

## ANGLO-PORTUGUESE RELATIONS

AND

### ARTHURIAN REVIVAL IN PORTUGAL

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I would like to open my lecture with a word of gratitude to the University of Oporto and in particular to Prof. Gomes da Torre and his team for undertaking the complex organisation for this commemoration and for providing me with the opportunity of speaking on a favourite subject - the adventurous, chivalric, idealistic, mythical and even mystical Arthurian Legend.

Permit me to remember on this occasion the name of a great Portuguese scholar and personal friend - the late Prof. Fernando de Mello Moser, appropriate because of his contribution to English studies and his close relationship with the Instituto de Estudos Ingleses of the Faculdade de Letras do Porto where he counted many friends. It was Prof. Moser who first guided me in the mysterious paths of the Arthurian Legend, and who first encouraged me to take part in this commemoration when he visited my home in Manchester in 1983. As this is the first occasion that I have presented a paper in Portugal, I would like to offer this brief contribution of mine as a sincere, though modest, tribute to his memory. I suspect that if Prof. Moser had been amongst us today he would not be able to resist the temptation of attending this conference to enthral us with one of his lucid, down to earth but scholarly expositions.

As the title of this lecture indicates, I will attempt to demonstrate the relevance of Anglo-Portuguese relations for the development of Arthurian Literature in Portugal - how the close contact between the peoples of Britain and Portugal left its im-

print in works such as *O Palmeirim de Inglaterra* by Francisco de Moraes, the *Memorial das Proezas da Segunda Távola Redonda* by Jorge Ferreira de Vasconcelos or even *Amadis de Gaula*.

The first two works blossomed during a period of Arthurian revival in the Iberian Peninsula, and the third though extant was object of many additions and sequels that it inspired from the pen of Castilian writers.

Limited time does not allow an exposition of the various stages in the development of Arthurian Literature, either in Britain, the Continent or even the Iberian Peninsula. Nevertheless, it would be of interest to state that by the middle of the 13th century ample references to heroes of the Arthurian Cycle could be found in Galician-Portuguese lyrical poetry; that by c.1280 the Portuguese version of the Post-Vulgate Cycle of the Romances of the Grail had already been completed; and that by the middle of the 14th century Portuguese chroniclers ranked King Arthur high amongst the great historical and legendary rulers.

From an historical and diplomatic point of view, the importance of the geographical relationship between Britain and Portugal is noteworthy. They are two maritime nations on the Atlantic perimeter of Europe. Their destinies have frequently crossed paths, either by the will of their rulers or by the hand of providence, and at times of great relevance for their future and maintenance of their territorial sovereignty.

By way of illustration, one could cite the conquest of Lisbon and Silves from the Moors (1147 and 1189 respectively); also the defence of Santarém from Almohad retaliation in 1190; the visits of English delegations - one in 1184 from Henry II asking for the hand of Teresa Mafalda, daughter of Afonso Henriques, for Philip of Flanders (under whose patronage Chrétien de Troyes wrote the *Livres del Graal*), and another in 1199 from John Lackland who was considering his own marriage to Mafalda, daughter of Sancho I. (1) One could also cite the many commercial agreements which allowed Portuguese traders to freely practise their profession in territories belonging to the English crown and which gave the same rights to British traders in Portugal. Even the many pirate attacks

reciprocally committed on the high seas amongst traders of both nations and the unavoidable letters of protest and apology, illustrate the regular diplomatic exchanges between Britain and Portugal. The period that perhaps saw Anglo-Portuguese relations at their closest was when the reigns of Edward III and Richard II of England coincide with that of Fernando of Portugal, the issuing crisis of 1383-85, and the reign of João I, also of Portugal.

Anglo-Portuguese relations became firmer at this point as, correspondingly, relations with France became cooler. The fairs of the region of Champagne, from which at the beginning of the 14th century Philippe le Bel barred Flemish traders, illustrates these changing relationships. In order to compensate for the absence of Flemish merchants and revitalise trade in the region, in 1309 Philippe offered special concessions to Portuguese traders who would wish to establish themselves in Harfleur, Rouen, Crottoy, Abbeville, Boulogne and La Rochelle. These would be exempted from certain duties and taxes imposed on merchandise of other origin. Such concessions were confirmed in 1341, 1350, 1362, 1364 and later in 1444.

The period of 80 years between the last two quoted dates can not pass unnoticed, for it contrasts sharply with the shorter intervals related to the middle of the 14th century. Furthermore, this period coincides with the so called Hundred Years War into which Portugal was indirectly implicated as a British ally. (2) This interregnum can be explained by an additional clause included in the Anglo-Portuguese trade agreement of 1353. There, it is stated, that none of the parties of this agreement will be allowed to contract any alliance with the enemies, opponents or adversaries of the other or provide them with any assistance or support. (3) Anglo-Portuguese agreements from the second half of the 14th century onwards acquired a markedly political character, as in most instances they specifically incorporated clauses which excluded Castile and/or France.

The reason why this arrangement came about was as a result of a dynastic crisis in Castile, when Enrique of Trastamara, illegitimate brother of Pedro Cruel King of Castille, undertook with military support from France to usurp the throne. The bargain

struck for this assistance was the naval support to be given to the French fleet attacking the Southern shores of Great-Britain, when, and if, Enrique succeeded in his ambitious plans.

Enrique of Trastamara did eventually meet with success, and ascended the Castilian throne on the death of his half-brother; who, it is reported by some chroniclers, was murdered by his own hand immediately after the disaster of Montiel in 1369. From 1373 onwards, a Castilian fleet of galleys was stationed on the Northern shores of France, occasionally driving devastating incursions against the Southern ports of Britain.

After various vain attempts at firming a treaty with Aragon, the British rulers opted for an alliance with Portugal. Portugal was a country also with a maritime tradition and with a fleet of galleys capable of confronting the Castilian vessels of the same type operating in the English Channel. At the time, the galley was an effective naval war machine propelled by about 180 rowers, enabling her to sail at speed and in almost any kind of weather.

One of the purposes of the Treaty of Windsor, was precisely to ensure the presence of Portuguese galleys in British ports, ready to face any attacks from the enemy in operation in the Channel. The clauses of the Treaty of Windsor related to this type of naval assistance seem to have been based, in their general lines, on the Franco-Castilian treaties of the same nature, and are a precious source of information on the crews and the general organisation of such war ships. Considering that each galley had one "patrão", three "alcaides", eight to ten sailors, thirty archers and one hundred and eighty rowers, and that ten of these vessels were sent to Britain; considering also that by 1384 the Master of Avis had already sent a squadron of six galleys and that this type of naval assistance lasted until 1390, one can infer that between 1384 and 1390, about 2200 Portuguese seamen were stationed in Britain. (4) In the Winter of 1388-1389, Richard II invited some of them to spend the Christmas season at the Court of St. James. As at the time Britain was experiencing the full swing of an Arthurian revival, it is very probable that these Portuguese seamen listened to recitals or the readings of Arthurian material in

the course of the courtly festivities. The same seamen, or even the ones that remained in the Southern ports of Britain could also have listened to some Arthurian narratives in the areas where they settled amongst the British community.

The presence of Edmund of Cambridge in Portugal in 1373 and the Iberian expedition of his elder brother, the Duke of Lancaster, in 1386-87, as well as the marriage of the latter's daughter to João I of Portugal have further contributed to the spreading of Arthurian Literature amongst Portuguese courtly circles. Nevertheless, it is of interest to note that even well before that, the Constable Nun'Álvares Pereira at the age of thirteen had already read the *Demandã do Santo Graal* which inspired him to follow the example of Galahad, as it is recorded in the *Crônica do Condestável* by an anonymous contemporary author and in the *Crônica de D. João I* by Fernão Lopes. (5)

It is not surprising that such close encounters between Portugal and Britain should have resulted in some repercussions on Portuguese culture in general and vice-versa. Literature was no exception. It is not possible to speak of the direct indebtedness of a specific Portuguese author or text; nevertheless, the Portuguese must have had some interest in English literature, for John Gower's *Confessio Amantis* (c.1390) shortly after its composition was translated into Portuguese by Robert Payne, an English canon of Lisbon and confessor of Philippa of Lancaster now queen of Portugal. It was subsequently translated into Castilian. This Portuguese translation of Gower's *Confessio Amantis* is highly significant, for Middle English literature was confined to England and was neither known nor translated into other languages. Prof. J.A. Burrow calls this translation "an isolated case, reflecting a special relationship between England and the Iberian Peninsula in the fourteenth century". (6) The historical evidence referred to above, however, leads one to believe that at the time this special relationship was developed with Portugal in particular. (7) Furthermore, these close contacts between the Portuguese and their English allies, especially in the course of the 14th century, left a mark on Portuguese Arthurian Literature of the 16th century, perhaps even

on literature of an earlier date.

It is undeniable that previously, French strongly influenced Portuguese literature, but the subsequent secondary line of influence brought about by the Anglo-Portuguese relations alluded to above, was never far away and is well documented in works such as the *Memorial das Proezas da Segunda Távola Redonda* by Ferreira de Vasconcelos and *O Palmeirim de Inglaterra* by Francisco de Moraes. The regular trade and diplomatic contacts with the English must have influenced the Portuguese to interpret the Arthurian Cycle as the history of an English king and his court. After all, that was what the Chronicles of D. Pedro Count of Barcelos stated and what seemed to correspond to the reality they knew.

As Anglo-Portuguese relations began to mature in the reign of Edward III, reaching a climax with the presence of his sons in the Iberian Peninsula, he was the king and with his was the period which Portuguese authors of the 16th century identified Arthur and his age. For the 16th-century Portuguese writer those Anglo-Portuguese contacts were remote enough to give him a feeling of antiquity, and yet strong enough to supersede any other previous source of information on King Arthur and his age. No other romance illustrates this point as conclusively as the *Memorial das Proezas da Segunda Távola Redonda* (1567) by Jorge Ferreira de Vasconcelos. Further examples can be found in *O Palmeirim de Inglaterra* or even the *Amadis de Gaula*, though extreme caution is necessary with the latter owing to the still pending problems related to the establishment of its date, language of composition, and expansions it suffered. (8)

The preoccupation of presenting the Arthurian Legend as real history is patent right at the beginning of Ferreira de Vasconcelos work, where he dedicates it to King Sebastião as a *speculum principum* containing such examples as worthy as those to be found in classical antiquity -

... aos quais os nossos modernos imitaram com não menos artifício, quando não estilo, nas histórias del Rey Artur, de Amadis de Gaula, e muytas outras semelhantes, as quaes muyto sem causa sam julgadas por vaãs e sem fruyto (openião leve e vulgarmente concebida). (9)



According to Ferreira de Vasconcelos, his source was a certain "Foroneus filósofo e Cronista Inglês, [que] desejoso de trazer à luz as cousas que lhe pareceram de mais tomo, compilou um sumário das que passaram nos tempos d'el Rey Sagramor". (10) Further on, the author states that this Foroneus "visitou a Inglaterra pessoalmente". (11) It is probable that this Foroneus is a product of fiction, for had he existed and actually lived in England there would be no need to stress the fact that he had visited that country. It would be far more reasonable simply to expect him to have lived there. Though this kind of literary pretense was quite current in Vasconcelos' days, it can be used to highlight two important aspects - one is that the author wants to present his work as true history, and the other is that his very source of information was an English historian who, better than any other should deserve our credit. In the *Memorial*, King Arthur is an *English* king and the *English* are his people awaiting his return from Avalon. (12) England is, therefore, identified with the territory ruled under Arthur, instead of the mythical kingdom of Logres.

This is an aspect that was already patent in *O Palmeirim de Inglaterra*, even in *Amadis de Gaula*, works that deal with events after the death of Arthur. The *Memorial*, however, tells of events that are supposed to have taken place immediately after Arthur's death, therefore in the reign of his immediate successor, Sagramor in this case, who ruled over the following generation.

The *Memorial* being, therefore, also known as *Triunfos de Sagramor*, Uther Pendragon in this work is also presented as King of England, whereas Arthur is frequently introduced as King of England and France - "Depoys florecendo nossa católica Fé, Artur Rei de Inglaterra e de França, Ordenou a Ordem dos Távola Rendonda [...] nas cortes de Londres" (13) The romance contains also numerous references to the courts of Arthur and Sagramor, which take place in London, and not in Camelot or Carleon, thus implying that the author is thinking in terms of the England of his own time, the capital of which was London.

The frequent references to Arthur and Sagramor as monarchs ruling over England and France (or large part of it, as it is also

stated in the romance), can only be explained if the author was thinking in terms of the reigns of certain British kings, such as Henry II, or Edward III in particular, or even Henry V, for these monarchs not only ruled over vast territories on both sides of the Channel, but stimulated further the popularity of the Arthurian Legend in order to better justify their rights over the various peoples that formed their kingdom. As it was stated above, it was precisely during the reign of these monarchs that Anglo-Portuguese relations took a step closer.

In the *Memorial*, the "Segunda Távola Redonda" of the title is the one founded by Sagrador. (14) In Chapter XIII, Lucidardos in the course of an adventure that led him into Corsica, finds there a chapel dedicated to St. George, patron saint of the Order of the Round Table. (15) Ferreira de Vasconcelos is here identifying the Order of the Round Table with the Order of the Garter, the patron saint of which is, indeed, St. George to whom is dedicated a chapel in the castle of Windsor. The Order of the Garter was founded by Edward III in 1348. When in 1331 Edward visited Glastonbury, a place long connected with the Arthurian Legend and where Arthur's tomb was supposed to have been found, he solemnly promised to reestablish the Order of the Round Table, which would consist of a brotherhood of knights. Ferreira de Vasconcelos, is therefore, attributing to Sagrador facts that not only happened in Edward III's reign, but that were brought about by his very person.

The vague chronology of the *Memorial* also seems to point to Edward III's age, since some of the adventures undertaken by these knights of the Second Round Table took place in the Canary Islands whose king was a certain D. Tenerife. The Canary Islands were discovered between 1312 and 1330, a period partly coinciding with the beginning of the reign of Edward III. (16) One of the knights of the court of King Sagrador, and therefore of this new generation of heroes, is a certain Fidonflor de Mares, Duke of Lancaster and son of Hector de Mares, one of the main characters of Arthurian romances. (17) In Portugal, the historical Duke of Lancaster, John of Gaunt, was one of the best known of English personalities. He was also father-in-law to João I, King of Portugal,



and son of Edward III.

As was previously noted, the *Memorial* portrays an age immediately following that of King Arthur. But the adventures that it narrates are on the whole deeply influenced by the new age of discovery - exotic details are abundant, frequently associated with elements of classical inspiration, as could be expected in a work of the 16th century. References to other heroes of the Arthurian cycle are rather sporadic, brief and reduced only to the characters best known in the Iberian Peninsula - "Dom Galvão, Lançarote do Lago, Tristão de Leonis, Dom Galeazo, Hector de Mares, Palomedes o pagão" - which admittedly can not be taken as sufficient evidence that Ferreira de Vasconcelos actually read the Arthurian romances. He could, however, have become familiar with the name of these heroes through lyrical poetry, or even through the reading, reciting or performance in court of romanesque episodes related to the Arthurian Legend. It is known for example, that D. João II enjoyed to perform the role of Knight of the Swan, a Peninsular interpretation of the story of Lohengrin.

In Portuguese Arthurian Romances the names of the kings of England and their progeny further encourage our thesis of identifying Arthur's age with that of Edward III, as in most instances they seem to derive from his name. In *O Palmeirim de Inglaterra* the son of King Fradique of England is called D. Duardos; in *Amadis de Gaula* the King of England is Lisuarte; but in the *Memorial das Proezas da Segunda Távola Redonda* the pattern seems to be broken, for the reigning monarch there is Sagramor. However, the pieces of the puzzle can be joined together, so to speak, as one lights upon *Lucidardos*, the main hero and son of Tristão de Leonis and Isolda.

The descendants of the house of Anjou showed a particular interest for Tristan. This interest dates from the days of Henry II or Richard I, under whose patronage Thomas probably wrote his *Tristan*. Subsequent English Angevin kings used the same heraldic device as Tristan - a golden lion on a red ground. (18) Therefore, even though Lucidardos in the *Memorial* is not an English prince or ruler, he is the son of Tristan whose arms were adopted by the English Angevin kings. His name of Lucidardos, like the name of Lisuarte and Duardos seems to have derived from "Eduardo", "Eduarte" or

even "Duarte" all Portuguese renderings of the English "Edward". The word Lisuarte seems to point towards an etymology found in the combination of *Lis* + *Duarte*. This etymology becomes more plausible in view of the fact that in 1326 Edward III added the *fleur de lys* ("flor de lis" in Portuguese) to his great seal, in order to further stress his claim to the throne of France. (19)

Massaud Moisés, however, in his study under the title of *A Novela de Cavalaria no Quinhentismo Português*, (20) explains the word Lucidardos as deriving from "dardos de luz", for the hero of the same name wears a white armour and arms flashing with light, often being also referred to by the epithet of "cavaleiro das armas cristalinas". But even so, it is not possible to completely ignore its close pronunciation to Duardos, Lisuarte or even Eduardo and its variations. This point acquires a new meaning if related to the fact that between 1273 and 1377, i.e. for a whole century, England was ruled by three monarchs all bearing the name of *Edward*, and that there would have been a fourth Edward in this series if the Black Prince had not died before his father. At this point it is relevant to remember once more that it was precisely during this period that Anglo-Portuguese relations began to take a more definite shape, becoming increasingly closer, and reaching a climax with the celebration of the Treaty of Windsor in 1386. It should not be forgotten either that the royal marriage resulting from this treaty produced a future Portuguese monarch, the first and only named Duarte (often spelt Eduarte), in memory of his English ancestors.

It could, therefore, be concluded that the similarities in the names of English monarchs and their progeny in Portuguese Arthurian romances such as the *Memorial das Proezas da Segunda Távola Redonda*, *O Palmeirim de Inglaterra* or even *Amadis de Gaula* are no mere coincidence, but derive from the historical character that the Portuguese romance writers took up for their model - Edward III.

A careful reading of the afore-mentioned romances seems to indicate that post 14th-century Portuguese writers either forgot or were unaware of the mainly French origins of the Arthurian Legend as it had been originally introduced into the Iberian peninsula through lyric poetry. The vivid memories of their contacts with

the English, mainly in the 14th century, became a source of inspiration and a model to draw upon when describing Arthur's court and times. The memory of these contacts with the English was so much more indelibly imprinted on the Portuguese, because the English had been in the Peninsula as allies precisely when Portugal was facing its greatest threat ever from a common enemy - Castile. But it is possible to draw conclusions from further back.

In the twelfth century (1147) the English assisted the Portuguese against the Moors, and so, similarly to other cities, Lisbon was conquered with English, or, more correctly, Anglo-Norman assistance. In the process, there were many squabbles regarding loot which almost led the enterprise to complete failure. In the *Memorial*, Jorge Ferreira de Vasconcelos seems to have such events in mind when he describes the fearsome way in which the English fought against the giants that had taken over the Canaries:

... por cujo esforço a desembarcação foy franca aos Ingleses com morte dos gigantes que a defendiam [...] porque os Ingreses traziam ho cuydado no tomar a cidade por o sacco que lhe o capitão mor tinha concedido. (21)

It is with the Portuguese romances that the geographical connection of the Peninsular Arthurian romances is reestablished with the British Isles. It is the Portuguese romance *O Palmeirim de Inglaterra* which, after a long series of Castilian romances initiated with the *Palmeirim de Oliva*, brings its central hero back to the country of his name - "Inglaterra", instead of pursuing his adventures in Constantinople. It is also in England, in a church in the outskirts of London that Palmeirim finds the tombs of the heroes from the *Amadis de Gaula*. (22)

Even if some French versions of Arthurian romances had circulated widely in Portugal, this by itself would not be enough to prevent a Portuguese reader of that age, including Ferreira de Vasconcelos, from identifying such romances as being of English provenance. Lourenço Fogaca spoke French at the court of Richard II, Philippa of Lancaster corresponded with her brother Henry IV in Norman-French and her sons adopted mottoes in French, as so many of their English relatives had done. Ferreira de Vasconcelos him-

self acknowledges that "naqueles tempos foy a lingua Francesa tam comum por todas partes; que de todos os nobres era entendida e fallada". (23) This remark, no doubt, reflects the knowledge that until 1362, French was the official language of the English court. Even though from then onwards law pleadings were made in English, the nobility continued to speak a form of French, especially with foreign emissaries. In the English court circles the use of French died down more slowly than would be expected, owing to the presence of numerous courtiers from Aquitaine, Brittany and even Flanders. Philippa of Hainault, wife of Edward III, had brought with her a large retinue of Flemings. John of Gaunt had himself been born in Ghent, Flanders.

It was my wish to foster a deeper interest for Portuguese Arthurian romances, particularly the *Memorial das Proezas da Segunda Távola Redonda*, for they are as curious and informative about their age as they are neglected, or overlooked, burdened that our minds still are with problems concerning date and authorship. The *Memorial* certainly does not have the makings of a classical work, but it is a precious testimony of the impact that Anglo-Portuguese relations left in Portuguese Arthurian literature. It demonstrates above all, that the power of that impact was so strong that it led Portuguese writers to forget the French origins of the *Demanda do Santo Graal* cycle and to identify the main characters of their Arthurian revival with personalities taken from actual English history.

Much more could still be said on this subject, but it must be left for another opportunity. Hopefully, before the VII centenary of the Treaty of Windsor,

## NOTES

- 1 - Thomas Rymer, *Foedera*, London, 1816, I, pp. XXXI and 761.
- 2 - Jaime Cortesão, *Os Factores Democráticos na Formação de Portugal*, Lisbon, (3rd. ed.) 1978, pp. 83-84.
- 3 - Marques Guedes, *Aliança Inglesa*, Lisbon, 1943, p.72.
- 4 - Peter Russell, Galês Portuguesas ao Serviço de Ricardo II de Inglaterra (1385-1389), *Revista da Faculdade de Letras*, Tomo XVIII, (2nd. series), Ns. 1 and 2, Universidade de Lisboa, 1953, pp. 61-73, esp. p. 62; Peter Russell, *English Intervention in Spain and Portugal in the Time of Edward III and Richard II*, Oxford, 1955, pp. 415-416; Fernão Lopes, *Crônica de D. João I*, II, Oporto, 1945, p. 167.
- 5 - *Crônica do Condestabre de Portugal don Nuno Alvares Pereira*, ed. Mendes dos Remédios, Coimbra, 1911; Fernão Lopes, *op.cit.*, Chap. XXXIV, p. 69.
- 6 - J.A. Burrow, *Medieval Writers and their Work - Middle English Literature and its Background 1100-1500*, Oxford, 1982, p. 71.
- 7 - Peter Russell, *op.cit.*, p. 541 and ff.
- 8 - For the reasons pointed out in the article, any references to *Amadis de Gaula* are based on the edition by Rodrigues Lapa (Lisbon, 1957), or on the reconstruction by Afonso Lopes Vieira of *O Romance de Amadis*, (Lisbon, 1935). Both authors claim to have based themselves, as far as possible, on the oldest version of the text and to have selected the most characteristically Portuguese passages.
- 9 - Jorge Ferreira de Vasconcelos, *Memorial das Proezas da Segunda Távola Redonda*, Lisbon, (2nd ed.) 1867, p.VII.
- 10 - *Id.*, p. 3.
- 11 - *Id.*, p. 276.
- 12 - *Id.*, p. 13.

- 13 - *Id.*, p. 2, 4 e 37.
- 14 - *Id.*, p. 4.
- 15 - *Id.*, p. 60.
- 16 - Jaime Cortesão, *Descobrimientos Portugueses*, Lisbon, 1980, I, p. 227.
- 17 - Jorge Ferreira de Vasconcelos, *op. cit.*, p. 13.
- 18 - R.S. Loomis, 'Tristram and the House of Anjou', *Modern Language Review*, XVII, p. 24-30.
- 19 - Paul Johnson, *The Life and Times of Edward III*, London, 1973, p. 12.
- 20 - São Paulo, 1957, p. 73.
- 21 - Jorge Ferreira de Vasconcelos, *op. cit.*, p. 160.
- 22 - *Palmeirim de Inglaterra*, ed. Rodrigues Lapa, Lisbon, (2nd. ed.), 1960, pp. 25 and 55.
- 23 - Jorge Ferreira de Vasconcelos, *op. cit.*, p. 215.