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Special issue on recent Portuguese historiography

Editorial note

This special issue of the *e-JPH* brings together a series of contributions presented at a seminar that took place at the Portuguese National Library on 8 May 2010. The aim proposed for this seminar by the editors of the *e-JPH* was to initiate a debate amongst the Portuguese historiographic community about recently published histories of Portugal. The initiative was warmly welcomed and was attended by 110 participants, who testified to the interest and importance of the contributions that had been requested beforehand from a panel of historians, who have now kindly agreed to revise their papers and publish them.

How are these histories put together? What language is used in their writing? What are their aims and purposes, their merits and limitations? Who are their target audiences? What are the immediate repercussions and prolonged effects of works that, displaying different capacities for synthesis but in all cases intended for non-specialist readerships, seek to stabilize or reinvent the great milestones of the History of Portugal?

In a country where the market for the publication of books about the history of Portugal does not seem to be showing any signs of slowing down, these are some of the questions that undoubtedly merit a more in-depth discussion. This is a debate that also promotes a serious reflection on the essential contents of works that do not limit themselves merely to disseminating facts, but end up making an important contribution toward educating a broad public interested in knowing more about the history of their country.

Most of the contributions gathered together here focus on the *História de Portugal* edited by Rui Ramos, and written by Bernardo Vasconcelos e Sousa, Nuno Gonçalo Monteiro and Rui Ramos (Lisbon: Esfera dos Livros, 2010). Although reference was made to a more diversified range of histories of Portugal (beginning with the inaugural address by José Mattoso, whom we wish to thank for doing us the honor of opening this debate), the seminar deliberately centered on the discussion of the above-mentioned work. This is, in fact, how one can best understand the spread of the contributions across the three great divisions that form the structure for this work (medieval period, modern period and contemporary period). We should like to express our sincere gratitude to the authors of this book, Bernardo Vasconcelos e Sousa, Nuno Gonçalo Monteiro and Rui Ramos, for their readiness to participate in the seminar held at the Portuguese National Library and for the interested and committed way in which they reacted and responded to the observations that were made about their work.

A special word of thanks is also due to the Portuguese National Library and its director, Jorge Couto, for having hosted the seminar at which these newly published papers were first presented.

Since the publication of the *e-JPH* first began, one of the main priorities on its agenda has been the holding of debates about themes of a historiographic nature. The problems of the internationalization of Portuguese historiographic production, as well as its respective supports for publication in the form of academic and university journals, have already been the subject of

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attention in the pages of the *e-JPH*. We hope that this new dossier will lead to this debate being extended into forthcoming issues of the journal, and we therefore invite all those interested in this matter to submit their own original contributions, in the expectation that these will help to broaden and enrich the historiographic debate that is now initiated with this issue.

The editors of the *e-JPH*

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Histories of Portugal

José Mattoso¹

In 1999, at a conference on the teaching of history promoted by the Portuguese Association of History Teachers, it seemed possible to me to state as follows: “Present-day historiographic practice has not only abandoned the great syntheses of the past, but it has also made it practically impossible to produce smaller syntheses. It calls into question the very notion of “epoch”, and, furthermore, of “period”, that used to form the fundamental bases for the work of reconstructing the past and its interpretation.”² The theme that was chosen for today’s meeting, the fact of our dealing precisely with a recently published synthesis (that of the *History of Portugal* edited by Rui Ramos), and of this having met with great success as a publication, seems to contradict what I considered to be evident at that time. I also wonder if it is still possible to maintain what I said then about the notions of epoch and period.

What is the problem? Is the success enjoyed by this *History of Portugal* proof of the fact that, in this regard, just as in so many others, the Portuguese public and our historians are once again demonstrating an effective cultural “backwardness” in relation to the present-day historiographic guidelines? Or did I, at that stage, misinterpret the signs of the times? Are the syntheses of national histories and the division of history into periods really out of fashion?

Let us look at the facts relating to the History of Portugal. During the period from the beginning of the twentieth century until 1970, or, in other words, for seventy years, I can remember four works published with the same theme: Fortunato de Almeida in six volumes, Alfredo Pimenta in just one volume, António Mattoso in two volumes, João Ameal in one, as well as *The History of Barcelos* in eight. For obvious reasons, I refrain from making any comments on this list. All that I’m interested in is contrasting this situation with what came next. Between 1970 and 1990, there appeared the histories of Oliveira Marques in two volumes (1972-1974) and Hermano Saraiva in just one volume (1978). Twenty years later, i.e. in the period from 1990 until the present day, we find that ten histories have been published, three of them written in English and two in French. Now, in this last period, other histories of Portugal were published, in several volumes, with the collaboration of specialists, covering either longer periods or more specific thematic areas. I am referring to the work edited by Oliveira Marques, the *Nova História de Portugal*, the one that I myself edited and which was published by Círculo de Leitores, and the ones by João Medina and Hermano Saraiva. At another level, I should also like to mention the extraordinary undertaking of Veríssimo Serrão, who succeeded in covering all the periods and all the areas in his seventeen volumes (1978-2008). And there is also the collection of biographies of the kings of Portugal edited by Teodoro de Matos, with its 34 separate

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² “A História hoje: que História ensinar?”, *Obras completas*, Lisbon, Círculo de Leitores, vol. 10, p. 89.

volumes (2004-2006). It seems that the change of the millennium has suddenly afforded the Portuguese Clio a fertility that was quite unexpected, given the advanced age of the muse.

It seems therefore that the writing of historical syntheses is alive and well, at least in the case of histories of Portugal. One may wonder if such production is one of sufficient quality, modern, up-to-date and capable of responding to readers' current demands. Whatever the case, I certainly have to revise what I said eleven years ago about historical syntheses. I should also like to say something about the problem of periodization.

First of all, the syntheses. Looking beyond our borders, what seems to have ceased to interest historians and their readership are those undertakings that sought to cover panoramic themes about the understandability of the past, of the kind that involved histories of mentalities, the family, women, etc. These were works that, sometimes quite brilliantly, tried to correspond to the ideal of "total history" defended by the *Annales* school. As is known, this type of historiography never met with any great acceptance in Anglo-Saxon countries. Having been abandoned by the French themselves since the 1990s, it has since been replaced by these writers, as far as the coverage of particular problematics is concerned, with attempts to revise concepts that the historiography of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries used in an anachronistic fashion, by applying them to previous periods. This is the case with concepts such as "property," "territory," "border," "nationality," "individual conscience" and others of the same nature. Such a situation has given rise to new syntheses that cover entire periods, such as the one written by Jérôme Baschet about the feudal civilization, and above all critical reviews of general formulations, such as the one written by Alain Guerreau about feudalism, by Patrick Geary about nationality, or more radical questionings about the pertinence of the historical reconstruction of an already dead past, such as those written by Gabrielle Spiegel and other authors inspired by the so-called *linguistic turn*.

In the case of national histories, the problem is presented in a special way. In the syntheses of the *Nouvelle histoire*, it was necessary to use concepts whose pertinence was open to discussion (such as those developed in our modern times, when applied to such different worlds as Antiquity or the Middle Ages) to define and interconnect highly fluid and diversified phenomena, with indeterminate subjects or objects, and depending on structures that it was impossible to establish and identify. In national histories, however, the destiny of a defined object is traced over time; in other words, we follow the progress of a group of human beings established in a given territory and subject to a continuous political power. In thematic syntheses, it is difficult to avoid a certain arbitrariness in establishing causal connections and relationships. In national histories, one can follow a narrative sequence that helps to define the object itself. Synthesis even becomes indispensable. It demonstrates the coherence of the collective behavior in whose name it is possible to talk about the nation. The enduring nature of the territory and the transmission of clearly identified powers along one single time line make it possible to construct the national history. Furthermore, the awareness of national identity can be seen, above all, through the formation of historical memory. It is not by chance that nationalist ideologies owe so much to history, and that the national history frequently becomes transformed into myth.

Contrary to what Marxist theory proclaimed, the mythification of national history and its ideological appropriation by nationalist movements do not affect its pertinence.

Although critics highlight the illusory nature of facts such as the miracle of Ourique, or reduce the proportions of an epic exaltation such as the *Lusiads*, what matters is not to deny the amplifications of memory, but to explain their appearance and the role that they played in the collective destiny. Critics call upon historians to explain why their nation endures over the centuries and what keeps it alive. These phenomena can only be understood and explained from a perspective of national history. The synthesis seems to me to be the best way to understand this.

Let us now see how some recent histories of Portugal, written as syntheses, have resolved the problem of the national history. I shall begin by excluding from the range of my comments the more extensive works, or, in other words, those written by Veríssimo Serrão, and those edited by Oliveira Marques, João Medina, Hermano Saraiva and myself. In these, the collaboration of many authors, frequently with different criteria, is prejudicial to the synthetic nature of the work. The history edited by Oliveira Marques took as its model the university textbook, such as those produced by Cambridge or by Clio, i.e. it presents a great deal of data and information, offers a copious bibliography and attempts to cover all sectors. The one that I was responsible for editing sought to make interpretive syntheses by periods, but it only partially achieved this aim. The heterogeneity of the work directed by João Medina is also quite evident. One positive aspect of this diversity is the fact that readers can find objective information and descriptive data in the *Nova História* by Oliveira Marques and interpretive panoramas or reflections on problematic questions in the other two collections. Before moving on to my analysis, however, I wish to underline the difficulty of historical synthesis. Deliberately excluded from the program outlined by Oliveira Marques, it was only partly achieved by some collaborators in the other two collections.

Therefore leaving this group of works to one side, I now wish to refer to the historical syntheses published in one or two volumes, or, in other words, to the works by Rui Ramos, Nuno Monteiro and Bernardo de Vasconcelos (2009), J.-F. Labourdette (2000), A. R. Disney (2009) and M. Newitt (2009). In order to be complete, I should perhaps also examine earlier works, such as those by D. Birmingham (1993), Y. Bottineau (1977), Carmo Reis (1999), Oliveira Marques (1972) and Hermano Saraiva, in his two versions from 1978 and 1993; but I was more interested in trying to understand the trends that have begun to develop recently.

I shall begin by referring to a significant point: Rui Ramos and his collaborators did not attempt to master the whole of the historical subject. Rui Ramos wrote the text relating to 1807-2008, which is his area of research, and entrusted the rest to two specialists, one for the Middle Ages and another for the Modern Age. He was careful enough to choose authors with conceptions of history that were similar to his own in order to achieve the necessary interpretive unity. In fact, they all follow a narrative line that is based on political facts; they seek to explain what happened at the national level with the help of economic and social facts; they reveal the concrete indicators on which they base their explanations of the facts; they refer to the essential facts about the institutions that were peculiar to each period; and they briefly point out the most significant cultural manifestations at the times when these occurred. They attempt to assess what happened by basing their analyses on quantitative information, such as demographic indicators, the volume of economic production, imports and exports, the evolution of GDP, and other data of the same kind;

they take care to check on the country's regional differences, whenever these gaps are significant. In short, they provide an account of the role played by the leading actors, making use, whenever possible, of particularly expressive contemporary testimonies, as brushstrokes illustrating personal actions. Furthermore, they have avoided making value judgments about figures who until the end of the period of the Salazar regime served as ideological standard bearers not only for republicans but also for monarchists and other traditionalists, without, on the other hand, attempting to conceal somewhat less edifying episodes of their behavior and performance. In this way, they have succeeded in achieving a great interpretive unity. They therefore demonstrate the same idea about what is important and what is secondary in history, and about the correlation between political, social and economic facts. They see history as the narrative of a common action and not as an enumeration of data, a discussion of theses, an ideological justification or an account of individual actions. They have opted for the presentation of a simple text, devoid of artificial emphases or rhetorical devices, and they have taken every possible care over the writing. In this way, the diversity of the authorship and the specificity of the historical periods have been overcome by the unity of conception, the mastery of the historical material and the quality of the form. And that is some achievement.

These qualities are particularly noticeable when we compare the book with those written by Labourdette and Newitt. As they are both specialists in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, they are not very familiar with the earlier periods, so that for these times their syntheses are poorly written, biased or, at the very least, debatable. Sometimes, they make basic mistakes, as happens with Labourdette, who uses the name *Tanque* to refer to Tariq, the Arab leader of the invasion of the Iberian Peninsula, and translates the term *legists* as "legislators." At various stages, the Portuguese proofreader found himself obliged to correct erroneous information given by the author in identifying characters and events. In the case of Newitt, for example, it can be seen that, by passing from the conquest of Lisbon in 1147 to Portugal's involvement in the Hundred Years' War, he reveals his lack of interest in the relationship of Portuguese history with the history of Europe and the world in the fourteenth fifteenth centuries, thus contradicting what he announces in the title of his book. The narrative of the conquest of Lisbon is a mere pretext for adding some more pages to his work.

These remarks show that when one seeks to cover several historical periods, it is better to entrust their writing to different authors rather than to just one person. History has become far too complex a discipline for it to be easy for just one author to capture the essential qualities of different epochs, and to present correct syntheses about all of them. In fact, despite the sheer amount of facts and information that are to be found in the seventeen volumes written by Veríssimo Serrão, and the merits of his undertaking, it would be senseless to quote him as an authority on medieval matters. It is a different case with Disney, however, who is a specialist on the modern period and international relations. He also deals with the Portuguese past from its origins until the present day, but I do have to acknowledge, in this case, that he demonstrates a correct knowledge of medieval political facts; however, what he has to say about the society, economy and culture of the same period is nothing more than a series of banalities.

I should now like to mention another type of specialization. Labourdette and Newitt are only interested in political history. The former retains more details in his

synthesis than the latter, which makes his exposition rather heavy and unclear: they both manage to achieve a reasonable integration of Portuguese history into the international history of the modern era; yet, on the other hand, they both ignore the repercussions of social and economic facts upon political life. Disney, who attempts to deal with all aspects of the past in each historical epoch, from pre-history to the present day, reduces to the bare bones what he says about the organization of the court, the royal administration, the organization of the boroughs (*concelhos*), the struggle between the civil power and the spiritual power, etc. On this subject, I should like to express the opinion that matters dating from before the foundation of the Portuguese nationality must be dealt with in an Iberian context and not in a national context, for the simple reason that the nation did not yet exist. The little that we know about the Portuguese Visigoths is based more on the history of the Visigoths as a whole than upon the actual sources relating to the north-east of the peninsula; the Portuguese Roman past can only be understood within the context of the Roman history of Iberia.

As a conclusion to these comparisons, I would say that it is preferable to run the risk of prejudicing the interpretive unity, by attributing each period to its own author, than to fill pages uselessly or deceptively with information that the more enlightened readers quite reasonably prefer to look for in syntheses written exclusively about specific periods. In my opinion, the current state of development of modern-day historiography calls for a specialization in historical periods, in a way that has ceased to be accessible to those attempting to write a more general history. It is true that this opinion may be disputed by the defenders of certain criticisms of modern-day historiography, such as those made by Gabrielle Spiegel, which, amongst other things, call into question the very notion of historical “periods.” The pertinence of some of her criticisms does little to help us find a solid and practical solution to this problem. Periodization does not depend only on historians but also on their readers. The notion of the “Middle Ages” has become so spontaneous and includes such a large quantity of other notions that it seems impossible to create a new conceptual system that is capable of accounting for the phenomena that were peculiar to that time without resorting to such unfounded generalizations as this one itself, or even worse. Without denying that we need to revise some of our common ideas, I believe that this happens above all in the thematic specializations of research and not so much in epochal specialization. In questions such as this, we need to exercise some common sense. It is best not to confuse research with dissemination. Deeper investigative study may not have immediate repercussions on dissemination and synthesis. Furthermore, not everything that we find in the new historiographic fashions is good. Before preaching the revisionist gospel, it is advisable to know exactly what it is that this calls into question. As Agostinho da Silva used to say, “don’t let yourself be overimpressed by something new that appears; don’t afford it an absolute place of honor, but rather gauge it according to the scale that the past provides you with; being modern... means not allowing everything eternal that the present offers to lose its soul.”

Let us now look at another question raised by the intellectual training and nationality of the authors. It is asked whether the Anglo-Saxon background in which Disney and Newitt were trained, or the French background of Labourdette, bring them any advantages or disadvantages as authors of works about an alien country, such as Portugal. They are not, of course—not by a long shot—the first foreign authors to write about our

country. We all know of historians of other nationalities who have specialized in Portuguese historical research. It is sufficient to mention C. Erdmann and Pierre David for the Middle Ages, Boxer for the modern period, Robert Smith for the Portuguese and Brazilian baroque. They are, however, researchers. Can we say the same in the case of less specialized works? It is logical to admit that a foreigner who is well informed about international history may be better able than a Portuguese historian to solve the problems arising from Portugal's political, economic or cultural relations with other countries. This seems to me to be precisely one of the positive aspects of the works by Disney and Newitt, especially for the modern era, about which they are both very knowledgeable.

In fact, until almost the very end of the twentieth century, one of the negative aspects of Portuguese historiography was the way that we conceived of our past as a closed circuit. Little is known about the history of the Iberian kingdoms. Only much later was it understood, for example, that the wars with Castile in the time of Dom Fernando and Dom João I had to be included within the scope of the Hundred Years' War. Portugal's participation in the European wars of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries was afforded less attention than the cultural works of Dom João V or Pombal's anti-Jesuit policy. Great importance was given to the seventeenth-century skirmishes with the French and Dutch in Brazil and Angola and to the loss of the seaborne empire in the East to the English, but without mentioning the debt that the Portuguese resistance owed to the Spanish administration during the Iberian Union. As it happens, these criticisms do not apply to the English and French works that we are commenting on. Problems of this type, which were customary in Portuguese historiography before the 1960s, now seem to me to have been overcome, thanks to the internationalization of research. Knowledge of the Spanish, French, English or American bibliography has become an indispensable requisite in any work of history, whichever period is being dealt with. It is not surprising therefore that, as far as this point is concerned, Rui Ramos' synthesis can perfectly well bear comparison with those of Labourdette, Disney or Newitt.

I should also like to mention the state of specialist Portuguese research, in order to arrive at a global understanding of our history. Do the syntheses that are currently available give us a complete, coherent and precise panorama of our past? Regretting my incompetence in matters relating to the other two periods, I am obliged, in this regard, to restrict myself to the medieval period. In order to say something about this, it is not enough to have a general knowledge of the periods and the problems. I shall therefore refer only to the chapters written by Bernardo de Vasconcelos e Sousa in the *History of Portugal* published by Esfera dos Livros, anticipating the next session of this meeting, which is dedicated to the medieval period.

I have no hesitation in saying that the text by Bernardo de Vasconcelos is clearly of a much higher quality than the corresponding part of the French, Australian and English works that serve as our reference. All that remains is to ask if I consider them to be totally impeccable. I must begin by saying that he was kind enough to allow me to read his text before it was published, and that he took into account the few remarks that I made to him. In fact, I didn't see any reason to alter his views and I didn't discover any important gap. It seemed to me to be a synthesis that I myself might have written, and which nicely resolved a difficulty that is peculiar to the medieval period, namely that of having to deal with institutional, social and economic questions that can only be explained over a long time

span. I believe that he managed to link these aspects most satisfactorily with the development of political events. Only after re-reading them in printed form did I notice what seemed to me to be a weak point: the role of the Church. In this case, however, the insufficient coverage of this aspect does not result from the author's incapacity, but from the state of Portuguese research: some essential questions related with the religious factor have never been properly explained amongst Portuguese historians. In fact, the religious history of Portugal is reasonably well known for the twelfth century, but a lot of research is still needed about the history of the Church from the thirteenth century to the Council of Trent.

For this period, the available bibliography is completely out of date. It essentially consists of the seventeenth and eighteenth-century monastic chronicles that, above all, were interested in the glorious deeds of the respective order or congregation, which gave rise to numerous falsifications and abusive interpretations, further exacerbated by the ignorance of the auxiliary sciences and the absence of any critical appraisal of the sources. The exceptions to this rule are rare, and, when they do exist, they transmit information that is highly incomplete. The nineteenth century produced practically nothing in this sector, except in regard to the rationalist criticisms that were made—normally rather ferocious and summary in nature, and generally more interested in denigrating the Church than in understanding the past. The first half of the twentieth century brought the first reactions on the Catholic side, but the apologetic stance that the authors adopted in seeking to respond to the anti-clerical offensive frequently proved to be either inadequate or partial in nature. Little more was produced than Fortunato de Almeida's *História da Igreja em Portugal*, which is a compilation of the information provided by the previous chronicles, classified into self-contained and watertight sectors, without any obvious links being established between politics and society, its institutions or culture. Apart from Fortunato, whose work was published during the period of the fiercest attacks against the Portuguese Church, we only have the works of Monsignor José Ferreira about the Archdiocese of Braga and the Diocese of Porto, Monsignor José de Castro about the Dioceses of Bragança and Miranda, and Father Francisco Rodrigues about the Society of Jesus. And that is practically all. Beginning in the 1950s, some monographs and journal articles began to appear, including those that were published by the journal *Lusitania Sacra*, and there were also some works written about the Portuguese Padroado in the Far East; but no work looking at the whole subject-matter was ever published, except for the extremely elementary and never replaced textbook written by Monsignor Miguel de Oliveira. Finally, all that is left for me to mention is the recent *História Religiosa de Portugal*, published by the Center of Religious History Studies at the Catholic University of Portugal, which, nonetheless, at least for the Middle Ages, continues not to answer essential questions.

It will be sufficient to mention the comprehensive nature of questions that require in-depth research in order to understand the Church's influence on our national history. Above all else, there is the problem of the relationship between the spiritual power and the temporal power, which is known about through the violent confrontations that took place throughout the thirteenth century. It is impossible to accept the point of view of the agnostic historiography that turned our kings into courageous predecessors of the liberal governments of the nineteenth century. Following in the footsteps of Herculano, those who continued his approach were content to make episodic quotations handpicked from

papal bulls, dispensing with the need to rigorously establish the facts, while ignoring the profound reasons for the conflict and putting everything down to the greed of the clergy. They did not attempt to investigate the development of the administration of dioceses, the setting up of episcopal curias, the application of canon law, the organization of the network of parishes, the strategies of the papacy, the role of the mendicant orders, or the relationship between the bishops and the untouchable religious orders.

This last point deserves to be stressed. The Franciscans and Dominicans exerted a great influence over religious practice, as well as the conceptions of morality and the cultural and social role of the Church, both from the point of view of doctrine and as the mediators of the relationship between the congregation and the Church hierarchy. These themes have been well studied at the level of Christianity. But what role did they play in Portugal? Did the Franciscans and the Dominicans intervene in any way in the conflict between the kings and the bishops? Or did they remain passive throughout this institutional battle? From what is known so far, they do not seem to have played a particularly leading role in events. Why was this? Did the conflict so absorb the attention of all the different sectors of the Church that it led to a withering away of all other religious activities? Can this circumstance explain the weak influence that they seem to have had on Portuguese social and cultural life, when they played such an important role at the level of Christianity? Can we reasonably understand thirteenth-century Portuguese history without clarifying these points?

Let us look at another example of the inadequacy of the Portuguese historical synthesis caused by the lack of any mature research. Traditional historiography presents the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries as periods of great religious decadence. Indiscipline and corruption, it is said, were rife in the religious orders, the priesthood regularly had concubines, the bishops set bad examples, the Roman Curia maintained an abusive system for the purchase of privileges, the trade in pardons became scandalous, the Western Schism brought discredit to the papacy, piety was channeled into a devotion for superstitious practices and strange forms of worship, the Inquisition spread witchcraft through torture, etc., etc. It was only after the Council of Trent that better days were to come. This thick screen of generalizations does, however, conceal realities that our historians have completely overlooked. Without it being necessary to ignore well documented facts about the effective corruption of a part of the clergy and the venality of the pontifical Curia, it should be remembered that the introduction into Portugal of the order of Observant Franciscans with their strictly run hermitages dated from the late fourteenth century, and that their determined fight for ascetic discipline gradually overcame the resistance of the Conventual Franciscans until they managed to achieve the unification of the order. And furthermore that, around the same time, there appeared in Portugal, originating from Spain, the new order of the Hieronymites, who combined intellectual study with the austere discipline that was common in deserted places. In the same years, two other typically Portuguese orders were founded, the *Lóios* or the canons of St. John the Evangelist, who also set great store by scholarly study and discipline, and the hermits of Serra de Ossa, a poor and simple order that came about in a popular and spontaneous fashion, but who organized themselves into a more institutional form during the fifteenth century. We should also mention the Dominicans, whose reformed branch was protected by João das Regras and who were entrusted by Dom João I with the custody of the Monastery of

Batalha. Now, it was against such a background that Dom João II founded the Hospital de Todos os Santos and began the reform of the hospitals and brotherhoods that would be continued by Dom Manuel I; that Dona Leonor created the charitable institutions known as the *Misericórdias*; that many nobles founded chapels where they worshipped in memory of their own lineages; that the Books of Hours were disseminated amongst the lay population; that the liturgy of Salisbury was introduced into the royal court; that some bishops began to make visits to their dioceses; that the first parish records were created; that the catechisms appeared in everyday language; that relations were intensified between the most active sectors of the Portuguese Reformation and those of the Italian Reformation, in which the abbot Gomes of Florence played such a vital role; that, finally, certain cores of resistance were to be found that opposed this movement, amongst which was the one directed by the Archbishop of Braga, Dom Fernando da Guerra. It was also in this same context that the king of Portugal attempted to control the issue of pontifical documents setting up the controversial system of “royal consent,” whose meaning cannot be explained solely by political reasons, and even less so by anti-clerical ones.

There was, therefore, a wide-ranging religious movement in Portugal that urgently needs to be studied in depth and as a diversified whole. This could also include what certain historiographers have referred to as the “pre-reformation” period. It would be limiting to consider it to be an exclusively religious problem. Besides having significant aspects from the point of view of both culture and mentalities, it also involved the royal court and broad sectors of society, and it altered the ecclesiastical organization, revealing important facts in the domain of international relations. It shows a social vitality and a cultural originality that have rarely been achieved in Portugal (can Fernão Lopes, Gil Vicente or Nuno Gonçalves be understood without a full knowledge of the backdrop that I have been referring to?). It demonstrates a kind of collective energy that must inevitably be related to the expansion into Morocco, the occupation of the Atlantic islands and the exploration of the African coast. Jaime Cortesão, who very clearly understood some of its aspects, spoke about “Franciscanism” and related it to the cult of the Holy Spirit. Other Portuguese historians studying the Low Middle Ages either noticed none of this or were afraid to explore a forest that was far too thick for them. As for the historians of the Church, who were influenced both by the Protestant vision and the Catholic reaction, these based their studies on the principle that the ecclesiastical reformation only seriously began with the Council of Trent. They therefore ignored the positive aspects of religious feeling in the Low Middle Ages. Neither Catholic nor agnostic historians have realized its importance for understanding the fifteenth century in Portugal. Yet, until such time as modern research begins to investigate this question in such a way that it can be understood as a whole, it will not be possible to fill in this gap in our history.

Since I am now talking about the fifteenth century, I should also like to mention, from another perspective, the place that histories of Portugal have tended to give to the voyages of exploration along the African coast. All of our historians are seriously concerned about these, carefully enumerating the places that were discovered, their leading figures and the royal policy with regard to this issue. I should like to ask if the place that has since been set aside for these obviously important facts (which certainly were not understood as such previously, other than by a small minority of people) is not the result of a teleological conception of history. Or, in other words, the importance that we now give

to this question results from what we know to have happened afterwards. I doubt whether contemporaries, even those who actually sponsored the voyages, could imagine the consequences that they would have in the distant future. The Portuguese presence in Morocco was probably a much more important matter for the Portuguese society of that time: it involved more people, required a greater allocation of resources, had serious consequences for the life of those participating in this enterprise, were they soldiers, merchants, government officers, criminals, priests or women, called for the taking of some of the most controversial political and economic decisions, implied more contacts with international powers, caused more losses of life, inspired more records in the written memory of the period, and exerted a greater influence on the public administration, the legal system and military organization. It can now be understood why the historians of our time, knowing in advance that the Portuguese fortresses in Morocco had their days numbered, have paid less attention to the facts relating to these than they have to the overseas voyages, whose consequences were to bring much greater changes to the world than the Portuguese presence in Morocco. I believe that the difference in perspective, determined by the teleological context and not by the point of view of its leading figures, also has a decisive influence on the history that we must write. In the first case, one looks at the situation from the outside, in the second case one looks at it from within. On this very subject, I cannot avoid mentioning that A. Disney did, in fact, give more importance to these matters than does the *History of Portugal* edited by Rui Ramos. This is one of the rare points in which this latter work seems to me to be less successful than one of the other histories that I have examined for this talk.

We cannot forget, however, that a synthesis is a synthesis. By mentioning this self-evident truth, I merely wish to say that a synthesis requires its author to make choices, that choices inevitably lead to omissions, and that omissions in turn invite criticisms. Most choices do not need to be justified. One is free to choose the vantage point from which one looks at the past. There are various points of view that are equally legitimate and necessary. In an atmosphere of intellectual development, diversity is natural and beneficial. It expresses the strict demands and the fertile nature of intellectual debate and scientific debate. That is what we are here for. I should now like to hear your opinions.

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Some Reflections on the Middle Ages

José Augusto de Sottomayor-Pizarro¹

The appearance of a new *História de Portugal* (Esfera dos Livros, 2009) always arouses some expectations, and even curiosity, particularly amongst the community of historians, and above all when one can still consider the last two similar initiatives produced in this area to be quite recent affairs. I am talking, in this latter instance, about the two collective works, one edited by Joel Serrão and A. H. de Oliveira Marques, which is not yet completed,² and the other by José Mattoso,³ for the histories written by individuals already date from some time ago.⁴

The authors, whom I wish to begin by congratulating on their efforts, identify themselves as the representatives of a new generation of historians whose responsibility it is to transmit the latest novelties produced by the recent efforts of enormous and wide-ranging collective research: “It was time for the historians from the new generations (without forgetting what they owe to their predecessors) to attempt to place the History that is being written nowadays in touch with the general public,” is what is stated in the “Prologue,”⁵ even though shortly afterwards, and in my view somewhat overly optimistically, it is said that “the reader that we have envisaged for this book is a demanding one” (I-II). In fact, I do not share the same faith as the authors in identifying the vast majority of the “general public” as demanding readers ...

Having been invited to take part at this conference in the panel dedicated to the study of the Middle Ages, I should like to dedicate my first reflections to some of the statements contained in the presentation or “Prologue” of a work that, I should like to

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² *Nova História de Portugal* (Joel Serrão and A. H. de Oliveira Marques, eds.), 10 vols., Lisbon, Presença, 1987-2004 (two volumes are yet to be published).

³ *História de Portugal* (José Mattoso, ed.), 8 vols., Lisbon, Círculo de Leitores, 1992-1993 (Estampa, 1993-1994).

⁴ Serrão 1976-2009; Saraiva 1993.

⁵ The tribute that is paid to the “*predecessors*” is made quite clear by the way in which the first part of the “Introduction” (VII-XIII) is structured, being fundamentally centered around the main lines of interpretation developed by Orlando Ribeiro, José Mattoso, Magalhães Godinho and Oliveira Marques.

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begin by saying, seems to me to be excellently put together in both graphic and editorial terms.

“After the great ideological debates of the past, historiography has shown an understandable tendency in the last twenty years towards a **positivist** concentration on small scale work. The great theories have been abandoned.” (II)

I believe that such a peremptory assertion—even though I consider it fairly debatable whether one can classify the more monographic research as positivist—should be developed in greater detail. First, because this would be a good opportunity to explain to the “general public” why more recent historiography (it is not clear whether this is in Portugal or worldwide) has tended not to discuss or even to abandon the great theories of the past and why the authors see this as something that is understandable. I personally wonder whether this might not be the inevitable corollary of the increasingly evident disappearance of ideological antagonisms, or even ideologies “tout court”, in western society and culture. Secondly, because the “demanding reader” will quite legitimately ask to what extent the text that is presented is a reflection or not of the authors’ own personal academic backgrounds, since they profess to have been trained in the theoretical and ideological premises of the *Annales* school of thought, only to be later seduced by the Anglo-Saxon school of historiography (III).

Thirdly and finally, because it would be interesting to join together the two previous premises with the one arising from what the authors then say in the continuation of the previous text:

“The great theories have been abandoned. Everything has become fragmented and micro. There has been a great multiplication in the number of works written by place and between dates that are very close to one another. (...) The sense of an overall vision has been lost (...)” (II).

In fact, I could not agree more with this last statement! But it would be very difficult to go in a different direction when the academic community from the social and human sciences has deliberately imposed upon itself a research model imported from the mathematical or biological sciences. This is a fact that should merit debate and profound reflection on the part of historians, when the criteria of “fast-food” are being

imposed on the writing of MA and PhD theses, which are necessarily being directed towards thematic micro-approaches. This is the price to be paid for the massification and popularization of academic degrees!

In keeping with the same criterion that I have been defending, I believe that the authors did well to demonstrate clearly and directly the assumption on which this synthesis of Portuguese history was based, namely as “the History of a unity constructed by the political power over the centuries,” and that, therefore, “the narrative would have to be based on political History” (III). This is a perspective that I myself find fairly attractive, leaving the reader in no doubt about the structure of the work.

Unlike some people, I do not consider this *History of Portugal* to be too unbalanced in terms of the three chronological parts of which it is formed, and I am not so certain that the existence of more sources for the contemporary period has resulted in greater knowledge in contrast to the medieval period, even though it should be recognized that the excessive amount of data may, at the same time, also be prejudicial. It is true that there are more sources, but this also frequently means that they are more repetitive and serializable; and, above all, because they are closer to us chronologically, they also arouse passion and controversy (again often excessively so), even when the professional historian is called upon to demonstrate the greatest possible distancing and impartiality. Another fact which is truly undeniable and also deserves serious reflection is that contemporary history is “fashionable.”

Let me make a couple of final comments, of a more general nature, in order to stress the usefulness of the “Annexes,” the good taste shown in the graphics of this edition,⁶ and above all the clear and pleasant readability of the text as a whole.

The great and, in my opinion, successful effort that has been made to synthesize the subject-matter has naturally obliged the authors to make some cuts in relation to certain themes. I therefore think that this choice and the fact that this is a more recent history of Portugal would justify the presentation of a more developed and above all commented bibliography.⁷ Such a methodology is unfortunately relatively uncommon in Portugal, but it would also make it possible to achieve the aims stated in the “Prologue,” in other words to give due emphasis to the contributions provided by more recent research.

⁶ In view of the size of the work, I believe that it would have been more practical to place the notes at the end of each chapter, or at least at the end of each of the three parts.

⁷ I think specifically that it would be useful to include a report of the main proceedings of recent conferences. *e-JPH, Vol. 8, number 2, Winter 2010*

Divided into seven chapters, the Middle Ages, are presented to us by an author—Bernardo Vasconcelos e Sousa—whose clear and well-constructed discourse we have become accustomed to, enabling the reader to enjoy a very easy understanding of the various phenomena analyzed. In this regard, I draw attention in particular to Chapters IV, V and VI, which seem to me to have the best structure, because of their remarkable internal balance.

From an overall point of view, I should like first of all to remark on the criterion adopted for establishing the chronological boundaries. While it is easy to understand the decision to omit the whole period prior to the appearance of the county of Portucale—although, in my view, this should have implied providing a good bibliographical outline to the study of the previous period (pre- and proto-history, Romanization, the Swabian and Visigothic kingdoms, the Muslim occupation, and, in particular, the kingdom of Asturias and Leon)—I must admit that the conclusion of the analysis at the end of the reign of Dom Afonso V did cause me some surprise. Apart from the absolute novelty of seeing Nuno Gonçalo Monteiro writing about Dom João II—and I’m not implying that he would not have done so with great proficiency—it seems to me that, in the case of various themes, the historiography of recent years has shown a very clear tendency to prolong the Portuguese Middle Ages at least until the end of the reign of Dom Manuel I, and the particular case of various studies about the Military Orders seems to me to be a good example of that reality. In fact, because of a division that, in my opinion, is not very clear, the reading of the last chapter of Part I leaves the reader with the feeling that it is somehow incomplete, without any logical conclusion. Later, one can understand why: I would say that most of the first chapter of Part II could perfectly well have complemented the previous one, for it is only just before the end that it begins to talk about Dom João III.

However, whatever the case, and regardless of the reasons that were given by the editors of this work for choosing this particular solution, I believe that all the criteria should have been clearly explained, for example, in the “Prologue.”

A second more general observation has to do with the absence of a greater focus on the comparative analyses between the history of Portugal and that of other peninsular kingdoms. On the one hand, I understand that obviously in a work of synthesis one has to leave out certain subjects, but, on the other hand, it is a little more difficult to

understand that a work that is structured around the writing of a political history can exclude, or not sufficiently stress, for example, the framework of Portuguese diplomatic relations, which would in fact afford greater prominence to many of the phenomena analyzed (and in fact very well) by Bernardo de Vasconcelos e Sousa. Or that, from another viewpoint, greater emphasis is not given to arguments of a political nature in the analysis of certain phenomena. Let us look at just one example:

“Notwithstanding some earlier initiatives of a more or less sporadic nature, it was only from the mid-11th century onwards that the great enterprise of the Christian Reconquest began in the west of the Iberian Peninsula, understood as a planned series of large-scale military expeditions with the aim of conquering territories and cities from the Muslims. (...) the Iberian Reconquest should be seen as an integral part of a general movement of expansion of the Christian West between the 10th and the late 13th century.” (18-19)

Dispensing with the need to comment on what I consider to be the highly debatable statement about the Reconquest only effectively beginning in the mid-eleventh century, I agree about the importance of the demographic and economic sustainability of the territorial expansion that was achieved—and the consequent process of the region’s human occupation and settlement—between those two centuries; what I do find strange, however, is that, seen from a perspective of political history (the area in which the authors are themselves situated), no reference is made, not even in the form of a brief comment, to the fact that the spread of Christianity in the mid-eleventh century coincided with the complete break-up of the Caliphate of Cordoba and its disintegration into scores of small political units—the Taifa kingdoms. More than anything else, it was this dispersal that greatly facilitated the spread of Christian influence. On the other hand, the recession and delay in the Christian advance in the late eleventh and twelfth centuries was due more to political causes than to reasons linked to the question of demographic and economic expansion. In fact, to underline what was said earlier, the Muslim reaction frequently proved to be successful more as a result of the antagonism that undermined the cohesion between the different Christian kingdoms than because of any clear military supremacy.

I shall now move on to a more detailed consideration of each of the chapters, in which I shall have the opportunity to point out some more examples illustrating the two

criticisms that I have just formulated, namely about the final chronology of Part I and the insufficient consideration that is given to the question of Portugal within the broader context of medieval Hispania.

The first chapter—"From the County of Portucale to the Portuguese Monarchy"—devoted to the eleventh and twelfth centuries begins with what is, in my view, an overly short synthesis ("The Reconquest in the Western Peninsula") of the whole period prior to the creation of the county of Portucale, in which the quotation that I commented on earlier is included. This is followed by an excellent analysis of the circumstances that brought Count Dom Henrique to the court of Leon—seen in conjunction with the influence exerted by the French clergy and the impact that the *Gregorian Reform* had at that time in the Spanish kingdoms—and the military and political role that he played until his death in 1112 ("The 'French' in the Iberian Peninsula").

The next section ("Afonso Henriques—from Prince to King") is also fairly well presented. This genuinely central question is discussed within the context of a relatively balanced look at the life of the first Portuguese monarch and the political and military path that he followed. I do, however, find it lamentable that there is no reference to the relations, or perhaps better the almost complete lack of relations, that Dom Afonso Henriques had with the northern nobility, especially after the court had been moved to Coimbra. I think that, as far as this point is concerned (in keeping with one of my initial criticisms) it would perhaps have been interesting, if only in the form of a brief paragraph, to underline the impact of the powerful military career that Dom Afonso Henriques enjoyed within the much vaster context of Hispania. In this way, the common reader would gain a better understanding of the participation of Fernando II of Leon on the side of the Almohads, in the disaster that befell the Portuguese king in Badajoz, in 1169—the success of the Portuguese Reconquest endangered the future expansion of the Leonese king southwards. The next section is somewhat out of place here, since, in my opinion, it should have been included in the first section: in fact, when, given the chronological sequence followed here, the reader would have expected to find a discussion of the military crisis caused by the reaction of the Almohads, which in turn gave rise to some dramatic moments in the Christian kingdoms, he finds himself instead confronted with a synthesis (in fact a very well written one) about the evolution of Muslim power since the invasion of 711. This means that stress is now placed on the

important role played by political factors in the dynamic process of the advance and retreat of the frontier of the Reconquest (“In Garb Al-Ândalus”).

Finally (“From the first king to the Portuguese royal dynasty”), the last section of the chapter presents the different aspects of the consolidation of the youngest Iberian monarchy, namely through the relations established by the royal family with other royal dynasties. It also discusses the passage of the crown to the new king, Dom Sancho I, intelligently underlining some topics that will be featured in the following chapter, namely the not always peaceful dialectic between the power of the king and the power of the clergy and nobility.

The second chapter—“The Monarchy between the Civil War and the Consolidation”—covers the thirteenth century and, as had been stressed previously, talks about the way in which the kings of this century gradually imposed themselves over the forces that were opposed to the plan to strengthen the royal authority, as well as about the remarkable joint efforts of the Crown and the Military Orders in their commitment to expanding the territory through the Reconquest, which was completed in 1249.

In my opinion, this is a reasonably successful chapter, with the author displaying moments of particular clarity in his exposition of such complex themes as the definition of the seigniorial system or the contextualization of the implantation of feudalism in Portugal. I only need to point out one or two aspects that are less successfully explained or insufficiently developed: in the second section (“Reactions to the concentration of power by the king”), I believe that the reasons for the military intervention of Afonso IX of Leon in 1212 should be made a little more explicit, since, in my view, this should be seen much more as the last desperate attempt by the kingdom of Leon to annex Portugal, or at least to seek to resolve the future possibility of advancing southwards, under the pretext (and this aspect was indeed the case) of defending his ex-wife’s rights of inheritance; in the sixth section (“Socio-regional diversities and the composition of the kingdom,” 66), I find it rather odd that no reference is made to my proposal about the way in which the expansion of the seigniorial system took place, drawing attention to the fact that the Portuguese monarchs, especially Dom Dinis, prevented the secular seigniorial system from extending to the region south of the River Tagus.⁸ Yet, in the penultimate section (“The seigniorial system and feudal relations”), which, first of all,

⁸ Sotto-Mayor Pizarro 1999: 2/449-509.
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deals with the structuring of the group of nobles (67), and then with the structuring of the relations of kinship and the transmission of inheritances within that same group (67-68), I cannot conceal a certain surprise in not seeing (at least with a reference in the notes) any mention of my innovative proposals about the two subjects, which have been unequivocally accepted by José Mattoso.⁹

On the whole, I repeat, it seems to me to be a good chapter, but I also think that it would benefit from a reference to the particularly rich and complex political and diplomatic relations between Portugal and the other peninsular kingdoms during this period. This positive impression carries over into the next chapter, Chapter III, dedicated to the theme of “Population and Society” in the thirteenth to the fifteenth century, where there is a very clear synthesis of such complex questions as demography and the economy, or the structuring of society.

As I said at the beginning, I consider Chapter IV (“The Kingdom of Portugal (13-14th Century)”) to be one of the best in Part I. Writing in a very clear and fluent manner, and producing a well-grounded exposition of his subject, Bernardo de Vasconcelos e Sousa presents us with one of the most interesting processes in our history, namely that of the formation of the roots of the structures of the Portuguese State, which was led especially by Dom Afonso III, Dom Dinis and Dom Afonso IV. Even though I continue to think that Portugal’s place within the Iberian context was not afforded the attention by the author that would seem to me to be desirable, the events leading up to the crisis that was to mark the last years of the founding dynasty were very well summarized, particularly the most interesting approach that was adopted in relation to the question of “Inês, from the Castro family” (125-128).

The same positive impression continues into the following chapter, “The Dynasty of Avis and the Refoundation of the Kingdom (1383-1438),” perhaps with rather too much restraint being shown in the writing of the section dedicated to the long reign of the first king of the Avis dynasty (“João I – bastard, master and king,” 136-144), which is followed by an extremely beautiful analysis of Fernão Lopes and the importance of chronicle writing in the legitimization of the dynasty (144-146). This chapter ends with an analysis of the structuring of the monarchy and the exercise of the

⁹ Sotto-Mayor Pizarro 1999: 2/537-541 and 565-592, respectively, for the two themes, and 1/9-11 for the opinions of José Mattoso. I feel the same sense of surprise in the following chapter, once again about the structuring of the group of nobles and the expansion of the seigniorial system (*História de Portugal* 2009: 95-98).

royal power in the dynasty's first two reigns.¹⁰ In relation to this, I draw attention in particular to the analysis of the centralizing measures that were adopted, namely the control exercised over the military orders (130). I just find it to be a pity that no comparison is made here with what was happening in the neighboring kingdom of Castile.

Chapter VI, which is dedicated to the fairly complex reign of Dom Afonso V ("Return to the Past? (1438-1481)"), is, in my opinion, the most successfully written and balanced chapter of them all, with a very interesting introduction and a good synthesis about the regency of the Infante Dom Pedro and the outcome of the Battle of Alfarrobeira (153-158), with there being nothing to say against the analysis of the governance of Dom Afonso V (158-163). The section about "The Iberian Temptation"—which is in itself very well written—clearly reveals, in my opinion, that the decision to move coverage of the reigns of Dom João II and Dom Manuel I to Part II was not the most successful one, because the question of "Iberian unity" can only be properly analyzed if seen as a whole. The final section also appears to be a good analysis, being a particularly speculative one ("‘Seigniorial reaction’ or the ‘advance of modernity’?" 167-169), which would be even more notable if the comparison made between the various kingdoms of the Iberian Peninsula were less general.

"The Beginning of the Overseas Expansion (15th Century)," the seventh and last chapter of this Part I, once again confirms the excellent power of synthesis demonstrated by Bernardo de Vasconcelos e Sousa, which I have been emphasizing throughout these pages. Its only flaw is the rather abrupt chronological break, which I have already referred to on several occasions.

This question does, in fact, allow me to make some final remarks in relation to a series of comments that, I must stress, were never intended to be more than simple reflections about a history of Portugal that undoubtedly represents a serious synthesis and a very valid contribution to current Portuguese Historiography.

An abrupt break, as I was saying, not only in terms of the approach to the theme of overseas expansion, but also in the way in which this Part I is brought to an end, just

¹⁰ In which one notes the rather strange omission of any reference to the work by Armando Luís de Carvalho Homem, *O Desembarço Régio (1320-1433)*, Porto, INIC-CHUP, 1990.
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when one might perhaps have expected a more protracted final reflection. Especially because one was expecting the development of a particularly interesting idea put forward by the author:

“Rather than being rooted in any long cycle of growth in western Europe, the Portuguese overseas expansion originated from the immediate circumstances of the crisis of the 14th and 15th century, the structural difficulties faced by the kingdom and its Iberian impasse.” (195)

Indeed, this statement, as rich in ideas as it is paradoxical in its contents, should, in my opinion, have led to a conclusion that would provide a particularly fertile orientation for approaching later centuries. How then should the fifteenth-century expansion be explained within the context of the recession of the late Middle Ages? The problem is that the answer cannot be given without taking two factors into account: comparing the evolution of the royal power in Portugal and the kingdoms of Castile and Aragon, on the one hand, and, on the other hand, prolonging the analysis until the beginning of the sixteenth century.

In this way, one would be able to understand, first, that the Portuguese secular seigniorial group, unlike the one in Castile, did not grow any larger and richer with the actions of the Reconquest, with the Portuguese kings choosing to base the settlement and organization of the territory on the other side of the River Tagus on the network of *concelhos* (boroughs), only allowing the seigniorial system to spread there through the presence of bishops, a few monasteries and, above all, the military orders; in Castile and Aragon, on the contrary, the system of “*repartimientos*” opened up Andalucía or Valencia to the secular seigniorial system, favoring the more powerful lineages and allowing for the territorial growth of other middle-ranking lineages. Second, besides other factors, this would explain the relative ease with which the Portuguese monarchs imposed a more centralizing system that, despite a number of setbacks, continued well into the beginning of the Modern Age; on the contrary, and especially in the kingdom of Castile, the existence of a particularly powerful seigniorial group obliged the monarchs to seek the support of ever more powerful and politically influential urban oligarchies. Yet both the former and the latter groups brazenly took advantage of the situations of royal weakness, as was the case with the successive periods of royal minority that affected Castile throughout the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. And, third, even in the

most conflict-ridden situations, such as the ones that marked the dynastic breaks of the second half of the fourteenth century, the Portuguese monarchs were able to maintain that guiding thread that structured and centralized the royal power, whereas, in the neighboring kingdom, the seigniorial group and the cities were increasingly strengthening their power. Fourth, as a paradigmatic example of what has just been said, one should note the fact that the new Portuguese dynasty of Avis took full control of the Military Orders by placing them in the hands of the members of the Royal Family, whereas in the new Castilian dynasty of the house of Trastámara the masterpieces of the military orders served to fuel even further the insatiable appetite of an already well-fed group of royal favorites. I believe that it would be interesting to understand that the Catholic Monarchs, from the last quarter of the fifteenth century onwards, and after imposing their will on the nobility and the leagues of cities, were finally able to promote measures of a centralizing nature that the Portuguese monarchs had already been applying throughout their kingdom, in some cases since the very beginning, but on a continuous basis since the middle of the thirteenth century.

It might then perhaps be easier to understand the reason why, at a time when England and France were recommencing the hostilities of the Hundred Years War at the Battle of Agincourt, when Aragon was beginning to experience the first years of a new royal dynasty, and Castile was going through the first throes of a prolonged and disastrous cycle of royal governance (1406-1474), the small and peripheral Portugal had the means and the capacity to turn its attention to the conquest of fortresses in North Africa and the exploration of the Atlantic Ocean.

In 1492, when a new continent fell as if by miracle into the lap of Isabella I of Castile, the Portuguese monarchs were already on the verge of discovering the sea route to India and also of setting foot on this same continent, after more than half a century of continued efforts of conquest and discovery. This cycle, which, after a certain moment, was accompanied by a shared desire for *Iberian Union*, was only to be brought to an end, in every regard, from 1521 onwards.

But, as I said at the beginning, and apart from the occasional detail that may be open to discussion (which is, in fact, perfectly natural in works of this type and size), the pages dedicated to the Middle Ages are, on the whole, an excellent contribution to the synthesis that the authors were attempting to make.

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The Temptation of the Synthesis

Hermínia Vasconcelos Vilar¹

In the mid-1980s, the first volume of the *New History of Portugal*, edited by A. H. de Oliveira Marques and Joel Serrão, was published. This was a work that examined the period of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries and consisted of the fourth volume of a long and comprehensive edition of a *New History of Portugal*.² The sole person responsible for this volume was Oliveira Marques, the author who, at the beginning of the 1970s, had been behind the publication of a new and innovative *History of Portugal* in only two volumes, but who proposed a synthetic revision of the History of Portugal through the eyes of a single author.³

This *History of Portugal* was to leave its mark on generations of students and researchers, being regarded for many years as the only example of a history that paid attention to the new historiographic problematics that had marked the 1950s and 1960s. Curiously, it proved to be necessary to wait a further decade⁴ for a new model to appear for the construction and presentation of the History of Portugal, founded on the contributions of different authors. This was the model proposed by the *New History of Portugal*, together with the *History of Portugal*, edited by José Mattoso and published shortly after the *New History*,⁵ and the *History of Portugal* by João Medina, presented in the early 1990s.⁶

In all of these histories, the medieval period was the subject of special attention, despite being approached in quite different ways. For the *New History of Portugal*, reflection about the medieval period spread over 3 volumes, if we consider a long chronology,⁷ each of them the responsibility of different authors, but it was the period between 1096 and the end of the fifteenth century that was afforded particular attention, with two large volumes on the subject, divided by the already firmly enshrined date of 1325, or in other words the death of Dom Dinis.⁸

This division was also the predominant feature of the volume of the History of Portugal edited by José Mattoso and dedicated to the “Feudal Monarchy.”⁹ Here, too, following on from this author’s study on “A Identificação de um País”, 1325 was taken as the date that divides the

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² Marques, 1987. This volume was entitled “Portugal na Crise dos séculos XIV e XV” and was Vol. IV of the *Nova História de Portugal*, edited by A. H. de Oliveira Marques and Joel Serrão.

³ Marques, 1972-1974.

⁴ In the meantime, two Histories of Portugal had appeared with different characteristics. The first was the work of Joaquim Veríssimo Serrão, consisting of 17 volumes published between 1978 and 2008. The second, dating from the beginning of the 1980s, first appeared in the form of separate booklets. As far as the articles dedicated to the Middle Ages are specifically concerned, the *História de Portugal* edited by José Hermano Saraiva and published by Publicações Alfa in 1983, managed to bring together researchers who were to unquestionably make a name for themselves over the following years and texts that were seen as excellent summaries of the themes proposed. Particularly noteworthy, for example, were the articles written by José Mattoso about the first kings of Portugal and by Maria José Ferro about the currency used in the Middle Ages, amongst others.

⁵ Mattoso (ed.), 1992-1994.

⁶ Medina (ed.), 1993.

⁷ Volume II of the *Nova História de Portugal* covered the period of the Germanic invasions, the Islamic presence and the formation of the kingdom of Asturias and Leon.

⁸ We are referring here to Volumes III and IV of the *Nova História de Portugal*. Volume III was edited by Armando Carvalho Homem and Maria Helena Coelho and covers the period between 1096 and 1325, which was given the title of “Portugal em definição de fronteiras”. Volume IV was the first to be published: it deals with the 14th and 15th centuries and was written exclusively by Oliveira Marques.

⁹ José Mattoso and Armindo de Sousa, 1992.

medieval period of Portuguese history into two, and once again the death of Dom Dinis is seen as the moment that signaled a turning point between a bellicose monarchy and the construction of a kingdom that was marked by crisis and by the ending of the Christian conquest movement.

Such a division was also reflected in the choice of the two authors who were to share the writing of these two parts. While José Mattoso returned to the chronology that he had already dealt with in other earlier works, Armindo de Sousa concentrated his analysis on the period of the late Middle Ages until 1480.

In this way, the traditional dichotomy that identified the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries as a coherent block was maintained, in contrast to the previous period during which the monarchy and the territory were constructed and established.

Despite these similarities, the fact remains that these histories of Portugal were written by various authors, who all sought, albeit in different ways, to include in these texts research work of their own or that resulting from team efforts, which was either in progress or had already been completed. Because of this they ended up amounting to parallel syntheses that did, however, differ in the treatment that they afforded to the evolution of the Portuguese kingdom between the eleventh and the fifteenth centuries, or even about the western region of the Iberian Peninsula from the fifth century onwards, through their analyses of the role of the Visigothic kingdom, the Islamic presence and the central role of the kingdom of Oviedo in the gestation of the peninsular kingdoms.

What they shared in common was their tendency to propose new readings about the evolution of Portuguese history during this period and the fact that they shone a spotlight on the different generations of historians who wrote many of the texts.

The final decades of the twentieth century therefore resulted in a revision of the production of the histories of Portugal after the great institutional works of the 1920s and 1930s, such as the *Histories of Portugal* written by Damião Peres and Fortunato de Almeida. This new phase is still continuing today, and, like some of the great histories of Portugal produced in the 1920s and 1930s, the new works have sought to reach a diversified and ever larger audience, whose interest in history has grown over the last few decades.

To a certain extent, there has been a clear attempt to produce academic historiography based on careful factual research and, at the same time, to provide students, researchers and interested readers with a particular line of reflection, as well as, in some cases, to raise problematic issues. These concerns were echoed by the authors of *History of Portugal* that has served as the starting point for this current reflection when they identified the two objectives that led them to compile this history of Portugal. In the prologue to the work, Rui Ramos explicitly and clearly states these objectives. On the one hand, he speaks of the need to “provide all readers, in a coherent and compact text intended to be as readable and clear as possible, with the results of the research and reflections of the most recent generations of historians.”¹⁰ On the other hand, the aim is also “to stimulate the debate about the frameworks used for the interpretation of our history,”¹¹ going beyond the practice of merely joining together fragmented studies and moving towards synthetic viewpoints that can be discussed, but which also seek to provide a new proposal for reading the history of Portugal.

Hence, the decision to produce just one volume, unlike the histories of Portugal written immediately before this one, although, on this occasion, the book is the work of three authors. This is how this history of Portugal succeeds in being both a collective history and an individual history. It is, in fact, a history written by three authors, but, at the same time, it represents an individual view of each of the great periods in history that are considered here, and in this way it establishes a complete break with the approaches adopted by the most recently written *Histories of Portugal*, published in the course of the 1980s and 1990s. In this respect also, it seems to draw closer to the foundational history written by Oliveira Marques in the early 1970s.

Curiously, the first decade of the twenty-first century has also seen the appearance of other synthetic views of the history of Portugal, edited in some cases by foreign authors, as is the case with A.R. Disney, whose *History of Portugal and the Portuguese Empire* was published by Cambridge

¹⁰ Rui Ramos (ed.), 2009, p. I.

¹¹ *Ibidem*, p. II

University Press in 2009,¹² six years after the Portuguese version of the *History of Portugal* by Jean-François de Labourdette had been published.¹³

In the specific case of the first work mentioned, the lack of an up-to-date knowledge of the Portuguese bibliography, and particularly of the most recent research undertaken in this area, clearly limits the analysis of the medieval period, which, together with a reflection centered upon some key dates in the political process involved in the foundation of the kingdom, leads to the painting of an impressionistic, but rather vague picture of the context of Portuguese history in those centuries.

The construction of a particular and individual view of the evolution of the history of Portugal is also what can be noted from reading the work by António Borges Coelho, a history of Portugal whose first edition also dates from 2009, but which, in the author's words, is to be considered a history "without a dalmatic,"¹⁴ a history of questioning, which does not follow the established canon but instead prefers to rely on "the rigor and pleasure of the word."¹⁵ The first volume deliberately entitled *Where We Came From* covers Portuguese pre-history, the Roman period, the Islamic presence and the Christian west of the Iberian Peninsula until 1128. All of this in roughly 220 pages that confront us with a reading largely displaying the appearance of an essay and a particular view of the evolution of a society.

In fact, there seems to be little that actually connects this history to the history presented by Rui Ramos, Bernardo Vasconcelos e Sousa and Nuno Monteiro, beyond a common desire to spread knowledge about the evolution of a geographical area and a kingdom. The essay writing is not to be found in this work by Rui Ramos, in which the discourse is meant to be founded on recent academic research. On the other hand, despite their common aims and even a number of common features that link the three authors of this History of Portugal, both in terms of their academic backgrounds and their paths of historiographic development, the truth is that each of the parts presented here, in their different coverages of the subject, reveal individual approaches that should be continually stressed and borne in mind.

In the prologue, the authors make a point of mentioning that the space allotted to the three chronological periods covered by the history kept on growing in order to deal in greater detail with events, situations and processes that were chronologically closer at hand, in keeping with similar works, without, however, attempting to say everything.¹⁶

In fact, it would be impossible to say everything whatever the options were, but this choice of increasing the available space in accordance with chronological proximity resulted in a volume that was uneven in the treatment that it gave to the different periods, with the medieval period (from the eleventh to the fifteenth centuries), for example, being allotted only 180 pages, whereas the period from the sixteenth to the eighteenth century was given 239 pages, and the contemporary period 341 pages.

Such unevenness necessarily has repercussions on the type of texts that are presented, with the authors openly preferring to adopt a model that appears to be relatively incomprehensible and clearly restricts the approach that is developed, owing much to specific individual views that have different ways of evaluating the different periods covered by the history.

If, however, we direct our attention to the first part of this work, we must first of all stress that the fact that its structure is based on succeeding chapters points to a discursive construction that attempts to follow a chronological thread, ranging from the emergence of the county of Portucale to the beginning of the overseas expansion and the government of Afonso V, and comprising an account of the main political facts. This account displays a line of discourse that begins in the first chapter with the foundation of the county and the emergence of Afonso Henriques and the first "Portuguese royal dynasty" and then extends the reflection in the second chapter until the end of the reign of Sancho II and the crisis of 1245.

In this way, the interpretation that is made of Portuguese history returns to the division into periods that takes the beginning of the reign of Afonso III as the beginning of a new stage and a new chapter, which Bernardo Vasconcelos e Sousa has no qualms in naming "The Kingdom of

¹² A. R. Disney, 2009.

¹³ Jean-François Labourdette, 2003.

¹⁴ António Borges Coelho, 2010, vol. I.

¹⁵ *Ibidem*, p. 11.

¹⁶ Rui Ramos (ed.), p. III.

Portugal” and which continues until the emergence of the political crisis of the fourteenth century. In this way, the government of the king known as the “Boulognese” appears as a turning point, an idea that can already be found in other approaches and which, although open to dispute, has the undeniable advantage of relocating the angle of analysis at the turn of the mid-thirteenth century and in the recovery and successful pursuit of a strategy that sought to define and consolidate royal power, in some cases recovering earlier measures and, in others, developing new areas in which the king might intervene.

Thus, although the author does not clearly state this and prefers to insert into his chapters global chronological barriers, the truth is that there is here an attempt to make a global interpretation of a period that lasted from 1245 to 1383 as the period during which the kingdom was consolidated. This seems to us to be an enriching approach that moves away from the view that is centered upon the fourteenth century and forms a limited picture of this time, which in many cases is exclusively confused with the signs of a crisis that marked a substantial part of that century. Instead we are provided with a broader and more coherent view of a period running from the second half of the thirteenth century (when the initiatives introduced in the earlier decades began to take shape) to the last decades of the fourteenth century.

But this analysis also allows us to glimpse another fact, and this has to do with the unquestionable gaps that our knowledge of the fourteenth century still displays. In fact, despite the increase in the number of studies produced in the last few decades at the level of Portuguese medieval historiography, it seems to us that the fourteenth century has, in many regards, been considered a poor relative of more recent research, after the great attention paid to this period during the 1960s and 1970s. This opens up a myriad of questions about the administration, social organization and the cultural and religious framework, as well as a whole host of more specific examples. To some extent, the great attention paid to earlier centuries has made it possible to develop further research into the initial period of Portuguese history, but at the same time it has also meant that our knowledge about the fourteenth century has, in some respects remained hidebound by fairly outdated frameworks of interpretation.

As far as the narrative thread guiding this first part of the *History of Portugal* is concerned, the “long” fifteenth century that stretched from Dom João I’s ascension to the throne to the reign of Dom Afonso V occupies the last three chapters, including in its discourse the first phases of the Portuguese overseas expansion beyond the confines of its continental borders. In between, there is one chapter, the third one, which seeks to provide a structural description of the population and society through a reflection that inevitably appears as an attempt to reduce its complexity to just over twenty pages of analysis.

Similarly limited are some of the choices that were made here, invariably resulting from the need to adapt a long and ambitious discourse to the space available, are reflected in the limitative approach to the theme that is presented here.

One of the first limitations is to be found in the relatively secondary place afforded to the Muslim presence in this text. As this is a history of Portugal that seeks to accompany the development and organization of the Portuguese kingdom, the characterization of Al-Gharb Al-Andalus is given only secondary importance and the gradual integration of the south of the territory is seen as a somewhat inevitable process.

A second limitation is to be found in the deficient characterization of religious aspects, including the clergy and their role in the political evolution of this period. Although the author has correctly devoted special attention to some of the conflicts that marked the relationship between the Crown and the Church, particularly from the twelfth to the fourteenth centuries, the truth is that this explanation is, in some respects, an apparently casuistic one and does not always allow us to glimpse the essential background to these conflicts.

A third limitation is to be found in a view that is sometimes seen as overly centered upon the internal evolution of the Portuguese territory and does not always incorporate the reality of the Iberian Peninsula and the influences exerted by the other peninsular kingdoms on the evolution of the kingdom that emerged in the twelfth century.

In fact, this history of Portugal is to be seen, above all, as a political history and owes much to a historiographic movement that attempts to recover the political aspects of the question. It is a history that has an underlying thread to it, accompanying both the process of constructing a kingdom and the process of constructing a monarchy. Hence the references, from the very outset,

to the gradual implantation of the monarchy, the process for the construction and definition of the royal power, the strengthening of the “center” in detriment to the peripheries. Such a procedure runs the risk of sometimes overlooking the limits imposed on the exercise of this power which was mediated by intermediate bodies.

But this history of Portugal is, above all, an ambitious product that fulfils its purpose of disseminating knowledge and enables a broader public to come into contact with a simple text that is pleasant and easy to read. A text that, despite these qualities, seeks to incorporate the results of recent research and the contributions of the new analyses, as well as drawing attention to what still remains to be discovered.

It is a history of Portugal that confronts readers with a fresh “recounting” of history and that, in the course of roughly two hundred pages, enables them to glimpse the evolution of the construction of a kingdom, from the constitution of the county of Portucale to the expansion into North Africa and the Atlantic Ocean. As such, it represents a long-desired attempt to provide a synthesis of this information and reflects the continuing attraction of taking a “fresh” look at the evolution of history.

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The early modern period

Francisco Bethencourt¹

‘L’histoire des rois est le martyrologue des peuples’
Abbé Grégoire

This *History of Portugal* has the advantage of presenting in one single volume a comprehensive vision of the past, from the foundation of the kingdom to contemporary history. It is not a history written by one single author, and thus follows a different approach from that of Oliveira Marques, who clearly stands as the previous most professional and efficient historian engaging with this genre. The decision was the right one: each of the three authors knows his period of specialization well. It is increasingly difficult nowadays for one single author to assimilate all the bibliography covering nine centuries. In general, this *History of Portugal* integrates the most recent bibliography well. But it suffers from two problems: the crucial issues of collective identity and nation building, with their plural forms, continuities and discontinuities, are neither clearly raised nor addressed in a systematic way, while they remain the object of constant reflection by philosophers, anthropologists, writers and historians; the initial promise to combine political, economic, social and cultural history is not fulfilled. I understand that there were constraints of space – the Middle Ages received 182 pages, the early modern period 240 and modern history 340 pages – but structure is always a matter of choice. The most balanced section is the modern one: Rui Ramos’s text reads very well, combining political, economic, social, demographic and cultural data in an efficient way. The main issues are present. The only problem, which is not a minor one, is the conservative bias of his political approach: popular movements do not really exist in his account, all political changes or continuities are analyzed from the perspective of political factions, the manipulation of the disorganized population, or the internal feuds of the power elite. One wonders how these manipulative elites were generated in the first place, and how they managed to exercise their power over such an inorganic population. The section written by Bernardo Vasconcelos e Sousa is also efficient, covering the main issues of the organization of the monarchy, addressing the different powers involved and searching for the origins of the expansion. The distribution of the population and the definition of its structure are other topics touched upon, although the question of its ethnic origins might have been more fully addressed, due to the significant number of studies on this issue in Portugal and Europe, perhaps one of the most recently developed fields in medieval studies (Wolfram, Pohl, Gillett, Noble, Hen). Although the crisis or revolution of 1383-5 is tackled well, history from below might have been better integrated into this section. But this is really the main problem concerning the vision of the early modern period presented by Nuno Monteiro. I have to concentrate on this period, since this was specifically requested from me.

The model of analysis is almost exclusively political and institutional, contradicting the initial promise. This is not the acclaimed British narrative model, which has accommodated the theoretical and methodological acquisitions of the *Annales*, *Past and Present* and German Sozialgeschichte, not to mention gender studies, and linguistic and psychoanalytic turns. It is sufficient to read authors so ideologically diverse as Christopher Bayly, Tim Blanning or Richard Evans to perceive the shared purpose of a comprehensive approach in the different scales they deal with. The concentration of this section on the architecture of powers is overwhelmingly structured by the relationship between the king and the aristocracy (reduced to the titled nobility), which was the focus of Nuno Monteiro’s major work on the ‘Big Noble Houses’ in Portugal.

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This is simultaneously the strength and the weakness of the text: the noble elite is very well analyzed, concerning its composition, its properties, and its financial and political dependence on the King for access to jobs and rents; but this is essentially a history of kings and high aristocracy. Although the evolution of the population is relatively well addressed – the crucial issue of the spatially diversified family structure could have been developed further – its social composition is quite simply not tackled at all. The bourgeoisie is not studied, with the exception of some timid references to the New Christians, who were overwhelmingly artisans. It would be important to know who the bankers and the contractors were, how they evolved over time, which conjunctures favored them, how they thrived as financiers of the Crown, the Church and the nobility, how their political intervention and international relations were shaped. Moreover, how their opinions were received by the king and how they tried to shape policies (Duarte Gomes Solis, for instance, is never mentioned). It would be interesting to know the role played by foreign merchants, discovering in which periods they dominated the Portuguese market and how the position of Portugal in the world-economies evolved. The distribution, composition and competences of the small merchants could have been addressed, what kind of economic tools they had, what their role in the economy of the empire was, why in Recife, for instance, the local merchant elite was undermined as *mascates*, during the War of the Mazombos, probably a reference to the Persian Gulf peddlers. Nowadays, we have significant studies by Nathan Wachtel, Jonathan Israel, Graça Ventura, Marques de Almeida, or James Boyajian on bankers and merchants, namely New Christians. We know their position as contractors of royal monopolies, namely as slave traders and contractors of the *asiento*. We also know their financial capacity: the general pardon of 1605 was not a failure; 1.5 million *cruzados* were collected from a total forecast amount of 1.7 million, as Claude Stuczinski proved. It is important to clarify that the New Christians were still being targeted by vigorous inquisitorial repression in the 1730s and the 1740s, as happened in Spain, which means that their disappearance dates from the middle of the eighteenth century, although their collective activity was broken down by the vindictive reestablishment of the Portuguese Inquisition in 1681. The artisans, perhaps less studied, but touched upon by a large variety of local studies, would also require some attention, since manufacturing production, corporations and the labor market are essential for understanding the transition to the liberal economy. A table concerning peasants and rural workers is included in the chapter on the Ancien Régime, but we do not know the impact of the different regimes of property, the real life conditions, the forms of cooperation and organization. The social structure of the population has been studied at a local level, namely for Lisbon in the sixteenth century, but the main issue is not addressed. The people, in general, are ignored in this approach. It is true that in Portugal, unlike England, the limited Marxist tradition has not been followed by a significant movement for the writing of history from below. The liberal tradition had already tried to connect the nation to a large community of citizens, whose origins were located in the past (Herculano). The procedure might have been anachronistic, but at least drew attention to the need to overcome the traditional history of kings and introduce those who scarcely have a voice in the chronicles and official documents. The only reference to popular movements concerns the anti-fiscal riots of 1636-7, prior to the Restoration, but their political importance is undermined. The problem of economic backwardness, studied by Jaime Reis and Pedro Lains for the nineteenth century, could also have been discussed for the earlier period. The crucial problem of the slave trade, mentioned in the text, might have been developed further, since it was a structural economic activity of the empire, with enormous social consequences.

If 'modern' subjects did not have a major impact on this new *History of Portugal*, then the postmodern subjects enjoy no better fortune. The historical condition of women (still a modern subject), gender relations, the construction of masculinities and femininities and their political symbolism are not addressed. And yet Portugal, like Spain, whose tradition of strong queens influenced England so much, might have had an original role in this sphere, amplified by emigration – another issue touched upon by Nuno Monteiro, but not studied in all its depth. The absence of fathers, husbands and brothers imposed other forms of labor and favored the emergence of widows and abandoned wives and daughters, who left their marks on the economy, society and literature. If we are talking about gender, then the patterns of behavior and male values might also have been observed within the context of the expansion. By the same token, the policies of the intimate colonial order, based on 'love rules' of who can be intimate with

whom and what processes of social shaming follow from these rules, might also have been addressed. Emotions and feelings, now at the centre of new historical research, are not integrated into this volume. The basic issue of literature is not tackled: we do not find in the index Sá de Miranda, António Ferreira, Fr. Gaspar de Leão, Jorge Ferreira de Vasconcelos, to name just a few, yet Gil Vicente, Camões, Vieira, Manuel de Melo or Bocage are all quoted without any attempt at analysis, mainly as political references. The early modern section is the poorest in the cultural domain: literature is abandoned, the other arts are ignored, music is reduced to the introduction of opera, religious architecture has two or three references to justify the general backwardness – the *Manuelino*, for instance, cannot simply be reduced to the late Gothic style – and military architecture, one of the most powerful elements in Portuguese history (Rafael Moreira) and very much in line with international innovation, is hardly mentioned.

The interpretation we are discussing here considers Portugal to be an archaic country, with a permanent backwardness of fifty to one hundred years when implicitly compared with the standards of the most developed European countries. Portugal did not assimilate the humanist movement, missed out on the absolutist experience of the seventeenth century, only to adopt it later with Pombal, and ignored the Enlightenment of the eighteenth century, only to introduce it later with Liberalism. At least Nuno Monteiro has clear ideas when he defines Pombal as an imitator of Richelieu and a typical *valido* (favorite politician of the king) of the seventeenth century, without any influence from the Enlightenment. Neither the idea of the permanent backwardness of Portugal nor the idea of the backwardness of Pombal are new, although the latter still appeals to the national mythology, which has a positive side. The problem is whether this assertion is adequate, resulting from a deep analysis of reality. I do not think that the expulsion of the Jesuits, the extinction of the Inquisition of Goa, the Directory of the Indians, the abolition of the New Christian stigma or the reform of the University of Coimbra, for example, might have occurred in the seventeenth century. And it is irrelevant for the argument to consider whether part of these changes had a long-lasting effect or not. The archaism of the country, which certainly existed, but should be thoroughly identified, nuanced and dated, does not seem to me to have been a systematic and coherent phenomenon. This approach is certainly not the most adequate for the purpose, since it is anchored in the royal policies and the games of power of the titled nobility. But let us now discuss the approach itself.

The text's insufficient reflection on the political theory of the Ancien Régime is surprising. The term 'State' is implicitly rejected in the text, although the notion was already coined by the end of the fifteenth century, referring to human groups submitted to the same authority. Max Weber's notion of State as the monopoly of legitimate violence is not as simple as it looks; to make it meaningful we have to relate it to the notions of system and the mechanisms of social regulation in Niklas Luhmann, the notions of micro-powers and power as decision-making and coercion of wills in Michel Foucault, or the notions of negotiation and resistance in Stuart Hall. In any case, we cannot ignore the vast literature of the period, where we see deep reflection on political community from John of Salisbury to Hobbes, from Dante and Marsilio di Padova to John Locke, from Machiavelli and Giovanni Botero to Tommaso Campanella. The idea of a political body is developed by most of these authors, involving people in their reasoning and considering the king as the apex of a much more complex reality. Nuno Monteiro concentrates his attention on royal power to lament the absence of political centralization; curiously, it is exactly political centralization that is upheld in this same book, by Vasconcelos e Sousa, as a precocious reality for the medieval period. Political community was not limited to royal power: it comprised seigniorial jurisdiction, the Church, municipalities, *Misericórdias*, confraternities, or the three orders of society, which were represented in the *cortes*. The issue is not political centralization, but how the king exercised his power of tutelage over a nebula of largely autonomous corporative and conflictive powers.

The institutional analysis in general is of good quality, although the Church is poorly researched, despite its fundamental role throughout the historical process. In the empire, royal patronage shows how the Church was part of the political community. The regulation of conflicts and direct intervention in the processes of political decision-making showed a constant predominance of religious reason until the government of Pombal. The archbishops of Goa likewise assumed on several occasions the direct interim government of the State of India, while the Dominicans in Timor or the Jesuits in Japan exercised secular jurisdiction over the territories

occupied or granted by local powers. It is sufficient to read Valignano's texts to understand this political dimension. Diocesan structure, represented in a map, is not discussed, while the divisions in the sixteenth, seventeenth, and eighteenth centuries express the successive reorganization of centers and peripheries. I draw attention to the transfer of the diocese of Kongo from Salvador to Luanda and then the subordination of the diocese of Luanda to Bahia, confirming the structuring of the South Atlantic as a historical and geographical complex in the accurate formulation of Magalhães Godinho, reused by Luiz Felipe de Alencastro. The disciplining of the population through the complementary action of the Inquisition and the pastoral visits, studied by José Pedro Paiva, has not been integrated into the text. I estimated that more than one million people were involved in the enquiries of these institutions for nearly three centuries, which makes the population of Portugal one of the most heavily controlled in the whole of Europe. The religious movements of spiritualism, Erasmism, Protestantism, Jansenism and Sigilism have not been integrated or have been afforded only fleeting references. By contrast, the idea of an Iberian anticipation of the Catholic Reform should be seriously discussed: if it existed, was it institutional, spiritual or theological? What was the reception of the *Devotio Moderna* or Erasmism, for example? The rupture between the Portuguese Crown and the Roman Church in the period of the Restoration might have been mentioned: Sebastião César de Meneses, a figure that deserves a biography of his own, never became Bishop of Porto. Magic, sorcery and witchcraft have not been touched upon, yet they reveal a world vision rooted in the population, which cannot be ignored as an exotic marginality.

The political history in general is of good quality, although this particular line of approach has not avoided problems. The Portuguese expansion should be compared to the Genoese, Venetian and Catalan precedents in the Mediterranean, not to the territorial European states. The messianic vision of Dom Manuel is a fallacy: the king was silent on the subject and the Portuguese expansion can be defined by pragmatism. Nuno Monteiro here is not responsible; he is only repeating other historians who decided to inflate Aubin's research. Sebastianism deserves serious analysis, since the reconstitution of the phenomenon is more or less complete; what we now need is an interpretation of its perpetuation. The analysis of the Restoration as a result of the political factions of nobility and royal bureaucracy, inspired by Jean-Frédéric-Schaub, introduces the vision from Madrid, but does not explain why the Portuguese rebelled against Spanish taxes in the 1630s only to accept paying more in the 1650s and 1660s, with military sacrifices, in some cases loudly demanded by the people. In the same line of reasoning, the explanation of Portuguese victory through Castilian incapacity results from a strange logic of inverted nationalism; we could also add that the international support for Portugal was in effect limited to the access to mercenaries and officers who were paid right down to the last penny. The analysis of the government of Pombal is formalistic and does not take into account the disruption of the traditional relation of powers, the opening up of a new order of knowledge, the rights of minorities and the secularization of Portuguese society. Finally, I think that the idea of an absence of a Brazilian colonial identity should be discussed. I agree that the process of national identity was delayed in Brazil; it suffered from the problems of a society based on slavery, but there were clear signs of a colonial drive for autonomy.

It is difficult for all of us to practice what Albert O. Hirschman called 'self-subversion', questioning our itinerary and choosing radical new challenges and departures from known paths. This is why I do not want to finish on a negative note. I have only focused on points of disagreement, while it must be said that there is a great deal of material that I entirely agree with. The volume documents an enormous effort to collect information on difficult and scarcely researched subjects. This *História de Portugal* offers a coherent though elitist vision, which accomplishes its function of defining a new framework of analysis and discussion for the future.

Portugal in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries

Fernanda Olival¹

The historiography written about Portugal has been particularly productive over the last three decades. There has also been no shortage of histories of Portugal attempting to produce syntheses, some more analytical, others less so, and almost all of them published in Portuguese.

Yet another two works of this nature were published recently, both in the same year: one in English (Disney 2009) and another in Portuguese (Ramos et al. 2009). In both cases, the general public's reception was a warm one, bearing in mind that they have both already been reprinted. And, in fact, they can both be considered to have been praiseworthy efforts from the outset. Not since A. H. de Oliveira's *History of Portugal* has a text of this scope enjoyed such widespread dissemination in English. In the case of the work edited by Rui Ramos, attention is drawn immediately to the attempt that was made to update the syntheses available in one single volume.

This brief article seeks to contribute towards the debate about the way in which the history of Portugal in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries is dealt with, in both works, and to analyze to what extent these two texts can be considered up-to-date, taking into account the bibliography that was available roughly two or three years prior to their publication. Obviously, attention will be given only to those parts relating to the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. In the case of the work edited by Rui Ramos, the chapters relating to the Modern Age were written by Nuno Gonçalves Monteiro.

It should, however, be noted that both A. R. Disney and Nuno Gonçalves Monteiro go into greater depth about the eighteenth century than they do about the previous periods. Furthermore, in the case of the first author, there is no doubting his interest in the colonial and export trade, even if one only considers the first volume of his work. In general, the pages that he writes about economic matters are almost always highly pertinent and interesting.

Disney makes a good synthesis of the bibliography available in English about the eighteenth century in Portugal. In turn, Nuno Gonçalves Monteiro capitalizes on his own research experience into various themes relating to the eighteenth century and offers a brilliant synthesis. However, given that there will certainly be specialists on the eighteenth century, as in this panel of commentators assembled here, my considerations will be centered upon the previous centuries.

It should be stressed that the plan of A. R. Disney's book recovers the traditional organization of history into Golden Ages and Dark Ages and dedicates just one volume to the Portuguese empire from the sixteenth to the eighteenth century. In this way, there is little connection to be noted between the empire, which is studied in some detail, and which the author is remarkably knowledgeable about, and the dynamics of the metropolis. The author seems to confirm the principle that "the Portuguese are better known in the world at large for their role in the process of Western global discovery and expansion, than for their contribution to the internal history of Europe" (I, 333). This criterion is therefore presented as one of the main bases for the selection of the information the author managed.

For A. R. Disney, the "period from about the mid-1490s to the early 1540s is in many respects the most memorable in Portugal's history" (I, 143). The Dom João III of the "Golden Age" differed greatly from the one of the "Tarnished Age" (I, 172). The successive deaths occurring in the family of Dom João III, the disinterest that Dom Sebastião showed towards women, the economic crisis that was also a crisis in the cape route to India, with a gradual and

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progressive impact on metropolitan Portugal, together with the consolidation of the Inquisition, all of these features made this change possible. The picture was further complemented by the Jesuit education system and by censorship (I, 190). The 1580 crisis of succession was part of this phase. In the author's own words, "The royal house, accounted so fortunate in the time of King Manuel, was now struck by a succession of devastating family tragedies that eventually imperiled the survival of the nation itself" (I, 172). The nation was identified with the Royal House and already existed in the sixteenth century. It is because of this context that he speaks of "reconstruction" when examining the period from after the Restoration until the late seventeenth century.

While the quality of his text has already been stressed in the sections where the records associated with international trade are brought into play (e.g., 208-213), the same cannot be said in relation to matters of social history. Notions such as class and bourgeoisie appear to be used inadequately in relation to pre-industrial society (182, 185) and the same can be said about the social effects and the scope of application of the *Lei Mental* (237). This latter ruling was only used to regulate succession in matters relating to the crown's estate and did not interfere juridically with any other type of property. For the succession of the crown's estate this law required the legitimacy of birth, the male issue and the primogeniture, together with the indivisible and inalienable nature of property. For these reasons, it was profoundly hated by the Portuguese nobility. Those who received resources from the crown, whether for their lifetime or forever, could easily lose them if they did not have a son, or if this son were a member of the clergy. As such rules did not exist in Castile, at the time when the throne was being disputed in 1580, there were some in Portugal who nurtured the hope that Filipe II would eliminate the law. Such an expectation contributed to the fact that some nobles showed themselves to be favorable to the House of Austria, but their hopes were thwarted because this law was a way of guaranteeing income for a Monarchy that permanently had many services to pay for.

In the text by Nuno Gonçalves Monteiro, there is a good interconnection made between the coming into being of the extra-European space and the history of Metropolitan Portugal. Little by little, a picture is painted of Portugal as a multi-continental monarchy (435), but without its being denied the status of a colonizing power and with its being seen as an active agent in the spread of slavery. The author is quite clear in regard to this particular question by attributing to the Portuguese a decisive role in the consolidation of the slavery originating from sub-Saharan Africa: "Between the mid-15th century and the beginning of the 17th century, the Portuguese were practically the only Europeans involved in the trafficking of African slaves all around the Atlantic Ocean, exercising an almost exclusive control over their introduction into Southern Europe, the Atlantic islands, Brazil and Spanish America, although at first they largely relied on the support of Muslim networks that already existed inside Africa" (246). In the work under analysis, Nuno Gonçalves Monteiro also adopts a stance that attaches great importance to the dynamism of the peripheries, something that becomes very clear when he writes about Brazil.

While, according to Disney's work, the Portuguese identity, both in the Iberian Peninsula and on the international stage, arose from the role that this political unit played in the process of Europe's global expansion into other continents, and from its involvement in the trade and the wealth that were generated in this way, in Nuno Gonçalves Monteiro's text, this participation takes on another meaning. The empire is not seen as an element that was external to Portugal, but rather as a structural feature that shaped the intrinsic make-up of this political unit and gradually informed all of its various aspects, beginning with politics. The history of Portugal in the modern period is almost completely transformed into the work of disentangling the intricate webs that configured this reality.

In his organization of the different subject-matters, Nuno Gonçalves Monteiro oscillates between an approach based on structural content, such as "The 16th-century realm," and chapters of a conjunctural nature. Chapter III, "A Peninsular destiny: Portugal and Castile (1557-1580)," seems not to make any sense as such. The contents that he presents would be better off being included in the next chapter, "Portugal in the Hapsburg monarchy (1580-1640)."

In fact, of all the themes that Nuno Gonçalves Monteiro dealt with here, it was in the discussion of Portugal under the rule of the House of Austria that he proved to be the least innovative, making this an area where some of his pages can be considered to have been less successful. It was here that he returned to a series of well-worn clichés, such as the "Statute of Tomar" or the "Pact of Tomar" (271-277) or the *Real de Água* presented as the equivalent to a tax

on meat and fish (292). In reality, it was only in 1582, when he was ready to return to Castile, that Filipe II subscribed to the principles by which he would govern Portugal and not at the *Cortes* of Tomar. As far as the *Real de Água* is concerned, it was a tax that could fall upon those consumer products, just as much as it could fall on others. The more fundamental these products were for people's daily lives, the greater was the tax's effectiveness.

Putting details to one side for the moment, and without claiming to sanction the status of an "interpretive synthesis" with which Rui Ramos introduces this volume, Nuno Gonçalo Monteiro's text launches a series of new ideas that deserve to be discussed by all those who write about early modern history. I shall now attempt to present them.

First of all, he highlights the involvement of the nobility, together with the Royal House, in the process of overseas expansion (209-210). Without denying the role that was played by groups of merchants, or the importance of the Royal House, he draws attention to the military aspect that was involved in this process. Indirectly, he redirects our attention to the social implications of that fact, which went far beyond the standard pattern of the merchant-knight, expressed by Vitorino Magalhães Godinho, or to the conquest of the fortresses in North Africa. It is a pity that the author is so summary in his analysis of this matter, particularly after introducing some bibliography on the problem, which he also quotes from (Boone 1986; Elbl 1997; Cunha 2004; Cunha 2005). Reading between the lines, it can be understood how, with their interest in these services, many members of the nobility—including the *fidalgia* (grandees)—ended up taking part in this process. However, it was worth taking time to be more precise about the type of *fidalgos* that were involved and under what conditions they set sail from Portugal heading for the empire.

In studying the institutional reforms of the first half of the sixteenth century (publication of the *Ordenações Manuelinas*—1512-1521; replacement of the medieval charters (*forais*) by the Manueline ones—1497-1520; installation of the Tribunal of the Holy Office of the Inquisition in Portugal—1536; the annexation of the masterships of the Orders of Christ, Santiago and Avis to the Crown, in 1551; and even the division of the six judicial districts (*comarcas*) at the end of the Middle Ages), he classifies these as the most important cycle of changes taking place until the liberal revolution (228). In fact, apart from the introduction of the polysynodal system of governance (even though the genesis of this system should be attributed to the first half of the sixteenth century, and not to the period of the dynasty of the Kings Filipe, as Disney suggests), few reforms were introduced that had such a distinct effect on the structure of the regime until the nineteenth century. Without it having been conceived or planned as such, this set of changes was to mark Portuguese society for the long term, from all points of view. The fact that this topic has been highlighted in this way is one of the great merits of this work.

Another important question is the fact of his pointing out that, at the dawn of the eighteenth century, "the court in some ways replaced the parliament (*Cortes*) as the essential form of the realm's representation" (340). In this case, the author is particularly explicit in the way that he demonstrates his interpretation of this matter: "Anyway, most of the little more than one hundred nobles summoned to the *Cortes* in 1697 coincided with those who were to acclaim Dom João V king in 1706. These aristocrats also held some of the highest offices in the realm (*mordomo-mor* (Lord Chamberlain), *estribeiro-mor* (Chief Equerry), *monteiro-mor* (Chief Huntsman), etc.) at the court of the new monarch. [...] The court, in the broad sense that includes not only the Royal House and the holders of the respective offices, but also the central administration of the monarchy, was reinforced and tended more and more to appear as the space that monopolized political life. The power and influence of the high nobility were no longer exercised, except in a residual manner, on the periphery of the territory and in the local spaces, but instead inside the court itself" (340-341). In reality, rather than the court replacing the *Cortes*, what clearly seems to have happened is that the high politics were played out in the Court and that it had more or less been like this since the Restoration. The concentration of the aristocracy in Lisbon, a process that has been studied so frequently by the same author, had been decisive in this regard, as had the fact that there were no medium-sized cities to be found in Portugal and no intermediate power bases. These last two aspects are not mentioned by Nuno Gonçalo Monteiro, and yet they seem to be decisive. Power moved from the court at the centre to the *concelhos* (boroughs) without any focal point in the middle. In this way, the periphery had lost the leading influence that it had attained in the past.

Finally, we should discuss the idea that the break with Castile in 1640 had pushed Portugal away from the cultivated and enlightened Europe and inevitably made a certain contribution to the

country's cultural isolation (343, 349). The author seems to be indisputably right in relation to the theatre, for example, given the traditional dependence on the theatrical companies on the other side of the border. However, wasn't Portugal's cultural isolation also a product of the court's difficulties in establishing itself immediately after 1640? With the war, the financial difficulties and the lesser demands of the "courts held in the villages", which dominated the period of rule by the House of Austria, did the right sort of conditions exist for the practice of artistic patronage or to encourage the development of a high-quality standard of consumption?

In short, whether one agrees or not with these interpretations, the launch of this problematic picture will certainly have repercussions on later historiographic production. If this is the case, this will undoubtedly be the major virtue of this work.

Finally, we should look at the question of just how up-to-date these texts are.

Taking the bibliographical references into account, Disney—in the pages that he writes about the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries—refers, above all, to a bibliography written up to 2002 and 2003. The only exception to this rule is the biography about Filipe I of Portugal, written by Fernando Bouza Álvarez and dating from 2005.

In general, Disney tends to use works of synthesis, such as volumes 5 and 7 of the *Nova História de Portugal*, edited by Joel Serrão and A. H. de Oliveira Marques. Of all the texts of this nature, this is the one that he quotes most often. Volumes from the *História de Portugal* by Joaquim Veríssimo are also frequently referred to in many of the notes. The *História de Portugal* by A. H. de Oliveira Marques, as well as the History of Barcelos, are also quoted. Overall, the author shows that he knows the works of reference published in Portugal, and above all the classical texts. Certainly the difficulties that he had in gaining access to the Portuguese publishing market explain this situation. Where he is most exhaustive is undoubtedly in the work that is published in English. Here, he makes very good use of the specialist bibliography and one should highlight the excellent mastery that he displays in relation to what has been written in this language about international trade.

In the case of Nuno Gonçalo Monteiro, the titles that are examined reach up to 2008, and he even includes one from 2009. One can clearly see the effort that he has made to include some of the texts published in Brazil, which is certainly praiseworthy. His synthesis is founded above all upon the specialist texts and has little recourse to the histories of Portugal, even to the one coordinated by José Mattoso, in which he himself participated.

To sum up, we are confronted here with two syntheses of the Portuguese dynamics in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, each with its own distinct profile. That written by Disney represents a commitment to the production of a textbook, almost providing an updated version of A. H. de Oliveira Marques's *History of Portugal* for English-speaking universities; while, in his turn, Nuno Gonçalo Monteiro takes advantage of the macro scale to attempt (in a text of a type that is little given to great innovations) to paint a problematic picture that seeks to be regarded as a major reference. I believe that he has succeeded in doing so.

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Two Comments on the Contemporary Period

Maria de Fátima Bonifácio¹

I. *The History of Portugal*, Part III, authored by Rui Ramos does not explicitly examine the eternal problem of the causes of Portugal's economic backwardness, and consequently it does not seek to develop any theory that might explain this. Yet it does confront us with this backwardness in a very direct way, and the reader feels a certain sense of frustration at not being able to find a clear and systematized answer to this problem. On page 524, we find ourselves confronted with a chapter entitled "Growth without Structural Change." On pages 524 and 525, some indicators are presented of the growth experienced by Portugal in the second half of the nineteenth century, beginning with the building of the railways, including the Dona Maria Pia rail bridge, with the largest span in Europe; the installation of an electric telegraph network; the establishment of links with England and Brazil via underwater cables; the rapid growth of our external trade towards the end of the century; the remarkable growth in Port wine exports; the increase in the useful area of the land available for agriculture; the import substitution made possible by industrial development; the significant increase in the consumption of meat, sugar, coffee and tobacco; the growth in the income of all professional groups; the urban development of Lisbon. All these indicators point to a radical break with the past, such as it was in the first half of the nineteenth century.

Yet beneath this wave of change and novelty, there persisted, as if etched in stone, the old national atavisms inherited from long before. One sign of this is the fact that Portugal diverged from the most prosperous European countries between 1850 and 1910. At the beginning of the twentieth century, the Portuguese GNP per capita only amounted to 40% of the GNP per capita of the richest countries, whereas in 1850 the proportion had been 55%. Consequently, Portugal diverged sharply from Europe, and it is impossible not to compare this phenomenon with the divergence that has once again been experienced in the last ten years. Today, just as was the case a hundred years ago, it seems that "there was not in Portugal the same 'structural change' that was noted in the other economies". This absence of structural change is what explains the divergence that could be seen a century ago and possibly explains the divergence that has been witnessed over the last decade. A simple numerical example is enough for us to form an idea of the gulf that separated Portugal from Europe in 1900: Belgium used 720,000 horsepower, while Portugal did not go beyond 111,000! As a percentage of its active population, Portugal employed more people in agriculture, and fewer in industry, than any prosperous country in Europe.

But there are other analogies between Portugal at the end of the nineteenth century and Portugal at the beginning of the twenty-first century. State spending always increased more than its income. The State lived in a situation of permanent indebtedness, just as is the case today. Just to give an idea of the extent of this problem, the public debt rose from 80,000 *contos* in 1850 to 600,000 *contos* in 1890! This amounted to something like 70% of GNP. Almost half of the State's spending related to interest payments, with the particularity that then, like today, Portugal had the heaviest interest rate burden in Europe when considered as a percentage of public expenditure.

I know that the obsession with Portugal's economic backwardness is now considered to be unfashionable. It went out of fashion when Marxism ceased to enjoy a position of hegemony in the Portuguese social sciences and historiography. Unfortunately, the theme seems to have become contaminated by the slogans and clichés that punctuate the Marxist discourse written about it. Yet, at the same time, the subject is an important one and cannot be ignored. If only because of its current relevance: everywhere people are already talking about the lost decade, referring to the period between 2000 and 2010. Well, it seems to me that a history of Portugal that begins even

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before the foundation of our nationality would be the appropriate (if not the ideal) place to point out and examine, in a more thorough and systematic fashion than is done here, the possible explanations for a backwardness of which the Portuguese had already been aware since at least the seventeenth century, and which today has placed itself firmly within the horizon of our reflections. In the nineteenth century, our economy was not competitive, and in the twenty-first century it continues not to be so. Why? The longstanding nature of the problem does not lend itself to explanations that are based on more or less short-term and conjunctural factors. There must be something deeper that goes back a very long way, that a book with this time span might very well have been able to discover, since it makes it possible to think about the problem from a very long-term perspective.

In this respect, *The History of Portugal* does not help to clear up my perplexity.

II. The second topic that I consider to be worth noting has to do with the definition of liberalism. I know that Ramos defines this as a discussion, a public and rational debate that is not therefore based on theological or dogmatic premises. But I disagree with this definition—I consider it to be too ill-defined—and the person who first inspired me, many years ago, to disagree with this standpoint was Robert Nisbet in his work *The Sociological Tradition* (published in 1967, if my memory serves me well). In this book, Nisbet states that the French Revolution gave rise to three currents of quite distinct political thought: conservatism (or traditionalism), liberalism and radicalism. For him, liberalism essentially consists in stating the fundamental importance of human autonomy. As far as radicalism is concerned, he sees in it secular forms of statism and millennialism.

And, in fact, in my contact with nineteenth-century history, I have consistently found the existence of a political current of thought that was distinct from liberalism and was even completely opposed to it, which rejected the most important aspects of the liberalist doctrine, and which coexisted with it either within a relationship of great tension or by demonstrating manifest hostility and open political combat. I would even go so far as to say—and I implicitly defend this point of view in my history of the nineteenth century²—that it is in this tension, in this antagonism between liberalism and radicalism, that one can find the main source of the political dynamics to be noted in the nineteenth century.

Liberalism and radicalism immediately diverge about the way in which religion is to be approached and lived. Liberalism always sought to reconcile freedom of thought with respect for the Church and the acceptance of religious dogmas, and it did not admit the hypothesis of a society that was based on purely lay foundations, which, in its view, would not be strong enough to erect an effective barrier against license and anarchy. As was to become evident from the end of the 1850s onwards, with all the controversy generated about the sisters of charity, radicalism openly tended towards atheism, or at least towards agnosticism, and, as Garrett revealed in the late 1830s, it considered that the Christian doctrine was incompatible with freedom and equality. And it was its radically secularist stance that led it—unlike the liberals and in open conflict with them—to demand freedom of worship and a secular state, from the 1850s onwards.

Its position or attitude towards the monarchy was also radically different from the liberal one. The liberals attempted to reconcile the monarchy with freedom—and even with democracy—hoping that this reconciliation would result, on the one hand, in freedom, but, on the other hand, in public order too. Radicalism was anti-monarchical and virtually republican in nature, when not openly so. However much it might be prepared to extend popular suffrage, in the final analysis the monarchy had a religious and dogmatic basis that justified the exorbitant privileges enjoyed by the king, who held this position by virtue of a hereditary right that was considered by the radicals to be as absurd as the divine right that was imputed to him. At best, radicalism would tolerate a king who amounted to no more than a hereditary president of the republic and limited himself to being a decorative figure, stripped of any effective powers. The radicals, whom the newspaper “*O Português*” expressly defined as “republicans” and “democrats,” offered a pact in the following terms: “if you want there to be a king, then let there be a king; we will accept him as we would the supreme head of the Republic. [...] But we do not want a mulatto or Lazarist king, or a Jesuit [...] we do not want a king who is subordinate to the Czar of Rome [...]. That is our pact. If you want it, then let’s go for it... if not, then don’t” (September 1860).

² *A Monarquia constitucional (1807-1910)*. Lisbon: Texto Editores Lda., 2010.

The radicals did not seek to establish any synthesis between the old and the new: they simply wished to tear down the old and build the new from scratch.

Whereas the liberals defined freedom as a possibility of choice, the radicals did not regard it as an area that could contain a plurality of opinions. Quite the opposite. There were opinions that they regarded as harmful to freedom, and these had to be suppressed. Or, in other words, in the name of freedom, there had to be restraints on freedom. There should not, for example, exist any freedom of education, not even in terms of domestic education, because if it were given over to the freedom of private initiative that was dominated by the clergy, education could easily be transformed into an instrument of reaction, in an environment where men were brought up fettered by their fanatical beliefs, deprived of that *hombriedad* (nobleness of character) that is the hallmark of all true citizens. The clergy dominated private education. This had to be prohibited, while at the same time education had to be regulated by the State right down to the tiniest detail. The liberals argued that competition was beneficial in all walks of life, and, above all, that it was not the task of the State to arbitrate over conflicts of opinion in society. The radicals, however, argued that the State had this obligation.

Radicals and liberals were also separated by profound, antagonistic differences about the concept of the relationship between State and society, or between individuals and the State. The radicals advocated the subordination of individuals to the State and society, being obliged to engage in a struggle for the civic emancipation of populations that turned them into a community of virtuous citizens and lovers of their nation, entirely dedicated to the *res publica*, into whose collective destiny their own particular destinies were to be diluted. And it was precisely such dedication, such commitment to the common cause, that was the only thing that could make sense and elevate mankind. Or, in other words, man's humanity was achieved through his political existence. It was in the *polis*, and not in the sphere of their private life, that men could realize their destiny and attain happiness. The liberals did not think in this way at all. They understood that, out of respect for the law, individuals were sovereign in their private life and that no human power could impose on them a duty of militancy in favor of regeneration or human redemption. For the latter, freedom was a natural attribute; for the former, it involved the creation of the *polis*.

The radicals understood freedom in accordance with what had conventionally come to be considered its positive acceptance—as a political action, as a way of participating in power. In the classical definition of Benjamin Constant, the liberals understood it as the possibility for each person to enjoy independence or autonomy. The radicals caused their notion of freedom to be derived from the republics of ancient times, adopting the liberty of the ancients, and Constant shows point by point how this notion contradicts the modern notion of freedom. Constant succeeded better than anyone else in explaining what this liberty of the moderns consisted of:

“For forty years I have defended the same principle: freedom in all things, in religion, philosophy, literature, industry and politics. And by freedom I mean the triumph of the individual both over an authority that would wish to govern by despotic means and over the masses who claim the right to make a minority subservient to a majority. Despotism has no rights. The majority has the right to oblige the minority to respect public order, but everything which does not disturb public order, everything which is purely personal such as our opinions, everything which, in giving expression to opinions, does no harm to others either by provoking physical violence or opposing contrary opinions, everything which, in industry, allows a rival industry to flourish freely – all this is something individual that cannot legitimately be surrendered to the power of the state.”³ And later on, he clarifies this idea: “But what is political freedom? It is the ability to be happy without any human power being able arbitrarily to trouble that happiness.”

This was a concept of freedom that horrified the defenders of radicalism. It seems to me to be very difficult to understand the political conflicts that existed in the nineteenth century without taking into account the antagonism between liberals and radicals.

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³ *Mélanges de littérature et politique* (Preface). Paris: 1829.

The Contemporary Era¹

Pedro Aires Oliveira²

After its clamorous reception by the media and the praise heaped upon it from many different quarters, the *História de Portugal* edited by Rui Ramos (and particularly the chapters for which he himself was responsible) met with a chorus of criticisms made by some of his peers in statements that were gathered together and published by a daily newspaper.³ The most negative reactions related, above all, to the author's approach to the period of the Portuguese Republic and the New State. More than seeing it simply as a revisionist exercise, some historians suggested that what we were witnessing was a kind of whitewashing of the iniquities of Salazar's dictatorship. It would be hard to think of a more unfortunate way of beginning the debate that this work undeniably merits, and my personal wish in this matter is that initiatives of the sort now being promoted by the *e-Journal of Portuguese History* will be able to pave the way for a more rational and calmer tone in this debate.

Rui Ramos has never enjoyed what might be described as an easy relationship with the tribe of Portuguese historians. In his vast and important oeuvre about contemporary Portugal (most particularly covering the period ranging roughly from the Regeneration to the end of the Republic), very few books have merited the critical review of other colleagues from the same profession. Curiously, it was a Spanish political science journal that was to publish what has so far been the only joint examination of his work and his theoretical and methodological premises.⁴ The fact that, in recent years, the author has become one of the best known and most popular intellectuals (he was a columnist in three leading national newspapers and a resident commentator on a TV talk-show), making no bones about his defense of a program of liberal reform for Portuguese society, has won him few friends in academic circles, where left-wing ideas still tend to prevail.

It would clearly be absurd to reduce everything to a question of envy or resentment. After all, Ramos is not the first openly right-wing historian to be adopted by the media. The antibodies he has aroused may perhaps be explained in two ways. First of all, as a reaction to his adopting a clearly different approach to history from the one that traditionally prevailed in Portuguese historiographic circles until quite recently—currents of thought that are in some ways linked to a Marxist origin, on the one hand, and the “French Historical School” (the generation of the *Annales* and their continuers in the 1970s), on the other hand. In line with the criticism leveled by the American historian Gertrud Himmelfarb against the so-called New History (which includes the post-*Annales* historiography and other more “structuralist” currents), Ramos wrote an article in 1991,⁵ defending the supremacy of a political history that constructed its problems from the questions posed by the witnesses and sources of each period, and not from some agenda provided

¹ I wish to thank Bruno Cardoso Reis and Margarida Lopes for the helpful comments that they made after reading a preliminary version of this text.

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³ Cf. *Público*, 31 May 2010, São José Lopes, “A História de Rui Ramos desculpabiliza o Estado Novo?” Amongst the historians and political scientists consulted by the newspaper were António Costa Pinto, Fernando Rosas, Irene Pimentel, Manuel Loff and Manuel de Lucena (the latter being the only one who praised the work, despite also making one or two criticisms; the book's most severe critics were Rosas, Pimentel and Loff).

⁴ Luis Arranz Notario, “Un Hito en la historiografía portuguesa. El Portugal contemporáneo según Rui Ramos,” *Historia y Política*, 20, July-December, 2008, 315-358, which describes the author's work as “a major contribution to European historiography.”

⁵ Rui Ramos, “A causa da história do ponto de vista político,” *Penélope*, 5, 1991, 27-46.

by modern social sciences. The “agency” of history would therefore be given back to those who, in each period, had most distinguished themselves in the struggle to assert a certain vision of the world or a project for society. This would be the historian’s main aim, with all the other dimensions normally highlighted by a more structuralist approach to history (geography, economics, social conflicts) basically being regarded as accessory to his explanatory efforts. To quote the author in his original text: “History can make use of sociology, anthropology or psychology, just as it avails itself of paleography, numismatics, climatology or archaeological techniques—as auxiliary sciences—in order to establish the boundaries of its subject-matter: political events, everything that has to do with the way in which men consciously sought to live in a community – in the ‘polis’.”⁶

It is quite possible that at the time of its publication, many people may have read this text as a rehabilitation of the old-fashioned political history, even including possible revanchist overtones (the Berlin Wall had fallen two years before the article was published, and the USSR was on the brink of imploding). By removing the social classes and the “economic contradictions” from the equation normally used for explaining great changes, Ramos was paving the way for the return of an elitist history, and, even worse, an eminently reactionary one. As long as he confined himself to discussing themes and periods that were less laden with ideological considerations, his work did not fuel any controversies that could be said to be too awkward. However, by undertaking a radical reinterpretation of the established versions of the history of the First Republic, in Volume VI of *História de Portugal* edited by José Mattoso,⁷ inspired to some extent by Vasco Pulido Valente’s pioneering study of the events of 5 October 1910,⁸ Ramos earned himself the title of “revisionist,” a term that in Portuguese intellectual culture, still heavily marked by the anti-Fascist tradition of opposition to the dictatorship, does not have very pleasant overtones.

The second factor fuelling the animosity towards Ramos’s approaches is precisely the suspicion that his history may be the vehicle for a hidden ideological agenda. Although this is not made explicit by his critics, it is reasonable to suppose that in their opinion Ramos’s revisionism not only seeks to belittle the contribution that the anti-Salazar left made to the construction of the present-day democratic regime, but also has the aim of legitimizing the idea that the solution to Portugal’s current problems requires the adoption of a neo-liberal orientation that will, in turn, free it from the constraints of an atavistic statism.

Maintaining an exceptional publication rate (without repeating himself from article to article), and making regular contributions to the media, Ramos has become possibly the most widely quoted modern-day historian, as well as the one most frequently commented upon. And, in the year marking the hundredth anniversary of the implantation of the Portuguese Republic, he has been like a wet blanket for all the official commemorations, a kind of Portuguese Furet. Whether or not one shares his philosophy of history, reading him is always a pleasure—because of the clarity of his thinking and his formidable erudition, of course, but also because of the intelligent way in which he outlines problems and hazards explanations, in a register that is always accessible to any curious reader.

The roughly 350 pages that he edited for this work synthesize many of his interpretive hypotheses formulated over roughly twenty years, and (possibly to the disappointment of some of the admirers of his more iconoclastic vein) they dispense with much of the outspoken language that was to be found in previous works (particularly the already-mentioned *A Segunda Fundação*).

For the period 1807-1890, which up to now the author has essentially approached through the study of some of its main intellectual figures (especially those who remained active after 1860, and particularly the historian J. P. Oliveira Martins, who was the subject of his PhD thesis defended at Oxford in 1997), we might perhaps highlight a few of its more suggestive moments. The first has to do with the extraordinarily intense labor pains involved in the birth of political modernity in Portugal, in a context of war and foreign occupation, economic devastation and the loss of an empire—a political transition that was much more prolonged and painful than the one that was eventually to take place, in fairly similar circumstances, in the mid-1970s. Secondly, there is the

⁶ *Idem*, 43.

⁷ Rui Ramos, *A Segunda Fundação*, Lisbon, Círculo dos Leitores, 1994 (there is a second revised edition published in 2001).

⁸ Namely in *O Poder e o Povo*, originally published in 1975. There is a third edition from 1999, published by Gradiva.

sheer magnitude of the transformations brought about in the aftermath of the triumph of the Liberals in the civil war of 1832-34, which the author does in fact refer to as the “Liberal Revolution” (1834-1851). As Oliveira Martins noted, it was in fact the Portuguese equivalent of 1789, because of the way in which it radically reshaped the “institutions and forms of power and relationship that had been the norm for centuries—the greatest and most brusque social and political change ever to have occurred in Portuguese history” (493). The royal power was restricted and stripped of its sacred significance, Catholicism was placed on the defensive, the power-holding elite significantly renewed, while areas such as taxation, justice, public order, bureaucracy and local power emerged from the liberal reforms with an almost unrecognizable appearance. Some of these changes arose from the ideological options of liberal legislators, who, despite the significant differences that existed between them, firmly believed in the State’s power to transform and the need to protect the Portuguese economy from outside competition. Other changes—the expropriations and confiscations of the land belonging to the Church and to the Miguelist nobles—were also dictated by the realm’s impoverished financial state. The divergences between a more radical current of Portuguese liberalism, historically identified with *Vintistas* and Septemberists, and another more moderate current, consisting of the supporters of the 1826 Constitutional Charter, fuelled much of the atmosphere of endemic political conflict that was rife until 1851, but Ramos stresses that these factions came together in a project for the regeneration of Portuguese society, the realization of which was to depend on the commitment of its most active and enlightened citizens, duly supported by the leverage of state power. In his opinion, it was this that gave substance to the culture of “civic patriotism,” which had evident affinities with a “republican” tradition forged in the course of the Italian Renaissance and with several followers in the European Enlightenment (Rousseau above all). Ramos states that this civic patriotism was also shared by the founders of the PRP (Portuguese Republican Party), which would have led various members of the ruling monarchic elite to consider that these people were fighting a pointless battle, since they were trying to break down an open door: in reality, although the king still enjoyed important constitutional prerogatives, the republican aspirations had largely been assumed by the monarchic regime, as Fontes Pereira de Melo once suggested to his fellow party member, and future president of the Republic, Bernardino Machado. Seen in this light, the conflicts between monarchists and republicans were basically the result of the “narcissism of minor differences,” and, when compared with the great upheaval of 1832-34, the regime change that took place in 1910 could almost be reduced to the level of a mere reshuffling at the heart of the Portuguese governing elites, a “detail,” as Ramos claimed in one of the interviews that he gave when the book was launched.⁹

Which does not mean that the Republic didn’t have a “revolutionary” regime in other aspects. We should therefore regard it as an unstable power that was regularly obliged to suspend its own procedures of the Rule of Law, by virtue of the reactions that its highly authoritarian methods of government ended up arousing. Basically, rather than diverging in terms of the ends to be achieved, the republicans marked their difference from the political elite of liberalism by the type of means that they were prepared to adopt in order to achieve their “Civic State,” which could only be built by “making a revolutionary break with the dynastic and Catholic past, accepting no compromises” (582). Now, as contemporary history has taught us, the question of the means is crucial for defining the possibilities of a regime founded on pluralism and tolerance, something that the First Republic most definitely never was. Frightened by the possibility of the leading figures of the Monarchy infiltrating the new parties and political institutions, some of the most influential members of the PRP pursued a radical strategy based on a “separation of waters” (in which the anti-clerical legislation of Afonso Costa played a critical role), while at the same time taking steps to prevent the discontent with their governance amounting to a decisive expression in electoral terms. Without the king’s moderating power, the regime set up by the 1911 constitution made it possible for the party of government to prolong its hold on power through greatly rigged elections, in which only a tiny fraction of the Portuguese population were qualified to vote. As the author says, “Given the impossibility of a peaceful rotation of government, the oppositions gave themselves up to conspiracy and attempted coups” (595). Notwithstanding important differences in their orientation, the republican elite, including the breakaway groups to the right and the left of the PRP, were never able to overcome this “democratic deficit,” which, in the medium run, was to prove fatal for the

⁹ Cf. his interview with José Manuel Fernandes, *Público*, 22 January 2010.

regime's legitimacy. Achieving an excellent equilibrium between the political narrative and a more analytical register, the author demonstrates how the more "progressist" projects of the Republic in the social and cultural field were irretrievably compromised by the disastrous options taken by the government (such as Portugal's participation in the First World War), and stresses how the regime founded in 1910 was one of the few to escape the widespread introduction of universal suffrage in the first half of the twentieth century. The fact that most of the initiatives promoted under the scope of the Commemorations of the Centenary of the Portuguese Republic have shown some circumspection may, to some extent, be put down to the historical "revisionism" that authors such as Rui Ramos and Vasco Pulido Valente have helped to popularize, and, as it happens, in a similar vein to the one in which liberal historiography popularized the Jacobin mythology of the French Revolution.

Bearing in mind these credentials, it is understandable that the chapters dedicated to the New State and the 1974 Revolution should have been awaited with a particular sense of expectation. His description of the end of the Republic and the advent of the Military Dictatorship, for example, highlights the enthusiasm with which he always seeks to capture the ambivalent meaning of historical changes. Whereas the classical version of the historiography most closely identified with the opposition to Salazar underlined the complete break with the past and the ideological and political antagonisms, Ramos prefers to emphasize the lines of continuity and the points of affinity between the republican elites and the right-wing forces that came together on May 28. Once again, the author suggests, political change arose from a disagreement between groups and factions during the last days of the Republic, who were attempting to develop solutions within its framework to bring an end to the political monopoly of the PRP—solutions that all tended, on both the left and right of the political spectrum, to underline the need for an authoritarian government.

The figure of Salazar, who only in 2009 was made the subject of a biography written by an academic,¹⁰ does not appear painted in a very different light from the one that has been presented by the scholars of the New State over the last few decades: a cold, realistic politician, highly skilled in achieving the balances and compromises needed to perpetuate his hold of power, although without sacrificing a set of more or less coherent principles associated with a Catholic and ultramontane world view. From the outset, Ramos moves away from the idea that Salazarism can be regarded as something that was monolithic and constant over time, and therefore does not waste much time on the debate about the putative "Fascist" nature of the regime. There were various kinds of "Salazarisms," which corresponded to the need that the leader of the New State felt to adapt to the challenges that each set of historical circumstances placed before him. In one particular aspect, however, his regime displayed great consistency—its faithful adherence to a series of arbitrary procedures and repressive instruments, which remained remarkably stable for more than forty years. The fact that the author once again places this dimension in perspective, establishing comparisons with other similar European regimes (which inevitably tend to lend a more benevolent air to Salazarism), has been criticized as an expedient for shifting the blame from the dictatorship, but this is, in my opinion, a rather exaggerated view. The way in which Salazarism managed violence, which not so long ago was defined by the sociologist Hermínio Martins as "optimum terror" (as opposed to the "crude maximum of terror"),¹¹ may not have been analyzed with the depth that the theme required—if only because this must have been one of the most original and disconcerting features of Portuguese authoritarianism. But let us agree, nonetheless, that this would always be a very difficult reality to describe given the constraints that are inherent in syntheses of this type.

An innovative aspect of this work is its exploration of the interaction between the metropolitan and colonial dimensions, something that had been completely neglected in the *História de Portugal* edited by José Mattoso, for reasons of a purely editorial nature (the publisher was about to publish a 5-volume *História da Expansão Portuguesa*). In the case of the New State, it would be impossible to underestimate the value of this interaction, in view of the connection that was established between the fate of the regime and that of the colonial empire, especially after the

¹⁰ Filipe Ribeiro de Meneses, *Salazar: a political biography*, New York, Enigma Books, 2009.

¹¹ Hermínio Martins, *Classe, Status e Poder e outros ensaios sobre o Portugal Contemporâneo*, Lisbon, Imprensa de Ciências Sociais, 1998, 68.

Second World War. I do not, however, believe that Salazar's decision to resist the decolonizing pressure can be considered comparable to certain attitudes of other democratic powers that also sought to postpone the granting of independence to their overseas territories, as is upheld by the author (680). The colonial policies adopted by France, the United Kingdom, Holland and Belgium displayed significant differences between one another and in comparison with Portugal, besides the fact that, in 1961, the key decisions taken by these countries in relation to decolonization, including the behavior of Gaullist France towards Algeria, were far removed from the course that had been laid down by Salazar. The statement—admittedly qualified with inverted commas—that Portugal would also have decolonized in its own way, namely with the reforms promoted by Adriano Moreira and with certain adaptations to the discourse (the incorporation of the Luso-tropical “vulgate”), in the absence of a more developed explanation, may confuse readers who are less familiar with the real meaning that the author wished to give to the expression.¹²

Despite his having tried not to lose track of the already-mentioned constraints of space, I do believe that the consulate of Marcelo Caetano, to which the author only devoted nine pages, was worthy of a more detailed treatment. I say this because of the premonitory nature of some of his social, economic and educational policies, because it was a crucial period for a better understanding of the genesis of the April 25 revolution, but also because of the testing ground that it represented for the generations that would very shortly come to dominate democratic politics.

The Revolution and the PREC (Ongoing Revolutionary Process), which have earned the right to the rather generous quantity of forty pages, benefit from the author's experience as a student of other revolutions and do not disappoint the reader. Once again, at the centre of events we find not the “people” or the “revolutionary masses,” but instead the leaders and the activists who were very conscious of their aims and the means that were necessary to achieve them, whether in the lands of the agrarian reform, factories, residents' committees or meetings of the MFA (Armed Forces Movement). “(...) Despite the ‘rank and file’ rhetoric of the revolution, political and social action continued to be hierarchical,” writes Ramos. “At the top, the revolution corresponded more to a generational change of elites, prepared by the socialization they were given in left-wing politics at the universities, than to a break with the social constraints of the past.” (730).

The great break with the past did, in fact, come with the institutionalization of a pluralist and competitive democratic system, whose historical singularity the author very fairly highlights in the final chapter. This was perhaps one of the most difficult chapters to write, given the absence of sufficient distancing in terms of time, of the kind that normally helps to hone the analytical capacity of historians. I do, however, believe that the challenge is overcome in an entirely satisfactory way, and not just at the level of the appreciation that he makes of the political and institutional evolution of the last thirty-five years. The profound economic, social and cultural changes that Portugal has undergone since the PREC are described with empirical rigor—here the author was able to benefit greatly from the studies directed by the sociologists António Barreto or Manuel Villaverde Cabral—but also with imagination and a touch of humor (see, for example, his references to the country's “ecological footprint” in 2003 and the increase recorded in the average height of Portuguese men throughout the twentieth century, or his remark about the public's relationship with the work of the film director Manoel de Oliveira).

Syntheses of this kind seem to be condemned to producing a sense of dissatisfaction amongst professional historians—as was, in fact, made obvious in the session organized by this journal, in May 2010, to discuss the book. There will always be some who feel that fundamental aspects of the history of a human society, or the type of interactions that different groups establish within themselves, are missing in this work, or were insufficiently discussed. It would, however, be unfair to lose sight of the scope and purpose that the authors (in fact, at the editor's suggestion) defined for the project: to write “the History of a unity built up by the political power over the centuries” (III). It is possible that what was involved here was the wish to embark upon a political history of a “narrativist” nature that would ultimately gain the approval of the general public, but the final result did not sacrifice the analytical depth that is to be expected in a more sophisticated history. Anyway, it seems to me to be undeniable that the perspective adopted helped the authors to construct an interpretation that fairly effectively incorporates both those features that continued

¹² On this question, cf. his article “‘O império que nunca existiu’. A cultura da descolonização em Portugal, 1960-1980,” *Revista de História das Ideias*, 28, 2007, 429-477.

to exist and those aspects that represented a break with the past, and which have marked these nine centuries of Portuguese history at the most varied levels. Critics of this *History of Portugal* are left with the challenge of seeking to produce an alternative view that manages, at the very least, to be as persuasive and readable as this book.