

A Companion to Portuguese Literature. Edited by Stephen Parkinson, Cláudia Pazos Alonso, and T. F. Earle. Woodbridge, UK: Tamesis, 2009.

A Companion to Portuguese Literature is a remarkably inspired and personalized introduction to the unattainable task of contextualizing perfectly the totality of Portuguese literary history. Comprising significant improvements and complements to the 1932 classic *Portuguese Literature* by Aubrey Bell and the more recent *A Revisionary History of Portuguese Literature*, edited by Miguel Tamen and Helena C. Buescu (Garland Publishing, 1999), *A Companion to Portuguese Literature* is unabashedly canonical yet revisionary, at once unassumingly authoritative and entertaining, resourceful and pleasantly concise.

The *Companion* opens with a masterful 24-page overview by scholar, novelist, and poet Helder Macedo covering eight centuries of Portuguese literature, followed by eleven chapters contributed by other specialists in each of their respective fields. The canonical authors and texts from the twelfth to the twentieth century are presented chronologically, and three additional chapters survey the literary landscape from modernism through contemporary times. The *Companion* concludes with an invaluable review of “Portuguese Literature in English Translation,” and each chapter is referenced to works cited and includes recommendations for further reading.

Each scholar’s personal style and critical approach to the text is woven seamlessly into a tightly organized whole. The diversity in analytical styles may be observed in the first two chapters by comparing the close reading of “Medieval Portuguese-Galician Lyric” (by Rip Cohen and Stephen Parkinson) with the historical reading of “Fernão Lopes and the Portuguese Prose Writing of the Middle Ages” (by Parkinson). The writers maintain a clear understanding of their primary readership throughout, and each chapter is like a master class on its subject, making the *Companion* an invaluable resource for undergraduates, graduate students, and scholars looking to expand their knowledge of Portuguese and comparative literature. With regard to the latter, Helder Macedo’s essay exemplifies how the *Companion* presents crucial historical and cultural insight beyond the strictly Portuguese context. Numerous references establish important connections and parallels between Portuguese,

English, and other European authors and their texts within their overall socio-historical context.

Drawing on local and global facets in the works of Almeida Garrett, Eça de Queirós, Camilo Castelo Branco, Alexandre Herculano, and Júlio Dinis, emphasis is placed on how relevant the nineteenth-century Portuguese novel is to the study of European romanticism, realism, and naturalism. The special focus on Garrett and Eça de Queirós is a refreshing shift away from the usually exclusive attention given to Luís de Camões and Fernando Pessoa in international surveys of Portuguese literature. Rather than isolating Camões's work from the context of other central authors and texts, three prominent scholars (Juliet Perkins, T. F. Earle, and Clive Willis) effectively broaden a particularly vibrant literary Renaissance in the Portuguese sixteenth century by exposing, in three important chapters, the interrelations between the works of authors such as Camões, Gil Vicente, António Ferreira, Fernão Mendes Pinto, and Sá de Miranda. Further on and by contrast, Pessoa is not as much presented (by Mariana Grey de Castro) as *part of a generation* but as *the* Portuguese modernist generation itself, and is somewhat restricted to his fascinating self-sufficient personality and literary projects.

Three chapters, in particular, provide an excellent blueprint of the direction Portuguese and Lusophone Studies have taken within the last two decades. The view of Portuguese literature since the modernist generation strikingly places responses to the Estado Novo dictatorship (1933-1974) at the core of artistic production in Portugal, and this centrality continues well into the twenty-first century. Notably, the five authors of these three chapters (Phillip Rothwell, Hilary Owen, Cláudia Pazos Alonso, Mark Sabine, and Claire Williams) elaborate on the process of updating and correcting the canon to include substantial contributions by women writers, and approach literary and cultural production during and after the dictatorship by contextualizing it within colonial and postcolonial debates on the end of the Portuguese empire.

It is fitting that the *Companion* ends with an up-to-date review of "Portuguese Literature in English translation" (by Patricia Odber de Baubeta), since so much of Portuguese literature's alleged inconspicuousness in the international landscape is sometimes attributed to the inconsistent publishing of its

major works in English translation. This survey of English translations dating as far back as the sixteenth century demonstrates that “Portuguese literature is neither invisible nor absent from the international landscape” (212).

The *Companion* is a welcome soulmate to the Portuguese canon and literature from their beginnings to the present, and with all of the complexity of their relationship to Portuguese society and politics. It will satisfy both the novice and the scholar, and is bound to become an essential reference for advanced students of Portuguese, Lusophone, and comparative literatures.

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