

## Automated search for the poetic imagery of Cesário Verde

Cesário Verde (1855–1886) is often considered to be the first Portuguese modernist, as he stands at the transition between romanticism and modernism in nineteenth-century poetry (Lopes, 1987). His poems are characterized by an extremely perfected structure and powerful visual imagery. In fact, the strength of his images has been repeatedly (albeit posthumously) recognized as a decisive factor in the emergence of modernist poetry in Portuguese language (Martelo, 2012). If we consider the three kinds of poetry as defined by Pound (1931) – who provided a classification of poetic language according to the type of sensory perception that it triggers in the reader – then the poetry of Cesário Verde is a prime example of *phanopœia*, i.e. “a casting of images upon the visual imagination”. In this presentation, we intend to demonstrate how the poetic works of Cesário Verde contain the power to awaken the visual imagination of the reader, thus being a perfect fit to Pound’s category. For this purpose, starting from the poem “*De tarde*” (“*In the afternoon*”), we use present-day technologies to search for images based on its verses. Specifically, we use a state-of-the-art machine translator, a natural language processing library, and an image bank database. The image retrieval process can be fully automated, but the result can still be improved by tweaking the translation, the choice of keywords, and the final image selection. The result is an aesthetically pleasing sequence of images, where the order of presentation, more than their pictorial accuracy, is reminiscent of the awe provoked by the original poem. The fact that such process can be carried out automatically, or at least semi-automatically, suggests that the aesthetic and visual appeal of that imagery comes from the poetry itself and not from the transformation process of poetry into images.

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