



*For King and Country,
and Lenin: Alternate
history fiction in
the Portuguese First
Republic*

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A Guerra das Pipas' (anthology), Editorial Divergência, 2019

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Received: 7 February 2022

Revised: 28 May 2022

Accepted: 28 July 2022

Published: 24 October 2022

DOI: 10.34626/2184-9978_2022_10-S1_003

Accepted Manuscript

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Abstract. During the First Portuguese Republic (1910-1926), several literary works, in the form of satire, fantasy or quasi-alternate history fiction imagined various outcomes for the political regime initiated in October 1910. As novels or plays, these texts became increasingly more explicit, and less symbolic, as the political regime entered its final phase. Starting from these works and making use of the comparative method between the expectations and the intentions of the historical actors of this period, this paper aims to explore how this literature presented several what-ifs. One can conclude that several “endings” were imagined: from the return of the monarchic regime to the establishment of a communist regime. It is our intention in the near future to expand this subject, gathering more texts from this period and from the *Estado Novo* (New State) dictatorship regime (1933-1974), as these texts provide a rich source of information about the dreams of some intellectual and public figures of the first decades of the 20th century.

Keywords: Portuguese First Republic; Literature; Alternate History; Satire; Revolution.

1. Introduction

The century-old years of the First Republic (1910-1926) and the First World War (1914-1918) have been extremely important for the renewal of Portuguese historiography. As far as culture is concerned, various studies have been particularly innovative, such as those on the remembrance of the First World War and women's rights during the First Republic [1]. Either way, many of the studies on the literature of that period have continued to focus on the usual themes of the writers who gravitated around the *Orpheu* and *Águia* magazines and their role (or lack of) in mobilising the Portuguese society to the world conflict [2]. It is therefore important to review this "other" less well-known (but no less innovative) literature, mainly due to their reflections on the fate of the First Republic, by using an original expedient: some features of counterfactuality. To this end, we have selected two texts for review.

The following analysis does not share the overly pessimistic view of the First Republic, such as that upheld by Vasco Pulido Valente in a well-known historiographic essay, then furthered by other scholars [3]. While the two texts raise doubts about the future and feasibility of the republican regime, it is also true that they nurture hope in its reform, by means of somewhat uncanny and paradoxical "solutions". Even if, ultimately, such "oddness" ends up mirroring and caricaturing certain political moments and practices that occurred in the First Republic, it should be stressed that one author, such as Jaime Cortesão, was a staunch defender of the regime and reacted proactively against the dictatorship begun in 1926.

The first section of this paper, under the title "Themes, Materials, and Methods", is divided into two subsections, the first of which offers brief considerations on alternate history and counterfactual history. In other words, how literature and scientific literature tend to be mixed up. The

second sub-section presents the materials and methodology used in this paper. The second section is also subdivided into two sub-sections, the first of which examines one play, while the second one analyses one satirical novel.

2. Themes, Materials, and Methods

2.1 Counterfactual History and Alternate History

In recent decades, the historiographical trend known as counterfactual, speculative, hypothetical, or virtual history has been the subject of an increasingly intense debate. Often summed up in the expressions "what if" or "Cleopatra's nose", counterfactual history had an important milestone in 1998 when *The Pity of War*, by Niall Ferguson, was published, leading to a great deal of controversy. One of its most controversial theories argued that Great Britain should not have participated in the First World War. This event would have triggered Germany's rapid victory over France and the establishment of a European Union *avant la lettre*. In simple terms, German hegemony over Europe would be achieved, but without Nazism, without the Holocaust or the Second World War, and without many of the most destructive and traumatic events that shed so much blood on the continent [4]. Objections arose to this view, including revisionist arguments. At one point Ferguson wrote that using counterfactuality is a tidy solution to fight against the determinist perspective so often used in historical analysis [5]. Nevertheless, could it not be determinism to consider that, in any case, Germany would always win in the "concert of Europe"?

For the sake of brevity, it would be impossible to discuss all aspects of this debate. It may be well to remember that influencing 20th century historians, such as E. H. Carr, were reluctant to

embrace counterfactuality. Carr took the question “was the Russian Revolution inevitable” to argue that one should rather ask: “were the Wars of the Roses inevitable? You would at once have suspected it was some kind of joke” [6]. In other words, Carr accepted that counterfactuality could be admissible to analyse recent events from a theoretical viewpoint, but it would become speculative and fictional when confronting distant pasts since it would prompt complex and odd alternate realities.

In any case, historiographic essays on previous periods abound, including on Classical Antiquity. For example, Josiah Arab reversed Arnold Toynbee’s premise on “what would have happened if, instead of dying at thirty-two, Alexander the Great had made it to old age”, proposing instead “the premature death of Alexander the Great” in the Battle of Granicus, the first great clash of the Macedonian campaign against the Persian Empire [7]. Moreover, the “what if” is most commonly used in military and economic historiography, since both areas often work with hypotheses, scenarios, and possibilities, but also with unpredictability, which will have inspired the famous axiom “the fog of war”. Niall Ferguson also formulated two premises essential for using counterfactuality in historiography, in order not to be confused with fiction or revisionism: 1) “we are obliged to construct plausible alternate pasts based on judgments about probability; and these can be made only based on historical evidence”; 2) “we must attach equal importance to all possibilities which contemporaries contemplated before the fact, and greater importance to these than to an outcome which they did not anticipate” [5 p87].

Like counterfactual history, alternate history tends to prefer the Contemporary Era. An interesting example of alternate history in Classical Antiquity is the short story *Delenda Est*. It starts from the premise of the death of Scipio Africanus

in the Battle of Ticinus (218 B.C.) cleared the way for Hannibal’s victory over Rome, during the Second Punic War, and for the emergence of an alternate reality in which Western Civilisation was never materialized [8]. Most of these works address the Second World War, such as *The Man in the High Castle*, which is among the most representative books of this literary genre. The book posits a winning scenario for the Axis powers, in which the United States of America was divided between Nazi German and the Empire of Japan [9]. Similarly, counterfactual history has developed this thesis, as seen in the *What If* book, written by military historians, in which three in twenty essays address other outcomes for the 1939-1945 conflict [10].

Furthermore, many examples of videos, stories, or even texts with some historiographical intentions, following the alternate history model, can be found in blogs or on social networks. We should keep in mind that some of the most popular video games for recreating historic battles let Napoleon win at Waterloo or, inversely, let the Austro-Russians win at Austerlitz, among so many other world history scenarios.

How does one explain this interest? Well, the genre to some extent replicates, in a stretch of fantasy and escapism, our daily mental process of making choices and carrying the responsibility for it, where we often regret not being able to change what we have done [5 pp2-3]. On the other hand, we must also consider that alternate history is close to other popular genres, such as science fiction and dystopia, and its presence “as a ubiquitous phenomenon in everyday life, in literature, in film, in philosophy, and social sciences” [11]. Finally, we should bear in mind the issue of historical revisionism, which, among others, explains why most of these alternate realities are set in battles, but also in diverse geopolitical settings. Two examples: a unified Iberian Peninsula or the

North American territory divided into North and South after a hypothetical triumph of the confederate army in the civil war.

2.2 Materials and Methods

The historian John Keegan, in his account of the First World War, wrote: “the First World War was a tragic and unnecessary conflict” [12]. There is no doubt that the greatest “what if” of the first decades of the 20th century is if Archduke Francis Ferdinand had cheated death in Sarajevo, on 28 June 1914, thus thwarting the long chain of events that led to war. There has been a great deal of speculation on the happenings on that fateful day and on the series of “errors” and “flukes” that “caused” the death of the successor to the throne of the Austro-Hungarian Empire [13]. In the same vein, questions were raised concerning the “inevitability” of the war, as the backstory already existed before the Sarajevo events, and the summer of 1914 went apparently peaceful. A book published in 2014 even presented an alternate reality in which “Archduke Franz Ferdinand Lives” [14].

Comparatively, the two major “what ifs” of the First Portuguese Republic relate to the start and end of the regime, even though participation in the First World War can be considered a third “what if”. Thus, it is possible to state that the Portuguese literature integrated more elements of symbolism and satire than counterfactuality. Only at a later time, i.e., in the context of the centenary of the First Portuguese Republic, would the genre have its first two *major* contributions. Interestingly, both books addressed the possibility that the First Republic did not come into existence. The first of these books, *A República nunca existiu* [The Republic Never Existed], is based on the following premise: by escaping the regicide in 1908, King Carlos prevents the triumph of the republicans two years later. Inspired by H. P. Lovecraft, but also by Gerson Lodi Ribeir-

ro [15], the fourteen stories imagined an alternative timeline, not necessarily coherent, ending in 2008, with the reign of King Afonso IX. In this regard, the novel *Derradeiro Suspiro Real* [The Last Royal Breath] was published in 2015. The book starts with the consideration that some historians have expressed, even if they do not endorse counterfactuality: “what if, in the early afternoon hours of 4 October 1910, Major Paiva Couceiro, in a reckless surge, had charged into the Rotunda, defeating the Republican insurgents” [16]?

We will thus attempt to interpret some of the burning issues of the period based on the play *Adão e Eva* [Adam and Eve], staged in 1921, and the political satire novel *Sem Rei nem Roque* [A Country Adrift], published in 1924. The two texts have in common trying to answer the second “what if” of the First Republic: the end of the regime. A comparative analysis was the method chosen in this paper. Moreover, the novel was a rebuttal to *Saúde e Fraternidade* [Health and Fraternity], first published in 1923. In turn, a new book on the same subject was soon published: *Deus guarde a V. Exa.* [May God Save You]. The play, on the other hand, which chronologically preceded the novel, works at a more symbolic and even philosophical level.

3. Quasi-alternate literature in the First Republic

3.1 Adam and Eve: beginning or end?

For several reasons, there are not many examples of the use of counterfactuality with regard to the First Republic period or even after. Firstly, due to Portugal’s ties with French culture, when we know Anglo-Saxon literature has always been closer to this genre. Note that the book *If It Had Happened Otherwise* [17], which included Winston Churchill’s famous essay on a different outcome of the American Civil War, was never

translated and published in Portugal. Also, the historicism of the elites prone to a positivist approach was a strong deterrent [18]. Secondly, we should point out some conservatism concerning more innovative genres. Even Jules Verne and his visions of the future were read and admired more than imitated. But the same can be said about exotic and colonial literature: only in the last years of the First Republic did a state agency create a prize to support the development of the genre [19]. Thirdly, the counterfactual elements are somewhat disguised and linked to other, more common aspects.

As we have seen, in recent years, the main “what if” of the First Republic has revolved around whether that political regime did not come into existence. However, in the early 20th century was more frequent to imagine alternative scenarios. In this sense, rather than alternate history literature, we should think of escapist literature with some counterfactual elements. Take the example of the play *The Redeemers of Illyria*, which premiered in 1916, and was written by Amílcar Ramada Curto, a Democratic Party militant who after the war joined the Portuguese Socialist Party. The focus of the play was war and revolution, with the antagonists voicing the debate that divided Portugal between interventionists and anti-interventionists (regarding the First World War). While imagining a conflict with Germany or Spain, or between the different republican groups, the author showed his concern and uneasiness about the fate of the regime. Curto’s play depicted the 1914–1916 period through a rather blurred lens, with the author even making somewhat contradictory statements about his real intentions as to whether or not to characterise those times. As he later added, the premiere of the play triggered in the audience the desire to match each character of the play to a politician of the time, and that “had never crossed my mind” [20].

In any case, the “storm of war” and the new post-1918 political environment changed the perception of reality. We should also note the importance of the October Revolution in Russia, which would inspire the foundation of the Portuguese Maximalist Federation (PMF) in 1919. This Federation, in turn, would give rise to the Portuguese Communist Party (PCP) in 1921, at a time increasingly marked by social struggles and the hardship continuously imposed in the wake of the war. These events and historical processes inspired new views, which were able to remove the symbolic filters, in order to enable a more direct and perceptible discourse, close to reality.

This, however, was not the case in the play by Jaime Cortesão, *Adam and Eve*, which premiered in May 1921. A republican and an interventionist, Cortesão headed to Flanders, on the Western Front, in 1917, serving with the Portuguese Expeditionary Corps (PEC). Author of memoirs about the conflict, regarding which he commented that “I will only speak of what I saw and heard. I suffered too much to lie” [21], the doctor and historian Cortesão premiered a play that stirred up interest among trade unions. In fact, *Adam and Eve* was “immediately put to use in proletarian circles as trade union propaganda”, due to the “attack on war profiteers and the demand for social justice that the drama partly showed” [22].

Like Ramada Curto, Cortesão combined the themes of war and revolution and, like Selma Lagerlöf, in the novel *The Miracles of the Antichrist*, became aware of the tendency towards utopian messianism in political discourse. Let us also remember Portuguese thinker Antero de Quental, who wrote: “if Christianity was the revolution of the ancient world, then the revolution is no more than the Christianity of the modern world”. It follows that the protagonist Marcos, a communist leader, is the new Adam, who seeks to restore the lost paradise of the working class after a rev-

elation in the trenches of Flanders. The religious parallels go further than this though. Besides the dialogues between Marcos and a priest, in which one of Marcos's messages is close to the aforementioned aphorism by Quental, the reinterpretation that the revolutionary man makes of the Genesis myth is also worth noting:

There was a time when the earth was Eden. All men lived freely under the tree of life, which stood in the middle of Paradise. Those who ate its most perfect fruits, which were love, wisdom, and beauty, enjoyed everlasting eternity. The tree of life had arisen to still the hunger and quench the infinite thirst of all men, and the permanence of men in the Paradise of delights was conditional on the joint possession of this tree. However, some feared that the tree would soon be bare if everyone continued to taste its fruits. It was then proclaimed that evil was born of the tree, so they enclosed it with walls and remained inside them until today, enjoying its delicious fruits. Others were forced to work and groan outside the walls, against the earth. They made them the persecuted race of slaves [23]¹.

According to this vision, those who continued to “usurp and oppress men” were filled with the “original sin”, denying the Paradise of primitive communism to humankind. Interestingly, the utopian thought does not work here only on a political level. It can be interplayed with both the Golden Age myth and alternate history. Present in many cultures, the Golden Age is, above all, the time imagined by men, the *in illo tempore* of the golden apples and the gods, the land where no one

grows old. Also, the “ideal city” of Thomas More and his followers could be seen as a reflection of the lost paradise [24]. In this sense, nostalgia and hope can be linked together. For its part, alternative history also has legendary and utopian elements, for both feed the imagination. Sometimes it is even difficult to differentiate all the nuances and subtleties of these genres and hence their many subcategories and subsequent intersections.

That's why, indeed, we can assume that the counterfactual elements of *Adam and Eve* work on a more complex level. Imagining the possibility of a perpetual Golden Age of Eden could be a reaction against that same escapism of our daily mental process of making choices and regretting them. It is worth adding that many works from the post-conflict, in the twenties and the thirties, began to express a sense of nostalgia for the *Belle Époque* lost in the turmoil of war. For instance, Joseph Roth wrote several novels and short stories about the “decline” and “fall” of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. Thus, it is also possible to foresee some of Cortesão's disenchantment with the future direction of the Republic [25]. Furthermore, in the play, the revolution came to nothing. Was Marcos echoing the republican revolution of 1910 or the crushed communist revolutions of the early twenties? The rising sun of the early dawn or the pale glimmer of the dusk? To sum up: the beginning or the end? It should be remembered that the regime under Sidónio Pais (1917-1918) was sometimes called the Nova República [New Republic] and, after his death, the Nova República Velha [New Old Republic].

Nevertheless, we should keep in mind that Cortesão would be one of the most important Portuguese historians of the 20th century, hence his labour was gathering facts and not twisting them. Of course, he discussed hypotheses, like the possibility of Brazil being known before Pedro Álvares Cabral's travel, but this argument

1 Cited text was privately translated from the Portuguese, at the author's request, by Maria Teresa Lopes da Cruz – Tradioma, with posterior adjustments made by the author regarding specific historical terms (e.g., *adesivos*).

does not make a case for counterfactuality. In the same vein, in his historical plays written during the war period, he did not alter the facts either. That's why *Adam and Eve* is an innovative play in Cortesão's output, as it sets the protagonist discussing the future from the here and now, rather than discussing the here and now from a past perspective.

In any case, in *Adam and Eve's* play, Marcos achieved likely redemption. Susana, his fiancée, said she was willing to follow him, becoming his Eve: "now I know that Paradise lives in our souls" [23 p132]. And, while according to stage directions the action of the play took place in "Lisbon; present day", the fact is that Cortesão projected an increasingly uncertain future, as the city and the country saw uprisings and savage protests. Let us remember that the year 1921 was the same year in which Bloody Night took place in Lisbon. In those events, rioting sailors killed the resigning Prime Minister António Granjo, naval officer Carlos da Maia and, symbolically, the founder of the Republic, Machado Santos. Indeed, there would be no singing tomorrows.

3.2 A crown or a red curtain falling over the Republic?

It must be said that satiric novels are not on the same level, as they identify the actors in the Portuguese political and cultural life (dozens of characters) by means of striking caricatures. From 1923 to 1924 three novels with these characteristics were published. These novels tried to imagine the future of the republican regime, mainly by envisaging the return of the monarchy and other political novelties, such as the establishment of a communist regime. In short, they created alternate timelines, although, as mentioned above, they do not entirely meet the criteria for being included in the alternate genre *tout court*, since they do not *really* rewrite the past. However, the sense

of alternate history invites the current reader to discover alternate fates for the last years of the First Republic. In particular, the book *Health and Fraternity*, published for the first time in 1923, but whose author claims to be from 1993. The counterfactuality (and satire) effect is also observable on a second (and phony) title page, having as title *A República Radical e o Bolchevismo* [The Radical Republic and Bolshevism]. Authored by Marcial Jordão and Gil Barbeira (the pseudonyms of Campos Monteiro), this phony book is the sixth and last volume of an imaginary *History of the Portuguese Republic*. And take also the example of *May God Save You*, published in 1924, which begins in 2025, with the discovery of a trunk containing documentation from the early 20th century: the so-called "Archive of the Sacred Cause". A sentence from the author is suggestive here, seeming to refer back to the mentioned Niall Ferguson's second premise, and runs as follows: "the most plausible things are not always the ones that happen" [26]. But let us start from the beginning.

Monarchic journalist Abílio de Campos Monteiro wrote *Health and Fraternity*, an undeniable best-seller, with at least ten editions, one of which in Brazil, and 40 thousand copies sold in just over six months. Its title is the republican farewell style used in official documents and letters, which is in itself an irony, a *farewell* to the Republic. The book set the tone for its followers, as it presents two political projects/periods: the "extremist Radical Republic, from 28 August 1924 to 3 March 1925" and the "Social Republic" or Dictatorship of the Proletariat, from the latter date to the restoration of the monarchy on 15 November 1926. In fact, the experience of the First Republic ended precisely in 1926, but with the imposition of a Military Dictatorship. The chapters and sub-chapters of each of these alternate projects/periods shed light on the author's critical intentions: "deluge of decrees", "new political friends",

and “strikes and scandals” – for parodying the Radical Party government; and “upside-down”, “lack of livelihoods”, “the terror: ruthless repression”, “mass arrests”, and “the Revolution devouring its children” – for parodying a triumphant Soviet regime, the Social Republic [27]. In any case, journalists and artists are also subject to criticism. The writer Júlio Dantas, ruthlessly caricatured by Almada Negreiros a few years earlier, is portrayed here presenting a play on the “Bolshevist ideal”, entitled *A Cortina Vermelha* [The Red Curtain], and then writing the novel *A Sereníssima Casa de Bragança* [The Serene House of Braganza], as soon as the monarchists threaten to overthrow the Social Republic [27 p166].

For its part, *May God Save You* is the republican replica and its title, accordingly, is nothing less than the farewell style used in the Constitutional Monarchy period. Its author, the journalist Neves Carvalho, first published the text in several numbers of the newspaper *O Rebate*. The book was subtitled “history of the political events in Portugal, following the book *Health and Fraternity* (1926-1928)”, i.e., the restoration of the Monarchy, and was authored by several pseudonyms. Like its predecessor, in *May God Save You* the (monarchic) regime is a politically unstable one, with no less than eight cabinets! In the end, after several scandals and a coup, the imagined King Manuel III abdicates and went into exile in London, as his father, the real King Manuel II had done in 1910.

A Country Adrift is probably the more developed book of the three regarding possible counterfactual elements. The monarchist and journalist Armando Boaventura imagined the happenings after 1926 with the “Restoration of the Monarchy and the Empire of the High Commissioners”. His main target, besides the republicans, were the “monarchists who give in miserably to the Republic without even a sign of rebellion, even lying and betraying”. So, for him, “the Republic was the

monarchy of these monarchists” [28]. In short, the author criticised the so-called *adesivos* [roughly translated as “turncoats”], that is, the monarchists that had *adesivado* [even more roughly translated as “turncoated to”] the First Republic to ensure their political survival. In his words, “the characters we are discussing are stooges of this political comedy that has characterised Portuguese life in recent years. The readers know them, one by one” [28 p13], in what could be a concise definition of this literary “genre”.

Comprising six illustrations by Boaventura himself, the first pages of *A Country Adrift* begin by exposing the *adesivos* or purported *adesivos*. In this way, the author imagines the reunion between Paiva Couceiro, Augusto de Castro, and Norton de Matos after the proclamation of the monarchy. In other words, this reunion was an exercise of post-Republic “reattachment” between the “last defender of the throne” in 1910 (and non-*adesivo*), the journalist and former Parliament member converted to the Republic, and the High Commissioner of Angola, respectively: “that shocking moment when those three great Portuguese... came together, embracing each other and crying with emotion” [28 p22].

Interestingly, it is not by chance that Norton de Matos is also one of the prominent figures in the mentioned alternate history novel *The Last Royal Breath*. In reality, he is a key figure linked to three major events of Portuguese contemporary history that sometimes inspire some “what ifs”:

- Since he was the main organiser of the PEC, what if Portugal did not enter the First World War?
- Since he was a very influential governor (1912-1915) and High Commissioner of Angola (1921-1924), what if Portugal had developed Angola according to his vision, instead of waiting for the sixties, in the context of decolonization?
- Since he was the presidential candidate in the

1949 elections, where he faced and gave up against the candidate of the *Estado Novo*² dictatorship, what if Portugal had become a democracy a few decades before the Carnation Revolution of 1974?

On the other hand, even if *A Country Adrift* does not retain the same alternate flavour as *The Last Royal Breath* or the also mentioned *The Republic Never Existed*, it is worth saying that all of them expressed some nostalgia for “the return of the king”. That’s why *A Country Adrift* shares some traits of the genre, no less because the author seems to be already building an alternative while the historical process is going on. Even more than *Health and Fraternity* or *May God Save You*, the truth is that *A Country Adrift* assumes that things could be different, but not so different whatsoever. Discussing the regime was one thing, discussing Portuguese idiosyncrasies was another entirely different thing. And all three authors agree on that. That is the main reason why the characters in *A Country Adrift* take turns in engaging in increasingly bizarre dialogues while waiting for King Manuel II to return from exile. Various cabinets were then formed and dismissed, mirroring the political instability of the final years of the First Republic.

One of the most important events, even more so than the arrival of the king, was when “the people rushed to the incoming supplies, with those first hours that Lisbon experienced being the happiest time of the last 17 years. Warehouses regulated by the government opened their doors and supplied the city with essential goods” [28 p157]. This refers to one of the problems inherited from war times, which was also a pretext for pointing a critical finger at the Industrial Company of Portugal and the Colonies, known as

“Moagem” (bakery was its main business). This company, which was managed by “high-profile journalists, politicians, and financiers” [29], was also responsible for overseeing two of the most important Lisbon newspapers, *Diário de Notícias* and *O Século*.

Finally, it should be added that the theme of the “return of the king” echoed a powerful element in Portuguese culture, that is, Sebastianism. Killed, or “disappeared” according to some accounts, in the Battle of Alcácer Quibir (1578), which led to the loss of Portugal’s independence, King Sebastião was the subject of an influential legend that ensured his return to rescue the country [30]. Several elements, such as the sleeping king myth, the Arthurian legend, Jewish messianism, and the Fifth Empire concept influenced decisively this long-lasting legend. What is important to say is that King Sebastião had several avatars: from the impostors of the late 16th century claiming to be him to later “impersonations”, such as King Miguel in the Liberal Wars of the 19th century [31] or even Sidónio Pais [32]. In fact, in *A Country Adrift*, the king returns, and the author promises a new book (never written) entitled *O Povo Soberano* [The Sovereign People]. The aim was to create a “political and final charge of the events related in this book” [28 p187]. Ultimately, more than considering the restoration of the monarchy, finally achieved with the return of the king, Boaventura reflected on the “Portuguese crisis”, a “moral crisis” dating back to 1834 when Liberalism and the Constitutional Monarchy triumphed over Absolutism. This was, perhaps, his greatest what if: what if the Constitutional Monarchy had not triumphed in 1834 with a vanquished King Miguel?

4. Conclusion

Although other texts published at the time or around the time of the 100th anniversary of the

First Republic had considered alternate historical realities about that regime, such as *The Republic Never Existed* and *The Last Royal Breath*, the fact is that the texts discussed herein are quite interesting. They are the first approach to a theme that we intend to pursue in future research, based on any existing works from the *Estado Novo* period.

Although the texts discussed have some counterfactual elements, the fact is that they do not fall completely within the alternate history genre, given that they imagine possible futures and not so much the “other facts”. These texts were influenced by the Portuguese participation in the First World War, the echoes of the October Revolution in 1917, and the social and political instability during some historical moments of the republican regime. They also provide a rich source of information about the dreams of some intellectual and public figures of the first decades of the 20th century. Naturally, the science fiction elements, usually present in this literary genre, are non-existent here.

Several reasons could explain the lack of explicit counterfactual elements: the cultural ties with France, and not so much with an Anglo-Saxon literary world keener to the alternate history genre; the conservative approach towards science fiction; and the subtle and complex level that these texts approach counterfactuality. In any case, in their description of rebellions, uprisings, revolutions, and other forms of political unrest, the authors reveal the dreams, fears, and expectations, imagining different fates for the First Republic, some of which were “logical”, others uncanny. The analysis of these two texts, as well as several others, allows us to conclude that the major “what if” of the First Republic had to do with the issue of the “end” of the regime. Thus, the characters of all texts are all too often politicians, journalists, and artists from those times, but also metaphors of ideas and values. Finally, note that these char-

acters, for the most part, caricatures, belong to the upper reaches of society, moving around in a republican world full of paradoxes devised during the regime’s brief sixteen years of existence.

5. Round Table Insight

My participation in the Oral Presentation Round Table #2³ at the *1st International Conference of ‘What if?...’ World History*, from 24th to 26th November 2021, was a very interesting one since the theme is rather unusual. I found it very useful that a previous discussion, moderated by the chairperson, began a couple of days before the actual round table started. In this regard, all the speakers knew the main issues of one another. It is also worth mentioning that despite the different approaches of the presentations – Lisbon in 2000 from a *Belle Époque* point of view; quasi-counterfactual fiction in the Portuguese First Republic; and the child not invented as naturally creative – the dialogue was engaging and, at some point, managed to find several common grounds.

Acknowledgments

I would like to thank Ana da Silveira Moura for all her support during the review process.

This work was supported by the CEIS20 - Foundation for Science and Technology [UIDB/00460/ 2020].

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3

Full presentation available at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=N4bxQfYOQA4>

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