

DICIONÁRIO DE HISTORIADORES PORTUGUESES

DA ACADEMIA REAL DAS CIÊNCIAS AO FINAL DO ESTADO NOVO

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Chagas, Manuel Joaquim Pinheiro (Lisboa, 1842 – Lisboa, 1895)

Pinheiro Chagas is a good example of a nineteenth-century historical and intellectual popularizer, who cultivated multiple genres, from history to novels, including drama, journalistic chronicles and serials. The son of an army major who had been in the Liberal Wars and became secretary to King D. Pedro V, Joaquim Pinheiro das Chagas, started out following in his father's footsteps. He attended the Military College, Army School and Polytechnic School. He received training as a journalist at Rodrigues Sampaio's newspaper *A Revolução de Setembro* (The September Revolution), and later worked in several other periodicals, where he wrote serials, literary and artistic critiques and political commentary. Although he was a soldier, he never served, and did not move beyond the rank of captain.

He directed several Lisbon periodicals. Chagas earned much prestige and was widely read in political, literary and academic circles (witnessed in the large number of reprints of some of his works), but he also had his critics, including some of the most prominent intellectuals and artists of his time, the so-called '*Geração de 70*': Antero de Quental, Eça de Queiroz and Oliveira Martins. Chagas was highly revered while alive and then fell quickly into oblivion. However, the memory of the author of *A Morgadinha of Valflor* is occasionally revived today.

One of his first publications was a lyric and nationalistic poem, the *Poema da Mocidade* or 'Poem of Youth' (with afterword by Castilho), which served as a pretext to the controversy of *Bom Senso e Bom Gosto* (Good Sense and Good Taste, 1865-66). Protected by the poet António Feliciano de Castilho, as an exponent of the official romanticism of Lisbon elite, Pinheiro Chagas resisted the literary innovations of his time – as in the *Odes Modernas* (Modern Odes, 1865) by Antero de Quental – criticising the style and particularly the poet's independent and irreverent attitude in defence of the autonomy of the writer. This was not surprising, as he had strongly criticized the Casino Conferences supported by Antero (1871), socialism, and realism in art.

Pinheiro Chagas left behind an extensive and varied body of work, representative of the cultural and political trends of his time, in a world that Eça de Queiroz described as "official, constitutional, Bourgeois, doctrinal and serious" (*Uma campanha alegre*, n.d., p.11). An example of his late romantic skills is *Morgadinha de Valflor* (Morgadinha of Valflor, 1869), a play in five acts performed for many years and translated into several languages. It is the story of a thwarted love between a young aristocrat (Morgadinha) and a plebeian, republican painter, which ends with the death of the latter. Another example is *O drama do*



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povo (The Drama of the People, 1876), whose action unfolds during the French occupation and the royal family's escape to Brazil. This narrative would warrant accusations against its author of being a guerrilla and 'petroleiro' (i.e. a communist). Yet the straightforwardness with which he confronted his opponents in the various controversies in which he was involved should be noted. For example, in the serial he published in November 1865 in the *Jornal do Comércio*, which harshly criticised the "Coimbra School" and the position of Antero de Quental, he made it no secret that there was nothing literary in his motives, it was "simply spite" that provoked "an independence that does not come queuing up in our phalanges, nor does it swear allegiance to our generals ", referring to his master Castilho (in Alberto Ferreira, *Bom Senso e Bom Gosto...*Vol.I, p.94).

He briefly taught in the Curso Superior de Letras language and literature program (January to October 1883), but then took office as Minister of the Navy in the last government Fontes Pereira de Melo. He returned to teaching in 1886 (the Fontes government fell in February of that year). He left teaching once again in April 1887, being replaced by Ferreira Deusdado. His Greek and Latin Literature program is not well-known. Pinheiro Chagas' background was not very different from that of most of his fellow professors at the institution: he attended university, but did not complete the program at the Polytechnic; he started his short-lived teaching career at the age of 40 (the relative majority of his colleagues did so between 31 and 40); he served as deputy before becoming a professor (like two of his colleagues) and worked as a journalist. He came from an urban middle class background.

Already among the political elite, Chagas, for over twenty years, was a very active presence in the public space as a liberal conservative. He was deputy first in 1871, for the Covilha constituency, linked to the small political faction of the Constitutional Party of José Dias Ferreira, sponsored by his friend Manuel Vaz Preto (local chief of Beira-Baixa). This faction would ally with the Regenerators and Avilistas in support of a Fontes Pereira de Melo government in 1871. Chagas directed periodicals such as *O Diário da Manhã* (founded in 1871) and *A Discussão* (1875, an organisation of that political group, which would later be called *Diário da Manhã* em 1876). The primacy he gave this political office – he was successively elected deputy in nine legislatures – led him to leave behind his teaching career. However, he held several other prominent public positions, including Peer of the Realm (1892), Chairman of the Board of Public Credit (1893), Secretary of the Academy of Sciences, President of the Association of Men of Letters and Journalists and a member of the Lisbon Superior Council of Public Education. How, then, should we interpret his interest in applying for teaching positions in the Curso Superior de Letras literature program several times? Undoubtedly for the symbolic capital it entailed. His career is indicative: his literary debut as a poet, playwright and journalist followed up his debut as a deputy, and then his promotion to Minister and Peer of the Realm. The relevance of rhetoric and skills of the literati in general in the promotion of policy were, in fact, well noted at the time by Eça de Queiroz and Oliveira Martins.

Eça de Queiroz, in the well-known portrayal of him written in 1880, saw Chagas as a traditionalist brigadier from the time of D. Maria I, a long-time friend of Pina Manique (a brigadier was a commissioned officer). In a dispute waged in 1880 in relation to a reference made by the novelist, he considered the Portuguese Empire of the East "one of the ugliest monuments of ignominy of all ages" (based on *História de*

Portugal by Oliveira Martins), to which Chagas countered with a pertinent comparison with the practices of other colonizers, the Dutch and the English. Eça was not mistaken in a prophecy he made about Pinheiro Chagas: he would soon be promoted in politics. However, the latter's reply was unexpected. He started by praising his critic – "How admirable is his talent and prodigious is his imagination!" – only to then counter that, in *História de Portugal* (History of Portugal), Chagas himself had referred broadly to the "vileness" practiced by the Portuguese in the East: the violence and cruelties carried out by governors of the Moluccas, by Vasco da Gama and Afonso de Albuquerque. Eça had not read the work of his opponent. Moreover, he had no sense of historical criticism because he ignored, in his view, that men *were only understood in the context of the civilization and the criteria of the time in which they live* (Letter to Eça de Queiroz 4 -1-1881, *Polémica Eça de Queiroz-Pinheiro Chagas*, pp.72-74). Pinheiro Chagas denied the anachronism. The controversy continued into early 1881, with notable passages of irony and humour, ending – something rare in Portugal – in a mutual and willing embrace that did not deny the distance standing between the two polemicists. In addition to all this were their two very distinct conceptualisations of homeland and patriotism: that of Pinheiro Chagas was nationalist, rhetorical and rooted in the past. For Eça de Queiroz, it was dynamic, critical and more focused on the present and future.

Chagas also applied twice, unsuccessfully, for the position of chair of Modern Literature (1865 and 1872). In 1872, when Teófilo Braga was selected, he presented a thesis entitled *Desenvolvimento da Literatura Portuguesa* (Development of Portuguese Literature, Lisbon, 1872), in which he contradicted the theory of ethnic unity of the Portuguese supported by Teófilo. While Teófilo identified this ethnic foundation with the Mozarabs, Chagas spoke of the Hispano-Gothic, neo-Latin race, that would have comprised different nationalities in the Middle Ages. In his view, the mixing of the Portuguese with the "foreign races" would have fortified and refined them (*Desenvolvimento da Literatura Portuguesa*, pp.12-13). In response to Chagas' objections in relation to the Mozarabs, Teófilo replied bluntly: "Would it not be a sad spectacle to have a debate with someone who is unaware of the high integrity of science?" He also rejected the term "Hispano-Roman race" he had adopted. The dispute ended there. Chagas' critical position in relation to the Mozarab theory was closer to the more substantiated position of Antero and Oliveira Martins.

Adolfo Coelho also publicly adopted a favourable position on Teófilo and lashed Pinheiro Chagas with harsh words: "a translator of novels by Alexandre Dumas, an apish imitator of Octave Feuillet, an uncritical compiler of something applauded by the mutual praise society and that they saw fit to call History of Portugal, an author of witty serials to make the reader laugh, a perfect nonentity (...) called Pinheiro Chagas" (*On the History of Portuguese Literature by Teófilo Braga – Letter from the Author*, 1872). Later, in 1888, following the brutal assault on Chagas outside parliament (the aggressor was the anarchist Manuel Joaquim Pinto), the unsuspecting Oliveira Martins would paint a very different picture of the then journalist at *O Repórter*, placing him in the "front row" of Portuguese literature, recognising his "talent, work and virtue," a combination that Martins considered rare in those times ("O atentado contra Pinheiro Chagas", *O Repórter*, 8-2-1888, vol.I, p.181).

In the field of historiography, Pinheiro Chagas' presence was felt in a broad and uneven body of work, in which we can highlight his *História de Portugal*, the first work to provide a liberal and secular perspective on

the national historic path up to the nineteenth century (in his magnum opus, Alexandre Herculano stopped at the thirteenth century). The first edition was published in instalments on behalf of a purported Society of Men of Letters in 1867 under the title, *História de Portugal desde os tempos mais remotos até à actualidade* (History of Portugal from the most remote times to the current day). The author justified this pseudonym, that would become the target of Queiroz's ridicule, invoking his initial intention to hire other collaborators. In multiple editions and abstracts, this work would contribute, however, like few others to the formation of the historical consciousness of national elites until the appearance of the History of Barcelos, directed by Damian Peres, starting in 1928. Vitorino Magalhães Godinho included it ("bulky but never boring") among other works by other authors in the awakening of his taste for history ("Palavras preliminares", *Os descobrimentos e a economia mundial*, 'The Discoveries and the World Economy', vol.I, 1981, p.9).

It is a long and detailed historical narrative based on works by other historians from Portugal and abroad: Ferdinand Denis, H. Schaefer, Prescott, Coelho da Rocha, Herculano, Rebelo da Silva, as well as on various sources. The fundamental traits of liberal narrative mark the work: a political and proactive theory of the formation of Portugal, inspired by Alexandre Herculano; rejection of mythical foundation traditions still very common in the first half of the nineteenth century – the miracle of Ourique and the Cortes of Lamego and, in part, the school of Sagres; adoption of the thesis of the covenant of the crown with the popular classes against the privileged orders; absence of feudalism in Portugal (as maintained by Herculano); increased value given to municipalism and decentralisation along with a very critical opinion of absolutism, blaming the latter, together with the Inquisition and the Society of Jesus for decadence. On all these points, Pinheiro Chagas closely followed the philosophy of history of Alexandre Herculano, without forgetting his abstract providentialism, as well as his theory on the role of the individual in history.

However, with respect to negative opinions on the monarchs of the Bragança dynasty (with the exception of D. Pedro V and D. Luís), and the Luso-British alliance from the seventeenth century, the author approached the negative criticism that, in this respect, Republican authors such as Teófilo Braga, Consiglieri Pedroso and José de Arriaga would develop. In this sense it could be said that, along with the historical novels by Camilo Castelo Branco and *História de Portugal* by Oliveira Martins, Pinheiro Chagas helped forge a negative image of the ruling dynasty in constitutional Portugal and thus, unwittingly, its decline in 1910.

On the other hand, there is an uplifting rhetoric of great achievements in the historical works of Chagas. Examples of this are his considerations on the death of D. João I. And yet, as with his master Herculano, Chagas was aware that patriotism, though a "noble passion", should not contaminate history (*História de Portugal popular e ilustrada*, 'Popular and Illustrated History of Portugal' vol. I, pp. 52-53). In a text published even before the controversy of 1880 with the future author of *The Maias*, Eça de Queiroz, he distanced himself from the declamatory excesses of patriotism (of which Queiroz accused him) as follows: "...I am the first to feel the ridiculousness of hollow declamations that we recall at every moment, repeating vague generalities for the thousandth time, the heroics of our past. But it is also fair to say that no other people has more reason to protest against the wicked forgetfulness that was voted for by the foreigner" (*Descobrimientos dos Portugueses na África*, *Conferências...* p.95). Was Chagas able to avoid these intrusions of love of country in his writing on history? Certainly not. It is understood that in the context of a

nationalist historicism in the past one can see an anticipation of his time and future progress which yearned for Portugal, and that he adopted the causalist theory in vogue at the time to the decadence of the nation from the sixteenth century, based mainly on Herculano and Rebelo da Silva. Additionally, unlike Antero de Quental in his famous *Causas da decadência dos povos peninsulares* (Causes of Decadence of Penninsular Peoples, 1871), he considered the weakening of the medieval "warrior spirit" in the East as a factor in the decline.

Chagas' idea of history is eclectic, between a pragmatic intentionality for forming citizen awareness in the context of the liberal state, social organicism, abstract providentialism and a liberal optimism led by the virtues of freedom and unilinear civilizational progress. In this respect, he can be considered representative of a liberal conception of history that values the actions of great men, without forgetting social constraints and a vague providence, a principle of determination and necessity that assisted that action. We can see this in the way he ended his *História de Portugal*: "Small nations cannot be noted in adventurous enterprises: however they may make progress in the forefront of the army of *Civilization and Labour*. and for this, it is essential that they have the *respect of the Order*. And, if in this modern world, small nations can no longer see the sun of glory shine in their horizons, they may at least always have a star, resplendent in its firmament, to serve as the North to other people, when the rest of Europe is engulfed in darkness, because this bright and serene star is called *freedom*" (Idem, vol. XII, p. 636).

The work hardly found a unanimous reception. In a report addressed to the Academy of Sciences, Castilho gave him high praise, considering it "a monument". Herculano was much more restrained in his letter to the editor published in the *Diário Popular* in 1871, revealing his positive impressions "in a work of this order the most one can ask for is that it not be lesser than the monographs that represent the result of the most rigorous studies on the subject. It seems to me that this rule was followed scrupulously" (*Cartas...*, vol. II, p.102). From the youngest members of Chagas' generation, the reception was far from favourable: Oliveira Martins saw it as a "compilation", insufficient as a "school of historical studies" ("Notas...", *História de Portugal*, vol.II, p.328), and Eça de Queiroz derided it. However, the narrative of Portugal's path as a nation constructed by Pinheiro Chagas, and which may well be considered a canonical liberal narrative, met a broad audience through the periodical press and other works of popular and educational dissemination written by the author himself, such as *História alegre de Portugal* (Merry History of Portugal, 1880) or *Resumo da História de Portugal* (Brief History of Portugal), both of which had publishing success, the latter being adopted in the First Republic (4th ed., 1916).

The author's extensive body of work even includes historical novels. What was his conception of the historical novel? For him, this genre was particularly devoted to the study of the physiognomy of an era and of its characteristic personalities, in the multitude of points of view, characters and intentions that they offer. He advocated a certain purity of the genre in his fidelity to historical truth, but at the same time recognised the need for fantasy – more fantasy than in contemporary novels. One example of this is *A corte de D.João V* (The Court of D. João V), in which he casts a critical eye over the eighteenth century, as a time of frivolity and debauchery, vices and hypocrisies.

In the press, Pinheiro Chagas advocated popular education, argued against Iberianism (notably the book

by Fernandez de Los Rios), criticised republicanism and socialism. For Chagas, socialism was a utopia that obeyed the principle of authority and was on the same side as charlatanism and Jesuitism (*História da Revolução da Comuna de Paris*, 'History of the Revolution of the Paris Commune', p.5). In socialism he saw "a highly damaging and dangerous party" because, in his view, it was opposed to freedom and set up another type of despotism. He cited as examples the fact that the Jesuit motto, which says the ends justify the means, was being espoused among the British trade unions, and that the Paris Commune had suppressed freedoms. On the other hand, he also did not spare the autocratic policy of Napoleon III. In the name of his liberal and conservative principles, he denounced all guidelines he considered despotic. Hence his attack on the Casino Conferences in parliament, in which he indiscriminately identified the positions of its participants with socialist and republican propaganda and with the ultramontane reaction (6 September 1871 session): "All the conferences were subject to the same intention; one of the speakers applauded and praised realism (...) art at the service of socialism; another spoke about teaching, how he saw in atheism the logical conclusion of all human sciences; another, finally, spoke of the decadence of the peninsula in the last three centuries, sadly very evident decadence, with the Socialist Republic presented as the only remedy" (As *Conferências do Casino no parlamento*, 'The Casino Conferences in Parliament', ed. J.A. França, parliamentary session of 6 September 1871, p.168). Chagas forgot the diversity of positions and even generations that could be found among the Lisbon Casino speakers (in the case of Augusto Soromenho and Eça de Queiroz). He considered socialism a "highly detrimental and dangerous party", seeing it as a synonym of reaction, and pitting it against values such as liberty and civilization. Moreover, he identified the internationalist propaganda with Iberism – another utopia that, in his view, called into question the concept of homeland. Pinheiro Chagas thus used the Iberist idea for purposes of political combat – which incidentally was very common in Portuguese political culture – and also in the construction of the memory of the nation. He adhered to the dark legend of Filipe II and saw a revolution in the restoration of 1640, in which the Portuguese people overthrew the despotism of the Filipe Dynasty (and not a palace coup, as it actually was).

He also referred to his support of Fontes Pereira de Melo, whom he greatly admired – he considered him the greatest Portuguese political figure of the second half of the nineteenth century ("Fontes Pereira de Melo", *O Ocidente*, vol.X, no. 292, 1-02-1887, pp.26-27). He became his Minister of the Navy and Overseas in his last government (1883-86), at a time of decisive struggle for the African territories by European powers. In 1884-85 the Berlin Conference took place, which would define a new international law on dividing the African continent. In those roles Chagas pursued developmentalist policies to extend the colonisation of Angola and Mozambique: during his term of office he began the construction of the railway between Luanda and Ambaca and between Lourenço Marques and the Transvaal, as well as the construction of bridges and telegraphic communication lines, and even the administrative organisation of the territory (as in Manica in Mozambique, a territory already disputed by the English). He also acted as member of the Superior Council of Public Instruction, and President of the Board of Public Credit (1893-95).

If the memory of Pinheiro Chagas that has prevailed has been rooted primarily in his confrontations with some of the most gifted artists of his time, it is also true that such confrontations – that he also forged – reduced his image to this dimension. We should not be made to forget that he contributed greatly to the

formation of historical consciousness of several generations of Portuguese people who read his work. His existential optimism, connected to an ingrained belief in progress, is perhaps one of the best examples of the civic consciousness of monarchical constitutionalism in its golden age. He may be considered the reverse side of the medal of a critical consciousness, as Oliveira Martins was, though his view of Portugal's "decadence" did not drive him away as much as you might think from the view of his opponents in political combat. Pinheiro Chagas was a partner and secretary general of the Academy of Sciences and President of the Association of Men of Letters and Journalists of Lisbon.

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