

Barry Hatton, *The Portuguese. A Modern History*. USA, Northampton and Massachusetts: Interlink Books, 2011. xvi plus 261 pp., ISBN 978-1-56656-844-9

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In 1925, Fernando Pessoa wrote a small book aimed at teaching the tourist what he should see in Portugal in which he lamented that “for the average British, and, indeed, for the average anything (except Spaniards) outside Portugal, Portugal is a vague small country somewhere in Europe, sometimes supposed to be part of Spain.” Since then, the lack of knowledge denounced by Pessoa has been gradually overcome, but, whenever someone from Portugal hits the news outside their homeland, this small country located in Europe’s periphery and assigned a secondary role in international economic and political affairs, still remains an “illustrious unknown” within foreign public opinion, despite its much-acclaimed hospitality. It is true that, lately, interest in Portugal has boomed, albeit not for the best of reasons: international organizations and political decision-makers keep a close watch on the country due to its difficult financial situation and the foreseeable risks of this contaminating the rest of the current globalized world. A pattern does emerge then: foreign interest in Portugal consists of long periods of silence and short bursts of intense observation, resulting in a persistent ignorance about both what has previously happened and what is now happening in the extreme south-western corner of the continent that shaped world history. Portugal’s rich and striking past does not seem to count today, hardly warranting a mainstream case-study in international historiography or political science, even though Portugal is itself one of Europe’s oldest countries and the birthplace of one of the world’s most widely spoken languages.

In light of this situation, all contributions that help to deepen and spread knowledge about Portugal outside its borders should be noted and welcomed, especially when such texts are written by foreigners. Barry Hatton’s book *The Portuguese. A Modern History* falls into this category and fulfils that task. Its reading is highly recommended, both for foreigners who wish to learn more about Portugal and for all Portuguese nationals seeking to reflect upon and/or remember the country’s past. Barry Hatton is a British citizen, who has been living in Portugal for the last 25 years: he arrived in 1986 as a

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freelance journalist, fresh from his course in literature at London's King's College. He raised a family in his new country and is today an Associated Press correspondent in Lisbon, covering national political, economic and sports news. These circumstances have turned Hatton into a special observer, halfway between a simple tourist, with a detached and eccentric gaze, and the native Portuguese. The former's powers of observation can sometimes be rather superficial and too opinion-based, while the latter's can tend to be somewhat biased, oscillating between patriotic self-defense and a desperate form of self-criticism. Hatton's approach is a very personal one, but it is nonetheless remarkably clear and professional, being based on a trained journalistic analysis, punctuated with a style of reporting that cleverly combines the proximity and empathy he undoubtedly feels towards his "second" country with the distance of "another's gaze," allowing him to scrutinize Portugal from the "outside." The above-mentioned quotation from Pessoa is actually included by Hatton at the very beginning of his book as a device for achieving the three main goals he set for himself in this "pocket-history" on Portugal and the Portuguese: "to shine a light on this enigmatic corner of Europe, describe the idiosyncrasies that make this lovable and sometimes exasperating country unique, and seek explanations by surveying the historical path that brought the Portuguese to where they are today" (viii).

Hatton's book is not just a mere abridged history of Portugal from the medieval time of its foundation and independence to its uncertain present at the dawn of the twenty-first century. While nonetheless encompassing all of that, it is also a work that intermingles historical analysis with journalistic sketches of the present in order to contextualize specific problems and features by tracing their origins and comparing past and present times. Hatton's writing is fluid and, both in some of his anthropological and sociological considerations about the Portuguese and in the judgments he makes about Portugal's tourist heritage, he is remarkably perceptive and accurate, exhibiting an undeniable sense of criticism, and indeed satire. Everything that has worked and still continues to work poorly in the country is mercilessly exposed, although he also takes time to recognize and praise national historical and civic achievements at the political, cultural or individual level.

Another great merit of the book is the wide diversity of the readings and authors who are quoted and used as sources of information, although the final bibliography, which is nothing more than a short "Further Reading" section, fails to show this adequately. Hatton is familiar with a large number of foreign figures from the past who have written about Portugal—from Nicolas Cleynaert and Voltaire to Henry Kissinger and Frank Carlucci, not forgetting William Beckford, Lord Wellington, Lord Byron, Hans Christian

Andersen, Miguel de Unamuno, Antoine de Saint-Exupéry, Winston Churchill and Calouste Gulbenkian—as well as with the most important names in the Portuguese historical panorama—from Gil Vicente and Camões to Amália and Lobo Antunes, but also including Gomes Eanes de Zurara, Father António Vieira, Dom Rodrigo de Castro, Almeida Garrett, Alexandre Herculano, Antero de Quental, Eça de Queirós, Cesário Verde, Teixeira de Pascoaes, Fernando Pessoa, António Sérgio and Miguel Torga. He also reveals his close attention to the production of Portuguese historiography, philosophy and literary essays, and to the new names that have more recently transformed the country's musical, literary and cultural landscape.

Barry Hatton employs a paradox to introduce the Portuguese problem or enigma. Several voices nowadays talk about an “irrelevant” and “disappearing” country, one that is struggling “in a limbo” for survival and recognition, described by the *Economist* as “the sick man of Europe,” and responsible for only 1% of the EU's GDP. All of this is true. But the spectacle of the typical Portuguese bullfight is used by Hatton to remind all those skeptics and catastrophists (and how many among them are Portuguese!) that “any country which wrestles bulls for fun can never be written off.” If only for purely literary reasons, “*Wrestling with bulls*” (the title of the book's Introduction) could have been used as its overall title, metaphorically identifying “bulls” as the many difficulties and obstacles the country has had to overcome over the eight centuries of its rich and diversified history.

Chapter one offers a geographic description of all the diverse contrasts of a small country compressed into a tiny strip of land measuring 561 by 218 kilometers and extending deep into the Atlantic Ocean with its two “island idylls”—Madeira and the Azores. Chapter two begins by evoking the small marble map in front of the Monument to the Discoveries (in the riverside area of Belém in Lisbon) that all tourists can see and walk over, and on which every continent and place that the Portuguese discovered and first set foot on are marked. Hatton's purpose is to recall the country's origins, its struggles against neighboring Spain, and also the lights and shades of the “golden age” of the maritime discoveries, during which Portugal both inspired and led the world's first attempts at globalization. In the same way, Prince Henry the Navigator is credited with the merit of giving humanity “the world in 3D,” through the groundbreaking scientific advances of the “Sagres School” (“the Silicon Valley of the day”). Hatton is, however, quick to remind us how, by becoming so widespread and suddenly endowed with the riches of the world, “the Portuguese were the architects of their own decline.”

Before the author proceeds with the diachronic narrative of Portuguese history, a further two chapters present us with his reflections and synthesis of the nation's cultural and diplomatic history. Chapter three is all about the Portuguese-speaking world. The main legacy of the Portuguese diaspora of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries was the foundation of a culture of miscegenation without "racial friction," today symbolized in a language that is spoken by some 200 million people—and whose defense and enlargement should and would be more active were it not for the meager results that Hatton sees in the activity of the Community of Portuguese-Speaking Countries (CPLP). Chapter four highlights the dynamics and problems of the historical relationship maintained by Portugal with its two most important international counterparts: Spain—leading the author to explore the origins and the present relevance of the "Iberian question"—and Great Britain, leading to a couple of pages on the main tensions that Lisbon has experienced with its "oldest ally" in the past.

Chapter five, which seeks to explore the dynamics of "Portugal's long decline and fall" and to discover the reasons for this, demonstrates the author's familiarity with some of the more classical Portuguese historical references. He begins by mentioning the famous conference, organized by Antero de Quental in 1871 in order to discuss the causes of the decadence of the Iberian countries. Hatton goes backwards and forwards in time, exploring comparisons that, though they fail to explain everything about Portugal's backwardness from a historical point of view, are useful for establishing intertemporal links between some of the nation's more pervasive and continuous impediments to its development: the relationship between the repressive anti-Semitic conservatism of the Inquisition and the closed, stifling and censored world of Salazar's Portugal; the relationship between the centralizing pattern adopted by the Absolutist regime and the continuing excessive weight that the State has in Portuguese society; and, finally, the relationship between the fading influence of the Discoveries, with their quick and easy profits, and the extravagant spending that has resulted from the misuse of the European funds that have been pouring into the country since Portugal's accession to the EEC in the 1980s. The space devoted to an analysis of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, and the early twentieth century of republican Portugal, is too short, and Hatton could certainly have given more attention to those issues, expanding on his brief notes about the international impact of the Lisbon earthquake of 1755, the importance of the French Invasions and the "Brazilian question," the increasing indebtedness of the period of *fontismo*, or the economic dire straits of the Republican regime of 1910-1926, together with all the "assassinations, murders,

kidnappings, strikes and violent street demonstrations” that marked the day-to-day agenda of the early twentieth century.

Chapters six, seven and eight constitute a triptych on the instability of twentieth-century Portugal. The first of these deals with the “Salazar years,” defining the regime of the *Estado Novo* as a “walled enclosure where authoritarianism triumphed,” the dictator himself—in what is indeed a fairly effective portrait—as “a forbidding blend of finger-wagging schoolteacher and finger-pointing priest,” and the ill-fated “Caetano Spring,” which brought the nation to an impasse with its “deliciously absurd concept” of “renewal through continuity,” while allowing the atrocities of the war in Africa to continue until the very end of the regime. Hatton’s fascination with the “Carnation Revolution” of 1974 is obvious in Chapter seven. His description of the events occurring between 1974 and 1976 is almost cinematographic in its quality and is permeated with curiosities—the origins of the Carnation flowers that gave their name to the revolution, an hilarious note on the all too frequent use of the word “*pa?*” (!) in the revolutionary lexicon, or the ideological contradictions of the PREC (the revolutionary period) in itself, keenly demonstrated in the famous TV documentary on the takeover of the *Torre-Bela* country estate. In this particular chapter, the geostrategic turnaround that began with the African decolonization and ended with Portugal’s accession to Europe in 1985-86 could have been explained in more detail, by affording greater prominence to the crucial decade of democratic normalization (1976-1986). Chapter eight deals with Portugal in Europe, beginning in 1986, or more precisely it examines the European influx *into* Portugal, and describes how that general input was badly misused. The *cavaquismo* of the 1980s signaled the arrival of “consumerism” and began a process of material improvement that was sufficient enough to grant Portugal the image of a modernizing country “on the move.” The economy boomed and, under the Socialist government of António Guterres, which followed on from Cavaco Silva’s Social Democratic consulate, the *annus mirabilis* of 1998, heralding the Universal Exposition in Lisbon, showed that “everything seemed possible.” But, as Hatton stresses, echoing what is now the consensual analysis of this period, “much of the change was cosmetic,” being based on “a credit-fuelled spending spree.” And, since after every “party” there inevitably comes a “hangover,” “if the EU aid was supposed to act like an injection of a growth hormone, it also had the effect of a narcotic. Sated by abundance, Portugal grew fat instead of building muscle.” The recent outcome of this illusion largely explains the “hard times” of the heavily overcast present moment, in which the country finds itself once again.

Chapters nine, ten and eleven leave history behind and are written in a more lighthearted and funnier journalistic style, employed by the author to chronicle some of the odd but characteristic habits of everyday Portuguese life, report on the cultural panorama of the music world, or enumerate, almost in the typical tone of a tourist guide, the specialties of Portuguese cuisine and gastronomy. Hatton thinks the Portuguese are “gentle anarchists,” who tend to live in a state of “peaceful disorder,” listing the many idiosyncrasies that together make up the national way of life: among other features, the average Portuguese is always late, excruciatingly formal, drives and parks like a madman, evades responsibility whenever possible, shows a “smart-alec” (or “*chico-esperto*”) attitude towards law and authority and hates paying taxes. Recalling the historical stereotype of “*Zé Povinho*” (a Portuguese cartoon character who appeared regularly in the nineteenth-century press), Hatton summarizes the people he chose to live with by using a string of alternate terms: “They are amiable but also irascible, deferential but indomitable, apathetic and humble, tough and dauntless, compassionate but grouchy, submissive and beleaguered, always waiting for fortune to smile on them, good company, conciliatory and tactful as well as effusive and spontaneous, given to blowing their top but eminently reasonable, with a sadness in their soul but joviality in their nature.” This very particular—Latin and “*Sebastianist*”—way of being and of doing things translates itself into *Fado* music (the theme dealt with in chapter ten), explaining why that specific musical genre can be summed up as “a celebration of ‘Portugueseness’.” It’s all about fate, sentiment and “*saudade*,” “the Word that cannot be translated,” as Hatton recognizes. Not many people are aware of the hard numbers that inspire chapter eleven: Portuguese people spend more than twice the EU average on eating and drinking, and the country has three times more restaurants per capita than the rest of the EU. What they like to eat and drink constitutes a flavorsome banquet—as “tasty” as it is “heavy”—that has already attracted the attention of both *Vanity Fair* and the *Wine Spectator*, with dishes ranging from *bacalbau*, *sopa da pedra*, *cozido* and tinned sardines to the more delicate *doce conventual* or *pastel de Belém*, to be accompanied by top-of-the-range wines and “the best coffee in Europe, alongside Italy,” says Hatton most effusively.

Returning to more serious business, the two closing chapters offer us a sharp contrast between the pessimistic and the optimistic approach to present-day Portugal. Chapter twelve tackles the issue of how “old problems,” feeding a “new crisis,” have recreated “that sinking feeling.” As “an analog country in a digital age,” Portugal’s last years have been marked by a “fall” into one of its “grimmest economic periods in living

memory.” Alongside the crude numbers, there is a qualitative problem that still lingers and “conspires to shackle the country.” As Hatton reminds us, “globalization, which the Portuguese initiated in the fifteenth century, rewards flexibility and innovation”; the thing is that Portugal seems to be ill-prepared for the twenty-first-century challenges, still revealing “bad habits”—“non-participation,” a “terror of reprisals for stepping out of line,” a State that has “a suffocating effect on the whole of society,” a general “lack of enterprise,” a legal system that works “at a glacial pace” or “low education levels.” Chapter thirteen, in contrast, builds on how—despite all of this – “adaptability,” “resilience” and “resourcefulness” are being brought to the fore by “the EU generation,” the youngsters who will conduct Portugal in the coming future, “unscarred by dictatorship and uncompromised by revolution.” Hatton is kind enough to point out how the Portuguese are their own worst enemies by always underestimating themselves, reminding the reader of all the things that actually work and show a better Portugal nowadays—from new technologies to new cultural landscapes and projects, from a renewed tourism (now a worldwide phenomenon) to a renewed outlook on Africa, from excellent national brands and corporate groups to individual achievements that cause the name of “Portugal” to echo all over the world. It is perhaps time—as Hatton says in his concluding remarks—for that old national “asymmetry” of being “self-defeating at home and excellent abroad” to wither away.

A book review on *The Portuguese. A Modern History* would not be complete without mentioning that there are some minor mistakes that occasionally accompany a text whose overall scope is truly praiseworthy. Most of these can be easily corrected in future editions and a few are the natural result of Hatton not being completely familiar with certain specific Portuguese historical debates. These include, for example, stating that Dom João VI “deserted” metropolitan Portugal or “fled” to Brazil in 1807 (page 91 or page 107), which doesn’t do full justice to what was a longstanding geostrategic plan first devised in the seventeenth century, if not earlier, and had existed ever since the small and tiny Portugal was deemed the lesser part of a transatlantic monarchy whose “jewel” was located in South America. The ideological characterization of Salazar’s *Estado Novo* oscillates between its being labeled an “authoritarian” regime and the statement (128) that the dictator’s preference leaned towards “fascism.” In fact, Salazar’s fascist “convictions” were nothing more than a disguise that never compromised his firm belief that Portugal’s only true partner had to be the UK. There is also a certain simplicity in the argument that “there was nothing sentimental about the refusal to leave [Africa in the 1960s and 1970s],”

implying that the huge burden of the colonial war was simply a question of “economic calculation.” As historiography has already pointed out, at the beginning of the 1970s, both imports from, and exports to, Europe (EEC and EFTA), represented almost 50% of all Portuguese foreign trade, while trade with Africa no longer amounted to more than 10 to 15%. The refusal to leave, then, had much more to do with ideological (i.e. political and historical) reasons arising from 500 years of colonial heritage than with any financial arguments.

Some of the minor mistakes that will need to be dealt with in a future edition are as follows: Wellesley landed in Portugal for the first time in 1808, not 1809 (90); the national anthem never had an original line that said “Against the Britons, march on!” (this is one of those false but enduring legends!) (92). Beresford was not sent to Brazil in 1820 because of the liberal military insurrection in Porto (108); rather, the military coup was out on the streets because he was absent from Lisbon, having sailed to Brazil to meet Dom João in Rio de Janeiro a couple of months earlier. The Portuguese Constitution of 1822 was never “consented to by the King and liberals alike” (108); it is true that the monarch did swear allegiance to the text upon returning to Lisbon, but he only did so to save his throne in an act that had been imposed upon him by the liberal radicals who presided over the political situation after the 1820 revolution. It is doubtful whether Dom Carlos I ever said that Portugal was “a dump” (110); republican propaganda sometimes cannot be taken as a proven historical fact. The first republican government (a provisional one) did not take office in 1911 (112), but on the very same day (5 October 1910) that the monarchy was ousted by the republican coup. In 1971, there was no longer either PIDE or Salazar, but their successors DGS and Marcelo Caetano (118). In view of the Paris Commune of 1871, perhaps the sentence “Western Europe witnessed its first revolution since 1848” with the Portuguese coup of 1974 ought to be reviewed (141). It is also somewhat problematic to consider that the PPD (the Social Democratic Party) was “right-of-centre” back in 1974 or 1975 (153). Its founder and first leader, Francisco Sá Carneiro, initially struggled to place it in the position where Nordic social democracy still stands today—to the left of centre. It was the continuing promotion of communism during the Portuguese revolution that pushed the Socialists and Social Democrats to the centre and right of the party spectrum. In Portugal, the President is not a “figurehead” (158). According to the semi-presidentialist Constitution, he certainly isn’t as powerful as his French or American counterpart, but he has much more power than the German one or, for the sake of the argument, the British Head of State, the Queen. António Guterres did not present his resignation as prime

minister in 2002 (181) but in December 2001, just after being defeated in the local elections. Fernando Dacosta is not a “late nineteenth-century writer” (202); he was born in 1945 and is still alive! Finally, the graphic chart of Portuguese economic indicators inserted on page 228 is simply incomprehensible since it offers no key to its reading.

All of this should not, however, be allowed to detract from the various merits of this book and the distinguished place that it will occupy among the few books written on Portugal by foreign observers and designed to be read by foreign readers (a Portuguese translation is already available, and is selling successfully). And the timing of its publication was also perfect: for better or worse, Portugal is making, and will continue to make, international headlines in the months and years to come, and Barry Hatton is keen to show that the country cannot be seen only in black and white. An eight hundred-year-old nation has a multitude of shades that it is sometimes difficult to grasp and fully understand, this book being a prime example of that. And for the Portuguese, it happens to be flattering, in this day and age, to read such a claim about us: “I do not doubt for a moment that the Portuguese will persevere despite hard times. There is as much chance of Portugal ‘disappearing’, as some have warned, as there is of a snowflake settling on an Algarve beach. The Portuguese remind me of those ancient olive trees you come across around the country—bent out of shape by bigger forces, flawed and suffering, but robustly surviving with an unusual beauty” (253–54).