

New Selection 1

Quental, Antero de

Cultural Current: Literature (fictional prose/drama), Literature (poetry/verse)

Cultural Community: Portuguese

Author: Martins Gomes, António

Quental, Antero de

Antero de Quental was born in 1842, in Ponta Delgada, Azores, into a noble and religious family. At 13, he moved to Coimbra, where he attended secondary school; three years later, he started his law studies, during which he founded the Sociedade do Raio (“Ray Society”), a secret organization that questioned certain academic traditions and led to the university rector’s resignation.

His lyrical production began in 1860, following a Romantic vein; this took a turn towards revolutionary idealism with Odes modernas (“Modern odes”) of 1865. A concluding note proclaims modern poetry as the “voice of the Revolution” with a sacred mission in the combat for social justice.

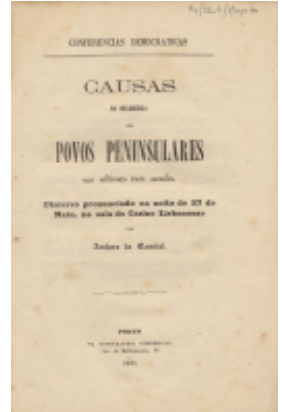
After finishing his degree, Antero played a central part in the Questão Coimbrã (Coimbra Controversy), a restless time in Portuguese cultural life which set his generation against that of older Romantics such as Castilho. In 1866, he moved to Lisbon, where he worked as a typesetter, and exercised that same profession when he moved to Paris at the beginning of 1867. Antero became involved in revolutionary activism inspired by Michelet and Proudhon.

In 1868, after the Spanish Revolution and Queen Isabella II’s deposition, Antero de Quental published “Portugal before the revolution of Spain”, praising republicanism and proposing an Iberian federalism. In Lisbon, he formed the Cenacle, a debating society that organized the Democratic Conferences of the Lisbon Casino with its positivist, republican and secular ideas. On May 22, 1871, coinciding with the Paris Commune, Antero de Quental gave the opening address announcing a ten-session cycle of meetings where Iberianism, socialism, democracy and republicanism would be debated, new philosophical and scientific ideas would be addressed, and new ways to develop Portuguese society would be worked out. A week later, his lecture on “Causes of the decay of the Peninsula’s people in the last three centuries” followed, on the theme of Iberian decline so central to the thought of the “1870 generation”.

Around the same time, Antero aligned himself with the European socialist movement with his “What is the First International”. Four years later, he was among the founders of the Portuguese Socialist Labor Party (today’s Socialist



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Title page, “Causes of Decay of Peninsular People in the Last Three Centuries”



Antero de Quental (1887)

Party).

His last decades saw him beset by neurasthenia and depression. His last poetry is more metaphysical and intimate in tone: his “Complete sonnets” (1886) were collected and prefaced by Oliveira Martins. Quental committed suicide in 1891 shortly after returning to his native Azores.

1.1.1.2/b

Carreiro, José Bruno; 1948. Antero de Quental: subsídios para a sua biografia (Ponta Delgada: Inst. Cultural) [“A. de Q.: contributions to his biography”]

Catroga, Fernando; 2001. Antero de Quental: história, socialismo, política (Lisbon: Notícias) [“A. de Q.: history, socialism, politics”]

Lopes, Óscar; 1983. Antero de Quental: vida e legado de uma utopia (Lisbon: Editorial Caminho) [“A. de Q.: life and legacy of an utopia”]

Medina, João; 1984. As Conferências do Casino e o socialismo em Portugal (Lisbon: Quixote) [“The Casino Conferences and socialism in Portugal”]

Quental, Antero de; 1980. O que é a Internacional (Lisbon: Ulmeiro) [“What is the First International”]

Sá, Victor de; 1995. Antero de Quental (Porto: Limiar)