

# Automated Search for the Poetic Imagery of Cesário Verde



Cesário Verde (1855–1886)



Photo by Windows on Unsplash

# Presentation topics

## Part One

- The modernity of Cesário Verde's poetry and his progressive creation of visual images.
- Classification of poetic language, as defined by Ezra Pound, and Cesário Verde's poetry.

## Part Two

- Technological process used to search for images based on the verses of Cesário Verde.
- Illustration of the sequence of images obtained for poem “In the Afternoon” / “*De Tarde*”.

# Cesário Verde as a precursor of modernism

- The abandonment of romantic lyric's subjectivity for a "functional self", as designated by Macedo (1999), thus beginning objective poetry.
- The adoption of Taine's aesthetics for his poetry, the same adopted by the realist novelists, which is reflected in :
  - the use of **prosaic vocabulary**, although he did not like to write in prose:  
"to me, nothing could be more outrageous / than to write in prose" in "Outrageous" / *"Contrariedades"*
  - the approach to **everyday themes**, in the sense of:
    - **concrete observation**
    - **criticism of reality.**
- Another striking aspect of Cesário Verde's originality is the fact that his poetry presents a sequence of juxtaposed events, which brings it close to the **cinematographic montage**, as pointed out by Macedo.

# The sensory perception in Cesário Verde

Refinement of **sensory perception**

Several images that appeal to the **senses**

- “Crystallizations” / “*Cristalizações*” in the verse:  
“of touch, of sight, of sound, of taste, of smell”
- Other situations in which the sensorial register appears in the form of **impressions** that are reminiscent of **impressionist painting**.

## Visual stimuli

## Pictorial nature

- Color “the sea a **green**, blooming plain” in “Summertime” / “*De Verão*”
- Tone “there gleams a great, raw **sunlight**” in “Crystallizations” / “*Cristalizações*”
- Stain “**yellowishly**, dogs resemble wolves” in “The feeling of a Westerner” / “*O Sentimento dum Ocidental*”
- Scintillation “water puddles, like on **glassy floor**” in “Crystallizations” / “*Cristalizações*”
- Brightness “sheets of white **reflection**” in “The feeling of a Westerner” / “*O Sentimento dum Ocidental*”
- Effulgence “the breakfast china **glints**” in “A Modern Neighborhood” / “*Num Bairro Moderno*”

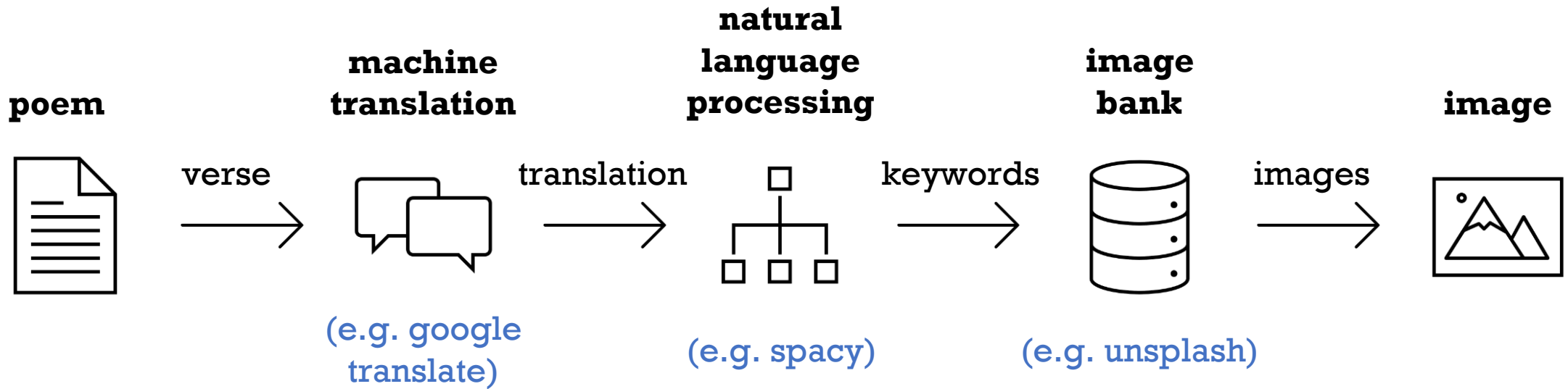
# Ezra Pound's poetic language classification

- **Phanopœia** Poetry that is based on the **visual power of the images**. Pounds describes this as “throwing the object (fixed or moving) on to the visual imagination”.
- **Melopœia** Poetry that is based on the **creation of sound effects**, “inducing emotional correlations by the sound and rhythm of the speech”.
- **Logopœia** Poetry that uses words beyond their direct meaning inducing both of the above effects by **stimulating associations** and **empowering the argumentation**.

Most of Cesário Verde's poetic images result from the **intersection of perceptual images**, whose dynamism grants them a **transfiguring force** and leads the reader, several times, to the **visual synesthetic experience**.

This process was precursor of the Pessoaan **sensationism**.

# Technological process



- The process can be fully automated end-to-end:
  - translation from PT to EN
  - NLP removes stop words (“the”, “I”, “that”, “and”, “in”, etc.)
  - image bank returns multiple images
- The results can be improved by manually tweaking:
  - the translation,
  - the choice of keywords,
  - the final image selection.

# Poem “In the Afternoon” / “De Tarde”

## IN THE AFTERNOON

At that bourgeois ladies' picnic,  
there was something just beautiful,  
and which, without history or grandeur,  
in any case would do for a watercolor.

It was when you, getting off the donkey,  
went to pick, without putting on silly airs,  
to a blue field of chickpea  
a red bunch of poppies.

Soon after, on top of some cliffs,  
we camped, the sun was still out;  
and there were slices of melon, apricots,  
and sponge cake soaked in malmsey.

But, all purple, peeking out of the lace  
of your two breasts like two turtledoves,  
it was the supreme charm of the picnic  
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## DE TARDE

*Naquele pic-nic de burguesas,  
Houve uma coisa simplesmente bela,  
E que, sem ter história nem grandezas,  
Em todo o caso dava uma aguarela.*

*Foi quando tu, descendo do burrico,  
Foste colher, sem imposturas tolas,  
À um granzoal azul de grão-de-bico  
Um ramalhete rubro de papoulas.*

*Pouco depois, em cima duns penhascos,  
Nós acampámos, inda o sol se via;  
E houve talhadas de melão, damascos,  
E pão de ló molhado em malvasia.*

*Mas, todo púrpuro, a sair da renda  
Dos teus dois seios como duas rolas,  
Era o supremo encanto da merenda  
O ramalhete rubro das papoulas!*

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It was when you, getting off the donkey, went to pick, without putting on silly airs, to a blue field of chickpea a red bunch of poppies.

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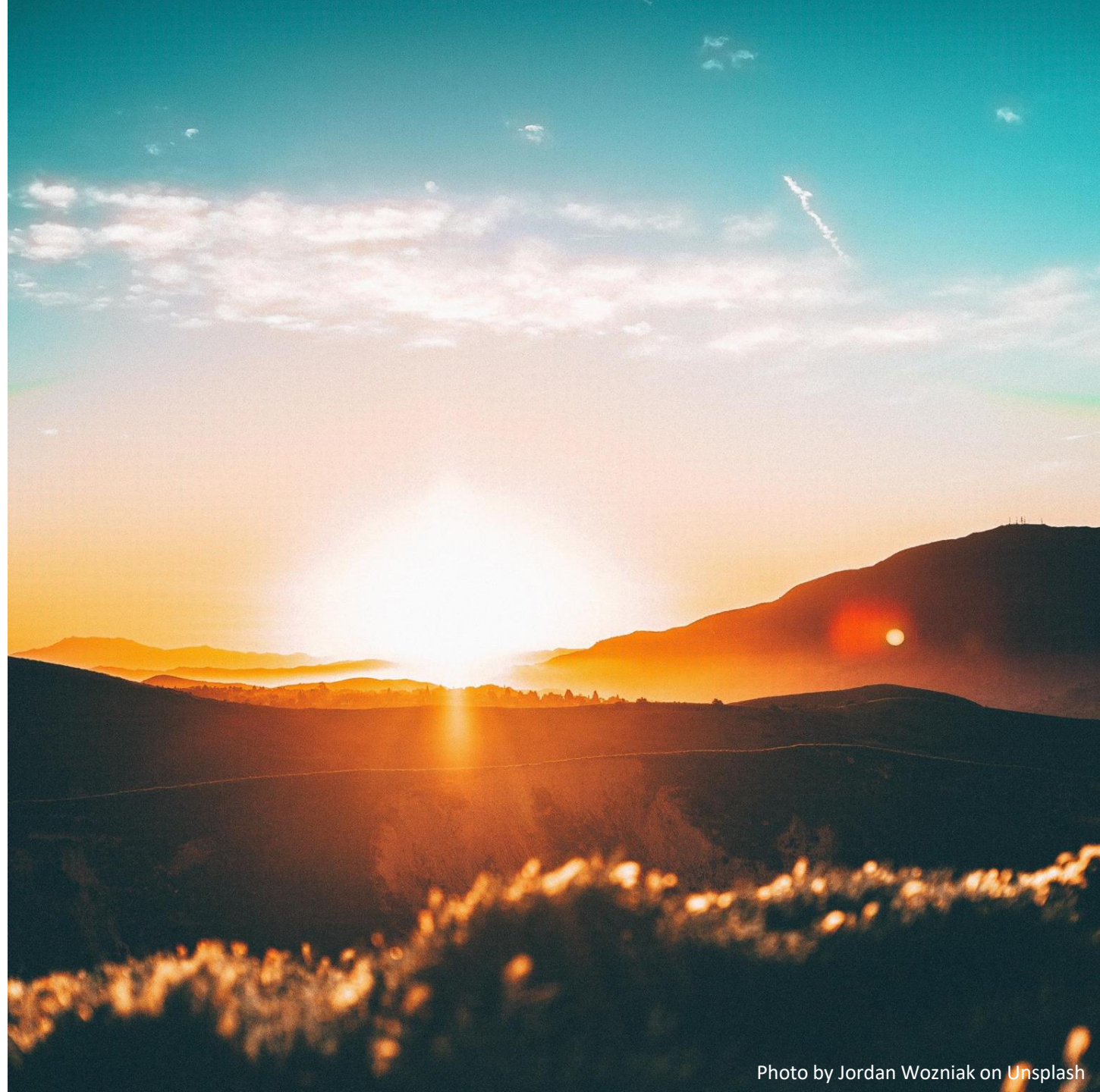
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# Sequence of images

- Aesthetics of each image vs. aesthetics of the sequence
- Order of presentation vs. pictorial accuracy
- Recalling the feelings provoked by the original poem
- Visual appeal as an instrument for the aesthetics of poetry





# Conclusions

- Starting from Cesário Verde's poetry, it is possible to establish a process that can be carried out (semi-)automatically, to translate verses into images.
- The sequence of images has an aesthetic and visual appeal that comes from the poetry itself and not from the transformation of poetry into images.
- Cesário Verde's poetry contains the power to awaken the visual imagination of the reader, thus being an excellent example of *phanopœia*.

Thank you.

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