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Review of: Miriam Halpern Pereira, *O Gosto pela história: Percursos de história contemporânea*

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Halpern Pereira, Miriam. *O Gosto pela história: Percursos de história contemporânea*. Lisbon: Imprensa de Ciências Sociais, 2010. 214 pp.

Social sciences were the impoverished orphans of the universities of Salazar's Portugal. The few chairs of history were in the hands of favorites of the regime, who taught a long outdated version of national history centered on the lives of heroic figures. During half a century the subjection of the university to the ideology of the *Estado Novo* isolated the university milieu from debates in the social sciences carried on in Europe and America. A few secondary school teachers dared inform their classes of Lucien Febvre and Marc Bloch, and in the halls of the universities some students discussed works whose mention in the lecture hall would have had unfortunate consequences. The up-to-date Portuguese historians had left for France or Brazil. There thus existed in the Portuguese universities two kinds of history, the official history of the classrooms and the non-official history of the corridors, strongly tinged with Marxist thought. (I can vouch that Portugal was not unique, the same bifurcation existed in Spain, although perhaps the bastions of official history began to break down earlier.)

This is the cultural climate that Miriam Halpern Pereira, a student in these bleak decades, makes us feel in the opening chapters of her *O Gosto pela história*. The first is an interview in 1989, the other the lecture she gave upon retiring in 2005 after more than twenty years as director of the journal *Ler História*. She tells us that two instructors at her *liceu* introduced her to the *Annales* and provided the inspiration that would lead to her becoming a central figure in the transformation of Portuguese historical studies after the Revolution of 1974. Her teachers liked her as a model student; however, she became suspect of Marxist sympathy because in the study of history she developed an interest in the nineteenth century. In the early sixties she joined her husband in exile in Paris. Escape to Paris became an academic blessing, for it permitted her to attend seminars at the *Sixième Section* (of the *École des Hautes Études*), the headquarters of the *Annales* school. Braudel was the best known figure, but she came under the direction of Pierre Vilar, the great historian of Catalonia. Marxist thought was in the air, and she breathed in her share of it, becoming convinced that the future of historical research lay in the fields of economic and social history.

She remained in Paris long enough to get her doctorate at the Sorbonne and to teach for three years at the University of Vincennes. She directed her thesis to the economy of Portugal in the nineteenth century, a virgin field in history. It would be an impressive work: *Livre-câmbio e desenvolvimento económico*:

Portugal na Segunda Metade do Século XIX (Lisbon 1971). Returning to Portugal she became associated with the *Instituto Superior de Ciências do Trabalho e da Empresa* (known familiarly as ISCTE), a university level business school founded in 1972, one of the few places in Portugal that taught economic history. Here she became the *catedrática* of history. The Revolution of 1974 provided the opportunity for ISCTE to flourish as a center of innovation especially in the social sciences and history. (In 2009 it would be raised to full university status.) In 1975 Miriam Pereira established the Centro de Estudos de História Contemporânea Portuguesa as a research center at ISCTE; it would organize research directed to breaking the silence about recent Portuguese history that had marked the Estado Novo universities. In 1983 she founded the journal *Ler História*, which would publish the research of the expanding community of Portuguese historians.

Her retirement lecture is an impressive survey of modern historiography beginning when the *Annales* school cast political history off center stage. The road she travels with the eyes of a south European is enlightening for an American reader who has lived through the period. It is familiar but also revealing. Through the 1950s it finds the historiographic world centered on Paris with Britain a tangential force until the appearance of *Past and Present* made it a full partner. The United States receives no notice until Europe discovered Robert Fogel's use of counterfactual history to question the contribution of railroads to economic development, initiating a period which made the Western world at last historiographically one. With unity, however came diversity, as new approaches knocked economic history off its podium. Finally, Pereira finds political history returning to favor, enriched now by social, economic and cultural history.

Her interviewer asked Pereira what she felt has been her contribution to history. She placed highest the destruction of the "legend" of Portuguese decadence, preached by *Estado Novo* historians but accepted also by the left in its own way, a facile explanation put forward to explain the failings of modern Portugal. For it Portugal was the "ideal" country, exempt from capitalism and social conflict until these diseases came in from abroad. Through the inspiration of Pereira, Portuguese history now includes an analysis of nineteenth-century capitalism, the role of agriculture in the market, and the social basis of Portugal's liberal revolutions. The analysis of underdevelopment has replaced the legend of decadence.

Given this self analysis, it is interesting to see the nature of the studies that form the rest of the book. They show that Pereira's recent work fits into the new kind of political history that she describes. While other Portuguese historians have turned to the twentieth century, she remains loyal to the nineteenth. Of these six chapters, three cover a broad sweep of decades. Two are devoted to analyzing the

transition from the Old Regime to the nineteenth-century constitutional monarchy. Pierre Vilar had encouraged Pereira to break down the cultural barrier that had long separated Spain and Portugal. One sees the result in the chapter “Do Antigo Regime ao Estado liberal (1807-1841): uma comparação ibérica.” The material is mostly familiar, but nicely presented. Pereira points out how, despite the different immediate responses to the Napoleonic invasion, after 1820 the conflict between liberals and conservatives followed remarkably similar lines in Spain and Portugal, an ideological conflict for which she finds a common social basis in the division between rural and urban societies. More creative is a paper she gave in Berkeley on the occasion of the bicentennial of the Napoleonic invasion. “Coroa, Império e Nação (1807-1834)”, which describes the transformation from Old Regime to liberal monarchy through the evolution of these three factors. The basis of the power of the crown was in the empire. Because the center of gravity of the empire had moved to Brazil, plans were already in the works to move the crown to Rio before the Napoleonic invasion forced the issue. But the resulting breakup of the empire, a catastrophe for Portugal, meant also the end of the old style crown. Instead the Nation appeared in the form of a liberal public sphere, with a nationalism directed at protecting the Portuguese economy from Britain. The result was a division of power between nation and crown that would last seven decades during which Portugal would develop a new empire. The third of these chapters, “Nação, cidadania e religião nos séculos XX-XX (1820-1910)” reviews the perennial problem of church-state relations by focusing on the fact that between the revolution of 1820 and the fall of the monarchy, the different constitutions defined a Portuguese citizen as Catholic. The Portuguese Liberals carried on a continual struggle with the Church as an institution, and they instituted measures of toleration, but they had no problem with maintaining that all Portuguese be Catholic.

These chapters will be especially useful to someone developing instruction in a general history of Portugal. The other three have more limited subjects. “Nação e cidadania no pensamento de Passos Manuel” looks at arguments for universal male suffrage and for limited suffrage using the case of Passos Manuel, the leader of the 1836 September Revolution. Passos favored the former until experience taught him that giving the vote to illiterates allowed the crown to control the results. “A Maria da Fonte: entre o saber e a dúvida” analyses the causes of widespread rural uprisings in the 1840s. Pereira questions the ostensible explanation that they were a religiously inspired opposition to a health law that moved burials from churchyards to new extramural cemeteries. She provides evidence that the real cause was peasant anger at continually expanding demands of the royal fisc, but leaves the question open for further research. Finally “As origens do Estado-Providência: as novas fronteiras entre o público e o privado” shows how the first steps toward the twentieth-century welfare state

came after the First World War when the state took over the social insurance provided by the mutual aid societies of workers' unions.

O Gosto pela história can profit all historians, but for those who are not familiar with Miriam Pereira's work, it will be an introduction to a major actor in moving Portuguese historiography from its isolation under the *Estado Novo* to a proper place in the international academic world.

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