

REVISTA CLARIDADE AND AMÍLCAR CABRAL: POETIC SEEDS OF POLITICAL RESISTANCE

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Abstract

This study examines the poetic-political militancy of Amílcar Cabral through his essay "Apontamentos sobre poesia caboverdiana" (Notes on Cabo Verdean poetry; 1952), in which he undertakes a critical analysis of the new poetry of *Claridade*, the avant-garde Cabo Verdean magazine published between 1936 and 1960. The magazine, a foundational milestone of the so-called *claridosa* generation and recognized for circumventing the restrictions of colonial censorship, introduced innovations in poetry that began to address cultural, social, and identity-related issues. It even incorporated poems and mornas in Cabo Verdean Creole, whose publication—given its status as a non-official language—was effectively repressed during the *Estado Novo*. Although *Claridade* broke with the classical aesthetics of metropolitan Portuguese poetry and began to thematize local problems—such as drought and famine afflicting the colony—Cabral identifies in its poems an unacceptable tone of resignation and passive hope for better times. In contrast, he proposes that poetry should transcend such limits and be transformed into revolutionary energy. The analysis of Cabral's essay requires, first, a brief contextualization of the *Claridade* editions that preceded the publication of the essay. In our reading of Cabral's text, we identify and explore four movements that structure the author's argument: the relationship between poetry and social function; the periodization of Cabo Verdean poetry into pre- and post-*Claridade* phases; the aesthetic inflection introduced by the magazine; and the transition from "resigned" poetry to the affirmation of an autonomous Cabo Verdean voice. We seek to trace, across the first seven issues of *Claridade* published prior to Cabral's essay, and likely read by him, the sources of his arguments, which are not always explicitly acknowledged. These sources include poetic verses, authors, literary works, and critical essays. We argue that one such essay, published by Osório de Oliveira in *Claridade* 2 (1936), constitutes a key source for Cabral's notion of "resignation" in Cabo Verdean poetry. This concept, foregrounded by Cabral in his essay, is examined here in dialogue with Oliveira's text in order to show how this intellectual exchange sheds light on Cabral's broader project of transforming poetic sensibility into critical force and a horizon for social change.



Keywords

Claridade, Amílcar Cabral, Osório de Oliveira, seeds of struggle and resistance, Cabo Verdean poetry.

Resumo

Este estudo examina a militância poético-política de Amílcar Cabral a partir de seu ensaio “Apontamentos sobre poesia cabo-verdiana” (1952), no qual empreende uma análise crítica da nova poesia da *Claridade*, revista vanguardista de Cabo Verde publicada entre 1936 e 1960. A revista, marco inaugural da chamada geração claridosa e reconhecida por contornar as restrições da censura colonial, introduziu inovações na poesia, que passou a abordar questões culturais, sociais e identitárias, incorporando inclusive poemas e mornas em crioulo cabo-verdiano, cuja publicação, por ser uma língua não oficial, era reprimida, na prática, durante o Estado Novo. Embora a *Claridade* tenha rompido com a estética clássica da poesia metropolitana portuguesa e passado a tematizar os problemas da terra – como a seca e a fome que assolavam a colônia –, Cabral identifica em seus poemas um inaceitável tom de resignação e de esperança passiva por tempos melhores. Em contraposição, propõe que a poesia supere tais limites e se converta em energia revolucionária. A análise do ensaio de Cabral exige, inicialmente, uma breve contextualização das edições da *Claridade* que precederam a publicação do ensaio. Na nossa leitura do texto de Cabral, identificamos e exploramos quatro movimentos que estruturam o argumento do autor: a relação entre poesia e função social; a periodização da poesia cabo-verdiana em fases pré- e pós-*Claridade*; a inflexão estética introduzida pela revista; e a passagem da poesia “resignada” para a afirmação de uma voz própria cabo-verdiana. Procuramos traçar, ao longo dos primeiros sete números da *Claridade* publicados antes do ensaio de Cabral, e provavelmente lidos por ele, as fontes dos seus argumentos, que nem sempre são explicitamente reconhecidas. Essas fontes incluem versos poéticos, autores, obras literárias e ensaios críticos. Argumentamos que um desses ensaios, publicado por Osório de Oliveira no n.º 2 da *Claridade* (1936), constitui uma fonte fundamental para a noção cabraliana de “resignação” na poesia cabo-verdiana. Este conceito, destacado por Cabral no seu ensaio, é aqui examinado em diálogo com o texto de Oliveira, a fim de mostrar como esse intercâmbio intelectual ilumina o projeto mais amplo de Cabral de converter a sensibilidade poética em força crítica e horizonte de transformação social.

Palavras-chave

Claridade; Amílcar Cabral; Osório de Oliveira; sementes de luta e resistência; poesia cabo-verdiana.

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Introduction

The historical impact of Amílcar Cabral (1924–1973), widely recognized as one of the foremost revolutionary leaders of the African anticolonial struggle, founder of the African Party for the Independence of Guinea-Bissau and Cabo Verde (PAIGC), and a distinguished Pan-African intellectual, contributed to the relative marginalization of his small yet significant literary output. His reflections and poetic incursions, though limited in number, constitute a still underexplored dimension of his multifaceted intellectual trajectory and prove fundamental to a more comprehensive understanding of the formative process of one of the most brilliant political leaders of the twentieth century.

The preferred point of departure for reflection on Amílcar Cabral's poetic-political militancy is his essay "Apontamentos sobre poesia caboverdiana" (*Notes on Cabo Verdean poetry*; 1952; hereafter referred to as "Apontamentos")—published in *Cabo Verde: boletim de propaganda e informação* (*Cabo Verde: Bulletin of propaganda and information*)—in which he undertakes a critical examination of Cabo Verdean poetry, particularly that of the magazine *Claridade*. The *Boletim de Propaganda e Informação*, edited between 1949 and 1963, was the official journal of the colonial government, designed to disseminate state propaganda—though recent scholarship suggests that its editors and collaborators may not have been fully aware of this function, or may have interpreted their work as vindication actions (Milheiro, 2022). Cabral's decision to publish in this official organ was strategically significant: it allowed him to address colonial administrators and the educated elite directly, while simultaneously using the regime's

¹ Declaration of Interest - The authors declare that there are no known financial, professional, or personal conflicts of interest that could have appeared to influence this research. The authors have no competing interests to declare.

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own platform to challenge the resignation that characterized much of Cabo Verdean poetry.

Cabral analyzes *Claridade* poetry through a materialist lens: Poetry is a product of its environment and must fulfill a social function, serving the people and contributing to their transformation. For this reason, *Claridade* represented, in Cabral's (1952) words, the "breaking of a new dawn" (p. 7).³ Published under the constraints of colonial censorship, *Claridade* marked the inaugural moment of aesthetic and thematic innovations that shifted Cabo Verdean poetry away from metropolitan traditions toward the problematization of insular realities—marked by drought, famine, emigration, and the search for cultural identity. Yet the magazine's poetry also remained deeply indebted to Portuguese lyrical conventions, occupying an ambiguous space between rupture and continuity. Cabral, however, observes that despite the formal and thematic rupture, the poems retained a tone of resignation and passive hope, insufficient in the face of historical urgencies. His intervention proposes that poetry transcend this limit and be converted into a revolutionary force, capable of creating, as he envisions, "another land within our land" (p. 8).

This article will examine Cabral's "Apontamentos" from the perspective of his political militancy, as well as the value he attributes to poetry—and, by extension, to culture—for the renewal and liberation of the colonial environment. Since the magazine *Claridade* is the object of discussion in Cabral's essay, we will first provide a brief overview of the magazine and of the possible issues Cabral considers in his essay. Building upon this contextual foundation, our analysis offers a detailed reading of the essay's internal structure, revealing how Cabral's argument unfolds through four distinct movements: The first is a reflection on art and its social function; the second, a mapping of Cabo Verdean poetry into two phases, pre- and post-*Claridade*; the third addresses the abrupt aesthetic shift promoted by *Claridade*; and the fourth calls for Cabo Verdean poetry to evolve beyond passivity and prepare for a decisive action of social transformation.

To deepen the understanding of the motif of "resignation" in Cabo Verdean poetry—an aspect central to Cabral's critique—the article examines the implicit dialogue he establishes with Osório de Oliveira's essay published in Issue 2 of *Claridade* (1936). Published sixteen years before "Apontamentos," Oliveira's text was the first critical essay on the *Claridade* poets to appear in the magazine itself, and it was there that the idea of Cabo Verdean "resignation" was first formulated. Cabral, who approached the subject not as a specialist in poetry but as an intellectual militant engaged in a broader project of liberation, anchored his critique in the existing discourse of respected figures such as Oliveira. By drawing upon—and ultimately surpassing—Oliveira's diagnosis, Cabral transformed a literary observation into the foundation for a political program, converting the aesthetics of passivity into a call for conscious action. Through this interlocution, the aim is to highlight how Cabral articulates his intellectual militancy by proposing the overcoming of the historical passivity of Cabo Verdean poetry, transforming the aesthetics of resignation into political force and symbolizing the passage from the literary

³ All translations are by the authors unless otherwise indicated.



seed to the blossoming of a voice capable of breaking silence and affirming itself as an instrument of social transformation.

Claridade, an Avant-Garde Cabo Verdean Magazine

In the 1930s, under Portuguese colonial rule and subjected to the repressive policies of António de Oliveira Salazar's *Estado Novo*, Cabo Verde faced a severe economic crisis resulting from prolonged droughts across the archipelago, famine, and a strong wave of emigration. It was in this context, amid strict censorship over the press and local cultural production, that the avant-garde magazine *Claridade* emerged as a literary response to those conditions of oppression, bringing new vitality to Cabo Verdean poetry and culture. The impact of the magazine, however, was not limited to Cabo Verde. According to Norma Lima (2024), *Claridade* is "in aesthetic terms, the magazine that ushered in modern letters not only to the archipelago, but to Portuguese-speaking Africa" (p. 97).⁴

Claridade published nine issues at irregular intervals between 1936 and 1960. The issues appeared in three distinct phases: the first three came out between 1936 and 1937; the next four between 1947 and 1949; and the last two between 1958 and 1960. In analyzing the three distinct historical moments in which the issues of *Claridade* were published, Ellen Sapega (2003) notes:

A single coherent project for the publication of Claridade never existed, either in terms of the review's content or of its actual physical layout. While not explicitly identified as belonging to different series, three very different incarnations of the review appeared at three different historical moments (p. 161).

There was considerable variation in the number of pages across each of these phases: The first three issues had eight to 10 pages each, which expanded to more than 40 pages each in the second phase and approximately 80 pages each in the third phase. Some elements, however, as Sapega observes, remained constant throughout the journal's 24-year history: For example, it was always published in Mindelo, on the island of São Vicente, and each issue consistently featured contributions from two or three of the intellectuals regarded as founders of the *Claridade* movement: Baltazar Lopes, Manuel Lopes, and Jorge Barbosa.

Considering that Amílcar Cabral's essay "Apontamentos sobre poesia caboverdiana" is a text from 1952, it is evident that the poems—as well as works of fiction and essays—from *Claridade* that served as the basis for Cabral's reflections were published in the magazine's first two phases, encompassing issues 1–7, released between 1936 and 1949. The examination of these first seven issues raises an important point to be highlighted: The way the magazine dealt with colonial censorship can help us to frame Cabral's critique regarding what he identifies as passivity and resignation in Cabo Verde's avant-garde poetry. Seven of the nine issues of *Claridade* carry the following phrase on their

⁴ Portuguese original: "Em termos estéticos, [*Claridade* é] a revista que instaurará as letras modernas, não somente no arquipélago, mas na África de língua portuguesa."



pages: “Visado pela censura” (approved by the censor). Curiously, issues 1 and 7 are the only ones that do not bear this mark of control. The fact that *Claridade* was launched, as indicated by its subtitle, as a “magazine of art and letters,” rather than as a newspaper directly associated with political themes, may have been the reason its first issue did not attract the attention of the censors. From the second issue onward, however, surveillance was imposed, and all subsequent issues—with the exception of the seventh—were explicitly subjected to censorship.⁵

The fact that the first issue was not subjected to censorship explains the publication, right on the opening page, of the transcript of a text in Creole: “*Lantuna & 2 motivos de ‘finason’ (batuku da Ilha de Santiago)*” (*Lantuna and two motifs of “finason” [Batuku from the island of Santiago]*),⁶ which did not recur in subsequent issues—a circumstance that drew the attention of other critics, as Sapega (2003) highlights:

Several critics have called attention to the importance of this cover as presenting a strong statement of the group’s project. For Pierre Rivas, “it is a manifesto in act, provocative in its laconic style and revealing of its spirit, at once manifest and concealed.”⁷ By presenting these songs without commentary or translation, Claridade begins its publication with a strong and sure affirmation of the importance of the Creole language and of cultural practices that are African in origin. After this moment, however, this gesture is never repeated—while the cover of the following issue also transcribes a text written in Creole, it is a morna [a traditional Cape Verdean form of poetry and music], not a finason. The third issue of Claridade then opens with the “Poema de quem ficou” [Poem by those who stayed] by Manuel Lopes, and the covers of all the following issues, with only two exceptions, also present original poems written in Portuguese rather than Creole (p. 163).

These early issues of *Claridade*, as Alberto Carvalho (2021) points out, are characterized by an “identity affirmation that unsettled the hegemony of the Portuguese language” (p. 33).⁸ Transcribing a Creole *finason*—one of the most traditional forms of Cabo Verdean oral poetry, linked to *batuku* and other African musical practices—is a far more provocative act than transcribing a Creole *morna*, which is a musical genre blending African and European influences. The *morna* that Sapega refers to on the cover of Issue 2 of *Claridade* is not an anonymous text like the *finason*. It is authored by Xavier da Cruz, and its title, “*Venus*,” has nothing to do with African culture. It is worth noting that the *finason* in Issue 1 was not accompanied by a translation. Although “*Venus*” also appears without a Portuguese translation, its lyrics are much closer to metropolitan Portuguese and therefore far easier for Portuguese-speaking readers to understand.

⁵ So far, no explanation has been found for why the seventh issue of the magazine escaped censorship.

⁶ *Finason* is a lyrical form of moral and social critique delivered through spontaneous sung poetry within performances of *batuku*, a female-centered musical performance from Cabo Verde, rooted in West African rhythmic structures.

⁷ Portuguese original: “é um manifesto em ato, provocador no seu laconismo e revelador de seu espírito duplamente manifesto e dissimulado” (Rivas, 1989, p. 40).

⁸ Portuguese original: “Uma afirmação identitária que desconcertava a hegemonia da língua portuguesa.”



According to Sapega (2003), “The choice of a morna for the cover of the second issue is already indicative of a move away from a cultural model inspired by African artistic practices” (p. 163). This editorial oscillation in the early issues of the journal reveals, from the outset, the tension between the affirmation of a radical difference in relation to the prevailing Portuguese colonial culture in Cabo Verde in the 1930s and the proximity to culturally hybrid forms. The *morna*, Sapega adds, is “representative of the cultural politics of miscegenation that would inspire a great deal of the literary and theoretical works produced by the *Claridade* generation” (p. 164). This politics of miscegenation drew heavily on the theories of Brazilian sociologist Gilberto Freyre, whose 1933 work *Casa-grande & senzala* celebrated racial mixing as a positive force in the formation of Brazilian society (Freyre, 1933). Freyre’s ideas—particularly his later concept of Lusotropicalism, which posited a distinctive Portuguese capacity for harmonious coexistence with tropical peoples—were enthusiastically embraced by the *Claridade* intellectuals as a framework for understanding Cabo Verde’s own creole identity (Salla, 2014, pp. 108-110). As Salla (2014) demonstrates, the Freyrean discourse of regionalism and miscegenation provided the *claridosos* with a conceptual vocabulary to affirm Cabo Verde’s cultural specificity while simultaneously reinforcing the archipelago’s integration within the Portuguese imperial sphere—a strategy of “approximation rather than rupture” with the metropole (p. 114). This apparent paradox is central to understanding the movement’s ideological complexity: while the *Claridade* project sought to “rediscover” Cabo Verde’s social and psychological reality, it did so within a framework that ultimately reaffirmed the success of Portuguese colonization (Salla, 2014, p. 111). Moreover, as scholars have documented, Freyre’s theories were only strategically appropriated by the Estado Novo regime from the 1950s onward, when Lusotropicalism became a diplomatic tool to justify Portugal’s continued colonial presence in Africa in the face of international decolonization pressures (Castelo, 1998; Costa, 2005). This chronology complicates any straightforward alignment between the *Claridade* project and Salazarist ideology, suggesting instead that the *claridosos* operated within a field of tension—at once asserting local identity and participating in the broader cultural politics of the Portuguese imperial world. We should note that Osório de Oliveira’s essay—which we will analyze later in dialogue with Cabral’s “*Apontamentos*”—was also published in Issue 2 of *Claridade* and aligns with the politics of miscegenation highlighted by Sapega.

In the next section, we will examine Cabral’s essay and his expectations regarding the expressive and political function attributed to Cabo Verde’s avant-garde poetry, outlining how this literary production is called upon to participate in a broader project of social intervention.

Cabral’s Notes on the Poetry of *Claridade*

Cabral begins the essay “*Apontamentos*” with an epigraph that announces his critical perspective on the poetic production of *Claridade*: “*Nothing of my private life pains me. / I suffer the penances of the community. / Water from a sweet river, I entered the sea / And salted myself in the salt of immensity*” (Torga, 1950, as cited in Cabral, 1952, p.



5).⁹ These are the opening verses of the poem “Fraternidade” (*Fraternity*) by Miguel Torga (1907–95), taken from the book *Cântico do Homem* (*Canticle of Humankind*) (1950). In Torga’s verses, poetry demands the sacrifice of individual pain in favor of the community; that is, the poet does not suffer for his private life but bears the sorrows of the collective. By leaving the sweet waters of lyricism and entering the sea, the poet metaphorically dissolves himself into the sufferings of the community. The final verses of Torga’s poem, which do not appear in the essay’s epigraph, reinforce the poet’s ethical commitment to his community: “*But I could not, lyrical poet, / Remain, with the reed flute, exercising the ear, / Far from the world and far from the noise.*”¹⁰ The uncommon Portuguese expression “*ficar de avena*” (to remain with the reed flute) indicates the aloofness of the pastoral lyrical poet, with his musical instrument, the reed, detached and indifferent to social life. The poet rejects the notion of “art for art’s sake,” for he understands that he cannot withdraw from the noise of the world and recognizes his duty to be present and to intervene in the life of the community.

Cabral’s use of a metropolitan poet like Miguel Torga as an epigraph is strategically revealing and, at first glance, counterintuitive. After all, how to justify resorting to a poet from the colonizing country to ground a critique of an emerging poetry that combined diverse cultural heritages and claimed a differentiated identity? Rather than drawing on a Cabo Verdean voice, Cabral appropriates the authority of the colonizer’s own literary tradition to legitimize his call for a socially engaged poetry. What emerges from Cabral’s engagement with Torga’s verses is the pursuit of a poetic model grounded in commitment and artistic responsibility—the refusal to remain aloof from collective suffering.

In the following subsections, we will concisely examine the four movements that structure Cabral’s essay: an initial reflection on art and its social function (“The Social Function of poetry”); the pre- and post-*Claridade* phases of Cabo Verdean poetry (“Pre- and Post-*Claridade* Cabo Verdean Poetry”); an analysis of the aesthetic inflection promoted by the magazine (“The Breaking of a New Daw in Cabo Verdean Poetry”); and finally, the appeal for Cabo Verdean poetry to abandon passivity and orient itself toward transformative intervention (“From Resigned Poetry to the Cabo Verdean’s Own Voice”).

The Social Function of Poetry

Before reflecting specifically on Cabo Verdean poetry, Cabral (1952) takes a position regarding the role of poetry as an artistic expression:

Poetry, like any artistic manifestation and despite all the individual characteristics emanating from the poet’s personality, is necessarily a product of the environment in which it finds expression. That is to say, however great the influence of the individual upon the work they produce,

⁹ Portuguese original: “Não me dói nada meu particular. / Penos cilícios da comunidade. / Água dum rio doce, entrei no mar / E salguei-me no sal da imensidade.”

¹⁰ Portuguese original: “Mas não podia, lírico poeta,/ Ficar, de avena, a exercitar o ouvido,/ Longe do mundo e longe do ruído.”



it is always, in the final analysis, a product of the social complex in which it was generated (p. 5)¹¹.

Although highlighted as a product of its environment, poetry, for Cabral, carries within itself a great potential to transform that environment, and this is the tone that permeates the entire essay, in a language marked by the use of expressions and vocabulary drawn from the semantic field of political militancy, such as “taking a stand,” (p. 5) “voices that rise to defend” (p. 5) a given manifestation, “raising the banner” (p. 5) with regard to the function of art, and “to serve or to betray” (p. 6) the social complex. Subtle linguistic strategies emerge in Cabral’s poetic-political critique, such as when, in defense of the social function of poetry, he states: “Dissenting voices that rise to defend the exclusive influence of the individual complex of artistic manifestation are becoming rare” (p. 5).¹² His militant voice, which defends poetry as an art form that is “dependent” on social problems, an “engaged art,” gains greater expressiveness when contrasted, in the passage above, with the multiple dissenting voices that are becoming rare and that still defend poetry as a mere expression of a sensitive individual—an “independent” and “disinterested” art—and therefore innocuous for society. Giving even greater emphasis and weight to the way he sees and wishes to make poetry seen, Cabral adds:

Thus, while the ranks of those who seek or desire an art with a social function grow day by day, the lines fill up around those who stubbornly raise the tattered banner of “art for art’s sake.” And, in qualifying as tattered the banner of those who defend a “disinterested” art, one is, even if implicitly, taking a stand (p. 5)¹³.

For Cabral, art—and, by extension, poetry—is produced by a being that is above all social—the human being—and is also moral, philosophical, scientific, religious, and so on. From his perspective, as we have seen, art should not be conceived as a mere externalization of the poet’s individual sentimentalism, nor as an aesthetic exercise detached from purpose—art for art’s sake. On the contrary, he affirms the social function of poetry, insisting that “what matters is *determining* whether such a work constitutes a good or an evil for that complex, that is, whether it serves it or betrays it” (p. 6, our emphasis).¹⁴ With this established, Cabral moves on to the second part of his reflections, in which he maps the two phases—pre- and post-*Claridade*—of Cabo Verdean poetry,

¹¹ Portuguese original: “A poesia, como qualquer manifestação artística e apesar de toda a característica individual, emanante da personalidade do Poeta, é necessariamente um produto do meio em que tem expressão. Quer dizer: por maior que seja a influência do próprio indivíduo sobre a obra que produz, esta é sempre, em última análise, um produto do complexo social em que foi gerada.”

¹² Portuguese original: “Rareiam as vozes discordantes que se levantam para defender a exclusiva influência do complexo individual da manifestação artística.”

¹³ Portuguese original: “Assim, enquanto vão crescendo, dia a dia, o conjunto daqueles que pretendem ou querem uma arte com função social, cerram-se as fileiras daqueles que, teimosamente, arvoram a esfarrapada bandeira da chamada “arte pela arte”. E, ao qualificar-se de *esfarrapada* a bandeira dos que defendem uma arte “desinteressada”, está-se, ainda que de maneira implícita, tomando posição.”

¹⁴ Portuguese original: “O que interessa *determinar* é se tal obra constitui um bem ou um mal para aquele complexo, isto é, se o serve ou se o trai.”



seeking to “determine” the nature of its social function, as we shall see in the following section.

Pre- and Post-Claridade Cabo Verdean Poetry

The material and human environment experienced by the Cabo Verdean poet defines the way in which their poetry is to be understood. Based on this principle, Cabral seeks to identify the characteristics that underpinned the manifestations of the two poetic strands of the archipelago: the one prior to the advent of *Claridade* and the one brought in by the magazine. The distinction between these two phases of poetry is already presented at the very beginning of his essay: “So distinct are these two phases that Osório de Oliveira does not hesitate to affirm: ‘only now (that is, with *Claridade*) can one speak of Cabo Verdean Literature’” (Cabral, 1952, p. 5).¹⁵ This is no mere passing reference. By grounding his periodization in Oliveira’s authority, Cabral strategically positions his own critique within the very critical discourse that had first defined Cabo Verdean poetry as a distinct literary phenomenon, while preparing the ground for his eventual departure from Oliveira’s framework.

The first stage of Cabo Verdean poetic production, as outlined by Cabral, is distinguished by an almost complete detachment from the environment, revealing itself as alien to the reality “of the land and [of] the people of the archipelago” (p. 6).¹⁶ The poets representative of this phase, according to Cabral, are Eugénio Tavares, José Lopes, Pedro Cardoso, and Januário Leite, although there are some works by Tavares and Cardoso that do not conform to this classification. As for Leite and Lopes, Cabral states:

*J. Leite, for example, offers in his sonnets the expression of the poet’s purely sentimental reaction to phenomena that concern him and him alone, whereas José Lopes conveys, more than any other poet, the stamp of classical culture, detached from its environment, which characterizes the ideological formation of the poets prior to Claridade (p. 6)*¹⁷.

Cabral relies on another statement by Oliveira¹⁸ to reach the conclusion that this mark of classical culture in pre-*Claridade* poetry results from the poets’ education at the Seminary of São Nicolau, which was the first institution to offer religious and secondary education in the archipelago and contributed to the formation of Cabo Verde’s cultural and political elites.¹⁹ The classical and bookish culture learned at the lycée did not favor the poets’ thematic approach to their environment and local problems:

¹⁵ Portuguese original: “Tão distintas são essas duas fases, que Osório de Oliveira não hesita em afirmar: ‘só agora (isto é, com a *Claridade*) se pode falar da Literatura Caboverdiana.’” This is one of the two passages in Cabral’s essay in which he refers to Osório de Oliveira, without citing a specific work.

¹⁶ Portuguese original: “da terra e [d]o Povo do Arquipélago.”

¹⁷ Portuguese original: “Enquanto poesia de J. Leite, por exemplo, oferece, nos seus sonetos, a expressão da reação puramente sentimental, do Poeta, perante fenómenos que a ele e só a ele interessam, a de José Lopes traduz, mais do que qualquer outra, o cunho de cultura clássica, desligada do meio, que caracteriza a formação ideológica dos Poetas anteriores à *Claridade*.”

¹⁸ Again, Cabral does not cite the work in which Osório makes this assertion.

¹⁹ The Seminary-Lyceum of São Nicolau was created by the Decree-Law of September 3, 1866, with the dual objective of training priests for the diocese and cadres for the civil administration (Neves, 2008, p. 24). The



With their eyes fixed on what they had learned from books and perhaps supposed to be unsurpassable, they achieve little more than imitating the authors they knew, producing a poetry in which love, intensely personal suffering, patriotic exaltation, and nostalgia are the common traits (Cabral, 1952, p. 6)²⁰.

Cabral further reinforces his critique of the elitist influence on the formation of the pre-*Claridade* poets:

The seminary in São Nicolau could be attended by only a few. There, a classical culture was imparted, to which those who had the fortune to receive it remained strongly attached. So strong was the bond that seminarians (or talented autodidacts), finding open to them the doors of a life where they could enjoy positions of prominence, ignored or forgot the realities surrounding them. In them, all that was merely philosophical, religious, or moral gained supremacy over the economic. Better yet, it was the very economic conditions in which they lived that facilitated this detachment from Cabo Verdean realities. The land and the people were distant. The latter, in the lyrics of the morna, sang of their sufferings and loves, while the poets composed perfect sonnets to exalt some sentiment, the braids and eyes of the beloved, the beauties of Greece, or a celebrated date in history (pp. 6–7)²¹.

To be considered “perfect,” Cabral observes, the sonnets must have “the sacred respect for meter, the distressing submission to the shackles of rhyme” (p. 6).²² He goes on to contrast this elitist poetry with the morna.²³ It is important to highlight that the author chooses the morna, and not the *finason* (published on the cover of the first issue of the magazine), as a genuinely Cabo Verdean art form. This choice may be interpreted as an

choice of the island of São Nicolau for its establishment was because the seat of the Bishopric of Cabo Verde and Guinea had been located there since the late eighteenth century (p. 24). During its 51 years of uninterrupted operation, the Seminary received students not only from Cabo Verde but also from other Portuguese colonies—Guinea-Bissau, São Tomé and Príncipe, Angola, and Mozambique—as well as from mainland Portugal and Madeira (pp. 25, 176). According to Neves, the seminary “was the driving force behind cultural, political, social, and intellectual dynamics, in addition to paving the way for the formation of a schooled stratum that produced extensively, encompassing poetry, fiction, essay, and journalism” (p. 25), which earned it the designation of “cradle of Cabo Verdean intellectuality” (p. 24). Abolished by Law No. 701 of June 13, 1917, the building was later used, in 1931, as a concentration camp for political deportees from the Madeira revolt (p. 27).

²⁰ Portuguese original: “De olhos fixos no que aprenderam dos livros e que talvez supunham insuperável, pouco mais conseguem do que imitar os autores seus conhecidos, produzindo uma Poesia em que o amor, o sofrimento pessoalíssimo, a exaltação patriótica e o saudosismo, são os traços comuns.”

²¹ Portuguese original: “O Seminário, em S. Nicolau, por poucos pode ser frequentado. Ministra-se nele uma cultura clássica, à qual se ligam fortemente os que tiveram a felicidade de recebê-la. Tão forte é o elo, que os seminaristas (ou os autodidactas) de talento, encontrando abertas as portas duma vida onde pode desfrutar de posições de relevo, ignoram ou esquecem as realidades que os cercam. Opera-se neles a supremacia de tudo quanto é meramente filosófico, religioso ou moral, sobre o económico. Melhor: é a própria condição económica em que vivem que facilita aquele alheamento das realidades caboverdianas. A terra e o Povo estão distantes. Este, nas letras da Morna, canta os seus sofrimentos e amores, enquanto os Poetas compõem sonetos perfeitos, para exaltar um sentimento qualquer, as tranças e os olhos da hegéria, as belezas da Grécia ou uma data célebre, da História.”

²² Portuguese original: “O respeito sagrado à métrica, a confrangedora submissão às algemas da rima.”

²³ The morna, the most emblematic and popular form of lyrical expression in Cabo Verde, was recognized in 2019 by UNESCO as an Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity.



indication of a critical predisposition to incorporate into his poetic reflection a cultural policy of miscegenation: a comprehensive perspective that conceives local culture as a dialogical phenomenon, without disregarding the elements inherited from metropolitan traditions.

Cabral's position on miscegenation, however, is more complex than a simple embrace of hybridity. As Mário Pinto de Andrade (1976) observed, Cabral's intellectual trajectory was marked by a process of "reafricanization"—a "reconversion" of the spirits through which colonized intellectuals, having been shaped by colonial education and assimilation, could overcome the limits imposed by that assimilation and reclaim their African identity (Sparemberger, 2011, p. 3). This process was not a rejection of all foreign influences, but rather a critical appropriation: Cabral advocated that from the culture he defines as African, experiences and knowledge from abroad should also form a part, but on African terms. In this sense, his choice of the *morna* over the *finason* is strategically revealing. By privileging a cultural form that already bears the marks of Portuguese influence—rather than a more distinctly African form like the *finason*—Cabral signals that his project was not one of pure nativism or a return to an idealized African past. Instead, he sought to engage critically with the cultural hybridity that defined Cabo Verdean society, transforming the "resignation" that Oliveira had identified into a conscious, critical engagement with culture as a weapon of liberation. Cabral's critique of *Claridade* poetry is thus not a rejection of Portuguese cultural elements, but a call to transcend passive acceptance—to move beyond the mere thematization of local suffering toward a poetry that actively participates in the struggle for social transformation.

The poetry Cabral defines as *claridosa* begins primarily with some compositions by Eugénio Tavares and Pedro Cardoso:

In E. Tavares (in singing of the atmosphere of Brava) and P. Cardoso (in translating popular Creole quatrains from Fogo), there is already something of what would later become reality in the poets of the new generation: an intimate communion between the poet and their world (Cabral, 1952, p. 6)²⁴.

This intimacy between the poet and the world, however, also involves an intimacy between the poet and the people, as appears clearly in Issue 7 of *Claridade* (p. 28), in the poem "Poeta e Povo" (Poet and people) by Aguinaldo Brito Fonseca, whose verses expose a collective suffering. But instead of naming aspects of a hostile environment, the poet prefers to show solidarity with the people in a collective lament in response to hunger:

*The people cried out in hunger.
Many heard, but no one wept...
The voice of the poem was not the voice of the poet:
It was the voice of the people, the cry of the people.
The verses of the poem wept like the people...*

²⁴ Portuguese original: "Em E. Tavares (ao cantar o ambiente bravense) e P. Cardoso (ao traduzir, do crioulo, quadras populares do Fogo) encontra-se já algo do que, mais tarde, se tornaria realidade nos Poetas da nova geração: uma comunhão íntima entre o Poeta e o seu mundo."



*and the poet, in writing them,
wept with them as well²⁵.*

The poet gives voice to the suffering of the people, but still does not propose a course of action to overcome this suffering.

The Breaking of a New Dawn in Cabo Verdean Poetry

The magazine *Claridade*, whose advent Cabral (1952) called the breaking of a new dawn, represented a sudden change in Cabo Verdean poetry:

It is the clarity that arises, giving form to real things, pointing to the sea, the barren rocks, the people struggling in crises, the fight of the "anonymous" Cabo Verdean—in short, the land and the people of Cabo Verde. Hence the intentional—fortunately so—character of the name of the magazine, which shows this profound transformation in Cabo Verdean poetry: Claridade (p. 7)²⁶.

The magazine introduces an innovation by bringing into poetry the natural, social, and human landscape of Cabo Verde, in contrast to the exaggerated individual sentimentalism, the references to Mt. Parnassus, and the idealizations of Greece in pre-*Claridade* poetry, which proved dissociated from the concrete reality of the archipelago—marked by infertile soil, prolonged droughts, and food scarcity that were the daily struggles of the Cabo Verdean people, Cabral's "anonymous Cabo Verdean." This expression is a direct reference to "Poema" (Poem) by Jorge Barbosa (1936), published in the first issue of *Claridade*, which includes the following verses:

*You crossed
seas
in the adventure of whaling,
in those voyages to America
from which ships sometimes never return...*

*On land,
in our poor islands,
you are the man of the hoe,
digging the dry soil in ungrateful regions
where rain seldom comes,
where drought is affliction
and hunger a tragic scene!...
(The morna...
seems like the echo in your soul*

²⁵ Portuguese original: "O povo gritou de fome. / Muitos ouviram mas ninguém chorou.// . . . // A voz do poema não era a voz do poeta: / era a voz do povo, o choro do povo.// Os versos do poema choravam como o povo . . . / e o poeta, ao escrevê-los, / chorava também com eles."

²⁶ Portuguese original: "É a claridade que surge, dando forma às coisas reais, apontando o mar, as rochas escalvadas, o povo a debater-se nas crises, a luta do caboverdiano "anônimo", enfim, a terra e o Povo de Cabo Verde. Por isso, o carácter intencional—e felizmente intencional—do nome da revista que revela essa profunda modificação na Poesia Caboverdiana: *Claridade*."



*of the sea's voice,
of the longed-for rain,
... the passive expression of our drama,
our revolt,
our silent melancholic revolt!)*

*America...
America has ended for you.
It has closed its doors to your yearning for expansion!
... To live always bent over the land,
our poor,
ungrateful,
beloved land!*

*O humble,
anonymous Cabo Verdean
—my brother! (p. 10)²⁷.*

This is one of the foundational poems of the *Claridade* movement, and its last verses inspired Cabral to refer to the Cabo Verdean people as “anonymous”—a term we have already encountered in the passage from his essay quoted above, where he describes “the fight of the ‘anonymous’ Cabo Verdean” (Cabral, 1952, p. 7). The dialogical composition in Barbosa’s poem, addressed to a “you” (“tu”)—the second person singular indicating an intimate mode of address—is a device that brings the poet closer to his subject of representation, namely the Cabo Verdean people shaped by emigration, the harshness of the land, longing, and silent resistance. Barbosa’s choice signifies an ideological stance, placing himself within the reality he describes, as demonstrated by the final verse, laden with the force of affect and identity, in which he calls his anonymous interlocutor “my brother.” Beyond its intimacy, the poem takes an anti-evasionist tone when the poet declares that “America has ended for you.” We also note the inclusion in the poem of the word “hunger,” whose use had been banned in local publications since 1927 by Governor Guedes Vaz (Lopes, 2021, as cited in Lima, 2024, p. 108).²⁸

²⁷ Portuguese original: “Cruzaste / mares / na aventura da pesca da baleia, / nestas viagens para a América / de onde às vezes os navios não voltam mais. // . . . // Em terra / nessas pobres ilhas nossas / és o homem da enxada / abrindo levadas à água das ribeiras férteis / cavando a terra seca / nas regiões ingratas / onde às vezes a chuva mal chega, / onde às vezes a estiagem é uma aflição / e um cenário trágico de fome! // . . . // (A morna . . . / parece que é o eco em tua alma / da voz do Mar / e da nostalgia das terras mais ao longe que o Mar te convida, / o eco / da voz da chuva desejada, / . . . / a expressão passiva do nosso drama, / da nossa revolta, / da nossa silenciosa revolta melancólica!) // A América . . . / A América acabou-se / para ti. / Fechou as portas à tua ânsia de expansão! // . . . // Viver sempre vergado sobre a terra, / a nossa terra / pobre / ingrata / querida! // Ser levado talvez um dia / na onda alta de alguma estiagem / como um desses barquinhos nossos / que andam pelas ilhas / e o Oceano acaba também por levar um dia! // . . . // Oh Caboverdeano humilde / anónimo, /—meu irmão!

²⁸ Vaz ordered a ban on the word “hunger” in local publications from 1927, and the Estado Novo regime aggravated the situation by confiscating newspapers that reported on the famines (Lopes, 2021, as cited in Lima, 2024, p. 108). *Claridade*, despite censorship, managed to circumvent this prohibition through literary strategies. The reality of hunger, drought, and emigration is also portrayed in *Claridade*’s prose, notably in the novel *Chiquinho* (1947) by Baltasar Lopes. The novel, which follows the protagonist’s life from childhood in a village in São Nicolau to youth in Mindelo and eventual emigration to the United States, is considered a foundational work of modern Cabo Verdean literature for its denunciation of living conditions in the archipelago (Lima, 2024, p. 105). The first part of the novel was published under the title “Bibia” in Issue 1 of *Claridade*.



The relevance of the local landscape in this new poetry is highlighted by Artur Augusto (1937) in the essay “O Sentido Heróico do Mar” (The heroic meaning of the sea), published in the third issue of *Claridade*:

Human geography has not yet unveiled, and perhaps will never be able to unveil, the intimate spiritual communion that man will always have with the land that was his cradle.

It is up to poets to reveal this hidden meaning that inextricably binds man to the landscape he first beheld. And so powerful is this influence that many preserve it solely through the atavism that holds them (p. 4)²⁹.

On this founding moment of *Claridade*, which places poetry in communion with the land, Cabral (1952) states:

The poets are now common folk who walk hand-in-hand with the people, with their feet firmly rooted in the land. Cabo Verde is not the dreamed Hesperidean garden, but rather the ARCHIPELAGO and its ENVIRONMENT, where trees die of thirst and people of hunger—but hope never dies. The sea no longer has mermaids, and the waves do not kiss the shore. The sea is the road of liberation and longing, and the murmur of the waves is the constant temptation, the permanent reminder of the “despair of wanting to leave and having to stay” (p. 7)³⁰.

The words *Arquipélago* (ARCHIPELAGO) and *Ambiente* (ENVIRONMENT) recall the titles of two books by Barbosa. *Ambiente* (Environment) was published in Cabo Verde in 1941, while *Arquipélago* (Archipelago) was released in 1935, a year before the first issue of *Claridade*. In “The Heroic Meaning of the Sea,” published in the third issue of *Claridade*, Augusto (1937) refers to this book: “Jorge Barbosa, in his latest book *Arquipélago*, notes the influence of the sea: Ah, the strange / song / of the Atlantic / that does not fall silent within us! . . . / Ah, the sea / that expands our dreams and suffocates our desires!” (p. 4). Given the relevance of this book for the renewal of Cabo Verdean poetry, Augusto returns to it in the concluding sentence of his essay, not only to refer to Barbosa’s poems but, more broadly, to the poetic production emerging with the *Claridade* writers: “In this time of grave crisis for Portuguese letters, I have the greatest faith in the destiny of the new generation of artists I see arising in this *Archipelago*.” (p. 4).³¹

In addition to Barbosa, Cabral (1952) also highlights other “pioneers of the *Claridade* event” (p. 7): Oswaldo Alcântara (the literary pseudonym of Baltasar Lopes, one of the

²⁹ Portuguese original: “A geografia humana ainda não desvendou, e talvez nunca o conseguirá fazer, a íntima comunhão espiritual que o homem há de sempre manter com a terra que lhe foi berço. Cabe aos poetas revelar este sentido oculto que liga indissolivelmente o homem à paisagem que primeiro viu. E é tão poderosa essa influência, que muitos a mantêm só pelo atavismo que os prende.”

³⁰ Portuguese original: “Os poetas, agora, são homens-comuns que caminham de mãos dadas com o Povo, e de pés fincados na terra. Cabo Verde não é o sonhado jardim hesperitano, mas, sim, o *Arquipélago* e o *Ambiente*, onde as árvores morrem de sede, os homens, de fome—e a esperança nunca morre. O mar já não tem sereias e as ondas não beijam a praia. O mar é a estrada da libertação e da saudade, e o marulhar das vagas é a tentação constante, a lembrança permanente do ‘desespero de querer partir e ter de ficar.’”

³¹ Portuguese original: “Nesta época de grave crise para as letras portuguesas, eu tenho a maior fé nos destinos da nova geração de artistas que vejo surgir nesse *Arquipélago*.”



founders of *Claridade* and author of the preeminent Cabo Verdean novel *Chiquinho*), Corsino de Azevedo, Manuel Lopes, Teixeira de Souza, Jaime de Figueiredo are among the main names.

These are the poets who, to Cabral (1952), give voice to the land, to the people, and to the reality of Cabo Verde: "The land, 'the martyred land'—is the mother who 'nourishes' her children 'with the tenderness of her entrails'; who has not died, but lies asleep 'in a crumb of land in the middle of the sea'" (p. 7). Cabral is quoting from the poem "Mamã" (Mother) by Alcântara (1936), published in Issue 2 of *Claridade*, which takes the form of a prayer of a child to Mother Earth:

*Mamã—Earth,
I come to pray at your feet,
Your son comes to raise his supplications . . .
for your other children—scattered
across the gray surface of your martyred womb.
Mamã—Earth, . . .
I searched for your tomb
and did not find it
And then,
in my anguish as a grieving son,
they told me you had been buried
in a crumb of land
in the middle of the sea.
I boarded a sailboat
and went sailing, sailing. . . .*

*You have not died, have you, dear mother?
You are only asleep
so that tomorrow you may rise again. . . .
Dear Mother, move aside a little
and let your son fall asleep at your feet (p. 7, our emphasis)³².*

Cabral identifies in Alcântara's verses one of the most poignant personifications of Cabo Verdean land, as a suffering mother, weakened and asleep, incapable of feeding her children, yet receiving the profound affection of the child who shelters in her and does not lose hope for better days.

In seeking the reason for such a profound transformation in Cabo Verdean poetry, Cabral (1952) understands that the principal change occurred in culture, which he considered "still the appanage of a restricted sector of Cabo Verdean Society" (p. 7).³³ The democratization of school education, according to Cabral, allowed greater access to

³² Portuguese original: "Mamã—Terra,/ venho rezar uma oração ao pé de ti,/ Teu filho vem dirigir suas súplicas . . . / pelos outros teus filhos—espalhados/ na superfície cinzenta do teu ventre mártir,/ Mamã—Terra,/ . . . Eu procurei o teu túmulo/ e não o encontrei./ E depois,/ na minha dor de filho angustiado,/ me disseram que te haviam sepultado/ numa migalha de terra/ no meio do mar./ Embarquei num veleiro/ e fui navegando, navegando . . . // Não morreste, não, Mamãzinha?/ Estás apenas adormecida/ para amanhã te levatares./ . . . Mamãzinha, afasta-te um bocadinho/ e deixa o teu filho adormecer ao pé de ti . . ."

³³ Portuguese original: "Ainda o apanágio dum setor restrito da sociedade caboverdiana."



culture, forming intellectuals not only from more privileged classes but also “from the so-called humble people”³⁴ (p. 7):

*The fulcrum of Cabo Verdean intellectual life, shifting from São Nicolau to the city of Mindelo, on the edge of Porto Grande, came into broader contact with the world, where, day by day, the evolution of the human mentality was unfolding, and the aspirations of humanity were being realized. It is to be admitted that such a transformation resulted mainly from this contact, essentially with metropolitan and Brazilian literature (p. 7)*³⁵.

It is worth noting that Cabral’s defense of a poetry that constitutes itself as the voice of the land and of the Cabo Verdean people does not imply that it is confined within a strictly identity-based horizon. On the contrary, the new poetry of *Claridade*, based in Mindelo, emerges from an intellectuality in broader dialogue with the world, exposed both to the literary trends of the metropolis and to international artistic currents. The hypothesis that the *Claridade* writers may have been influenced by Brazilian literature had already been suggested in Oliveira’s essay “Palavras sobre Cabo Verde para serem lidas no Brasil” (Words on Cabo Verde to be read in Brazil), published in Issue 2 of *Claridade*:

*The Cabo Verdeans needed an example that Portuguese literature could not provide, but Brazil offered it. The affinities existing between Cabo Verde and the states of Northeastern Brazil predisposed the Cabo Verdeans to understand, feel, and love the new Brazilian literature. Finding examples to follow in the poetry and modern novels of Brazil and feeling supported in the analysis of their case by the new Brazilian essayists, the Cabo Verdeans discovered their path. A group was formed under the name Claridade (Oliveira, 1936, p. 4)*³⁶.

For Oliveira, there were two reasons why the new writers—“some talented young men . . . modest clerks, or employees” (p. 4)³⁷—came to discover and sing freely using the rhythms of their own land: one was the fact that they could not go to Portugal “like the happy men of other generations” (p. 4), and so established more intimate contact with their surroundings; the other reason was the example they found in the new literature emerging in Brazil. By “the new Brazilian essayists,” Oliveira is primarily referring to Gilberto Freyre, whose concept of Lusotropicalism strongly influenced the *Claridade* intellectuals in the 1930s. However, the sixteen years separating Oliveira’s essay (1936)

³⁴ Portuguese original: “Da chamada gente humilde.”

³⁵ Portuguese original: “O fulcro da intelectualidade caboverdiana, passando de S. Nicolau para a cidade de Mindelo, à beira do Porto Grande, encontrou-se em contato mais amplo com o Mundo, onde se operava, dia a dia, a evolução da mentalidade humana, concretizando-se as aspirações do Homem. É de admitir-se que tal transformação resultou principalmente desse contacto, em essencial com a literatura metropolitana e brasileira.”

³⁶ Portuguese original: “Os caboverdeanos precisavam dum exemplo que a literatura de Portugal não lhes podia dar, mas que o Brasil lhes forneceu. As afinidades existentes entre Cabo Verde e os estados do Nordeste do Brasil predispunham os caboverdeanos para compreender, sentir e amar a nova literatura brasileira. Encontrando exemplos a seguir na poesia e nos romances modernos do Brasil, sentindo-se apoiados, na análise do seu caso, pelos novos ensaístas brasileiros, os caboverdianos descobriram o seu caminho. Um grupo se formou com o nome de *Claridade*.”

³⁷ Portuguese original: “Alguns rapazes de talento . . . modestos funcionários ou empregados.”



from Cabral's "Apontamentos" (1952) are critical: during this period, the Estado Novo strategically appropriated Freyre's theories to justify its colonial presence in Africa, transforming a discourse of cultural affirmation into an instrument of imperial propaganda (Castelo, 1998; Costa, 2005). This temporal gap illuminates the differing positions of the two authors: Oliveira's discourse occupies a frontier space between an appeal to Cabo Verdean resistance and a reaffirmation of colonial ideology, while Cabral, writing in the early 1950s, could draw upon Oliveira's notion of "resignation" only to transcend it, transforming cultural critique into a call for political liberation.

It is also important to recognize the distinct historical contexts in which Oliveira and Cabral were writing. Oliveira's essay was published in 1936, a period when colonial ideologies remained largely unchallenged in the public sphere, and when the Estado Novo was consolidating its imperial mystique. His discourse, while appealing to Cabo Verdean cultural resistance, inevitably operated within the ideological frameworks available at the time—frameworks that were not yet subjected to the anti-colonial pressures that would emerge after the Second World War. Cabral's "Apontamentos," by contrast, appeared in 1952, against a backdrop of progressive decolonization that had begun with the independence of Asian countries such as India (1947) and Indonesia (1949). The political stakes of literary criticism had shifted dramatically: where Oliveira could still invoke the "excellence of Portuguese colonization" without immediate contradiction, Cabral's call for poetry to transcend resignation was already imbued with the language of national liberation. This chronological distance does not diminish the intertextual relationship between the two essays; rather, it illuminates how Cabral appropriated Oliveira's diagnosis of "resignation" and, in a new historical conjuncture, transformed it into a revolutionary call.

Near the end of his essay, Oliveira says: "The high mental level of the Cabo Verdeans has long been one of the greatest proofs of the excellence of Portuguese colonization and of our civilizing capacity" (Oliveira, 1936, p. 4).³⁸ This statement reveals Oliveira's alignment with the ideological foundations of the Estado Novo, which promoted a self-congratulatory narrative of Portuguese colonialism as a uniquely benevolent and civilizing enterprise. The praise of Cabo Verdean cultural autonomy is immediately appropriated as a justification for colonial presence. In the final paragraph, Oliveira deepens the paternalistic tone, creating a brotherhood between Brazilians and Cabo Verdeans, both "children" (*filhos*) of Portugal: "And may we, Portuguese of the Continent, know how to see in this understanding . . . the best proof of the universality of our spiritual action, our eternal glory."³⁹ The rhetoric evokes the great navigations and parallel Catholic proselytism—an ideology aligned with the Estado Novo.⁴⁰

Although Cabral refers to Oliveira's statements several times in "Apontamentos," at no point can we see any affinity with Salazarist ideology, as might be expected. Yet Cabral's position is not entirely free from ambiguity. As noted earlier, his choice of the *morna*—a

³⁸ Portuguese original: "O alto nível mental dos cabo-verdianos é, há muito, uma das maiores provas da excelência da colonização portuguesa e da nossa capacidade civilizadora."

³⁹ Portuguese original: "E que nós, portugueses do Continente, saibamos ver nesse entendimento . . . a melhor prova da universalidade da nossa acção espiritual, nossa glória eterna."

⁴⁰ For further details on the influence of Gilberto Freyre's work on the avant-garde *Claridade* movement, see Salla (2014).



culturally hybrid form—over the *finason* may suggest a subtle alignment with the politics of miscegenation that Oliveira had embraced. However, for Cabral, this choice reflects a pragmatic recognition of Cabo Verde's cultural reality rather than an endorsement of colonial ideology. One of the observations Oliveira presented, on which Cabral strongly relied, was Cabo Verdean "resignation"—an idea Cabral would incisively combat in the fourth and final part of his essay, as we shall see in the following section.

From Resigned Poetry to the Cabo Verdean's Own Voice

In the final part of "Apontamentos," Cabral (1952) defends his position on this new form of poetry, *determining* the following:

But the evolution of Cabo Verdean poetry cannot stop. It must transcend "resignation" and "hope." "Total insularity" and droughts are not enough to justify perennial stagnation. The messages of Claridade and Certeza⁴¹ must be transcended. The dream of escape, the "wanting to leave," cannot be eternalized. The dream must be another, and it is up to the poets—those who continue hand-in-hand with the people, with their feet firmly rooted in the land and participating in the common drama—to sing it. The Cabo Verdean, with eyes wide open, will understand their own dream, will discover their own voice, in the message of the poets (p. 8)⁴².

Cabral's emphasis on "resignation" as a recurring trait in Cabo Verdean poetry highlights the implicit dialogue with Oliveira's essay. Cabral opposes an alternative to this resigned attitude, one that aligns with the critical perspective already announced in his earlier writings, although those did not develop the detailed analysis of poetic production found in "Apontamentos."⁴³ Before examining how the dialogue between Cabral and Oliveira is established regarding "resignation"—a concept that Oliveira first introduced in his 1936 essay published in Issue 2 of *Claridade*, and which Cabral would later engage with, without direct citation, in his 1952 "Apontamentos"—it is necessary to make explicit the terms of this debate. This is a crucial dimension of our analysis, as it reveals the often-unacknowledged source that Cabral drew upon for his critique of Cabo Verdean poetry.

⁴¹ On *Certeza*, another avant-garde Cabo Verdean magazine that was highly representative, Cabral (1952) says: "Years later, *Certeza* appears, an unfortunately short-lived publication, founded by students of the lycée. In it, Arnaldo França, Nuno Miranda, Tomaz Martins, G. Rocheteau, and other young men attempt to put out a new message and show that they understood that of the *Claridade* poets. But *Certeza* is not merely a comprehension of *Claridade*" (p. 7).

⁴² Portuguese original: "Mas a evolução da Poesia Caboverdiana não pode parar. Ela tem de transcender a 'resignação' e a 'esperança.' A 'insularidade total' e as secas, não bastam para justificar uma estagnação perene."

As mensagens da *Claridade* e da *Certeza* têm de ser transcendidas. O sonho de evasão, o desejo de 'querer partir,' não pode eternizar-se. O sonho tem de ser outro, e aos Poetas—os que continuam de mãos dadas com o Povo, de pés fincados na terra e participando no drama comum—compete cantá-lo. O caboverdiano, de olhos bem abertos, compreenderá o seu próprio sonho, descobrirá a sua própria voz, na mensagem dos Poetas."

⁴³ Cabral's critique of resignation echoes in Onésimo Silveira's "Consciencialização na literatura caboverdiana" [Conscientization in Cabo Verdean Literature] (1963), where he argued that the *claridosos'* focus on emigration "ended up arbitrarily simplifying this complex problem and offering a stereotyped image of the Cabo Verdean man (Silveira, 1963, p. 10, as cited in Sapega, p. 168). Silveira's critique is particularly noteworthy given that he himself published the poem "Saga" in *Claridade* (Issue 8, 1958), a work with strong political connotations—suggesting that his critique emerged from within the movement he would later question.



While Cabral does not cite Oliveira by name in this context, our research demonstrates that his argument is fundamentally shaped by Oliveira's earlier diagnosis of Cabo Verdean "resignation," a diagnosis that Cabral ultimately seeks to transcend by transforming cultural lament into revolutionary action. This strategy of implicit appropriation and transcendence is central to understanding Cabral's poetic-political militancy.

Osório de Oliveira: Resignation as a Defining Trait of the Cabo Verdean

Oliveira's "Palavras sobre Cabo Verde"—signed in Lisbon on March 29, 1936, and published in *Claridade* that August—is an ideologically hybrid text that calls for Cabo Verdean resistance while simultaneously corroborating a colonialist discourse. Composed of seven paragraphs, the text responds directly to the poem "Écran" (Screen) that Manuel Lopes (1936) had dedicated to him in the first issue of the magazine, in which the poet described the world that his eyes "drink in from outdated newspapers and magazines,"⁴⁴ before concluding melancholically: "that here [Cabo Verde] none of this exists: It is all resignation"⁴⁵ (p. 4). The editorial epigraph—"We congratulate ourselves on Osório's collaboration, always welcome in this magazine whose explicit aim is to reveal the message of the national soul"⁴⁶ (p. 4)—seeks to legitimize in advance a text that flagrantly contradicts the magazine's project of identity affirmation.

Oliveira (1936) highlights the Cabo Verdean's "gentleness of temperament," (*doçura de temperamento*) which makes them "nostalgic, melancholic, and resigned" (*um nostálgico, um melancólico e um resignado*) (p. 4). He adds that "resignation is the word that defines their attitude in life when the harshness of destiny actually demanded revolt, the energetic reaction of the strong" (p. 4).⁴⁷ He thus identifies "resignation" as a defining trait of the Cabo Verdean—a resignation that contrasts with what the situation requires. Further on—in the shortest paragraph of the essay, which seems to be a deliberate choice—the core of Oliveira's appeal is revealed:

But it is precisely this resignation that educated Cabo Verdeans need to combat in their people. . . . If I could, I would go from island to island, from village to village, from house to house, telling the Cabo Verdeans not to be resigned. There are many things they can achieve if, instead of bowing to implacable destiny, they cry out in a desperate will to live (p. 4)⁴⁸.

Here, Oliveira summons a "cry" against resignation—a call for change from silence to action. However, the "destiny" against which they must cry out is a vague and depoliticized category: not the colonizer, not the regime, but an almost natural force.

⁴⁴ Portuguese original: "Sorvem nos jornais e revistas atrasadas."

⁴⁵ Portuguese original: "Que aqui [Cabo Verde] nada disso existe: é tudo resignação."

⁴⁶ Portuguese original: "Congratulamo-nos com a colaboração de Osório, sempre benvinda nesta revista que, justamente, procura revelar a mensagem da alma pátria."

⁴⁷ Portuguese original: "Resignação é a palavra que define sua atitude na vida quando a inclemência do Destino exatamente exigia a revolta, a enérgica reação dos fortes."

⁴⁸ Portuguese original: "Mas é precisamente essa resignação que os cabo-verdianos cultos precisam de combater no seu povo. . . . se eu pudesse, iria de ilha em ilha, de povoação em povoação, de casa em casa, dizer aos cabo-verdianos que não se resignassem. Há muitas coisas que eles podiam conseguir se, em vez de se curvarem sob o Destino implacável, gritassem a sua vontade desesperada de viver."



The call remains on the plane of will, without translating into concrete political action. Oliveira sees in the *Claridade* poets the possibility of this turn but cannot—or does not dare—name the true enemy.

In the sixth and seventh paragraphs, Oliveira's discourse reveals a paternalistic colonial logic: while acknowledging Cabo Verdean cultural autonomy, he appropriates it as proof of the Portuguese civilizing mission. This rhetoric, echoed in his invocation of a spiritual brotherhood between Brazilians and Cabo Verdeans as “children” of Portugal, aligns with the Estado Novo's ideology of imperial universality and its evocation of the great navigations.

Oliveira's essay contains structural contradictions. Although his discourse intends to call the Cabo Verdean to expression—to the cry—it is anchored in markedly ethnocentric and colonial assumptions, reiterating the supposed superiority of Portugal, the idea of a “civilizing miscegenation,” and the eternal glory of the Portuguese people. Such internal tensions stem, in part, from the demands imposed by the censorship of the period: In order to obtain approval, the text had to incorporate statements that resonated with the regime's ideology. In this way, the “cry” that the author summons is immediately neutralized by a discursive framework that empties it.

In “Apontamentos,” Cabral does not discuss Oliveira's ambiguous political stance—both conservative and anarchic—and it might be precisely because he disagreed with this position and did not wish to propagate it (except occasionally, where it served his critiques and political-poetic militancy) that he intentionally avoided citing his sources. Yet it is clear that his critical vision of Cabo Verdean poetry is grounded in the notion of “resignation” that was first pointed out by Oliveira. At the end of his critique of Cabo Verdean poetry, Cabral (1952) identifies two poets—António Nunes and Agualdo Fonseca—who to him “are at the forefront of this new poetry. They do not conform to stagnation. The prison is not in the sea” (p. 8).⁴⁹ In his critique, Cabral highlights these poets who expose a “shipwreck on land” (*naufrágio em terra*) and “another land within our land” (*outra terra dentro da nossa terra*).

Final Remarks

The analytical path undertaken in this article highlights the relevance of the essay “Apontamentos sobre poesia caboverdiana” as a fundamental document for understanding Amílcar Cabral's poetic-political militancy and his relationship with the *Claridade* movement. More than a literary critique limited to aesthetic considerations, “Apontamentos” is an intellectual intervention that articulates cultural reflection and a political project, anticipating central categories of Cabral's thought, such as the social function of art, the need to overcome historical passivity, and the role of culture in the anticolonial struggle.

The analysis of the first seven issues of *Claridade* revealed a literary movement marked by significant internal tensions: On the one hand, the magazine broke with the

⁴⁹ Portuguese original: “Que estão na vanguarda dessa nova Poesia. Não se conformam com a estagnação. A prisão não está no mar.”



metropolitan poetic tradition and introduced insular realities—drought, famine, emigration—into the center of artistic creation; on the other, as Cabral observed, it remained largely imprisoned by a resigned tone and passive hope, which were insufficient in the face of the archipelago’s historical urgencies. The editorial oscillation between the affirmation of a radical difference (the transcription of the *finason* in the first issue) and the approximation to culturally mixed forms (such as the morna and Oliveira’s essay) highlights the limits and contradictions of a project that, although innovative, did not manage—or did not dare—to fully become a critique of colonialism.

The implicit dialogue that Cabral establishes with Oliveira, especially around the notion of “resignation,” illuminates the originality of Cabral’s position. Although Oliveira summons the Cabo Verdean to the “cry” against “destiny,” he remains entangled in colonial assumptions that neutralize his appeal and also aligns himself with the ideology of the Estado Novo. Cabral, by contrast, takes “resignation” as a political problem to be overcome through conscious action and not as an intrinsic trait to be lamented. His critique of *Claridade* poetry is therefore not a rejection of the movement but a call for its transcendence: Poetry must cease to be a mirror of suffering and become an instrument of transformation.

It is precisely at this point that the most enduring contribution of “Apontamentos” is revealed: the defense that art—and poetry in particular—is not merely the externalization of individual feeling, but also a complex field where collective struggle can find its voice. The “poetic seed” planted by *Claridade*, by shifting the poet’s gaze toward the reality of their land, contained within itself the potential to germinate into critical consciousness and political action. By identifying the limits of this seed and pointing out paths for its transcendence, Cabral calls it to blossom into its own voice, capable of breaking the silence imposed by colonial oppression and affirming itself as a force of liberation.

Ultimately, Cabral’s essay reveals itself as a seminal text, in which the central concerns that would mark his entire intellectual and political trajectory are announced: the function of culture in the anticolonial struggle, the need to forge a Cabo Verdean identity beyond the colonial legacy, and the conviction that social transformation is the work of the conscious and organized action of the people. By critically examining *Claridade* poetry, Cabral not only contributes to the literary history of Cabo Verde but also offers a key to understanding his own project of national liberation.

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