domination, such as in the case of Cape Verde until independence in 1975, that permits us to seek a pos-

sible relationship between these literatures. At the same time, it is important to distinguish what makes these local literatures specific or different.

Thus it is legitimate to say that during a certain period of this “national” literature imitations of classical Portuguese texts (itself strongly influenced by classical culture) should be present, especially among the poets who wrote before the *Claridade* period. These poets admired and imitated Greek and Latin authors.

The most prominent specialists of Cape Verdean literature agree that in the work of these poets, and especially in the case of José Lopes, there is

um anacronismo aparente que parece decorrer do seu quadro de valores e gosto e que encontra suas motivações no fundamento clássico pelas influências de ideias, trabalho de intertextualidade, atitude admirativa endereçada à alteridade, escrita literária amplificadora.¹⁴

[an apparent anachronism that seems to stem from his set of values and tastes; the influences on his work—the intertextual allusions, the admiration he feels for the other, the exaggerated writing—find their sources in the classics.]

Alberto Carvalho affirms that

o efeito de anacronismo que a sua irupção no século XIX pode sugerir dilui-se portanto nesta função de alicerce estabilizador, igualmente terapêutica tanto na agregação dos materiais que sincretizam a vida social como na disciplina da cena multiforme das suas variadas experiências literárias.¹⁵

[the anachronistic effect that its appearance in the nineteenth century can suggest to us is diluted, therefore, in this function of stabilizing foundation, one that can be equally therapeutic both in the gathering of materials that synthesize social life as well as in the discipline of the multiform scene of his varied literary experiences.]

For the essayist Manuel Ferreira, it was because those poets were

[...] prisioneiros de uma experiência oriunda do passado [e] parece terem sido incapazes de se reatualizarem, com certeza por fatalidade dos anos, do meio, do difícil acesso continuado às obras coevas, e daí a impossibilidade de motivações para a renovação estética.¹⁶

[(...) prisoners of an experience that had originated in the past and seemed incapable of getting themselves up to date, surely also because of the fatalism of their advancing age, because of the environment, and because of the difficulty of getting access to work published during that time—all this explains the lack of motivation for some sort of aesthetic renewal.]

Alberto Carvalho further adds that *Hesperitanas* [*Of the Hesperides / Hesperidians*], the title of a book of poems by José Lopes, is

aparentemente anacrónico por fazer conviver e perdurar, por enquistamento de correntes literárias, um classicismo já tardio amalgamado com tendências de escola portuguesas e europeias da segunda metade do século XIX.¹⁷

[seemingly anachronistic in so far as it allows a belated classicism, already amalgamated with other tendencies in Portuguese and European literary schools of the second half of the nineteenth century, to coexist and endure besides other literary currents.]

On the other hand, maintains the same scholar,

as suas obras (dos autores novecentistas) são exercícios de trabalho fundadores, em continuidade da escrita comunicativa e literária numa sociedade que apenas algumas décadas começara a generalizar a escolarização.

[his works (of nineteenth-century authors) are the works of someone who was establishing a literature, and they follow directly from the sort of communicative and literary writing produced in a society where only a few decades before basic schooling had become more widespread.]

The merits of his creative efforts are open to debate.¹⁸

However, these same scholars also maintain that understanding this poetry aids in our understanding of Creole history. If we accept that there is a void in the tradition of writing prior to the nineteenth century, then we have to re-evaluate these authors, even though writers that have come after have questioned their intellectual stature. But they were the beginners.

The historical, cultural and literary-aesthetic context behind the poetry of these writers is certainly important. However, it is our conviction that the

poetry of José Lopes, as well as that of the other poets, can take us a little farther in helping us to understand the ancestral void that was created by the fact that before they were discovered by the Portuguese there was no life on the islands. The anxiety and the anguish of an existentialist dilemma that would explain and justify the existence of the Cape Verdean as a historical and ethnic subject, a subject that, practically speaking, has no past, no memory, no history, this anxiety and the anguish assailed José Lopes throughout his life; it is also certainly evident in some of his poems. It is a legitimate existential concern.

In his search for the cultural identity and the historical origin of his “Cape Verdean brothers,” the poet José Lopes wrote a long poem, included in *Hesperitanas*, a poem entitled “Minha Terra” [“My Country”], which is a poem of praise to the islands of Cape Verde. In this poem, where myth is combined with legend, José Lopes revives, from out of the far distant past, the legend of Atlantis, a legendary island that—it is believed—was located in the Atlantic, to the west of Gibraltar.

Minha Terra!

(saudação às Ilhas de Cabo-Verde)

Foi... só Deus sabe, há que milhares de anos!...

De Poseidón a Ilha ou Continente,

Maravilha dos priscos Oceanos,

Erguia sôbre o Ponto do Ocidente

Os rôpos dos seus montes soberanos.

Era imensa, formosa, viridente...

Mundo vasto, fantástico, lendário,

Segundo as mais remotas tradições,

Povoavam-na, enchiam-na milhões,

A crêrmos Diodoro de Sicília

Via-a de longe a Terra do Arsínario.

[My Country!

(praise song to the Islands of Cape Verde)

It was... only God knows, how many thousands of years ago!...

From out of Poseidon, the island or continent,

The marvel of the ancient oceans,
 Raised the summits of its sovereign hills
 Over the Point of the West.
 It was immense, beautiful, flourishing...
 A vast, fantastic, legendary world,
 According to the most ancient of traditions,
 It was populated, filled with millions,
 And if we are to believe Diodorus Siculus
 The land of Arsinarius was visible in the distance.]

This utopian island, initially mentioned by Plato, is supposed to have perished in the vast ocean during an earthquake.

The story of this mythical continent still shrouded in mystery has dazzled generations of poets and prose writers; it has become a recurrent trope in the poetic output of many. Did Atlantis really exist? Who would have inhabited this mysterious continent? How did it disappear? The more recent archaeological discoveries have not given us the definitive answer, even though clear traces of this continent have already been found and identified.¹⁹

It is also argued that we are not merely dealing with a lost continent. Legend has it that this was a highly advanced civilization. The islands of Cape Verde would be the remains of this mysterious continent, the heir to this thousand-year civilization. As the daughters of Hesperus they would of course be called the HESPERIDIANS, the title that J. [José] Lopes gives to his book of poetry. Or the Arsinarius islands, the island of Cape Arsinarius, so named by Strabo [Pliny—*trans.*], and by the Portuguese who changed it to Cape Verde, as is attested by Camões in *Os Lusíadas*:

Onde o Cabo Arsinário o nome perde
 Chamando-se dos nossos Cabo Verde

[Where Cape Arsinarius loses its name
 And which our people now call Cape Verde]
 [Canto V, 7—*trans.*]

The first reference to the Hesperides occurs in Hesiod's *Theogony*; here we are told of the Hesperides, the daughters of the Night [Atlas—*trans.*], who guarded their garden in the extreme Western corner of the world; they kept

watch on the golden apples that Hercules would one day come to gather.

José Lopes's knowledge of the history, myth and legend around this theme was reworked in his poem "Minha Terra," a praise poem to the islands of Cape Verde, which is none other than Atlantis "*as vastas extensões assim submersas...*" ["its vast extensions still submerged"]. He evokes the continent that thousands and thousands of years ago had succumbed "*às convulsões plutónicas*" ["to Plutonic convulsions"]; he delves into the past, and on this basis he recreates the fantastical world that had inhabited the Atlantic Ocean.

This legend is described by José Lopes in his poem in the following manner:

Era ali o Jardim dos pomos de ouro
(Dizem os papiros primordiais do Egipto)
[...] Cinco ninfas, entre elas Erythea
e Héspera, guardavam noite e dia
O Jardim, com o auxílio de um dragão

[.....]
As Hespérides, de Héspero as três filhas,
Por essa mesma antiga tradição,
Deram o nome às nossas, com razão
Chamadas, pois, Ilhas Hesperitanas.
També, se denominam Arsinárias
Pelo cabo Arsinário dos Antigos,
Nesse mudado em Caboverdeanas.

[It was there, in the garden of the golden apples
(Or so it is said in the ancient papyri of Egypt)
(...) Five nymphs, among them Erythea
and Hespera, guarded the garden
Night and day, with the help of a dragon

[.....]
The Hesperides, the three daughters of Hesperus,
According to that same ancient tradition,
Gave the name to our isles, correctly so,
For ours are called the Hesperidians.
They were also named the Arsinarians

As a result of what the ancients called Cape Arsinarius,
Which has now been changed to Cape Verdean.]

José Lopes admired the classics; he would try his hand at poems in the epic mode, in the manners of Virgil and Camões. He was influenced by Camões, the greatest Portuguese epic poet, and an abiding presence in this author's work.

José Lopes dedicated a fifteen-stanza-long poem entitled "Camões"²⁰ to the Portuguese epic poet; here he emulates the style of the poet, develops his ideas, and portrays him as one of the greatest poets:

Entre os maiores poetas,
És o poeta maior.
Igualavas os profetas,
Sabias sentir amor!
Tu és a ave da serra
Que além das nuvens desferra
Seus vôos, longe da Terra.
Tu és a águia, o condor!

Cale-se a fama de Homero
E de Vergílio o cantar!
Camões, mais alto e sincero,
Tinha mais doce o trovar!
Era um poeta inspirado,
Tinha um génio sublimado,
Ninguém lhe foi comparado
Ninguém o pode igualar!

[Among the great poets
You are the greatest still.
You were on a par with the prophets,
You knew how to love!
You are the mountain bird
Far from the clouds
Unfolding its flights
Far from the earth.
You are an eagle, a condor!

Of no compare is Homer's fame
 And Virgil's song!
 Camões, loftier and more sincere,
 Had the sweetest music!
 He was a poet with inspiration
 His skill was exalted
 No one was compared to him
 No one can equal him!]

Drawing on Romantic aesthetics of the nineteenth century, this author uses historical material, be it of Portuguese origin or derived from Hellenic antiquity, in long poetic works where he sings the historical deeds of different protagonists in different circumstances. The appraisal of these poems can raise the delicate problem of to which country this literature belongs. The characteristic that predominates in all of them is praise in epic proportions; he turns to European material, and to themes from Roman history, themes much in evidence in the poetic texts entitled “Úrsus e Lýgia” [“Ursus and Lygia”],²¹ dated 1906, and “A Morte de César” [“Caesar’s Death”], from 1910. These are poems that retell key moments in the history of ancient Rome, that is to say, (1) the time of the conspiracy that leads to the murder of the Caesar and puts an end to the dictatorship, and (2) the tumult that overwhelms the great Roman Empire as a result of the fire that razed Rome, attributed to the Emperor Nero, and the subsequent intense persecution of Christians, promoted by the emperor himself around the year 64.

In “Úrsus e Lýgia” we witness the combat between Ursus, “*o Hércules cristão, o gigantesco lygio*” [“the Christian Hercules, that gigantic Lygian”], against the ferocious lions; this occurs when he is thrown to the wild animals in the arena, in front of a “*turba-multa insana*” [“insane multitude of people”] thirsty for blood. It is an uneven combat and the tragic finale is easy to foresee. Ursus resists heroically, but his strength begins to fail him. Bloodless, he almost faints, but a miracle occurs and Ursus is able to defeat the beast and save Lygia, his protégée. The finale is a eulogy:

A turba invade o circo e arranca-os triunfantes
 À arena, entre ovações e palmas retumbantes!...
 Por tôda a imensa URBS as gentes aclamavam;
 E, vendo-os passar, as virgens perfumavam

Os cabelos de Lygia, o meigo ser bendito,
De essências mais subteis que os bálsamos do Egipto,
Qual de um Triunfador, subindo ao Capitólio,
Na fronte majestosa o sacrossanto óleo.

[The crowd invades the circus and, amongst ovations and thundering applause,
Triumphantly drags them from the arena,
People acclaimed throughout the immense urbs;
And as they walked past virgins perfumed
Lygia's hair, that meek blessed soul,
With perfumes subtler than the balms of Egypt,
As befitting a victor, walking up the Capitol,
The sacrosanct oil on his forehead.]

The poem "A Morte de César" describes Caesar's life and that of his empire up to the time of his death. His facts, his expeditions, conquests and victories:

Foi nos idos de Março. Estava combinado
Que Bruto, Cássio e os mais matassem no Senado
A César nesse dia. Entraram ainda cedo.
Lenas, um Senador, aproximou-se e a mêdo
Aos ouvidos lhes disse: "*Os planos estão sabidos.*
Se hesitais um momento, estais todos perdidos...."

[It was during the ides of March. It had been arranged
That Brutus, Cassius and the rest would kill Caesar in the Senate
That day. When they arrived it was early still.
Lenas, a Senator, approached them and fearfully
Whispered in their ears: "The plans are known.
If you hesitate at all, we are all lost...."]

In sum: a more extensive study will lay bare this intellectual relationship that the poet maintained with the past, namely with Greek and Latin Antiquity. It will allow us to understand, for example, on the one hand, that underlying the classicist poetry of José Lopes are the processes of cultural *translatio*, through the transfer of elements from Graeco-Roman culture, by means of the process of *aemulatio*, and through the intellectual relationship

that he maintained with classical culture, and, on the other hand, that the act of creation of his literary texts implies a confrontation with other literary texts, that is, if we situate him “in a specific tradition, be it rhetorical-stylistic, technico-literary, or thematic-literary, to which he can belong and at the same time transform or break away from.”²² A. Nascimento argues along very similar lines in an article we already have made reference to; he says that “any *translatio* is worthy of whoever performs it only if it is carried out on the basis of an *aemulatio*, so that through the *imitatio* the *melius* may be obtained. It is this agonistic attitude that characterizes the humanism of Western civilization and that which makes Quintilian (X.2.9) say that *imitari* is *contendere potius quam sequi*.”²³

Other poems by José Lopes, included among the works he published in his lifetime, reveal the poet's penchant for themes derived from classical culture. The humanism and the universality that characterize some of the poems of José Lopes, the use he makes of *imitatio*, his ease and familiarity with the great thinkers and poets of Classical antiquity, the poems in the epic mode, very much in the manner of Virgil and Camões, are all factors that permit us, without resort to any sort of subterfuge, to understand the driving lines of a poetry created at a certain time and place. Everything leads us to believe that the anachronisms were just for appearances.

Notes

¹ Even today there are some who maintain that the islands of Cape Verde were discovered and others who hold that they were found; there are arguments in favor and against the two positions. See *História Geral de Cabo Verde* 23.

² Ferreira, *Literaturas Africanas de Expressão Portuguesa*. In this work, the author presents an overview, as complete as possible, of the prose writers and poets who published the first texts of a literary nature, be they Cape Verdeans or Portuguese citizens of Cape Verdean origin who were either living in or outside the country.

³ França 115. França makes reference to two writers of Cape Verdean origin, André Alvares de Almada and André Dornelas. *O Tratado Breve dos Rios da Guiné* [*Brief Treatise on the Rivers of Guinea*], dated 1594, is attributed to André Alvares de Almada, and Dornelas is credited with a description of Guinea, also from the sixteenth century. See Teixeira, A., *Dois Escritores Quinhentistas de Cabo Verde — André Alvares de Almada e André Dornelas* (Lisboa: Junta de Investigação do Ultramar, 1971).

⁴ See Carvalho, “Do Classicismo ao Realismo da Claridade” 24.

⁵ Carvalho, “Do Classicismo” 22.

⁶ França 116.

⁷ A printing press was installed in Cape Verde only in 1842, in compliance with the ordi-

nance-law of September 7, 1836. The first issue was published on August 24 of that same year. Until 1880 this government body also served the province of Guiné [Portuguese Guinea].

⁸ França 120.

⁹ Osório 111.

¹⁰ Actually, these poets were never reclaimed or recovered by Portuguese literature, and their names do not figure in any history of Portuguese literature.

¹¹ The *Almanach de Lembranças* appeared in Lisbon around 1851, although it was made available and was read at several places where Portuguese was read and spoken. The expression “*Luso-Brasileira*” was added to the title a few years later, around 1872; this allows us to appreciate the dimension it had taken, as well as its usefulness today as a source of information about the evolution of literary and cultural forms in the countries we have referred to.

¹² See the statistical data on the peaks of greater literary production, presented by Carvalho in “Sobre o Culto de Camões, convidado das ilhas crioulas” 25.

¹³ *Vida Contemporânea*, Revista mensal, nº 15 (Lisboa, Julho de 1935) 500.

¹⁴ Carvalho, “Sobre o Culto” 35.

¹⁵ Carvalho, “Sobre o Culto” 35.

¹⁶ Ferreira, *Literaturas Africanas* 36.

¹⁷ Carvalho, “Sobre o Culto” 30.

¹⁸ Carvalho, “Sobre o Culto” 31.

¹⁹ Recent research [1967—*trans.*] reveals the new location for Atlantis to have been Satorin (Thíra), an island in the Aegean Sea that is not much more than an arch of volcanic rock on the waters. Archaeologists have found vestiges of a highly developed society—perhaps contemporaneous with the Trojan War—in Satorin, which suddenly disappeared from Thíra some time before the largest volcanic explosion ever witnessed by the man. Today we know that an advanced society prospered on an island in Aegean Sea called Thíra... that it traded with other peoples and, all of a sudden, collapsed, the result of constant earthquakes and a devastating volcanic explosion.

²⁰ Lopes, *Hesperitanas* 215.

²¹ This poem was reprinted in *Hesperitanas* (288), with the same title as the one with which we present it.

²² Aguiar e Silva 34.

²³ Aguiar e Silva 34.

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