

# ART, EMPIRE AND HUMANITY

A Sociological Study of Relationships Between  
Artistic Style, Social Structure and Cultural Concepts of Race  
in Sixteenth Century Portugal

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by

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"Art, Empire and Humanity: a Sociological Study of Relationships Between Artistic Style, Social Structure and Cultural Concepts of Race in Sixteenth Century Portugal."

#### ABSTRACT

The study is a sociological investigation of links between the imperial activities of the Portuguese in the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries (the Manueline period) - their aesthetic sensibilities, especially as revealed in the artworks produced during that time - and the nature of Portuguese race consciousness during the period. In its methodology and presentation of data, the study stresses the importance of "the visual" as a dimension of culture, as a means of making possible insights into relations between aesthetics and culturally constrained morphologies.

The methodological focus of the work develops from a notion of 'iconology', which suggests that at a deep level there exists a relationship between culture, social structure and iconography. Iconology is shown to have an affinity with commodity fetishism, the two concepts jointly informing our appreciation of culture. The significance of race consciousness is considered within the context of conceptions of ideology. The importance of the aesthetic dimension is stressed.

The historical circumstances underlying manueline Portuguese aesthetic and race consciousness are examined with special emphasis upon the perceived tendency for the development of egalitarian systems of human classification.

Features of the manueline style in art are identified. These are related to the social, cultural and imperial circumstances of the Portuguese. Visual and pictorial data are considered for the light which they can shed upon the structure of Portuguese aesthetic and racial consciousness. The colour plates incorporated in the study are drawn from a unique collection compiled for the purposes of this research project.

The anthropological implications of the manueline world view are considered. Its novelty is explored and its significance for our own appreciation of aesthetic sensibility and cultural domination is questioned.

The theoretical orientation of the study informs an anti-foundational approach to the appreciation of the variety of human cultures.



FRONTISPIECE

*Adoração dos Reis Magos (1501 - 6)*

*Mestre do Retábulo da Capela-mor da Sé de Viseu  
Grão Vasco*



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*Frontispiece*

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This study offers a novel interpretation of Portuguese history and culture; any error of fact or interpretation is entirely my own.

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## PREFACE

definitions: 'Manueline'.

i. That period of Portuguese history during which Dom Manuel I ruled, (1495-1521). Held by some commentators as a period in which there developed an egalitarian structure of race relations, unique amongst the western imperial nations.

ii. Primitive artistic style peculiar to Portugal during the reign of Dom Manuel I, thought to reflect the exoticism of the voyages of Discovery.

This study asks whether there developed a novel anthropology in Manueline Portugal, characterised by a pluralistic egalitarianism, and expressed through an aesthetic which gave a positive evaluation to exoticism and difference. The significance of this for our own appreciation of aesthetic sensibility and cultural domination is questioned.

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## INTRODUCTION

Rationale, Structure and Method



## INTRODUCTION: RATIONALE, STRUCTURE and METHOD

### A. RATIONALE

Empirically, the present study investigates links between the imperial activities of the Portuguese in the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries, their aesthetic sensibilities - especially as revealed in the Manueline art works produced in Portugal during that time, and the nature of Portuguese race consciousness during the period. These themes might appear at first to be somewhat arcane, but they are deliberately chosen because they bring together debates current within sociology, history and philosophy, and show that these debates can take us further in our understanding of the human condition, and its historical embeddedness.

Theoretically, the themes and issues raised by this period of history, and the treatment given to it in this study cover: the significance of the 'aesthetic', and especially of visually realised art forms, for the understanding of human culture and society; the importance of the sociology of knowledge in providing us with an understanding of the nature of knowledge and ideas; the significance of systems of human classification and their historical realisation - especially race consciousness; possibilities for egalitarian social structures which derive from cultural pluralism.

All these themes are of relevance to our appreciation of the context of Portuguese race consciousness in the period at hand. Our understanding is set against the context of

parallel debates now joined within the twentieth century cultural sciences, with, on the one hand propositions that we are now entering a 'post-modern' phase of culture, and on the other attempts to establish ways forward in the humanities and social sciences which reject positivistic notions of scientific methodology in favour of an 'anti-foundational' conception of human being.

The purpose of this introduction is to show the reader ways in which these ideas are brought together in the creation of a suitable problematic for the study at hand, and then to go on to discuss the structure and development of the arguments which this entails, the kinds of empirical data to be used and the appropriate methodologies for their creation.

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#### An obscure history

Although the Portuguese discoveries were documented by a series of 'Chroniclers', there remain today serious problems as to the interpretation of the history of the period. In the first place, chroniclers were chosen by Kings or Princes in order to write 'authorised' accounts of what took place, and in this way the 'author' and the 'authority' soon merged to create an official interpretation which would set out the passage of events according to the perceptions of those in dominant positions.

For example, we shall see in subsequent Chapters that the persona of Henry the Navigator is a creation founded upon

the contemporary Chronicles, but it is a creation which inflates the role of one man way beyond the probable importance which he had at the time. This creation came especially from England, and is to be read as a contribution to a 'great men' theory of history, rather than one which looks to wider structural and cultural factors. In fact, it was the demise of his brothers which left the way clear for D. Henrique subsequently to create history in his own image - or imaginining.

A second factor hindering the uncovering of Portuguese history is a relative lack of original source materials. Not only did the illustrious period of imperial adventure eventually collapse under the domination of Spain in 1580, but two hundred years later the city of Lisbon - centre of cultural activity - was destroyed by the Great Earthquake, fire and tidal wave of 1755. What the predations of the Spanish left untouched, the forces of nature largely destroyed. Of course, we do not know the extent of such devastation but as much of Lisbon, including the royal palace, was totally destroyed in 1755, we can estimate that between them these two Portuguese disasters jointly account for much of the difficulty we now have in accessing material from the time of D. Manuel I.

A third factor compounds this in a whole series of explicit and implicit ways - namely that Portuguese culture is 'foreign' to an English observer and contains within it cultural practices alien to a north European mind. To begin

with there is the problem of language. Portuguese has been called the European language which most closely approximates to Latin, but at the same time it is recognised as a difficult language for anglophones to learn. Then there are other cultural practices, such as religious beliefs, which perhaps evade the sensibilities of observers from the Protestant/rationalist north of Europe. Portuguese commitment to Roman Catholicism, too, is a further cause of problems with the accessibility of materials, since some of the relevant documents from this period of history must surely be lying even now somewhere on a shelf in the Vatican Library, in some recess, uncatalogued and forgotten; effectively inaccessible.

Portuguese culture and history, especially the society of D.Manuel I, is therefore somewhat hidden from the gaze of a twentieth century British sociologist; but in this there is cause for hope rather than for despair, since it renders largely irrelevant positivistic approaches to an understanding of the period, and calls for a theoretical orientation which can gain a purchase in such sparse conditions. Anti-foundational theory is well suited to provide a means of entry into just such a situation. At this point we shall focus upon some of the insights of Gadamer in order to provide a first set of justifications for the approach taken in this study.

Gadamer offered the modern social sciences the possibility of constructing a methodological orientation which transcended the increasingly sterile opposition of positivistic and interpretive sociologies of the early

twentieth century. His approach explicitly entails the incorporation of the "prejudice" and "self reflective" aspects of interpretation into the analysis of cultural phenomena.

Rather more schematically, Gadamer proposes three main facets of a social scientific approach (1975): the awareness of the prejudice of the analyst; the self reflection of the process of interpretation; and the "effective historical consciousness" which results from the action of the original text or phenomenon upon the interpreter.

"...the analysis of social action must begin with an understanding of the actor's concepts. But Gadamer provides precisely what is missing in the interpretive approach: a legitimation of the integration of the actor's concepts with the conceptual scheme of the interpreter...Gadamer's position...precludes the possibility that any one approach can be declared 'true'. Because interpretations necessarily change with interpreters and are the result of the fusing of horizons, one 'objectively correct' interpretation is not a possibility for Gadamer." (Heckman, 1986):150

This viewpoint insists upon the impossibility of providing a naive or unaffected reading of the original text. All approaches to sensory data necessarily involve the original intentions and motivations (both implicit and explicit) of the author, and also the intentions and motivations of the interpreter. The interpreter, in Gadamer's

scheme of things, brings to their role the prejudices of their own life circumstances. These provide the filter which acts to select phenomena and data for their relevance, and also the interpretive frame within which they will be 'read'.

"At the beginning of all historical hermeneutics, then, the abstract antithesis between tradition and historical research, between history and knowledge, must be discarded. The effect of a living tradition and the effect of a historical study must constitute a unity, the analysis of which would reveal only a texture of reciprocal relationships." ( Gadamer, 1975 ):251

Gadamer, then, provides for the possibility of our entering into a dialogue with historical data in order to construct our own legitimate interpretation. It will be the task of a later part of this introduction to pursue this logic of development as it relates to methodology.

#### **An alternative to the 'modern' cultural form?**

An anti-foundational methodology founded upon Gadamerian principles of hermeneutics finds itself in accord with certain aspects of the critique of the 'post-modern' perspective, but to what extent is this of relevance to the present study of fifteenth and sixteenth century Portugal? In order to answer this we shall review some selected themes of the post-modern critique before going on to locate the study of Portuguese race consciousness within this context.

'Post-modernism' has become something of a fashionable theoretical position adopted by researchers in the humanities

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and social sciences, and yet there remains a reluctance amongst those who espouse these views to actually commit themselves to such a position. In part this is due to that notion which eschews essentialist thinking and declines to accept the fundamental validity of any claim for objectivity within a world-view. Post-modernism thus takes its own perspective sufficiently seriously in so far as it reflexively refuses its own existence. Whilst we can accept the problems of defining a discrete body of knowledge in this area, it is useful to draw from the work of Featherstone (1988) some of the major post-modern perspectives within social enquiry. Featherstone sees the debate as focussing upon a shift in the significance accorded to culture - from 'moved' to 'mover'. Alongside this, there is the emergence of a new social totality, characterised by cultural pluralism, which comes about due to shifts in the imperial relationships.

For Featherstone, this extends into the arts in a number of ways, including the development of a stylistic promiscuity and mixing of codes, together with an increasingly artful and exotic decoration in artworks. We shall find below that the notions of stylistic and cultural pluralism, and the element of exotic decoration, are necessary themes in our appreciation of Manueline art, the Portuguese aesthetic sensibility and the associated forms of race consciousness.

A question which we come to address is whether the exoticism, cultural pluralism and implied egalitarianism of Manueline culture signalled the development in Portuguese society of a novel anthropology which offered a possible

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alternative to the type of modern anthropology which was to be associated with the rise of industrial society. We come to question the divergence of Portuguese society from a 'mainstream' development which drew its inspiration from classical and renaissance culture. Of course, to find that the Portuguese situation differed from a notional European or industrial mainstream does not necessarily imply synonymity between 'Manueline' and 'post-modern'. However, the identification of forms or aspects of similarity might allow us to begin to move towards a sense of the longer term embeddedness of our own perspectives towards aesthetic sensibility and human classification within the overall development of a European cultural context.



## B.STRUCTURE OF THE STUDY

Following Gadamer, Heckman suggests that a process of analysis and interpretation has three basic stages,

- i) the definition of the historical and cultural horizon of the actors involved in the event
- ii) the imposition of a different horizon of meaning on to the actors' perceptions through the act of interpretation
- iii) an awareness of the action of the analysed phenomenon upon the act of interpretation.

In the current study we vary this order, beginning with the abstract notions contained within the theoretical discussion of the problematic, moving through a consideration of relevant historical and cultural factors in the Portuguese situation. Finally we are in a position to explore our visual data and to assess its significance, both in the particular context of Portuguese culture and of the more general question of the divergence of Portuguese anthropology from other European developments. There are, then, three major areas of development which we shall now review in a schematic form in order to permit the reader to relate the structure of the study to the development of the argument.

### 1.The development of a horizon of meaning, contextualising interpretation. (Chapters One to Four)

The first part of this study sets out a number of theoretical perspectives which orient the overall development of the research. It is the major presupposition of the

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approach adopted here that visual data drawn from the art products of a society, in association with historical and theoretical dimensions, can shed light upon certain aspects of culture. This presupposition is justified in terms of the iconological approach of Erwin Panofsky. This claims that the "basic attitudes" of a cultural group, be it national, religious, historical, are condensed into the art works produced in that culture. The art work thus becomes an indexical form of documentation, and it becomes potentially possible to 'read' from art works something of the conditions of the society which gave rise to it. However, what is read depends not only upon the condensed symbolic structure of the art work, but also upon the frame which is used for interpretation.

This notion of an interpretational framework is given substance in the first part of the study, which begins by attempting to define the social and historical underpinnings of the aesthetic. This reveals a very large element of cultural determination within the aesthetic dimension of human sensibility. However, it appears untenable to say that the aesthetic response is completely determined by other aspects of society and culture; we draw back from the idea that it might be purely epiphenomenal since there seems to be a quality associated with the aesthetic response which indicates an element of autonomy. Consequently we seek to question the extent of the determination and ask whether an independent aesthetic can be recognised.

This discussion leads on to the explication and

evaluation of Panofsky's iconological approach which is recognised as centrally important for our methodology.

In Chapter Two we question accounts which propose a structural determination of symbolic systems. The importance of culture as a social determinant is stressed. In attempting to provide a means of understanding the formal qualities of human knowledges and ideas, we find that a Marxist approach towards ideology, informed by theories of alienation and reification, accounts for form at the expense of content. Mannheim, too, is able to account for formal qualities of knowledge but is also deficient when we seek to explain particular knowledge contents. We find that Durkheim can provide an account of the structure of culture, but one in which classification systems reflect social structure.

When we turn to the history of ideas, we find that Lovejoy's use of the notion of 'unit ideas' lacks any serious theoretical grounding, but that his identification of a quality of metaphysical pathos alerts us afresh to the aesthetic dimension.

Developing out of these concerns, we come to consider whether systems of cultural classification exist at the superficial level of culture, or whether they have a deeper significance. In Chapter Three we seek to establish race consciousness as part of the aesthetic mode of society, and further, to understand the role of the human body as a metaphorical basis for the development of culturally located systems of symbolic order.

Marx's theory of the fetishistic nature of the

development of commodity value is found to be a useful basis upon which to establish an understanding of the morphological aspects of culture. We reject an economic determinism such as that offered by Lukacs, finding more acceptable conceptualisations of the social composition of knowledge in Durkheim and Jung. It is, however, with Douglas that we reach an explicit elaboration of the significance of the biological body as a cultural metaphor.

Finally, we reprise our arguments to show how iconology and commodity fetishism can legitimately be taken together, and how they jointly inform our appreciation of culture. We stress the significance of the aesthetic dimension, and see how its recognition can lead analysis in differing directions.

## **2.The definition of the historical and cultural horizon of the actors. (Chapters Five to Eight)**

A transitional stage in the development of the study is reached when we come to consider the relatedness of the Portuguese 'renascimento' to the general process of renaissance in Europe, a theme which continues to inform the study, finally forming a major basis for the concluding statements.

This consideration begins in Chapter Five, which takes up the argument concerning ways in which the notion of cultural renaissance in Europe can become reified. Looking to the ways in which art forms embody anthropological and morphological perspectives of a culture, we proceed to a

consideration of the distinctiveness of the Portuguese renaissance within the wider European process.

Before detailed consideration of this can begin, further historical evidence is called on to reveal more of the ideosyncratic development of Portuguese race consciousness. The major contributions of Freyre and Boxer are used as a beginning point in the discussion of the claim that the Portuguese experience of imperialism, both as dominator and dominated, lead to an egalitarian attitude to race within Portuguese culture itself, and in the colonial structures which were put in place at around the time of the Manueline period. Particularly important in this phase of the argument is the consideration of the religious development of Portuguese culture. Race and religion develop as two intermingled facets of the culture with now one and now the other acting to stimulate social change.

Eventually we are able to suggest an aesthetic structure underlying Portuguese race consciousness which typically differed from the north-west European attitude by adopting a much wider notion of what counted as 'white' skin.

Specific historical circumstances underlying Portuguese attitudes towards human classification are given further examination, especially in the context of a focus upon the egalitarian characteristics of three religious developments which have taken place in south-western Iberia during the Christian period: Priscillianism, Arianism and Islam. The question is raised as to the implication of these ideological systems for the notion of the overall openness of Portuguese

anthropological orientations.

Lastly, the peculiar circumstances of Portuguese historical development prior to the Manueline period are considered in the context of the Revolution of 1383. This revolution had characteristics which placed it in the van of European social transformation. It was concerned with the overturning of the existing social order and its replacement by a new order representing an alliance of bourgeois commercial and Jewish interests. This revolution can be seen to have propelled Portugal out of the medieval period and into the modern colonial era. Its significance for us is that the Portuguese historical development moved away from medievalism, but appears rather to have gone its own way following its historical and cultural ambiguity than to have fitted in with a wider European process of becoming modern. Consideration of the aesthetic and cultural achievements of the society in subsequent chapters indicates that this development moved towards a pluralistic egalitarianism, a characteristic which has now been taken as a feature of the 'post-modern'.

### 3.The action of the analysed event upon the act of interpretation. (Chapters Nine to Eleven)

This third stage of the methodological development of the study we take here to be the identification of the characteristic features of the Manueline style, consideration of the visual and pictorial evidence which has been gathered

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and selected, and an investigation of the novelty of the Portuguese approach.

We turn first to the Manueline style itself. Portuguese perspectives on the style are considered, prior to a detailed examination of the specific architectural, sculptural and pictorial forms through which the style is today known to us. We find that certain distinct characteristics can be associated with Manueline achievements, especially in architecture and sculpture, which have an indirect relevance for the subject of the study. Three dimensional art forms do not give direct evidence of Portuguese race consciousness; however, we do find a willingness to employ exotic and naturalistic motifs in order to express the developing hemispheric experience of the Portuguese discoveries. Whilst they could have become ethnocentric and inward looking in the face of the encounter with a wide diversity of cultural and natural forms, the tectonic artists chose rather to adopt novelty and experimentation as the characteristics of their public statements.

In the field of pictorial art we find that Manueline painters relatively frequently depicted non-european peoples, especially young men, but that the context within which this depiction took place was noticeably formalised. In most cases this context is the Adoration of the Magi Kings at Epiphany. In art historical studies of this scene, the development of a black Balthasar takes place alongside the interpretation of strategic biblical texts. The image of the black king is

essentially north european, and travels through German and Flemish art during the medieval period and into Portugal during the fifteenth century. This artistic convention served to express Portuguese attitudes to the human diversity which was encountered on the voyages of the navigators. It also serves to mark off Portuguese from Italian and Spanish art, and to underscore the ambiguous position of Portuguese culture within the wider european context.

Subsequent analysis of the Manueline oeuvre shows it to present a relatively compact and homogeneous body of work, and to form the basis of the visual ideology of the Portuguese elite groups. In fine art the black kings exist within a condensed symbolic structure which ties them into the religious, political and diplomatic aspirations of the Portuguese hegemonic elite. Nearly all the black kings depict a youthful power and vitality which was seen as offering help and assistance in the Portuguese quest to unlock Christianity from its Mediterranean cage. The black Christians of Africa gave the hope that Islam, the old enemy and sire of the Portuguese nation, could be surrounded and nullified. Race consciousness is seen to play a positive role in the visual ideology along with religious and imperial considerations. Additionally, formal qualities of these depictions are found to point towards an overall assessment of the formal dimensions of Portuguese race consciousness. At the same time, however, the qualities of masculine youth and vigour also reflected the qualities sought after in the enslaved black



African with whom the Portuguese were familiar. The image therefore reflects the ambiguity of Portuguese culture, an ambiguity which we remark upon throughout this study.

Moving towards an overall conclusion, the relatedness of the Portuguese renascimento to the experience of the discoveries marks out Portuguese renaissance culture from the wider European experience. Within this novel experience, relationships of aesthetic sensibility, art forms and race consciousness interacted to produce a distinctive type of cultural formation.

Manueline Portugal was not, however, a unity. Within the culture there was represented a conflict of interest between traditionalists, humanists and a group of innovators including navigators, imperialists and merchants. The manueline style reflects this social competition and has to be appreciated as a product of its particular historical location. Portugal was marginal to Europe in many ways, and the Portuguese experience of cultural renewal reflected this marginality and turned its focus of attention out from Europe towards the wider world.

The development of a novel anthropology, which had a positive evaluation of cultural difference, became enmeshed in the overall process of economic, political and cultural development at the time of the discoveries. Cultural and economic factors conspired to celebrate the benefits of cultural pluralism and the exotic through the Manueline style. The style reflects the Portuguese appropriation of

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humanity and nature, and offers an accompanying aesthetic structure within which this can be symbolically expressed. Based as it was, however, upon the ideosyncratic social and cultural structures of Portuguese imperialism, the style soon became supplanted. The anthropological potential contained within it was largely dissipated before the loss of national self determination in 1580. However, the Manueline achievements still resonate with their concerns for the natural world and the diversity of human experiences.

### C.METHODOLOGY AND FIELDWORK

Our immediate concern is to enquire into Gadamer's approach to the hermeneutical significance of the work of art. He suggests that the modern attitude towards cultural products results in their being detached from their connections with life and their becoming 'framed'. He says: "...we make every work of art, as it were, into a picture". This has implications for the way in which we view cultural products; they must be detached from the gallery determined form of aesthetic consciousness to which modern observers have become accustomed; they cannot be taken solely as two dimensional representations since this only reinforces the crisis of the picture produced by the modern rational mind.

Gadamer says that we have to realise that pictures are not simply pictures, but "demand room"<sup>(12)</sup>. Whilst he declines to elaborate what exactly this implies, we here propose that the room required by pictures is both temporal (i.e.chronic) and interpretive. Temporally, they require us to bring into contact both the aesthetic dimension of the form and content of the art work with the ongoing historical development of the societies in which it is both produced and received. Regarding interpretation, pictures require that we bring the intentions of the artist into confrontation with the prejudices of the observer.

Further than this, Gadamer suggests that the creation of pictures is a form of representation which reacts back upon that which is represented. The picture is no simple mirror image which reflects the original, but an autonomous

representation, which can have "an effect upon" the original. It is only in the religious picture that we can observe "the full ontological power of the picture" since the religious picture provides a metaphysical communion with the subject, namely the divine.

"Word and picture are not mere imitative illustrations, but allow what they represent to be for the first time what it is." :III

This point has implications both for our subject matter and for our methodology. As we shall find in our study of Portuguese Manueline art, it is the interpenetration of religious art with a wider history that creates for us an understanding of the aesthetic realisation of Portuguese race consciousness, an understanding peculiarly our own and only partially determined by the original motivations and understanding of those who initially created the art works. Whilst Gadamer states, "The picture contains an indissoluble connection with its world", we are left to claim that its world is both that of its origination and that of its interpretation.

Gadamer provides us with a way of approaching the meaningful quality of a picture. He also suggests to us that we cannot overlook the pictoriality of the world. In the context of the present study, with its creation and use of pictorial data, we have to keep in mind the methodological point that data and analysis interact with the original to produce a novel interpretation.

At this point we can indicate some of the considerations

raised by the photographic evidence used in the body of the study.

It is not the intention, here, to suggest that the visual evidence which is included in this study offers an objective perspective on the art works of Manueline Portugal. As far as is known, the illustrations selected here form part of a photographic collection unlike any other to be found in the public domain, either in the UK or in Portugal. There must be other photographic collections, but these are not publically available.

Also, and this turns our attention to the focus of these illustrations, those collections concerned with Manueline art forms tend to be dominated by architecture rather than painting. For example, the 1987 Exhibition at Canning House, London, which focussed on churches; the 1988 Exhibition at Évora University, in Portugal, and the 1989 Exhibition at the Barbican Centre in London entitled 'In the Wake of the Navigators', both of which had strong general architectural concerns. Former approaches to Manueline art works may well have been too concerned with architectural forms and have suffered from an oversight of the pictorial. If the reader finds this strange, then it can possibly be accounted for in the predominance of Nuno Gonçalves, who lived and worked in Portugal immediately before the Manueline Period, and whose painting, until recently, was thought to outshine all other Portuguese painting. Also, the only substantial study of Manueline style, ( 'O Manuelino' by dos Santos ), itself concentrates upon architecture. There are,

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however, historical reasons for this, including the fact that dos Santos was writing during the Salazar dictatorship, which seems to have had a predominant concern with architecture and an aversion to painting and other, literary, art forms.

The illustrations contained here therefore reflect the concern of the study with forms of human classification, and also with the 'exotic'. They do not present an overall objective impression of Manueline art. Indeed, these representations are included because they illustrate the argument being advanced in the research.

#### Method and fieldwork

The approach to the empirical research necessary to generate the historical and pictorial data underpinning this study is made more difficult by the multiplicity of representations at play at any and every part of the work. The empirical focus of the study draws together Lowenthal's notions (1985) of the past and the unknown, with Spitzer's notions (1988) of history as representation. Compounding this, there is the representational form of much of the pictorial art work, which is further caught up in the processes of photographic and reprographic imaging. On top of all this, the cultural milieu of the original empirical data is, to non-Portuguese at least, 'foreign' and conducted in a difficult tongue.

Attempting to claim to have 'solved' the problem of trans-historical and cross-cultural understanding and interpretation is not the purpose of this study; as we have already indicated above. Here, the purpose is to show, as

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simply as possible, the different methods used to gain access to the materials which form part of the data of the research, to make clear the way in which the process of selection was structured, and to bring out some of the implications of the approach adopted towards empirical data.

All research is a process. It develops and changes along with developments and changes in both observer and knowledge. This processual nature is often obscured in 'final' accounts of research outcomes for a variety of reasons, ranging from a fear of 'failure' (Clarke, 1975) to a need to meet the requirements of sponsors' confidence in one's own competence (Shipman, 1988). When we read accounts of research activity they have about them a progressive development and formal structure which aids the communication of ideas from the writer to the reader. And yet research is a process. It develops and changes with the circumstance of the researcher. As a process it becomes reified and sets its own imperatives for defining, accessing, comprehending and analysing the empirical world to which it attends.

In the case of the multiple forms of representation which stratify the empirical base of this study, we shall here refer to two main concerns, namely, the cross-cultural (national, historical and linguistic) and the pictorial.

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#### A. Cross-cultural concerns

The problem for the researcher is that whilst national, or ethnic, historical and linguistic factors may be kept analytically distinct, in practice they form inextricable facets of experience. According to Berenson (1984) either you believe that you can engage in cross-cultural study, or you do not. Berenson does, and in a different way so do I. But it is not as simple as Berenson claims. We saw earlier Gadamer's approach to the hermeneutical problems of cross-cultural and historical research. Others, e.g. Jarvie, 1983; Tibbets, 1985, come to differing conclusions as to the problems involved. We shall not rehearse these arguments here, but will attempt to show how the process of cross-cultural understanding was tackled in this research project.

#### Biography and problematic

Initial contacts with literature relating to Portuguese culture came in the context of studies in the sociology of knowledge. This served to underline the claim which I had come across some years earlier, when in pre-revolutionary Portugal, that the influence of Portuguese colonialism upon race relations had been benign. This might have remained at the level of the unconscious were it not for the Revolution of 1974, lead by the Armed Forces Movement, which took as its signal the song "Grândola vila morena" (Grândola, dark-skinned perhaps moorish, town) sung by José Afonso. I began to suspect that there existed as yet uncovered questions of contemporary interest. It was not, however, until two further



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biographical themes were to come into conjunction that I would see the potential for the scope of this research.

Much earlier I had sold paintings and prints for a living. This began for me an interest in visual and especially pictorial aspects of culture. Somewhat later, this knowledge began to be constrained by a developing sociological awareness of the cultural embeddedness of artefacts. It was only when I subsequently became interested in the development of modern forms of imperialism, that I came across C.R.Boxer's work on the Portuguese. Boxer directly addressed the problem of race relations in the Portuguese empire, and did not mince his words concerning deficiencies in current knowledge. This enabled me to see that in the consideration of relationships between art forms and race consciousness in Portuguese history, there were also links with the aesthetic sensibilities and structures of classification of our own times, and that contemporary developments in social theory could help shed light on these.

Up to this point I only had access to English language sources. Now there was a need to get closer to the Portuguese original. I began to learn Portuguese from a variety of taught, self-paced, structured and unstructured sources. Eventually I became able to read Portuguese and then to understand it as spoken in the north of the country; to this day I have more difficulty the further south I travel. Having developed this ability, I pursued bibliographic sources in the UK and eventually came across what I believe is the most valuable collection of original materials in this country, at

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Canning House in London. With access to this and other specialist libraries it was eventually possible to track down a great deal of ethnographic, historical and art-historical materials, although some could only be obtained in Portugal. Contacts with the Anglo-Portuguese Society (TAPS), the Anglo-Portuguese Foundation (Cultura), the Cultural Attaché of the Portuguese Embassy in London and with Canning House filled many of the gaps in my knowledge.

#### Fieldwork

Collection of empirical data could not be successfully completed had all the research been carried out in the UK. There remains a problem of a lack of published materials. To a great extent this reflects the lack of a developed academic literature in Portugal itself, still reflecting the forms of censorship which operated during the Salazar Dictatorship. Recent developments in post-revolutionary Portugal have begun to open up debate; entry into the E.C. is cited by many as the means by which the lasting effects of the fascist closure will be outgrown, although it will probably be the tourist trade which opens up the culture as a whole. A problem with the tourist perspective on Portugal, however, is that it is an activity compressed into a narrow and highly defined strip of the country. For the present study the only benefit of this new activity lay in the availability of cheap flights from London to Faro. This meant that an 'amateur' approach to fieldwork could be sustained without substantial financial support, and that it was feasible to plan a structured

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approach to the gathering of empirical data.

Throughout the initial researches into the nature and extent of Manueline art forms, every example and its location was logged and held as part of a data-base. Drawing on visits, art-historical, historical, literary and cultural sources, exhibitions and other published sources, and finally searching systematically through tourist guides, it became possible to compile a list of the extant Manueline art forms.

This work was aided by a number of factors. In the first place Portugal is a geographically small country with a small population, so that the total area under consideration was not unmanageable. Also, the Portuguese patterns of settlement mean that, even within this small country, historical and cultural artefacts are relatively concentrated and thus more easily accessible. Further, the remaining Manueline sites and art-works tend to be retained within the provenance of the Church, State or local authorities, with very little having entered private hands.

These fortunate considerations benefit further from the small number of Manueline artefacts in existence. The sheer novelty of artistic patronage, the depredations of nature and foreign invaders, and of the Portuguese themselves - either in their former 'creative' approach to restoration or in their outright reconstruction of originals - all serve to limit the absolute base number. Consequently, the task of producing a simple data-base was well within the compass of one person.

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The subsequent stage involved the process of selection, from the few hundred examples, of relevant empirical illustrations of themes of the study at hand. In practice this process comprised a number of stages. Initially the descriptive accounts of various artefacts were consulted and a picture of their relative significance for the Manueline oeuvre was assessed. At this stage particular architectural and pictorial instances suggested themselves as being strategically important in the development of a Manueline style - the Church of Jesus in Setúbal as the point of the architectural inception of the style; the window at Tomar as the high point of decoration; the paintings of Grão Vasco. In addition to these, reference either to the exotic, or to potential depictions of non-european humans, were sufficient to underline the importance of a piece for the study - Camões tomb for its exotic naturalism; the sculptural work of Diogo Pires the Younger for its depiction of an African; the paintings of Christovão Figueireido.

Locations were recorded on a large scale map of Portugal pinned to a wall. Each instance of a Manueline art work was indicated on the map, with colour coding for the various media. At this point it became possible to see how potential itineraries would have to be constructed, either because of the salience of a piece, or because of the concentration of a number of items, or perhaps one or more collections.

If one were to visit only one location in Portugal, then

the beautiful city of Lisbon would provide a great range of empirical data. Close to Lisbon are the towns of Setúbal and Sintra. Then, at further remove, Évora, capital of the Alentejo, Beja, Coimbra, Viseu, Porto, Braga, along with a host of small towns which come to our attention because a church or painting appears especially important. Put more simply, therefore, one would not only visit Lisbon to pursue such a project, but would travel extensively across the country, and this is what was undertaken for the present study. It should be noted, however, that the main focus of attention for a study of Manueline art works concentrates upon the southern two-thirds of the country because of the geographical distribution of these works.

A point about field-work and the collection of empirical data is that it permits the researcher to develop a feel for their subject which goes beyond 'mere' scholastic reaction. Gadamer's argument concerning the significance of the observer's "prejudice" must surely include the, perhaps intuitive, perhaps imaginative, response of the observer to data on the ground. Instances drawn from the experience of fieldwork undertaken for this study may illustrate this point. These instances were recorded in detail at the time in the research diaries which were kept during the fieldwork.

#### **In Sintra**

The first instance of 'feel' was in Sintra, a small traffic clogged town some 20 kilometers away from Lisbon - a favourite with indigenous Portuguese and tourists alike.

Although the royal palace is impressive and takes us further in our understanding of Manueline style ( as we indicate in the body of the study ), it is only when one can explore the whole of the site that creative impressions can be gained.

As a former student of Eng. Lit. you might expect Lord Byron's dwelling place here to be celebrated, but it is a disappointing and dirty reality. However, if, spurred on by such disappointment, one is to walk on down the road and take the unmarked footpath up the hill to the ruins of the Moors' Castle, then there begins the experience of 'Cintra' as Byron wrote of it, especially the dark green cover which hangs about the hillside, and which makes the Moors' caves seem dank, dark and sublime.

Once on the ramparts of the castle, with a view across the royal palace to the country beyond, it is not difficult to see how Islamic architectural themes might have insinuated themselves into the developing consciousness of the adolescent Manuel.

Finally, taking the deserted path again, back down to Sintra, hearing a folk band playing, with the music drifting across the valley, you begin to imagine that your experience has about it some sense of authenticity and insight.

Near the window at Tomar

Another instance of 'feel' helped address the problem of the window at Tomar. Whilst tourists and commentators alike wax eloquent about this, rather overdone, window decoration, the words of Bridge and Lowndes constantly made a reminder

that here was overstatement. Yet it still retained great significance for the Manueline style.

The discovery of Mendes-Atanazio's work on the window, whilst on a trip to Lisbon, had excited my interest and, although this clearly is not a nineteenth century re-creation (is it?), the significance of the window certainly needed accounting for. At last, when on the site at Tomar, I one day realised that perhaps the significance of the window lay precisely in its overstatement, as the only focus in the vicinity forceful enough to divert interest from elsewhere. Particularly, it would create a diversion of interest away from the architectural vandalism done to the Chapel of the Templars by the addition of the Claustro dos Felipes. This palladian cloister cuts straight into the Manueline Church and, in its material intrusion it celebrates the cultural and spiritual intrusion of the coronation of Philip I of Portugal, otherwise Philip II of Spain. Felipe was crowned in this cloister, thus marking the suppression of Portuguese national self-determination in 1580. Portuguese reaction to the period of Spanish domination is still fuelled by an ever acrimonious relationship between the Portuguese and the Spanish, and it is not to be wondered at that the modern day celebration is of achievement rather than vanquishment.

#### **More stirrings of nationalism**

A final example of 'feeling' the material, again with the ideas of Mendes-Atanazio in mind, comes with the South Portal of Jeronimos Monastery at Belem in Lisbon. This

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monument to the Discoveries is apparently largely a creative rebuilding of the original, yet it attracts many Portuguese who photograph themselves, their families and, often, wedding parties, beneath what is now taken as a monument to Portuguese national feeling. Two ideas come to mind in the vicinity of this portal, surrounded in the summer daylight by tourist coaches, but at other times a deserted place.

In one way this may actually celebrate the modern Portugal - a focus of transient interest for tourists, but backed up and supported by a vast historical edifice. In another way, it might serve to contrast this thrilling building with the empty, modern monument to the Discoveries built in 1960 on the occasion of the 500th anniversary celebrations. The white concrete of modern architecture seems awkward and domineering, the portal human and fallible, yet enduring. Of course, Portuguese people may simply love the portal because it heralds yet another visit to the most moving of all Portuguese architectural achievements - the Hieronymite Monastery.

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Fieldwork, the collection of empirical data, bears a varying relationship to the development of a research study, according to whether an inductive or a deductive approach has been adopted. However, this notion is not as clear as it might at first appear, in that once data are selected as worthy of study, they can, in their turn, act back upon the ongoing logic of development of the study. To recognise this is to recognise Gadamer's third methodological stage in which



he asks for an awareness of the action of the analysed phenomenon upon the act of interpretation. This can happen at a number of levels, beginning with the overall historical structure of the event, constraining the development of the argument in a most fundamental and formal sense.

Alternatively, certain perceived themes or regularities in the data can also cause the interpretive perspective to develop in ways only vaguely indicated by the general conceptualisation of the problematic. This is so for the present study in the case of the accentuation of the significance of the "Adoration of the Magi" as a context for the pictorial depiction of non-Europeans in Manueline art. Whilst making the photographic record of Manueline paintings it soon became apparent that the pictorial context within which non-Europeans overwhelmingly appeared in this period was the Adoration of the Magi - itself usually part of a polyptych representing scenes from the Life of Christ. By and large these polyptychs form the bulk of the known output of the Manueline painters. Their significance in giving us a pictorial record of the Portuguese cultural responses to the Discoveries cannot be overestimated, although it is a resource that has not yet been seriously attended to beyond the present study.

The observation of the importance of the Adoration of the Magi thus turned attention towards Kaplan's art historical study. It gave a discrete focus for the pre-existing notion of the present study that 'Christian' themes

were amongst the constraining features characteristic of the Portuguese aesthetic sensibility of race consciousness. A significant influence upon Kaplan's work has been the earlier historical study of the Magi in European culture by Eligassaray. This earlier treatment has exerted considerable influence upon Kaplan's approach and it remains a task of a sociological approach to art and culture to make an overall assessment of Biblical and Christian imagery upon contemporary cultural formulations, especially in the field of visual and pictorial representations.

#### **Doing fieldwork: the best laid plans...**

Once itineraries were drawn up, specific schedules of visits could be planned and a preparatory reading of descriptive accounts undertaken. The logistics of flight booking, car hire etc. are now quite easy; car hire being essential for the purposeful exploration of a series of sites since reliance on public transport would cause whole days to be lost in travelling on journeys which could be tackled in, at most, a very few hours in a car. This problem of scheduling is compounded by the hours kept in many Portuguese public places, often only opening from 10 to 12 in the morning and from 3 to 5 in the afternoon.

This means that it is often only possible to plan to visit one item in any one day, unless it forms part of a collection. You soon get to know that the problems of arranging for Church keys to arrive to open huge wooden doors can consume all of the two hours from ten o'clock to lunch, and that it is unlikely that anyone will want to stir

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themselves for you until late in the afternoon. In this way days can pass without apparent gain for the research project, but the way of life of many 'ordinary' Portuguese people from beyond the urban centres is much less hurried than our own, and loss on the schedule is really a gain in re-learning to use time in a more human way, rather than to be used by it.

Access to major collections is relatively straightforward, but all now ban flash photography for fear of long term damage to art works. Many places will impound photographic equipment. In this context the cultural attaché of the Portuguese Embassy in London most generously made official requests to major collections for photographic access to be given. With this support I was able to negotiate the use of a camera for 'flash free' time exposures. This was especially valuable in the National Museum of Antique Art in Lisbon, since it made possible the creation of what I believe to be a unique collection of colour plates of Manueline paintings.

#### **B.Pictorial problems**

It is an important claim of this study that representational and interpretive impositions serve to modify an original cultural phenomenon. In the nature of using the 'visual' as a form of sociological data, we necessarily confront the question of the extent of the modification thus implied. As Henny (1986) has argued, early American approaches to Sociology, and especially to social description, relied quite heavily upon photographs. However,

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this form of data was swept aside by the search for positivistic formulations of law-like regularities in social life, which simply could not be captured in single still images (see also the Introduction to Fyfe & Law, 1988). There remains a general unease about the use of pictorial data and their incorporation into research reports. Surprisingly, this is true even in such fields apparently substantially dependant upon the visual as the sociology of art, where texts of fundamental significance (e.g. Wolff, 1981) can shift disciplinary perspectives without the use of a single visual image.

Whilst it is recognised that a photographic image does not objectively re-create the original, it is surely necessary for some visual data to be legitimately incorporated into certain fields of sociology, and for the implications of this to be realised in a serious way. In so doing the discipline would be bringing itself into line with contemporary developments within culture at large. These developments place an increasing emphasis upon forms of communication of a non-written kind and are epitomised in the development of multi-media forms of data presentation and manipulation.

Another area of technological innovation likely to bring about an increase in the use of graphics alongside text is the photocopying machine. Black and white images are now economical for large runs and laser copied colour imaging has begun to become financially feasible in small numbers. These techniques of copying permit the incorporation of detailed

images into academic work, at relatively low cost. They also offer the potential for the original art work to become displaced; this can happen in a number of ways.

Firstly, there now exists the capacity to 'enlarge' and 'reduce' images, to crop them, to alter focus and colour balance, and to copy them onto various media. The original image thus becomes a 'potentiality' which is only realised through technological manipulation.

All the images used in the present study have been reduced to the size of photographic plates and then enlarged to an A4 size with gutter margins of a specified size. Colours are as near to original as possible, but it is difficult exactly to know what this means beyond the technical notion that no colour filters were used in the photographic process, and that colour photocopying was preceded by a scanning process intended to mimic the RGB (red/green/blue) balance as nearly as possible. A discerning eye can, however, pick out those photographs taken with long exposure times under conditions of yellow/amber lighting.

Finally, the use of white paper for a backing to the image lends it a peculiar tactile quality. This could have been varied according to colour, tactile surface quality (rough/smooth), and medium (paper, card, board, hessian, wood, transparency, computer disk, CD ROM).

Secondly, the image viewed is substantially varied by the reprographic process. All originals are three-dimensional, including paintings, and yet the photographic representation is essentially two-dimensional. It is readily

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grasped in the case of architectural and sculptural originals that a photograph is a likeness and not a faithful reproduction. Distortions occur to dimensionality, volume, perspective, foreshortening and temporality which significantly alter the experience which counts as 'viewing' (Chicó, 1981; de Sousa, 1973). Whilst we can recognise the image, we do not know it in its original authenticity.

Finally, the image comes to us at several removes. Many of the representations found in this study are, in fact, *representations of representations of representations* i.e. they are colour photocopies, of colour photographs, of paintings depicting imagined events or of architectural forms embodying certain explicit or implicit ideas. These multiple representations are further presented after they have been selected by the author, placed within an interpretive context and 'read' by the reader - perhaps according to entirely different criteria.

To say then, that the representations used in this study bear a relationship to the originals is to take the above considerations into account. It is to recognise that the representations themselves form part of the discourse and technique of the argument which is being presented, as well as comprising its object.

This element of self-reflexivity is a necessary condition of the use of visual data.

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**Technical details:**

Word processed on an Atari 1040 ST, using 1st Word Plus.

Printer: Citizen Swift 24.

Plates taken with Pentax P30 camera, using ASA 100 and 400  
Kodacolour Gold, without filters.

Colour reprographics by 'By Design' of Bromley, on a Canon  
Laser Colour copier.

PART ONE

CHAPTER ONE:

ART, FORMS AND SOCIETY I



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ART, FORMS AND SOCIETY I: The Contribution of perspectives  
drawn from the study of art - towards iconology

"...the forms and styles of painting respond to social circumstances...the forms and styles of painting may sharpen our perception of the society." Baxandall (1974):151

This chapter seeks to elaborate the relationship between certain analyses of the historical development of artistic style and the nature of the cultural elaboration of boundaries between concepts. The *iconological* approach is investigated in order to seek a legitimate justification of the methodological orientation of this study.

When we turn to the study of art in order to obtain new perspectives on cultural content and organisation, especially in respect of aesthetics and race consciousness, we find that certain distinct developments have taken place each generating differing viewpoints from which to assess the nature and significance of artistic products. It is not the intention here fully to elaborate these differences, since making detailed distinctions would not, in itself, help with our problem of eliciting a new perspective on the nature of sixteenth century Portuguese race consciousness. However, a consideration of the vantage points of four trends will be helpful, in so far as it illustrates the uses to which certain kinds of art products can be put in this study, and it will also provide a means of appreciating their linkage to

the wider culture.

These approaches can be styled as 'painter-centredness', critical art history, aesthetic theory and the sociology of art. These represent often interdependent perspectives which can be situated on a continuum varying from an overriding concern with the artist themselves, viewed as genius, to an almost polar opposite, in the sociology of art, which often situates the artist within a cultural milieu and views their work as a channel for the elaboration of ideological forms. This is not to imply that a sociology of art necessarily claims that all art is ideological, but to recognise that such a position has a very strong influence upon much of the work undertaken, and that, at the very least, this proposition deriving from certain marxist commentators has become embodied into the problematic of the field. Thus we notice that the more we move from an uncritical painter-centredness, the more significant become the cultural influences upon the artist, the greater too becomes the interest in an analysis of the work as opposed to simply an experience of it.

Indeed, it is the argument of this study that a naive experience of the work as intended is not possible, given the cultural constraints which act upon the observer. In this sense all appreciation of art implies a re-reading of the work with the accretion of contemporary perspectives; a point which we made in the introductory discussion of methodology.

Painter-centredness, in its ideal-typical form, brings

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the audience to the artist or artwork; it is concerned to reveal the artist's work to the audience in as unmediated a manner as possible, without interventions of a visual or analytic nature. To a certain extent this is the underlying approach of the art gallery, which encourages a direct encounter between the work of art and the audience. In such a perspective, the fact that the work is usually unchanging whilst the spectators pass it by, reinforces the hierarchy between the work, say a painting, and the people looking at it, such that its importance can be held to be unquestioned, whereas the significance of the spectator is transitory. The more the spectator is separated from the work by cordons, attendants and bullet-proof screens, the more they have impressed upon them the importance of the artwork and the insignificance, even the inappropriateness, of their individual response. The result of such an approach is seen as the revelation of the qualities of the work for the audience. No other evocation is needed because the work in question is taken as essentially meaningful; indeed, elaboration upon the meaning could well detract from the experience of the artwork itself. For modern audiences, their expected passivity in the face of the work of art, which itself is taken as the interpretation, leaves nothing to be done but to receive or consume. The response must in no way interfere with the work itself.

"The audience has to keep its movements under very strict control so that no sound from them disturbs the sounds produced by the orchestra... At present, the

concert-goer's code of conduct confines applause to the end of a symphony or any multi-movement piece of music... The restraint imposed upon an audience in this manner is all the greater since their emotions are stirred. And yet, as far as possible no muscle must stir. They should be moved without moving. Only at the end may an audience indicate through the strength and length of its movements, of its applause, how strongly it has been moved in silence before."

Elias & Dunning (1986):50

Whilst this quotation refers to music, it would not be unfair to see it as also relevant to painting and other forms of artwork, impressing on us the passivity of the audience in the face of dense, celebrated meaning.

Pure painter-centredness is very difficult to sustain simply because of the methods of presentation which must necessarily be employed for the reception by mass audiences of works of art. As soon as we move away from unmediated communication between text and audience (whatever this might mean), interpretations begin to be imposed. Even with the coffee-table book of art reproductions there will be a specific format, usually differing from the originals in size, tactile quality and surroundings; there will be a hard binding and the plates will be presented in a discrete order. Very often too there will be a brief and possibly superficial commentary, extolling the aesthetic qualities of the work, or more likely seeking to relate them to the life of the painter.

As we move from the pure type of painter-centredness, therefore, we are obliged to take account of the adjoining perspectives of critical art history and aesthetics. It is quite possible, and frequent, for such a development to be undertaken, and the most usual direction is towards an indication of the 'life and times' of the artist. Such a work as Cirlot's "Picasso: Birth of a genius" (1972) is typical of this approach, seemingly fixated by the biography of the painter and its assumed explanatory function with regard to his paintings. Yet this type of explanation is never actually located, and always fails to explain the significance of Picasso's work.

There are a number of possible ways out of this apparent dead end. For example, it is possible to see Picasso's location within an historical discourse of artists, in which case such a work as 'Guernica' becomes comprehensible as an extension of themes already dealt with by Goya (Arnheim, 1962); but this is only a partial explanation since similar statements can be made of other painters' work, e.g. Jackson Pollock, who is also thought to have been influenced by Goya (Robertson 1960).

Alternatively, it is possible to interpret the significance of artwork as residing in the social response, a position adopted by Gombrich in his exploration of the relative importance of Picasso's 'Demoiselles d'Avignon', which is recognised by many as the beginning point of Cubist painting.

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"How was this possible? You need only ask this question to see that if it can be answered at all it cannot be answered in terms of Picasso's personal history alone. It acquired this meaning within a different context: the context of the institution we call art... The point is that he found himself in a situation in which his private conflicts acquired artistic relevance. Without social factors, what we may term the attitudes of the audience, the style or the trend, the private needs could not be transmuted into art. In this transmutation the private meaning is all but swallowed up."

Gombrich (1953):<sup>43</sup>

This is clearly moving away from the painter-centred approach; the significance of the context as expressed in terms of audience, style, and an institution of art, are all recognised as factors not only in the creation of the artwork itself, but equally importantly in its reception and recognition.

This type of analysis was taken further, albeit in an earlier period, by Raphael in his study of Picasso which employed an avowedly marxist approach, but which, as we shall see later in this chapter, avoids the pitfalls of narrow determinism. Take the following extract written in the context of his study of Picasso, in which Raphael is concerned to stress throughout "the material conditions which obtain in the process of spiritual production", and consequently elaborates a position which would be readily accepted within

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modern sociology of art. Raphael's concern is to show how the painter's work reflects the social position of the bourgeoisie in the early twentieth century. He sees Picasso as confronted by a choice between idealism and materialism.

"Picasso...discovered two ways out: 1) in an abstract idealism concretizing itself in colour...

...2) in an idealising realism, which made use of the styles of antiquity and its descendants (Renaissance and Classicism) with a view to developing a powerful corporeality. In this way both materialism and dialectics were excluded. This path taken by bourgeois art was inevitable, for all of Picasso's genius...this phenomenon stigmatizes the whole situation of the bourgeoisie...the ghosts of the unvanquished past (quasi-medieval ideology) haunt the feudalism of monopoly capitalism no less than those of Hellenism and Christianity haunt Picasso...The fact is that although Picasso is truly the perfect representative of the ruling class of his time, he lacks the ethos of the man who rises above the present and faces towards the future." Raphael (1933/1981):131

Critical art history, therefore, tends to modify a painter-centred approach to art by its stress on biographical, social or historical factors and their importance in the determination of the nature of artworks and their reception.

Another perspective which has informed and elaborated a purely painter-centred approach to art is that of aesthetics,

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conceived as a project aimed at locating an essentially human capacity to appreciate and enjoy artistic beauty. The study, even the 'science', of aesthetics has seen two major lines of development. There is a philosophical concern for the nature of perception which can be seen especially clearly in the work of phenomenologists who seek to locate essential qualities in the human appreciation of works of art. Alternatively, there is a more empirically based development, exemplified in the approach of Wölfflin (1922, 1952), which has attempted to put aesthetic understanding at the service of art history, and to delineate the development of formal qualities of style. Such an approach lays stress on the form perhaps more than the content of art, understood as an historically emergent institution.

"Anyone who concerns himself with the subject-matter of works of art will be completely satisfied with it; yet the moment we want to apply artistic standards of judgement in the criticism of works of art we are forced to try to comprehend formal elements which are unmeaning and inexpressible in themselves and which are developments of a purely optical kind.

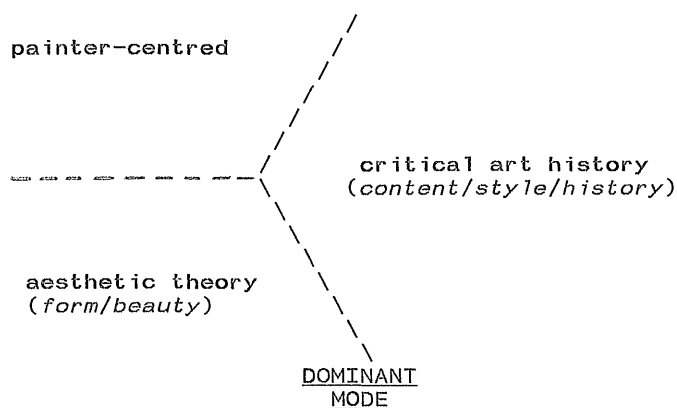
Thus, 'Quattrocento' and 'Cinquecento' as style-concepts are not adequately explained by a descriptive analysis of the subject matter; the phenomenon of 'Quattrocento' and 'Cinquecento' style has double root and shows a development of artistic vision which is essentially independent of any particular sentiment or any partic-



ular ideal of beauty...the things we have analysed so far...are all formal elements which cannot be deduced from the spirit of the age."

Wolfflin (1952)  
: 287

In drawing together painter, style, form and beauty, we arrive at a model which begins to look rather less unidimensional, and which can indicate the dominant mode of understanding art history.



It should be recognised that the formal quality of the work is seen as making an explicit contribution to its conception, creation and appreciation. Increasingly then, the nature of the aesthetic dimension needs to be clarified since an appreciation of the form can become the light which, Wolfflin urges, should "make the diamond sparkle". With such a recognition of the significance of the aesthetic mode there comes also a recognition that aesthetics cannot be seen as a field of study which is divorced from any particular context, that it is not an independent science in pursuit of absolute

notions of truth and beauty, but that the conclusions of aesthetics themselves have to be seen as culturally conditioned. As soon as such a consideration is raised, it becomes possible to ask whether it is legitimate for the field of artistic production and aesthetic appreciation to be excluded from the wider analysis of culture and ideology.

Raphael appears to offer an approach which balances the possibility of an objective understanding of aesthetics against a realisation of the culturally conditioned manner in which they will arise and be refracted.

"How true is the assertion that art is independent, and to what extent is consciousness deceived? The fact that materials, techniques, and even the genres preferred by a given period depend on the character of its material production, is proved so clearly even by the most immanent approaches to the history of art that there is no need to dwell on this point. As for creativity and style. history shows us that certain general categories, certain laws, are realised in the works of art of all times and all peoples - for instance, symmetry and series; the static and the dynamic; the separation between and opposition or interpenetration among the dimensions, etc. - but realised under different configurations. The diversity is accounted for by the diversity of natural environments against which men struggle by the concrete social structures within which this struggle, i.e. material production, is carried on; by the level achieved by art

in connection with other ideologies."

Raphael(1933/1981)

:126

Ultimately we come to the sociology of art, which enquires into the social factors present in any art work, both in the process of its creation and in that of its reception and interpretation. Wolff justifiably stresses the vague parameters of such a field of study in the following way.

"The sociology of art and literature is an ill-defined and amorphous discipline, comprising numerous empirical studies and various attempts at rather more general theory, all of which have in common merely the fact that they are somehow concerned with the relationship of art and society."

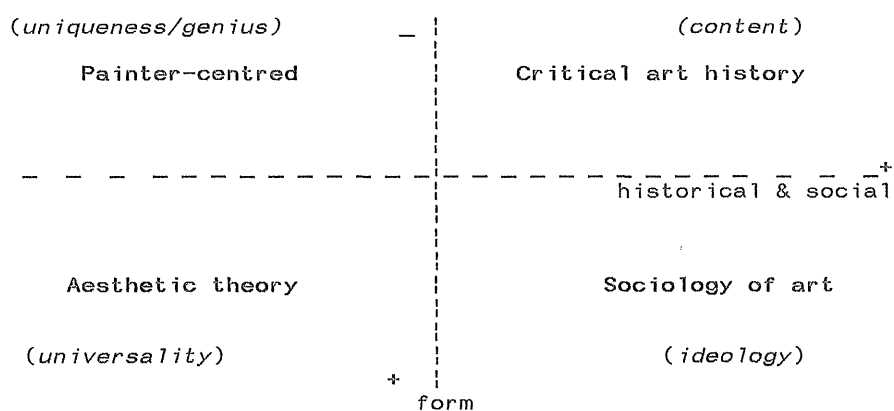
Wolff (1975):3

For the purposes of this study, the most significant development in this field comes with the realisation that cultures, if not characterised by total uniformity - which they are not - at least contain a degree of coherence which can be recognised as having a structural dimension, and which tends to draw together what might otherwise be taken as disparate aspects.

Cultures also contextualise the realisation of aesthetic capacities in their members, and consequently we have to see art works as embedded in their own milieu whilst, at the same time, somehow reflecting it.

The ways in which this reflection takes place are

conceived variously by such writers as Wolfflin, Hadjinicolaou, Marcuse and Wolff, since each interrogates the nature of the aesthetic as a free-standing domain, and each in their own way offers an interpretation of the relationship between art, seen as a cultural product, and social structure. It is now necessary to review these various possible approaches, at which point we shall be able to make sense of Panofsky's call for an "iconography in a deeper sense". We shall see that each is prepared to acquiesce in giving the aesthetic an independent status, but that each also wishes to locate that aesthetic within a conditioning cultural context.



This diagram represents the relatedness of the perspectives which we have so far discussed, and shows that whilst painter-centredness and the sociology of art both share boundaries with aesthetic theory and critical art history, they have little in common with each other and indeed can be seen as having mutually exclusive interests. Individual con-

tributions could be plotted on the grid according to the strength of commitment of the author to the two axial principles of form and historicity, further moderated by their tendency to concern themselves with questions of uniqueness, universality, content and ideology.

### Conditioned and Conditioning: Everything Follows Form?

Of the contributions on which we shall draw, Wolfflin's is known for its formalist approach, and has been most commonly taken to task for offering a theory of the evolution of form without a human agent. However, for the purpose of this study, Wolfflin's analysis of style in Renaissance and post-Renaissance art offers an appropriate insight, particularly with the 'General Representational Forms' which he elaborated (Wolfflin 1929). Wolfflin's argument suggests that certain societies (i.e. times and places) can be recognised as being characterised by identifiable artistic style, and further, that there are certain major dimensions according to which such style can be assessed.

The development of a recognisable national style depends on an interaction between the personal style of the artist, to which:

"...must be added the style of the school, the country, the race...art history has grateful tasks before it as soon as it takes up systematically this question of the national psychology of form. Everything hangs together."

(1922)  
:9/16

However the identification of a tendency towards a unified national artistic style is complicated by Wolfflin's recognition of the processual nature of art forms, which gives them an historical, as well as a social contingency.

"...different times give birth to different art. Epoch

and race interact. We must first establish how many general traits a style contains before we can give it the name of a national style in a specific sense."

(1922):9

There is here a tendency towards a balance between the specific and the general, the two being intermixed at the level of the work of art, but analytically distinct since we can allow both ideosyncratic perceptions or skills to a specific artist but still see their work as typical of a stylistic period. Clearly, the generalising form of analysis which comes with a recognition of a style is the more pertinent to the study at hand. Wolfflin's major contribution to art history lies precisely in this field with his systematisation of the 'General Representational Forms'. The delineation of these forms became necessary once he recognised that concern solely with the "quality and expression" of art does not exhaust all the possibilities for analysis.

"There is a third factor - and here we arrive at the crux of this enquiry - the mode of representation as such. Every artist finds certain visual possibilities before him, to which he is bound. Not everything is possible at all times. Vision itself has its history, and the revelation of these visual strata must be regarded as the primary task of art history." (1922):11

Wolfflin goes so far as to claim that the existence of a style characteristic of a particular society is sufficiently pressing upon the individual vision for it to be seen as

acting in a law like manner.

"Nobody is going to maintain that the 'eye' passes through developments on its own account. Conditioned and conditioning, it always impinges on other spiritual spheres. There is certainly no visual schema which, arising only from its own premisses, could be imposed on the world as a stereotyped pattern. But although men have at all times seen what they wanted to see, that does not exclude the possibility that a law remains operative throughout all change." (1922):17

These styles, which have their own national identities, are also an important means of access to a wider understanding of the whole ideological positioning of a group of people. Wolfflin links very clearly the artistic style of a society and its world view. In this he can be seen to be close to those who have sensed an ideological role for art e.g. Hadjinicolaou, 1978; Goldmann, 1964; Adorno, 1969, although he obviously does not offer a similar class-based analysis, preferring to refer to peoples and nations as his basic social categories.

"As every history of vision must lead beyond mere art, it goes without saying that such national differences of the eye are more than a mere question of taste; conditioned and conditioning, they contain the bases of the whole world picture of a people. That is why the history of art as the doctrine of the modes of vision can claim to be, not only a mere super in the company of histor-



ical disciplines, but as necessary as sight itself."  
(1922):237

Like Hadjinicolau, Wolfflin gives the history of art a vital role in the humanistic enterprise of understanding cultural difference. Wolfflin's formal criteria, however, remain located within the work of art itself, where they offer the basis for some peculiarly interesting insights into the nature of the classification of knowledge, and its relationship to forms of racial consciousness. It is to this consideration that we now turn.

The General Forms of Representation are expressed as five pairs of oppositional concepts which characterise the pictorial form as it becomes established during the Renaissance and subsequently in its development into the Baroque. These concepts have varying potential for the study of the aesthetic expression of race consciousness, or indeed for the appreciation of the importance of art history in understanding the nature of the classification of knowledge; we shall not review them all, but shall concentrate on those which appear to offer the most potential for this study.

The 'Linear' and the 'Painterly': it is with this first pair of concepts that the General Forms have become most well known, and it would appear also that for the purposes of this study they offer the greatest potential. This is because they are concerned primarily with the way in which artistic styles permit the artist to indicate the boundedness of

bodies and objects in their work. The linear style, typical of Classical art, is concerned to indicate the existence of objects by their boundaries, whereas the painterly style represents objects as impressions. Thus the linear style is predicated upon the existence of definite edges or boundaries between the objects represented.

"Linear art...has to deal with bodies and space, and needs lights and shadows to obtain the impression of plasticity. But line as fixed boundary is assigned superior or equal value to them." (1922):14

This accentuation of line not only demarcates the world of objects, but also allows the spectator to experience a feeling of certainty in their perceived world, since objects very clearly are what they seem, and can be seen to have a distinct existence. The linear style is overwhelmingly concerned with the formal qualities, with representing the world as a series of discrete phenomena, thus placing great stress upon those areas which are recognised as marking the boundary between objects.

"Linear style is the style of directness plastically felt. The evenly firm and clear boundaries of solid objects give the spectator a feeling of security, as if he could move along them with his fingers, and all the modelling shadows follow the form so completely that the sense of touch is actually challenged. Representation and thing are, so to speak, identical." :21

Here we come to the heart of the matter; the linear style is defined by Wolfflin as that style which attempts to represent "things as they are" and this forms the basis of the distinction between the linear and the painterly.

"There is a style (i.e. the linear) which, essentially objective in outlook, aims at perceiving things and expressing them in their solid, tangible relations, and conversely, there is a style (i.e. the painterly) which, more subjective in attitude, bases the representation on the picture, in which the visual appearance of things looks real to the eye, and which has often retained so little resemblance to our conception of the real form of things." (1922):20

Wolfflin is suggesting that the painterly style represents objects "as they seem to be", with the artist appropriating the appearance of reality but working not at the level of reality to the touch, but reality to the eye. This is achieved by what Wolfflin terms the depreciation of line as boundary. Accentuation of masses takes place at the expense of accentuation of edges; colour and shade become important for their contribution to the overall effect of the artwork upon the eye of the spectator, rather than in their delineation of distinct objects. Commenting on Leonardo's *Last Supper*, and its significance for the development of the chiaroscuro effect, Wolfflin states...

"Everything depends upon how far a preponderating sig-

nificance is assigned to or withdrawn from the edges, whether they must be read as lines or not. In the one case, the line means a track moving evenly round the form, to which the spectator can confidently entrust himself; in the other, the picture is dominated by lights and shadows, not exactly indeterminate, yet without stress on the boundaries. Only here and there does a palpable outline emerge: it has ceased to exist as a uniformly sure guide through the sum of the form."

(1922)

.19

The painterly style is evocative not of the formal distinctive qualities, but of an overall tendency towards movement and integration.

"In the one case, uniformly clear lines which separate; in the other, unstressed boundaries which favour combination." (1922):19

It should be clear that there are here resonances with the Durkheimian propositions of likeness and differentiation which are to be found in the mechanical and organic forms of moral solidarity which emanate from the social division of labour (Durkheim 1964), and with Bernstein's notion of the classification of knowledge (Bernstein 1971). Perhaps the most significance, however, can be found in a comparison of Wolfflin's concepts of the linear and painterly styles with their differing conceptions of the significance of boundaries, with Douglas' notion of the social significance of the human body, especially with regard to the marking of the

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margins, which we come to discuss in Chapter Two in connection with the analysis of the aesthetic realisation of race consciousness.

This suggests that the representation of forms, and their subsequent reception and interpretation, takes place according to culturally derived criteria. In other words, the same phenomenon, for example the human body, is apprehended in ways which are culturally specific, but which do not deny the possibility of inter-cultural communication and comprehension, specifically because they deal with a continuous phenomenon according to cultural criteria which are themselves ordered according to deeper level considerations of form.

We should note the significance of the utilisation of the human form as a metaphor, in terms of its social importance, and also the potency of marginal areas within a system of classification. We have to recognise that the significance of formal artistic qualities goes beyond the purely representational, and addresses the location of the individual in the culture. This is presumably why Wolfflin sees the element of safety and reassurance in the linear form which is missing in the painterly, since the margins are clearly demarcated and the classification system is therefore not thrown open to question or revision, or rendered subjective. This suggests that the Classical form of representation goes deeper than just being an artistic convention, and that it embodies and reinforces the symbolic ordering of nature

which provides the base of West European culture. We shall return to this important topic shortly, when we come to consider the nature of classical art. We shall see that it has implications for Panofsky's notion of iconography in a deeper sense, and also for the way in which we come to assess the nature and impact of the Renaissance in its wider European context. For the moment, however, we shall return to our consideration of Wolfflin's general representational forms.

**'Closed' and 'Open' Form:** The subsequent conceptual pairs which Wolfflin proposes as typifying the development of the Baroque out of the initial Classicism of the Italian Renaissance, come logically from the move from linear to painterly style, with their implications for order and substance. This is clearly brought out in the 'closed' and 'open' form, also called 'tectonic' and 'a-tectonic'. These notions relate to the content of the art form, and seek to assess the organisation and internal relatedness of such content, as well as its relation to the work as a whole. Simply, we may characterise the distinction as one between an explicitly geometrical portrayal and one in which the law-like quality of the geometrical portrayal is deliberately contested by the artist. The tectonic (classical) approach is typified by a sense of having been arranged to deliberately display the horizontal and vertical dimensions, and to display these especially through a reintegration of the separate aspects of subject matter into an overall impression of symmetry. On the other hand, the a-tectonic, open, style does not deny sym-

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metry and structural arrangement, but works through these principles to overcome them. These principles are therefore held in a relationship of tension, rather than certainty. Thus these principles, in their turn, tell us something of the world view of the society which espouses them.

"The style of closed composition is an architectural style...The preference for the primitive forms of the vertical and horizontal goes together with the need for limit, order, law. Never was the symmetry of the human figure more strongly felt, never the opposition of horizontal and vertical and self-contained proportion more strongly sensed than then. At all points the style strives to grasp the firm and enduring elements of form. Nature is a cosmos and beauty is revealed law.

In a-tectonic style the interest in the constructed and self-contained declines. The picture ceases to be an architecture. In the figure the architectonic factors are the secondary ones. The significant element of form is not the scaffolding, but the breath of life which brings flux and movement into rigid form. In the one case, beauty resides in the determinate, in the other in the indeterminate.

Again we meet notions which reveal, behind artistic categories, different conceptions of the world." (1922)

135

This last comparison of rigidity and flux, and the appreciation of the determinate, bears a striking similarity to the characterisation of North West European, as opposed to Portu-

guese, attitudes to race which are suggested in Chapter Six of this study. Whilst we cannot suggest that the Portuguese of the sixteenth century held essentially Baroque world views, we can suggest that there are similarities or even continuities between outlooks which are obscured by the notion of the Renaissance, and its repercussions, being a unique re-birth of classical values, rather than as a re-formulation of an ongoing cultural theme. We shall return to this problem later, when it will be suggested that classicism represents the dominant mode of Western European cultural development. In so doing, we shall of course be finding similarity where Wolfflin finds difference, the polarity in his conceptual pairs being but the means by which a resolution is achieved. In such a way we can treat the conceptual polarities as dialectical rather than purely oppositional, with the result that they reveal the nature of the underlying process of artistic representation; artistic styles containing the 'seeds of their own destruction' because they are variations of a theme more deeply embedded in culture, of which any creative re-working can only express a part, and which therefore must elicit a response which attends to those aspects of the basic theme which have been omitted from contemporary variations. With the situation of the Portuguese culture of the sixteenth century the position is complicated by the legacy of the period of Islamic domination, as we shall find in Chapters Five and Six.



**Multiple Unity and Unified Unity:** this pair can also be seen to derive from the linear and painterly pair, in so far as a move towards the painterly also has the effect of breaking down the individual identity of the component objects and making the overall effect one of internal integration, rather than one of internal relatedness. The accentuation is here placed upon the move from a collection of individuals to a mass of relatively undifferentiated persons or objects, unified by a single theme.

"...there stand opposed the multiple unity of the sixteenth Century and the unified unity of the seventeenth; in other words, the articulated system of forms of classic art and the (endless) flow of the baroque...the decorative schema becomes a mode of apprehension of nature...multiplicity and unity are, so to speak, vessels in which the content of reality is caught and takes form. We must not assume that just any decorative system was clapped over the world's eyes: matter plays its part too. People not only see differently, they see different things...the concept of a multiple beauty and of a unified beauty...stand side by side as independent values..." (1922):158

These types of unity register the relationship between the parts and the whole to show the way in which art forms can be said to reveal the nature of integration within a bounded system, such as a form of racial classification or consciousness. The multiple unification takes place on the basis of fundamentally dissimilar, clearly differentiated,

objects being drawn together under the dominant principle of classic art, "...that of perfect proportion...the image of perfection at rest with itself." (Wolfflin 1922). Unified unity, however, has no need of clear distinctions, but is able to integrate the components of an art work by means of their subordination under "a more unified total motive": (Wolfflin 1922):159

We can summarise Wolfflin's view of the typical Renaissance style as inter alia, linear, closed, and having multiple unity, whilst the Baroque was, inter alia, painterly, open and of unified unity. The Renaissance, for which we can here also read classical, was therefore strongly rule governed, unified, but consisting of distinct components, whilst the Baroque displayed a tension with regard to the system of rules, but concurrently imposed a unity upon its component parts, which consequently lose both their individual identity and freedom. The Renaissance attitude, it seems, was more able to tolerate ambiguity, provided that an overarching structure could ultimately accommodate the phenomenon in question ; we might question whether this shows a continuity with the Gothic style, and adds further evidence to the view that artistic style develops in a conversation between present and past.

If there is a seeming paradox in the two contrasted positions of the Renaissance and the Baroque, it is in the association of freedom and strong rules; the parallel with Durkheim's forms of moral solidarity appears to break down

when we see these two potentially oppositional attitudes held within one form. However, just such a paradox can be found in Durkheim, as Bernstein (1967) has intimated. When social actors,

"...experience a sense of loss of structure and, with this, problems of boundary, continuity, order and ambivalence are likely to arise." :352

Bernstein suggests that such problems as the relation between the transmission of belief on the one hand, and social organisation on the other, are likely to be solved by a strengthening of other sources of belief, religion and identity. As Bernstein says:

"...we should be eager to explore changes in the forms of social integration in order to re-examine the basis for social control." :352

A cross-cultural perspective, such as that adopted in this study, has a similar methodological intention, namely of questioning the relationship of forms of social integration and social control. The argument advanced here is that forms of social integration will be seen to be reflected in the ideological structures of a society, in its art work no less than in its general structure of classification, and that each reveals something of the other's nature; as Wolfflin says, "both conditioned and conditioning".

Critics of Wolfflin from within art history point to an over deterministic notion of form which has come to characterise his work, arguing that this deprives the artist of

their creative role, leaving only an evolution of forms which seem to be self sustaining. In part, this is an unfair criticism, since Wolfflin himself does go to some length to ground his ideas of formal genesis within specific social and historical contexts. Two critics who have treated him more kindly are Hadjinicolau and Gombrich. Hadjinicolau lays an emphasis upon the conditioning effect of culture, which constrains the possible artistic production of any society.

"This aspect of Wolfflin, with its pre-existing possibilities for the individual artist and its style considered as the expression of the temper of an age, would range him among the most progressive bourgeois art historians." Hadjinicolau (1978):59

Gombrich (1985) adopts an altogether more useful position which allows him to recognise that such morphologies as Wolfflin and others propose in characterising the development of artistic style, are essentially ad hoc, and would not necessarily have been recognised by the artist at work, but they still successfully express the retrospective perceptions of later ages. The utility of these classifications lies in the fact that they help the spectator and critic initially to recognise the classical and non-classical periods of style in art production. Gombrich suggests that Wolfflin is really measuring all art work against a classical ideal, in which there is a balance of content and form, a perception which again alerts us to the element of continuity which the classical gave, and still gives, to art production and art

criticism. Whilst, as we have already said, this question will be dealt with at the end of the Chapter, it is appropriate at this point to indicate that the criterion which Gombrich advances, in support of a morphological treatment of art work, is that it permits the identification of periods marked by exclusion, as opposed to periods marked by the sacrifice of priorities in favour of a dominant principle.

"...the principle of exclusion is a very simple, not to say primitive, principle that denies the value it opposes. The principle of sacrifice admits and indeed implies the existence of a multiplicity of values." :17

Classical periods can thus be seen to be exclusive, and consequently normative in their significance for the construction of a somatic norm image, since the classical typically seeks to elaborate a structure of aesthetic apprehension which reflects "perfect proportion".

"In the human figure as in the edifice, this epoch (Italian Renaissance) strove to achieve the image of perfection at rest within itself. Every form developed to self-existent being, the whole freely co-ordinated: nothing but independently living parts...forms in which the human being may find an existence satisfied in itself, extending beyond human measure, but always accessible to the imagination. With infinite content, the mind apprehends this art as the image of a higher,

freer existence in which it may participate."

Wolfflin (1922)  
:11

Again, the notion of a continuity of cultural form coincides with a motive derived from the human body; in terms of Douglas' argument this implies that crucial aspects of the relationship between culture and social structure are being mediated in the conception of the classic in art, which lends all the more importance to the consideration of the caesural role of the Renaissance which comes later in this study. At this point, however, we move on from Wolfflin, to consider certain aspects of marxist analyses of art.

#### Moves towards the recognition of an independent aesthetic

Approaches inspired by a marxist interpretation of history and culture would seem to offer the prospect of a sociology of art which takes seriously the notion of the social determination of culture, as opposed to the seeming formalist self-determination offered by Wolfflin. However, when we turn to writers working within the marxist tradition, it becomes clear that there is an explicit tendency to recognise the aesthetic dimension of culture as existing in some way beyond the influence of economic determination. In part, this stems from Marx's own writings on the subject, especially his critique of Greek art.

"...the difficulty is not in grasping the idea that Greek art and epos are bound up with certain forms of

social development. It lies rather in understanding why they still constitute for us a source of aesthetic enjoyment and in certain respects prevail as the standard and model beyond attainment." Marx (1939/73)  
:360

Attempts to come to terms with such a statement, which appears to fly in the face of much else that had been said by Marx concerning culture and ideology, have either resulted in a sterile formalism such as that espoused by Lukacs for much of his life (Heller, 1983; Markus, 1983; Bennett, 1979), or it can result in the kind of exegesis in which Dupré engages.

"Greek art established a permanent ideal of humanity; what came later was more a reflection of humanity in its natural, historical, existence. Art thus becomes 'art production', a particular function in the overall process of production related to, and, to some extent, dependent upon, other functions...while art as ideal, though conditioned by a particular state of society, nevertheless transcends its social context altogether."

Dupré (1983)  
:262

This consideration of an independent aesthetic sphere is clearly an important one if we are to use Marx's contribution to the critique of ideological forms for anything more than a gross economic determinism. The claim for a relatively autonomous cultural sphere of society, adumbrated within a marxist framework, is nowadays typically to be found in the work of the critical theorists of the Frankfurt School - Adorno,

Marcuse, Benjamin etc. - but a general foundation for such a position was advanced by Raphael in the 1930's.

"...economic life does not produce anything directly of itself. It merely determines the manner in which the pre-existing thoughts are transformed and evolve. Moreover, it almost always determines this in an indirect fashion...Despite its relative autonomy, every ideological domain acts upon all other domains, and in the end reacts upon its own cause, the economic sub-structure." Raphael (1933/81):77

However, Raphael is not content to propose an independent aesthetic but is, rather, concerned to criticise other disciplines for having done precisely that, and for having thus idealised, and extrapolated, art from real life.

"The science of art, the history of art, and art criticism...isolate their subject to the point of abstract purity, and try to locate their foundation in an immanent manner. By contrast, the sociology of art rests upon a material basis extraneous to art, by which one can account for the concrete particularity of each work, the interaction of ideologies with each other, and art's influence upon that basis." :84

Raphael then, is determined to locate the social and historical factors determining the formal qualities of art products.

"...the laws governing the construction of form in every



work of art...are at the same time laws of relation and association; thus, they themselves constitute a formal and immanent sociology of the work of art...a sociology which acquires its full meaning only when studied in relation to a material and transcendant sociology of the work of art." :24

Raphael offers us a way of beginning to ground the formal dimension of artwork as proposed by Wolfflin. He does not enter into the eulogising of art as a form of liberation, as do Marcuse (1979) and, to a lesser extent, Dupré. In a similar tradition, Hadjinicolau (1978) proposes that the specificity of the artistic effect should not be assimilated to other ideologies such as, for example, the literary, musical, political or religious. For Hadjinicolau, the 'aesthetic effect' is to be found in the observer's response to an art work, in which they recognise themselves as involved in the "Visual ideology" of the piece; and it is in this notion of a visual ideology, specific to a social class, that Hadjinicolau develops our appreciation of the embeddedness of art in a concrete social and historical situation. As with Raphael, he wants to go beyond mere consideration of either the form or the content of an art work, and to investigate the ways in which their interrelatedness produces a particular ideological interpretation of the world which allows it to be manifested in, for example, a painting.

"When I speak of a visual ideology, I intend the term to be understood in a literal sense: a specific combination

of the formal and thematic elements of a picture through which people express the way they relate their lives to the conditions of their existence, a combination which constitutes a particular form of the overall ideology of a social class." :95

The problem for Hadjinicolau lies in the ways in which the visual ideology relates to the overall ideology of the group, since, on his own admission, the two are part of a circular process in which the one is revealed in the other, and vice versa. The relationship can only be determined by historical analysis and theoretical elaboration, but its existence is sufficient for Hadjinicolau to declare the conditioned autonomy of the aesthetic sphere.

"...one must not forget that this sphere has specific features and some autonomy even though it is not independent. Its autonomy is shown by the fact that the elements of which it is composed do not exist as such, or certainly not all of them, in other types of ideology. Its dependence is shown by the fact that it is always determined by other types or spheres of the ideological level, according to the mode of production and the social formation." :101

In elaborating this position, Hadjinicolau recognises that the art work both has an existence, qua work of art, and is determined by the cultures in which it is produced and received. He leaves us with the ability both to distinguish

art as a discrete and knowable category of social and cultural activity, whilst admitting that it not only creates meanings but also reflects in these meanings the social situation of its commissioning patrons and cultural author.

Perhaps the most concise statement of the sociological attitude towards the aesthetic comes from Wolff (1983), in which she denies the existence of an autonomous aesthetic realm, acting in a law-like way unto itself, yet admits the necessity of a recognition of the aesthetic in any sociology of art. Aesthetics and art history must themselves be taken as socially and historically situated practices, and consequently their conclusions cannot be taken as objectively true for all time; they must be subjected to critical analysis to reveal the nature of their contingency, although neither can the conclusions of aesthetics and art history be rendered solely as socially constructed, and hence totally contingent and relative, since to do so would be to deny the existence of art and the possibility of understanding it (see also Berenson 1984).

Wolff finds herself at odds with Gombrich (1979) who, in an unashamedly provocative piece, suggested that whilst social science can be of assistance to art history, it must necessarily admit the superior wisdom and epistemological status of art history, derived from art history's intimate knowledge of, and conservation of, the tradition of aesthetic appreciation and criticism.

"The social scientist has his (*sic*) own problem sit-

uation, his own theories he wishes to test and investigate...(but) he has no instrument in his tool-kit to spot those 'artistic achievements' which are worth examining...whether he knows it or not, he will have to rely on the art historian who is the keeper of the canon...while the social scientist can assist the art historian, he cannot replace him." Gombrich (1979)  
:165

It might have been more appropriate had Gombrich tempered his claims with a recognition that the sociology of art and art history are mutually enlightening activities, but perhaps this would be too much to expect in the light of the constant discrediting of art history engaged in by many of those involved in the sociology of art. Wolff concludes,

"... whatever the direction taken by a sociological aesthetics, one of its most important obligations will be to acknowledge and investigate the specific and historical conditions of aesthetic experience and evaluation."  
:107

To this extent, Wolff claims that sociology is prior, and it is not the intention here to refute this, for the specific reasons that she advances in support of her thesis from which we draw, in part, the legitimation for employing a study of the aesthetic in pursuit of our understanding of Portuguese race consciousness, namely that response to art and the aesthetic,

"...can only be conceived as historically and concretely produced in individuals in the context of the particular

nature of the family in the given society and period, the specific relations between the sexes obtaining, and the wider social and ideological processes and institutions in which consciousness and experience are constructed." Wolff (1983):107

Amongst which social and ideological processes and institutions must be included the nature of race consciousness in a society, its cultural elaboration, and its connectedness to the wider ideological structure.

#### Towards 'iconology'

Whilst much of the debate within art history itself, and between art history and the sociology of art, has stemmed either from a formalist or an iconographical perspective, seen in opposition to each other, it is now appropriate to seek a way in which the two can become reconciled, allowing us to move into the position suggested by Baxandall, (quoted at the beginning of this Chapter). Namely, that since the forms and content of art production respond to social factors, it is reasonable to expect that art works themselves will therefore provide a resource which can be drawn on to increase our awareness of the social conditions of the society giving rise to such artistic products.

An important contribution to such a perspective can be found in the work of Panofsky, especially in his elaboration of what he calls the study of 'iconology' - which builds upon and transcends study of form and content with the intention

of locating art products as "cultural symptoms", which are embedded in a specific culture, but which express in certain themes and concepts "essential tendencies of the human mind" (Panofsky 1962). The argument advanced here is that the iconological method offers a valuable synthesis of otherwise diverse cultural forms, but that in attempting to characterise the "essential tendencies of the human mind" Panofsky has claimed too much, and lacks theoretical support in advancing his case. However, we should note that our later discussion of concepts of Race (Chapter Four) draws on both biologicistic principles and historical notions of long term cultural development, viz. the 'long durée', and that race consciousness can be seen as a cultural elaboration of the relationship between them. Given this, it is proposed here that Panofsky's objective is modified to lead us towards essential tendencies of specific cultural traditions; this is elaborated in the context of the discussion of the Renaissance subsequently in this study.

Panofsky recognises those levels of understanding and interpretation of the meaning of an art work which correspond with the stylistic, the iconographical, and the iconological; namely, the primary or natural subject matter which is evinced by formal and stylistic qualities and which constitute the world of motifs; the secondary or conventional subject matter which constitutes the world of images, stories and allegories; lastly, the intrinsic meaning or content, which constitutes the world of symbolical values. We shall turn briefly to the first two stages because they are

essential in constituting the third, upon which we rest the main claim for the legitimacy of the methodology of this study.

Primary subject matter, which reveals to us the motifs of art, is characterised by Panofsky as pre-iconographical description. This might seem a somewhat disparaging dismissal of such a contribution as Wolfflin's which would be included in this category, but Panofsky does not hold a very high opinion of Wolfflin, slighting his work as pseudo-formal analysis. This is "the world of pure forms", which is accessible to our practical experience. However, Panofsky suggests that we fool ourselves if we think that pre-iconographical description is an automatic capacity generated by our practical experience, because an essential part of such a procedure lies in the divination of the "historical locus".

"While we believe ourselves to identify the motifs on the basis of our practical experience pure and simple, we really read 'what we see' according to the manner in which objects and events were expressed by forms under varying historical conditions." ;||

Pre-iconographical description is, therefore, controlled by an understanding of the history of style, which allows the interpretation to grasp both the factual nature of the motifs, and their construction by the artist and determination by the culture.

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Pre-iconographical description is seen as a necessary condition for iconographical analysis, but this approach also demands "a familiarity with specific themes or concepts as transmitted through literary sources". As with forms, so with themes or concepts which are expressed by objects and events, an understanding of the historical conditions which give rise to such expressions is necessary, in order that we should be able to recognise the constitution of a world of images, stories and allegories, by means of a typificatory use of certain objects or events. Thus, Panofsky recognises that images gain their meaning in a given historical context, and indeed it is this context which supplies the meaning to the image - the task of iconography being to bring to bear an awareness of the wider cultural tradition which can reveal this significance.

The third stage - the interpretation of intrinsic meaning - goes beyond the previous two stages by,

"...ascertaining those underlying principles which reveal the basic attitude of a nation, a period, a class, a religious or philosophical persuasion - unconsciously qualified by one personality and condensed into one work. Needless to say, these principles are manifested by, and therefore throw light on, both 'compositional methods' and 'iconographical significance!':7

These principles have an importance in documenting the cultural conditions of the society from which they arise. We are able to see forms, motifs, images, stories and allegories



as "manifestations of underlying principles", and therefore the superficial manifestations can be taken as "symbolical values", and it is the location and analysis of these that, for Panofsky, constitutes iconology.

"The discovery and interpretation of these 'symbolical' values (which are generally unknown to the artist himself and may even emphatically differ from what he consciously intended to express) is the object of what we may call iconography in a deeper sense: of a method of interpretation which arises as a synthesis rather than as an analysis."Panofsky (1962):8

This synthesis is to take the form of an intuitive estimate of the intrinsic meaning of the work, which has to be developed into a comparative structure in which artistic products are correlated against the other cultural products of that society.

"The art historian will have to check what he thinks is the intrinsic meaning of the work, or group of works, to which he devotes his attention, against what he thinks is the intrinsic meaning of as many other documents of civilisation historically related to that work or group of works as he can muster; of documents bearing witness to the political, poetical, religious, philosophical, and social tendencies of the personality, period or country under investigation. Needless to say that, conversely, the historian of political life, poetry,

religion, philosophy and social situations should make an analogous use of works of art. It is in the search for intrinsic meanings or content that the various humanistic disciplines meet on a common plane instead of serving as hand-maidens to each other." :16

The effect of which is to suggest that, in the iconographical synthesis, a resolution can be found to the dispute joined by Gombrich and art historians on the one hand, and Wolff, Hadjinicolau and the sociologists of art on the other. However, we shall now enter a caveat against part of the logic of Panofsky's approach, which may give the advantage to the sociologists of art at the expense of the art historians; an objection which will also have implications for the ultimate objective of the iconographical synthesis, namely the history of cultural symbols in general.

The argument is simply this, that whilst Panofsky sees formal analysis and iconographical analysis as necessary and prior to the iconographical synthesis, he does not appear to make his theory reflexive, in so far as it does not explicitly include the earlier stages as part of the final stage, or as conditioned by it. Neither does his case proceed in the other direction, namely that the essential tendencies which are called into play are a product of the prejudices and cultural determination of the analysts, although, to be fair, he does admit that the "personal psychology and weltanschauung" of the critic will condition the act of synthetic intuition, which also has to be seen as located as an act within a tradition i.e. as itself historically located.

To fully reflect this, the synthesis should include its own two formative stages, in which case it would become more able to take account of its own formulation. Hence 'form' and 'type' come to be seen as constitutive of the synthetic intuition, in which case we can see that they are more than the recognised stages leading up to it, and actually become part of the substance of the iconological method. The notion of "the essential tendencies of the human mind" is thereby modified to become 'the characteristic tendencies of the tradition within which the critic is working, and/or the tradition which is being addressed.'

The purpose of iconology can now be conceived of as an identification of the characteristic tendencies of specific civilisations, or cultural or historical complexes, made possible by means of the iconographical synthesis. Such a position treats more seriously the formal qualities of the culture to which we are attending, and ultimately reconciles views of culture and social structure as interactive agents. Finally, such a position retains a synthetic notion of an integrative, historically located, analysis which takes the analysis of differing aspects of culture (Panofsky's humanistic disciplines) as mutually informative, but recognises their social and historical location and determination. In this way the grounding of the iconographical synthesis provides this study with a justification for its methodological orientation.

We now arrive at a formulation of the importance of the art products of cultures which meets the criteria laid down

in the Introduction to the study; namely, that our orientation should permit cross-cultural description and analysis whilst also avoiding a positivistic approach to cultural data. It is important, therefore, that we pursue further this 'anti-foundational' approach to our subject by investigating the ways in which cultures and social structures interpenetrate, and the processes by which aesthetic sensibilities are formed for members of a society. This can be done by examining theories which bear upon the symbolic structuring of culture, and also upon the penetration of thought by interest.

Because of the empirical focus of the study upon Portuguese forms of human classification, this argument will be developed to include consideration of the implications of culturally located morphologies, the significance of the human body and the theoretical importance of boundary maintenance in cultural systems of classification.

CHAPTER TWO:  
Structures of Causality  
of the Symbolic System

## STRUCTURES OF CAUSALITY OF THE SYMBOLIC SYSTEM

On the Applicability of Insights drawn from the Sociology of Knowledge to an understanding of the social location of ideas

Subsequent chapters address a number of issues which are significant for the elaboration of the common ground which exists between the sociology of knowledge and the study of race consciousness. They arise from the fact of our having taken race as a notion embedded within culture, but also having an existence as an attribute of the long term structure of culture, namely the underlying symbolic structure. It is intended that three items should be subject to scrutiny; firstly, the relationship between knowledge, structure and discourse and the indeterminacy of the relationship between culture and social structure; secondly, the structures of causality of the symbolic system; and thirdly, the generation of forms of social classification, morphology and boundary maintenance. At each stage the argument will be evaluated for its significance in ordering our understanding of the cultural contextualisation of Portuguese race consciousness.

Viewing race as a biologically given category, or as a manifestation of a social structure, is to adopt forms of determinism which cannot fully do justice either to the subjectivity of the social actor, or to the constraint of physiology. We shall later see that reliance upon the a priori existence of racial categories can lead to a sim-

plistic account of the development and comparative evaluation of civilisations. At the same time, however, a willingness to deny biological causation in favour of a thoroughgoing social determinist position not only leads to the rejection of the intrinsic meaning of the racial distinction, but also depends upon the elaboration of a structural determinant which can be used to explain away the views of the actors. In either case, therefore, the theorist rejects the subjectivity of the actors and hence the meaningful nature of their world. This is probably more intrinsically acceptable in the case of the proponent of biological determinism than in that of social determinism, since the former can at least claim to be working according to positivistic notions involving objective detachment, and toward the establishment of laws of causality.

In both cases the problem arises from an overdetermined concept of structure and a failure to take account of the subjective involvement of both actor and theorist in creating the categories of perception and analysis with which they are working.

Reeves (1983) suggests that...

"....theories of race relations often simply mention an economic relationship of racial subordination and domination and the social consequences which emerge from it, without dealing with the account the actors give of the circumstances in which they find themselves. Such theories lack conviction inasmuch as they do not explain

why the actor's accounts of their actions differ from those offered by the observer." :35

He concludes that a theory of ideology is needed in order to reconcile these competing perspectives and to provide a clarification of the causes of the difference. Reeves' advance is made through his application of a theory of ideology to a notion of racial discourse. He defines 'ideology' as...

"...a discursive(sic) system seeking to justify a particular state of affairs or course of action. Ideology emerges only when human beings have to account for their actions to others." :32

This might be criticised as being too strictly intentional, but allowance is made by Reeves for the implicit pursuit of a purpose and discourse is considered racial not only if it has an explicit racial content, but also in terms of its effects. We wish here to extend this definition to include not only the linguistic forms in which racial discourse results, but also those very structures of communication which make such discourse possible in the first place, namely the symbolic components of culture. In his study, Reeves really remains wedded to a notion of structurally determined ideology, for him the main determinants being the economic conditions of society. In accounting for discourse, we need to take account not only of the social and



historical context but also of the generative conditions, which include both beliefs and the social structure.

#### The Indeterminate Relationship between Culture and Social Structure

Our present concern with race consciousness, taken as existing within relationships between knowledges, structures and discourses, necessarily leads us to enquire also into the ways in which the relationship between culture and social structure might best be conceived. There have developed differing American and European traditions regarding the study of culture and the relative emphasis to be placed upon it as an analytical device, as opposed to the use of a notion of social structure. In the American tradition there has been an emphasis on structure at the expense of culture; whilst the concept of culture has been central for anthropology, it has increasingly become marginalised in some sociological analyses. On the other hand the European tradition has tended to treat culture and social structure equally seriously, in part this is due to the development of German hermeneutics and the French concern for epistemology. Consequently, whilst Wuthnow et al. can say that cultural analysis needs to be established as a novel perspective, it is to a series of European writers that they turn, or at least writers of European extraction who take their problematics from ongoing European debates.

"...cultural analysis has been inhibited...by deeper assumptions about the nature of culture itself. These assumptions have relegated culture to the realm of subjective thoughts and feelings held by individuals and have attempted to explain them away rather than identify systematic patterns among the elements of culture itself. So defined, it is little wonder that culture has remained poorly understood, if not genuinely misunderstood."

(Wuthnow et al. 1984)  
:7

Wuthnow is asking for the rectification of an imbalance that does not necessarily exist for the European theorist. However, his concern does lead him to formulate very clearly the dangers of an overemphasis of social structure to the detriment of the appreciation of the cultural processes of society.

"...the dominant tendency has been to reduce culture - its causes, its form and quality - to social structural considerations. This tendency has formed its closest articulation in a traditional 'sociology of knowledge', which sought to demonstrate the determination of ideas by social circumstances." :247

This is rightly criticised as a form of sociological reductionism; the recognition of such a misconception calls forth a demand that culture be treated in its own right with a systematic consideration of the patterns which can be

identified at the level of culture. What Wuthnow is calling for is an acceptance of a dualistic approach which takes both culture and social structure as significant elements, interacting to produce a recognisable society, in which social structural considerations relate to the resource funds available, whilst the cultural aspect can be seen to shed light on the symbolic structures of communication.

In appreciating this we need to be alert to the implications for our study of Portuguese culture. A notion of race consciousness should be seen as a reflection of the tensions which exist at the level of the social structure, but must also be seen to have meaning for the members of society in terms of their cultural and symbolic ordering of reality. This is most important since it keeps in view our concern to see race consciousness existing within the relationship between culture and social structure, and not in their opposition. In recognising this we should not be unaware that such a perspective is likely to create problems for the student, since the established authorities in the field of race relations work within a paradigm which is essentially American in its origin and orientation. The European tradition of race relations studies has consistently drawn its problematics and methodologies from the United States, and as a result, it has implicitly and probably unconsciously accepted the thesis that structural elements are strongly deterministic. This orientation extends to the critical theorists as well as the 'mainstream', and accounts

for the unease expressed elsewhere in this study concerning modern notions of race (see Chapter Four). If this is so, it also accounts for the ambivalence which can be found in a very large number of studies of race concerning the accurate definition of the subject matter or field of study, extending even to the lack of consensus which this field exhibits both in its academic form and in the wider political debate.

This question can be tackled by means of a consideration of Marx's critique of Hegel's allegorical interpretation of the manifestation of the Idea in the contemporary society. Whilst the problems with the Hegelian notion of the Idea are not our central concern here, the response to them can shed light on the ways in which ideas reflect cultural and social structural realities. For Hegel, the forms of human activity were realisations of the progressive unveiling of the Idea through history. Consequently there existed behind human activity a further causative factor which also gave it meaning and direction. Marx objected that there had occurred an inversion in thinking in order to permit such an analysis, such that the Hegelian philosophy of religion could be criticised as follows:

"...religion has no content of its own and does not live from heaven but from earth and falls automatically with the dissolution of the inverted reality whose theory it is." (Marx, 'Letter to Arnold Ruge.' in McLellan, 1977):23

It is the question of the inversion of reality that

concerns us here, especially the interest which we have in whether ideas can be seen to create an illusory understanding, or whether they are necessarily related to the social conditions within which they have currency. Thus, for example, if we accept a critique of biological determinism, we are left with the possibility that race consciousness has no objective reality but is 'ideological', in so far as it creates a systematic interpretation of a subjectively apprehended social reality which is factually meaningful, specifically to those involved.

"The theoretical context from which the concept (of ideology) emerged was that of a critique of certain distorted forms of consciousness, which Marx equated with inversions. But these inverted forms of consciousness were not seen as empty illusions or misrecognitions without any social basis; they spring from real inversions in society, from social contradictions. The role of the cognitive inversion is to compensate at the level of consciousness for the inversion at the level of social reality."

(Larrain, 1983)

Where we find evidence of race consciousness, even though we assume it has no direct objective biological reality, we cannot simply deny such a perception since it must reflect real circumstances. We should seek more fully to appreciate the 'symbolic universe' (Berger & Luckmann,

1967) within which such consciousness is embedded and which gives it both form and content. It is important to be aware, however, that this symbolic universe is not to be conceived as overly determinant, since we have to recognise that the basic material resource upon which the idea of race is founded is the human body, and this can not be denied as an objective reality to its owner, even if its social composition and recomposition has to be recognised as of fundamental significance.

This leads us back to question the validity of establishing a distinction between culture and social structure. In his analysis of recent developments in the sociology of knowledge, Law (1986) sees a tendency towards a disintegration of the two concepts as typical of certain recent approaches within the field. Whilst Foucauldian critiques of power and ideology have offered necessary correctives to a notion of discrete social and cultural form, they do also present their own problems if taken as empirical conclusions of historical research rather than as premisses of theoretical debate.

For our purposes it is important to retain a distinction between social structure and culture because this can allow the inclusion of historical evidence especially insofar as it can be shown to have a conditioning effect upon Portuguese race consciousness. Factors such as the Islamic domination must to be appreciated as having structural causation, and although it is recognised that they also have cultural

outcomes, these are simply more easily handled if the distinction is maintained. On the other hand it will also be useful to accept that there are social phenomena which are not readily amenable to interpretation as either exclusively structural or exclusively cultural, but are best taken as part of a dialectical relationship between the two. Race consciousness is one such phenomenon, as are aesthetic value and notions of artistic style in the portrayal of visual reality.

The relationship of culture and social structure is therefore to be seen as an indeterminate one, which varies according to the nature of the object of analysis, rather than determining the subject. In this way the full complexity of social reality can begin to be attended to.

### Structures of Causality and the Symbolic System

It is now appropriate to pay attention to the ways in which ideas come to be realised in the particular form which they take in a given culture. There are two main dimensions along which such an analysis can proceed. On the one hand there is the concern for the social structuring of ideas - a typical interest of the sociology of knowledge - which seeks to understand the ways in which the formation of ideas is influenced by social and historical factors, and seeks to relate structures of knowledge to social structures. On the other hand there can be a concern for the content of ideas, which not only seeks an understanding of the homology between culture and social structure, but also seeks to appreciate the significance of the particular content of ideas. Whilst in no way denying the validity of the argument concerning homology, this perspective is also interested in ideas qua ideas, and not simply in terms of their structural significance.

We shall investigate both approaches with a view to expanding the arguments addressed above concerning the relationship between culture and social structure, especially in the case of race consciousness. As we have already suggested, the two approaches are here seen as complimentary to each other and can best be treated by drawing on both aspects. Moreover, subsequent chapters will address the ways in which social classifications, especially those concerned



with race, reflect both structural and qualitative factors.

An implication of such an approach is that we should bear in mind the significance of ideas for the individual. Put in terms of a polarity of possibilities, it would be possible to conceive of individuals either as carriers of ideas which have a structural derivation, or alternatively to see ideas as the results of the creative activity of individuals. Either position is inadequate when taken in isolation since, as we intend to show in this chapter, it is important to understand ideas as having a social dimension, and also to see that their meaning is realised subjectively. We shall then be in a position to suggest the importance of ideas generally within culture, and in specific terms of the aesthetic realisation of artistic sensibility and of consciousness of race. This cultural orientation is treated both as a part of the general structure of ideas, the social system of classification, and as a concept of importance in its own right due to the significance of its qualitative nature for the relationship of knowledge, structure and discourse.

#### The Penetration of Thought by Interest: Karl Marx

Our attention now turns to the means by which symbolic interpretations are accounted for in certain approaches within the sociology of knowledge, and we begin this examination with the marxian notion of ideology, although the

argument will develop beyond this. We have already seen that social inversion and its embodiment in ideas and beliefs does not suggest that people are necessarily mistaken in what they think, but that what they think reflects the social conditions in which they live. However, in his criticism of religion and philosophy, Marx proposed a further thesis concerning the ways in which social interests come to be expressed through ideas.

Marx is relevant to our present argument because he rejects both idealistic interpretations (Hegel) and materialistic interpretations (Feuerbach) in favour of a dynamic approach which is concerned with human practice. Avineri (1968) notes that this results in a tension which allows Marx to transcend the classic dichotomy between subject and object. In so doing he suggests that although the social world is created by human beings, it acquires an independence over time which permits it to confront people as a dominating force.

"This fixation of social activity, this consolidation of what we ourselves produce into an objective power above us, growing out of our control, thwarting our expectations, bringing to nought our calculations, is one of the chief factors in historical development up till now." (Marx 1970):53

This idea of the inaccessibility of the social structure to individual attempts at change underlies not only

Marx's critique of religion, but also his formulation of the means by which such a critique could be transcended ( i.e. the move from the negation of religion to the process of the negation of the negation through the struggle between the social classes, with the object of the destruction of bourgeois individualism and its substitution by the system of common ownership). People therefore confront a reified world which is 'given' by the culture; in this sense reification and alienation are two interrelated and unavoidable conditions which must of necessity arise in the process of social interaction. The culture is created by the necessity of social intercourse, and the consciousness of the individual is given to them through their existence in that society.

"...language is practical consciousness that exists also for other men, and for that reason alone it also exists for me personally as well; language, like consciousness, only arises from the need, the necessity, of intercourse with other men...Consciousness is, therefore, from the very beginning a social product, and remains so as long as men exist at all." (Marx 1970):51

However, Marx was not only concerned with the grounds of consciousness as a social and historical product, but was also intent on laying open the way in which the interests of social groups come to be embodied in cultural products. In his statement of the relationship between the ruling class

and ruling ideas, he offers a perspective which seems derived from the old materialism, and which proposes that there is a synonymity between material power and power to control the intellectual products of society.

"The ideas of the ruling class are in every epoch the ruling ideas, i.e. the class which is the ruling material force of society, is at the same time its ruling intellectual force...The ruling ideas are nothing more than the ideal expression of the dominant material relationships, the dominant material relationships grasped as ideas; hence of the relationships which make the one class the ruling one, therefore, the ideas of its dominance."(Marx, 1970):4

Various attempts have been made to account for this passage, and it has attained significance for some groups as a test of dogmatic correctness. From the point of view of the study at hand it seems that the most useful approach is to accept the arguments which Marx goes on to advance in "The German Ideology" regarding the ways in which dominance in the one field leads to dominance in the other, namely by means of the appeal to 'universality'. This suggests that the perception of history which each age develops permits its insights and its existence to be taken as good for all time. This is especially so as the material basis for those ideas goes unremarked. Universalistic concepts become possible:

"...if we confine ourselves to saying that these or

those ideas were dominant at a given time, without bothering ourselves about the conditions of production and the producers of these ideas...This conception of history...will necessarily come up against the phenomenon that increasingly abstract ideas hold sway...For each new (ruling) class is compelled...to give its ideas the form of universality, and represent them as the only rational, universally valid ones."

(Marx, 1970)  
:65

A result of such a process would be that history could come to be seen as motivated and sustained by these abstract ideas, and that each new dominant group is obliged to claim 'objective' validity for its own ideas, simply because it comes to power as a result of a struggle with a previously dominant group whose own ideas were claimed to have universal validity. However, were we to invert this logic, we might also claim that the existence of ideas of a universalist or essentialist kind might point towards their being the cultural possession either of dominant groups, or of groups seeking dominance.

Marx's writings thus offer two particular insights which can be employed in our enquiry into the nature of race consciousness as a component of the aesthetic structure of culture. These are firstly, the identification of the process of reification with its attendant quality of alienating the individual from the social world which s/he had been involved in producing; secondly, the critique of ideology from the

point of view of the insertion of interests into the structure and content of ideas. On closer examination we can see that racial consciousness provides a useful example of the contiguous nature of these two insights.

For Marx, the capitalist social system had brought about a structure of social and economic relationships such that individuality in its full sense was denied, and the only hope of resolution lay in the collective recognition of the need for all individuals to develop in an all-round manner. The liberation of the individual is expressly seen as an overall political task and is definitely not a programme to be undertaken in isolation.

"In the present epoch, the domination of material conditions over individuals, and the suppression of individuality by chance, has assumed its sharpest and most universal form, thereby setting existing individuals a very definite task...of replacing the domination of circumstances and of chance over individuals by the domination of individuals over chance and circumstances. It has not...put forward the demand that 'I should develop myself'...it has instead called for liberation from one quite definite mode of development" (Marx, 1969):<sup>65</sup>

Here Marx recognises that forms of culture and structures of the division of labour have a supra-individual character, especially in so far as the individual is prevent-

ed from complete self development as an act of volition. Rather, collective interests express the structuring of society, and only collective action can alter that structure. This analysis, if applied to race consciousness, can clearly take account of the categorical nature of such classification and of its inaccessibility to the will of the individual. In other words the concept is a part of the structure of intercourse between people, and must be seen as having a social character. Moreover, the concept potentially contains an intrinsic validation of the differential allocation of group interests, in so far as racial differences are held to account for the distribution of life chances, or indeed the achievement of life styles.

Race consciousness, then, offers the possibility of a vision of the social world as one in which human attributes have become reified and withdrawn from the grasp of the individual; race offers a collective definition of the human condition which can readily be called upon to justify or explain biological or cultural differences.

However, whilst it could be claimed that Marx had uncovered certain aspects of the formal and structural qualities of ideas, and whilst his position on the value content of ideas is insightful, it is not a sufficient basis upon which to build an analysis of culture, since it does emphasise form at the expense of content. As we shall see when we come to enquire into the analysis of fetishism, the problem that Marx creates for us is that of accounting for

the content of ideas at the same time as realising their representation of, or penetration by, social interests.

#### The Penetration of Thought by Interest: Karl Mannheim

Mannheim's work on ideology is now taken as a classic statement on the penetration of thought by social interest. For example, in his comparison of the concept 'freedom' in terms of the meanings which it held for Old-style German Conservatives, romantic conservatives and liberals, he shows how the term had contradictory meanings for each competing party.

"That the liberal saw only one, and the conservative only another side of the concept and of the problem was clearly and demonstrably connected with their respective positions in the social and political structure. In brief, even in the formulation of concepts, the angle of vision is guided by the observer's interests. Thought, namely, is directed in accordance with what a particular social group expects." (Mannheim, 1936):245

This approach leads us to an appreciation of the 'perspective' of the subject and allows us to interpret historical data in terms of the characteristics of the period. What it does not do, is to permit us to appreciate from where those characteristics are themselves derived. It is clear that the distinction which Mannheim makes between



the idealistic notion of 'pure' contemplative knowledge and the activistic form of knowledge - in which there exists an irreducible "purposeful element" - does not allow us to make progress in this matter since it recognises the human intent, but fails to deal with the actual outcomes in terms of the particular forms of behaviour which arise from such knowledge. The germs for such a treatment are, however, held within an aspect of Mannheim's work which has remained largely unremarked.

In the acknowledgement of his debt to Marx, for his perception of the class interests enmeshed within the ideas of a society, Mannheim is now commonly seen as the inheritor, the systematiser who widened class-based analysis into a generally applicable theory of ideology, through the transition from a particular to a total theory of ideology.

The starting point for Mannheim's project lay in his recognition of a peculiarly modern predicament of thought which arose from the development of an increasingly pluralistic system of ideas. This process had begun with the demise of what he saw as the essentially static medieval society which contained within itself an elite group - the intelligentsia - whose main task was to treat questions of dogma and to "provide an interpretation of the world for that society". This stratum is seen as enjoying:

"...a monopolistic control over the moulding of that society's world-view, and over either the reconstruction

or the reconciliation of the differences in the naively formed world-views of the other strata."

(Mannheim, 1936)  
:9

Such a group had a tendency to develop an increasing scholasticism in their work and a removal from the concerns of everyday life. With the 'disruption' of this intellectual monopoly, long established certainties gave way to an uneasy individualism, and ultimately to a renewed search for an organic reintegration of society, but this time predicated on mechanistic interpretations and de-mystified explanations stripped of significance of meaning at the level of the individual. The change which came about had a sociological significance also.

"... the decisive fact of modern times, in contrast with the situation during the Middle Ages, is that this monopoly of the ecclesiastical interpretation of the world which was held by the priestly caste is broken, and in the place of a closed and thoroughly organized stratum of intellectuals, a free intelligentsia has arisen...free competition began to dominate the modes of intellectual production." (Mannheim, 1936):10

This change in the structure of the intelligentsia had positive and negative results; it produced "a sudden flowering of unexampled intellectual richness" which at the same time could be seen as a "first upsurge of the profound disquietude of modern man", and this resulted in people's

being driven:

"...to reflect not merely about the things of the world, but about thinking itself and even here not so much about truth itself, as about the alarming fact that the same world can appear differently to different observers." (Mannheim, 1936):<sup>8</sup>

It would therefore seem to be the key to Mannheim's work that he has located those socio-historical conditions which give rise to world-views. Two major problems present themselves, however. Firstly, the socio-historical conditions cited by Mannheim concern the structure and interests of the intelligentsia, and he has been rightly criticised for offering an overly determinist account of the role of an intellectual stratum in the creation of an ideology. A second criticism also seems possible which does not at the same time deny either Mannheim's importance as a sociologist, due to his recognition of the ideological nature of all thinking, or the validity of the criticism which is levelled at his apparent concentration upon the intelligentsia. This concerns his account of the qualitative nature of the earlier, Medieval, thought system.

"The dogmatic content of the premises with which these divergent groups start and which this thought then seeks in different ways to justify, turns out for the most part to be a matter of accident, if judged by the criteria of factual evidence. It is completely arbitrary

in so far as it depends upon which sect happens to be successful, in accordance with historical-political destiny, in making its own intellectual and experiential traditions the traditions of the entire clerical caste of the church." (Mannheim, 1936) :40

Mannheim appears to be saying that whilst ideas express interests, the actual content of the ideas is unimportant. This rests upon a notion that an opposition can be made between form and content, and that the one has absolute priority over the other. We must object that this leads him into the second, and logically connected error of his approach, namely that the change from an ecclesiastical world view represented a true rupture, or "disruption" as he terms it. It has at least to be seriously considered that, whilst the elite groups and their associated relations of domination were significantly altered, at the level of culture (as opposed to structure) there existed a continuity in discourse, which derived from the classical world view. This possibility is investigated in a later part of this study, but it is useful here to indicate that such a claim necessitates special consideration of the balance between continuity and rupture which can be found in the renaissances of Western Europe.

In his analysis of the development of the sociology of knowledge, Abercrombie (1980) suggests that the question of the relation of form to content should be seen as the central

one. The problem which needs to be addressed is why ideas took the particular form that they did, and why these beliefs rather than others come to be adopted. In putting it this way it might appear that there is a voluntaristic element involved in the adoption of beliefs, and the way is opened up for conspiracy theories of ideology and consciousness. If we recognise that consciousness is locked into an interpretation of reality, this should not in its turn proceed to the assumption that forms of individual consciousness might be false simply because they can be seen to be culturally conditioned. Indeed, as Abercrombie states:

"the causal mechanism correcting (sic.) class to belief is interest...although this concept is of great importance to the sociology of knowledge, it is not used in a clear and straightforward manner. Conventional Marxist accounts tend to take it for granted, while Mannheim both relied on it and criticised its 'onesided' use in Marxism." (1980):55

However, it is recognised by Abercrombie that the difficulty remains one of explaining why particular beliefs, and not others, come to be adopted by given social groups. Also, it is important to retain in our approach some recognition of the inevitability of beliefs, since we can recognise that it is not possible for individuals to deny the authenticity of their beliefs to themselves. Such concepts as are held will have an inevitability about them for their

holder; put rather more simply, this is like saying that the holder believes his or her beliefs. The importance which attaches to this viewpoint lies in the recognition that authenticity is directly linked to cultural content. Barnes (1977) puts this concern very well when he draws a distinction between action and belief.

"...belief (is not) so arbitrary and uninfluenced by real primitive causes that we can choose to believe whatever we like. Actions we can choose; beliefs, strangely, we cannot. We cannot simply decide to believe..." :43

We would wish to take issue with the notion that even actions are subject to choice, since actions are likely to be motivated by, and subsequently rationalised by, the beliefs which actors hold, but Barnes' point is well made.

#### People, Things and the World

The seeming inevitability of beliefs is a point worthy of mention since it retains the idea of structural qualities being held within thought. This recognition is to be found in Durkheim's elaboration of the nature of 'social facts', which are seen to have a thing-like quality constraining human action in a most profound way.

"The first and most fundamental rule is: consider social facts as things...The voluntary character of a practice

or an institution should never be assumed beforehand...the most important characteristic of a 'thing' is the impossibility of its modification by a simple effort of the will...(social facts) determine it from without; they are like molds in which our actions are inevitably shaped." (Durkheim, 1938):4

This viewpoint is a fundamental one in the development of sociology, in that it stresses the eminently social aspect of human action and cognition to the detriment of an explanation drawn from individualistic psychology, and accepts that this position lays great stress upon the social component of knowledge. Especially in the generation of primitive systems of thought, Durkheim sees the social group as being the dominant influence on the structure of the system.

"...if the totality of things is conceived as a single system, this is because society itself is seen in the same way. It is a whole, or rather it is the unique whole to which everything is related. Thus logical hierarchy is only another aspect of social hierarchy, and the unity of knowledge is nothing else than the very unity of the collectivity, extended to the universe."(Durkheim & Mauss, 1969):84

Durkheim and Mauss see a progressive development in thought whereby the so-called 'sentimental' aspects are increasingly shed due to the growth of scientific thinking

which excludes social referents and instead concentrates on "true nature". They do, however, also acknowledge that these "remote influences" still exert a hold over the forms of logic which obtain today. These remote influences still make themselves felt in the structure of thinking which we employ, this:

"...is the very cadre of classification, it is the ensemble of mental habits by virtue of which we conceive things and facts in the form of co-ordinated or hierarchized groups." (1969):88

Durkheim and Mauss point out that the study of classification in fact involves a recognition of the lessening of society's emotional grip upon the concepts, and the increasing exercise of critical and rational capacities. As society moves towards a scientific system of classification we would expect the mystificatory action of sacred emotion to lose its power to influence the thought processes of the individual. As a consequence, the ideas held within society, while they might formally display the structural qualities of hierarchy and division which are derived initially from the sociocentric conception of nature, also transcend such structural imperatives by recognising their relationship to the world of nature. Whilst Durkheim and Mauss see the primitive thought structures as basing consciousness of difference in nature upon their having identified human differentiation, and natural classification upon social



classification, the very recognition of a logical classification of nature itself implies a lessening of emotion and a recognition that the natural world does not exist either at the level of pure ideas or solely at the level of social consciousness, but must be understood as a reality refracted by the structure of classification found in a specific culture.

The suggestion which we took from Marx concerning the way in which thought systems are presented as universally valid, whilst in reality expressing the ideological interpretation of a discrete social group, might as readily be applied to the culture and beliefs of Manueline Portugal, or indeed to modern day scientific thought as to the Zuni or the Kulin tribal peoples cited by Durkheim and Mauss.

"...just as for the primitive the tribe constitutes all humanity, and as the founding ancestor of the tribe is the father and creator of men, so also the idea of the camp is identified with that of the world. The camp is the centre of the universe, and the whole universe is concentrated within it."(1969):65

Indeed, Durkheim and Mauss claim that the notion of the society as a microcosm of the universe is still to be found in the Roman word 'mundus' which had meaning as both the world and as the gathering place of the 'comitia'. At the very least Durkheim provides us with the possibility of accounting for the structure of culture, and by extension,

provides the means by which an account can be constructed of those forms of social consciousness which we have seen as being neither exclusively structural nor cultural in their origin.

"From this point of view we can the more easily understand that the nature and the value of a thing can be distinct. Collective ideals can only be manifested and become aware of themselves by being concretely realised in material objects that can be seen by all, understood by all, and represented to all minds. Drawings, symbols of all sorts, formulae, whether written or spoken, animate or inanimate objects, provide examples of such concrete realisations...In this way a rag (flag) achieves sanctity and a scrap of paper (postage stamp) may become extremely precious."

(Durkheim, 1965)  
:94

In this formulation Durkheim provides us with a way of beginning to see how symbolic value comes to be embodied into cultural artefacts. The process by which collective ideals come to be manifested is a focus for the iconological analysis of culture, and indicates that such an approach can find theoretical legitimacy within a sociological approach.

As we shall later see, race consciousness brings into interrelation aspects of biology, social structure and culture. Durkheim and Mauss' consideration of the significance of the system of social classification concerns

this particular constellation of factors, laying emphasis upon the way in which the various factors of biology, structure and culture are involved in a dialectical relationship in which they are to be seen as both determining and yet determined. We shall return to this issue in the next chapter of this study when we come to consider the significance of the relationship between boundary maintenance and attitudes to the body for the understanding of race consciousness and its cultural embeddedness.

#### **Ideas in History and the History of Ideas**

Before doing this, however, we need to address the problem of the idealist interpretation of history. We saw that it was by means of a rejection of both material and idealist forms of determinism that Marx could claim to account for both creative human action and social oppression. Avineri (1968) emphasised this element in Marx's writings, and its significance has been recognised in recent developments (e.g. Cousins and Hussain, 1986). It would seem to be the case that the rejection of idealism has been elevated to an unacceptable level in some analyses which stress economic determinism to the exclusion of reality as experienced by cultural actors themselves; such a position is criticised elsewhere in this study. We return to the subject here since it sets the context for an appreciation of the contribution of the history of ideas within the context of an analysis of

ideas in society.

Lovejoy (1933) made a number of assertions concerning such an approach which illustrate both its complexity and its fruitfulness. In considering the characteristics of study which he wished to promote, we shall be able to evaluate their relevance for our own approach. There are a number of very significant ideas which we can draw from Lovejoy's work, but the overall approach adopted by him does not constitute a sufficiently rigorous base upon which to rest our own work, mainly because his approach is atheoretical.

Lovejoy's great strength is that he is not prepared to take ideas at their face value. He considers that the body of a philosopher's works, for example, might best be taken as having a series of component ideas - 'unit ideas' as he calls them - which are distinctively arranged by successive thinkers but which retain a strong element of structural continuity.

"...most philosophic systems are original rather in their patterns than in their components...The seeming novelty of many a system is due solely to the novelty of the application or arrangement of the old elements which enter into it...increments of absolute novelty seem to me a good deal rarer than is sometimes supposed." :3

Students of history are advised by Lovejoy to turn their attention to the "persistent dynamic factors" which underlie the production of thought in history. We should treat warily systems of thought which appear to have a superficial unity

due to their similarity of name, since it might well be the case that such consistency exists at the level of name only, and that only within the system do we find "Real units". Lovejoy is not concerned to deprive us of the means for making generalisable statements on the nature of knowledge, and his notion of the unit-idea allows him to retain the qualities of consistency and persistence over time. He suggests that there will be inter-cultural connectedness which will render specific linguistically based compartmentalisation inappropriate. In the same way the ubiquitous nature of these ideas implies that the notions of a single discipline-based approach to their understanding will necessarily be inadequate.

"...any unit-idea which the historian thus isolates he next seeks to trace through more than one - ultimately, indeed, through all - of the provinces of history in which it figures in any important degree, whether those provinces are called philosophy, science, literature, art, religion or politics...the same idea often appears, sometimes considerably disguised, in the most diverse regions of the intellectual world." :15

Lovejoy's concerns echo those to be found in the sociology of knowledge at large. His particular focus upon the overall structure of thought in society, at the expense of the isolated individual, has a great similarity with the analytical approach to the understanding of culture and

ideology which the sociology of knowledge, and especially the European tradition, has done so much to promote.

"...it is especially concerned with the manifestation of specific unit-ideas in the collective thought of large groups of persons, not merely in the doctrines or opinions of a small number of profound thinkers or eminent writers...it is, in short, most interested in ideas which attain a wide diffusion, which become a part of the stock of many minds." (Lovejoy, 1933):11

This differs from the sociology of knowledge, however, in not attempting to generate a level of theoretical analysis beyond this notion of the unit idea; leaving us intellectually somewhat disappointed in his approach and his own apparent willingness to find unity at a methodological level.

Finally, and of great significance, is Lovejoy's concern for the meaning of ideas which he identifies as "metaphysical pathos".

"'Metaphysical pathos' is exemplified in any description of the nature of things, any characterisation of the world to which one belongs, in terms which like the words of a poem, awaken through their associations, and through a sort of empathy which they engender, a congenial mood or tone of feeling on the part of the philosopher or his readers." :11

It is in the reaction of the audience that the true quality of this pathos is to be found. Lovejoy's concern here appears similar to what Berger and Luckmann have taken as the meaning structure and the structure of plausibility within the 'symbolic universe' (1967). However, Lovejoy already seems advanced beyond Berger in that this notion of 'metaphysical pathos' allows us to escape Berger's determinist idealism and confront that most important of questions concerning why particular ideas create resonance in the minds of members of particular cultures.

"...susceptibility to different sorts of metaphysical pathos plays, I am convinced, a great part, both in the formation of philosophical systems by subtly guiding many a philosopher's logic, and in partially causing the vogue and influence of different philosophies among groups or generations which they have affected."

This notion is especially appropriate to the study of particular art forms or genres, because it causes us to question the ways in which aesthetic sensibilities are generated by cultures, both in terms of their contents and in terms of their formal qualities.

We need to consider what are the appropriate levels at which to be looking to find evidence of such metaphysical pathos. It might be seen as archetype recognising archetype; it may be produced by a 'fit' between class interest and ideology, or perhaps it can more widely be recognised in

situations where culture and social structure have synonymity. In part our answer is pre-judged by the foregoing analysis. In part, however, we must also turn to the criteria for classification and judgement which a socio-historic location makes available for the interpretation of reality.

We next consider the structural qualities which render such interpretation possible, and following on from that what makes possible their realisation through time in specific cultural milieux. The argument pursued in the following chapter is therefore aimed at investigating the ways in which culturally mediated systems of human classification form, and are formed by, the aesthetic sensibilities current within a society.



CHAPTER THREE:  
Bodies of Thought

**BODIES OF THOUGHT:**  
**Social Classification, Morphology and Boundary Maintenance**

The problem which we shall now address concerns the nature and duration of systems of classification as they exist within cultures. We shall question whether such phenomena can be recognised only in their superficial manifestations, or whether they exist also at the deeper level, giving shape to cultural articulations. Viewing race consciousness as a component part of the system of symbols which exist within a culture, we shall begin to orient our concerns towards the analysis of race consciousness as a specific form of the aesthetic mode of society, in which context the symbolisation of the human body is to be seen as part of a wider structure of discourses whilst at the same time having an intrinsic significance of its own. However, before we can accept that race consciousness is to be viewed as part of the aesthetic mode of society, we need to establish its location within the forms of symbolic classification and boundary maintenance which society operates.

**Fetishism and the Commodity Form**

We shall again begin our discussion with a consideration of certain of the ideas of Marx which have particular relevance for the study of social forms of classification and

particularly race classification, but which also raise the question of the historical specificity of ideas. Our assessment of the utility of the perspectives discussed below will be based in part upon the notions of historicity which they contain, and in no case is this as evident as with Marx, who, whilst making a contribution to the understanding of social morphology and classification, also confronts us directly with the problem of the historical specificity of ideas.

Marx's analysis of the fetishism of commodities (1972) suggests that commodities acquire values when they are placed into a system of exchange between groups of people working in isolation from each other. In order that the products of their labour can be exchanged at a value commensurate with the amount of labour needed to make them, a calculation against a form of currency, such as gold or silver, permits the seller to compare her/his own labour input with that of others in the market place. As Marx suggests, this process involves a further unconscious one in which the relations between things assume a social character, and those between people assume a material character. In a footnote, this is put the following way.

"When, therefore, Galiani wrote, 'wealth (value) is a relation between two persons,' he should have added, 'but the relation is hidden away within material wrappings.'" (Marx, 1972):47

This suggests that the superficial appearance of objects

obscures a deeper reality which springs from the underlying social relationships which are entailed in their production. This distinction has been conceived of as one between appearance and essence, in which case it is deemed the task of science to discover the nature of the reality which underlies the outer form (e.g. Geras, 1971; Mephram, 1973; Rose, 1977). For Marx the answer was set in terms of the argument concerning the fetishism of commodities, namely that such a process was at its most developed in the bourgeois society, where it determined the quality of labour by means of a mystification of the relations of production. In other and earlier societies, this obscuring of the real relations of dominance and submission were carried on directly between people and were not in need of translation, and therefore apparently not as readily available for mystification.

"These forms are the very things that comprise the categories of bourgeois economics. They are the socially valid, and therefore objective, thought forms, which serve to express the relations of production peculiar to one particular method of social production, namely commodity production. Consequently, all the mystery of the world of commodities, all the sorcery, all the fetishistic charm, which enwraps as with a fog the labour products of a system of commodity production, is instantly dispelled when we turn to consider other methods of production." :\$0

Amongst those other methods of production is that which obtained in medieval Europe, and by our own inference here, in Portugal at the time relevant to our study.

"In Europe during the Middle Ages, all are dependent...dependence characterises the social relations of material production, no less than the spheres of life that are established upon these relations. But for the very reason that relations of personal dependence form the groundwork of society, it is not necessary that labour and the products of labour should assume fantastic shapes differing from their real ones...The tithe which must be handed over to the priest is a more tangible reality than his reverence's blessing. Whatever view we take of the masks in which the different personalities strut upon the feudal stage, at any rate the social relations between individuals at work appear in their natural guise as personal relations, and are not dressed up as social relations between things, between the products of labour."

(Marx, 1972)

:50

This is, of course, a problematic view of the nature of medieval social relationships. We might ask whether the payer of the tithe and the recipient priest would actually have conceived of their relationship as directly human or whether they would have seen it as mediated by God, in an analogous way to the reference to the market which underpins the

relationship between buyers and sellers in a capitalist society. In neither case would the underlying assumptions have to be of a very elaborate or sophisticated kind for them to offer an ideological explanation which accounted for the place of the holder of the beliefs within the world as they knew it. If we take it that the believers of the Middle Ages did really believe in the existence of the Christian God, which does not seem to be an unfair assumption, then we might expect their view to include God as entering into their social relationships in a real way, as real, in fact, as the capitalist or labourer's view of the existence of commodities, and having also the capacity to enter into social relationships and to determine the actions of the individuals who have originated the concept.

Also, Marx's analysis rests upon a restriction of the process of the fetishisation of commodities to the bourgeois market situation. In this he has attracted both supporters (Rose, 1977) and critics (Lukacs, 1971). The view that the process is confined to the process of production will necessarily restrict the extent of its applicability. In the context of studies of race consciousness it would seem to place a tight band around the number of ways in which such ideas can be explained by means of a reference to fetishisation. At most, race consciousness would be the direct elaboration of labour relations, concealed in order to hide the economic truths which tied people to each other, but likely as not a strict interpretation of the

conceptualisation of fetishism would remain firmly grounded within the discrete analysis of the social process of labour and commodity production.

Once a rather looser interpretation is brought to bear, however, the applicability of the concept becomes considerably greater. Lukacs attempts this when he denies the essentially economic nature of commodities, and takes them instead as the "central structural problem of capitalist society". Given access to the process of reification beyond the purely economic sphere, it is possible to create a model of "all the forms of bourgeois society together with all the subjective forms corresponding to them" (Lukacs, 1971). Lukacs is therefore willing to admit that reification is a quality of the totality of the culture of capitalist societies. Drawing on this reading it becomes possible to construct an analysis of culture in general and of the aesthetic dimension of race consciousness in particular. In Lukacs' case, however, it is made clear that this structure of ideological representation is specific to modern capitalism, in so far as it now totally dominates modern modes of thought. Lukacs is therefore able to provide a basis for the development of a theory of race consciousness conceived in what we might term a modernist perspective.

To extend the historical dimension beyond the bourgeois-capitalist society would be to leave the direct application of both Marx and those interpreters cited above. The need to extend the analysis can be made plain if we take two

criticisms of the thesis as we have so far outlined it.

There is, firstly, the problem of Marx's explicit denial of a commodity form within the feudal society. Even in his own terms Marx actually denies this since, when he is elaborating the notion of the fetishism of the commodities, he draws comparisons and examples from the study of religion.

"To find an analogy, we must enter the nebulous world of religion. In that world, the products of the human mind become independent shapes, endowed with lives of their own, and able to enter into relations with men and women. The products of the human hand do the same thing in the world of commodities. I speak of this as the fetishistic character..."(Marx, 1972):45

It appears that in wishing to be done with "the negation of the negation", Marx had also put aside the possibility of a general critique of culture. Indeed, the case of religion must surely be the one which most adequately details the extent to which medieval, and earlier, times were caught up in a total ideological structure which was based upon a reification of the products of culture. This point is so compelling that its omission can only be accounted for if we assume that a desire to avoid ahistorical systems building obscured the need to take seriously the longer term historical dimensions of contemporary culture. However, observations which have a wider applicability than the modern period would only be ahistorical if they made claims for



universality, claims which could never be supported by the available data.

This argument might, therefore, make it possible to suggest an extension of the notion of the fetishisation of commodities beyond the purely modern period, and to seek it in forms other than that which has been taken as historically specific to the capitalist society.

It is attractive to consider Berger and Pullberg's claim (1964/5) that reification is a cross-cultural and historically recurrent phenomenon, if only because some process of objectification is anthropologically necessary to the formation of the human consciousness of the world. This would add an historical dimension to the notion of fetishism, since the underlying process by which the creation of a fetishistic value took place could be seen to be part of the means by which symbolic values come to be created and inserted into human cultural discourse. Whether one then proceeds to the position that "alienation and sociation are de-facto linked processes" is a point of doubt, since in their own argument Berger and Pullberg admit that this renders the process into an ahistorical functional imperative. This would leave the way clear to deny authorship and meaning, a move which we wish to resist in our analysis, since it is recognised that the social and historical contextualisation of a phenomenon is a vital part, not only of that phenomenon's existence, but also of its analysis.

A second point concerning the notion of the fetishis-

notion of the 'materiality' of human relationships , it is not too great a step to suggest that such a recognition leads to the integration of our understanding of human beings into our understanding of the world as a whole. Without denying agency to the individual, it becomes possible to locate the perception of what it means to be human, within the apparently more general structure of classification from which we derive our ideas, and to which we give substance. With our attention shifted from economy to culture, we can see that race consciousness is an example of a means of viewing a largely social set of relationships as having a material (i.e. biological) origin and existence.

We can derive from Marx a perspective on the ways in which humans come to be understood within a wider system of objectification. However, we have already suggested that it is not appropriate to ground a study of race consciousness solely in the analysis of the class structure of society. Lukacs' attempts at widening the point of analysis from the economism of the vulgar marxists, extend this potentiality. They do not ultimately provide a satisfactory framework for a study of the phenomenon of an aesthetically felt race consciousness as long as it is held necessary to view cultural forms as epiphenomenal, with the only significant factors of causality seen to be economic. Also, the insistence upon a modernist interpretation is rendered problematic since we have already established that such forms of thought are not the exclusive property of the capitalist period, but are

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found widely represented in a variety of non-capitalist historical and geographical contexts.

Such an approach lays stress upon the form of social relationships but has little to say of their content. Indeed Lukacs explicitly states that the more society develops towards being capitalist in its economic organisation, the less do the artistic and aesthetic structures have significance for the process of cultural production generally, or indeed specifically for artistic work itself (this latter becoming increasingly subsumed within other craft based activities). The reason for this being that purely economic factors are seen to become ascendant. In fact, what Lukacs has done is to rescue us from a narrowly applied economic determinism only at the price of widening that determinism to the whole capitalist culture. If anything, the problem of epiphenomenalism is exacerbated, and we are left without a means of apprehending the non-economic aspects of culture. Since under capitalism,

"...the production of commodities advances purely economically 'of itself' in an unbroken revolutionary process. It is evident that in pre-capitalist societies the positive influence of art on handicraft production must be quite decisive. (As in the transition from Romanesque architecture to Gothic.) Under capitalism the scope of art is much more narrowly confined; it can exercise no determining influence upon the production of consumer goods and indeed the question of its own

existence is decided by purely economic factors and the technical problems governed by them.(As in modern architecture.)" (Lukacs, 1971) :236

Lukacs's willingness to see an important role for art in pre-capitalist societies initially seems encouraging. The problem for us here is that such a clear differentiation of the aesthetic influence between periods lacks validation. We return to this question in the 'reprise' at the end of this chapter.

If it seems unreasonable to draw such a distinction between capitalist and pre-capitalist societies, then at least we can see a solution suggested from within the perspective with which we have just been dealing, namely the association of the process of reification with the appropriation of the world by means of its being drawn into a structure of symbols. Taking the notion of fetishism, we can see that phenomena are symbolised as having a thing-like existence, and are then made available for classification in comparison with other phenomena which have become appropriated by means of symbols.

#### Deep Structure and Historical Continuity: the Manifestation of Humanity

We have to seek an approach which can accept the notion of the fetishism of the commodity form, whilst at the same time paying more attention to the cultural significance of

the content of ideas, namely the characteristics of the forms of social classification. In order to do this we shall now turn our attention to certain of the ideas of Durkheim and more recent writers who have been influenced by his approach.

It was argued earlier that Durkheim and Mauss' study of primitive forms of social classification gave a sufficient basis for an account of the structure of culture to be developed. Durkheim was prepared to see a very large social element in thought, and to see the fundamental categories of understanding as products of collective thought. As he said in an apparent attempt at moderation which has the effect of creating an appropriately placed degree of ambiguity into his discussion, "at least it is allowable to suppose that they (i.e. the categories) are rich in social elements," (1971). The precise nature of this social component of knowledge is, of course, important, since the range of possibilities held within such a proposition can be diverse, and their implication divergent. Lukes (1973) argues that there are several interpretations which can be read from "Primitive Classification" and "The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life", three of which make major contributions towards the understanding of the social nature of knowledge in general, and systems of classification in particular.

These interpretations are, respectively, that "concepts are to be seen as rule-governed elements in conceptual systems", that "belief-systems should be treated as cosmologies", and that "there are structural correspondences

between symbolic classification and social classification," (Lukes, 1973). A closer examination of these themes is now appropriate.

We begin with the notion that concepts are rule governed elements of conceptual systems. Durkheim pointed out, both in the essay "Individual and Collective Representations" (1965) and in "The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life" (1971), that conceptual understanding in the individual has to be seen as located within a wider, social, context. In this wider social context we can find the collective representations existing in themselves, over and above the actions of individuals which have given rise to them in the first place.

"The representations which form the network of social life arise from the relations between the individuals thus combined or the secondary groups that are between the individuals and the total society...there is nothing surprising in the fact that collective representations, produced by the action and reaction between individual minds that form the society, do not derive directly from the latter and consequently surpass them."(1965):24

Moreover, their existence is brought to the consciousness of the individual by means of their obligatory nature, (as in the case of religion, morality and law which are examples cited by Durkheim) and this is signalled by means of the individual's recognition from time to time of

overarching truths of which s/he "catches a glimpse". The systemic nature of the collective representations is indicated in the following way.

"...collective representations,...add to that which we can learn by our own personal experience all that wisdom and science which the group has accumulated in the course of centuries. Thinking by concepts is not merely seeing reality on its most general side, but it is projecting a light upon the sensation which illumines it, penetrates it and transforms it. Conceiving something is both learning its essential elements better and also locating it in its place; for each civilisation has its organised system of concepts which characterises it." (1971):436

Consequently, the system of conceptualisation has an explanatory function for the individual in that it constrains conception and offers "guarantees of objectivity", since the concepts, in order to have existed over time, must be seen as being in accord with their referents. The collective representations are therefore continually verified by people's experience in living their lives according to the efficacy with which they make life possible. Durkheim notes also, however, that the representations are not judged solely according to their practical affect, but also in accordance with their integration into the overall scheme of collective representations in society, since their validity must also be



vouchedsafe by the general structure of thought. If not, people will not be willing to entertain these ideas as possible ways of conceiving the world, since they would not fit in with the structure of ideology, the consistency of which is ensured by its fundamentally rule governed nature.

In one sense, the priority of the rules as opposed to the specific content of ideology is unimportant except in so far as their distinction permits us to see the effect of the one upon the other. Thus we can infer the existence of the rules from the consistency of the ideology, or alternatively, the consistency of the ideology from the existence of the rules; either way we are saying that we expect cultural forms to exhibit some degree of internal coherence, and also to be affected by the historical legacy of preceding cultural forms which themselves have the consistent appearance of rule governed phenomena. However, we do then face the question of the universality of the rules which we have identified as basic to the culture. The more we see them as universal, that is to say as contextually independent, the more we create a notion of ahistorical structure underlying human behaviour. For our purposes here, the rules are conceived as being historically realised, and as having an historical continuity. However, this continuity does not imply that they exist extra-contextually, and so their length of existence will depend upon the culture which gives them substance, but which in turn shapes its substance according to the interpretation of the legacy of the past which its present resources imply.

Arguably, the system of rules which govern the elaboration of knowledge, gain their characteristics from this need to ensure some degree of continuity between various aspects of culture in order that the individual is not forced to confront either a social or a physical reality in which there exist either stark contradictions, which might call into question the whole validity of the structure of thought, or conflicts between moral imperatives which might leave the individual in a state of confusion as to the appropriate form of action in a given context. A case in point, and one of relevance for this study, being the ways in which notions of humanity exist in dialectical interrelation with conceptions of race and religious affiliations (see e.g. Freyre, 1956). These consistencies, or otherwise, are thus tested in the process of social interaction, and given specific expression in their aesthetic, linguistic and other cultural forms.

Further, these consistencies will allow an overflow between various facets of the culture and an interpenetration of themes and contents. This lends a sense of legitimacy to our seeing the aesthetic as a site of potential insight into aspects of racial consciousness. It also suggests that the forms and contents of visual representations will offer possibilities for understanding aspects of Portuguese culture in a general sense - going beyond the artistic and the visual to wider aesthetic sensibilities, forms of classification and history.

For Durkheim, this systematic structure of collective

representations is made apparent to the individual by means of language. Language is the appropriation of the conceptual structure of society and "every word translates a concept"(1971), with the result that whilst it is admitted that it is not possible for individuals precisely to share experiences, it is possible for them to be invited, by the use of language, to "place themselves before the same object as myself and to leave themselves to its action." However, it has to be kept in mind that the concepts which language translates are themselves impersonal forms of representation, bearing the mark of no particular action, but resulting from the interactions which go to make up the community.

It is not only through language that we can expect to find expressed the symbolic structuring of individual and collective cognition. According to the logic of Durkheim's argument we can expect such a social structuring in all areas of culture. In this way the form of language is but a specific and dense form of the cultural organisation of symbols, but so too is the visual form of communication which underlies the creation and appreciation of art forms. Indeed, both language and art forms imply an underlying aesthetic mode of human cultural activity. In looking to this wider aesthetic (Fuller, 1988,1990; Eagleton, 1990) we need to question whether such an aspect of human sensibility also acts at a deep level to provide motivation for human cultural development (vide Jung) or whether it always functions in an historically located manner (vide Lovejoy).

The recognition of the possibility of deep structures of causality, historically located within culture, is a theme also of Jung's treatment of the collective unconscious which is seen to comprise archetypal structures of mind. Pursuing the notion of a psychic unity of humanity, which had also informed Freud's analysis of religion (1938), Jung claims that at the level of the unconscious there exists a common structure which underlies human consciousness.

"...personal consciousness rests upon a deeper layer, which does not derive from personal experience and is not a personal acquisition but is inborn. This deeper layer I call the collective unconscious. I have chosen the term 'collective' because this part of the unconscious is not individual but universal; in contrast to the personal psyche, it has contents and modes of behaviour that are more or less the same everywhere and in all individuals. It is, in other words, identical in all men and thus constitutes a common psychic substrate of a personal nature which is present in every one of us." (Jung, 1934/1954):3

This domain cannot be recognised explicitly, clearly so because it exists at the level of the unconscious and refers to those aspects of the mind which have not directly been subject to cultural realisation. Through the process of historical manifestation, fundamental changes occur to the patterns of structure of the unconscious giving 'colour' to

the unconscious content of the mind, which is taken from the individual through whom it has appeared. Contents of the collective unconscious Jung terms as 'archetypes', and it is by means of an elaboration of the nature of these archetypes that he is able to propose his formal approach to consciousness. The identification of this archetypal structure of the collective unconscious demands that we draw a distinction between allegory and symbol - the allegory expressing the conscious content of the mind and the symbol expressing the unconscious. In the case of the collective unconscious Jung suggests that it has an existence independent of the individual mind.

"...the collective unconscious is anything but an incapsulated personal system; it is sheer objectivity, as wide as the world and open to all the world."  
(Jung, 1934/1954):22

This symbolic structure of consciousness is therefore both the means to consciousness and its negation. A confrontation with the unconscious gives us the formal structure of comprehension whilst at the same time threatening to overwhelm us. Jung suggests that the culturally constructed barriers of rite and dogma are erected with the express intention that they act as dams, keeping back the tide of the unconscious. The means by which these structural properties of mind are dealt with are thus seen as devices which hold back the symbols which we would rather not confront because

of their potency (c.f. Geertz and Berger on the role of religion as a defensive mechanism against chaos, who both see religious beliefs as bulwarks against the meaninglessness of suffering and death). Jung's analysis sees everyday life as defusing the threats which exist at the level of the collective unconscious, whilst Geertz and Berger see collectively held symbolic structures as working to impose meaning upon an otherwise meaningless existence. To see beliefs as offering support against internal symbolic forms has the advantage of offering the potential for comparison, whilst the view of beliefs as walls against chaos does seem to suggest that the beliefs have no comparability at the level of content. It appears more logical to see beliefs as positive statements of meaning and intention - which Geertz also recognises (Geertz, 1966), and to see chaos as the boundary, or the result of the negation of a pre-existing structure of ideas, which gives those ideas dimensions and factuality in the eyes of their carriers.

The force of the confrontation with a potent unconscious leads Jung to 'look behind' the patterns of thought of modern society to see them as epiphenomenal forms of the struggle to wall in the collective unconscious.

"...external historical conditions, of whatever kind, are only occasions, jumping-off grounds, for the real dangers that threaten our lives. These are the present politico-delusional systems. We should not regard them .

causally, as necessary consequences of external conditions, but as decisions precipitated by the collective unconscious." (Jung, 1935/1954):23

The idea which Jung suggests most strongly is that of a continuity of consciousness through history, which arises from the collective unconscious. His project in elaborating such a supra-individual notion has direct similarities with that of Durkheim, by whom he was influenced (Jung, 1938/40), and this approach further presents an elaboration of the fusion of culture and social structure when we come to enquire into the content of the archetypal forms and their relevance for the study of race consciousness as a culturally constrained phenomenon.

Jung draws an analogy between the physical and the mental structure of human beings, at least to the extent that each has a morphology which has been influenced by the historical experiences of humanity, and is essentially unknown to the individual. The influence of historical experiences is especially clear in the case of the mind, which comprises a series of archetypes, originally called by Jung 'primordial images', a notion that he drew from Burckhardt but which he later modified into the Thomist notion of archetype.

"Our unconscious mind is, like our body, a storehouse of relics and memories of the past. A study of the structure of the collective mind would reveal the same discoveries as you make in comparative anatomy...The

brain is born with a finished structure, it will work in a modern way, but this brain has a history. It has been built up in the course of millions of years and represents a history of which it is the result. Naturally it carries with it the traces of that history, exactly like the body, and if you grope down into the basic structure of the mind you naturally find traces of the archaic mind." (Jung, 1977) 150

Amongst others, Jung identified two associated archetypal forms which have some relevance for our study, namely the 'Shadow' and 'Trickster'. The shadow is a constituent part of the individual's personal unconscious, presenting to that individual aspects of their personality which they would rather ignore. These are the aspects of "uncontrolled or scarcely controlled emotions" which cause the individual to behave "like a primitive, who is not only the passive victim of his affects but (is) also singularly incapable of moral judgement" (1951). Fordham puts this in a rather more stark way when she suggests that the shadow is a personification of the self as "an inferior or very primitive person" who represents "all those uncivilised desires and emotions that are incompatible with social standards and our ideal personality - the shadow is the natural, i.e. the instinctive man." It therefore represents "the primitive, uncontrolled, and animal part of ourselves." Whilst not directly reflecting Jung's own description of shadow, Fordham does at least stress the underlying notion of the undeveloped



nature of shadow, an aspect which Jung referred to as the "dark" aspects of the personality, thereby making an association of darkness and primitiveness which should be understood alongside his other association of darkness as the original state of human life. The parallels with Jordan (1974) being too obvious to miss.

However, the archetype of trickster places this discussion on a social plane. Trickster is:

"...a collective shadow figure, a summation of all the inferior traits of character in individuals. And since the individual shadow is never absent as a component of personality, the collective figure can construct itself out of it continually. Not always, of course as a mythological figure, but in consequence of the increasing repression and neglect of the original mythologems, as a corresponding projection on other groups and nations." (Jung, 1972): p. 13-14

Now Jung sees this archetype as having a therapeutic value for those who hold it in that:

"It holds the earlier low intellectual and moral level before the eyes of the more highly developed individual, so that he shall not forget how things looked yesterday." (1972): p. 13-14

But if it were to become rather more associated with the projection upon other groups or nations, then such an

archetypal response would hold within itself the potential for the transfer of inner repressed feeling of hostility onto those who become typified by it, backed up by an inevitable association of the differing characteristics of primitiveness, animalism, low moral and intellectual status and notions of darkness. As such, it would seem to offer a first indication of a structural explanation of the origin of certain types of racial consciousness based upon a negative evaluation of those of a relatively darker skin colour, especially blacks of African origin.

The notion of a collective unconscious, formed of archetypes, appears to offer possibilities of cross-cultural comparison, in that it posits a common basis to all human cognition and action. At the same time, however, this potentiality is withdrawn by the notion of the walling in of the unconscious by culture and ritual, since it is the function of the process of walling in to completely obscure the unconscious and thus prevent it from overwhelming the conscious mind. At the level of individual consciousness, therefore, there will be little possibility of developing a comparative perspective. At a structural level, Jung's approach provides a means by which we can begin to become more sensitive to underlying formal qualities of culture and history. However, whilst Jung's notion might have formal applications, his archetypal forms of Shadow and Trickster appear to have little purchase in the explication of the 'content' of the Portuguese art works which we discuss later.

### Culture, Classification and Cosmology

We need here to pursue those aspects of Durkheim's sociology of knowledge which we outlined above, namely the idea that belief systems should be treated as cosmologies, and the notion of a structural correspondence between symbolic classification and social organisation.

Durkheim stated that,

"There is no religion that is not a cosmology at the same time that it is a speculation upon divine things...religion has contributed to forming the intellect itself." (1971):4

In a sense, this idea extends the notion discussed above, in that it reiterates the importance of the system of collective representations, showing it to be part cause, part result, of the moral integration of society. The system of beliefs of a society can be seen to express the social interaction between peoples which has resulted in the formulation of concepts. These concepts therefore contain within themselves social elements because they are constructed in the course of interaction. However, their object, at least in the case of the basic categories of understanding, imposes upon them the need adequately to reflect the reality which at the same time they are appropriating. As explanations of the universe they embody both the social context within which they arose, and the proper-

ties of the universe for which they account. In such a view, ideas both reflect and determine reality for those who hold them. A vital question which again confronts us, concerns the extent to which it is possible to arrive at a non-contextualised understanding of the basic categories of understanding. The task of the researcher is to test the limits of such an awareness by seeking out the particular factors which constrain the development of the categories; in other words, by the development of an appreciation that cosmologies are, as are languages, socially situated. The possibilities which Durkheim offers in this formulation were recognised in the socio-linguistic analysis of Bernstein (1971) which grounded the Whorfian hypothesis in a recognition of the importance of the social contextualisation of speech; it is also found in the work of Douglas (1970), which again recognises that moral systems, rituals, symbols and cosmologies must be understood as being grounded in the structure of social relations.

Douglas' work provides a useful perspective on the relations between symbolic order and social structure. This she does by drawing in part upon her reading of Durkheim and Mauss, and in part upon her own interpretation of Bernstein. Of fundamental importance for her is the creation of order, which permits individual consciousness, interpersonal communication and social organisation.

"the drawing of symbolic lines and boundaries is a way of bringing order into experience. Such non-verbal symbols are capable of creating a structure of meanings

in which individuals can relate to one another and realise their own ultimate purposes. Learning and perception itself depend upon classifying and distinguishing. Symbolic boundaries are necessary even for the private organising of experience. But public rituals which perform this function are also necessary to the organising of society." (1970):73

There is certain to be a strong link deriving from such a perspective between the social structuring of the symbolic universe, the drawing of symbolic boundaries, and the material which is to hand for the construction of discourse. The problem which arises concerns the content of culture and the mechanism by which the boundaries come to be drawn. We might see the notion of discourse as presenting us with a more active view of the relationship than does Douglas' definition of order, since a discourse suggests that there will be an active engagement of individuals creating meaning, whilst at the same time recognising the public dimension called for in the creation of culture by people who are nevertheless constrained by biological, social structural and historical factors. Discourse might alternatively be seen as people making their own history, but under circumstances not of their own choosing, thus finding a balance between the potentially oppositional perspectives of voluntarism and determinism. In the context of a study of the aesthetic realisation of race consciousness, we need to take account of

the dynamic interaction of biology, social structure and history, not only within a given historical and geographical context, but as part of a developing and emergent cultural form.

Durkheim's original formulation drew an analogy between the structure of collective representations and the structure of language, partly because language was deemed by him to be relatively static.

"Now language is something fixed; it changes but very slowly, and consequently it is the same with the conceptual system which it expresses." (1971):433

However, he did recognise the social quality of the concepts, in so far as they were engendered in the process of social interaction, even though they attained an apparently independent status. Durkheim's perspective therefore gives a rather more elaborated perspective on the relationship between the content of thought and the social milieu in which it originates and is employed. He also permits the historicity of phenomena to be given an embodiment in culture which goes far beyond the marxist notions of epiphenomenalism.

The above discussion implies that we should see a strong relationship between cultural forms, especially as these are expressed in the conceptual and symbolic structure of society. We should also be aware of the need to locate our focus on a long time scale which takes account of the

continuities which underly cultural change. Finally, and consequent upon these two points, we should expect that the deep structure of phenomena which can be recognised at either the conceptual level or the historic level, will be active in determining both the form and content of cultural products. This is not to argue that cultural phenomena are misleading in their appearance, but to suggest that peoples' understanding, whilst it is authentic and must be recognised as having a meaningful content, also has a social dimension which allows it to be characterised as both a specific cultural product, and as an expression of ongoing human discourse. This last point being of extreme importance since it relates to the basis of intersubjective understanding and the means by which the social and the personal coalesce.

#### From bodies of Thought to Thoughts of Bodies

In order to determine the relevance of these ideas for our study of the aesthetic realisation of race consciousness, we shall now look more closely at the analysis of body symbolism undertaken by Douglas (1966, 1970).

Douglas argues that the body becomes a symbol for the external boundaries of culture; in other words, the highly charged areas of the margins of society - highly charged because they mark the transition from the known into the alien - come to be incorporated into the concept of the body because in that way public concerns with moral integration

can be translated into the most intimate, and consequently the most pressing detail.

"The body is a model which can stand for any bounded system. Its boundaries can represent any boundaries which are threatened or precarious. The body is a complex structure. The functions of its different parts and their relation afford a source of symbols for other complex structures." (1966):138

Douglas summarises her underlying ideas when she says that what is being carved in human flesh is an image of society. Her precise concern with pollution and margin permits her to focus more clearly upon the strength of boundary maintenance between the components of the symbolic system. Amongst others, Douglas identifies two particular dimensions which, we can propose, are of direct relevance to our study of Portuguese race consciousness; these are the external boundary and the internal lines of the system. Finding an unfunny wit at play in the association of pollution rituals with dangers pressing on the external boundaries of the system, she notes that the significance of symbolic margins is heightened by their power to re-order the experience of their object, should they be altered.

"...all margins are dangerous. If they are pulled this way or that the shape of fundamental experience is altered. Any structure of ideas is vulnerable at its margins...The analysis of ritual symbolism cannot begin



until we recognize ritual as an attempt to create and maintain a particular culture, a particular set of assumptions by which experience is controlled."(1966):145

From this we gather that the symbolism of the body not only gives the most intense expression to the social relations of a culture, but also reiterates the relatedness of the individual, and their consciousness, to the general structure of consciousness which comprises the symbolic system. Concern with the body is therefore indicative of two possible interpretations; firstly, that the object symbolised by the body is of the utmost importance for the relationship of the individual to the society, and, secondly, that the formal quality of the system, either internally or externally, or both, is under pressure.

Subsequently, Douglas came to express these dimensions as those of group and grid, and offered a formalistic explanation of ritual behaviour predicated on the various permutations of these dimensions and their capacity to generate distinctive cosmologies. Leaving aside the adequacy of this schema, and the criticism which it has attracted, (Wuthnow,1984) we shall instead concentrate here upon the association which Douglas makes between classification, boundary maintenance and conceptions of the human body. Accepting a structurally dimensioned explanation, Douglas proposes that the analysis of the symbolic structure of culture should reveal a significant relatedness with the role

structure; a sort of consonance between culture and social structure. The seminal point at which Douglas arrives draws together the ideas from Marx and Durkheim which we have already discussed.

"First, the drive to achieve consonance in all levels of experience produces concordance among the means of expression, so that the use of the body is co-ordinated with other media. Second, controls exerted from the social system place limits on the use of the body as a medium." (1970):95

The argument is clear, that the use of the body as a medium for the transmission of socially significant symbols will result in the body's being apprehended as a part of the socially grounded system of symbols; but more than this, the body symbolism will give voice to specific concerns which resonate with the fundamental meaning of the conceptual system of the bounded society. Body symbolism is of the most fundamental kind, because it alerts us to the fact that at issue here are the boundaries of legitimacy of the structures of reality and its apprehension.

The body as symbol becomes the pivotal point, or focus, of other symbolic systems in society, bringing about a consistency in their forms of articulation. This echoes Durkheim's point concerning the need for collective representations to offer some degree of consistency within the conceptual structure. Here, however, it is implied that

the most profound meanings issue when the individual conception of self as a physically existing subject is brought into relationship with the other body in which the self exists - the social body of society.

"The physical body can have universal meaning only as a system which responds to the social system, expressing it as a system. What it symbolizes naturally is the relation of parts of an organism to the whole. Natural symbols can express the relation of an individual to his society at that general systemic level. The two bodies are the self and the society; sometimes they are so near as to be almost merged; sometimes they are far apart. The tension between them allows the elaboration of meanings."(Douglas, 1970):112

We should now consider the significance of this for the understanding of race consciousness in society. It is possible to see two dimensions of racial thinking which are of importance here; the tendency to conceive of human beings in a collective sense, and not as autonomous individuals; together with the associated perception of people as typically and categorically different, with that difference marked by a racial boundary. In both cases the justification lies in the perception of attributes which are seen to be typical of the members of the group concerned.

In the case of the collective conceptualisation of human beings, an interactive mixture of fetishisation and body

symbolism is at play making the structure of apprehension focus upon the 'thing-like' qualities of people's bodies, almost to the exclusion of their individual personalities and creativity. This perspective presents us with a reified conceptualisation of human being of the most fundamental kind, in which criteria for the evaluation of human worth are exclusively of a material derivation - the biologicistic perspective being the archetypal form of such a viewpoint. People are seen as significant only to the extent to which they have a bodily form which can be seen to accord with specific classificatory systems. As such, the elaboration of supportive data, or the enactment of associated behaviour, will place biologically existing bodies within a culturally contextualised structure of symbols which, because of the fact of the crucial significance of bodily, as opposed to other forms of symbolism, will make it very clear to those who are involved in such a system that their rights to define social reality, or conversely, to have it defined for them, are at issue.

As for the 'energy' associated with the boundary between different peoples, we should perhaps follow Douglas' observation that the significance which attaches to boundaries arises from their capacity not only to differentiate like from unlike, but also to act as defensive markers denoting the extent to which particular cultures hold sway, and indicating those who are included and those who are excluded. In this sense we can see that the cultural

significance of race consciousness lies in its signalling the external boundary between differing cultural forms, and we might expect rather more energy to attach to interracial conceptualisation in contexts in which the originators of the racial ideas either found themselves in a precarious position of power, or else were concurrently experiencing a crisis in their internal lines of symbolic demarcation, which called forth a spirited defence of the external boundary so as to re-impose order upon their collective structure (see Cohn; Boswell; Foucault, inter alia, for diverse applications of such an argument within the West European context). Either way, the use of body symbolism will re-iterate the deep significance of the phenomenon to those involved.

We can see then, that consideration of the symbolic structure of society is a necessary part of the process of understanding race consciousness, since it allows us to see ideas as located in a social and historical context. To understand the significance of the notion of race as a way of identifying human differences, we have also to understand the general conceptual and aesthetic form of society and its relation to the social structure, since it is these factors, in their interaction, which give rise to, and sustain, a form of discourse which itself permits notions of race to characterise the culture of a society, and to order its social structure.

Body symbolism attracts the multiple powers which derive from its marking concerns with reality definition, and its

standing between the individual and the chaos of the breakdown of the conceptual order. The appearance of black bodies in the iconography of Western Europe in the late middle ages denotes a remarkable instance of this process, which brought together biblical, imperial and racial themes in an admixture which - with hindsight - we can see as a herald of the reformulation of the symbolic structure of culture which was to result from the rise to supremacy of the 'modern' form. Enmeshed in this process, and still to allocate each other to their relative positions of dominance and inferiority, were the culturally realised structures of 'classification' and 'the visual'. In the context of the European Renaissance these would find a particular relationship, but one which would not immediately dominate all of European culture. As we shall see in subsequent chapters, the Portuguese cultural context diverges from the mainstream European. In this, the kinds of anthropological classification developed are held deep within the overall structure of classification and themselves relate differently to visual forms of expression. Racial consciousness, bodily apprehension and the visual expression of cultural form are not, thus, 'unit ideas', but fundamental creative aspects of human existence.

REPRISE

REPRISE: ICONOGRAPHY AND THE FETISHISM OF COMMODITIES - a  
formal coherence.

At this point it is appropriate to draw together the theme of fetishism as we have been considering it so far, with the methodological orientation of iconology. At first sight these perspectives might seem unconnected, even antithetical; however, certain formal characteristics are held in common between them and this commonality helps to support their joint use within our approach.

Whilst Marx's formulation is historically prior, Panofsky's has methodological priority in the context of this study. To recall briefly Panofsky's approach: the three fold nature of the perspective develops firstly from natural subject matter, secondly towards conventional subject matter, and thirdly comes the discovery and interpretation of the 'symbolical' values. We thus move in a progression from the facticity of the natural world, through the conceptualisation of that world, into the evaluation of it.

For Marx, there is a similar progression from the natural world towards the symbolic. The basic stuff of the world exists in an initial state untouched by human agency. It is when biological and cultural needs are felt by people that economic organisation develops. The economic structure of a society is the culturally determined means by which the natural world is appropriated to human needs. However, in the course of this process, cultural relationships cause symbolic values to be placed upon nature and culture.



The formal similarities of the two approaches are thus to be found in their progression from a pre-existing natural world of forms, through a human appropriation of that world, and lastly towards an evaluation of it. Through this process qualities are ascribed to the world which originate from the human mediation of nature, but which go beyond both nature and individual response. In 'going beyond' a sense of value is imparted to cultural products. This value is then available for interpretation in a variety of ways.

Firstly it can be taken as a facet of human nature. In which case it will attract objectively predicated explanations - positivistic, biologicistic, essentialist. On the other hand it might be seen as a facet of the universe, attracting mystical, spiritual or religious explanations. Alternatively, we can view this process as fundamental to the means of culture; the way in which the world becomes apprehended, interpreted and expressed. This last approach is the one adopted in this study; the sense of the term 'aesthetic' to which we frequently refer is intended to express the way in which the human sensibility of the world comes to form that which we recognise as culture.

Culture is thus more than the sum of individual responses to specific historical circumstances. It is more than a set of ideas, laden with interest. It includes the social relationships which people have, one with another. It also refers to the natural basis upon which all human activity is predicated. Consequently, our understanding of

culture has to include the ideological, and the social structural aspects of society. These dimensions alone, however, do not include the natural world which forms their basis. Consequently we have to make a specific point of including a biological element within our approach to culture.

Finally, we claim here that it is the aesthetic sensibility which links together the ideological, social structural and biological features of human existence and culture.

Moves towards the recognition of an independent aesthetic - a second attempt.

Contemporary debate has renewed the question of the status of an aesthetic dimension to culture. From Hadjinicolaou, through Wolff and more recently in the exchanges between Fuller (1988, 1990) and Eagleton (1990) an increasing importance has been attached to aesthetic experience as a feature of human understanding which might, in some way, transcend the social and historical particularities of its own time. In proposing an autonomous aesthetic sphere theorists run the risk of returning to an essentialist perspective on human nature. It seems that the response to the Foucauldian thesis of a human being constructed within discourse has been largely motivated by the intention of denying the incipient relativism which it appears to imply.

A response has been to reach for formulations which

locate an intersubjective form of human understanding which has 'taste' and 'spirituality' as autonomous creators of culture. Fuller's work comes closest to this with his plea for an aesthetics of redemption - a position close to that formerly set out by K  ng.

"The best we can hope for is that aesthetic surrogate for salvation: redemption through form." (Fuller, 1990)

In his urge to embrace modern Romantic painting, Fuller ultimately comes to validate a perspective informed by the views of Ruskin - a perspective that offers a disenchanted Christian aesthetics as a means of appreciating the beauty and the immanence of form in nature. Fuller, it seems, was only prevented from conversion to a belief in a transcendent God by his insistence on immanent form - an insistence itself informed by his uneasy shifting between concepts of 'theoria' and 'aesthesis' in his appreciation of the modern Romantic movement.

In contrast to Fuller, and partly in dialogue with him, Eagleton (1990) self consciously recognises the implications of contemporary theory for an appreciation of the importance of the aesthetic. He is however, unwilling to accept the increasingly mystical, deistic, views of Fuller. Eagleton suggests that what brings coherence to the contemporary debate is a concern for the human body. He aims,

"...to reunite the idea of the body with more traditional political topics of the state, class conflict and modes of production, through the mediatory

category of the aesthetic."

The approach adopted in this study comes close to Eagleton's formulation, but departs from him in a number of ways, especially in his insistence on the historical uniqueness of the notion of the aesthetic. For Eagleton, the concept of the aesthetic is a peculiar bourgeois product of the Enlightenment, which only the mechanism of dialectical materialism can lay bare. Its importance for the late twentieth century theorist lies precisely in its historical specificity. It is, for him, a product of the modern era and must be a part of the means of accounting for that era.

However, because a conceptual awareness of aesthetic sensibility is appropriate to modern criticism (and it would be difficult to disagree with this notion), it does not hold that it is inapplicable to other periods of history, or indeed to our modern interpretation of those periods. As we have argued above, and in Chapter One, an awareness of the aesthetic dimension to culture is a *sine qua non* for the appreciation of culture and human sensibility. This is especially so if we are to avoid a descent into either essentialism or transcendentalism.

CHAPTER FOUR:  
Race and levels of meaning

## RACE AND LEVELS OF MEANING

Reviewing the sociological study of 'race', Moore (1971) reflected on the ways in which British, and also American, research had been dominated by a 'social problems' approach. The main body of the work was policy orientated, with its problematic drawn from wider social and political concerns with the assimilation of minority status blacks into the dominant white society. Whilst the aftermath of the years of European fascism had resulted in a rejection of biologicistic and eugenic approaches, culminating in the UNESCO declaration on race (1952), which seemed to have settled the issue of the cultural causation of ideas of race and left open only the administrative concerns of resolving the 'problem of race relations'. It became normal for race to be considered outside the total social context, and its theoretical importance as a problem lay in its disruption of the hypothesised functional integration of society. It was in this spirit that Myrdal's 'An American Dilemma' was written and published (Myrdal, 1944), with its analysis of race relations in the USA as having characteristics of a caste like system, and this reflected the 'ghettoisation' of race as an analytic concept in sociology, a kind of sub-world echoing the dominant structures but unable to interact with them.

In this way, the sociological study of race bears remarkable similarities with the sociological study of reli-

gion which, whilst it had been an essential component in the ideas of the nineteenth century founders of the theoretical tradition of sociology, had effectively been marginalised by the middle of the twentieth century. However, whilst the thesis of secularisation could be said to account for decreased interest in religion on the part of social theorists, the Civil Rights movements only served to underscore the importance of race as a means by which identity is bestowed upon humans by their fellows. Thus, whilst for religion the interest lay in its disappearance, for race the concern lay in its practical day to day outcomes and their implications for policy.

Cox's work (1948) can now be seen to mark a critical turning point at which theoretical issues and a need to locate race within a wider framework of analysis began to be recognised. Following what were seen as the achievements of the Civil Rights campaign, especially in the USA, the conscience of liberal commentators was cleared sufficiently to allow other, theoretical, concerns to begin to inform the analysis in an ever more pervasive way. The social and historical contexts were also recognised as important, so that with the publication of works by Banton (1967), Mason (1970), Rex (1970) and Zubaida (1970), the early 1970's saw the development of a self-conscious field of race relations studies which soon had its own problematics, methodology and experts.

An example of the problems which follow from this

attempt at defining a discrete field of study can be seen in the following comments concerning the proper focus of study for sociologists of race.

"Are we to take it that any kind of theory may appear in a race relations situation, provided that a certain sort of structure of social relations is present?

Some sociologists would in fact take this step, but by so doing they abolish the sociology of race relations as a special field. It becomes an indistinguishable part of a wider field." (Rex, 1970)

A development which some might like to see; however, the consensus at the time lay in the direction of a securely demarcated field which had certain recognisable traits.

"I am not persuaded that it is proper to speak of race-consciousness or racism in times or places where people do not employ a concept of race." (Banton, 1970)

However, the notion that the field had come of age, or that this period marked "the end of the pre-sociology of race relations in the UK" (Moore, 1971) was true only in so far as the field had become established in its own right. Importantly, interest had turned from policy analysis to comparativism and notions of causality and questions concerning the epiphenomenal nature of race were beginning to be recognised as legitimate. And yet by taking as its priority the study of 'race', the general debate within the field appears to have



developed largely uninformed by contemporary developments in the sociology of knowledge (of course, with a few notable exceptions such as Lieberman, 1968; Bash, 1979) which have increasingly drawn on the earlier anthropological debates on the nature of cultural relativism along with their implications for appropriate methodological and epistemological stances.

With the important exception of marxist approaches, the debate has largely held back from a concern for the recognition of the deep level homology that can be found between culture and social structure. Rex's concern for the relationship between race, colonialism and class structure, or Banton's interest in the impact of rational choice upon the establishment of group definitions of 'boundary', go only a certain way in recognising the contribution which can be made by incorporating the debate about race into the wider debate over the nature of the relationship between culture and social structure, which is now beginning to draw on those Marxian and Durkheimian perspectives which have been so important in post-structuralism. This problem seems to be highlighted by a statement such as Reeves' to the effect that "racial discourse can only be identified by the presence of a racial category" (1983), in which he appears to be confining his interest to a discrete area of social phenomena which are thus to be understood according to their superficial appearance, rather than according to other, possibly deeper, criteria. In this sense the biologicistic approach represents a

significant advance in the field of the study of race because it grounds its analysis in an acceptance both of the authenticity of the superficial appearance, and of the deeper level homology.

Neither has the debate often been concerned to see race consciousness as a contemporary facet of an historically located cultural form, which has meant that the potential contribution of the history of ideas has not been fully drawn upon. Without a prior analysis of the deeper level of symbolic structures it is difficult to see how the 'unit ideas' which comprise the "great historic conceptions of mankind" can be adequately addressed (Lovejoy, 1933).

"These large movements and tendencies, then, these conventionally labelled '-isms', are not as a rule the ultimate objects of the interest of the historian of ideas; they are merely the initial materials. Of what sort, then, are the elements, the primary and persistent or recurrent dynamic units...?"<sup>6</sup>

The consequence is that the taken for granted nature of the concept appears to have burdened debate with many of the disadvantages of cultural and historical specificity, without seeking to gain from its recognition as a problematic located between structure, knowledge and discourse, rather than in their opposition. Race relations research had turned from its policy orientation to comparativism; what was lacking, and still is, is an appreciation of the implications of the

critique of culture which has been so central to recent developments in the sociology of knowledge.

Having been previously over-concerned with biology, economy and then policy, the study of race could only make further progress if it were to become located in the study of culture itself, thereby reflecting an increasing concern to stress its importance for the humanities in general, and also to grasp its intrusion into, and generation within, the consciousness of real people. Such an interest in the contribution of the sociology of knowledge was explicitly recognised by Moore (1971), when he came to examine those views of race which might be explained away as being forms of false consciousness.

"Men (*sic*) act in accordance with their perception of the situation and action must be explained in accordance with this actual perception. Therefore the aim of sociology is not to evaluate the truth or falsity of beliefs, but to explain the origins of the social stock of beliefs or 'implicit shared theories about the world and how it works' which inform and constrain action. A sociology of knowledge is a precondition of the sociology of race relations and a precondition of all sociology." :99

This being said, however, Banton's criticism of Levi-Strauss' approach to the problem of race shows how far research had become constrained by its contemporary concerns,

to the detriment of its analytical potential.

"Levi-Strauss' own arguments against the idea of cultural superiority have been criticised as mutually inconsistent...This...may serve as a cautionary tale to those who believe that the factual conclusions of anthropology prove either superiority or relativity in matters of culture. The student of race relations does well to concentrate upon the elucidation of more immediate problems."(Banton, 1967):5

Yet problems of cross-cultural interpretation are closely involved both in those situations which have been seen as having some racial element, and in the formulations of what it means to talk of race itself. Thus, the rejection of biological notions of race itself entails a direct evaluation both of the biological notions and of the associated notions of superiority. Indeed, researchers in this field are apparently trapped by competing demands which will continue to cause problems until the question of cultural relativism is faced. On the one hand there is the wish to respond to the liberal sentiment which nowadays surrounds such an area of study, and which implies that the formulation of evaluations of various cultures is not acceptable because it leads to their dismissal or subordination, just as does racism in the wider society. On the other hand to adopt the position of the relativist is potentially to deprive oneself of the power of critical evaluation, an implication of which might be that we

take seriously the attitudes of both master and slave, a position successfully adopted by Genovese (1970, 1971).

The modern political context is, however, inimical to such an academic position since it is often demanded that the observer recognise the relativity of all cultures whilst being informed by the liberal attitudes of the commentator. Without addressing the apparent paradox it becomes difficult to move beyond the merely polemic, and towards understanding. Genovese was able to escape such a dilemma since his analysis was founded upon a theoretical structure which brought together both positions. He argued that we need to attend to the historical context whilst remaining clear about the structural implications. This awareness of the potential contribution of an approach which recognises that there might exist various levels, at which ideas of race have varying implications was also developed by Moore when he came to question the interrelatedness of forms of belief within society.

"Very little sociological attention has been directed to the problem of relating levels of belief to one another...The question of exchange between levels of racism is of crucial importance and its explanation would contribute to resolving the cause - epiphenomenon question...but there are few monographs in current British sociology which have pursued the issues to the point of grappling with such a problem."

(1971)

103

This distinction of a series of related levels of belief is one which is also found in Bastide's work on the African religions of Brazil (1978), in which he uses ideas drawn from Gurvich (1950) in order to attend both to the complexity of historical reality and to the structuring and restructuring of the organised whole of human behaviour. Bastide suggests that sociological analysis:

"...must simultaneously take into account these two needed elements - configuration on the one hand, tiered depth levels on the other." :259

In part this is a response to his having found essential aspects of the study of culture treated in both 'depth' and 'plane', and it is this distinction which allows us to see these areas of concern in relationship to each other. On the one hand biological determinists and social determinists are attempting to offer causal explanations of race, whilst an historical approach is more concerned with situationalism, as Bastide put it. The depth approach focusses upon the nature of causality while the plane approach is more concerned with ideographic description.

Three areas of interest will now be examined. They are chosen because they represent major dimensions of the contemporary approach, because each dimension takes as its focus a necessary but not sufficient aspect, and because their treatment permits a further perspective to be developed towards the causal and situated study of race. Structures of causal-

ity are treated in 'Race and Biology' and 'Race and Structural Determination', whilst 'Race as an Idea in History' treats the situated perspective. These dimensions are established so as to help ground the later fusion of causal and ideographic approaches adopted in the treatment of the Portuguese context.

## RACE AND BIOLOGY: A Critique of a Determinist Perspective

The perspectives of biologists towards the elaboration of human racial difference lay stress on the relationship between physiological structure and cultural achievement. Such approaches can be seen to be of two types, either concerned with the demographic distributions of physiological types which predispose their owners to cultural advantage, or else concerned to display the relationship between genetic evolution and cultural development.

The first of these two positions is the longer established, and probably the closer to a popular notion of race; indeed it represents the classical notion that there exist certain human capacities which are unequally distributed within and between populations. These capacities are sufficient for them to be the basis upon which distinctive cultural patterns can be established. Theories of 'race' within this perspective will consist of attempts at distinguishing which are the significant characteristics and how they are distributed throughout the human population. In other words, the link between race and culture will be a direct one, and racial type will be an enabling, or disabling, inheritance predisposing the individual to certain behaviours.

The second position is much more recent in its development, although its detractors suggest that it really represents a re-working of 19th century Social Darwinism, and



indeed of earlier theories (Rose, Lewontin & Kamin, 1984). Since the mid-1970's socio-biologists have attempted to develop a theory of 'epigenesis' which can account for the interaction between genes and environment such that cultural products can be accounted for in terms of the contribution which they make towards the fitness of the individual, i.e. to maximise the transmission of genes into future generations. In this case racial theories will have to account for the perceived differential genetic endowment of the races, and the effects of this upon epigenesis.

Both perspectives encounter substantial problems in accounting for the intentionality of those human actors whose behaviour they seek to explain; a problem which is heightened for the socio-biologist by the a priori assumption which is made concerning the primacy of the individual genotype within the evolutionary process.

### **'Race' and Civilisation - the Physiological Dimension**

There is no single position around which a consensus exists as to the precise linkage between physiological morphology and racial classification (Marshall, 1968), any more than there is agreement on the impact of race upon cultural development (Dobzhansky & Boesiger, 1983). However, biological determinism is taken here to represent a perspective which consistently traces the genesis of human behaviour back to structural properties of the human body which afford those

who possess them a potential for certain superior forms of cultural development. This biological predisposition is then accounted for within a classification of human types which rests upon an association of culture and physiology, such that distinguishing physiological characteristics of the race become the basis for the explanation of cultural difference. However, criteria of classification often seem ultimately to come down to skin colour because other less visible criteria are unable to sustain evidence of differential achievement whilst at the same time echoing popular notions of just what race 'really is'. In this way the importance of visibility as a feature of racial classification is supported to the detriment of such notions as cranial capacity and genotype (Banton, 1967 Van den Berghe & Frost, 1986).

The interests of proponents of such formulations lead them to focus upon selected aspects of the human body as a repository for cultural potential. Leaving aside the bio-social notion of genetic predisposition which is examined below, we can say that there are a number of features which have commonly formed the basis of racial classifications. Benedict (1937/1965) summarizes these as skin pigmentation, cephalic index, nose shape, hair structure, eye shape and stature.

Approaches which take any single factor as determinant of cultural achievement have lost their influence, but synthetic approaches can still be found. An example of such an approach lay at the heart of the debate concerning I.Q. and

'race' during the 1970's, which stressed the significance of cognition for the development of learning, and which attempted to account for differential racial achievement in education, and more specifically in intelligence, by means of the notion of distributions of unequal potentialities for learning. It should be noted that such distribution is ultimately found to reside in a mixture of continental groupings and social criteria;

"...for the major racial groups there is undoubtedly a high degree of correspondence between social and racial criteria. If one were to sort school children, for example, into three racial groups - Negro, Oriental and Caucasian - by the ordinary social criteria (skin colour, hair form, facial features), one would find a very high concordance of classification if one used strict biological criteria based on the frequencies of blood groups, anthropometric measures, and other genetic polymorphisms."(Jensen, 1973):130

The focus upon mental capacity and its more generalised form of 'mind' and culture, has become a point of issue for biological determinists. Indeed, it is by means of the account offered of the causal relationship between mind and body that the theorists' positions can be compared, not only within the concerns of biology, but within a wider context including socially located accounts.

Baker(1974) provides an analysis which we can see as

representing the strictly determinist position, in which race is taken not only as an objective biological category, but as a real factor in the determination of differential cultural achievement between societies. He proposes that there exists a positive correlation between race and the development of civilisation; in this he is at odds with the socio-biologists who claim a link between genetic structure and culture but at the level of the deep structure of the individual rather than as a trait of a population as a whole. Clearly in order to appreciate his argument it is necessary to establish the meaning which he attaches to the terms 'race' and 'civilisation'.

'Race' is a term which denotes, for Baker, descent from common ancestry which directly results in the sharing of resemblances. It is to be understood as a sub-division of species, whilst species is to be understood as a population, whether of animals or people, whose interbreeding leads to the production of fertile offspring. It is not seen as a problem that differences should occur within the racial groups; indeed, unless such difference can result from interbreeding, then those groups referred to as races would actually be species. The fact of intra-group variation is therefore a necessary part of Baker's definition.

"The definition of any particular race must be inductive in the sense that it gives the general impression of the distinctive characters, without professing to be applicable in detail to every individual." 181

It should not go without comment that this notion of intra-group variation is the very ground upon which biological notions are refuted by those who advance a socio-historical approach (Montagu, 1963; Banton, 1983; Rose et al., 1984).

Baker sees the demographic, the physiological and the behavioural aspects as interacting to create races. Thus race refers to a geographically distributed population sharing certain physiological characteristics and engaging in common activities.

As for 'civilisation' Baker suggests a 21 point check list which can be used as a template against which to measure the extent to which any society can be called 'civilised'. This ideal type is intended to reflect "the most obvious features" by which societies are "commonly" regarded as civilised. There is no attempt at developing an analytical framework which could take account of social structural development, since Baker seems unaware of that dimension. Instead he offers a collation of ethnographic items which lack any theoretical coherence, and are therefore severely restricted in their utility for comparative purposes. Yet it is with comparison in mind that Baker has gathered together his list, since it will enable him to establish a hierarchy of human races. This list is then applied rather patchily with the claimed intention being to discover which cultures ...

- i) qualify as civilised
- ii) have developed without external influence and,
- iii) have given rise to other great civilisations.

Baker claims that these criteria are met only by the Sumerian, ancient Egyptian, Helladic-Ionian, Indus Valley and Sinic cultures. However, little attention is actually paid to an exploration of the evidence for such a claim, rather such evidence as is explored relates to relative skull sizes and their utility in establishing racial group membership.

The most interesting case is one which is omitted, namely the Middle American cultures, especially the Mayan. This is excluded by Baker with reference to his check-list. He especially takes exception to the religious activities of the Maya, stressing that their beliefs were superstitious, lacking in ethical content, conducive to cannibalism, and overall formed a part of a cultural system in which the capacity for abstraction was not developed.

The significance for us of this way of approaching the relationship between race and civilisation lies in the assignment of these cultures to racial categories. On the basis of such archaeological evidence as he provides, Baker concludes that the development of civilisation is a quality of the 'Europid' and 'Mongolid' races and that, whilst the 'Indianids' have approached partial civilisation, the 'Negrids' have never independently originated a civilisation. He thus concludes that,

"...all the great independent and dependent civilisations developed among the Europid and Mongolid peoples."(ibid. 520)

and,"...two Indianid subraces approached nearer to civilisation...and one of these subraces advanced to an impressively high level of culture; and here again the negrids fell behind...the possibility of environmental causes has been reviewed in some detail and rejected as an insufficient explanation of the facts."(p.533)

This approach to the evaluation of cultures is contentious in that it omits the Indian and Middle American cultures from equality with those accepted by Baker; moreover, it residualises the African achievements in culture and civilisation in a way that is not acceptable, neither recognising the great African nations (Davidson 1968,1984) nor even evaluating the 'racial' composition of the classical Ethiopian contribution to the Ancient Egyptian culture which he admits into his group of those cultures meeting his stated criteria (for evidence on this point see below, and also Snowden, 1970, 1983; Bernal, 1987; Vercoutter et al 1976).

Of critical importance, however, is Baker's suggested mechanism for the explanation of the link between biological race and culture, and it is this which shows his enterprise to lack the necessary supporting data to sustain its assertion of a link between the race as a biological given and cultural development. It is suggested that it is characteristic of cultural advance that it is stimulated and sustained

by an elite group. Drawing on Lamarck and Thorndyke, Baker proposes that a small number of people can possess extraordinary abilities which permit them to give rise to the knowledge and skills which come to be seen as the causes for the genesis of civilised culture. Since the Europid and Mongolid cultures have developed civilisations, then it is assumed that these races possess the capacity to produce the elite group who make such civilisation possible. By an extension of the argument, since the Negrids have not produced such culture, they can be seen to have no potential to produce such people. The link is thus made between biology and culture at the level of what Baker claims to be a 'secondary characteristic'. Baker cannot therefore be accepted as having substantiated his hypothesis, indeed, since he needs recourse to secondary characteristics rather than 'primary', he has dismissed his own case. The problematic tension between a neo-Darwinian and a Lamarckian formulation is not resolved, precisely because the cultural elements are not treated in sufficient depth.

#### Genes and Culture - the Socio-biological Dimension:

A move to overcome the problem of superficial linkage between biology and culture was made by the development of socio-biology. This seeks to drive the analysis towards an appreciation of the significance of the deep structure of human physiology for the determination of cultural forms. The



classic statement from this school came with the work of E. Wilson (1975) who proposed a primacy of genetic causation in the human world, but who consequently proposed to subsume the social sciences within biology. This orientation has undergone a number of reformulations (Wilson, 1978; Lumsden & Wilson, 1981). but the issue addressed remains that of the relationship of causality between biology and human behaviour.

The sociobiological argument is founded on three main principles. These suggest that evolution takes place by means of natural selection; that genes have a direct, if poorly understood, influence upon behaviour; and that individuals will aim for optimality i.e. they will tend to behave in a way that maximises fitness (Barash, 1982). In this case fitness refers to the success with which genes are transmitted into the next generation i.e. reproductive fitness. In this equation adaptation implies any behavioural change which produces enhanced fitness for the individual.

Wilson's most elaborate statement on the subject of the relationship between human genotype and culture calls into question the dividing line between genetic and cultural evolution.

"We have established that no sharp line can be drawn between genetic and cultural evolution. Paradoxically, the distinction becomes even less clear and useful as the analysis of gene - culture evolution gains in

precision...the epigenesis is prescribed by the gene ensembles...thus the link between genes and culture cannot be severed."(Lumsden & Wilson, 1981):344

The central process in this gene-culture coevolution is epigenesis, the interaction between the genes and the environment that ultimately results in behaviour and thus culture. Certain capacities are recognised as being peculiarly human - language, reification and disjunctive concept formation - which, whilst being biological in origin, are not found in the non-human animals. The 'epigenetic' rules, which derive from the DNA structure, lay down the patterns and regularities of response of the organism to its environment, and the 'culturgens' form the basic units of culture towards which the epigenetic rules will establish a position of acceptance, modification or rejection. In other words, the culture of human beings is claimed to result from the individual's genes maximising their likelihood of appearing and multiplying in the next generation. The mechanism for this clearly becomes of interest. Lumsden & Wilson's model of causation expresses the basic structure thus:

"The ultimate, evolutionary goals of the mind, toward which minute-by-minute problem solving is directed, reside in the epigenetic rules, and in that sense the core of both humanness and individuality are invested there rather than in the more purely cognitive and ratiocinating portions of the mind.

To complete this conception of gene-culture coevolution, the epigenetic rules interact with the signals received by the individual to convert that individual into a full cultural entity, a human being. Thus the mind is an active entity that shapes its own growth. The interaction of the members of the society creates the culture, which together with the genotypes of the individuals and their relatives determine reproductive success. The degree of success in turn prescribes the gene frequencies over generations and thence form the epigenetic rules on which cultural evolution depends."

(1981)

:348

It is here that two significant problems arise, one relating to the model of causation itself, the other to the process whereby fitness maximisation is achieved through the cultural process.

The steps in the model of causation are claimed to have been separately documented and understood, with the exception of the reification rules. This, however, is no small omission, to be lightly overlooked, but one which calls into question Lumsden & Wilson's claim to have established a clear knowledge of the process of epigenesis. This is so because reification and the closely associated processes of symbolisation, metaphor and communication form the essential and only link in Lumsden & Wilson's model between the epigenetic rules and social interaction, with the sole exception of learned responses. In which case we are expected to accept

the model in the absence of that level of proof which it claims to be making possible. This might seem to be of little consequence were it not for the associated question which hangs over the cultural aspect of fitness maximisation.

Whilst sociobiology sees the genotype and its associated phenotype as the property of the individual, it is recognised that individual behaviours aggregate into patterns and that they will be realised in the context of social interaction. The premise is that the individual's behaviour will have an effect on the success of that individual in passing on their genes into the next generation, to the exclusion of all other non-related genes. A premium is thereby placed on selfishness, aggression and promiscuity which logically elevates serial rape to the peak of fitness maximising behaviour. The inference which critics have drawn, for example Rose et al. (1984), Sahlin (1977) and Barker (1981), is that the sociobiological perspective provides an implicit justification of all types of domination and oppression; in fact, sociobiology is seen as a revised version of the naturalistic fallacy. This is a point which is explicitly refuted by Barash (1979) and Van den Berghe (1975, 1981) who clearly state that the sociobiological perspective is ethically neutral and may even be contrary to domination since it proposes the synonymy of human genetic inheritance.

However, Lumsden & Wilson's evolutionary scheme has a serious difficulty in accounting for morality, specifically for altruism. Co-operation between individuals would be

unlikely since it would enhance alter's chances of passing genes into the next generation. It seems that the only co-operation possible in such a scheme is copulation; and yet the ethnographic evidence suggests that a characteristic of human societies is a sustained level of co-operation across a variety of activities, of which sex is but one. The problem was therefore formulated in the following way: if the individual is genetically programmed to maximise fitness through cultural activity, how does any specific cultural act enhance such maximisation? Also, how does the link between genotype and cultural act become established and evaluated for fitness maximisation? The answer comes by taking the kin group as a population sharing a gene pool as a result of their jointly inherited past. An act of altruism on behalf of a member of one's own kin group would thereby enhance the fitness of that member, whose genotype would be very similar to that of the altruist. The wider the group spread, the more necessary it became for a limit to be placed on its extent. One such limit being the racial boundary which stresses the notion of biological similarity and difference within and between groups of people.

"Given that humankind is a biological species, it should come as no shock to find that populations are to some extent genetically diverse in the physical and mental properties underlying social behaviour." (Wilson, 1978)

The severe limitation of this approach, as Sahlins(1977)

has indicated, is that kin defined culturally is by no means synonymous with a strict biological or genetic designation. If kin is understood socially, any tendency to favour kin might often be shown to be favouring unrelated alleles at the expense of related alleles.

"What is here at stake is the understanding that each human group orders the objectivity of its experience, including the biological 'fact' of relatedness, and so makes of human perception and social organisation a historic conception...culture is properly understood as an intervention in nature rather than the self-mediation of the latter through symbols. And the biological givens, such as human mating and other facts of life, come into play as instruments of the cultural project, not as its imperatives." :62

Wilson himself accepts that there is a considerable importance in learned behaviour. However, whilst appearing to deny the existence of discrete human races, he does allow that there are certain tendencies which can be seen to have a geographical distribution.

"The behavioural genes more probably influence the ranges and form and intensity of emotional responses, the thresholds of arousals, the readiness to learn certain stimuli as opposed to others, and the pattern of sensitivity to additional environmental factors that

point cultural evolution in one direction as opposed to another...Does geographical variation occur in the genetic basis of social behaviour? The evidence is strong that almost all differences between human societies are based on learning and social conditioning rather than on heredity. And yet perhaps not quite all."

(Wilson, 1977)

Which leaves open the question, later answered by Wilson himself, as to the balance of genetic and cultural factors in the process of coevolution. It also leaves unanswered the question as to whether the failure to find sociobiological evidence of the existence of races does not still permit the genetic explanation of the perception of racial differences, a key question addressed both by Barker and by Van den Berghe, whose views will be discussed presently.

Problems of biological determinist positions on race stem from the attempt at generating a reductionist theory of culture, without taking into account the perspective of the theorist, and the significance of culture in determining the perception of 'the biological'. We can grant the notion that cultures are created by biological beings, and that those attributes of symbolisation and abstraction which are taken to be characteristically human are realisable only insofar as human beings have a biological potential to develop them (Benton, 1984). It would be more difficult to accept that culture is wholly determined biologically. Also, if we were to accept the notion that in the process of co-evolution the

line between social and biological causes is indistinct, who is to say what degree of causation is to be attributed to either part of the equation? The problem for Darwinian theorists of the evolution of human races lies in the extent to which it can be conceded that humans have a capacity for self-modification which can bring about developments in behaviour that can be learned and transmitted to future generations. In fact, the more concessions are made to the creative power of culture, the more the way appears to be open to a neo-Lamarckian interpretation of racial differentiation, very much contrary to those of the biological determinists. Such a position introduces the possibility that racial types may not be fixed properties of human physiology, or else that the genotype may not be causative of the phenotype. Rather the reverse would be seen to be the case, i.e. racial types and their associated physiological capacities would be the product of ecological or social forces, and genotypes would be the product of phenotypes.

Such a neo-Lamarckian view of the development of racial differences can be seen to take two forms - the one still rooted in sociobiology, the other embracing a social determinist perspective. Two authors, Darlington and Van den Berghe, represent differing positions in this regard, and each takes us closer to a consideration of the non-biological aspects of racial classification.

Darlington draws on the work of C.S. Coon to establish the thesis that the 'great races of mankind' evolved as a



result of the migrations caused by the successive ice ages of the Pleistocene era and the second great Paleolithic expansion. These movements of population resulted in the distribution of distinct populations reflecting the main continental groupings. However, Darlington (1969) also proposes that the evolution of mankind depends equally upon the development of the human brain, i.e. the increase in mental capacity. This increasing capacity actually becomes the dominant evolutionary force for long periods of human history, leading people to develop capacities for survival which were no longer dependent upon physical capacity. This mental development is seen by Darlington as being a directed process and one which is shared in common by the great races. An increased mental capacity provides the means by which new territories can be conquered, specifically through the development of improved techniques of communication and cultural development. For example, the development of boats is seen to open up areas of the Earth's surface which were previously inaccessible, new hunting skills could have a similar effect, with the resultant forms of art, magic and belief which express "man's joy of the discovery of his prodigious powers as a hunter". Similarly speech is claimed as a means by which selection and differentiation were mediated - placing a premium on similarity and excluding the divergent. However it should be noted that Darlington emphasises the parallel nature of this development in the various racial groups.

This parallel development provides a problem for

Darlington since he suggests that we can now witness a world distribution of races which appears not to have a direct relationship to the adaptive requirements of the human ecological environment. He is thus able to account for the emergence of races, but on the point of their difference he seems to reserve judgement (not so in Darlington, 1978 in which he uncritically adopts the findings of Jensen regarding black cognition). Because of this "precocious" mental development and its role in human evolution Darlington admits to being tempted by a Larmarckian explanation, but ultimately adopts a Darwinian formulation, locating Homo Sapiens as a racially diverse species, but one which must be understood as an evolving animal species, whose mental capacity enhances evolutionary adaptation but whose inherited traits are not consciously developed and transmitted to future generations.

Van den Berghe's notion of race, however, suggests that whilst race is a socially ascribed status, it is necessary to appreciate the sociobiological context within which such ascription becomes necessary and meaningful. This context is created by contact between populations whose phenotypic differences are sufficiently noticeable for them to be used as social labels. This means that 'race' is taken as a social interpretation of a biological trait, the point having some significance in that it is the social and historical context which gives rise to the racial classification, and which gives it meaning.

"If phenotypic criteria are socially used to categorise groups (usually, if not always, invidiously), then races are said to exist in that society, and the ideology supporting that classification and its social consequences is called racism."(1981):6

Van den Berghe stresses that the significance of the racial classification based upon phenotype is social and not biological, giving an indication of the "genetic origin", but not of the fitness of the individual in the terms already described. Whilst it cannot be denied that populations do have genetic differences, these differences have not "been shown to bear any functional relationship with the social attribution of racial characteristics..."

This argument is pressed home with the observation that most inter-group contact takes place between people whose phenotypes are sufficiently similar to preclude their use as the labels of group membership. It is only where long distance migration has taken place across genetic gradients that phenotype becomes a reliable basis for such categorisation. Given this, Van den Berghe suggests that racist distinctions of primary group relations are unusual in human societies, and that where they do occur they will be characteristically unstable, being broken down through micregenation in a process that echoes Park's cyclical movement from accomodation to assimilation.

Given this acceptance of the social basis of racial classification we can return to our consideration of the

process of the evolution of human types. Van den Berghe distinguishes between culturally caused evolution and biologically caused evolution.

"Cultural evolution is much faster than biological evolution, and its transmission is lamarckian rather than darwinian. Acquired cultural characteristics, unlike in genetic evolution, can be transmitted, modified, transformed or eliminated through social learning. Cultural artifacts can be passed on and utilised from individual to individual through non-genetic inheritance."%

A problem with Darwinian concepts of race classification lies in the assumption of a sufficient and exclusive biological group identity. This notion has been seriously undermined at the genetic level by the work of Rose et al. (1984). Their argument suggests that recent discoveries in genetics make it plain that there is no absolute genetic difference between 'races', and that the extent of genetic variation within so-called great races is 85% of all measurable genes, with a further 8% being accounted for by inter-tribal genetic variation and only 7% being interracially variable (notably the FyB allele of the Duffy group, and the Diego blood factor). Rose et al. propose that with such genetic variation within races, it is impossible to base a verifiable classification of race on such data. The question then becomes, what is the basis for such classification? Rose et al. suggest that the

main criteria are the most noticeable ones, namely skin colour, facial features and hair form. Indeed, having rejected genetic causation of race, they propose that it is an historically and socially located concept based largely on skin colour.

"In practice, 'racial' categories are established that correspond to major skin colour groups...the differences between major 'racial categories', no matter how defined, turn out to be small. Human 'racial differentiation' is, indeed, only skin deep. Any use of racial categories must take its justifications from some other source than biology. The remarkable feature of human evolution and history has been the very small degree of divergence between geographical populations as compared with the genetic variation among individuals." :127

Rose et al. therefore adopt a position close to that of Van den Berghe in that both take sociobiological variation to be significant only at the individual level, whilst race is significant at the cultural level. The enhanced significance which this view attaches to cultural factors in the evolution of human populations is echoed by Dobzhansky & Boesiger who summarise the 'interplay of biological and cultural evolutions' in the following way.

"The most rapid and obvious changes in present-day human populations are those caused by man's cultural activ-

ities. The spread of the Christian and Muslim religions over much of the earth's surface represents a spread of ideas, not a diffusion of mutant genes...nevertheless, cultural evolution does not occur in a biological vacuum. Biological evolution evokes cultural change; cultural evolution evokes biological adaptation."(1983)  
:11

From this perspective the main concern remains that of the balance between the two factors and the direction of causality.

A final problem of the theory of the biological determination of race is suggested by Marshall (1968), who points out that there is a considerable degree of cultural variation in the typologies of race which scientists employ.

"...the 'races' about which many scientists speak and write are those perceived and delineated by particular groups of people who interact in given socio-political contexts,,,In no instance are these classifications referable to competent genetic studies...Hence, many scientists persist in the use of the term race to describe groups whose racial statuses are determined, and whose racial characteristics are defined, by socio-political expediences." :151

Moreover, the popular classifications upon which Marshall asserts scientific classifications to be based, have a variability which seems to bring us to a form of cultural

relativism which might deprive the observer of the capacity to make judgements according to explicitly defined criteria.

"Comparative studies of these popular racial typologies show them to vary from place to place; studies of popular racial classifications also show them to vary from one historical period to another." :151

In so relativising the concept of race, Marshall might be guilty of emptying discussion of any definite moral or ethical criterion; as Jarvie has pointed out in his discussion of the problems associated with a relativist perspective on cultural variation.

"...were we to take this doctrine literally, other societies would become not objects of wonder and fascination, but of bafflement and incomprehension. It is precisely because accounts that seem rational to us can be given of what is going on in primitive society that anthropologists have been able to escape the old condemnation, ethnocentrism, primitive mentality, etc. views of predecessors in anthropology." (1983): 56

What must be further elaborated in the context of this study are the grounds upon which the 'seeming rationality' is founded, and not simply in terms used by Jarvie which call on our common humanity, but with due regard to the social and historical context within which cultures make the world meaningful for their members. Given the variability of con-

cepts of race, and bearing in mind the problems such relative perspectives present unless they can explicitly integrate an appreciation of the socio-historical context within which the study takes place, it seems that it is not sufficient for biologists to account for culture, rather they should take account of culture. As with Van den Berghe and Rose et al., Marshall is telling us that 'race' is a culturally determined concept, and he is implicitly warning us to take seriously Mannheim, with his injunction that we:

"...must start with the assumption that there are spheres of thought in which it is impossible to conceive of absolute truth existing independently of the values and position of the subject and unrelated to the social context...for what is intelligible in history can be formulated only with reference to problems and conceptual constructions which themselves arise in the flux of historical experience. Once we recognise that all historical knowledge is relational knowledge, and can only be formulated with reference to the position of the observer, we are faced, once more, with the task of discriminating between what is true and what is false in such knowledge." (1936):151

Having interrogated scientific accounts of race for their objectivistic validity, we now turn to social scientific analyses in order to gain a further perspective on the epistemological status of the concept 'race', which increasingly appears to us as a culturally located phenomenon.



## RACE AND CULTURE

### a) Race and Structural Determination: a causal perspective

We have already seen that Banton (1983) suggests that the use of the term 'race' can be taken as indicating that a group is involved in the process of identification. In taking this position he is adopting a perspective which is now dominant within the social scientific approach to the understanding of race, namely that we should concentrate upon social determinants of racial categorisations, and even that we should look to unmask race concepts as social constructs which are consequently seen to have an extrinsic rather than an intrinsic meaning. Rex (1973) pursues this second line of argument which begins with the subjective definition of the actors and then goes on to offer a structural explanation of the underlying 'reality' which is seen to give rise to these views,

"...to say that social facts are subjective by no means precludes the possibility of ideological distortion and rationalisation as a legitimate objective for sociological inquiry. We may still see the observed actor's statements about the way in which he classifies the world as concealing from himself and from the sociologist the true bases on which he does so...(we should first define) the kinds of social differentiation in which subjective racial distinctions have been made and then, accepting that such situations need not always be

defined in racial terms, look at the kind of definitions which are used in order to define them as racial."

(Rex, 1973)  
:184

A consequence of this position is that the meanings attributed by the actors are not accepted by the researcher, who is then left free to impose another interpretation upon the adoption of race categories which can be claimed to explain away the very content of those categories. It seems as if the commentator is saying that in spite of the actor's intransigence, we can see what is really motivating action, a view well expressed by Williams in his analysis of the racial basis of slavery in the New World...

"Slavery in the Caribbean has been too narrowly identified with the Negro. A racial twist has thereby been given to what is basically an economic phenomenon. Slavery was not born of racism; rather, racism was the consequence of slavery...Here, then is the origin of negro slavery. The reason was economic, not racial: it had to do not with the color of the laborer, but the cheapness of the labor."(1964):6919

Williams goes on to point out that neither slavery nor anti-slavery could be distinguished as absolutes. Both were closely connected with the dominant economic interests, and came to ascendance according to the perception of those interests regarding the Caribbean monopoly. Yet, whilst

Williams is clearly supported by the evidence in his assertion of a major role for economic interests, and of the relationship between ideas and the social context, he does not successfully explain why slavery came to exclude the whites, who, even on the evidence offered, were employed as indentures rather than as slaves. The assumption must surely be that whilst economic interests were of great importance, they did not exist in isolation but interacted with other aspects of culture and social structure to produce the racially defined system of slavery.

Another influential contribution to this perspective is to be found in the work of Cox (1948), who, in the course of directing a bitter attack towards Myrdal, formulates what he takes to be a critique of idealism in order to show how Myrdal's evidence points towards a class based analysis. Having accused 'orthodox theorists' of mysticism, Cox goes on to claim that,

"...in developing a theory of race relations in the South one must look to the economic policies of the ruling class and not to mere abstract depravity among the poor whites." :524

Cox then goes on to state unequivocally a conspiracy view of the generation of racism which adequately demonstrates our concern with the denial of authenticity and meaning in the actors' view.

"...both race prejudice and Negro standards are consis-

tently dependant variables. They are both produced by the calculated economic interests...the propagators of the ruling ideas, those whose interest it is to replace debunked beliefs with new ones, are not mistaken at all, and (that) they should not be thought of merely as people or white people. They are, in fact, a special class of people who fiercely oppose interference with the established set of antagonistic racial beliefs. The racial beliefs have been intentionally built up through propaganda. They are psychological instruments facilitating a definite purpose..."(1948):530

An opposing view can be found in Kuper's statements on the relationship between race, class and power (1974), in which he attacks the class based analysis in the following terms,

"...I find it difficult to understand why analysis of racial conflict...should give a primary emphasis to class categories and the class struggle, when the life chances of an individual are specifically defined in racial terms and appreciably determined by racial identity." :272

Such a position clearly begs the question of the determination of racial identities, and of the interaction of class structure and other cultural and social factors. Kuper's own solution to this problem is to deny the existence

of a general racial basis of society, suggesting that racial differentiation can come to have primary significance in certain times and under certain circumstances, the motive force coming from the degree of political incorporation of the various racial sections. But this leaves us with the problem of viewing racial differentiation as the superficial elaboration of power structure, which means that we are left with the difficulty of explaining the significance of race for the specific Portuguese contexts with which we are concerned. To deal with this we need to take account of the structural determinants elaborated by Rex and Banton who offer differing approaches in their accounts of the derivation of racial distinctions.

Banton(1983) utilises the theory of rational choice in order to distinguish between racial and ethnic groups, and to appreciate their genesis. His approach is founded upon three major premises which hold that...

- 1) individuals utilise physical and cultural differences as a basis for the creation of groups and categories, these groups and categories being based upon criteria of inclusion and exclusion,
- 2) ethnic groups are the result of inclusive categories, whereas racial groups are the result of exclusive categories,
- 3) as a result of group interaction and individual competition certain changes can be expected to occur in the group's boundaries, namely that individual competition

will work as a corrosive upon the strength of the boundaries, whereas inter-group rivalry will tend to reinforce them.

For Banton, these criteria interact with two further assumptions about the nature of human behaviour, vis. that people as individuals tend to optimise, and that when they make a choice this will have the effect of defining which future choices are available to them. Underlying Banton's theory is a basically rational and economic form of analysis which not only claims to account for the development of racial and ethnic boundaries, but also makes claims for intrinsic forms of human behaviour. In a decultured sense the claims about the tendency to optimise through choice might be accepted as a basis upon which a theoretical perspective can be erected. However, it soon becomes clear that we are not dealing with situations which are decultured, and we must have explicit regard for the cultural and historical context within which distinctions of race are to be found. Banton recognises this in his proposition that the rational choice theory can have two concurrent aims.

"To work for the advancement of knowledge about racial relations it is therefore necessary to move forward on two fronts simultaneously, improving both historical interpretations and theoretical frameworks." :138

In suggesting that theoretical accounts of racial relations should bring together historical and theoretical pers-

pectives, Banton is putting forward an argument with which it would be difficult to disagree. To suggest, as he does, that theories of racial and ethnic relations can be seen both as philosophies of history and as possible social scientific theories is to set the foundation for an informed approach to our material. The significant question, however, concerns the nature of the relationship between the historical and the theoretical, in so far as it becomes necessary for the researcher to clarify their interpenetration. So we have to ask whether the historical data can be seen in isolation from the theoretical position, as offering evidence in support or against the theoretical framework, or as conditioned by it. The two have to be seen as existing in close relationship to each other, permitting the interplay of the material and the ideal, the historical and the analytic, in the way criticised by Genovese (1971).

It is not immediately clear in what way the initial elaboration of the rational model is helpful. By adopting too strong a notion of rationality, Banton runs the risk of creating an ahistorical approach which loses sight of the cultural significance of the perception of racial differences and accounts for the social determination of such differences in terms of the pursuit of optimum returns on alternatives chosen by rational actors. To carry more weight such an argument must take seriously the debate concerning the socially constructed nature of rationality and its cultural embeddedness. This question is dealt with later in more

detail, but it does lead us here into a discussion of the viewpoint held by Rex, in which he touches on just these concerns although he does not adequately pursue them, at least in his earlier formulations.

Two major themes can be found in Rex's work, both of which have some significance for this study. The first suggests that "race relations problems are primarily linked with the phenomenon of colonialism"<sup>122</sup>. This reflects the tendency to relate racial conceptions to essentially exploitative and hierarchical societies which exist within a framework of metropolitan and colonial or peripheral national relationships. To confine race relations in this way is to be too specific about the conditioning factors which lead to a perception of racial differences, unless the definition is sufficiently loose to accommodate the flexibility of Banton's notion of rationality, in which case it would be almost without meaning.

Rex's second major theme is of direct relevance here. It is the notion that "the kind of moral and intellectual justification which men offer for the differences of power and privilege which exist between them"<sup>123</sup>, is an important component of the sociological category of race. As Rex indicates, some of the ideological constructs which are used for explanatory purposes tend to have the effect of freezing or determining the social system which they are intended to explain. Rex takes a position similar to Benedict by arguing that the earlier theological justifications have given way to



biological and scientific viewpoints. He begins to elaborate a simple approach to the social location of knowledge by suggesting that certain forms of knowledge will have relationships to the power structure of society. The utility of this position is that it allows us to recognise racial categorisation as somehow bound up with the ideological structure of society, but does not necessarily suggest that it is a mystification of class structure or a result of rational choice, closely defined. What is needed however, is some means of elaborating the relationship between racial categorisation and the social structuring of knowledge in a society which avoids the determination of the rigidly applied class based model, and also avoids the apparently voluntaristic genesis of group boundaries through the optimisation of returns. We need to treat race consciousness as significant in itself, and to appreciate its interplay with social structure and historically grounded discourse.

**b) Race as an idea in history: a situational perspective**

Race, suggests Barzun (1937) is a modern myth which is a..

"superstition on a par with the belief in witchcraft and horoscopes, a satisfactory definition is not to be had."  
:292

A view which brought the retort from Benedict(1942) that..

"Race is not 'the modern superstition', as some amateur egalitarians have said. It is a fact." :96

She goes on to assert that there may even be a biological basis to certain distinct forms of group behaviour, thus,

"...further investigations, for which as yet science has not the necessary basic knowledge or tests, may even show that some ethnic groups have identifiable emotional or intellectual peculiarities which are biological and not merely learned behaviour." :96

Going beyond this speculation, Benedict draws a distinction between 'race' as an objectively measureable fact, and 'racism' which is, she claims, the actual modern superstition which should be of concern to the student of human relationships. It is important to offer a clear statement of Benedict's position, since she has exerted a considerable influence both directly and indirectly upon succeeding writers, as we shall see. Racism is defined as the doctrine of congenital hierarchy, in which one group asserts its own superiority and identifies other groups as being naturally inferior. The motor for these assertions is to be found in the proposition which Benedict identifies as being one which,

"...the most uneducated can remember and glory in: 'I belong to the Elect.'"

However, such a dogma is not available to the scrutiny of the scientist since it is not necessarily founded upon facts, but upon belief. It is therefore to be treated as

other beliefs in that it should be studied for its results and supporters. As Benedict suggests,

"It is, like a religion, a belief which can be studied only historically...Any scientist can disprove all its facts and still leave the belief untouched. Racism, therefore, like any dogma which cannot be scientifically demonstrated, must be studied historically." :97

Benedict's own 'prehistory of racism' is a model which attempts to trace the existence of an innate predisposition to the formula "I belong to the Elect" amongst "the simplest naked savages." The tendency of primitive tribes to designate themselves as 'The Human Beings' or as 'Men' is seen as evidence of an inevitable formation of 'in-group consciousness, based not on race but on cultural difference.

If Benedict is to be criticised for her approach here, it must be because she offers not one piece of evidence to support this assertion. Of course, there is evidence enough in her other writing to indicate that she was not unable to substantiate this proposition, which makes her omission even more puzzling. On another level, it is possible to find a basis for an equally damaging attack in the work of Barth (1969) which derives from the critique of the ideal type definition of the ethnic group as being one which,

- "1. is largely biologically self-perpetuating
2. shares fundamental cultural values...
3. makes up a field of communication and interaction;

has a membership which identifies itself...as constituting a category distinguishable from other categories of the same order." :11

Barth objects that this approach to ethnicity "allows us to assume that boundary maintenance is unproblematical and follows from the isolation which the itemized characteristics imply: racial difference, cultural difference, social separation and language barriers, spontaneous and organised enmity." Thus in attempting to outline an inevitable condition of humanity, Benedict has become guilty of a form of ahistorical idealism which seems to deny the very continuity which she is attempting to generate in her analysis. This tendency is reinforced by two other claims made by Benedict, and which need to be taken account of here. The first is that scientific racism is uniquely modern in its appeal to evolution and anthropometry. As Benedict herself puts it,

"This formula (i.e. the racist formula of the Elect) in its modern guise would have been impossible before the days of Darwin and of anthropometric measurements...These Elect, moreover, can be identified by measurements of the body. These refinements could not have arisen in the world before the nineteenth century."

:18

Here Benedict has clearly made an assumption which is not supported by the evidence; Snowden (1983), for example, makes the following points about the descriptions of blacks

in the ancient world.

"Accurate and often detailed information about the black man's physical characteristics is apparent in several classical accounts. Fullness of detail, however, is perhaps best illustrated by the 'Moretum', a poem ascribed to Virgil by ancient authorities, which in only four verses gives the most complete portrait of a black from classical antiquity...in this succinct metrical description the author of the 'Moretum' delineated several characteristics of the Negroid division of mankind in language remarkably similar to that of modern anthropologists." 10

Whilst accepting that the specific knowledge and techniques of the nineteenth century have to be understood as contributing to the peculiar articulation of scientific racism during both the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, it is important to be wary of attributing to racial awareness too modern a character. In such a consideration we run into the dangers of 'presentism' as outlined by Banton (1983a) who suggests that,

"By presentism is meant a tendency to interpret evidence from other historical periods in terms of the concepts, values, and understanding of the present time." 247

Even taking this seriously, it is difficult not to be persuaded by the wealth of evidence advanced by

Snowden(1970,1983), Beardsley (1929) and Vercoutter, Devisse et al (1983) that the ancient world was quite well aware of the existence and distinctiveness of black human beings. What appears to differ from our own times is that the Egyptian, Roman and Greek cultures were less exercised in producing scientific descriptions of physiological differences, and more concerned with subjective interpretation; although this may clearly be a product of the evidence to hand, since it is equally clear that the Greeks and more especially the Romans sought to explain the difference between black and white in terms of the effect of environment upon the human body (Snowden 1983, pp.85-87).

Benedict's second major assumption about the so-called prehistory of racism is that it is a phenomenon based in the realm of ideas, and having similarities with the structure of religious beliefs in society. Indeed this approach has had considerable significance and has formed a way in which later writers could both accept an historical dimension to the notion of race, and also develop Benedict's notion that scientific racism was something essentially new in the modern period. Beginning with the patristic period in Christianity, Benedict suggests that the joint development of the Roman Empire and of Christianity meant that the Church of Rome was to propagate a distinctive approach to race relations,

"The Church of Rome, after Christianity became the state religion, inherited both from imperial tradition and from the teachings of Christ and his followers this

belief in the brotherhood of man without regard to race, and acted upon it in its long overlordship of many diverse nations and peoples in the Middle Ages. Even today, in a world given over to racism, the Papacy follows its long and honourable precedent and opposes race prejudice in its pronouncements." : 104

And yet the basis of discrimination is still sought in the realm of ideas, with the essential distinction being found in the allied notion of religious difference, so that the easy way in which a similarity is remarked upon initially by Benedict between racism and religion, is brought into a direct relationship when the focus of attention is shifted back in the past. However, it should be noticed that the purpose of this association is not to suggest that religious discrimination is the forerunner of racism, but that it not only bears no relationship to racism but actually stands in the way of the development of racist ideas. This is reinforced in the analysis proposed by the apparently easy acceptance of the notion of the hostility of the Church of Rome to racism,

"The natives were regarded as outside the pale of humanity, without religion, law or morals...but this was regarded as a consequence of the fact that they were not Christians, not of the fact that they belonged to the darker races...racism had not yet appeared on the horizon." : 106

In putting forward such an argument a fracture is being created in the very notion of a prehistory of racism which the writer has set out to chart, and she is left with the task of explaining her own notions of continuity in the face of her rejection of a superficial line of development. This has lead to some interesting formulations.

For Benedict the way out of the difficulty lies in the notion of racism as an explicit philosophy as being relatively recent. Thus when she declares that racism did not get its currency until it was applied to class and later national conflicts in Europe, she is suggesting that the earliest currency of the term in the case of class conflict is with the Count de Boulainvilliers in France in 1727, and more especially with Count de Gobineau again in France in 1853, both of whom set out the view that the hope of continuity for the ruling class lay in their ancestry within the fair skinned races of Northern Europe. Whilst nationalist conflict between France and Germany saw the use of Gobinism by Broca in France, in 1871, and by Wagner and Houston Chamberlain in Germany from 1894 to 1899.

Having chosen to distinguish between race as fact and racism as ideology, Benedict achieves her intention of showing racism to be the modern superstition, but at the same time she seems to deny the very historical continuity that her approach is based on. This problem of locating racism as a recent development can be seen to provide the obverse of



Banton's trap of 'presentism'. This methodological problem was highlighted by Banton (1983b) as a parallel to the rather more commonly acknowledged problem of ethnocentrism. As outlined above, presentism, or chronocentrism to give the phenomenon Banton's preferred label, consists in the author imposing his or her own understandings upon the data to hand,

"The historical study of racial thought and attitudes has often been flawed by an unreflecting presentism. Earlier writers are held up to scorn without any attempt to locate their understandings within the context of the knowledge available to their generation...possibly the most noticeable feature of race as a concept is the way it has inveigled observers into assuming that the main issue ...is that they should concentrate upon what 'race' is, as if this would determine the one scientifically valid use for the word...the main issue is the use of the word race, both in rational argument and in more popular connections, for people use beliefs about race, nationality, ethnicity and class as resources when they cultivate beliefs about group identities." :33

Which in itself is a fair example of presentism, if the author is suggesting that when people speak of these aspects of social life they are really speaking of 'group identity', it can be objected that the notion of 'group identity' has less explanatory power than the phenomena and usages for which it is meant to account. But at least Banton can account

for the continuity which he sees existing within and between the differing conceptions of 'race' which he charts. Nevertheless he is bound by his wish to avoid presentism, and this results in his eschewing a judgement about the chronicity of the awareness of race, except that he is prepared to allow its existence from the 16th century onwards as a 'folk concept' delineating lineage, and from the 18th century and within the 20th century variously as a zoological, a sociological and an administrative concept. Again we come back to the distinction made by Benedict between the religious and the racial basis of discrimination since Banton is one of those writers apparently influenced by Benedict. His view of racial awareness as a relatively modern formulation can be seen in the following passage.

"Up to the eighteenth century at least, the dominant paradigm in Europe for explaining the differences between groups of people was provided by the Old Testament..." :34

However, Banton has to account for an earlier statement:

"...the English settlers in North America were at first inclined to refer to themselves as Christians, and to Africans as Negroes...They scarcely ever used religious designation, like 'heathens', 'pagans', or 'savages' for Negroes...but it is important to remember that during this period it was unusual for the people to employ the idiom of race in ordinary speech and writing." :37

How then, we may ask, did these people speak of themselves? To be sure we must already be limited to the white perspective since the blacks were mainly debarred from literacy. According to Banton the English began to call themselves 'English' and 'Free' and from about 1680 as 'white'; and for the Blacks, the terms 'Africans' and 'Blacks' came into use. This would imply that there there was a mixture of imperialism and naturalistic racism entailed in the descriptions.

To turn to Banton's own source, W.D.Jordan, we can see that Banton's professions of methodological purity are to be taken with a pinch of salt:

"...unfortunately there is little evidence with which to build an answer...(with) the available evidence (what little there is)...we do not know. The available data will not bear all the weight that the really crucial questions impose." (Jordan, 1968, 1974):52

Also, the religious dimension is dismissed by Jordan from from exclusive causality, since the idea of 'Christians' as opposed to 'heathens' was used to indicate civilisation, nationality and whiteness of skin. Jordan sees the use of such terms designating precisely what Banton claims to be seeking in the term 'race', namely group identification and a commonly held notion of 'we' and 'they'. But there is more to the situation than group identification, since Jordan's thesis concerns the United States and the rationale for an

exclusively racial basis to slavery.

"...everyone knew that slavery had for generations been based on the racial and not the religious difference." :51

This tendency to see racial awareness as a modern phenomenon is now firmly established in the literature; it is also almost a prerequisite of liberal and radical critiques of racism. However, it does involve assumptions about the historical embeddedness of racial awareness which we have already seen to be called into question by the evidence collected by Snowden, Vercoutter et al., and Beardsley. It may not be doing too much violence to the perspectives of the various authors on race to suggest that three main time sequences emerge as formative assumptions within their work. These differently locate race as modern (mainly post 18th century), imperialistic (post 1492) and archaic. This is not to say that writers will exclusively espouse one perspective, since it seems an accepted part of the structure of analysis to begin with an historical analysis in order to draw in some (more or less) felicitous examples to show, if nothing else, that the writer has an acquaintance with classical learning. Thus in the case of the work by Baker (1974), there is a brief review of the Greek, Roman and early Christian attitudes, followed by a quotation from the Venerable Bede's description of Pope Gregory's reaction on seeing two Anglo-Saxon boys for sale in the market place of Rome. These accounts date from the turn of the sixth century, and it is

with disarming honesty that Baker is able to turn from his discussion of the racial similarities of subrace Nordids (Anglo-Saxon boys) and subrace Mediterranids (Pope Gregory) thus:

"These two subraces are closely allied. A leap to the sixteenth century brings us to Montaigne's essay entitled 'Des Cannibales'." :14

Whilst such an approach eliminates many of the problems of historical research, the assumption must be that far from deliberately omitting 1,000 years of European history from his account, Baker has found an awareness of racial difference to be characteristic of the seventeenth century onwards, and not to exist substantially before that period. Neither is Baker alone in locating race as a relatively modern western phenomenon (Banton, 1967, 1977, 1983b; Barzun, 1935; Cox, 1948; Stepan, 1983; Williams, 1964). However, as Harris states,

"Racial determinism was the form taken by the advancing wave of the science of culture, as it broke on the shore of industrial capitalism. It was in this guise that anthropology first achieved a positive role alongside of physics, chemistry, and the life sciences, in the support and spread of capitalist society. Certain Marxists (c.f.Cox, 1948) insist that racism itself is confined to the capitalist epoch, but such a view can find

no support in ethnographic facts. Folk racism, a popular system of prejudice and discrimination directed against one endogamous descent group by another, is probably as old as humanity."(1969):81

For Harris, it is the pre-eminence of science in these otherwise ancient ideas that is distinctive about the nineteenth century; the "rewarding of the wise men" of the society for their proof of the supremacy of one people over others.

Aptheker (1971) offers a typical version of the second perspective which sees racial awareness as a product of the discovery of the New World and the division of the colonial claims of Spain and Portugal in the series of Papal Bulls which were declared between 1455 and 1493, together with the Treaty of Tordesillas of 1494; a perspective called by Banton "the so called '1492 school of race relations'".

"All the evidence shows the general absence of this ideology in the ancient and medieval world, and the gradual development of it and insistence upon its observance by the ruling classes of the early capitalist period, starting in the late fifteenth and early sixteenth century." :33

Benedict (1942) also takes up a similar perspective in her treatment of the debates between the monogenists and the polygenists. This dualism allows her to account for the

traditional monogenists' view in terms of the Church's acceptance of the creation myth, whilst the voyages of discovery are cited as the source of the polygenist view that the human races would only have such diversity if they had been created in a number of special acts, rather than at once. Benedict offers the following account of the structure of knowledge which marked a shift from the pre-Columbian European view,

"We must remember that in those days nobody knew how widely the yellow race varied in itself, or the black race, or the red; nor was it known how these races shaded off into one another. The races were seen as a series of contrasted pictures like those in our own elementary geographies." :20

The Discoveries thus mark the end of the pre-history of racism and the resultant antagonism between the exploiters and slavers on the one hand and the Church on the other created a need for a new theory of inferiority and superiority which the nineteenth century was later to provide. It can be seen that the imperialistic experience is identified as being largely causative of the development of racist attitudes, a position which can also be found in such approaches as Said's account of the development of Orientalism as a racist and imperialist domination of the 'Orient' by the 'Occident' (1975), and Boxer's account of racialism amongst the Portuguese in which the experience of three centuries of enslavement and exploitation are held as

the inevitable cause. However, as Genovese (1971) suggests, this attitude should not necessarily mean that we lose sight of the need to distinguish between different levels of influence and causation, neither that we should "turn our backs on either historical-traditional or ecological processes." And in using Boxer's account, it is interesting that Genovese cannot avoid the following criticism,

"Regrettably, even Boxer slights the historical dimension. It is noteworthy that he begins his survey, 'Race Relations', with the conquest of Ceuta in 1415 and leaves aside the racial conditioning of Portuguese life that preceded it." :153f

Genovese's distinction between the idealist and the materialist positions in accounts of the relationship between slavery and racialism permits him neither to reject nor totally embrace either position, but to see them as inter-related and able to offer complementary insights. To offer an exclusively materialist account, as Genovese finds to be the case in what he is concerned to dismiss as crude marxism, is to deny the authenticity of human action, in the dogmatic pursuit of a mechanistic generative structure which conditions and shapes social life.

"according to this view, the past plays no vital role in the present except for transmitted technology. If the case for materialism rests on a denial of the totality of human history and on the resurrection of an economic



determinism brought to a higher level of sophistication, materialism has poor prospects." :152

Genovese recognises the weaknesses of a subjectivist or idealist view, a position equally ahistorical, as Braudel points out in his discussion of the 'extrême longue durée.'

"...all we find ourselves with are truths built rather too much on the dimensions of eternal man. Elementary truths, aphorisms amounting to no more than common sense, are what the disappointed might be inclined to say. To which would come the reply, fundamental truths, able to cast a new light on the very bases of all social life...(since) the entire value of the conclusions is dependent upon the value of the initial observation, and on the selection of the essential elements within the observed reality and the determination of their relationships...(perspectives) pinned up in what I would call, in this instance, the excessive longue durée...must discover the diversity of life - the movement, the different time spans, the rifts and variations."(1958):47

The long time span is one which allows the cultural continuity of race awareness to be located within the historical-traditional process viewed as necessary by Genovese. That notions of continuity are contingent upon the project at hand is illustrated by the differing approaches of Husband

(1982), whose focus is essentially upon the very recent past; Banton (1977), whose time span essentially locates itself in the past two hundred years; Jordan (1974), who is concerned with the period from the sixteenth century onwards; Armstrong (1983), whose main professed structure of analysis is the *longue durée* and who concentrates on the Christian-Islamic conflict, but who is also prepared to look to the early Middle Ages in his exploration of Stamm formation; and, separately, Davis (1966) and Snowden (1983) who both accept the legitimacy of deriving their perspectives from antiquity, in Snowden's case from c. 2600 B.C.

For our current purpose the long time span is essential since only by drawing on evidence from various times and social settings can we recognise our problematic as located in the relationship between structure, knowledge and discourse.

This perspective comes within the third of the views outlined above on the chronicity of race awareness, since it locates the phenomenon as having archaic derivations. Snowden's work (1983) gives a full account of the extent to which the ancient world was used to finding large numbers of black human beings among its population and continually retained a considerable degree of contact with those black skinned people who are variously referred to as Kushites, Ethiopians and Nubians, and who originated in the area south of Egypt, but also to some extent from north-west Africa.

Whilst it might be objected that the time-scale here is

of such a duration as to make the data irrelevant to modern students, it should be noted that the significance of such a perspective can be found in the light which it sheds on modern attitudes by way of a comparison with archaic views, and secondly, no less important, is the information which is provided for the testing of the view that significant components of modern day attitudes were already being incorporated into the world view of the Greeks and Romans. Such evidence therefore allows the case for and against continuity to be assessed since the tension between the continuity of race perception and the alleged specificity of racial prejudice can be seen to provide a major focus for such writers as Snowden and Davis. However, Snowden is himself concerned to validate Benedict's thesis of the modern nature of racism and we again see the influence of her work in the following:

"In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, as a result of the cultural differences perceived by whites of European stock between themselves and the black colonials whom they ruled, many whites associated poverty, inefficiency, and backwardness with non-whites and attached strong emotions to physical differences. Among the ancients, similar associations of color with material poverty, military weakness, political insignificance, and cultural unproductivity did not exist."

(1983)

:73

Benedict's legacy is not only to locate racial consciousness

as a modern phenomenon, but to imply the moral superiority of the ancients.

PART TWO

CHAPTER FIVE:

ART, FORMS AND SOCIETY II

## ART, FORMS AND SOCIETY II

### The General Problem of the Renaissance and its Relevance to Portuguese Art and Culture in the Sixteenth Century

"We are confronted...with two preliminary questions which must be answered before we can attempt to discuss the questions of 'where', 'when' and 'how'. First, was there such a thing as a Renaissance which started in Italy in the first half of the fourteenth century, extended its classicizing tendencies to the visual arts in the fifteenth, and subsequently left its imprint upon all cultural activities in the rest of Europe? Second, if the existence of such a Renaissance can be proved, what distinguishes it from those waves of revival which, as has been granted, occurred during the 'Middle Ages'? Do all these revivals differ from one another only in scale or also in structure? In other words, is it still justifiable to single out the Renaissance with a capital R as a unique phenomenon in comparison with which the various mediaeval revivals would represent as many 'renascences' with a small r?"

Panofsky (1972):7

In considering the applicability of the notion of a European Renaissance to sixteenth century Portugal, we shall have to bear in mind two issues, the one following logically from the other. Firstly, echoing Panofsky, we have to ask whether it is anyway legitimate to speak of a Renaissance proper, and

however we decide on this issue, we then have to ask whether the process of renaissance was unique to Italy, or whether it also occurred, albeit in differing form, in places such as Portugal which had distinct cultural and historical inheritances, and which, significantly, pioneered the discovery by Europeans of the hitherto unknown non-European world.

The formative expression of the argument in favour of viewing the Renaissance as a novel innovation in 'modern' Western European culture, making a distinct break with the Medieval Period, is proposed by Burckhardt (1965). Burckhardt traces a number of interrelated developments which together bring about a shift in the overall culture and social structure of Western Europe, initially in Italy, such that he can claim;

"The Renaissance, however, is not a fragmentary imitation or compilation but a new birth..." :106

For Burckhardt, this new birth made possible a reinterpretation of nature and history, thereby also establishing the basis for the development of humanistic and individualistic anthropologies. He claims that the Italian Renaissance can be seen to be significantly influenced by the sheer proximity of the relics of the old Roman buildings, which acted both as a source of melancholic nostalgia - a feature common to the Italian and the Portuguese contexts - and as a reminder of the glory of Rome, from which inspiration could be sought.

There was, however, a further legacy which outshone the physical ruins of Rome since it carried with it the potential for an ideological development of the most fundamental kind.

"...the literary bequests of antiquity, Greek as well as Latin, were of far more importance than the architectural, and indeed than all the artistic remains which it had left. They were held in the most absolute sense to be the springs of all knowledge." :114

This reappropriation of the classical heritage, the new willingness to appreciate and to learn from antiquity, was a process which was to prove more congenial to the Italian mind than to those from across the Alps.

"...the resuscitation of antiquity took a different form in Italy from that which it assumed in the North. The wave of barbarism had scarcely gone by before the people, in whom the former life was but half effaced, showed a consciousness of its past and a wish to reproduce it. Elsewhere in Europe men deliberately and with reflection borrowed this or the other element of classical civilization; in Italy the sympathies both of the learned and of the people were naturally engaged on the side of antiquity as a whole, which stood to them as a symbol of past greatness. The Latin language, too, was easy to an Italian, and the numerous monuments and documents in which the country abounded facilitated a return to the past." :105

The result of this re-birth could be found especially in the



attitude towards nature and humanity, which two concepts form the basis of any world view, establishing the nature of reality by defining both the 'reality' of nature and the nature of humanity.

"The worldliness, through which the Renaissance seems to offer so striking a contrast to the Middle Ages, owed its first origin to the flood of new thoughts, purposes and views, which transformed the mediaeval conception of nature and man. The spirit is not in itself more hostile to religion than that 'culture' which now holds its place, but which can give us only a feeble notion of the universal ferment which the discovery of a new world of greatness then called forth. This worldliness was not frivolous, but earnest, and was enobled by art and poetry." :304

This represented a re-appropriation both of a human self and of the material environment, and for Burckhardt, it can be seen to stem from specific historical and geographical factors in the Italian situation, not the least of which he sees as the Genoan capacity for discovery. As we can see, this gives rise both to similarities and differences in the interpretation of the Italian as opposed to the Portuguese experiences of cultural renaissance.

An alternative formulation to Burckhardt's is proposed by Huizinga (1924), who takes exception to the idea that the Renaissance marks a rupture in Western European cultural

development; rather, he claims, the Renaissance must be taken as a part of a larger process of cultural development which brought to fruition the mediaeval cultural forms, whilst at the same time reaching out for the inspiration of the antique.

"The transition from the spirit of the declining Middle Ages to humanism was far less simple than we are inclined to imagine it. Accustomed to oppose humanism to the Middle Ages, we would gladly believe that it was necessary to give up one in order to embrace the other. ..Classicism did not come as a sudden revelation, it grew up among the luxuriant vegetation of mediaeval thought. Humanism was a form before it was an inspiration. On the other hand, the characteristic modes of thought of the Middle Ages did not die out till long after the Renaissance." :307

Huizinga's analysis is therefore founded upon an assertion of continuity in the period whereas Burckhardt takes contradiction to be the characteristic. However, despite this fundamental difference of perspective, Huizinga does develop a number of lines of argument which have similarities - at times quite marked - with the propositions put forward by Burckhardt. Importantly, there is the notion of the empathy of the Italian mind for classical culture, stimulated by the proximity of the ancient ruins, "...the people born under the Tuscan sky or in the shadow of the Coliseum." The Middle Ages, says Huizinga, did not form a

backdrop of decline and decay against which the Renaissance could mark a new beginning. What is more nearly true is that the greater significance should be given to the notion that mediaeval society had begun to outgrow the culture which it had developed, and was thereby enabled - in some way not fully explained by Huizinga - to renew its appreciation of, and proficiency with, classical culture. "Now, by an inward ripening, the mind, after having been so long conversant with the forms of Antiquity, began to grasp its spirit...Europe, after having lived in the shadow of Antiquity, lived in its sunshine once more." :318

Huizinga therefore agrees with Burckhardt that it was not itself the re-birth or re-appropriation of classical culture which was the 'moving power' of the great renewal.

Huizinga:

"Classical expression and imagery, and even sentiments borrowed from heathen Antiquity, might be a potent stimulus or an indispensable support in the process of cultural renovation, they were never its moving power." :317

Burckhardt:

"...it was not the revival of antiquity alone, but its union with the genius of the Italian people, which achieved the conquest of the Western world." Burckhardt :105

In part, then, Huizinga and Burckhardt are in agreement, and the significance of this can be realised when we contemplate the answer to Panofsky's questions on the nature and extent of the Renaissance, since Panofsky is concerned to justify

his proposition that there was indeed a distinctive cultural break.

"...there was a Renaissance 'which started in Italy in the first half of the fourteenth century, extended its classicizing tendencies to the visual arts in the fifteenth, and subsequently left its imprint upon all cultural activities in the rest of Europe'." 42

Panofsky substantiates his claim by stressing that the Quattrocento saw continuity and coherence expressed through the revival of painting, sculpture and architecture, in that sculpture held a moderating position between the other two, which had developed, in the case of painting a concern with the return to nature, and in the case of architecture a concern with the return to classical antiquity. Panofsky is therefore able to go beyond Huizinga and Burckhardt in showing that the Renaissance depends upon a synthesis of the naturalistic and the classical, especially within the visual arts.

"As soon, then, as the 'revival' of three visual arts could be perceived as a coherent picture, the historiographers agreed that the complementary motives of this 'revival', return to nature and return to classical antiquity, had become effective at different times and, more important, with different potency according to media: that the return to nature had played a maximum role in painting; that the return to classical

antiquity had played a maximum role in architecture; and that a balance had been struck by sculpture." 32

With regard to the relevance of this argument to the Portuguese situation, we shall address the associated concerns of nature and antiquity in due course when we shall see that they partly help us to answer Panofsky's second initial question concerning the Renaissance, which is concerned with the uniqueness of the Italian Renaissance. To this question there is also an affirmative reply to be found in an extension of Burckhardt's point concerning the melancholic nostalgia evoked by the proximity of the ruins of ancient Rome, which motivated Italian culture of the fourteenth, fifteenth and sixteenth centuries to go beyond mere re-iteration and copying in an attempt at recapturing that which it had become apparent was lost. In a passage of some erudition, Panofsky shows how the Italian Renaissance was qualitatively different from other European renaissances and created a lasting cultural effect which is nowadays recognised as the beginnings of modernism.

"The 'distance' created by the Renaissance deprived antiquity of its realness. The classical world ceased to be both a possession and a menace...The Middle Ages had left antiquity unburied and alternately galvanised and exorcised its corpse. The Renaissance stood weeping at its grave and tried to resurrect its soul. And in one fatally auspicious moment it succeeded...resurrected souls are intangible but have the advantage of

immortality and omnipresence. Therefore the role of classical antiquity after the Renaissance is somewhat elusive but, on the other hand, pervasive." ://2

This capacity is seen by Burckhardt, Huizinga and Panofsky as unique to the Italians because of the haunting effect of the presence of the ruins of ancient Rome. However, it is conceivable that Portuguese culture, and others as well within the Western European tradition (see for example Ozment 1980, Trevor-Roper 1966, Brooke 1969, Haskins 1927) had legacies of Rome which, albeit that they might be different and less tangible, were equally potent in generating an appreciative attitude towards ancient culture. Subsequent to the establishment of Roman power in the Iberian Peninsula, the effects of the culture which was thereby established continued to have an important and formative influence upon both the wider Iberian way of life, and upon the more narrowly focussed Portuguese context (Freyre 1946, Freyre 1959, Martins/Bell 1930). Thus, under the Visigoths, the Hispano-Romans continued their traditional religious and other cultural practices, including the Roman system of justice, alongside that of the conquerors. When the Visigoths ultimately drafted their own judicial code, they were greatly influenced by the indigenous culture.

"The clergy in fact, as we have said, constituted the link between Roman and Gothic Spain; and the conquerors, confronted by an organised national body, allowed themselves to be directed by it, respecting its strength,

recognising its superiority in education and above all using its power in their own interest.

Although methodically drawn up, the Visigothic Code reproduced, as could not fail to be the case, the ancient laws." Martins/Bell :64

Martins, however, sees this collation of codes as an essentially artificial and conservative process, analogous to the Carolingian conservation of classical culture; and here a point of immense significance is made which allows us to suggest that the fifteenth and sixteenth century attitude towards antiquity was indeed modified beyond mere emulation as a result of Portugal's own history.

"This attempt to stay the decay of Roman Spain was unnatural and therefore doomed to failure...it was only when the Moors invaded Spain and the decay of Roman Spain was completed that the traditions and instincts of the people gained the upper hand." :72

This distancing is exemplified for Martins by the development of the Mozarabic population of Iberia, a group whose outward customs of dress, manners and language took on Moorish styles and forms, but whose religion remained Christianity, (i.e. they were not Moors; the other ambivalent groups which we find in Iberia at various times are the Moors converted to Christianity - *os Mouriscos* - , and the New Christians, Jews converted to Christianity - *os Cristãos-novos*).

Martins claims that this cultural innovation is of immense importance for an understanding of modern Iberia, and

we can take this importance as being that which establishes a distancing between the Portuguese (and other Iberians) and antiquity.

"The conquering sword destroyed at one blow the kingdom of the Visigoths; the nomad tribes of the berbers prevented the establishment of a stable Arab Khalifate; but the complete victory of the Africans finally completed the decay of ancient Spain, in the same way as the second invasion of the barbarians completed the destruction of Gaul and Roman Italy. But in Spain, when the decay was completed, the new edifice of modern society was rising from the ruins; birth and decay had been simultaneous... Dwelling on the frontier of Christian and Moorish states (for long the raids and forays on either side, penetrating far into the interior, made frontier lands of the centre and south of the Peninsula), the Mozarab hesitated between the two forces which were fighting for empire. On the one side were his friends, on the other his ancestors; on the one side were his daily habits, on the other his religion. Standing outside or indifferent to the struggle, the Mozarab for that very reason, and by reason of the ties which bound him to either side, was welcomed and protected by whatever side happened to be victorious."

The phenomenon of the Mozarabic population, as Martins says welcomed and protected by either side, marks out the ambiguity of the Portuguese cultural allegiance which was



tempered in the fire of the dazzling Omayyad culture. (With the break-up of the Omayyad Khalifate in the late 10th, early 11th Century, that area which is now Portugal was ruled by the Emirate of the Beni-Alaftas, with Algarb remaining independent and the north increasingly subject to Christian influence.) This tempering seems very much as Huizinga suggests that Italian culture, and Western Christendom generally, was made ready for the "great renewal" of the Renaissance, precisely by the sheer development of mediaeval cultural forms. Whilst no suggestion of parallels is intended, the Portuguese experience can be seen to bear certain affinities with the Italian; ultimately they are analogous in their realisation, through historical circumstance, of the ideal of antiquity, since both have been profoundly separated from it.

In itself, perhaps, this would not provide sufficient grounds upon which to base an hypothesis that the Portuguese cultural experience could be interpreted as distinct from that of the Italian. The conventional view (e.g. Smith 1968) has Portuguese art developing at approximately half a century behind the Italian, due probably to the time taken for Italian ideas initially to impact upon Flemish artists and thence to come to Portugal.

However, a reconsideration of the significance of the representation of nature and the conceptualisation of humanity, and especially of the role of discovery, will lead us towards a view which has Portuguese art and certain aspects of the wider Portuguese culture as producing a unique

cultural form which was able to generate ways of conceiving of humanity which diverge from those which, for want of a better term, might be called 'mainstream' Western Christian, or "early modern".

As we have seen, Panofsky validates his notion of an Italian Renaissance specifically in terms of the capacity of the three visual arts to recover nature and humanity as conceived in classical thought. However, Manueline art in Portugal is known for its incorporation of the natural world at the expense of directly portraying the human form. Two separate influences are clearly at work here, and can be seen to be contributing to the development of such an artistic style. Normally the style is seen as a celebration of '*os descobrimentos*' - the Discoveries - and thus maritime themes characterise the works e.g. chains, ropes, exotic fruit and foliage, some of water plants. In addition, architectural motifs employ 'Luso-Moorish' devices of repetition and horseshoe arches, sometimes also Romanesque arches. For Smith, the "exotic naturalism" of the style necessitates its being periodised as late Gothic. However, Smith also accepts that the style "contains a good deal of Italian Renaissance ornament", whilst other "concepts of space and lighting are essentially baroque".

The Portuguese patrons of the early 16th Century, viz. the Monarchy and the Church, were not yet ready to understand contemporary Italian Renaissance style, preferring to experiment with the Manueline. However, it is not unreasonable to propose that the tendency towards the

development of a discrete Portuguese style reflects, not simply an indigenous need to elaborate the Gothic style before the Renaissance could be appropriated, but rather a distinctive cultural form which is scarcely done justice if it is squeezed into the category of 'the late Gothic, but with additional Romanesque and Moorish and Renaissance and Baroque' motifs. Rather than accepting the pre-ordained logic of the periodisers (Panofsky 1972), it is proposed here that the Manueline be recognised as the expression of a distinctively Portuguese phenomenon which, in part at least, reflects a growing sense of unease with the antique which derives jointly from the Mozarabic inheritance, (often celebrated but seldom analysed), and the Discoveries.

Moorish influences upon Portuguese art are recognised in '*os azulejos*' (the decorative tile), in the plateresque form of gilt ornamentation, in the rounded Moorish arch, and in the use of repetitious patterning. Some of these influences interpenetrate; so, for example, the repetitious patterning of some ceramic tiles can be found in association with gilt ornamentation giving an effect altogether unlike the traditional European, having marked contrasts of blue, white and gold. In another way, too, the Islamic influence must be sought in the stylisation of Portuguese artwork, through the formal Koranic prohibition on the depiction of the human face or form, which can be seen to result in the tendency to employ patterning and to celebrate symmetry at the expense of realistic naturalism (see for example Critchlow 1976). This would suggest that certain art forms might be more sympath-

etically received than others, specifically architecture and ornamentation, rather than painting and monumental sculpture. This might help explain the relative dearth of Portuguese painters working in the Manueline period.

Overwhelmingly, therefore, it is in the fields of architecture and its decoration that Portuguese art of the early sixteenth century is represented. This relative underdevelopment of an indigenous school of painting marks a clear contrast with the contemporary Italian context in which painting, particularly, is nowadays seen as of profound significance in the overall development of the visual arts. An interpretation of human classification might therefore have to be sublimated in some way into the architectural forms and decorations which characteristically celebrate the maritime adventures of the Portuguese discoverers, whose activities played such a formative role in the encountering and perception of non-white peoples, giving rise to an art-form which bears interesting similarities with Islamic art as described by Sandler (1976).

"In spite of a common misapprehension that Islam prohibits the representation of human figures, figural motifs occur in Islamic painting from the very beginning, and there is no prohibition against them in the Qur'an. But during the eighth century, those who took the commandment against graven images to the extreme became opposed to the imitation of human and animal forms, and these types of forms are not found in

religious buildings or as part of the decoration of the Qur'an. One feels that this attitude inhibited the Islamic use of figures even when it did not prohibit their use; for while human figures are used to elaborate stories, they are rarely more than yet another decorative element, and are used in much the same way as geometric and plant motifs are used, that is, in the service of a decorative whole." :48

For the purposes of this study, two of the major sources of data which are available through which to interpret Portuguese attitudes to the classification of human beings, and to race consciousness in particular, are the architectural form and the decorative. Architecture gives us important clues as to the extent of the influence of the classical, Vitruvian, conceptions of the human form, whilst the decorative aspects give us a key to understanding the impact of the Discoveries upon Portuguese attitudes both to antiquity and human anthropology, which permitted the development of a unique reappraisal of the classification of humankind.

The Re-appropriation of the Human Form and its Embodiment in  
Architecture: an Anthropological Grounding of the Emerging  
Modern World View

The way in which a given period or culture conceives of the human form, and embodies this in its art and architecture, reflects the basic attitudes of that society to the human body, but viewed in a social context. Panofsky (1921) suggests that the canon of proportion in an artistic style reflects the basic character of the art of the period, and indeed offers a key to the interpretation of the art products that might most clearly reflect this artistic intention of the sculptor or painter.

"If, in considering the various systems of proportions known to us, we try to understand their meaning rather than their appearance, if we concentrate not so much on the solution arrived at as on the formulation of the problem posed, they will reveal themselves as expressions of the same 'artistic intention' (Kunstwollen) that was realised in the buildings, sculptures and paintings of a given period or a given artist. the history of the theory of proportions is the reflection of the history of style..."<sup>83</sup>

Elsewhere, 1972, Panofsky uses this notion to distinguish between the formal characteristics of mediaeval as opposed to classical and Renaissance architecture. At issue is the Vitruvian notion of the embodiment of proportion and anatomy in the proportions of sculpture and architecture.

"...those famous classical orders represented an architectural transformation and glorification of the human body: 'the Romans had columns calculated after the dimensions of man and woman'.(Leo X)

This statement, manifestly based on Vitruvius' derivation of the Doric, Ionic and Corinthian columns from the proportions of a man, a full-grown woman and a slender virgin, expresses the fundamental fact that classical as opposed to mediaeval architecture is - if I may use these terrifying expressions - catanthropic rather than epanthropic: dimensioned in analogy to the relative proportions of the human body, not scaled with reference to the absolute size of the human body." :28

The artistic intention of these two styles is revealed as follows:

"In a classical temple - and, consequently, in a Renaissance church - the bases, the shafts and the capitals of the columns are proportioned, more or less, according to the relation between the foot, the body and the head of a normal human being. And it is precisely the absence of such an analogy between architectural and human proportions that caused the Renaissance theorists to accuse mediaeval architecture of having 'no proportion at all'." :29

Panofsky then goes on to show the way in which this relationship to the human scale can determine the perception of even the most well known and significant of European

structures.

"The doors of St. Peter's rise to about twelve meters and the cherubs supporting the holy-water basins to nearly four. As a result, the visitor is permitted, as it were, to expand his own ideal stature in accordance with the actual size of the building and for this very reason often fails to be impressed by its actual dimensions, however gigantic they may be (St. Peter's has been described, only half facetiously, as 'small but neat'); whereas a Gothic Cathedral of much lesser dimensions forces us to remain conscious of our actual stature in contrast with the size of the building. Mediaeval architecture preaches Christian humility; classical and Renaissance architecture proclaims the dignity of man." :29

We can thus see that the Renaissance permitted the re-embodiment of human proportion in architecture, but we are left with our earlier question as to whether the Renaissance offered simply a re-iteration of classical culture, as did the renaissances of Carolingian society and the twelfth century, or indeed amounted to a creative extension of West European culture. Again, drawing on Panofsky (1921), we can see, firstly, that the Italian Renaissance reinvested the artistic theory of proportion with a metaphysical meaning, which had particular significance in that period.

"The theory of human proportions was seen as both a pre-requisite of artistic production and an expression of



the pre-established harmony between microcosm and macrocosm; and it was seen, moreover, as the rational basis of beauty...As a synthesis was sought between the mystical spirit and the rational, between Neo-Platonism and Aristotelianism, so was the theory of proportions interpreted both from the point of view of harmonistic cosmology and normative aesthetics.." :119-22

This perspective on the visual world had deep significance for the ways in which culture, and social structure, were to be re-ordered in the process of renewal which ushered in the modern world.

"...perhaps the theory of proportions appeared so infinitely valuable to the thinking of the Renaissance precisely because only this theory...could satisfy the disparate needs of the age...The proportions of the human body...seemed to be invested with an antiquarian and historical, as well as with a mythological and astrological significance. And new attempts were made - in connection with a remark by Vitruvius - to identify human proportions with those of buildings and parts of buildings, in order to demonstrate both the architectonic 'symmetry' of the human body and the anthropological vitality of architecture.":122

Moreover, the Renaissance not only breathes new life into the theory of human proportions, but it also establishes and renders legitimate an artistic acceptance of the three

factors of organic movement, perspective foreshortening and optical adjustment.

"These three factors of variation have one thing in common: they all presuppose the artistic recognition of subjectivity." :128

The significance of this being expressed by Panofsky in the following way:

"It was, therefore, a fundamental innovation when the Renaissance supplemented anthropometry with both a physiological (and psychological) theory of movement and a mathematically exact theory of perspective. Those who like to interpret historical facts symbolically may recognise in this spirit a specifically 'modern' conception of the world which permits the subject to assert itself against the object as something independent and equal; whereas classical antiquity did not as yet permit the explicit formulation of this contrast; and whereas the Middle Ages believed the subject as well as the object to be submerged in a higher unity." :129

In these terms, the Italian Renaissance presented Western culture with a novel perspective on the constitution of nature and of humanity's place within it; the artistic exploration of this theme thus went beyond mere elaboration and created a set of ideas which could develop their own momentum and consequently be seen to provide an intellectual

foundation upon which modern society could base its ideological and cultural development. That this was not the only possible route of cultural development available to the West is often overlooked, with the glare of the Renaissance blinding researchers to other contemporary manifestations of cultural change which offered equally challenging possibilities for the reconstitution of Western European culture in the period characterised by the gradual erosion of the Church's hegemony and the rise of the urban industrial bourgeoisie. Portugal offered one such alternative, stemming particularly from the impact of the Discoveries upon a developing bourgeois nation. The response to these new forms of knowledge was to differ from that in Italy, and we are confronted with the question of whether there was in fact a Portuguese Renaissance which, in some ways, pre-dated the Italian, and also generated alternative attitudes to humanity, and by extension, to race consciousness.

**CHAPTER SIX:**  
**History Belief and Culture**

HISTORY, BELIEF AND CULTURE: the development of a discrete aesthetic underlying Portuguese race consciousness in the Manueline period

"...many (perhaps most) aspects of Portuguese colonial history require much further investigation, research and discussion before generally agreed conclusions can be reached. Even in such well tilled fields as the development of the fifteenth century Discoveries, and the origins of Brazilian independence, widely differing interpretations and conclusions have been reached by scholars who have spent a lifetime in studying those problems. Still more does this reservation apply to such delicate and controversial topics as race relations and religious attitudes." (Boxer, 1969):342

Claims have been advanced that the Portuguese, especially in the period from the fifteenth century onwards, had a peculiar attitude to race relations, and in particular to skin colour, which resulted either in their complete lack of colour awareness (Welch, 1935, 1946, 1949), their reversal of traditionally understood attitudes of white superiority (Nash, 1926), or their adoption of tolerant attitudes towards blacks (Freyre, 1946, 1961). From this it has been possible for commentators to stress the unique Portuguese inheritance of an attitude to matters of race which both deviates from the common European perspective, and which seems to offer a

pattern of hope for those in modern society who wish to turn away from the evils of racism in order to establish 'racial democracy'. And yet, the thesis has not gone unquestioned either for its historical accuracy (Boxer, 1963, 1978), or on account of its theoretical basis which is claimed to be cast in terms which encourage an idealist interpretation of events to the apparent disregard of material and economic circumstances (Harris, 1969). The purpose of this section is to review major contributions to the debate, and to suggest that the Portuguese experience is sufficiently distinct to justify exploration both in its own terms, and as a case study which investigates the penetration of notions of race into the art products of Portuguese society, an expression further refracted by the deep historical and cultural structure of the society.

In its most scholarly form, the question of Portuguese racial consciousness has centred on the works of Freyre and Boxer which have provided much of the stimulus, and material, for subsequent contributions. The approach adopted here is firstly to investigate the major thesis as proposed by Freyre, before coming to look at the elaborations and criticisms made pre-eminently by Boxer, but also by other commentators who have used Boxer's evidence for their own arguments. Additionally the evidence of internal race relations in Portugal is reviewed. Finally, certain theoretical issues are addressed which show both the peculiar nature of Portuguese racial consciousness, and its significance within the wider

consideration of the nature of racial consciousness as a culturally produced and mediated phenomenon.

#### Defining a Distinctive Portuguese Racial Consciousness

In what way might the Portuguese consciousness of race and skin colour differ from any supposedly normative pattern which can be discerned from available data? van den Berghe & Frost propose that there is an hierarchical ordering of skin colour preferences amongst societies which, almost without exception, place more value upon, and accord higher status to, lighter skin, especially amongst females. Moreover, this hierarchy is more than an expression of the culturally prescribed norms, since it has a biological aspect.

"...preference for light skin is not a random and capricious artifact of culture. Either cultural randomness or cultural narcissism would lead one to expect that many groups would prefer darker pigmentation, especially those which are themselves dark. Yet, this is not the case. The sexual asymmetry of the preference is also well beyond chance." :106

van den Berghe & Frost claim that they have located an example of gene-culture co-evolution as hypothesised by Lumsden & Wilson (1981), in that the conjunction of skin colour preference and patterns of choice of sexual partner, especially by men, on the basis of lightness of skin colour, can lead to the development of a gene pool which is increasingly

likely to produce light-skinned offspring - especially amongst the dominant groups. The co-evolutionary mechanism linking the genetic structure to the cultural disposition is then held to account for the way in which modifications to the racial characteristics represent an adaptive response which has specific advantages in the transmission of ego's genes into the next generation.

As was pointed out earlier, this argument does not find that historical evidence of European expansion in any way invalidates the hypothesis, since this pattern of preference for light-skinned women is to be found even in societies which have had no white contacts. Indeed, van den Berghe & Frost see the historical evidence as indicative of a mutual reinforcement between cultural and biological factors.

"The conquest hypothesis, especially the colonial expansion of Europe, is undoubtedly a proximate explanation of much racial stratification of many ex-colonial and ex-slave societies throughout the world. It is, thus, not a competing hypothesis with ours. It is a more limited proximate and historicist explanation which complements ours. As a more limited explanation it leaves a large unexplained residual...Our argument is that the cultural dice are not simply loaded. They are loaded genetically...We are not saying that lighter skin preference is either universal or inevitable, nor that culture is incapable of overriding it. The flexibility of human culture is undoubtedly quite wide, though far



from infinite. The point is that this flexibility is not random; it is adaptive. In the last analysis, culture, to persist, must serve the reproductive interests of its flesh and blood carriers."

For van den Berghe & Frost then, races, and especially skin colour variations of races, reflect both aesthetic and biological structures within an historical context. Their hypothesis carries with it the explicit proposition that there are both cultural and genetic factors predisposing societies to give lighter skin colours higher status and desirability, and that this conjunction is to be found in a great majority of cases. On their evidence, van den Berghe & Frost are proposing that light skin preference is normative culturally, biologically and numerically. The importance of this lies not only in identifying a normative and adaptive aspect of attitudes towards skin colour, but also in putting forward an hypothesis which gives Portuguese race consciousness a significance beyond its immediate historical location, and which has implications for the study of race consciousness as a whole.

Evidence concerning Portuguese colour consciousness points to a partial alteration to the view which is dominant in N.Europe, which polarises white and black, and has white as superior. The Portuguese variation, at least historically, admits much less consciousness of variations of skin colour amongst non-black members of society. A strong degree of insulation does obtain in respect of the boundary between

black and white as overall groups. This distinction, along with the greater imprecision of the white group, can be contrasted with the N.European categorisation which assigns even minimally non-white skin colours to the black group. The Portuguese perspective, on the other hand, at times assigned non-black skins to the white group.

Hoetink's distinction between the Iberian and N.W.European variants of the 'somatic norm image' has explanatory value in this. Hoetink proposes the notion of the somatic norm image in order to escape the racist and biologicistic assumptions which he sees attending certain concepts of 'race', and which obscure the cultural aspects of racial identification. This image is both normative and ideal for a group of people in that it provides a measure of aesthetic appreciation which can be applied to the somatic characteristics of the group, whilst at the same time recognising that no one individual is likely to display the characteristics in a pure or absolute form. The somatic norm image is the measure which is applied to various peoples in order to assess their membership, or otherwise, of the group which operates the dominant image. Drawing on Weber, Hoetink asserts that there is a very strong 'socially determined aesthetic appreciation in race relations'.

"Weber...does not think exclusively of factors deriving from the social milieu, culture, and social structure, but recognises without hesitation the relevance of socially determined aesthetic appreciation which has the

somatic norm image as its standard." :128

Hoetink defines race in terms of the ideological appreciation and evaluation of the physical (i.e. biological) characteristics of the human body. He thereby enables himself to explain the biological component of racial ideas by means of socially mediated concepts.

"I would define a 'race' as a group of people which on the basis of its own characteristic hereditary physical features, has, in principle, its own somatic norm image. By the introduction of the concept 'somatic norm image' I have reduced the sociologically relevant facets of the process of biological mingling to the category of acculturation phenomena, for the transmission of the somatic norm image is a phenomenon of acculturation." :137

Hoetink notes that somatic norm images have developed in the course of European expansion, and that the N.W.European and Iberian variants most fully encapsulate the differing racial attitudes which have arisen as a result of the experiences of the various groups of settlers and explorers. The causes of such differences are accounted for by Hoetink,

"...the differences in 'race relations' between the Iberian and N.W.European variants...are to be found...in the everyday, non-intimate relations, and in the intimate relations between racial groups...The cultural factors in the sphere of non-intimate racial

relations were Roman Catholicism as opposed to Protestantism, a 'pre-capitalist' mentality as opposed to a commercial, 'capitalist' mentality, a 'medieval', all-embracing hierarchical view of society as opposed to Renaissance particularism and individualism. These factors support and supplement one another and overlap." :173

The precise historical claims which Hoetink makes will be scrutinised later in this study when we come to investigate the relationship of the Portuguese Discoveries to the Renaissance in Portuguese culture, and the implications of this relationship for the historicity of the cultural forms which develop. At this point we should note that the problem which Hoetink's elaboration of the concepts of the somatic norm image creates arises from his refusal to entertain the biological referents which, themselves, form a part of cultural reality. This being said, however, it is not the intention here to dismiss the concept of the somatic norm image since it can be employed as a means of judging at least the superficial aspects of race consciousness, and also indicates that there can be expected to be a consistency with the deeper, structural aspects which support the image, however obscurely.

#### Concerning Portuguese 'appetites'

Freyre's ideas on the peculiar nature of Portuguese race consciousness were first set out in his historical study of the development of Brazilian society (1946) which paid par-

ticular attention to the culture of the Portuguese settlers. This concern with the Portuguese background eventually came to form almost half of the first lengthy volume of Freyre's study, and is a necessary foundation upon which rests his thesis of a racially democratic Brazilian society. Later, Freyre came to systematise his ideas on what he saw as the apparently progressive attitude of the Portuguese in his development and advocacy of the concept of "Luso-tropology" (1961). This sought to establish an alliance between philosophy and sociology as the means by which a statistical and scientific approach to the "Science of Man" (sic) could be overthrown in favour of an interpretive and synthetic method which was founded on the recognition of the "ability of the Iberian in general and the Portuguese in particular to develop cultures and peoples by intermingling at a cultural level and cross-breeding at a biological level." :9

It is this concern for the mixing, or hybridisation, of peoples that underlies Freyre's approach, and as such, necessitates an historical dimension to his ideas which can take account of the demographic movements which bring about such mingling. It also accounts for his insistence on matters of sex and food as two major items crucial to an appreciation of the way of life of a society, since these are taken as culturally conditioned biological necessities implicated in the creation and sustenance of life. The concern with sex in particular has resulted in his acquiring a reputation as a somewhat febrile writer, although the concern to reconcile

race and sexuality is to be found throughout the literature on race relations in writers who do not so readily attract such criticism (Bastide, 1968; Davis, 1966; Jordan, 1974; Myrdal, 1944). By way of illustration, and directly indicating his attitude to skin colour, is the cult of 'a *moura encantada*' (the enchanted Moorish woman) cited by Freyre in a disappointingly superficial way.

"Long contact with the Saracens had left the Portuguese the idealized figure of the 'enchanted Moorish woman', a charming type, brown skinned, black-eyed, enveloped in sexual mysticism, roseate in hue, and always engaged in combing out her hair or bathing in rivers or in waters of haunted fountains." (1946):2

In the context of the development of Brazil such legendary figures become synonymous with the native women who were apparently less coy than their legendary counterparts, and who themselves became legendary in their own time, due to their submission to the Portuguese "who were so gluttonous for a woman", for nothing more than a baubel; although submission hardly seems an appropriate word in the light of the, albeit brief, account. In the context of the Portuguese society, however, such a legend takes on an altogether deeper significance, bringing together the Christian and Moorish traditions and expressing them in the form of an idealised erotic image of dark-skinned women.

"All of these circumstances would appear to confirm the assumption that these women were an expression of sexual or erotic mysticism, a species of cult of the coloured woman or of the dusky Venus among the Portuguese."<sup>12</sup>

Freyre's treatment of this legend is only superficial, and although he later gives instances of the importance of the story in both Portuguese and Brazilian culture, he does not expand on the matter. For our immediate purposes we can note that the factor underlying the legend is a concern with the profound biological mixing of peoples. According to Freyre, this mixing gave the Portuguese two special hybridised/adaptive advantages, and one peculiar social trait. The two advantages were firstly, the extension of colonial power through incorporation of native populations, and secondly the biological capacity for acclimatability in warm regions; the social trait being the Portuguese form of racial consciousness.

On the subject of the sexual relationships between black and white in Portugal, Saunders (1982) suggests that black women apparently held few charms for the indigenous Portuguese man, although mulattas appear to have exercised a positive attraction.

" Among slave women, blacks were held to be the least desirable. Only white, that is Moorish, women slaves were considered so attractive that a master might want to keep them exclusively for himself...Perhaps mulattas,

being lighter-skinned, were the most sought after...";102

Furthermore, the Portuguese man's attitude would have been complicated by an already existing tendency to misogyny which was encouraged by the Catholic religious tradition (Boxer, 1975), and which can also be seen as a perversion of a cultural legacy of the Moorish occupation of the country, which resulted in women not so much being accorded status within the domestic sphere as being excluded from the public. Overall, however, Freyre has alerted us to an important consideration, and this is significant in that it associates concepts of gender and sexuality with an ideosyncratic concept of sexual attractiveness.

The apparently precocious colonial capacity of the Portuguese has been a cause for comment by some students of the period (e.g. Diffie & Winnius, 1977). It has been seen as problematic that a nation of as little as one million people could not only have undertaken the initial 'European' exploration of the 'World', but also that they could establish a colonial empire the extent of which had few counterparts. It is now widely agreed that this had to do with the readiness of the explorers and early settlers to establish sexual relations with the indigenous population, to create a group of *mestiço* (half-caste) offspring who could become engaged in extending the settlers' lines of power and communications. Freyre develops this notion into a significant part of his explanation of the success of the Portuguese in their colonial activities, and further support for such a view is



detailed by Boxer (1962), and Degler(1986). However, such success was based not only in the sexual proclivities of the early colonisers, but also in their ideological and technical capacities, and in their world-historical situation as a part of the development of the city centred European capitalist economy (Braudel,1984; Magalhães-Godinho, 1965-1971; Wallerstein, 1974).

For our immediate purposes, the technical advances which the Portuguese achieved, especially in the design of their ocean going shipping, was not of direct importance, except insofar as they represent the capacity of those people to borrow ideas from other cultures and to adapt them to their own circumstances; in this case the arabic lateen sail which was to prove vital in allowing ships to sail against the prevailing winds on the return journeys along the African coast (Cipolla, 1965; Diffie & Winnius, 1977; Law, 1986). On the other hand, the ideological and geopolitical contexts are important. The point being that whilst a willingness to establish sexual relationships may well have been a necessary condition of the ongoing expansion of colonial power, it was in no sense sufficient by itself to account for their capacity to exert force in far flung parts of the world, nor to account for the ways in which the Portuguese came to perceive that such actions were not only possible but also desirable.

### Developing 'Hybrid Vigour'?

The geographical position of Portugal, positioned as it is on the Atlantic coast of the Iberian peninsula, leads Freyre on to his second line of reasoning, that such a situation naturally predisposed the region to invasion both from North and South, with each group of invaders representing a contrasting cultural tradition which was to have a profound impact upon the biological composition and national identity of the Portuguese.

"Predisposed by its geographic situation to be the point of contact, of transit, intercommunication, and conflict between diverse elements, whether ethnic or social, Portugal in its anthropology as in its culture displays a great variety of antagonisms, some of them in a state of equilibrium, others in conflict...We shall discover this ethnic and cultural heterogeneity in the remote origins of the Portuguese people."(Freyre, 1946):200

Both Celtic and Mediterranean components were to be found in the population by the time of the Roman invasion, although Freyre himself posits that the dominant type of appearance was one of brown skin and curly hair.

After three centuries of Roman rule, invasions of the Alani, Vandals and Suevi provided the foundation for the establishment of Visigothic domination, although culturally, and especially in the fields of law and religion, the

Hispano-Roman Catholic creed remained dominant. Through this period Jewish traders established money lending and slave trading activities, and the Jewish element in Portuguese culture began to become established.

In the eighth century the Moors established control over the Iberian Peninsula, which was to create out of the region an objective for the Christian Crusaders whose activities resulted both in the establishment of the Portuguese nation in 1095, and in the completion of the Reconquista in the province of the Algarves in 1249.

As a result of these activities, infusions of Moorish, Berber, Nordic and North European blood took place. On top of this, the reorientation of the slave trade during the late medieval period had the effect of introducing, and apparently incorporating, black people into the population (Saunders); although this last factor is not one elaborated by Freyre. Overall, he sees these factors as indicating that the basic Portuguese type may well have owed more to Africa than to Europe.

"...the basic racial stratum in the peninsula, looked upon as indigenous might be of African origin. Looked at in this way, the Arabs, Moors, Berbers, and Mussulmans, in the course of their invasion, would simply have been taking possession of a region where the way had been prepared for them by an infusion of their own blood and culture...a large part of the populations submitted to

the political rule of the Moors and proceeded to develop intimate relations with them, preserving all the while a comparative purity of faith.

It was these populations - Mozarabic ones - a people imbued with the invader's culture and with the invader's blood in his veins - that were to constitute the base and sinews of Portuguese nationality."(1946):208

These influences appear to Freyre to have rendered the Portuguese peculiarly suited to the colonization of the tropics due to their 'acclimatability'. In other words, faced with extreme climatic conditions, especially in Central Africa and Brazil, the mixed ancestral heritage gave them an inherent advantage over other, more white, Europeans. Consequently, they were able to settle in regions which would otherwise have been inhospitable. The peculiar endurance and heat tolerance comes from the 'hybridisation' process which had been undergone by the Portuguese people. This notion of hybrid vigour springs from the idea of the introduction of the heat tolerance of the African peoples to the European, a proposition which clearly contains biologicistic elements.

These ideas would appear to be at least partly refuted by Boxer's account (1963) of the West African missions, especially the mission based in Cape Verde in 1627, which was abandoned after 40 years. The death rate amongst white clergy was so high that this really was a 'White Man's Grave', with the result that sufficient manpower was not forthcoming to

run the mission. Faced with a choice between closure, the full incorporation of native clergy, or the use of criminal elements amongst the clergy as a form of punishment, the Jesuits chose closure, thereby denying both Freyre's claim of Portuguese acclimatability and of racial tolerance in the one action.

#### Racial Tolerance and the Person of Henry the Navigator

Even though the two adaptive advantages claimed for the Portuguese may each appear less persuasive in the light of recent historical data, the social trait bequeathed by the democratic history of the nation is not necessarily equally called into question. By this trait is meant that of the acceptance of racial or skin colour difference, an outlook which is perhaps best personified for the Anglo-Saxon mind by the persona of Prince Henry the Navigator, known in his own culture as '*o Infante Dom Henrique*'.

The popular notion of the liberal minded Dom Henrique, a man without regard to race, is one that can be found in Freyre's work, where it is developed into an important aspect of the thesis that the Portuguese were a racially tolerant people. This makes it important to question the veracity of this notion of an apparently proto-liberal aristocrat whose inspiration lay at the heart of '*os Descobrimentos*' - the Discoveries - and who lent them their most unique characteristic, racial tolerance.

The popularly known aspect of the life of Dom Henrique is his co-ordination of the seafaring activities of the group of scientists in the Sagres 'School' on the most South-westerly tip of Europe. Sagres is a wild and wind-swept place which can readily evoke in the minds of city-dwellers what it might be like actually to be at sea, even to be lost at sea, given the fogs and mists which the clash of cold currents and warm lands create. Sagres has attained fame as the location and embodiment of the single-minded pursuit of adventure and learning.

"...in his lifetime Dom Henrique had changed the world. His hand had swept away for ever the phantoms with which men's imagination peopled the Atlantic." (Sanceau, 1943)  
:12

Sanceau offers an admirable, if somewhat laudatory, interpretation of the period, seeing Dom Henrique as the figure who took on a strategic historical significance spanning the transition from the Medieval period to the Renaissance.

"It was a prince of Portugal who lead the way. Henry the Navigator stood between two worlds - the dying Middle Ages and the dawning Renaissance. The mysticism of the one and the insatiable curiosity of the other were the driving forces which controlled his life. He was a crusader and a man of science rolled into one." :8

We should note that there are two issues bound up in this attitude; on the one hand there is the personality of

the historical figure which may lend itself to literal or metaphorical interpretation, such as is our present concern; on the other hand there is the question of the historical location of the period which is addressed later in this study. It should be pointed out here, though, that the treatment accorded this transition from Medieval to Renaissance Portugal should not be so simply characterised as Sanceau has done. The changes were more complex than is indicated by her, and subject to more conflict of interest and interpretation than she admits. A more convincing analysis of the period is given by Hooykaas (1979), amongst others.

For Freyre, too, Dom Henrique is the genius who so inspires a national style of civilisation that it reverberates through history as a creative contribution to human culture. This is so for the navigational and the colonial achievements, but even more marked in the case of his inspiration of new social relationships between black and white which are still reflected in modern-day luso-tropical culture. Freyre refers to this "transnational style of civilisation" as "Henrian":

"Henrian in the predominance of its processes of relations between Europeans and non-Europeans, between Whites and Negroes, between God-parents and God-children - an institution so genuinely Portuguese since the time of Prince Henry...Henrian in its combinations of scientific study with adventurous daring...Henrian in the

work of Christian protection to the orphans, the poor, the aged, the sick...Henrian...in the way of reconciliation of the spirit of security with the spirit of adventure...in which may be detected the Lusitanian love to go forward in every kind of 'seas never crossed before', the pioneer using, for such daring feats, both the helm and the compass; leaning Camões-like on the knowledge of the experts and on the experience of the old hands; relying on maps; basing himself on calculations; having recourse to capable foreigners."(1961)

The dual achievement and legacy of Dom Henrique, typically summarised in Freyre's Luso-tropical approach, balances human relationships against material gain, the discoveries of peoples and nations against the discoveries of science, the individual against the race, black against white.

"From Sagres there did not only come to the modern world physical means of communication: transoceanic means. There came also, under the inspiration of the Prince, founded on his truly universal Christianity, new means of psychic, social and cultural communication among different races and of many colours...The very value of beauty, particularly as regards the beauty of types of woman, would thus come to be enriched, when to the classic - Graeco-Roman - forms of that type of shape new substances, and even new forms, and, especially, new



colours were added, through the great adventure of miscegenation, in which the Portuguese engaged more than any other Europeans..." (1961):266

Dom Henrique thus displays the quintessential qualities of the Portuguese culture which Freyre wishes both to systematise into a synthetic method of scholarship, and to record as sociological fact. Luso-tropology, at least for Freyre, exists both as method and substance; it is a way of understanding the world and it is a way of life. Above all it is a moral prescription for researcher and subject. Small wonder, then, that Freyre's claims for Portuguese racial consciousness encountered criticism from his more 'dispassionate' academic peers, for example Corwin (1974). Before turning to Freyre's wider claims concerning Portuguese colour consciousness, we should enter a question mark against the figure of Dom Henrique himself, in order the better to understand the basis of the cult of personality which some historians have developed.

The main source of information about Dom Henrique comes from the official Chronicles of the Kings of Portugal, especially that of João I. It became a tradition for Portuguese kings to appoint a royal chronicler - the writer of the official history of the reign - who also held the posts of Keeper of the Royal Library and Chief Archivist. These men were in a privileged position to observe the events leading up to and involving the Discoveries. The Chronicles which

provide the basis for the persona of Henry the Navigator were written by Azurara (1915, 1937). Azurara was closely associated with Dom Henrique, being Commander of the Order of Christ, of which Dom Henrique was the Governor, and Bell(1974) sees a conspiracy of historical misrepresentation, possibly moved by Azurara.

"Although history has given most of the credit for begetting the voyages of discovery to Dom Henrique, there seems no doubt that his two elder brothers also played their part and that the contribution of D.Pedro especially has been underestimated. But by the time the story of the early voyages came to be written, both D.Duarte and D.Pedro were dead and disgraced...Dom Henrique, on the other hand, was still alive and had a devoted admirer in his protégé, Gomes de Azurara, on whose writings most subsequent accounts were largely based." :43

This critical attitude to Azurara's accounts is also to be found in Diffie & Winnius, and in Leite (1958, 1960), who presents the major Portuguese critique of the myth of the Sagres School, recognising the major contribution of the Infante but rejecting the cult of personality which is seen largely as a British construction. It might seem, therefore, that the picture which we receive today is an idealised one, with the pre-eminence of the Infante deliberately inflated by the Chronicler. Freyre's attitude, however, is derived in the

main from his reading of the accounts which deal with the protection offered to the first Africans on their landing in Portugal.

"It is Azurara who tells us, with all his objectivity, that in accordance with the social policy directed by Prince Henry...the lords received protectively the first captives brought from Africa to Portugal; and they acted towards them in such a way that some of those Portuguese Christians even went so far as to treat, bring up and educate the newcomers as if they had been their own children."(1961): 247

The protective reception of these people seems to have had more to do with evangelisation, since Azurara's account tells of the grief of families forcibly split up and of the misery of mothers who clung to their children and were whipped with little pity. Notwithstanding this, the acceptance of black boys into the Order of Christ (Boxer, 1963; Freyre, 1961; Sanceau) does suggest that whilst individual characteristics may have been inflated, in general attitudes of tolerance towards peoples of differing skin colour were likely to be found in the Order. This probability seems to be backed up by Boxer's account (1978) of racial attitudes in the Portuguese religious orders, which finds that discrimination was not widespread until the end of the sixteenth century onwards. This is a view which is also held by Saunders.

"There was...no extensive development of the arguments that divine punishment had relegated blacks to natural slavery or that blacks lived bestially or even that blacks brought to Portugal experienced an immense improvement in their conditions of material life. True, these ideas never completely disappeared, but by the sixteenth century the paramount justification of the slave-trade was that enslavement was an effective method of bringing blacks to a knowledge of Christianity." :43

The lionisation of Dom Henrique has the effect of enhancing the ideographic descriptive approach, to the detriment of the structural level of analysis, and whilst it is recognised that culture is a significant aspect of any explanation, it cannot be reduced to the result of the wilful actions of sovereign individuals. To see the Discoveries as the result simply of the actions and intentions of one man (who apparently only travelled overseas three times during his life, and those three times only to Morocco), is to overlook the structural changes which were taking place within Portuguese society at the time.

The national economy was founded initially upon the strength of the output of the large agricultural estates of the Church. Over time there developed a drift from the land to the towns, many of which were on or near the coast. Freyre claims that those who moved from the land included significant numbers of Jews and Moors who, being excluded from the

pursuit of profit in agriculture by the Church monopoly, looked to the commercial activities of the urban areas for a means of acquiring wealth. This tendency played to the interests of the monarchy which could consolidate its power at the expense of the Church as a result of this shift in the basis of productive activity.

"The precocious ascendancy of the maritime and commercial classes in Portuguese economy and politics was a result...of the extraordinary variety of seafaring and mercantile stimuli...According to Alberto Sampaio and Antonio Sergio, it is from the beginning of Portuguese national life that the antagonism between the commercial class of the cities and the landed aristocracy of the centre of the country really dates. As this economic class antagonism grew sharper, accentuating the divergence between rural and seafaring interests, the kings, in a desire to free themselves of any kind of aristocratic pressure upon their royal power, were inclined to adopt a policy that favoured the commercial bourgeoisie and the people of the cities."(1946):<sup>146</sup>

Thus both the monarchy and the Jewish community benefited from the change in the centre of gravity of the economy, and the precocious bourgeois development which was to act as a spur to the Discoveries themselves also had the effect of bringing about a circulation in the position of ethnic interests. Despite the anti-semitic sentiment which Freyre

exhibits, there is a recognition of the importance of the Jewish plutocrats in the process of colonial expansion.

"It is obvious that the Kings of Portugal did not protect the Jews out of love for the latter's beautiful Oriental eyes: they did it out of self interest, forcing the Jews to contribute, through heavy taxes and duties, to the wealth of the crown and the State. It is worthy of note that the Portuguese merchant marine was in large part developed through the special taxes paid by the Hebrews for every ship that was built and launched. In this manner the crown and State took advantage of Israelite property for their own enrichment. Portuguese imperialism and imperialist expansion were based upon Jewish prosperity."(1946):230

It should not be overlooked that when seaborne trading had become well established in the time of Manuel I, it was possible for the King to suppress the Jews, forcing them either into the Catholic Faith or into flight from Portugal, thereby 'freeing' the monarchy of its old bourgeois ally. However, this rendered the monarchy more vulnerable to the Catholic Church, and this ultimately brought about the end of Portuguese independence in 1580 with the acceptance/imposition of Castilian rule.

In one sense then, the persona of Henry the Navigator can be taken as a metaphor standing for the social alliance between monarchy and Jews. It is interesting to reflect that

the qualities attributed to him of learning, scientific discovery, cosmopolitanism and enterprise, are those which are often associated with Jewish culture. Dom Henrique was a progressive force in that he represented the ambitions of the precocious bourgeoisie against the conservative claims of the aristocracy. His legendary tolerance can be seen to have a real basis in his dependence upon Jewish capital and the revenues which this created. In questioning the historical validity of the persona of Henry the Navigator (Diffie & Winnius; Leite), it is important to bear in mind that the single figure may contain more generalised historical truths which could be lost if the sole intention of the critique was the destruction of the cult of the historical personality (Geertz, 1983; Lowenthal, 1985).

#### **A developing race consciousness: economics and slavery**

Alongside such considerations must go a recognition of the wider structural context within which the economic development of Portugal was taking place. Braudel (1984), following Magalhães-Godhino, suggests that the traditional view of Portugal as a vanguard for later European expansion is only partly correct, since the supremacy attained by Portugal was merely a passing phase in the transfer of the control of the European city-centred economy from Venice to Antwerp. Lisbon rose as a major centre of trading activity in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries because it was situated within a

relatively powerful and stable developing economy, which was well placed to fill the vacuum created by the decline of Venice. Lisbon was only marginal to the development of the world economy because larger structural tendencies in the market, especially in the demand for pepper, were shifting the natural centre of gravity from southern Europe northwards. As Wallerstein points out, the Portuguese also found themselves in the peculiar conjunction of geographical, economic and internal political forces which meant that whilst most other European powers could look within for territories to be colonised, Portugal did not have such territories available.

The stability of the nation meant that resources could be marshalled for the long-term enterprise of oceanic exploration. The reason why the Portuguese felt it to be desirable to undertake such activities is to be found in their wish to extend the notion of the 'Reconquista' into the very heart of Moorish society; the context in which D. Henrique and his brothers swore on their mother's deathbed to capture the North African port of Ceuta, a feat which they achieved.

The underlying economic factors were not internal to the society but were to be located in the decline in seigniorial income in Europe generally during the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, which meant that new sources of income had to be sought. The conjunction of this with the growing demand for foodstuffs finally forced European societies to look beyond Europe. This is held by Magalhães-Godinho to account



for the initial colonisation of the Atlantic islands of Madeira and the Canaries. Further development represented an extension of these tendencies, but since Portugal was not situated at the centre of such forces, it was inevitable that her achievements would be overshadowed by those of the more northerly societies. As Braudel states, with hindsight the Portuguese decision not to support Columbus now appears to have cost Portugal the prize of North America, but such reasoning overlooks the fact that Portugal was to be hindered in its development of Brazil by sheer lack of human resources, and that such a small nation could not have developed the northern part of the continent in the way in which it was later to be developed, especially by the English, Spanish and French.

Whatever conclusion we reach as to the position of Portugal in the overall process of European expansion, we should note that it is not possible to isolate the development of any one economy from that of its neighbours. We have to recognise that Portugal was embedded in the process of the development of the world capitalist economy, but that it held a marginal position with regard to the purely European market. These factors are pertinent when we consider the nature of Portuguese involvement in European culture elsewhere in the study.

Somewhat similar geopolitical considerations are raised by both Tannenbaum(1946) and Davis (1966) with respect to the position of Portuguese slave trading activities, and sub-

sequent treatment of slaves. Tannenbaum sees Iberian slaving as taking place within an already established body of law and tradition which meant that relationships between the races involved in slavery were already supported by a body of moral and juridical ideas and practices.

"The negro slave arriving in the Iberian Peninsula in the middle of the fifteenth century found a propitious environment. The setting, legal as well as moral, that made this easy transition possible was due to the fact that the peoples of the Iberian Peninsula were not strangers to slavery. The institution of slavery, which had long since died out in the rest of western Europe, had here survived for a number of reasons...but the mere survival of slavery in itself is perhaps less important than the persistence of a long tradition of slave law that had come down through the Justinian Code." [*which contextualised and shaped Las Siete Partidas*].

(Tannenbaum)  
:43

Davis, too, proposes that the Iberian societies developed novel perspectives towards differing racial groups because of their historical experience with the slave trade. However, he is not so certain as Tannenbaum regarding the tolerance of colour in these societies, since he sees a direct link between colour prejudice and slavery, just as does Boxer. The Iberian societies were therefore "the transitional link between slavery as it had existed throughout history and slavery

as it developed in America." The main difference came with the slaving expeditions of the Europeans along the shores of Africa.

"The problem of a house divided against itself originated when the burghers and merchants used their hard-won liberty to launch expeditions for the enslavement of a different race." (Davis):42

These various perspectives serve to remind us that beliefs or attitudes should not be taken in isolation, but should be seen both within the wider contemporary context and as existing within a developing historical form. Neither the general development of the Portuguese economy, nor the specific development of the African slave trade can be understood when decontextualised from other aspects of culture and tradition. The same holds specifically for Portuguese consciousness of, and attitudes towards, differing skin colour. To explain the phenomenon of colour prejudice as a direct result of the slave trade, is to include a necessary but not sufficient factor. Portuguese attitudes to slavery were themselves conditioned by their attitudes to colour, which were in turn conditioned by previous cultural and historical experiences which pre-date the African slave trade, and of which Freyre is more cognisant than other commentators in this field.

During the large-scale population movements which took place in Portugal situated as it is between Europe and

Africa, the dominant factor in the building of the nation was religion rather than race. Religion gave voice and coherence to the shaping of the early national structure.

"This was a society that in its evolution was protected less by a consciousness of race, which was practically non-existent in the plastic minded Portuguese, than it was by a religious exclusiveness given expression in a system of social and political prophylaxis."(Freyre, 1946):3

But underneath the superficial ideological coherence afforded by religion lay a mixed population who felt drawn by competing interests and whose very composition was subject to a remarkable degree of social mobility. As the various influxes of conquerors settled in the country, so groups comprising the population saw their prospects now waxing, now waning. The experience of the pronounced circulation of elite groups is held to have rendered the Portuguese used to the experience of domination by peoples of differing colour. Neither was this experience transitory, passing into memory as the invaders withdrew or were supplanted, because the old dominant groups had mixed with the indigenous groups to establish a permanent residue of their presence.

For Freyre, the biological and cultural seem almost to become synonymous.

"When this socially mobile population - extremely

mobile, in fact - returned to Christian Europe, it was to bring with it a dense layer of culture and an energetic infusion of Moorish and Negro blood, the effects of which persist to this day in the Portuguese people and the Portuguese character." (1946):211

The precocious bourgeois development of the nation brought together the racial groups and mixed them as fully as did the same process mix the social strata. We might further suggest that the synonymity of biology and culture can be extended in Freyre's perspective to include the social structuring of the power and prestige groupings in Portuguese society.

"Weakened by the pressure of the big landowning ecclesiastics, not a few aristocrats of Nordic origin went to the middle class, which was impregnated with Moorish and Hebrew blood, in search of rich young women whom they might marry. From this there resulted in Portugal a nobility that showed as great a racial admixture, almost, as the bourgeoisie or the masses. For the mobility of families and individuals from one class to another was formidable...Those who would divide Portugal into two countries, one blond and aristocratic, the other brown-skinned or Negroid, which would be the plebian one, are ignorant of the true meaning of Portuguese history, where we find a constant alteration of hegemonies, not only of races, but of cultures and

classes as well, with now one and now another predominating." :210

A result of this process was that the Portuguese aristocracy failed to develop a rigidity and exclusiveness which would become the model for exclusive categorisations lower down in the social hierarchy. Freyre cites Sampaio (1923) as suggesting that the *Livro Velho* (the Old Book of ancient lineage) gives strong evidence that family names were held in common by people from all levels of society, with the implications for the formation of racial exclusiveness being that there exists no basis in lineage for its demarcation.

"'A dominant race with a blood-stream different from the inhabitants is inadmissible without personal names that are its exclusive property'...No means of identifying Hispanos and Moors, Christians and infidels, conquered and conqueror, nobles and plebian in Portuguese society is more uncertain than individual and family names. Races, cultures, and social classes were so jumbled in the peninsula that the weight attaching to the feet of some through slavery or the spoils of war never succeeded in preventing them from fluctuating anew." :217

Even Manuel I's suppression of the Jews in 1497, and their forcible baptism, which might appear to be an act borne of discriminatory intention, is seen by Freyre as further evidence of the Portuguese openness in matters of lineage!

"All this shows us how intense was the mobility and how free the circulation, so to speak, from one race to another, and, literally, from one class to another, from one to another social sphere, even in the case of the Jew." :234

In Freyre's view, therefore, Portuguese racial consciousness was expressed neither in a rigidly stratified social structure, nor by means of publicly recognised lines of descent. Moreover, he makes the explicit claim that the ideosyncratic demographic history of the nation resulted in a confusion of colour consciousness, as exemplified by the legend of a *moura encantada* which we have already mentioned. Freyre's perception of skin colour variations in Portugal is that they originated as a darker African type, which was successively modified by influxes of lighter skinned peoples from both northern Europe and from Africa. Presumably the Moors later introduced skin colours which were towards the darker end of the spectrum, but which could clearly be distinguished from the dark skins of the 'Aethiopians' and the sub-Saharan Africans. As a result of the process of mixing, both dark and blond types became possible amongst offspring, even within the same family or community.

"Portugal is, par excellence, the land of the transitory blond or demi-blond. In those regions most deeply penetrated by Nordic blood, many a child grows up as blond

and pink as a Flemish Christ Child, only later, on reaching maturity, to turn out to be brown-skinned and dark-haired. Or - and this is more typical - it then reveals that duality, that balance of antagonisms, to be seen in the natives of Minho whom Alberto Sampaio describes for us: men with blond beards and dark hair. Dark-skinned men with blond hair." :203

In this way the Portuguese were debarred from developing a strong normative image of bodily types and skin colours which would have provided a further base from which racial consciousness could have sprung.

"Let us not forget, however, in speaking of blonds in Portugal, that ancient localisations of blonds have also been identified in North Africa; and that among the brown-skinned mass of Mussulmans who invaded the country there were also individuals with light hair. Or that many a Moorish charmer was glimpsed by night combing locks which were as golden as the sun. Portugal also got its blonds from the southern side. From Africa - sandwiched in between heavy layers of dark men, many of them Negroid.

Throughout the historical era racial and cultural contacts in Portugal, merely rendered difficult but never impeded by religious antagonisms, were the freest to be found anywhere, between the most diverse elements." :204



The significance of this was addressed when we came to consider Hoetink's notion of the 'somatic norm image', later in this chapter. At this point, however, we shall examine some of the critical points raised by Saunders' examination of the social position of blacks in Portugal in the fifteenth century, and then by Boxer's interpretation of the evidence of Portuguese racial consciousness as exhibited especially in the colonial activities.

Saunders concludes that race relations in Portugal during the fifteenth century can be seen as having been based upon four major groupings, the Whites, the Moors, the Blacks, the Mulattoes. The identity and standing of these groups depend upon the extent to which they reflect the characteristics and qualities of the dominant white group; these qualities being, in order of importance, skin colour, religious and cultural habits, and attitudes towards labour. The most important factor in ordering race relations in this period was skin colour.

"...the Portuguese thought that, because of their colour, blacks were an entirely different species of human being. Thus though their behaviour might resemble a white's, it was nonetheless not the same thing and did not respond to the same motivations." :174

This sentiment was apparently built upon an antipathy which the Portuguese had towards the very appearance of black-skinned people, from their first arrival in the country

in the fifteenth century, brought back as captives and slaves. Saunders draws on the notion of colour symbolism to explain this initial reaction. In an argument similar to that used by Degler and by Walvin, he claims that the pre-existing meanings attached to the colour were transferred to those who were seen as having black skin, with the result that these strangers were thought to have originated in Hell, and to have other devilish qualities. (Such a response may partly bear out the Jungian archetypes of Shadow and Trickster.) This aesthetic response extended to a general dislike of the facial features of the blacks, which according to Saunders, were judged according to the European criteria.

"The Africans' very colour was against them: traditionally, black, and especially the word 'negre' which was used to describe the people, signified misfortune and sadness. In fact, it was held to be the skin colour of the devils in Hell. Furthermore, by European standards, the blacks' facial features were unattractive...the European physiognomy remained the standard of beauty in the sixteenth century." !167

The primary criterion interpreting these newly arrived peoples was thus physiological. The Portuguese made use of certain biological attributes of the Africans, and apportioned social characteristics both to the characteristics themselves, and to those who bore them, all the while using a culturally defined standard.

### Religious attitudes

On top of this, there was the fact that the Africans were not Christians, and in this they must initially have resembled the Moors, who were execrated for not being Christians. This situation soon changed, however, and the blacks were readily converted to Christianity, being allowed to set up their own exclusive brotherhood, the Order of Our Lady of the Rosary, which was based in Lisbon, and which offered a focus for black aspirations of social advance, eventually winning the respect of the powers that be for their piety, and obtaining legislative protection for blacks within Portuguese society. Having thus identified Christian conversion as a possible route of social advance, it is clearly insufficient to suppose that the blacks simply altered their beliefs to secure advantage. Saunders argues that the African pagan beliefs of the blacks were in any case susceptible to extraneous influences, provided that those influences could be shown to be efficacious.

"...most blacks seem to have embraced or managed to follow the Christian 'lei' or way of life. (In Portugal Christianity was considered a law which governed all aspects of one's existence.) Many took part in religious celebrations, while some formed lay brotherhoods and a few took holy orders...the heterodox were quickly reconciled with the faith, once it had been properly explained to them. On the whole, Christian and African moral

codes were not incompatible and Catholicism offered an attractive channel for expression of the blacks' religious feelings." :149

Saunders argues that the similarities were especially strong in the case of the brotherhood of the Order of Our Lady of the Rosary, which was associated with the Dominican Order, the Order which had not only 'promoted devotion to the rosary during the Middle Ages', but which had 'provided several of the Infante Dom Henrique's confessors and were involved in overseas missions'. The same order, i.e. the Dominicans, was closely associated with the tribunals of the Inquisition, and is thought unlikely to have knowingly harboured sorcerers or those involved in pagan magical rites. Nevertheless, the activities of the Dominican reverence of the Rosary had their attractions for the Africans, as Saunders points out.

"...the semi-magical, almost talismanic nature of the rosary itself may have appealed to Africans accustomed to fetish objects. Certainly the spiritual indulgences and privileges obtainable by belonging to the brotherhood and saying the rosary were considerable, including plenary indulgence once during a brother's lifetime and again 'in articulo mortis'. This magical aspect also approximated the organisation to the secret societies characteristic of many African tribes." :152

Sub-Saharan Africans were therefore potentially open to Catholic conversion, and were actively welcomed into the Church, all being given baptism and Christian burial by order of the Monarchy. In this they clearly stood apart from the muslim Moors, who were captive and in slavery precisely because of their religion, and who probably saw their greatest hope of liberty in their being ransomed and returned to North Africa. As a result a hierarchy of fidelity could be established according to Catholic criteria, with the whites ascendant but with the blacks given a recognised place, in contradistinction to the Moslems.

The mulattoes also were ready to adopt Catholicism, and this is seen as one reason for their ready acceptance by the Portuguese, since they reflected Portuguese cultural priorities in so doing.

"The Portuguese regarded themselves pre-eminently as Christians; 'Christian' was the word they used when they wished to distinguish themselves from other, non-European, peoples. Hence blacks, while they were considered an inferior species of man, were trusted because they were Christians. Conversely, even though the Mooresses' whiteness made them sexually desirable, Moors were distrusted and feared. Mulattoes, who were not only Christians but also resembled Europeans in their features - and who often had the advantage of prolonged acquaintance with Portuguese culture - were esteemed. This would explain why the most highly-placed

people of African descent in Portugal during the period (1441-1555) were mulattoes." (Saunders) :175

All of which indicates that the factors of race, gender and religion were already bound up in a complex way in Portuguese society at this time, rendering it difficult to reach a straightforward conclusion with regard to the relative standing of the four groups, save to say that the whites are seen by Saunders as unquestionably dominant, with the mulattoes finding quite favourable treatment; on the other hand, the blacks and Moors were each disqualified by a combination of either race, gender or religion. Over the longer term, argues Saunders, the religious factor would become ascendant, with the result that the blacks would not only become accommodated within Portugal, but would be assimilated to the extent that nowadays there is no discrete relic of these communities to be found; the processes of miscegenation having broken down their separate identity.

There is clearly some degree of apparent inconsistency in Saunders' having identified both race and religion as the major factor shaping social and racial relations in Portugal at this time. This inconsistency can be explained by virtue of the changes which took place within Portuguese society, and if such an explanation is offered, it appears to lend weight to the thesis that Portuguese race consciousness was distinct from that which arose further north in Europe. On the other hand, the contiguity of the racial and religious factors might more adequately be explained if these phenomena

are not driven into mutually exclusive opposition, but are seen as related aspects of a complex social reality, which each display precisely those aspects of the relationship between culture and social structure to which we refer elsewhere when we propose that race should be seen as an historically emergent concept, conditioning the understanding of the biological aspect of human existence.

In our later discussion of fine art we shall find that race, religion and geopolitical considerations combined to produce Portuguese attitudes to young black males which reinforce our concerns here.

#### Colonial attitudes

The Portuguese did not only express their racial attitudes in their relationships within Portugal itself, but also in the way in which they undertook the long and difficult process of colonial development. According to Freyre they were not racially conscious in the way in which the term could be applied to the northern Europeans, neither did they create a legacy of racialism in their colonies. In Boxer's accounts, such a notion is roundly dismissed. For example, in discussing S.R. Welch's claim that there is no racial question 'anywhere in the Portuguese colonies', Boxer (1960) responds,

"This, of course, is utter clap-trap. The Portuguese,

like everyone else, have their share of human frailties, and like everyone else they were children of their age and shared to a greater or lesser extent the prejudices of the average European in the tropics...this assertion is contradicted by easily ascertainable facts." :61  
Neither does Freyre escape this criticism, at least by inuendo.

"...it is, I hope, sufficiently clear that racial prejudice and racial tension existed in colonial Brazil to a much greater extent than some modern authorities - 'no names, no pack drill', as we used to say in the army - are willing to allow."

(Boxer, 1963)  
:122

Boxer's rebuttal stands on two grounds, that the Portuguese treatment of their black slaves, and the actions of the religious orders in the colonial context, both reveal a significant level of racial contempt, which can be contrasted with the varying attitudes of tolerance shown at times to such non-black / non-Portuguese as the red-skinned indians of Brazil and the copper-skinned inhabitants of parts of the Portuguese '*Estado do India*' (State of India).

Indeed, for Boxer, the question of the Portuguese attitude to racial difference revolves around the tension between those aspects of colonial activity which were primarily aimed at securing the trade in slaves, and those which were intended to secure the souls of the natives. This



dualism can be found to have co-existed in certain contexts, but the balance seems to have swung either towards the commercial interests or the religious interests partly as a function of the politico-geographical context with which one is concerned. In the case of Brazil, we can see these two forces having almost equal advantages until the suppression of the religious order of the Society of Jesus, by the decrees of Pombal, the authoritarian dictator, in 1757-8, whilst with West Africa and the *Stado da India*, the commercial interests dominated. According to Boxer, the differing advantages held by these activities resulted in differing attitudes being held towards indigenous peoples in particular, and blacks in general. In neither situation, however, did a state of affairs come about in which full equality was realised, or even widely advocated, for those of red, black and white skin, since the racial tolerance for which Portugal has gained a liberal reputation is found to apply rather to the attitudes held towards the red and the brown-skinned than to the black.

Of itself this marks a disjuncture with north-west European notions of skin colour which frequently define those of a non-white colour as 'black'. The Portuguese seemed not to have employed such a categorisation, at times having accorded high status to people of intermediate colouration.

The initial Discoveries, those of the fifteenth century, established the link between overseas adventure and the pursuit of slaves for financial gain. Dom Henrique's success

in establishing a slave trade is lauded by Azurara in the *Crónica da Guiné*, when he describes the landing of the first African captives in Portugal.

"I cannot reflect on the arrival of these ships, with the novelty of these slaves before our Prince, that I do not find pleasure. For it seems to me I see before my eyes how great his joy must have been...(to see the first profit from these heavy expenditures), not for the number of those captives, but for the hope, oh Sainted Prince! you had for others you could have in the future."

(Azurara)  
:78

From thereon, the commercial activity seems to have run ahead of the religious especially in the voyages down the west coast of Africa, and ultimately round the Cape of Good Hope and on towards Moçambique. In part this was due to the prior existence of African kingdoms, such as the Congo, which had long established patterns of trade in both 'black and white ivory' which could be peacefully re-oriented to the economic benefit of Portugal.

"King John of Portugal and his successors in the house of Avis did not attempt to secure political control of this kingdom, nor did they try to conquer it by force of arms. They were content to recognise the Kings as their brothers-in-arms; and to treat them as allies and not as vassals; and to convert them to Christianity."

(Boxer, 1963) .  
:19

However the evangelisation of the congolese (Angolan Bantu) seems to have run on at a very slow pace with only a few hundred serious converts to Christianity, and precious few of these outside the Royal court, according to Boxer. Whilst the West Africans could be persuaded to trade by peaceful means, there was no attempt at force of arms. In other situations the Portuguese readily resorted to force in order to disrupt unfavourable trading patterns and to turn the flow of trade in their direction.

The results of such prolonged trading in human persons is seen by Boxer to have had the effect upon the Portuguese of giving them a feeling of innate superiority over those whom they enslaved. The fact that these people were black therefore resulted in the development of anti-black racialism amongst the Portuguese.

"Another result of Portuguese concentration on the slave-trade was the rooted conviction that the negro could be legitimately enslaved and hence was indisputably an inferior being to the white man."

(Boxer, 1963)  
40

A similar treatment is to be found in Saunders' treatment of the origins of Portuguese attitudes of superiority over blacks, which, he says, resulted from slavery.

"...the interpretation which the whites placed upon the

observed facts, namely that the blacks' actions were those of an inherently servile people, is clearly no more than a rationalization and justification of slavery and the status quo. Further examination shows that the blacks' behaviour is best explained as a reaction to their oppressed social position." :166

Similar arguments can be found in the writings of Davis, Jordan and Snowden. Whilst this reasoning must carry weight, there is still the problem posed by Jordan (1968) that the basis of negro slavery lay in the identification of blacks as categorically alike and biologically inferior, fitted only to be the working hands of the whites. This notion of a specific categorisation of blacks as a result of slavery is also to be found clearly stated by Davis.

"When the Negro was categorised simply as black, a heathen, or a savage, he could be no more than an impersonal object that men manipulate for certain purposes." :473

Whilst by the eighteenth century it is possible to see the full results of this process.

"...the Negro had been cut off from the normal mechanisms of sympathy and identification. He was burdened by the weight of ancient fears associated with his color; he suffered from the consequences of an immense cultural barrier, which was heightened by the

European's sensitivity to unrepressed sexuality; he carried the stigma of all the vices which slavery had thrust upon him; and the very spirit of secular science which brought emancipation to the European mind tended to relegate him to a position of natural inferiority." :473

Similar assumptions that the black people were fit only for labouring tasks, because of their inferior form of humanity, could be found amongst the *moradores* (Brazilian settlers) whose attitude towards the native Indians appears to have been based primarily upon their evaluation of the labouring potential of the indigenous peoples, and whose attitudes to black slaves reflected economic considerations, but 'only' to the extent that such hands were less than human and inaccessible to the Faith.

"...the representative of the *moradores* of the Maranhão-Pará declared that in any event he agreed with those authorities who considered the Amerindians to be 'not true human beings, but beasts of the forest incapable of understanding the Catholic faith'. He further stigmatized them as 'squalid savages, ferocious and most base, resembling wild animals in everything save human shape'." (Boxer, 1963):76

Brazil did develop as a multi-racial society different from the other Portuguese colonies, partly because of the 'lower' level of social organisation of its indigenous

population, partly as a result of its climate, and partly because the African and Indian colonies attracted fewer women settlers who could form the basis of a white aristocracy as was the case elsewhere.

A further distinguishing factor between the geographical regions was that Brazil was the location of agricultural and mining expansion whilst Africa was the source of the enslaved peoples. The Portuguese therefore had a different attitude towards the religious health of the two regions, because they had differing economic interests. In the former case a deep seated involvement with the very shape and development of the nation, whilst in the latter a superficial interest based mostly in the knowledge required for the exploitation of a resource which was only valued when it was taken out of its original context. This involvement can be seen especially in the case of the Society of Jesus which was in the vanguard of the foundation of Brazil.

"'This land is our enterprise,' wrote Manuel de Nobrega, leader of the pioneer Jesuits who landed at Bahia in August 1549...'We are working to lay the foundations of houses which will last as long as the world endures.'...it is very likely that but for the work of the Jesuits in colonial days there would be no Brazilian nation as we know it today."

(Boxer, 1963)

: 87

The Order saw its mission in the following way:

"Their original and principal reason for being in Brazil was the conversion and care of the Amerindians.

It need hardly be said that this was an exceedingly difficult and thankless task. The missionaries' ideal was to make 'savages into men, and men into Christians, and Christians persevering in the Faith.' It was this last stage which inevitably proved the most difficult to attain with the nomadic food-gathering forest tribes whose cultural level was that of the Stone Age."

(Boxer, 1963)  
:88

The Jesuits organised and defended the Indians in *Aldeias* (villages) until the suppression of the Order in 1759, and some of the Jesuit priests actively sought to support the cause of the Indian. The best known of these Jesuits being Nobrega in the sixteenth century, and Vieira in the seventeenth century, of whom Boxer states:

"The most famous champion of the freedom of the Amerindians was the celebrated Padre Antonio Vieira, S.J., who spent much of his long life battling and intriguing on their behalf, whether as a missionary in Brazil and the Maranhao, or as an advocate of their cause at Lisbon and Rome." (Boxer, 1963):92

Vieira himself was partly of black extraction, which may well have had an effect upon his outlook. Despite this, Vieira's attitude does seem remarkably liberal, at least in modern terms, as instanced by Boxer.

"...while fighting tooth and nail for the freedom of the Amerindians, (he) limited himself to denouncing the sadistic ill-treatment of Negro slaves without suggesting that their enslavement was equally wrong...he did not believe in the innate superiority of the white man over the black. 'Can there be', he asked in his celebrated Epiphany sermon of 1662, 'a greater want of understanding, or a greater error of judgement between men and men, than for me to think that I must be your master because I was born further away from the sun?...An Ethiopie if he be cleansed in the waters of the Zaire (Congo) is clean, but he is not white; but if cleansed in the water of baptism, he is both'."

(Boxer, 1963)

:102

But this was a liberalism which extended only so far, and which still supported the black slave trade, and which could exclude yet others on account of religious difference (c.f.Boxer, 1957). The racial situation in Brazil can be said to reflect the typical style of Portuguese race consciousness which gives advantages of varying degrees to white and brown-skinned people but which excludes blacks.

#### Brothers and Sisters in Christ

A further measure of the attitudes of the Portuguese concerns the extent to which they moved towards the formation of an indigenous clergy in their colonies. It also further



indicates the involved relationship between religious and racial attitudes. As outlined by Boxer, the evidence appears to show that colour prejudice was a phenomenon which developed and spread in the Portuguese empire only after an initial period in which there was little evidence for the existence of such an attitude. Initially the notion of the church as a community of believers was extended by the Portuguese to the colonial situation; Boxer provides evidence of native clergy being trained in São Tomé and Cape Verde up to the seventeenth century, with a Congolese Prince, Dom Henrique, being consecrated titular Bishop of Utica in 1518, by what Boxer refers to as a 'rather reluctant Pope'. However in Goa the attempts at establishing an indigenous clergy appear to have followed local colour and caste divisions, whilst the Pombaline Decrees of 1761 which set up Moçambican seminaries for training local priests were in actuality a dead letter, in spite of the dictator's authoritarian powers; a point reckoned by Boxer to substantiate the strength of Portuguese colonial racism.

Attention should be drawn to this distinction between the formal or legal situation which obtained regarding colour discrimination, and that which actually obtained in practice. Pombal's Decrees on the subject of anti-racialism set out a systematic position of racial tolerance (Andrade, 1953). For example, the Decree on the Moçambican Seminary (1761 and again 1763) which stated "His Majesty does not distinguish between his vassals by their colour but by their merits", and

which equally forbade the terms 'Nigger' and 'Half-caste', show that there did exist a colour-bar which merited the attention of the dictator himself. Equally, the Laws of 1562 and 1572 which promulgated that "Asian converts to Christianity should be treated as equals of their Portuguese co-religionists..." were never fully implemented, and as Boxer concludes that it is unsafe to generalise on the subject of religious bigotry in the *Stado da India*, so also does he feel about racial bigotry.

"...it can be said as a rough guide that bigotry was more in evidence than tolerance for most of the two centuries between 1561 and 1761.

As with religious bigotry, so with racial prejudice, and for obvious reasons the two often went hand in hand. The Muslim, the Hindu, and the Negro who was legally and socially discriminated against on account of his colour."

(Boxer, 1963)

:125

This question of the formal and informal situations is raised by Davis in his comments on Tannenbaum. Tannenbaum had validated much of his thesis of the tolerant slave regime in Iberian America by means of a reference to the already established body of slave law which existed especially in Spain, '*Las Siete Partidas*'. According to Tannenbaum, the North American law did not recognise the slave as a moral personality. Davis disagrees with this on a number of levels;

firstly, that Tannenbaum was wrong to deny the recognition of the slave's humanity in the North, and also that by drawing too strong a distinction between the legal and the actual situation, we lose sight of what really was taking place between people, that is to say we stress social structure to the detriment of our appreciation of culture.

"It is difficult to see how a society could have much respect for the value of slaves as human personalities if it sanctioned their torture and mutilation, the selling of their small children, the unmitigated exploitation of their labour, and the drastic shortening of their lives through overwork and inadequate nourishment." (Davis, 1966) :125

It is important, then, to keep in mind the total situation, and not to reify certain causal factors, or to misinterpret their importance because they are seen in isolation.

In sum, the evidence does not permit an exact statement either way concerning the existence and nature of Portuguese colour prejudice. This confusion is well expressed by Azurara, in his description of the landing of the first black captives by Lanzarote, in Lagos in the Algarve on August 8th 1444. The blacks were "so deformed in their faces and bodies, that they almost seemed images from the lower hemisphere..." yet they could be "dressed...fed...loved" because they had "turned with good faith to the path of the Faith." Account

has to be taken not only of the actual response of white people to black, but also of the social and cultural factors which contextualise such a response, including conditions of servitude, religious belief, geo-political factors such as colonialism, aesthetic attitudes and the embeddedness of colour prejudice and race consciousness in the history of the culture, including the possibility of its universality.

This notion of the universality of systems of colour discrimination which favour white at the expense of black is a theme which is taken up by a number of commentators, for example Davis, Jordan and Degler. Each attempts to establish not only that there is a common human tendency to denigrate black as a colour, but they also pursue the link to the evaluation of skin colour in race relations. Davis and Jordan come to remarkably similar conclusions that the move from simple colour differentiation to active racist differentiation was a result of the twin forces of the African slave trade and the rationalist critique of religion which came to the fore during the West European Enlightenment. Jointly, these factors reinforced notions of black inferiority and deprived thinkers of the theological basis of a common humanity in the sight of God. The way was then clear for the development of scientifically informed theories of racial difference (Stepan, 1982 and Banton's response 1983).

The problem with such analyses is that they tend to locate racial consciousness as a relatively recent

phenomenon, overlooking its long-term historical embeddedness in favour of other factors (van den Berghe 1981). In Davis' argument, it is slavery that is the prior phenomenon, especially as it interacts with ideological factors, whilst for Jordan the context is one of a colonialism which contains certain exploitative economic forms. Degler goes beyond these analyses in his work on the difference between North West European and Iberian racial consciousness, suggesting that very real differences can be found in the modern world and that these differences have deep historical and conceptual roots.

#### An Aesthetic Dimension

For Degler, two fundamental perceptual universals underly racial consciousness; namely, the human need for categorisation of the world, and the tendency to distinguish between black and white.

It will be useful to establish Degler's argument, especially as it relates to categorisation. The argument proposes that some form of conceptual classification or categorisation of the world is an a priori structure of human consciousness, giving people the capacity to apprehend the world and to make sense out of what would otherwise be an unformed chaos of phenomena and events.

"...to categorise people on the basis of how they look undoubtedly aids in understanding the world - and

perhaps of controlling it a little. For without such quick and constant categorising of impressions, the world appears to the beholder as little more than a mass of unrelated, disparate things, animals, persons, and ideas." (Degler, 1986):208

Degler goes on to assert that this fundamental structure of human consciousness means that "awareness of racial differences is inherent in man", (sic) because visual perceptions are our primary data used to organise perception. From this it is a small step for him to argue that along with physical distinctions humans will make associated social distinctions, favouring the known and discriminating against, or fearing, the unknown. Similar arguments are to be found in Davis, expressed rather at the level of substance, when he charts the change in the image of black people.

The conjunction of unknown people, who were at the same time black-skinned, in the colonial experience of West European white voyagers is seen to have had a self-confirming effect in which the natural tendency to discriminate becomes one of negative discrimination in the light of the pre-existing symbolism which attaches to colour. This argument forms a partial basis for the case put forward by van den Berghe & Frost, suggesting that aesthetic structures predispose human cultures to a higher evaluation of light, as opposed to dark, skin colours. Their major disagreement with the analyses of such writers as Davis, Jordan and Boxer

concerns the notion that racial discrimination is an historically recent phenomenon, since van den Berghe & Frost contend that evidence exists which indicates that light skin colours are favoured by people who have had no contact with whites. The problem for such a view is primarily methodological, since the data upon which it is based do not appear to have great credibility. The general drift of the argument that there are deep-seated factors at play in racial perception is, however, well made.

Further, an easy association of colour symbolism and racial discrimination as is often assumed to be the case, also comes in for criticism by Snowden, who suggests that whilst it is one thing to substantiate structures of colour symbolism, it is quite another simplistically to transfer such arguments to the evaluation of human worth as an explanation of racial discrimination.

"Interpretations that have seen a significant anti-black sentiment in the ancient association of Ethiopians with Death and the Underworld are questionable. In the first place, the association seems to have been due primarily to the basic tendency of peoples, African Negroes included, to equate blackness and evil. Second, recent research in the social sciences has raised the question of whether individuals who react negatively to the colour black also develop an antipathy toward dark-skinned people and suggests that, though such a reaction is in theory plausible, the evidence is far from

conclusive. It is doubtful for example, that expressions such as black-ball, blacklist, black mark or black-hearted would in themselves have given rise to serious anti-Negro sentiments in the modern world in the absence of such phenomena as Negro slavery and colonialism." :84

Snowden is right to question the symbolist argument, and also to stress the importance of slavery and colonialism as conditioning factors. However his general thesis that there was no colour discrimination in the ancient world is not proven, and the evidence which he advances goes a long way to establish that whilst the question of discrimination in the perjorative sense is debatable, discrimination as perceptual differentiation is a fact.

Associated issues of conceptualisation and aesthetic structure were dealt with in greater detail in Part One of this study. For our present purposes we should note that Degler cites these two factors as inevitable and universal. His own commitment to a distinction between N.W.European and Iberian patterns of colonial race relations necessitates the identification of causal factors which account for the difference, rather than the similarity of the two systems, i.e. their historical emergence. These factors, which relate to specific cultural conditions in Brazil, concern the economy, the family and ideology, in so far as each contributes towards the development of what Degler terms the 'mulatto escape hatch'. This is a way of addressing the



peculiar advantages which accrued to mulattoes, especially in Portuguese cultural conditions, and which contrast strongly with the hostility meted out to half-castes in English and Dutch colonies, where their existence was a cause for neither celebration nor lust, but for shame.

The economic argument is of tangential interest to us here, since it is primarily located by Degler in the modern structure of the United States and Brazilian economies, but it does lead us on to other important ideas. The main thrust of the argument is that not only is it difficult to generalise about, for example, a Brazilian style of race relations, but that within the one culture there are many varied styles. Both Davis and Degler note that there are similarities between race relations in the Southern States of the United States and those of southern Brazil. The explanation for this lies in their sharing similar capitalistically inclined structures of production, in contrast to northern Brazil which still retains a paternalistic, hierarchical, agricultural base. The significant variable is not simply economic organisation, at least not for Degler, but is to be found in the forms of family organisation which existed, and to a great extent still do exist, in the various regions.

#### Gender and Race

Degler associates widespread miscegenation between black and white with the fact that Portuguese colonialism went on

for many centuries as an overwhelmingly male activity, whereas English colonialism was, after a brief initial period, a family affair, the same also being true in southern Brazil. Portuguese settlers, therefore, lacked the white women with whom to marry, whilst at the same time being surrounded by readily available black and red women, and mulattas. On top of this, Portuguese family structure was traditionally authoritarian and patriarchal, with the women being kept in domestic seclusion - even to the extent of being prevented from attending Mass in Church - not allowed to leave home to buy provisions, which consequently had to be hawked around the streets - nor allowed to occupy rooms with external windows, there being special womens' rooms at the centre of the house overlooking the inner garden. However, Degler asserts that Brazilian ideology,

"...lacked the English - or Protestant - emphasis upon the individual and the definition of freedom as absolute. Instead the Brazilian conception of the good society was hierarchical, traditional, and Catholic; it was pre-Enlightenment in outlook rather than a product of the Age of Reason. No pretense was made that all men were free and equal; each man had his place in the social hierarchy, some high, some low, some in between. In such a scheme there was a place for white, black, or brown; for free, half-free, and slave." :263

We noted a similar dualism posed by

Hoetink, but we should also be aware that this contrasts strongly with the claims of such as Sanceau, who sees the period of Portuguese colonialism from the perspective of its initiation of modern society. This question is admirably tackled by Hooykaas, whose ideas concerning the place of the Portuguese within western periodicity, especially as a result of the Discoveries, is examined subsequently in this study.

Stressing the domestic responsibilities of women is typically a feature of Islamic societies, a point which might therefore reinforce Freyre's notion that the interpenetration of Christian and Moorish culture in Portugal over the centuries had had a profound effect upon the social structure of Portuguese society, both in the mother country and in her colonies.

Degler's case offers further evidence that the Portuguese cultural inheritance resulted in a significantly peculiar structure of race consciousness. What Degler fails to address, as is also the case with Davis and Boxer, is the process called for by Genovese, and attended to by Freyre, namely, an understanding of the racial conditioning of Portuguese life that preceded the colonial period. Apart from Freyre's ideas on this, there is a dearth of English language material. This concern with the processes by which Portuguese society came to develop its peculiar form of race consciousness must therefore be developed by drawing on other sources of data, in the first place Portuguese language sources, but also data generated from a sociological perspective which can

be used to draw inferences from the existing materials, however incomplete that material might be. An analysis of the aesthetic structure of society has a contribution to make to this question.

Our attention now turns to specific aspects of Portuguese history which had an impact upon the process of racial conditioning.

CHAPTER SEVEN:

Peculiar Histories - Peculiar People I

## PECULIAR HISTORIES - PECULIAR PEOPLE I

### Three 'Heresies' and their Contribution towards a Portuguese National Identity Informed by Egalitarian Beliefs

The capacity of the Portuguese to generate an unusual anthropology has to be understood in the context of the development of Portuguese nationalism, particularly with regard to the ideological structure of the society, by which is understood pre-eminently in this immediate context, religious belief. Whilst it would generally be recognised as absurd to overlook the Discoveries as both expressing and forming Portuguese national characteristics, rather less interest is aroused by the peculiar religious legacy which the past has given to the process of national self definition. Admittedly the concept of the Reconquista of the Iberian Peninsula has been developed as a means of clarifying modern Christian societies, and of establishing and elaborating their historical origins. This has frequently been taken as an opportunity to elide the interests of Church and State in the long-term historical process by which Islamic domination of the Peninsula was gradually overthrown by Christians emanating originally from the Asturian Kingdom in the North. Such a view is advanced by Herculano,

*"A reacção da raça visigoda contra a conquista árabe começara na Espanha poucos anos depois dessa conquista. Nas ásperas serranias das Astúrias, um punhado de godos que não haviam aceitado o jugo dos muçulmanos alevant-*

aram o estandarte de uma guerra de religião e de independência que devia durar por mais de sete séculos até a final vitória do Evangelho contra o Corão. A batalha de Cangas de Onis, em que os infiéis ficaram desbaratados, foi o primeiro anel de uma cadeia contínua de combates, que nos fins do século XV veio soldar-se na campa dos derradeiros defensores de Granada, quando Fernando e Isabel, 'Os Católicos', conquistaram a capital do último reino mourisco da Península."<sup>1</sup> (Herculano, 1980):183

Without wishing to deny the reality of the southern movement of Christian domination during the Reconquista, it is important not to become so fixated by this historical development that we lose sight of the variety of beliefs and practices which comprised Iberian Christianity - a variety which can be overlooked when a contrast is made between Islam and Christianity.

It is intended here to focus upon three systems of belief which illustrate the diversity of ideas subsumed under the historical provenance of 'Christianity' as it applies to that part of the Iberian Peninsula which is now within the

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<sup>1</sup> "The reaction of the Visigoths against the Arab conquest of Spain began a few years after the conquest. In the wild mountains of the Asturias, a handful of Goths who had not accepted the yoke of the Mussulman raised the banner of a religious war of independence which would last for more than seven hundred years until the final victory of the Gospel over the Koran. The Battle of Kangas de Onis, in which the heathens were routed, was the first of a chain of engagements linked, at the end of the fifteenth century, to the graves of the last defenders of Granada, when Ferdinand and Isabella, 'the Catholics', conquered the capital of the last Moorish Kingdom of the Peninsula."

boundaries of modern-day Portugal. These belief systems have each had a direct influence upon the development of Portuguese Christianity and also upon the idea of the Reconquista. Two of the belief systems, Priscillianism and Arianism, are early forms of Christianity which came to be condemned as heresies. The third, Islam, has been taken as the most important heresy of all, and in its Iberian form, with the development of Mozarabic culture, clearly illustrates the interpenetration of Christian and Islamic cultures.

Above all, however, it will be proposed that each of the three 'heresies' can be seen to play a determining role in the development of a characteristic Portuguese anthropology, since each system of ideas contains elements which, either directly or implicitly, generates attitudes towards human worth which come into play in the activities of classifying and evaluating persons. Taken in tandem with their significance as definers of Portuguese cultural identity, these heresies indicate for us aspects of both continuity and rupture which so uniquely characterise the ambivalent position of this nation, at once both marginal and central to the wider West European culture. Marginal because of its position, geographically and culturally, on the far southwestern tip of Europe, approaching Africa and the Mediterranean but never finally appropriating them; central because of its role as the modern-day vanguard of European exploration and capitalistic development; ambivalent because of the apparent hybridisation of cultural values which, it



has been claimed, showed the world the possibility of imperialism generating a form of racial democracy (Andrade, 1953).

#### Priscillianism

Roman Spain cast Lusitania in the role of the unheralded outpost. Livermore (1947) suggests that its sheer distance from the internal struggles of Rome meant that the western extremity went almost without record until the invasions of the Barbarians. What we do know of this period comes in part from our understanding of the developments in Christianity which took place under the Empire; Priscillianism being one such. Priscillianism is generally taken as having two aspects (c.f. Hastings, 1918), the first relating to Priscillian himself, and the second to the spread of Priscillianism and its wider significance.

Priscillian was a fourth century ascetic whose manichaean attitudes towards the flesh, and other earthly delights, resulted in his coming into confrontation with his fellow Spanish bishops, who "were notoriously lax and unsympathetic towards ascetic ideals" (Strachey, 1958). Priscillian propounded a dualistic theory which drew a distinction between the goodness of spirit and the evil nature of matter. He proposed that angels and human souls were derived from God, whilst bodies and other things material had been created by the Devil. As a consequence, the union of human body and soul was seen as a punishment for human sins, and this created a

theological dilemma in so far as Priscillian had to account for the nature of Jesus. This nature, he suggested, could only be understood as being not really human at all, with Jesus and God being distinguishable in name only. As such Priscillianism presented a form of Sabellianism, which used Jesus to express redemption, but which drew no real distinctions between the three aspects of the Holy Trinity. As we shall see presently, this placed Priscillianism in opposition to the Arian view.

Priscillian's importance in the modern day stems from his recognition as the first heretic to be executed (Collins, 1983), according to the decree of Emperor Magnus Maximus issued in 385 A.D., the Emperor himself being a fellow Spaniard. However, Priscillian's execution did not put a stop to the widespread adherence to his ideas. Indeed it seems to have promoted them with Galicia becoming subject to its dominant influence (de Oliveira, 1940), and the Spanish Church electing other Priscillian bishops. An extreme form of asceticism thus became translated into a dominant ideology whose detractors characterised it as follows,

*"...no Prisciliano confluiam tôdas as heresias anteriores e muitos erros pagãos. Os priscilianistas negavam a Trindade divina, atribuíam a Cristo só uma aparência do corpo, condenavam o matrimônio e a alimentação de carne, negavam a criação do mundo e a ressurreição, consideravam a alma humana parcela de divindade, falsi-*

*ficavam as Escrituras canônicas e serviam-se de livros apócrifos, praticavam a magia e admitiam o fatalismo astrológico. As esses erros doutrinários acresciam ainda graves desordens de costumes."*<sup>2</sup>

(de Oliveira, 1940)  
:588

Whilst these doctrines give evidence of the importance of Gnostic ideas in the Iberian Peninsula in late Roman times, and up to the final eradication of Priscillianism by the time of the Council of Braga in 563, they can also testify to the development of an identifiable cultural form in the western parts of the Peninsula. Moreover, this cultural form contains egalitarian characteristics which mark it off clearly from orthodox Christian ideas.

*"...sob o ponto da hierarquia eclesiástica, os seus adeptos levaram até o extremo o princípio da igualdade revolucionária: nem leigos, nem mulheres estavam excluídos do ministério do altar."*<sup>3</sup> (Menéndez Pelayo, 1880)

These ideas, especially in their pantheistic and astrological aspects, are claimed by Menéndez Pelayo to be deeply rooted in Celtic culture, resulting in their being taken up

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<sup>2</sup> "...in Priscillianism met all the previous heresies and many pagan delusions. The Priscillians denied the Holy Trinity, attributed to Christ only the appearance of corporeality, condemned marriage and meat eating, rejected the Creation and Resurrection, considered the human soul divine, falsified the canonical scriptures and used false texts, and practised magic and astrology. These doctrinal errors they compounded with debased morality."

<sup>3</sup> "...in respect of the ecclesiastical hierarchy, its adherents raised to the extreme the principle of revolutionary equality: neither laymen, nor women, were excluded from the ministry."

with ardour by the people in general.

Cortês (1958) claims that this indicates the existence of a distinct social grouping who are already on the road to national identity.

*"...essa se nos afigura a primeira e evidente manifestação da existência duma comunidade social, diferenciada e a caminho de nação."*<sup>4</sup> :214

Sociologically speaking, says Cortês, Priscillianism can be taken as the expression of a social structure and of a cultural consciousness. In this, Priscillianism gives a soul to the structure already created by the Romans, and allows the Lusitano Celts to be seen as the anticipators and heralds of an egalitarian Portuguese national identity.

#### Arianism

If Priscillianism can be seen to occupy an extreme spiritual and ascetic position, Arianism, at least in its formulation of the Holy Trinity, stands in opposition. Yet we shall see that Arianism played a parallel role to that of Priscillianism in the process of the creation of Portuguese national self-identity. Again, Arianism gains its name from its formative thinker, whose ideas have come to be seen as a discrete set of beliefs. These ideas also have two signif-

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<sup>4</sup> "...that seems to us the first unmistakable manifestation of the existence of a discrete group of people on the way to nationhood."

icant elements, firstly in the direct impact of Arius upon the development of the Church from the fourth century onwards, secondly in the cultural and social structural ramifications of Arianism as it existed in Visigothic Spain.

Arius, seeking, as the Priscillianists had done, to come to terms with the Judaic notion of 'One God' in the face of the Christian notion of a Holy Trinity, proposed a different formulation. His resolution of this dilemma lay not in subsuming Jesus into the existence of God, but in making a clear distinction between them. This left God as the Supreme Being and created a view of Jesus not as totally divine but as a creature, having a definite material existence, whereas in Priscillianism he had only a spiritual one. The distinction between God and Son in Arius' thinking lies not in Jesus' divinity, which was not questioned, but in the essential being, or 'ousia', which was a quality that God had and Jesus did not. In other words, Jesus was not co-eternal with God, a view reflected in the widely quoted statement "there was when he was not".

What Arius had done, in reformulating the conception of the Holy Trinity, had a direct implication for the boundary between humanity and divinity, with Jesus being shifted somewhat across the boundary to share the same category as human beings. This resulted directly from Arius' concentration upon the differences between God and Jesus.

"Arius had no desire to blur the second line between the

Son and the rest of creation. But in practice it often seems less firm than it was intended to be, because of the extreme vigour with which the first line between the Father and the Son is drawn." (Wiles, 1966) : 39

More than this, though, the Arians claimed to aspire to be like Christ in that whilst Jesus could be seen to be a creature advancing towards divinity, so also could human beings attempt to receive grace. Gregg & Groh (1981), see this as the most significant feature of Arianism, in that it potentially challenged the existing order and offered a vision of a new order of holiness, less secure in its foundation and more open to humanistic interpretation.

"Ecclesiastics were confronted with the choice between an orthodoxy in which grace had come to be the entry into a stabilized order of redeemed creation and an Arianism in which grace empowered people for moral advance in a transactional universe."

(Gregg & Groh, 1981)  
: 193

Theological developments had made available the possibility of an anthropology in which human beings could aspire to the perfection of Christ. In such an anthropology there is the potential for an egalitarianism which eschews other, cultural and/or biological, distinctions such as race, gender and class. It was clearly a potent political force which would either have to be acknowledged or refuted, and it was in the refutation of Arianism that the Nicene Orthodoxy of

the Catholic Church was established.

Arianism, however, had another historical and political dimension in that it can be taken to mark the establishment of late antiquity and, in its confrontation with orthodox Christianity, it signals the process by which antiquity will be transfigured and the grounds upon which such a change will take place.

"Our research...suggests we are approaching one of the last great battles in the East between humanistic and theistic tendencies in Christian theology and, hence, the opening stages of the final transformation of the classical world which will constitute the Byzantine Age in the East." (Gregg & Groh) :194

It is not solely in the East, however, that the phenomenon of Arianism has to be taken as significant, since in Spain, after the direct Roman domination came to be superseded by the Suevi and the Visigoths, Arianism comes to constitute the religion of the rulers of the Iberian Peninsula, at least until 587 A.D., and is possibly implicated in the circumstances which lead in 711 A.D. to the Islamic conquest.

Early in the fifth century, in 409 A.D. the Suevi, Vandals and Alani had begun to establish themselves in the Iberian Peninsula; then in 415 A.D. the Visigoths, undertaking their long migration from Germany, were given the task of settling Roman Spain and re-creating the stability which

had been a feature of the area for the preceding centuries. By 429 A.D. the Vandals, Alani and Silingos had been expelled or supplanted, leaving the area open to the domination of the Suevi in the west and the Visigoths in the rest of the Peninsula. On their arrival in Lusitania the Suevi had been pagans, but they underwent a series of conversions and reconversions between Catholicism and Arianism which left them as fellow believers with the Arian Visigoths, and effectively incorporated into Visigothic Spain by 585 A.D.

Visigothic rule seems to have been characterised by a distance between the Visigoths themselves and the people over whom they exercised power, this distance being marked by the Visigoth's Arian beliefs in contrast to the Romano-Iberian Catholicism. Here, then, the conflict of the two sets of ideas can again be seen to mark a transition from classical to medieval society, with Arian beliefs being maintained by the aristocracy until Reccared, Visigothic King of Spain, converted to Catholicism, for either personal or political reasons, with the effect that it became possible for later commentators to see Spanish unity expressed through the Church. This linking of Spanish and Catholic unification comes to be taken as characteristic of Christian Iberia as it is overrun by the Arabs and Berbers in 711. Thereafter, the question of the co-terminous nature of Church and State plays a significant role in the delineation and analysis of that historical process now known to us as the 'Re-conquista' (Linehan, 1982), and on into the Crusading motivation of the



Portuguese Discoveries (Russell, 1984).

The perception of such a role is evinced by Leite de Vasconcellos (1939),

*"Lançando um olhar geral para o que fica dito da época Barbaros, que vemos? Paganismo Lusitano, paganismo romano, christianismo com variedades e heterodoxias. Accrescentemos que da rica mythologia e religião germanicas muito devia ainda frutificar na alma dos Suevos e dos Visigodos. Extraordinário mixto de crenças! Confusão inextricavel de sentimentos! Lutas porfiadas e contínuas! Em meio de tudo o clero católico, primeiramente só, depois auxiliado pelo poderes centraes, fazia mil esforços para com substituições, anátemas, prédicas, leis, exemplos, suasões, supplantar aquillo que ele julgava diabólico, e pôr unidade onde apenas havia multiplicidade..."<sup>5</sup> :588*

In sum, we can see similarities between Arianism and Priscillianism in terms of their anthropological, political and historical impacts in medieval Spain. Both provided philosophies with egalitarian potentialities, both can be seen to be implicated in the formation of national identity within the Iberian Peninsula, and both, in their dialogues

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<sup>5</sup> "Taking a general look at what has been said of the barbarian period, what do we see? Lusitanian paganism, Roman paganism, schismatic and heretical Christian beliefs. We would add that the rich German mythology and many religions must further have matured in the Suevic and Visigothic soul. An extraordinary mixture of beliefs! An inextricable confusion of emotions! Continuing and hotly disputed struggles!

In the middle of all this, the Catholic clergy, at first alone, then helped by the central powers, made a great effort using supercession, excommunication, preaching, law, example, and persuasion to replace that which they judged demonic, and supplanted plurality with unity."

with orthodox Christianity, signal the transformation of classical culture into early medieval. However, whilst Priscillianism was extinct by 563 A.D., Arianism continued to play a role in Spanish history even after Reccared's conversion in 587 A.D. (Altamira, 1913), and it is not impossible that the move to invite the Islamic invasion of 711 A.D. was made by a group of disaffected Arians.

## Islam

It is certainly true that Islamic beliefs of Jesus' human nature are close to those of the Arians, both seeing him as a creature. It is also true that Islam contains the potential for egalitarianism, and in Iberia played a significant role in the creation of national identity. However, the group which stood to gain most from the Arab invasion - apart from the invaders themselves - was not the Arians but the Jews. These had been successively persecuted by various Visigothic Kings, their property forming an important supplement to the royal treasury - a role which the Jews of Iberia were destined to play for many centuries.

As with the Priscillians and the Arians, so with the Muslims, the Iberian Christians found reason enough to know that they were confronted by a religion which lay claim to certain doctrinal propositions similar to their own, but which so modified other aspects as to be taken as competing and hostile. This attitude has come down to the present day

(Said, 1985) and is well summarised by Southern (1962).

"The existence of Islam was the most far-reaching problem in medieval Christendom. It was a problem at every level of experience. As a practical problem it called for action and for discrimination between the competing possibilities of Crusade, conversion, co-existence, and commercial interchange. As a theological problem it called persistently for some answer to the mystery of its existence: what was its providential role in history - was it a symptom of the world's last days or a stage in the Christian development; a heresy, a schism, or a new religion; a work of man or devil; an obscene parody of Christianity, or a system of thought that deserved to be treated with respect? It was difficult to decide among these possibilities." :3

Indeed, the focus of much attention has been upon the extent of competition between the two belief systems, especially as a result of the 'Pirenne Thesis' (Pirenne, 1925, 1939) which stressed the role of Islam in laying siege to Western Christendom, thereby hastening its unification, especially in the Carolingian Empire. Critics of Pirenne, however, have tended to emphasise the historical continuity which underlay the opposition between Christianity and Islam, viewing both belief systems, along with Byzantium, as products of the decline of Rome (Dennett, 1948; Herrin, 1986; Riising, 1952).

Whilst archaeological evidence has been used to deny altogether the significance of Islam for the Carolingian Renaissance (Hodges & Whitehouse, 1983), scholars of Iberian history have sometimes gone to the opposite extreme to emphasise the role of Christian resistance to Islam as the single most important factor in fashioning a coherent Spanish society, ideologically focussed upon, and given expression through, the Catholic Church (Albornoz, 1956). Extreme positions seem misplaced in the Iberian context since Islam is more usefully seen both as a cause of increased Christian self-assertion and as a significant influence upon that very Christianity (Linehan, 1982), especially as it gained expression in the cultures of the Christian societies which supplanted the Moslems after the Reconquista - namely in their nationalism, their economic activities and in their imperialism.

It is not the intention here to enter into a protracted discussion of the Pirenne Thesis, rather to acknowledge the value of Pirenne's recognition of the strategic importance of Islamic expansion, especially so in Spain, a point echoed by Collins (1983).

"The rise of Islam and the creation of the Arab empire, that stretched from the Pyrenees to the Punjab during the course of the seventh and early eighth centuries, transformed the political and cultural geography of the Mediterranean and the Near East. Arguably they represent

the most important developments in Europe and western Asia during the whole of the first millenium A.D." :101

Culturally, the impact of the Arab domination of the southern part of the Peninsula meant that continuity with the Graeco-Roman world could be maintained, especially so in the light of the Hellenized orientation of Islamic culture. As Dennett (1948) states, the Islamic culture probably had more in common with the Hellenized East and with Byzantium than did the Gaul of Pirenne's 'Romania'. We might see the dazzling Umayyad Dynasty of al-Andalus as offering to Iberia, not a barrier against its historical heritage, but rather a revitalised link. An awareness of this seems to have been restricted amongst Christians of the period to those who actually lived under the rule of the Arabs, and who thus had ample opportunity to appreciate the cultural achievements of the Muslims, whilst simultaneously entering into a more rational appreciation of the Islamic faith. As *dhimmies*, the Christians living under these circumstances would have been offered the protection of the state, except in times of extreme orthodox dogmatism, according to the injunctions of the Koran and Hadith.

"...the nearest in affection to them (i.e. the faithful Muslims) are those who say 'We are Christians'."

Koran 5.83

"He who hurts a dhimmie hurts me, and he who hurts me annoys Allah." (Mohammed according to al-Tabarani in Al-awsat)

This is not to say that the practice of the Muslims was necessarily always in accord with the sayings of the Prophet, but the Umayyad Caliphate in al-Andalus was under the influence of the Malikite orthodoxy and it could therefore be expected that attention would be paid to the Prophetic injunctions. Christians under Islamic domination except in the first and last periods of Iberian Islam, would have experienced a toleration akin to that which they had found under the Arian Visigoths, since the concentrated urban structure of the dominant power left the indigenous population at liberty to carry on with its former religious and economic activities. Indeed, both in terms of religious activity and economic life, there was an incentive for the Muslim rulers to maintain the status quo ante, because they would then be able to gather taxes from the Christians whereas, strictly speaking, they would be debarred from taxing fellow believers, and it was through the taxation system that the domination was maintained and the cultural splendour financed.

The opportunity for the mutual interpenetration of cultural practices was established, and the Christians were availed of the possibilities for detailed appreciation of the Islamic faith (Rodinson, 1979; Southern, 1962). There then took place a lengthy process of miscegenation and cultural interpenetration which had the effect of blurring the hard and fast boundaries between Christian and Islamic culture hypothesised by some, with the result that we can now

identify groups and associated cultural influences which developed during this period of cross-fertilisation - namely the *Muwallads*, Islamicised Iberians; the *Mozarabs* (arabisers), Christians who maintained their own faith but adopted Muslim customs; and the *Mudejares* (those permitted to remain), Muslims who continued in their residence, religion and other cultural activities despite the change of rulers from Muslims to Christians.

These groups are but the extreme expression of the influence of Islam upon Iberian Christianity, and in this they exemplify the ways in which Islamic culture was to press its shape upon the culture which remained even after the fall of al-Andalus. This is nicely put by Gabrieli (1979).

"...the arabisation of Spanish customs appears to have been tenaciously preserved a considerable time after the decline and fall of Islamic dominion...from the external aspects of social life and customs we are recalled to the depths of the individual and collective soul by the problem of the influence of Islam on what was, and is, Christianity, its antagonist in the Iberian Peninsula: at first conquered and submissive, then starting on the long duel for recovery, and finally victorious, but marked in its turn by the rival faith with indelible stigmata." :89

Indeed, Mozarabic culture was to become a significant influence upon the Christian states, due to the use made of

Mozarabs as settlers in the buffer-zone of no-man's land which was maintained between the two dominions, with the consequence that as Christian states expanded their influence, they incorporated these 'arabised' people who thereby infiltrated their customs into the newly emergent society. In addition to this, the Mudejars constituted the major proportion of southern Iberian, especially Andalusian, peoples after the Reconquista, and consequently their cultural influences were quite marked, to the extent that the term 'mudejar' is now applied to artworks of the thirteenth to sixteenth centuries which show a so-called 'Moorish' style.

The potential for egalitarianism inherent in Islam would have been expressed through this art style especially with regard to the prohibitions against ostentation and the making of 'graven images'. The worth of the believer was to be evaluated not according to their wealth, but by their righteousness in living a life in accordance with *al-halal* (the lawful). The glory of an individual would consequently be a reflection of Allah's glory, and not that of the individual himself, with the result that the individual should not be glorified by fellow believers, even to the extent of there being a prohibition against statues and pictures which are created with the intention of such edification, or of imitating Allah's creation.

"Assuredly the angels do not enter a house in which there are statues."



"Among the people receiving the harshest punishment on the Day of Resurrection will be the makers of figures."  
(Hadith reported by Muslim)

When we look at the art products of Portugal in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, the relative dearth of statuary and fine art may be seen as a structural expression of mudejar influences working at the deepest level of the development of a national aesthetic style.

In conclusion, we have attempted to show that there were remarkable parallels between the three belief systems which we have discussed, especially with regard to their implications for the development of a Portuguese national identity, and one which was historically informed by an anthropology at least potentially egalitarian in its outlook. That each also lends itself to a strong form of elitism when it is used to legitimate claims for the Salvation of the faithful, may well indicate the delicate balance which exists between an egalitarian ideology and its informing classifications.

In their time, each belief system was reviled by orthodox Christianity and was deemed heretical; such an emotional attitude implying that fundamental cultural values were being put to the test of definition, or were actually in the process of being restructured; the force of the response reflecting the subconscious acknowledgement of the Christian that the heretic has in some way managed to formulate their

own disquiets concerning their position as believers, as members of a culture, or as individuals caught up in profound historical movements over which they have no control, but which are likely to refashion their world beyond recognition. We have seen that each of the three 'heresies' discussed has been variously taken as marking a barrier between antiquity and the medieval world, whilst also being claimed as the force which brings about the consolidation of a national identity. That it is possible to find all three reviled as heresies in twentieth century literature may be but an indication of the fragility of contemporary perceptions of national identity, particularly in the light of the apparent need to read history as a progressive development towards our own times. To be more than a statement of our own subjectivity, our analysis has to take account of the historical discontinuities before we can in turn make a claim to see continuity.

CHAPTER EIGHT:  
Peculiar Histories - Peculiar People II

PECULIAR HISTORIES – PECULIAR PEOPLE II:  
The Revolution of 1383

The revolution of 1383 has attracted the attention of Portuguese historians, at least in part, because of the marking of its 600th anniversary and the proximity of this to the Portuguese Revolution of the 25th of April 1974. This raised questions concerning similarities between the two events, particularly concerning their significance in defining and substantiating Portuguese national identity, especially in terms of the popular base of the two insurrections. A second and related consideration, namely that of the uniqueness of the revolution of 1383, may be seen to have its modern significance in the awareness amongst many Portuguese that the reluctance to de-colonise left her almost isolated amongst her Western European neighbours. The 1974 Revolution, which resulted from the colonial engagement and caused its sudden abandonment, both alleviated and emphasised Portugal's tardiness in the general European process of de-colonisation. Indeed, some of the impetus for claiming a unique and humane state of race relations in the Portuguese colonies came from groups generally supportive of imperialism who wished both to assuage wider West European bourgeois liberal opinion and to retain the economic advantages of the imperial power. The most notable figure amongst these was the dictator Antonio de Oliveira Salazar, whose Constitution for the 'New State' of

1933 was explicitly informed by Christian principles, and who claimed credit for Portugal from the state of race relations in the colonies, being supported in this by, inter alia, Andrade (1953), Welch (1935, 1946, 1949) and Otto von Habsburg (1965).

"Now that the African continent has freed itself from colonialism, it should become an ideal collaborator of Europe...Portugal is defending the peace in her Overseas Territories, but this is not only her private concern; it is of interest to Europe as a whole...the Portuguese cannot abandon these lands without betraying themselves...We can draw a very objective conclusion with regard to the glorious past history of the Portuguese that, to quote the words of Professor Adriano Moreira, 'the international political complex is defined in terms of the coincidence of the Portuguese national interest with that of Christianity...' (Habsburg 1965): 9, 45

Some version of Christianity, then, would seem to have been synonymous with Portuguese national identity; but was the situation the same in the earlier case of the Revolution of 1383, which can be seen to have in some way ushered in the modern period of Portuguese national identity?

Regarding the significance of the Revolution of 1383 in defining Portuguese national identity, the treatment of the question of the extent of popular support for the insurrection indicates the perception of the extent of the devel-

opment of nationalist sentiment at that time. On this there are basically two opinions: that shared by Coelho (1981) and Sergio (1971), which suggests that the movement began, and was lead by, the high bourgeoisie in Lisbon, and that shared by Serrao, Saraiva and Cortesão (1964/78), drawing on the attitude of Martins (1930), who each claim that the revolution was also based in the masses and represented an essentially national will, rather than being restricted to a narrow class base.

The basic events of 1383 are that on the death of the King, Dom Fernando, a section of the nobility, lead by the Count of Ourem, supported moves to unite Portugal with Castille. Ourem was in turn supported in this by Fernando's widow, Leonora Teles, who was also his lover, a fact widely known in Portugal at that time. The King of Castille, Juan, had Leonora Teles proclaim him King of Portugal, a move which roused public hostility. The arguments of Nun'Alvares Pereira and the lisboetan bourgeois Alvaro Pais were eventually successful in persuading Dom João, Mestre de Avis (Master of Avis), an illegitimate son of a former Portuguese King, Dom Pedro, to make a move for power. In an orchestrated sequence of events, Dom João personally stabbed Ourem, and Pais brought the Lisboaetans onto the streets to surround the Palace and acclaim Dom João, at the same time throwing from his bell tower the Bishop of Lisbon, who had failed to sound the bells of the Cathedral in support of the new King.

Dom João was not immediately accepted by the aristo-

cracy, and competing claims were assessed in Coimbra in 1385, with João eventually consolidating his position. It was, however, with victory in the Battle of Aljubarrota of the same year that Dom João was finally able to assert his claim over that of the competition by defeating the Castillian Army as it attempted to march on Lisbon. Dom João secured his position by entering into alliance with England with the Treaty of Windsor of 1386, and by marrying Philippa, daughter of John of Gaunt, in 1387. Success in these moves marked the end of the serious Castillian threat to Portuguese sovereignty until 1580, and saw the consolidation of the basis for the first stirrings of Portuguese imperialism.

Modern interpretations differ on the question of the extent to which the Revolution of 1383 was widely based. Cortesão, contrary to Coelho, claims that:

*"Ilude-se quem suponha que o Mestre de Avis jogou uma cartada loucamente temerária. A revolução de 1383 não foi o acto de uma classe ou dum partido, mas um movimento largamente nacional...nacional nas suas causas próximas e no objectivo directo, évitar a usurpação estrangeira, nacional ainda porque se apresenta em conjuncto (e nisto vamos contra a opinião geral) como a obra da maioria de nação e não duma pequena parte..."<sup>1</sup> :137*

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<sup>1</sup>"It is an illusion to suppose that the Master of Avis played a wild card. The Revolution of 1383 was not the act of one sole class or party, but a nationally based movement...national in its causes and in its objectives, namely to avoid foreign usurpation, and national in that it represents the effort of the majority of the nation and not a small part (and in this we go against the general view)..."

This is directly connected to the way in which the question of the unique nature of the revolution is tackled by Carvalho and Coelho. We can return to Carvalho's claim that these events constitute *the first national bourgeois revolution*, a claim supported differently by Coelho and Cortesão. For Coelho, the originality of the Portuguese situation lies in the extension of the insurrection to the rural bourgeoisie, since other conflicts between the bourgeoisie and the feudal order, and within the bourgeois state itself, were already known in Europe. Thus Coelho suggests that in social movements of the 14th century three main trends can be identified as of differing significance. Firstly, there is the struggle for emancipation from feudal service and duties, as exemplified by Wat Tyler and by the Jacquerie; secondly, there are urban bourgeois movements against feudal power which, says Coelho, were not a basis for rural insurrection, for example Etienne Marcel; and thirdly, there were conflicts internal to the new bourgeois world in which the nascent proletariat were opposed to the bourgeoisie, as with the Ciompi movement of Florence.

What is more, says Coelho, 14th century Europe knew of city states like Genoa and Venice, dominated by the bourgeoisie and having colonies and maritime bases. What Europe did not yet know, and was to be shown by the Portuguese, was the victory of a bourgeois revolution on the scale of an entire nation.



"The originality of the Portuguese movement, an originality which was the essential condition of its victory, was to be based not only in a rich maritime bourgeoisie, but in the arms and power of a rich rural bourgeoisie...This second arm of popular revolution - the arm of the Portuguese rural bourgeoisie, lead by Nuno Álvares Pereira, was the essential condition, at least in our opinion, of the victory of the bourgeois revolution on a national scale." :146

Cortezão agrees that the revolution was urban, and also drew in the urban masses, but he does not share Coelho's enthusiasm for the significance of the involvement of the rural bourgeoisie. Rather, he accentuates the urban nature of the revolution which became a vehicle for the struggle of the rising bourgeoisie against the old aristocracy, who largely supported Leonora Teles and the pro-Castillian group, and who subsequently abandoned Portugal on the accession of Dom João I, leaving their goods to be redistributed amongst his supporters. Thus it was that the emergent bourgeoisie rallied to the cause which was ultimately their own. They comprised:

*"As massas dos grandes centros urbanos, ainda que com o predomínio dos elementos mais estritamente populares, a grande maioria dos letrados e lecionistas, uma grande parte do clero, e, na fidalguia, o escol de novos, a geração mais completamente evoluída, aderem calorosamente á*

*revolução."*<sup>2</sup> :137

For Cortesão this marks a clear stage in the evolution of Portuguese nationalism and leads on to the establishment of a secular state which could be organised so as to undertake the European discovery of the world, thereby also revealing the destiny of humankind.

*"O seu destino e a sua missão na história estavam traçados; mas para realiza-los urgia unificar a Nação, depurando-a dos elementos dissolventes e concentrar todas as suas energias na missão marítima. A invasão do estrangeiro veio auxiliar essa obra depuradora. O povo libertá Portugal, não só do estrangeiro, mas da tutela das classes oligarquicas durante o período aureo da sua história; e imprime as suas tendências a política nacional. E também durante o período de maior valimento político das classes populares que surge uma elite nacional tão prodigiosa que, dirigindo o Grei, dirige os destinos da Humanidade.*

*Com a Revolução de 1383, Portugal entra na maioridade; na sua política interior dominam as tendências laicas e civilistas, condição essencial para a dignificação e liberdade dos povos; e o Estado atinge a forma de organização que lhe permite resolver o grande problema*

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<sup>2</sup>"The masses of the large urban centres, although predominating in strictly popular elements, the great majority of scholars and lawyers, a large part of the clergy, and, in the nobility, the new school, that generation most completely evolved, all fervently supported the revolution."

*da expansão da Europa e do conhecimento do planeta."*<sup>3</sup> :157

It is possible to see the Revolution of 1383 as expressing through its social basis the victory of the cultural ideals of the Portuguese Jews over the Catholic establishment. The direct connection is revealed in the actions of Dom João, the newly installed King, in putting down an anti-semitic riot in the Jewish quarter of Lisbon in 1383, shortly after his successful bid for power. Ferro (1979) states:

*"Nos finais do século, Lisboa é cenário de uma tentativa de assalto a judiaria grande. Não é esta a primeira vez...Mas, em 1383, a situação apresenta-se diferente e a destruição e pilhagem não se chegaram a efectivar, graças á pronta atitude do mestre de Avis, secundada por alguns membros da nobreza."*<sup>4</sup> :155

As a result of the intervention it appears that the resources of the Lisboetan Jewry were placed at the service

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<sup>3</sup>"Its historical destiny and mission have been described, but to realise its need to unify the nation, it cleansed itself of breakaway elements and concentrated all its energies on its maritime mission. The foreign invasion helped in this task of purification. The people liberated Portugal, not only from foreigners, but from the bondage of the oligarchical classes, in a golden period of her history. Meanwhile during the period of the greater power of the popular classes which became an elite so developed that, in seeking for the world it found the destiny of humanity.

With the Revolution of 1383 Portugal came of age; her internal politics were dominated by secular and reforming tendencies, an essential condition for the exaltation and liberation of the people; and the state gained the form of organisation which allowed it to solve the great problem of the expansion of Europe and the discovery of the planet."

<sup>4</sup> "At the end of the century, Lisbon was the scene of an attempted assault on the Jewish quarter. Nor was this the first occasion...But, in 1383, the situation was different and the destruction and misappropriation could not take place, thanks to the swift action of the Master of Avis, backed up by some members of the nobility."

of what Ferro calls '*a causa nacional*'. It was indeed this wealth which, as Freyre (1946) states, was used to finance the shipbuilding and capital risk taking essential to the voyages of discovery. This re-emphasised the traditional position of the Jews as the property of the sovereign, owing their protection to him and paying in return a significant debt of gratitude into the treasury. This would explain the notion that the revolution of 1383 was characteristically urban, since Portuguese Jews are recognised as having been in an advanced stage of economic evolution, ahead of the wider Christian population.

*"A sua mentalidade econômica diverge da dos cristãos. Enquanto estes, pela palavra dos seus teóricos, defendem o trabalho agrícola como a principal fonte de riqueza e subsistência, colocando o comércio em segundo plano, os judeus, certamente pela sua situação de povo sem pátria e dependente das circunstâncias do momento, inclinam-se para uma visão mais moderna do problema econômico."*<sup>5</sup> :151

The position adopted by Coelho concerning the rural dimension of the Revolution of 1383 is consistent with a notion of Jewish involvement since there was significant Jewish activity in viticulture (Ferro), many of the urban dwelling Jews having been displaced from the towns by, amongst others,

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<sup>5</sup> "Their economic outlook differed from that of the Christians. The latter, according to their theories, defended agriculture as a main source of affluence and sustenance, putting commerce in second place, the Jews, because of their position as a stateless people, dependent on the circumstances of the moment, were lead to a more modern view of the economic question."

Leonora Teles. Whilst the Jews had become widely engaged in agriculture, according to Ferro they were 'not really interested in it', preferring rather to be involved in commerce. It is not unreasonable to hypothesise that such a potentially disaffected group would readily support an attack on the old order which had connived in their being banished from their preferred economic role. The anti-clerical, modern economic character of the Revolution of 1383 clearly suited both the nationalistic urban bourgeoisie and an antipathetic Jewry, each concerned to gain access to the skills and resources of the other, and consequently finding more in common in their desire to overthrow the old order than separated them in their respective faiths. Once freed of the aristocracy, however, they would be free to engage in competition and their co-operation would be relatively short lived.

PART THREE

PLATES I - VI

PLATE I

*O Inferno*

Unknown painter - possibly Fransisco Henriques

Housed MNAA; origin 'Conventos Extintos' (defunct monastery)





PLATE II

Detail of Plate I



PLATE III

Tiled doorway - Room of Moors

Royal Palace - Sintra

PLATE IV

Cloister: Jerónimos Monastery, Lisbon

(note variation of styles between floors)



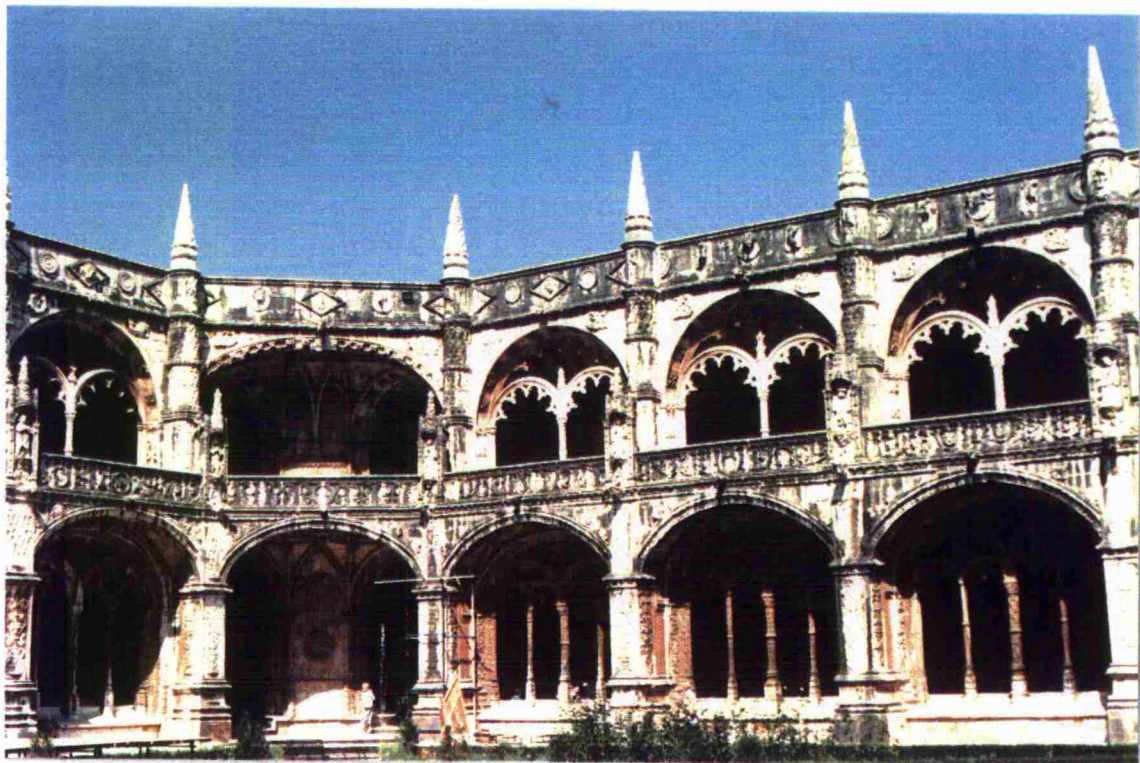


PLATE V

Twisted column - interior, Igreja de Jesus, Setúbal

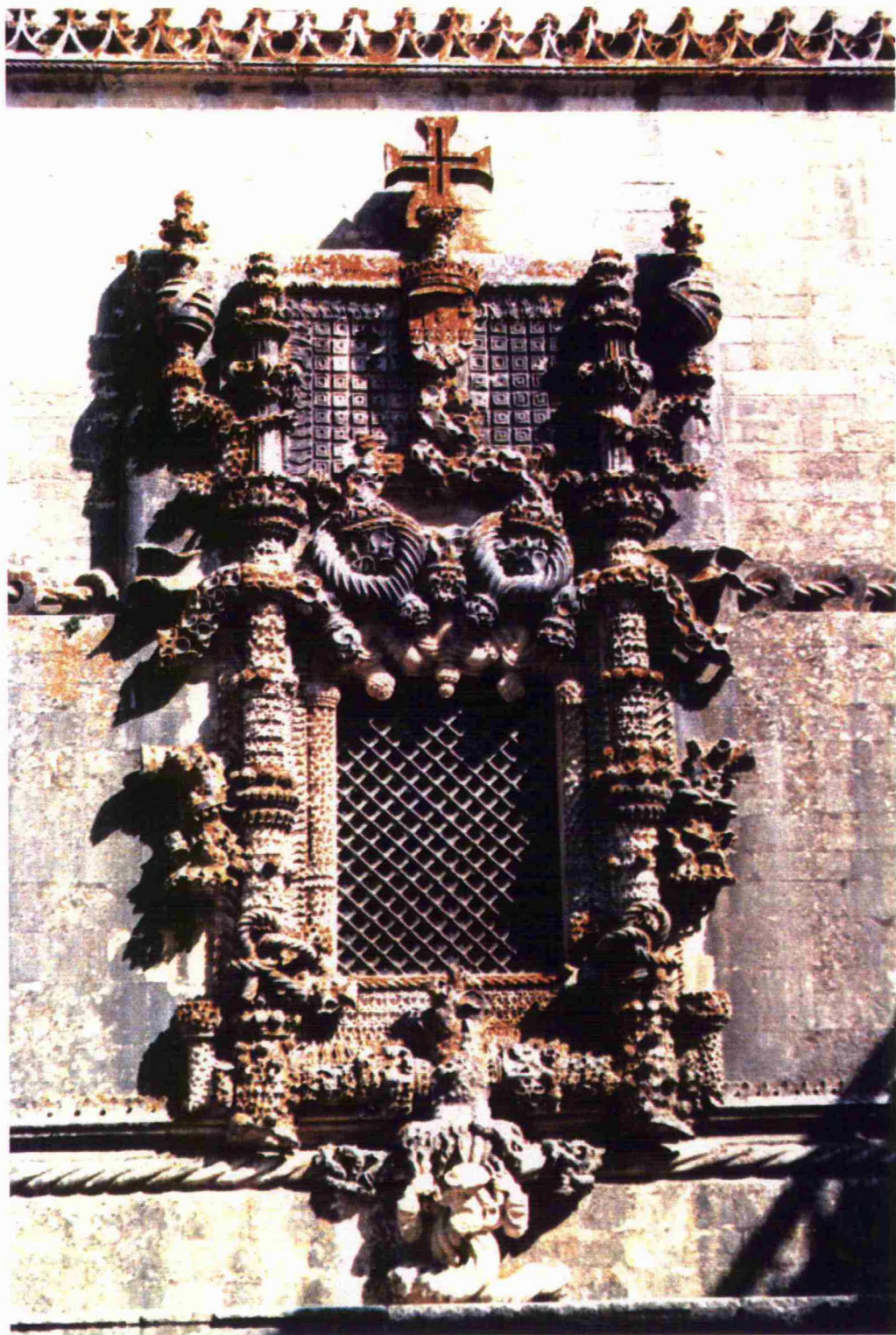


PLATE VI

Window by Diogo de Arruda

West nave - Convento de Cristo, Tomar







CHAPTER NINE:  
Art, empire and the exotic

**ART, EMPIRE AND THE EXOTIC: A Descriptive Survey of Portuguese Architecture, Sculpture and Painting in the Manueline Period**

The speculative investment which went into the voyages of discovery during the fifteenth century was to result in a bountiful pay-off at the close of the century. Dom Henrique's intention to round Africa was ultimately realised at the beginning of the reign of Dom Manuel I (1495-1521) when, on 18th May 1498, Vasco da Gama's small convoy of three ships, the *São Gabriel*, the *São Rafael* and the *Berrio*, accompanied by a supply ship, sighted Calicut. After some three months of eventful negotiations, the hold of the *São Gabriel* was filled with pepper, cloves, nutmeg, cinammon and precious stones (Livermore, 1969). Vasco da Gama had outflanked the Moslem control of the supply lines from East to West, and as a result was enabled to realise a profit for his backers - who included the King - with a mark up of some 20,000% on the original purchase price of the spices. In Western Europe these had hitherto been in short supply, and available only from a monopoly supplier. As ruler of the nation which had found the key to such immense potential wealth, Dom Manuel I was indeed most aptly styled '*O Venturoso*', The Fortunate, or perhaps even The Prosperous.

The consequence of this for Portuguese cultural and artistic development is accurately summarised by Kubler (1959), when he states:

"Much wealth accruing to Portugal from the new ocean trade was encrusted as ornament upon her buildings. A national style of decoration, commonly called Manueline, flourished..."

However, being a period of the accumulation of wealth through international trade other, foreign, artists were attracted by the prospect of patronage, and thus the Manueline style...

"...flourished side by side with another, of Italianate derivation, with mudejar forms, and with North European and plateresque imports." (Kubler 1959)

Such developments may seem to reveal a simple relationship between economy and culture but their interpretation and analysis is by no means straightforward. Central to our considerations is the extent to which novelty can be perceived in the resultant art forms, and the contiguity of such novelty with the Discoveries and their commercial rewards. The writer who probably most accurately locates the problems associated with the definition of the characteristics of '*O Manuelino*' is Reynaldo dos Santos (1952), who showed how art historians have variously attempted to describe the Manueline style as a derivative or degenerate type of a whole variety of other, non-Portuguese styles, rather than recognising it in its own right.

*"Quanto aos historiadores nacionais, têm-se deixado levar, mais pela cegueira das paixões e das dúvidas geradas no facciosismo das polémicas, que pela análise*

*independente e crítica da personalidade dos mestres e das obras. E ora baixam o estilo ao nível de um gótico degenerado, ora o declassificam como uma imitação do plateresco. Isto sem falar na mistura indiscriminada do manuelino autoctone com as formas híbridas dos biscainhos, quer do Norte quer do Sul."*<sup>1</sup>

Reynaldo dos Santos claimed that Manueline art, precisely because it does express the spirit of the Portuguese Renascimento, based as it was on the discovery of 'new' worlds, was opposed to the Italian Renaissance, which found its inspiration in the recovery of the ancient world. Logically, Manueline art can be seen to have similar characteristics to that most beloved of all aesthetic forms (at least in the eyes of modern European commentators), Greek art.

*"...como todas as artes apos a descoberta de novos aspectos da natureza, a arte manuelina foi naturalista, como a arte helenística apos as conquistas de Alexandre."*<sup>2</sup> ://

Thus when Marx is able to pose the dilemma in the following way:

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<sup>1</sup> As regards the national historians, they have perforce abandoned the independent analysis and criticism of the personalities of the masters, more through blind passion and through doubts derived from the most factious polemics. Now they lower the style to the level of a degenerate gothic, then they classify it as an imitative plateresque. All this without mentioning the Northern and Southern Biscalian hybrid forms in the synthetic mixture of indigenous manueline style.

<sup>2</sup> as with all art that deals with the discovery of new aspects of nature, manueline art was naturalistic, as was the hellenic art which dealt with the conquests of Alexander the Great.

" the difficulty is not in grasping the idea that Greek art and epos are bound up with certain forms of social development. It lies rather in understanding why they still constitute for us a source of aesthetic enjoyment and in certain respects prevail as the standard and model beyond attainment." (Marx 1973)

dos Santos is able to answer for the Portuguese/Greek analogy that it is because both societies were engaged in the fundamental activity of the discovery of new aspects of nature. We can speculate that this permits those involved the opportunity to consider afresh the relationships which exist between nature and human nature, and, in defining more closely the former, to be lead into re-defining the latter. This re-definition will find its form in the artistic, literary, speculative and scientific products of the society.

*"Chegamos assim, dentro do conceito geral do Renascimento europeu, que abrange a ciência de Copernico e Vesalio, a arte dos van Eyck e van der Weyden e o humanismo de Erasmo, ao conceito nacional de Renascimento português, com as suas raízes na ciência da navegação e descobertas e plena eflorescência no reinado do Venturoso - no teatro, nas ciências, na literatura e nas artes."*<sup>3</sup> :11

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<sup>3</sup> We thus arrive at the concept of the Portuguese renaissance, from within the general concept of the European renaissance, which includes the science of Copernicus and Vesalius, the art of van Eyck and van der Weyden, and the humanism of Erasmus. This Portuguese renaissance has its roots in navigational science and the discoveries, flowered fully in the reign of Manuel - in the theatre, the sciences, literature and the arts.

Given, then, that the artistic flowering of Manueline Portugal is directly associated with the Discoveries, made financially possible by them, and expressing and appropriating their associated ideas, we shall turn to the Manueline style itself in order later to enable us to gauge its significance in illuminating the cultural basis of Portuguese racial consciousness in the early sixteenth century. Three aspects of artistic production will be focussed upon, architecture, sculpture and painting. Each of these has a distinct way of working which draws upon a specific artistic vocabulary of dimension, volume, degree of abstraction of representation, and colour, not to mention subject matter and differing techniques of collective and individual creativity, patronage and control.

## ARCHITECTURE: Naturalism and a taste for the exotic

Architecture is essentially social; it is in architecture that the most public and collectively created expression of cultural, and especially artistic, forms is to be found. This is the case in respect of the 'Manueline'; whilst a wider reading of the term can apply to all aspects of Portuguese culture in the reign of Dom Manuel I, i.e. 1495-1521, it is in certain characteristic buildings that the 'manueline style' is to be found in an almost ideal typical form.

The characteristics associated with this style give us a first indication of the cosmopolitanism of Portuguese culture at that time. In short, the Manueline style has the following characteristics: it is a marriage of "essential naturalism" with the mudejar, having a feeling for space and volume with a capacity to enhance the decorative effect; it embraces a pluralistic orientation to other artistic styles and periods, resonating classical, romanesque, gothic, mudejar, plateresque, renaissance, baroque, indian and wider oriental characteristics; it also seems to be peculiarly concerned with doors and windows, that is to say, with margins.

Various formulations of the components of Manueline style have been advanced, including that of V. Correia (undated, cited in M. Chico et al. 1948). Correia suggests that it comprises a reworking of gothic themes.

*" 1º Um gótico chamejante puro, tal como o empregaram os entalhadores neerlandeses, burgunhoes e renanos;*

2º Um gótico flamejante iberizado, um ogival naturalizado em Espanha, que Lamperez caracteriza como uma mistura de elementos góticos, traços mouriscos e tendências naturalísticas;

3º Um gótico terminal popular, de origens variadas e elaboração regional;

4º Um gótico mudéjar, resultante da combinação de contributos ogivais e muçulmanos;

5º Um gótico flamígero-plateresco, em que elementos complementares do último ogival se transformam sob a acção dos motivos renascentistas."<sup>4</sup> :263

Whilst, alternatively, Chico himself is not prepared to go far beyond the confines of the gothic in his rehearsal of familiar themes:

"Pode dizer-se apenas que, de um modo geral, são incluídos na arte manuelina:

a) os monumentos do gótico final português em que a planta, a composição dos alçados, o espaço, a iluminação e as combinações de volumes ficam presos a arte tradicional e só a decoração e as proporções são diferentes;

b) os que já acusam a influência decorativa e espacial do Renascimento, embora conservem a estrutura gótica e

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<sup>4</sup> Firstly, a pure gothic, as found in north European works; Secondly, an iberian flamboyant gothic, with naturalised Spanish ogival, which Lamperez characterises as having a mixture of gothic elements, moorish traces and naturalistic tendencies; Thirdly, popularised late gothic, from various sources with regional variations; Fourthly, a mudéjar gothic, resulting from the combination of the ogive and the Islamic; Fifthly, a flamboyant-plateresque gothic, in which elements of late gothic are transformed by renaissance tendencies.



*sejam revestidos da decoração exuberante e por vezes brutal que tanto caracteriza o coro do Convento do Cristo de Tomar como os portais de São João de Moura e da igreja matriz de Viana do Alentejo;*

*c) os que revelam influências exteriores mais nitidas como, por exemplo, a porta da Capela Imperfeita do Mosteiro da Batalha, esculpido por Mateus Fernandes, no calçario brando e dourado da região, e, por fim,*

*d) as construções que ficam fieis a arte luso-mourisca. Ha, assim, quatro grupos de monumentos cuja importância varia e que têm forte personalidade, mesmo quando representam o florescimento logico dos ensaios e experiências anteriores."*<sup>5</sup> (Chico 1981) :193

However, it is probably dos Santos' recognition of the sensitivity of the Manueline to 'depth, dynamism and the picturesque' all activated by the play of light (1953), which provides legitimation for the importance recently attached to it. This response is evoked very strongly by the work of Boytac, in perhaps its most profound manner in the twisted columns of the Igreja de Jesus in Setúbal, variously des-

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<sup>5</sup> We can just about say that Manueline art generally includes:

- a) the monuments of late Portuguese gothic in which the plan, composition, space, light and the combination of volume are held within traditional style, and only the decoration and proportions are different;
- b) those which already show decorative and spatial influences of the renaissance, whilst conserving the gothic structure and are covered with exuberant and sometime crude decoration, such as that which is typified by the Choir of the Convent of Christ at Tomar, the portal of Sao Joao at Moura and the mother church of Viana do Alentejo;
- c) those which show clear foreign influence such as the portal of the capelas imperfeitas of Batalha, sculpted by Mateus Fernandes, in soft golden regional limestone, and finally
- d) structure faithful to luso-moorish art.

We thus have four groups of monuments of varying importance, having great personality whilst at the same time reflecting the works and experiences of the past.

cribed as a "prodigally inventive use of forms in torsion...three colonettes are screwed together in a helical column of delirious instability."(Kubler 1959), and "a fantastic Manueline structure with twisted, spiralling columns and rope like ribs. Their rhythmic motion suggestive of the sea gives the church a bizarre quality unique in Western architecture."(Fisher 1988) [plate V, page 358]

It is as a herald of architectural innovation that we now turn to look more closely at this church.

**The proto-manueline Igreja de Jesus, Setúbal (The Church of Jesus in Setúbal).**

This is one of the first major flowerings of the Manueline style. There was little to herald its advent. As dos Santos claims, the Manueline style did not evolve, but was a sudden outpouring, so it is difficult to see a gradual development. Dom Manuel's tastes and the artists's theories gave form to the gusts of exoticism and renewed inspiration which flowed over Portugal from the new worlds. In fact such a process can be seen in Jesus, Setúbal, in that it was a reworking of an already initiated project, considered by Dom Manuel to have been too penny pinching in its original conceptualisation.

With its dynamism the church gives early indications of the baroque character of the Manueline style. The South Portal and the twisted columns initiate two significant characteristics of Boytac's work, both of which make a play

for the imaginative understanding of architectural effect as a processual interplay of space, surface and rhythm. Other characteristic aspects of the building such as its three naves and the structure of the vaulting are also characteristic of Boytac's contribution, but will attract less attention in the later analytical approach of this study.

Not only does this church attract our attention because of the impressions created by its decorative effects, but it also gains importance in being the basis upon which Boytac was to found his plans for *O Mosteiro dos Jeronimos* (the Hieronymite Monastery, the Church of Santa Maria de Belem) in Lisbon. Jeronimos is the most impressive of the Manueline structural achievements, and is certainly the most celebrated within Portugal, carrying as it does a cargo of nationalistic sentiment. Situated on the North bank of the Rio Tejo (River Tagus), it is immediately close to one of the main sites of nautical activity during the period of the Discoveries, and was at one time in full view of the vessels as they set out from Lisbon, and on their return. It has now become rather isolated from this original setting since the river itself has since changed its course and runs a few hundred meters to the South.

*O Mosteiro dos Jeronimos* - the joint achievement of Boytac and Castilho

Architecturally, Jeronimos offers a fusion of the Manueline, which was the achievement of Boytac, and the Renaissance/Plateresque, now recognised as the work of

Castilho (and indicating the Castilian influence - thought by some to extend much more deeply into the whole structure of the Manueline style, as suggested by Peres-Embid and discussed below in the context of 'mudejarism'). There are also later additions such as the austere classical Spanish rebuilding of the main chapel, which houses Dom Manuel's tomb, which is now held by some Portuguese to reflect the Castilian domination of a degenerate Portuguese nation in the late sixteenth and the early seventeenth centuries, although this judgement on the classic proportions of the chapel is not shared by all critics. Although commonly taken as original, the dome and twin towers of the West facade are more recent, having been added in the nineteenth century as part of a project aimed at rendering the facade more ornate (Mendes Atanazio 1984). For discussion of the sculpture of the South and West Portals, again renowned but now the subject of re-interpretation, see the following part of this Chapter. It is indicative of the relative lack of knowledge concerning Portuguese culture that this fact concerning the major national monument was unknown until 1984, and largely remains so today.

Jeronimos contains a number of noteworthy elements of special importance to this study: Castilho's octagonal pillars, constructed in palmate form, reflect the perceived exoticism of the experiences of the Navigators and the Renaissance decoration of these pillars provides such a contrast with those of Setúbal; the huge span of the vault echoes gothic interests; the cloister with its two floors,

the lower by Boytac and the upper by Castilho [plate IV page 356]; the decoration of the vaulting of the side chapels, as in that which houses Camões' tomb, with full use of the naturalistic elements which have now come to be taken as characteristic of Manueline decoration, maize, leaves and twisted ropes.

It is not the individual details which comprise the significance of this structure, but the overall variety and hybridisation of styles which brought together in creative juxtaposition the Renaissance influence of the Plateresque with the language of volume and decoration as spoken by Boytac.

*" O que tira ao mosteiro de Belem a significação duma obra manuelina pura e a hibridez com que, a partir de 1517, o plateresco dos biscainhos e sevilhanos se veio justapor as formas e decorações de Boitaca..."<sup>6</sup> (dos Santos 1952):25*

As well as being a monument to Portuguese national identity, Jeronimos embraces cultural pluralism and the exotic. It blends these with a celebration of the heroic, as reflected in the scale of the structure, and yet, in its almost naive naturalism, it re-emphasises the human scale and the constraining limits imposed by the natural world.

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<sup>6</sup> What gives the monastery of Belem its significance as a an example of pure manueline is the hybridisation with which, from 1517, the Biscanian and Sevillian plateresque was juxtaposed with the decorative forms of Boitac.

## O Mosteiro de Batalha

Begun in 1388 in celebration of the victory of Dom João I, *Mestre de Avis*, at the Battle of Aljubarrota, the work of construction continued through the fifteenth century and was only brought to a halt at the close of Dom Manuel's reign, with the decision of his successor, Dom João III, to concentrate his resources upon the completion of Jeronimos. O mosteiro de Batalha was largely the work of the architect Mateus Fernandes, d.1515 (who incidentally founded a dynasty of Portuguese royal architects), and who was succeeded by Boytac. Whereas in Jeronimos the mix of styles is of Boytac's manueline and Castilho's renaissance plateresque, in Batalha the significant admixture is of Fernandes' gothic form and Boytac's later contributions.

One of Fernandes' major achievements is the *Portico Monumental*, which leads from the original apse of the Church of the Pantheon of Dom Duarte into the famous *Capelas imperfeitas* (the unfinished chapels). The porch has been variously described as gothic, manueline and transitional renaissance. In fact the arch is of Fernandes' origination, having a considerable degree of finely worked ornamentation; it is composed of a series of polycentric arches in a trilobate arc. The decoration is in a characteristically flamboyant gothic style having an element of naturalism depicting oak branches and acorns, blossom, thistles, trellis and artichokes - all decorative effects which do little to make an emphatic statement of depth. The overall effect of

the arch is closer to an islamic arch than to the gothic. In a very real sense, then, Fernandes' contribution here cannot simply be labelled as gothic, and must be seen both as breaking new ground and in creating a sense of the exotic even within the established gothic conventions. In fact, because of its exuberant decoration the arch is seen by dos Santos as reminiscent of Indian art, an idea which should not be too readily dismissed.

It was at one time thought that the whole of the later manueline parts of the structure of Batalha could be attributed to Mateus Fernandes; now, however, it has been persuasively argued by dos Santos that Boytac's contribution is of considerable importance. The naturalism of much of the ornament would tend to indicate the truth of this, as, for example, in the Royal Cloister and in the Unfinished Chapels. Although surmounted by a renaissance balcony designed by Castilhano for Dom João in 1533, the Capelas Imperfeitas remain as an ambiguous monument to the transience of human powers. Almost hidden at the rear of the building far away from the very public West face, the incomplete pillars enclose a space which is unroofed and open to the elements. Although not a ruin in the sense of having once been whole and having been left to decay, the Capelas Imperfeitas play a variation on the theme of humanity and nature which it is impossible to overlook. The response is more deeply felt since it goes beyond the perception of the degradation of former beauty. The sudden termination of the pillars marks a sharp contrast with their massive bulk; the fine detail of

the arch entering the Chapels, denying its exposure to sun, wind and rain; both offer paradoxical images more readily apprehended by the psychoanalyst of art appreciation than by the art historian.

Whilst the pillars suggest the castration of phallic forms, they are not emasculated, indeed they are strengthened and their presence is enhanced by the perception of their crowding round the Chapels in a sense of brooding overbearance. The exposure of the delicate decoration, clearly not originally intended to be revealed to the elements, gives us leave to entertain Kleinian notions of the unconscious phantasy of destruction and ultimate reconstruction (Fuller 1980). The oedipal and maternal resonances of the Capelas go some way to explaining their continued potency, and indicate again the way in which the human scale is stressed in the manueline legacy, either by intention as in Jeronimos, or by default as in Batalha.

Sintra: the crescent in the crown of Manueline Architecture

" Lo! Cintra's glorious Eden intervenes  
In variegated maze of mount and glen.  
Ah me! what hand can pencil guide, or pen,  
To follow half on which the eye dilates  
Through views more dazzling unto mortal ken  
Than those whereof such things that bard relates,  
Who to the awe-struck world unlock'd Elysium's gates?"  
(Byron: Childe Harold's Pilgrimage, Canto I, XVIII)



Sintra is, in reality, a cluster of small towns a few kilometers to the North-west of Lisbon, which were the summer residence of the Kings of Portugal from the time of Dom João I. The location was of strategic importance from as early as the eighth century, as is evidenced by the *Castelo dos Mouros* (Moors' Castle) which commands the hill overlooking the Vila Velha (Old Town) in which is situated the *Paço Real* (Royal Palace), now more prosaically known as the *Palácio Nacional*. Although there are other architectural sites in the near vicinity, it is with the *Paço Real* and the *Castelo dos Mouros* that this study is chiefly concerned since, as we shall see, their juxtaposition is a key to a peculiar ambiguity in the Portuguese culture, namely that between European and African, perhaps between Christianity and Islam, suggestive of a reworking of mainstream European cultural themes.

The *Paço Real* is the location of a cycle of manueline restoration which has created a building clearly more important for its significance as an emblem of nationhood than for its beauty. In short, the exterior of the building is plain, if not downright ugly, especially in contrast with the luxuriant vegetation of the area. It is adorned, if adorned is quite the right word, by two chimney stacks from the kitchens which do not allow aesthetic considerations to interfere with their efficiency, having the "look of a cement factory" (Fisher 1988).

The building draws together manueline and moorish styles and marks a point at which mudejar themes were given

legitimacy and encouragement in the architecture of Southern Portugal ; this development was, however, of a specific kind and duration, as we shall see presently. Restoration and remodelling of the Palace of Sintra, which had been built in the reign of Dom João I, was carried out under the auspices of Dom Manuel himself, who employed his premier architects, Boytac and the Arruda brothers, on the project. The work was executed in three stages, beginning with the thematic decoration of the rooms of swans, arabs, magpies, lions and mermaids. Later the armoury was decorated with the coats of arms of the Portuguese nobility (Torré de Brazões) Finally the royal apartments were added on the Eastern flank. In its development the Palace gives a material record of the development of manueline style itself.

Initially the renovation work of the late fifteenth century and early sixteenth century brought to Sintra a mudejarism deeply thrallled by Andalucian and especially Sevillian art. In addition to the decorated rooms there are the andalucian and moorish ajimeces (paired windows). The inspiration for this development is widely thought to have originated in Dom Manuels's journey to Spain, to be sworn heir to the throne of all Iberia ( a unification which was not in fact to come about until the Spanish domination of Portugal in 1580, and the suppression of the Portuguese monarchy). Impressed by moorish themes in architecture and ornament, Dom Manuel set about creating an atmosphere of Andalucian style in his summer palace.

Doubtless these events as retold bear a strict

correspondence to the truth. However, such a version of events raises as many problems as it solves, in that Portuguese nationhood rested upon the vanquishing of Moorish power, and whilst the Church remained largely antipathetic to mudejarism, the aristocracy undertook elaborate and highly visible architectural experiments in this style, especially in the Alentejo (the region of Southern Portugal across the River Tagus from Lisbon - além Tejo ).

A number of possible explanations suggest themselves as to why such a style should find favour, and they are worth reviewing at this point since they offer suggestions as to the structural location of manuelism in Portuguese culture.

These explanations are variously concerned with:

- 1) the mudejar interest in boundaries, margins and exits
- 2) the mystery and perceived luxury of Moorish culture, characterised also by the cultivation of knowledge
- 3) the antipathy of the Church towards Islam and things Moorish
- 4) the historical dimensions of Portuguese nationalism, and its need to appropriate a novel history in order to claim a new future and to consolidate its contemporary power.

#### 1) The Mudejar Interest in Boundaries, Margins and Exits:

two aspects of this concern us directly here, the Moorish penchant for wall decoration and the stylisation of door and window construction. In Sintra decoration of the walls can be said to be largely of two types; the use of pigment and paint upon stucco, wood etc., and the use of tiles (*azulejos*). The pursuit of wall decoration only became characterised as mudejar and typically manueline when it involved the use of explicit naturalism and based itself upon an overall effect gained from repetition. The various thematic rooms of the palace, with their famous ceilings mark a new stage in Portuguese architectural decoration. They lend significance to boundaries and heighten the importance of walls and ceilings as locations in which nature, architecture, representation and imagination are encouraged to interact. Mudejar ornament becomes more than mere ornament and suggests a new relationship between construction and perception.

The *azulejos* (decorative tiles) in the Palace, among the earliest but not the earliest to be found in Portugal, are thought to be imports from the Sevillian quarter of Triana, made by Moorish workmen (Meço 1985). They, too, invite the viewer to re-interpret the two-dimensionality of wall-space according to the novel conceptualisation of the designer [plate III page 356]. In the Palace at Sintra the *azulejos* have a "geometric dynamism" (Meço), giving the wall surfaces a dimensionality which renders their apperception into a processual re-interpretation and re-appraisal of space and vision. On close inspection many of the surfaces of the

tiles carry three dimensional patterning, further enhancing the tectonic effect. These tiles lend a sense of dominance and regal presence to the door spaces, making them both a visual event and a statement of power.

The mudejar concern with boundary, margin and exit is given further accentuation through the use of the ajimeces (paired windows), which were included in the first phase of reconstruction. Paired horse-shoe and swelling marble arches constitute typical window structures. These mediate the boundary between inside and outside so that the lush vistas of Sintra are seen through exotic frames which enhance their luxuriance. Seen from outside, the austere, block-house like exterior of the Palace accentuates the charm and stylisation of the windows.

## 2)The Mystery and Perceived Luxury of Moorish Culture; Characterised also by the Cultivation of Knowledge:

from a Eurocentric perspective certain aspects of Moorish and Islamic art and architecture have a power to transmit notions of tranquillity and well-being. The use of the horse-shoe arch, the general absence of the human figure, the employment of greens and blues, thematic exploration of water and shade, and the cultivation of a conceptual interpenetration of carpet and garden, all offer the European person culturally significant cues for a respite from social and ecological demands and pressures. This is an inferred response which is enhanced when the aesthetic stimuli are offered in contrast to the heat, light and dust of a warm climate. Now, whilst Sintra could hardly be called sun-baked, indeed it is attrac-

tive because of its cool verdancy, the other locations of mudejar architecture and decoration in Portugal certainly are - especially those in Évora and the Alentejan Plain, re-creating an effect similar to that experienced by Raban in Abu Dhabi (1987).

" I went through the door in the wall, and was met by a bewildering change of scale. The house I had looked at from outside had been no bigger than a slab-sided concrete garage. Inside it was all air and space, sun and shade. We were standing in an open courtyard full of trees. A carpeted wooden platform stood on stilts in the centre, and a complete canopy of foliage allowed the sunlight to trickle through and fall in bright splashes on the blue and scarlet patterns of the carpets. The trees had created deep pools of shadow; beyond them lay lattices, windows and more doors. We were shown up on to the platform. It made a lovely outdoor drawing room. Vines and acacias, set against white stucco, formed a kind of living wallpaper. It was as cool as any air-conditioned office, and the constant play of the light in the leaves gave it a brilliant underwater air, as if we'd stepped into an illuminated tropical aquarium." :138

Those who make such pretensions on paradise could find some legitimacy in proposing that only the gods, or the godly, can gain access. Whilst this may not set apart those within the cultural field of Islamic art forms, it does set apart those from without. In a society such as that of sixteenth century

Portugal the adoption of a culture and the creation of a paradise were potent tools in the symbolisation of fortune, be it power, wealth, mystery or exoticism. The potency of these symbols derived in no small part from the fact that these were forbidden fruits - denied to the general run of the people by the Church, as we shall shortly see.

The mystery and exoticism of mudejar culture contained further advantages for the Portuguese monarchy and new aristocracy in the Manueline period. Islam, occupier and enemy in the past, had also been the beneficiary and transmitter of the Graeco-Roman bequest (Herrin 1986, Leaman 1988). The reassertion of Christian control over the Iberian Peninsula had been intimately involved in the process by which Northern Europe re-established contact with the Aristotelian tradition of learning and the positive evaluation of the pursuit of knowledge. For those involved in the activities of the Discoveries, such attitudes offered welcome comforts and supports in the face of the uncertainties and risks encountered in their overseas quests, and the criticism encountered at home. This criticism came both from the 'old' established, rural, Church order and from the 'new' humanistic renaissance thinkers. Bent on an expensive strategy of discovery and enterprise, the Navigators and their backers could look to mudejar art, and its associated culture, and find there both reassurance in their pursuit of knowledge, and promise of reward. That a significant amount of finance and initiative for the undertaking was Jewish, and that Islam, more often than not,

had sheltered its Jewish populations, could only reinforce this sense of a virtuous circle.

### 3) The Antipathy of the Church:

although mudejarism became fashionable in Alentejan architecture during the Manueline period, there was one powerful sector of society which did not as readily embrace such novelties and cultural badges: the Church. Whilst the interpretation of the Reconquista as the Catholic re-capture of Iberia from Islam may be simplistic, there can be no doubt that the dominant attitude amongst Christians towards Islam was to see it as a heresy, and all things Islamic as anathema. The almost total absence of Moorish ruins in Portugal lends weight to such a view.

This was not an unmixed blessing to the stirring urban bourgeoisie of the period. Without in any way denying that the explicit and consciously advanced motivations of those engaged in the overseas projects were understood in profoundly Christian terms, the adoption of a moorish cultural affectation or style allowed, or at least reflected, the opening up of a cultural space between church and state. This space gave room for the developing Portuguese imperialism to flower and bear fruit for the benefit of 'Portugal' itself and not, by way of duty and allegiance, for the benefit of Rome. Much of the fortune of *O Venturoso* lay in his being able to retain the rewards of the imperial and commercial activities. Moreover, it would not be accurate to deny any adoption by the Church of mudejar artistic themes. Both at



Setúbal and in the *Sé Velha* (Old Cathedral) of Coimbra, azulejos were used to create explicitly moorish images and effects. Their use at Setúbal in particular would have been familiar to Dom Manuel, and may have influenced his attitude to their use at Sintra.

It can be hypothesised that as the Portuguese crown became increasingly wealthy, it became acceptable for religious themes to be employed in secular art work (namely azulejos and the Cross of Christ), but that unfettered use of essentially 'royal' themes was limited to laudatory rather than creative purposes. In seizing the initiative through the navigational explorations, the Crown also gained the initiative in the definition, creation and legitimation of knowledge; a concomitant of this being the emphatic naturalism of Manueline church decoration, relaying but not re-defining royal achievements. Creative cultural redefinition was thus made possible for the King through the use of a form of exoticism or naturalism; mudejar style was clearly exotic to the Portuguese, even if it had intrinsic problems with naturalism, especially with regard to the Koranic prohibition on graven images found in wider Islamic culture.

#### 4)The Historical Dimensions of Portuguese Nationalism:

as already mentioned, it is conventionally considered that Dom Manuel became attracted to Moorish art styles whilst on his coronation journey to Spain. Returning to Portugal, he is thought to have been sufficiently enamoured of the Andalucian style to bring about its incorporation in his own buildings.

We have accepted that there is probably much truth in this, but such a ready acceptance is not completely satisfactory. The three aspects of mudejarism in Portugal as discussed immediately above undoubtedly offer further elements of explanation; what is missing, however, is a simple explanation, and this can only be gained by going to Sintra itself, leaving the *Paço Real* in its valley, and climbing the old Moorish pathway up the hillside overlooking the *Vila Velha* to the ruins of the *Castelo dos Mouros* which still commands the heights above the Palace. Byron gives some suggestions as to the possible significance of this site in *Childe Harold Canto I*, verses XX to XXII.

"Then slowly climb the many-winding way,  
And frequent turn to linger as you go...  
On sloping mounds, or in the vale beneath,  
Are domes where whilome kings did make repair;  
But now the wild flowers round them only breathe;  
Yet ruin'd splendour still is lingering there.  
And yonder towers the Prince's palace fair:"

Nowadays the Portuguese national flag, with Dom Manuel's armillary sphere celebrating the Portuguese hold of the world, flies from the *Torré Real* (Royal Tower), at a viewpoint from which the castle look-out could command the view from the Atlantic coast, along the estuary of the Rio Tejo and round as far as Lisbon. Below, however, is the *Paço Real*.

It is inconceivable that Dom Manuel would not have known these ruins and their history. Neither is it likely that they

were without influence upon his architectural activities as monarch, a situation similar to that which Burckhardt (1965) and Huizinga (1924) thought to have obtained in Rome where the proximity of the ancient ruins served to provide the spur to intellectual and artistic creativity. Like the *Capelas Imperfeitas* of Batalha, the *Castelo dos Mouros* of Sintra also invites a Klienian evaluation of the stimulating effect of the contemplation of the unfinished, the incomplete, or the ravaged art object (c.f. Fuller 1980).

The urge for restitution could not have been legitimately satisfied in sixteenth century Portugal by means of a restoration of the *Castelo dos Mouros*. Rather, by associating the developing Portuguese imperial and commercial activities with the ruins through the use of the cultural affectation of mudejarism, Dom Manuel would be able to resolve his own psychological and aesthetic tensions, and to appropriate the culture of 'the enemy', the muslim, in the construction of an historical grounding of Portuguese nationalism. Critics who reject the mudejarism of the manueline style as a borrowing from the Spanish culture (Peres Embid 1944) therefore overlook the most obvious evidence of all - the ruins of the Moors Castle at Sintra, close by the site of the Royal Palace.

The other, later, stages of the Manueline rebuilding of the *Paço Real* at Sintra add rather less to our appreciation of the development of the manueline style. Following the adoption of the moorish style earlier in the process of

reconstruction, and its transference to other palaces, e.g. *Paço da Ribeira*, Lisbon (now destroyed) and Évora, the influence of Boytac can be seen in the 1508 reconstruction of the *Torré dos Brazões* (Tower, or Room of Blazons). As dos Santos claims, this phase of reconstruction was characterised by the use of sombre decoration with an absence of exotic style or exuberance. The architectural effect being gained from structural rather than decorative effects, and the contrast with the earlier period is the more marked for this. The later (1517) building of the Pavilion and the Royal Apartments brings about a re-introduction of picturesque naturalism and sees the growing influence of the Arruda brothers, who are known for the adoption and propagation of the mudejar style in Alentejan architecture.

#### A Torrê de Belem (the Tower of Belem)

Situated seawards from Jeronimos, on the shore of the estuary of the Rio Tejo, the *Torrê de Belem* was constructed under the architectural control of Francisco de Arruda between 1515 and 1519. The tower provided a defensive emplacement for the port of Lisbon, and commands a view over the Lisboetan littoral as far East as the Alfama, which itself is overlooked by the *Castelo de São Jorge*. Whilst the military significance of the tower is now gone, the general area still retains its strategic importance, housing a small gun emplacement which commands the same defensive position and offers a protective line of fire across the mouth of the

estuary.

Not only did the tower have a military function, but stylistically it is one of the more important manueline art works, mainly due to its drawing together of what might loosely be termed 'oriental' with nautical themes, and thereby enhancing the link between the Discoveries and a sense of the exotic. This sense of the exotic is derived from Arruda's use of the dome, verandah and balcony. The use of rope work effects shows the conceptual linkage with the Arrudas' work at Tomar, but the main inspiration for the tower is the Castle at Beja, a thirteenth century structure which bears remarkable similarities of proportion to the tower. Both buildings had defensive roles and consequently both use their balconies to offer extensive views across the surrounding areas. Just as Beja commanded the eastern frontier, the Alentejan Plain with its traffic from Évora - a royal seat - to Spain, so Belem commanded the Western frontier, out into the Atlantic and onwards past Sagres towards Africa.

For dos Santos the tower is like a ship anchored at sea, the Crosses of Christ like shields surrounding the hull representing the spiritual defences of the port. Overall the effect is not dissimilar to the Venetian elision of the Eastern and the Gothic in architecture.

"Reminiscences of the Venetian Lagoon seem to glimmer on the waters of the Restelo in the blood red tints of sunset."

Defensively, the Tower of Belem marks the desire of the

Portuguese to exclude alien elements and prevent them from entering the realm. Architecturally it has precisely the opposite function in giving material witness to the fusion of indigenous and alien cultures which is so characteristic of the Manueline period.

## SCULPTURE

In comparison to architecture, Portuguese sculpture of the manueline period is not greatly developed. Peres (1948) suggests that the attraction of employment in the activities associated with the Discoveries drew many indigenous Portuguese away from such work, with the result that foreign help was enlisted. Especially at the end of the fifteenth century this involved mainly Nordic, Galician, French (Loreto), and Biscayan (J. and d. Castilho). The dominant indigenous sculptor of the period, Pires -o- Moço worked mainly in central and Northern Portugal. The numerically and stylistically most influential sculptor was the plateresque Nicolas Chanterene, who introduced Renaissance themes into Portugal, and who worked at Jeronimos, Alcobaca, Coimbra, Sintra and Braga. His work is most obvious in the Western Portal of Jeronimos, in which are depicted the King and Queen and scenes from the Nativity of Christ, including an Adoration of the Magi Kings. The significance of Chanterene's achievement lies in his having successfully blended Renaissance themes into the general development of the manueline style.

The more renowned Southern Portal of Jeronimos was originally the work of João de Castilho. Recent scholarship (Atanazio 1984) suggests that both the Western and Southern Portals have been much altered since their original construction. In the case of the Southern Portal, with the exception of the figures of Dom Henrique (Henry the Navigator), Dom

Manuel and the Queen (whether this is D.Maria or D.Leonor - the former dying in 1517 and the latter becoming Queen in 1518 - is a point of dispute), all decoration is the result of later, revivalist additions.

Diogo Pires -o- Moço (Diogo Pires the Younger) continued the work of Diogo Pires -o- Velho ((the Elder), and may even have been his son. He was active from 1491 to approximately 1530. Nowadays certain works are attributed to him in part because he sometimes took the unusual step of signing them. His main work, the tomb of Diogo de Azambuja, in the *Igreja dos Anjos* (Church of the Angels), Montemor -o- Velho near Coimbra, consists of a continuation of gothic themes which accentuate naturalistic decoration with notions of the gold trade and commerce in Africa. (Methodological aside here : despite hours spent waiting in the hot sun for the old lady with the key, the church was not opened for me ; only written descriptions have so far been located of this work, there are apparently no photographic plates in the Portuguese art literature. This is also true for another work by the same artist, the sculptures which decorate the tomb of Frei João Coelho in the *Igreja do Leça do Balio*; and also the baptismal font and cross in the same church. Here the key holder was seen legging it across the grounds, to the dismay of the priest who had given up his only key because he was ill. The key-holder did not appear within a 'reasonable' time, and his behaviour suggests that he was ensconced in some nearby hostelry, waiting for the foreigner to go away.)

The tomb of Fernão Teles de Meneses in *São Marcos de*



*Tentúgal* (the church of St. Mark in Tentúgal) near Coimbra - and not in Tentúgal at all but some kilometers away, much to the apparent mystification of local inhabitants when asked for São Marcos - is decorated with a frieze in which the central figure is a black African head with a vine in its mouth and the hands clasped onto the vine, almost as in a state of bondage [plate XIX page 474]. Closer inspection reveals that to the right of the head is a figure having the attributes both of a small human adult and of a monkey. These figures are surrounded by naturalistic motifs. The major problem of associating this piece with the development of the manueline style is that it is found in a church built later in the sixteenth century, during the time of Dom Sebastian. There are, however, stylistic similarities between this piece and the baptismal font of the *Sé Velha* (Old Cathedral) of Coimbra. This has naturalistic motifs, but also includes in the decoration the figures of two angels which are ambiguously given features suggestive of black African faces. The similarities between these two pieces are strong enough for it to be considered possible that Pires -o- Moço at least had a formative influence upon the tomb in Tentúgal, even if that was a later product.

The significance of Diogo Pires -o- Moço is his development of a peculiarly Portuguese approach to sculpture, which recognises the renaissance contribution of Chanterene, but modifies it so as ultimately to refute it, preferring to elaborate upon the exotic, the naturalistic and the commercial in a celebration of the African dimension of the

Discoveries.

#### O Convento do Cristo, Tomar (Christ's Convent in Tomar)

Christ's Convent in Tomar was initially built in the twelfth century, at which time it consisted of the *Rotunda dos Templarios, Charola* (the round chapel of the Templars), which was modelled on the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem. The Charola is an octagonal structure which was later decorated by sixteenth century artists. The Knights Templar are said to have attended on horseback throughout the services held in this chapel. During the fourteenth century persecution of the Templars initiated by Philip the Fair and ultimately supported by Pope Clement V, the Portuguese arm of the Order was protected by Dom Dinis, and in 1320 renamed as the *Ordem Militar dos Cavaleiros de Nosso Senhor Jesus Christo* (Military Order of the Knights of our Lord Jesus Christ). In 1334 the Order based itself at Tomar, which remained its headquarters until the Order was disbanded in 1834. The Portuguese monarchy took a prominent role in the affairs of the Order, and despite its virtual elimination North of the Pyrenees, in Portugal the Order prospered. Indeed the caravels of the Discoveries bore the emblem of the Order, the Cross of Christ, on their mainsails, and the cross became integrated into the general themes of manueline decoration. The Templars' involvement in the Discoveries was marked by the construction of the manueline nave onto the West facade of the original Rotunda, and it is with this nave and its

decorative details that we are mainly concerned in this study.

It is of interest to note that the Convent of Christ has mirrored the fortunes of the Portuguese nation in its own fortunes. When the crown of Portugal passed to Philip II of Spain, the coronation took place in the Palladian Cloister (known as the *Claustro dos Felipes*) whose gaunt austerity provides such a contrast with the exuberance of the manueline nave. The cloister, the work of Diogo de Torralva, was built in 1557 - 1566, before the Spanish domination began in 1580; however, the structure directly abuts the South façade of the nave, disregarding the architectural integrity of that edifice, literally cutting right into the fine decoration of the facade of the nave, preventing its appreciation. Indeed an architectural metaphor, and not a very subtle one either.

Later, in the early part of the nineteenth century, the Portuguese used the building as their military headquarters and garrison during the War of Oranges against Spain. When it was taken by the French in 1810, French soldiers were garrisoned in the Convent and inflicted great damage upon the interior. As Bridge and Lowndes (1949/1963) put it, the French were almost as destructive as more recent renovators. Now, the Rotunda is undergoing a full-scale renovation under the auspices of the 'Friends of the Convent of Christ'. It is thus inaccessible to visitors, being totally obscured by scaffolding, and having been radically stripped.

The most celebrated aspect of the Convent is Diogo de

Arruda's window, situated at the far Western end of the nave [plate VI page 360]. This was sculpted in 1510 and provides an iconographical depiction of the themes of naturalism and the sea, which are major themes in the manueline depiction of the Discoveries. As dos Santos states, the buttresses of the nave and the decoration of the windows are a grandiose conception of restlessness and exuberance which reflect Diogo de Arruda's visits to the Magreb. The obsession of both the Arruda twins with the plains and the sea turns the artists' dream into surrealist nightmares. The decoration of nave and windows contains cork trees and their powerful roots, oxen yokes with bells, tongues of fire, clusters of coral and seaweed, floats for fishing nets, stylised nave, cables, pulleys and knots.

"It is the most grandiloquent naturalism in all the 'Manueline' art, as if the nave at Tomar had not only the symbolic significance of St. Peter's, but also the realistic significance of Gama's ships returning laden with the magnificent spoils of the discoveries, and its hull covered with all the maritime flora of the Indian Seas. The planks of cork seem to serve as a protection to the ship as it comes alongside." dos Santos (1952):67

For dos Santos, as for many others, this is one of the most bold, original and glorious creations of the manueline style. The force of personality of the master, and the power of his creation, ultimately have to be constrained by the knots, chains, ropes and buckles.

The overall conception marks a distance between the

manueline and either the gothic or the renaissance styles - the nearest one can approach in periodising is to say that it contains its own exuberant barroquism - "*o seu barroquismo exuberante*".

There are some dissenting voices. Bridge and Lowndes emphasise the surrealism and nightmarish horror of the work.

"Some of the later Manueline is in fact frightfully ugly, and may honestly be recognised as such - one of the authors of this book, confronted for the first time with the monstrous exterior of the West window of the Church of Christ at Tomar, with its crazy wreathings of anchors and octopuses, felt physically sick, and had to go and sit somewhere out of sight of the stone insanity and be revived with brandy!" :3

On the other hand, Atanazio (1984), stresses the structural superficiality of the decoration and its lack of integration into either the architectural structure of the nave or the symbolic structure of manueline style. He complains that the window decorations are really only an afterthought, crossing structural boundaries, out of proportion with the aperture itself, cramped and crowded. He claims that the work is not pleasing or beautiful, and contrasts it "*com tudo quanto o Manuelino produziu de autentico*" (with all the real manueline achievements). Although he does not go so far as to deny its authenticity, he does deny its importance; it has been aggrandised by commentators and tourists alike - symbolically it is a more mundane piece than

formerly supposed - a rag-bag held together with ropes!

#### **Naturalism and Exoticism in Manueline Architecture and Sculpture:**

We have seen that certain distinct characteristics can be associated with Portuguese cultural achievements in the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries. These relate mainly to the penchant of the architects and sculptors for decorating the structures with a range of exotic naturalistic motifs, and also to embody a high regard for the superficial features of the mudejar techniques of construction and decoration. The major three dimensional manueline achievements all have about them an air of innovation, fluidity and an openness to alien products of both nature and culture.

It is not to be expected that there would be large scale and overt references to the Portuguese anthropology, nor that architecture would offer up direct clues as to the Portuguese forms of racial consciousness. What we do find, however, is evidence of a willingness to make public cultural statements concerning the propensity of the Portuguese to appropriate novel aspects of nature and culture in order to express their developing view of the world. In their naturalism and exoticism, Portuguese three dimensional artworks display a positive attitude towards the alien world, and suggest that domestic artistic activity did not seek to create a reactionary and narrow minded cultural insularity or ethnocentrism. Architecture especially was an area in which experimentation and

cerebration could take place in full public view. Its particular importance lies in the fact of its immediate connection to the ruling groups of Portuguese society at the time - the manueline style in architecture gives us a highly developed concretization of the ideas of the Portuguese hegemonic elite. For more direct and explicit representation of race consciousness we have to turn to the newly developing field of painting.

## PAINTING: The Portuguese Primitives

The bulk of the consideration of Portuguese painting of the manueline period will come in the next two chapters, which look at the specific contributions and achievements, and then consider the significance and implications of these representations for our understanding of Portuguese race consciousness. At this point, in order to retain a degree of balance with the foregoing part of this chapter, there comes a discursive and somewhat formal description of the major figures and schools involved in Manueline painting.

The one painter who is widely regarded as of consequence beyond Portugal itself is Nuno Gonçalves. He is attributed with the six panels of the Retable of *São Vicente de Fora*, Lisbon (now in *Museu Nacional de Arte Antiga, Lisboa* - hereafter referred to as MNAA Lisbon), a work which gives great attention to portraiture but departs from its probable Flemish influence by excluding a detailed treatment of its setting. To look at this retable is to be confronted by an almost overloaded series of human faces, relieved only by the detail of the clothing. Gonçalves, however, died in or before 1492, and therefore almost exactly departed the scene as the Manueline period was about to flower. As Smith (1968) states:

"His disappearance on the eve of the Manueline age left a void like that which had preceded him, for very little is known about Portuguese painting of the fifteenth century beyond the extraordinary achievement of Nuno Gonçalves..." :147



Lacking a well developed indigenous school of painting, the way was therefore open for foreigners to come to Portugal in order to take advantage of the wealth which could create patronage for artists. Foremost among those who made this move were the influential Flemish immigrants Francisco Henriques and Frei Carlos, both of whom were to become influenced by Portuguese styles, but who equally had a profound influence upon their adopted country's painting.

The Flemish influence was especially strong in the Lisboetan workshops of Jorge Afonso, which can be seen as one of the two major foci of the development of manueline painting. The other centre was to be found further North in Viseu, where the local Portuguese artist Vasco Fernandes, popularly known even today as Grão Vasco (Great Vasco), lived and worked. It was ultimately the Viseu school of painting which was to come to dominate people's perceptions of the nature of manueline painting. Indeed, until Raczynski questioned it in the nineteenth century, it seems that it was generally accepted that all Portuguese primitive painting was to be attributed to Grão Vasco.

Grão Vasco was born in approximately 1480 near to Viseu, and died in obscurity, and probably in poverty, also in Viseu some time in 1543, well after the close of the reign of Dom Manuel. Although most of the major attributions to him nowadays seem secure, his circumstances clearly illustrate the general lack of knowledge which still typifies our understanding of Manueline painting.

It is not possible to identify a 'Manueline' style of painting in the way one can for architecture and, to a lesser extent, sculpture. Whilst there is perceptible the influence of the Discoveries upon the styles and content of paintings in the early sixteenth century, the gross naturalism of Boytac's architectural decoration - the artichokes and cables for example - or Arruda's Window at Tomar, find no equal in Portuguese fine art. Neither can direct cross reference with the Italian High Renaissance artists be suggested. There is not the equivalent of a Michelangelo in the portrayal of the human form, neither is there a painter who is able to emulate the naturalism of Raphael. The main influence upon the Portuguese painters must be recognised as the Flemish, with Van Eyck's sojourn in Lisbon early in the fifteenth century as the foundation of a subtle and never very marked factor.

The subject matter of those surviving Portuguese paintings may have been more easily open to control than the architectural; paradoxically so, as it was more concrete in its form of representation. The painters were obliged to follow mainly Christian themes, and while architecture celebrated the achievements of the Navigators, painting lauded Christ. A major problem in the interpretation of Portuguese painting of this period, is that it appears to be about fifty to a hundred years behind other European fine art developments, whilst the other artistic and cultural developments of the period, and the impact of the Discoveries upon the attitude to scientific methods, would imply that the Portuguese were in the van of European cultural development.

Is this perception created by the selective recovery of say, only religious painting? That is to say that only religious art was safe in the keeping of the Church; but the work of Michelangelo and Raphael was also centred upon religious images. Of interest also is the relative lack not only of secular subject matter which might more adequately reflect the experiences of the navigators, but also an apparent lack of royal portraiture; thus, as far as one can tell, the likenesses of the King and Queen in this manueline period are quite infrequent. We should ask, then, why it is that there appears to be a relative lack of visual depiction of the period. In this sense we are obliged to refer generally to painters of the Manueline Period rather than of 'Manueline Painting'. In one sense, however, this is to underestimate the extent to which even the Christian iconography of these paintings acts as a culturally acceptable vehicle for the expression of royal interests, as will become clear from the consideration of the symbolic implications of the paintings in the subsequent two chapters.

#### The Viseu School

With Raczinski's realisation that Grão Vasco could not physically have managed to paint all the retables and altar pieces of the early sixteenth century, there came a general increase in the sophistication of knowledge concerning the paintings of this period. As with architecture, however, the field of fine art is dominated by relatively few art historians, amongst whom the doyen is Reynaldo dos Santos whose

work, although now somewhat dated, has defined the main lines of our present day knowledge. (Some caution is in order in accepting all the implications of his work as he wrote during the Salazar dictatorship which, as we have shown elsewhere in this study, did tend to elicit support for its own historical myths.)

It is now generally accepted that there were two major schools of painting in Portugal during this period - the Viseu School and the Lisbon School. In addition to Grão Vasco, the Viseu School grouped around Gaspar Vaz, João Piniz, Miguel Nuñez, Francisco Fernandes and the 'Master of the retablo of the Sé de Viseu' (Cathedral of Viseu). It is Grão Vasco who is pre-eminent in the Viseu School itself, and in the wider national scene.

" ...um dos mais poderosos e originais pintores portugueses da primeira metade de Quinhentos e, por certo, como a mais arreigadamente lusiada do periodo manuelino...já o artista se libertou por completo de influências estranhas e dea plena expressão ao gênio da terra que lhe foi berço, cultivando uma pintura não apenas de caracter nacional mas também até de tonalidade regional." Pamplona (1948):8

Fernandes' (i.e. Grão Vasco) first attributable work was

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<sup>7</sup> One of the most powerful and original Portuguese painters of the first half of the sixteenth century, amongst the outstanding painters of the manueline period...already the artist frees himself completely from foreign influence and gives full expression to the temperament of the land which was his birth-place, cultivating pictorial style not only national in character but also giving expression to regional subtleties.

the Retable of Lamego, painted for the Bishop of Lamego, Dom João Camelo Madureira, between 1506 and 1511; later, after 1520, he produced the '*Piéta e Santos*' tryptych now in Lisbon (MNAA). Then until 1535 there is no trace, after which time follows a period of activity including the sixteen panels of the Retable of the Church of Freixo d'Espada at Cinta, the now celebrated '*São Pedro*' of Viseu, and the *Pentecost* of Santa Cruz de Coimbra. It is also thought that Grão Vasco was the painter of the polyptych of the Sé de Viseu which includes the '*Adoração dos Reis Magos*' (Adoration of the Magi Kings)[frontispiece] now in Viseu Museum, a work significant for its depiction of Balthazar as a South American Indian, thus indicating the influence of the Discoveries upon theological speculation and artistic depiction. The series of panels is executed in generally dark and sombre colours, with a density of composition.

"Dans 'L'Adoration des Mages', le Roi Balthazar est un Indien du Brésil, inspiré par la découverte récente de ce pays. Le maître de Viseu est, par le lyrisme de son imagination, l'agitation passionnée de ses draperies, la rudesse de ses formes et le naturalisme de ses paysages, le premier grand maître (sic) de l'école portugaise liée à la Renaissance manueline." dos Santos (1953):19

Through his naturalism, sense of colour and sense of dramatic life, Grão Vasco brought together manueline themes with a sense of the Renaissance, and from the elements created a national Portuguese style. At times he collaborated

with Gaspar Vaz, whose *São Pedro* in the *Igreja do Mosteiro de São João de Tarouca* provides a gothic comparison with Grão Vasco's *St. Peter* in Viseu. Along with this painting is a *São Miguel Arcanjo*, which contains a representation of the Devil as a black man, although this was probably painted some time after the close of the manueline period.

Also associated with the Viseu School, and probably the only other painter of consequence based there to be relevant to this study, Miguel Nuñez painted retables in the *Misericórdia de Montemor -o- Velho*, the *Igreja Matriz de Sardoal*, and Celas. His '*Assunção da Virgem*', now housed in the *Museu Machado de Castro*, Coimbra, bears similarities with Botticelli's work.

#### The Lisbon School

This School of painters centred on the workshop of Jorge Afonso, appointed Painter Royal in 1508 and the expert inspector of all fine art for the King.

"Jorge Afonso deve ter sido o maior pintor daquele tempo e o mais decisiva influência exercue sobre os seus coevos." <sup>8</sup> Pamplona (1948):2

Yet, despite this pre-eminent position, no authenticated works of Jorge Afonso are known today. He is attributed with the panels of the Ambulatory of Tomar (Pamplona; dos Santos;

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<sup>8</sup> Jorge Afonso must be considered as the pre-eminent painter of his time, and to be the major influence upon his peers.

Smith), and with a retable in the Franciscan Nunnery of Madre de Deus, Lisboa, which is also the original site of the *Retabulo de Santa Auta*, indicating perhaps the same hand. These works display a background landscape which indicates a Flemish influence, and along with dos Santos we may note a monumentalism in the figures and a sense of material presence.

#### Francisco Henriques

Henriques is thought to have been Flemish by birth, probably named Frans Hendricks; he was brother-in-law to Jorge Afonso, one of the many family relationships which characterised the Lisbon studio. Active from 1500, he died of the Plague in 1518, having been ordered by Dom Manuel to remain at his post in Lisbon, even though the King himself was wont to go to Sintra and to Evora to escape the outbreaks of plague, a *peste*, which frequently hit Lisbon, and which still figured as an unhealthy city even in Byron's time.

Henrique's work forms a significant part of manueline painting, especially the polyptych of the *Altar-mor de São Francisco de Évora*. Amongst his works is the later '*O Inferno*' [plate I page 352, plate II page 354], which was finished shortly before he died. This depicts a surreal Hell in which dark skinned demons torture pale skinned humans before the gaze of the Devil - also dark skinned. Smith sees Henriques' style as characteristically offering a "sharp profile and jerky, insistent gestures...", whilst he also remarks upon the attention given to glass and pottery

vessels, silver and gold; necessary articles in the depiction of the Adoration of the Magi.

#### Frei Carlos

Another Fleming, but active rather later than Francisco Henriques, Carlos brought a profound Flemish influence to his work, but over time he became influenced by Portuguese style. Of his known paintings, the Polyptych of Espinheiro comprises a third of his output, which is characterised by a typically Flemish attention to detail in the backgrounds. His depiction of female faces emphasises softness of form in a manner reminiscent of Gerard David. Due to the period of his activity, however, it is difficult to view Frei Carlos as making a significant contribution to maneline painting.

#### Os Mestres de Ferreirim (The Masters of Ferreirim)

These three painters, Gregorio Lopes, Garçia Fernandes and Cristovão de Figueireido, represent the freeing of Portuguese primitive painting from its earlier, formative, Flemish influence, and they base their work essentially in Portuguese culture. Active from the final stages of the maneline period, they continued to work during the subsequent Joannine period. In fact Fernandes was exclusively active after the maneline period and is therefore excluded from consideration in this study.



### Cristovão de Figueireido

Prior to his association with Lopes and Fernandes, Figueireido worked in association with Francisco Henriques, but it was in his association with Lopes and Fernandes that he was to have the greatest influence. "Cette association domine toute la peinture portugaise de la première moitié du XVI siècle." dos Santos (1953):73

Amongst the works with which Figueireido is credited are included panels in all the major Portuguese centres e.g. Santa Cruz '*Ecce homo e Santa Cruz*'; Lisbon '*São Hippolyte e São André*' and a *Trindade* in Porto. He is also credited with having painted, or at least having strongly influenced, the works now known as by the Mestre de Sta. Auta [plate IX page 418] and the Mestre de São João, Mestre de São Bento and part of Mestre de Setúbal, Igreja de Jesus. This last painted in association with Lopes, and the São Bento series in association with Fernandes. São Bento comes slightly after the manelino period as strictly defined by the lifetime reign of Dom Manuel, although clearly it reflects influences of that time and style [plate VII page 414].

### Gregório Lopes

Although much of Lopes' work was completed during the Joannine period, he was in fact appointed Royal Painter to Dom Manuel on the demise of Jorge Afonso towards the end of Manuel's reign. His early collaboration with Figueireido is now, however, lost. He is thought to have painted four panels of the Setúbal polyptych, and perhaps to have collaborated with Figueireido on other panels of this significant work.

## Conclusion

Generally, the work of the Portuguese primitives can be said to develop from an early love of colour towards a later appreciation of subtler greys and browns. There is a realism in the depiction of backgrounds which are both natural and architectural; in addition there is a tendency to include landscapes and seascapes, thereby further revealing the Flemish influences felt in Portuguese primitive painting as it developed its own discrete identity. The Flemish style has a sense of monumentalism, but there is also an accent on portraiture. The Portuguese were attracted by the expression of feeling rather than form, and as dos Santos suggests, this means that Portuguese painting reveals the spirituality of the soul. There is a use of vibrant light, and a sense of romanticism. Dos Santos opposes Portuguese to Spanish painting in the following way:

"Au goût oriental qui prédomine dans la peinture du Levant espagnol s'oppose le sentiment occidental de la peinture portugaise, plus naturaliste, plus intime."

(1953)  
3

As dos Santos notes, Portuguese painting is "sweeter and more lyrical" than Spanish, which is in its turn mystical and dramatic; there is a sense in which this whole development is a form of romanticism before the event. Whether or not we agree with his deductions, dos Santos does successfully establish that Portuguese painting is a form in its own

right. This is a fact of some significance for our understanding of the interrelatedness of manueline art, Portuguese national self awareness and imperial adventures, together with the development of an anthropology which was enmeshed with a world view predicated on an acceptance of the exotic in both the natural and the human worlds.

PLATES VII - XIII

PLATE VII

*Adoração dos Reis Magos*

*O Mestre do Retábulo de São Bento ( G. Lopez ?)*



PLATE VIII

*Adoração dos Reis Magos*

*Mestre do Retábulo de Santos-o-Novo*

Monastery of Santos-o-Novo, Lisbon







PLATE IX

*Santa Ursula e o Principe Conan*

*Mestre de Santa Auta* - reverse of right-hand side panel



PLATE X

*Julgamento das Almas*

Lisbon, *Convento de São Bento*. Unknown painter (M.André ?)

PLATE XI

Detail of Plate X





PLATE XII

Detail: *Adoração dos Reis Magos*

Style of *Mestre de Sardoal*

10.1



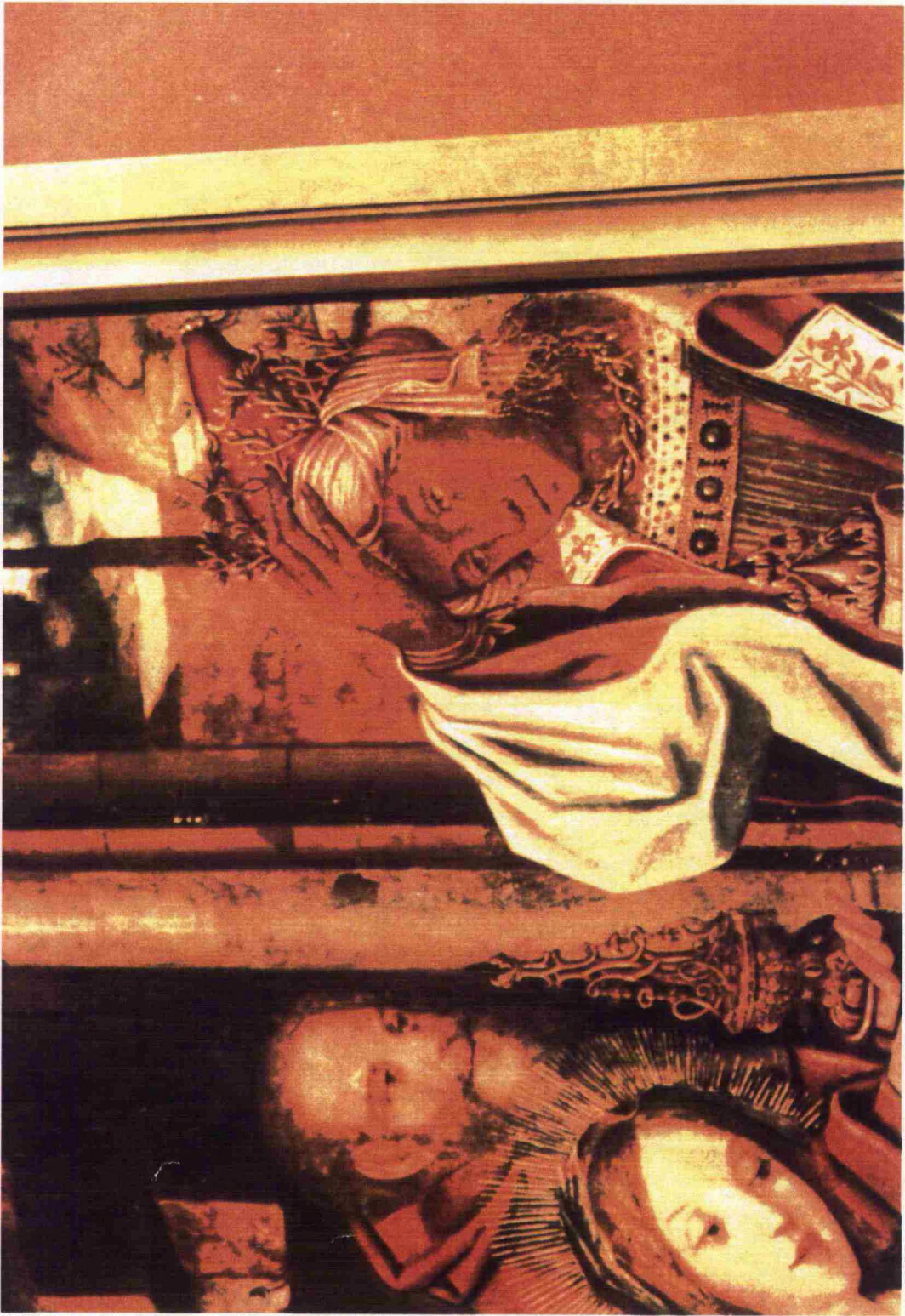


PLATE XIII

*Adoração dos Reis Magos*

Unknown painter. Housed MNAA







CHAPTER TEN:  
Epiphany and Epiphenomenon I

#### EPIPHANY AND EPIPHENOMENON I : Images of Black People in Portuguese Primitive Art

As a result of the peculiar historical experience of the development of Portuguese culture, the depiction of black people in the work of the Portuguese Primitives is noticeably formalised. Whilst there is a relatively pronounced propensity to paint black people, it should be noted that in most cases this takes the form of one of the three Magi Kings in the scene of the Adoration at Epiphany. This meant that the image of the black which was developed was high status, male, young and pious. Such images had about them a redolence of affluence and conspicuous consumption, youthful vigour and exotic colour.

It seems that as well as reflecting a predilection for the naturalistic and the exotic, Manueline art, but especially fine art, had available one specific image which was culturally legitimate and symbolically appropriate for an exploration of the interlinked themes of race and imperialism. The composition of the Adoration of the Magi brought together religious and secular themes which drew on a wider European cultural history. In particular it had developed in the context of the Holy Roman Empire which had lent to its treatment and iconographical significance a blend of religious and imperial universal aspiration, which was also appropriate to the Portuguese context in the period of the Discoveries.

However, in order to offer a satisfactory contextualisation of the dominant representation of black people in this period we have to see the story of the Magi Kings located in the overall iconographical structure of European Christian culture which provided a significant part of the material with which artists worked. Also, reflecting the notion of ambivalence which we have recognised in Portuguese culture of the period, it is important not to lose sight of the Islamic influence upon Portuguese art, in particular the proscription upon the making of graven images and Koranic attitudes to race.

The major art historical study of the depiction of the Magi Kings is that by Kaplan (1983) in which he charts the development of the image itself and also the variety of associated themes and images which contribute towards an understanding of European artistic portrayal of blacks in the medieval period. Kaplan's study offers a massive overview and in itself runs to more than a thousand pages. However it cannot do more than help in setting up an understanding of the background to the Portuguese situation since its main focus is upon the contrasting Italian and North-West European traditions, giving only a brief and rather simplistic treatment of the Portuguese context. It is not unfair to view Kaplan's study as focussing mainly upon the Germanic developments which he sees as influencing the general European attitude; but it cannot be claimed that this adequately addresses the Portuguese cultural context other than by showing the route by which one element in the composition

came to Portugal. However, Kaplan does offer the basis for an understanding of the complexity of the image of the Magi, paralleling in many ways the treatment offered in Devisse et al "Image of the Black in Western Art", Volume 2 part 2.

To a much greater extent than Byzantine culture, early medieval Western Christendom was characterised by a degree of xenophobia. The Carolingian Empire had lacked an explicit theory of universal sovereignty and it was not until the First Crusade that Western European geo-political perspectives were raised above and beyond the sub-continent. This meant that West European Christians now had to countenance not just their proximity to Islam, but also began to hypothesise upon what lay beyond Islam itself. Whilst Byzantine art included frequent images of black people, this was much more uncommon in the West, where we can see black images as either negative and derogatory or as positive and offering an affirmation of the human and spiritual worth of black people. For Kaplan, the one necessarily entails the other;

"Where black figures are concerned, saint is never too far from demon in European thought..." :208

Blacks appeared as demons, executioners, onlookers at the Crucifixion, as servants and as slaves. However systematic anti-black sentiment is located by Kaplan as beginning as recently as the 15th and 16th Centuries. In stating this he is following Snowden's formulation of the extent of racism in classical culture (Snowden 1970), a point

somewhat disputed by Devisse et al.

Certain biblical stories provided contexts within which European attitudes towards black people could develop; amongst those which are most commonly thought of as relevant in this context are Pentecost, the Song of Songs and the Epiphany.

#### **Pentecost:**

Interpretation of the story of Pentecost (Acts 2:1-30) suggests an ambiguity between the diversity of tongues (glossae) and of peoples (phylae). According to Kaplan's account, the Byzantine renderings of Pentecost readily stressed the diversity of peoples, whilst such an option was not chosen in the West. The reason for this lay in the differing views which the two churches had towards their perceived missions of evangelism, each reflecting the differing geo-political situations in which they found themselves. The Byzantine church could justifiably expect to evangelise black people since Byzantium was located in relatively close proximity to black Africans and had regular trade and other contacts with them. Such was not the experience of the Western Church.

Modern scholarship identifies the story of Pentecost with Luke and suggests a relatively late origin for the text. The main actor cited in the body of the text itself is Peter, and the events form a possible basis of a programme to evangelise all the world, rather than just the Jews of the Diaspora, for reasons outlined below. Either interpretation

is possible from a naive reading of the text.

" 2.And suddenly there came from heaven a sound as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting.

3.And there appeared to them tongues forking out, as of fire; and it sat upon each one of them.

4.And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance.

5.Now there were dwelling at Jerusalem Jews, devout men, from every nation under heaven.

6.And when this sound came, the crowd gathered and were bewildered, because every man heard them speaking in his own language...

(and Peter said)...

20.The sun shall be turned into darkness and the moon into blood."

Amongst those gathered around are the Medes and Elamites, and the Cretans and Arabians. Haenchen (1971) suggests that the Medes and Elamites would represent for the original writer the names of "the remotest possible peoples - 'even unto the ends of the Earth'". However the Cretans and Arabians are thought by Haenchen to be later additions intended to include Paul's missionary activities (cited in Tit. 1.5 and Gal 1.17), the original nations being twelve in number. Without the benefit of modern scholarship, however, the medieval Western European Christians were faced with an

injunction to evangelise even the peoples and nations whose voices were initially comprised in Babel, but who were now resolved into the equality of potential believers. With their sights set on an Islamic enemy, and with Jerusalem their goal, the presence of the Arabians in the text meant that Pentecost was an unfolding drama in which Western Europe had become involved, and that subsequent events concerning European expansion had a biblical reference point.

As Kaplan suggests, it was only a matter of time before historical events would underline the distinction between glossae and phylae; the equality of all potential converts, black and white, was implicit in the biblical text; Pentecost could be interpreted either as a mono-racial or a multi-racial narrative. It was the context that would determine which. For the Portuguese, the references to Arabians, the experience of Islamic domination and the Christian resettlement of Western Iberia must have seemed to be foreshadowed in Peter's words (v.20) when he cites Joel. "The sun shall be turned into darkness and the moon into blood."

Kaplan suggests that neo-platonic attitudes had a strong impact upon early Christianity, finding much significance in the "sacred characteristics of light, elevating and transforming the primeval fear of the dark into an abstract theological principle". In this way religious and racial concerns became intermixed in the classical bequest to Christianity.

"An early Christian hostility to blacks as part of the non-Roman and therefore 'uncivilised' world was soon transformed into a characterisation of the Islamic world which emphasised its most unfamiliar (to Europeans) racial component: blacks. The idea that many Moslems were black was no fantasy; it was rather an accurate evaluation of the great success Islam had enjoyed in converting both West African and East African blacks during the Middle Ages. The Christian hostility toward Islam thus easily spilled over onto blacks in general, despite the existence of powerful legends and real evidence that at least some blacks were Christian."

:158

Islam was thus a powerful enemy and a potential source of converts whilst at the same time, at least for sections of white Europe, coming to symbolise, and to be symbolised by, racial diversity and black skin.

#### Song of Songs:

The Vulgate, the version of the Bible accepted as authoritative by Rome since the 4th Century, has the bride in the Song of Songs describe herself as follows, "*Nigra sum, sed formosa*," ( I am black but beautiful). Such a reading would be that which was widely available throughout Europe for many hundreds of years prior to the period with which we are here concerned, and for several centuries thereafter as well. Indeed this is still the basis of modern Portuguese translations, e.g. 1842 '*Biblia Sagrada -Traduizo em*



*Portuguez segundo a vulgata Latina pelo Padre Antonio Pereira de Figueiredo* which has "Eu sou trigueira, mas formosa" ( I am swarthy but beautiful), whilst the British and Foreign Bible Society ( *Sociedade Biblica Britannica e Estrangeira - Traduzia en Portuguez por João Ferreira D'Almeida 1923*) has "Eu sou morena, mas agradavel..." ( I am dark-skinned but pleasant).

These versions based on the Vulgate, and reflected in the English translations such as King James and Revised Standard Version, depend upon Jerome's re-interpretation of the Septuagint, which has "black am I and beautiful". In its turn this is a re-working of the earlier Jewish text which, whilst it contains neither "but" nor "and" - these not being available - is expressed in the adversitive and therefore indicates that Jerome's translation is probably nearer to the original.

Kaplan, following Snowden(1970), stresses the ambiguity of the two readings; and whilst this allows us to appreciate Origen's view that the text read ' *nigra sum et speciosa*', it does not detract from the authoritative version available in Portugal. This would certainly have read ' I am black but comely' and the Portuguese faithful could draw their own conclusions that even though a black person could be beautiful, it was a point which needed remarking since blackness might be seen to interfere with beauty.

For Kaplan, the association of Solomon and Sheba, the descendants of Noah and their descendants Ham, Cush and Saba, create an inter-relationship in which medieval iconography,

from the late twelfth century onwards, links Sheba and the Magi; and whilst the Queen of Sheba herself is not depicted as authentically black, she is attended by black servants, and is sometimes depicted with the facial features of a white woman but coloured in black. The themes of the Magi, the 'exotic', and blackness become inevitably associated in West European iconography, and though it is Kaplan's contention that from the thirteenth century blacks were inevitably associated with the Queen of Sheba, it is from the fifteenth century, especially the period between 1430-1460, that the West European representation of the Magi inevitably includes a black king. It was at this time that the iconographical significance of the themes entailed in the Adoration of the Magi became enmeshed in the interpretation and portrayal of the European, and especially the Portuguese, discovery of the hitherto little known world beyond Europe. This:

"...enabled European images of the *Adoration* in the later 15th Century to represent fully that exotically cosmic meaning of the Magian pilgrimage which had for political reasons become so important to theologians and artists." :137

Whilst other Biblical and also non-theological treatments of black representation contributed towards a shaping of the European artistic ideas, it was in the precise context of the Adoration of the Magi Kings that the far flung discoveries and geo-political innovations of the late fifteenth century and the early sixteenth century were

sedimented into artistic form. Some treatment of the historical process whereby this took place is therefore now appropriate immediately prior to the cataloguing of Manueline Primitive paintings depicting black people.

### The Adoration of the Magi: An effortless transformation?

In 1164 the relics of the three kings were brought from Milan to Cologne by the Emperor Frederick Barbarossa; from this time onwards Cologne became the capital of the Magian cult. At various times the Holy Roman Empire was seen by the Emperor of the day as a power base from which imperial ambitions and adventures could be launched. In particular, the Emperors Frederick II and Charles IV, albeit historically well separated, shared notions of the universal reach of their sovereignty, taking this to imply that black as well as white were to be seen as legitimate potential subjects. At such times imperial ambition and racial tolerance were mutually sustaining.

"Transnational empires have often paid at least lip-service to the concept of universal brotherhood. It was apparently Alexander the Great who first introduced the concept of 'homonoia' - the idea that all humans are brothers - in Western culture." (Kaplan):28

This idea was developed by the Romans and picked up by the early Christians - to reappear with the Holy Roman Empire and later as an issue in the debate concerning Portuguese imperial activity with which this study is centrally concerned.

Furthermore, the Hohenstaufen elite, and especially Frederick II, were inclined to value highly the services of black retainers. In the case of Frederick, a former black

slave by the name of Johannes Maurus rose to a position of great power and prestige as Chamberlain in the Imperial court. Kaplan claims that his carved portrait at Lucera is the first known portrait of a black in post-antique Western art.

Both transhistorical and idiosyncratic elements combined to give the depiction of black people a legitimacy in the iconography of the Holy Roman Empire which was to come down through history, exerting its influence not only upon the German art of the Renaissance in such works as those of Dürer, but also through Flemish art and ultimately into Portugal, where artists had developed close links with the fifteenth century Flemish School, and in some cases were themselves of Flemish origin, as we have already seen.

As well as the German dimension, the Adoration of the Magi encapsulates the European fascination, and dealings, with the ruler of Ethiopia, the legendary Prester John. The Ethiopians had long since occupied a special place in Christian thinking, being considered by the early Church Fathers as potential converts, and thereafter representing both a source of exoticism and a target for evangelism. After the First Crusade West European speculation on the type of culture to be found beyond Islam began to focus upon the person of the Emperor of Ethiopia as an embodiment of non-European Christian piety who might ultimately help in the Christian encircling of the Moslem powers. In Kaplan's view:

"Unfortunately, the art of this period, because of its

orientation towards biblical and hagiological subject matter, could not provide much opportunity to depict the Prester, except on maps and in illuminated manuscripts of travel literature. European culture overcame this difficulty by a transposition. In a very profound sense, the black Magus/King, whose history in art closely follows that of the African Prester in literature, is the visual expression of his quasi-historical colleague." :248

Increasing contact took place between European countries and Ethiopia, especially in the context of the Church Councils of the 1430's and 1440's at Basel and Florence, which sought to construct an ecumenical alliance between Rome, Byzantium and Ethiopia against Islam. It is surely no coincidence that we find the first "undeniably and originally black" king in an Adoration in the firmly dated *Wurzack Altarpiece* created by Hans Multscher in 1437. The Portuguese contributions to the Church Councils promoted consideration of the significance of black conversion to Christianity - these issues raised especially by the Count of Ourem and Andrea de Escobar. At Basel the Council mediated between Portuguese and Castilian claims for West Africa, and subsequently in the 1450's the Church actively promoted the Portuguese navigational activities in the hope that they would lead to an outflanking of Islam and the establishment of contact with Prester John's Ethiopia. Thus the Papal Bulls of 1452 (*Dum Diversas*), 1455 (*Romanus Pontifex*) and 1456

(Inter Caetera) reflect this attitude:

"Thence many Guineamen and other negroes, taken by force, and some by barter of unprohibited articles, or by other lawful contract of purchase, have been sent to the said kingdoms. A large number of these have been converted to the Catholic faith, and it is hoped, by the help of divine mercy, that if such progress be continued with them, either those people will be converted to the faith or at least the souls of many of them will be gained for Christ." Romanus Pontifex 8.1.1455, cited by Boxer (1969)

The Portuguese discoveries, with their consequent treasure of 'black gold', were thus the focus of the European contacts with black peoples. Kaplan sees the irony in the fact that it was in attempting to reach the potential Ethiopian ally that black enslavement became a possibility and a reality.

"The impact of all these events on the treatment of blacks in visual imagery was, although indirect, considerable: the immense popularity of the black Magus/King after 1450 must be due in part to this surge of ecclesiastical diplomatic activity with Ethiopia, and perhaps also to a more complex reaction to the news of the Portuguese discoveries and the human treasures which they supplied." 1473

Lastly we shall consider Kaplan's treatment of the

implications of the Portuguese enslavement of black people for the iconography of the black Magus/King. Kaplan's judgement is that prior to 1500, European culture had not formed a derogatory attitude towards black people. However, as the Portuguese discoveries began to have an impact upon Western knowledge and attitudes, and as black slavery began to gain economic as well as spiritual significance, the context of ideas began to shift.

"The fact that, until the very end of this period (*i.e. to 1550*) most European slaves were not black, the increasing naturalism of the visual arts and their interest in accurate portrayals of ethnicity, and the persistent belief in the existence of pious Christian blacks who might assist the beleaguered West, all contributed to this state of affairs. When these conditions began to change, Gomez de Zurara's racist account of the curse of blackness began to assume an ominous importance."<sup>473</sup>

As stated in Chapter Six of this study, Zurara was Chronicler to Dom Henrique (Henry the Navigator) and his accounts are generally considered privileged. In fact his attitude towards black people is more in the spirit of evangelistic fervour than racist intent. Kaplan, however, cites Lewis as suggesting that racist views were held amongst such artists and writers as Mas'udi, Maqdisi, Sa'id al-Andalusi and Ibn Khaldun. Zurara is thought by Kaplan to have expanded an Islamic notion concerning the curse of Ham being



realised in the servitude of blacks, but if we look at Ibn Khaldun, for example, we find that his theory of blackness has an environmental thrust, more in tune with the bride of the Song of Songs - scorched by the sun - than with Noah's curse on his son.

"To attribute the blackness of negroes to Ham, reveals disregard of the true nature of heat and cold and of the influence they exercise upon the climate and upon the creatures that come into being in it. The black skin common to the inhabitants of the First and Second zones is the result of the composition of the air in which they live, and which comes about under the influence of the greatly increased heat in the South. The sun is at its zenith there twice a year at short intervals. In all seasons, the sun is in culmination for a long time. The light of the sun, therefore, is plentiful. People there go through a very severe summer, and their skins turn black because of the excessive heat...a white skin is...likewise the result of the composition of the air."

Ibn Khaldun  
:60

It was the ambiguity and ambivalence of the European attitude to Portuguese enslavement of black people which gave energy to the depiction of one of the Magi Kings as black. (This notion of a discrepant energisation of the black Magus is treated in detail in the subsequent chapter of this study). The apparent Portuguese motivation in undertaking the

voyages of discovery has been expressed as the search for gold and Prester John (Boxer 1969). Kaplan suggests that the reality was black gold and Prester John. Against Kaplan we should see that such an ambiguity is, of course, to be found in the mind of the twentieth century observer, rather than in the motivation of the Portuguese. From the Portuguese perspective, their actions were quite consistent with a desire to evangelise; black slavery was not the enslavement of black people qua black, but as the available commodity, given the existing geo-political and religious constellation of the period. Whilst Kaplan is undoubtedly correct in his assessment of the significance of the black Magus/King "as a convenient means of disguising and deflecting consideration of the dilemma of black slavery on the popular religious level",<sup>458</sup> this is not a totally adequate explanation since, as we have seen earlier, commissions for painting were not the province of the population at large, but were undertaken at the highest levels of society by the most powerful people, both within the Church and the Monarchy.

Despite this reservation, Kaplan's caustic comments on the Portuguese attitudes in all this deserve attention because they do again remind us of the characteristic of ambiguity which has been remarked upon already in this study during the consideration of the position of Portuguese culture vis a vis the wider European context.

"The Portuguese artist and his audience were evidently not disturbed by the contrast between the slave status of living blacks and the African sovereign in the

Adoration; faces surely modelled on slaves are frequently given to the young Magus. These effortless transformations demonstrate the paradox that the favourable iconography of blackness in the Magi story was not at all inconsistent with brutal treatment of blacks; if anything, it may have provided a means of exorcising the doubts caused by the enslavement of Africans." :556

Kaplan's attention to the Portuguese situation is, however, brief, and the view advanced here is that the Adoration of the Magi Kings marks for Portuguese art and society of the Manueline Period a condensed symbol of the imperial power and aspirations of the society, the material riches flowing from that position and the human diversity which it had revealed. The image is one of universal piety and subservience in the presence of nascent sovereign power; it is a celebration of domination by the faithful and a reiteration of the power of men in imperial manoeuvrings, but above all it is a geo-political and diplomatic world-view which is embodied in the figures of the Epiphany as they appear in many of the Portuguese paintings of the Adoration of the Magi Kings - *A Adoração dos Reis Magos*.

### Catalogue of Manueline Paintings Depicting Images of Black People

It is noteworthy that in all of Kaplan's detailed and authoritative treatment of the iconographical history of the depiction of black people in West European art, his treatment of the Portuguese situation, so central to his analysis, runs to only a brief descriptive passage citing the Mestre de Sardoal and suggesting, further, that the influence of the Antwerp mannerists and Dürer can be discerned. This lack of detail of the actual Portuguese art works contrasts with a fuller evaluation of the significance of Portugal's position as the vanguard of the European discovery and exploitation of Africa and the Indian Ocean.

"...at the turn of the Century (16th) the nation's new wealth created a flourishing environment for the arts, and *Adorations* containing black Magi soon abound." :556

Having concentrated upon Northern Europe in his formal analysis, Kaplan clearly had few resources left to apply to a more detailed review of the Portuguese artistic scene, although he does go into greater detail concerning Spain. A part of the explanation for this would seem to be in the accessibility of materials in the public domain pertaining to the two countries - Spanish culture having been more closely studied, whilst the focus of interest regarding the history of the Portuguese achievements of this period is placed upon the Discoveries themselves and not upon the indigenous

Portuguese cultural achievements.

The treatment by Devisse et al. (1979 Vol. II part II) is no less unbalanced. In a volume running to nearly 2,000 pages the few lines given to Portuguese art seem inadequate; and yet we can also find this relative lack of detailed treatment in other works such as that of Kubler & Soria. It has to be conceded that much of the dilemma of the treatment of the art history of Portugal arises from the generally inadequate knowledge we now have of even the most fundamental details, such as the identity of the painter of any given work. This arises from the fact that Portuguese painting was relatively undeveloped in the fifteenth century and only really began to become established with the influx of imperial wealth. Paintings have gained their identity not from those who painted them, nor even from those who commissioned them, but from the place in which they were hung - necessarily so, since this was long the only detail available. It might be suggested that Portuguese art history has moved from the nineteenth century position of ignorance, in which all paintings were attributed to Grão Vasco, to one of informed ignorance, in which it is recognised that very little is known for certain. This does at least make possible a step forward towards a more secure knowledge base at some time in the future.

Devisse et al. characterise the Portuguese *Adorations* as follows, and it is possible to quote in full.

"Another homogeneous group, also relatively abundant, appeared at the same time in Lisbon. It was intended to

supply the "home market" and did not enjoy the international distribution of the Antwerp *Adorations*. This is the first time we have had occasion to discuss Portuguese art, which did not, in fact, enter upon the European scene until after 1500. These *Adorations* were produced within a short span of time. They are characterized by a marked rigidity in the composition (being closer in this respect to the Germanic than to the Flemish model) and also by a remarkably keen psychological insight, which gives each picture its own personality. The Portuguese group surpasses the Antwerp production in the luxury of its details, the sumptuous costuming, the overabundance of jewelry. Whereas the work of the Antwerp mannerists gives a feeling of whimsical fancy dress, in the Portuguese paintings one is impressed by the display of the new riches brought in by the Discoveries. The black is always given a prominent place: his image shows careful observation and the wish to express good feeling toward a visibly familiar figure, so well is his presence as an individual rendered by the artists. As in Mantegna's work, the black King is often kneeling - a formula also met with, but more sporadically, in the Germanic areas and rarely in the Low Countries." :185

To reiterate, this is the total attention paid to Portuguese *Adorations* in a series of works running to nearly 2,000 pages.

1 A Adoração dos Reis Magos (The Adoration of the Magi Kings)

1 i) Style of the Mestre do Sardoal (Master of Sardoal)  
[detail of black king in plate XII page 422]

This painting is now housed in the MNAA Lisbon; it is suggested by Kaplan as being perhaps the earliest of the *Adoration* paintings in Portugal, mainly because of the simplicity of the style. Kaplan's dating of circa 1500 is possibly accurate, but the oeuvre of the Mestre do Sardoal consists of some 30+ paintings which stretch over a period from approximately 1495 to 1525. Soria suggests that the Mestre do Sardoal shows stylistic references to the Viséu studio of Vasco Fernandes, which might place his work towards the later part of the period. Sardoal itself is, however, close to Tomar, and we could look to Jorge Afonso's work in the Charola de Tomar to have had an influence. Pamplona suggests that it is in fact Miguel Nunes who is responsible for the Sardoal Series.

Commentators are agreed that Sardoal does not display the overt Flemish influence which might be expected of an early contribution to the Portuguese Primitive cycle of *Adorations*; instead he is variously described as "rustic" (Soria) and "German" (Kaplan).

The plate included shows that Sardoal clearly attaches greater importance to the figures and interrelationships of the *Adoration* than to the background or setting, (although we should note the tree of life, transformed into a crucifix,

in the arch). The contiguity of Joseph, Mary, the baby Jesus and the two kings Caspar and Melchior provide a contrast with the figure of Balthazar. His positioning suggests that he stands apart from the ensemble by the column, and this feeling is enhanced by the way in which his complexion is little differentiated from the parched earth of the background, suggesting his origins in torrid climes. The fact that he is standing - like Joseph - may call us to question his centrality and importance. However, the gesture which he is making, apparently to take off his headgear in honour and submission to the baby Jesus, is significant. Also of importance is the gaze of the three kings, which does not follow the common triangular structure, but which looks out towards a point on the viewer's left, presumably resting upon a further feature to be found in another of the series from which this painting is taken.

Balthazar's clothes are white and red with green and flesh coloured contrasts; there is golden embroidery upon his cloak. Whilst the white of the cloak may indicate purity, the red is similar to that in Joseph's cloak and may indicate deception. Balthazar is adorned with gold and jewels, although his bracelet and necklace implicitly evoke the chains of slavery, and his headgear the crown of thorns.

On Balthazar's racial type, we note that it cannot be taken as clearly Arabic or black African, rather he is a "white" European whose features have been rendered darker to contrast markedly with the very pale skin of Mary and Jesus.



He is clean shaven, a feature of other depictions of black men in this cycle, in contrast to many of the white men who are shown with beards.

Finally, we should note the accuracy of Soria's characterisation of the portrayal of faces in the Sardoal Series.

"The faces, generally in three-quarter view, show oblique eyebrows forming a Y with the sharp thin edge of the nose. Heavy-lidded, slit eyes are set in oval faces with small chins and broad cheeks."<sup>332</sup>

This is especially true for the depiction of Mary's face.

1 ii) Mestre do Retabulo de Santos-o-Novo [plate VIII page 416]

Now housed in the MNAA, this *Adoration* forms a part of a polyptych painted as the altarpiece of the Convent of Santos-o-Novo in Lisbon. Whilst the retable is not specifically attributed by the MNAA, except as titled here, Soria strongly affirms this as the work of Gregorio Lopez - and dates it as later than the Manueline Period. He sees this as the finest of all Lopez's altarpieces.

"Its panels are most inventive and refreshing. The interior scenes show a new concept of space. The unity of Afonso's Renaissance style has been transformed into a decorative, ornamental type of architecture. Texture is valued more and more...spatial clarity is negated in

a search for heightened emotion. Every square inch of paint substance becomes interesting in the russet-and-salmon tomb overgrown with lichen and guarded by grotesque dragons (The Resurrection). Rhythmic white highlights applied like silverpoint drawing were Lopez's forte, and carry an emotional charge."<sup>136</sup>

Similar to this *Adoration*, and part of the same polyptych, is an *Adoração dos Pastores no Presépio* in which at least one of the shepherds is painted with a very dark complexion. Although both paintings come from a period slightly later than that which is our main concern in this study, they can be remarked upon for their continuation of the portrayal of black and swarthy subjects by means of the darkening of essentially 'white' features. The exception to this is the thickening of the lips of the black Magus King. It seems that Lopez was by now more concerned with style than with content, and with emotionalism rather than with naturalism.

1 iii) Mestre do Retabulo de São Bento [plate VII page 414]

Painted early 1520's, probably late Manueline but possibly early Joannine; origin Capela de Nossa Senhora dos Prazeres, Mosteiro de São Bento da Saude; now housed in MNAA. There is some disagreement concerning this painting. The official catalogue (Couto 1956) gives it to Lopez, whilst Dos Santos (1953) suggests that it is probably the work of Figueireido and Fernandes, along with the other São Bento paintings of the *Visitation*, *Presentation at the Temple*, and

*Jesus and the Doctors*. Soria firmly attributes the work to Garcia Fernandes, along with the Sta.Auta Polyptych.

The São Bento *Adoração* is noteworthy particularly because the black King is accompanied by a black attendant. Here, the King is not clean shaven (as is his attendant) but shows the beginnings of a moustache and other facial hair. He is resplendent in high necked red robe decorated with gold stitching. With bejewelled gold earrings and a heavy gold bracelet, set off against a flowing gown of white and gold, the black King is an embodiment of affluence and the display of wealth. The composition has the King turned away from Mary and Jesus, towards the outstretched arms of his servant, who is proffering Balthazar's gift. It is as if the rightful role of this King is not to show full piety but to demonstrate his allegiance to his sovereign lord by the giving of gifts and the submission of his wealth. Indeed, his pose is not kneeling, as are the other two Kings in this scene, but half squatting, straight-backed. We see in this figure a celebration of youth and power.

This image appears to be based upon the description of Prester John given by Alvares(1961), the official Portuguese Embassy to Ethiopia, from an audience on the 19th of November 1520.

"The Prester was dressed in a rich mantle of brocade, and silk shirts of wide sleeves which looked like pelotes. From his knees downwards, he had a rich cloth well spread out like a Bishop's apron, and he was sitting as they paint God the Father on the wall...In age,

complexion, and stature, he is a young man, not very black. His complexion might be chestnut or bay, not very dark in colour; he is very much a man of breeding, of middling stature; they said that he was twenty-three years of age, and he looks like that, his face is round, the eyes large, the nose high in the middle, and his beard is beginning to grow."(as quoted in Devisse et al. Vol.II no.II,) :22<sup>8</sup>

The military significance of this black king is emphasised by the very obvious hilt of his sword which projects outwards, as he squats down, and in so doing points directly at Mary and Jesus. Remarkably, the sword is worn for left-handed use; were it on the more usual right-hand side, it would be hidden from view and also lack any apparent connection with Mary and Jesus. For her part, Mary almost appears to be moving her left hand onto the hilt. In the Portuguese language a sword-hilt, '*guarda-mão*', or '*guarda*', has a second connotation of a defensive, custodial or protective role, or even further denoting a body of military men. If we accept that this is Prester John who is depicted as the black king, then the significance of his turning to his servant may also indicate the man as a gift, that is to say, the provision of military assistance to the Christians against Islam. The servant is wearing a type of leather jerkin, or armour. The whole feeling of military presence being further stressed by the swords of the central figures, the soldiers above the head of Balthazar, in the distance, and the lances top left.

The São Bento *Adoração* stresses muted colours and only uses bright colour for Balthazar's cloak, Joseph's clothing, and the two red marble pillars with golden capitals and bases which stand between them. Columns were traditionally used to represent the Passion (Child & Colles 1971); columns were also traditional to the Nativity setting and were often used as supports for Mary. In this case however, the columns are more likely to signify the Pillars of Hercules. These were the high points of Mount Calpe (Gibraltar) and Mount Abyla (in the Atlas Mountains) which Hercules tore apart, thus creating access into the Western Mediterranean. Given this, the central positioning of the black king, along with the clerics pointing fingers - which indicate the king rather than the infant Jesus - all suggest that this painting is an important statement of Portuguese diplomatic interests. The significance of this painting cannot therefore be underestimated.

1) iv) Unknown Master: Early 16th Century *Adoração dos Reis Magos* [plate XIII page 424] Housed in MNAA

Although without attribution, certain similarities in the treatment of the golden jewelry worn by the kings, and in the composition of the Virgin's face, indicate that this painting might be by the same hand as that which produced the Sardoal series (1i above). Against this, we have to recognise that the depiction of the other faces does not accord with Sardoal's Y-shaped visage, and this may lead us to conclude more than one influence.

In this painting there is a fairly accurate depiction of the African facial features, not only of Balthazar, but also of his two attendants. Balthazar is closest to the infant Jesus, whilst Mary, on the right-hand side of the composition, is effectively rested up against the pillar of the arch. Through the arch - the pillars of which may, as with São Bento, be taken as the twin pillars of Hercules - stream the military masses of the Orient. The Oriental presence is pronounced in this *Adoração*, especially with the turbaned heads of the soldiers looking on in the background.

Colour does not play a pre-dominant role, which rather stresses the political and diplomatic themes of São Bento, but in a visually less pleasing way.

1) v) *Mestre do Retabulo da Capela-mor da Sé de Viseu*  
[frontispiece]

This painting, now housed in the Museu de Grão Vasco, in Viseu, was painted some time between 1501 and 1506. It has attained a degree of renown for the way in which the figure of Balthazar has been rendered as a Brazilian Indian - Brazil having been 'discovered' in 1500 by Cabral and his men.

The eye is attracted to the painting not only for its figures, but also for the vivid colours which the artist has employed, reminding the viewer of the treatment of many of the paintings in the Setúbal Retable. Particularly brilliant colours are used in Melchior's cloak and hose - reflecting the court dress of the Portuguese *fidalgos* - and we may even suggest that Melchior bears a facial likeness to Dom Manuel

himself. By contrast, Joseph's red coat pales into insignificance, and he is left vying for our attention with the ass in the stable. Joseph's appearance in this painting renders him a younger man than in other realisations, but he is still of a grizzled and somewhat unusual appearance, seeming to be neither black nor white, but intermediate; is this deliberate, or an ideosyncratic re-interpretation of a figure who is intended essentially as a weather beaten rustic?

Balthazar, yet again, is portrayed as an active young man. His very pose, near to Melchior's doffed hat and Joseph's hands steadying Caspar's gift, lends a sense of movement and vitality to the painting.

Strangely enough, the nearest we can come to a similar composition is an engraving by Teodoro de Bry ( in the book "Indiae Orientalis" ) of native inhabitants of the Congo in the sixteenth century [ plate XIV page 468]. This treatment is typical of sixteenth century portrayals of savage cannibalism, and whilst the ostensible subject matter of the two paintings is very different - the one the *Adoração* , the other of warriors, the shooting of fowl and the butchering of human flesh - the similarity of the poses of Melchior and the Indian with the spear; of the legs of the same Indian, and those of Balthazar; and of the legs of the warrior with the cleaver, with those of Melchior, should be noted. We can also see a facial similarity between the last-mentioned warrior and Joseph. Finally, we might observe the similarity of the

stable in the *Adoração* with the butcher's hut in the engraving. If we gaze for too long at the contents of the butcher's slab and then look quickly to the *Adoração*, we see more bare flesh, and now the slab upon which Caspar has placed his hat takes on an altogether more threatening potentiality.

Viewing the two pictures together may, or may not, be legitimate, but they certainly do seem to have great similarities. de Bry's engraving lends a sense of mortality to the setting of the *Adoração*; it renders the infant Jesus vulnerable and reinforces the prophetic elements of the gifts. The painter of the Epiphany was possibly simply extending the exoticism of the now established treatment of Balthazar - celebrating the Portuguese Discoveries - and even in this the painting is a remarkable work, but if we accept that some pictorial evidence would have been viewed prior to its execution, then greater interpretational possibilities exist.

1 vi) Retábulo da Sé de Évora [plate XVIII page 472]

Housed in the Évora Museum, this painting forms part of a polyptych depicting the life of the Virgin. It is understood to have been painted locally, and is attributed by Soria to Francisco Henriques. The paintings are traditionally seen as the work of the Flemish school, and this accords with the possibility that this is the work of Francisco Henriques, who was probably of Flemish extraction (Frans Hendricks).

Comparing this painting with the *Adoração* of the Retable



of Viseu (1v above), we can feel a greater sense of calm and composure in the work. Indeed, the impression created by the painting is one of self-conscious composition, with the figures apparently motionless and their features drawn without depth. Having said this, however, we should also note that the African features of Balthazar are quite accurately drawn. The overall impression of the painting is created by the folds of the fabric which cover each figure almost as if heavy brocades had been draped abundantly around them.

Displayed on the figure of Balthazar is the Tree of Life, which is used to decorate his tunic. This contrasts in its fullness with the rough-hewn shaft immediately behind him. The Tree of Life on Balthazar's tunic evokes the vast reaches of humanity; its coming to fruition on the breast of a black African King, set against a cloth of regal gold and highlighted in royal purple, indicates a sense of the common origin of all humanity. Balthazar is to be seen as a part of a wider and greater whole. By contrast, the pruned trunk behind him evokes the Tree of Jesse, of which is said in Isaiah (11 1-3): "*Egredietur virga de radice Jesse.*" (A shoot shall grow from the stock of Jesse.)

This device, which was not uncommon amongst Netherlandish painters of the Renaissance, not only reinforces the sense of a genealogical link between the three kings, but has additional relevance for the Adoration itself, since the similarity between 'virgo' and 'virga' caused some medieval commentators to see here a prefiguring of the virgin birth. The Tree of Life is linked in Christian iconography

with the Ansated Cross (a cross surmounted by a loop) in which the Egyptian hieroglyph 'ankh' is used as a symbol of life. This type of cross, which suggests that the Tree of Life is the 'True' Cross, is thereby associated with the Coptic Church, from which Balthazar was formerly thought to have come. Moreover, the main issue of the trunk is not a branch, but a straight timber, suggesting the work of a human hand and indicating the Crucifixion.

A final speculative possibility is to be found in the wounds left on the trunk; the surface of the trunk is dark brown and, being placed in such close proximity to Balthazar's face, we can see his colour in the bark of the tree. However, where the branches have been cut away to reveal the substance of the wood we find that it is much lighter, almost the colour of the skin of the whites present in the scene. Could it be that this is a sixteenth century statement declaring a common humanity, and that the difference between peoples is only skin deep? If we admit such a possibility, then the *Adoração dos Reis Magos* of the Mestre do Retábulo da Sé de Évora is significant in indicating a remarkable level of racial tolerance within Portuguese culture.

1 vii) 16th Century Portuguese School - Évora [plate XX page 476]

Housed in the municipal museum of the town of its origin. Painted by an unknown hand, this *Adoração* presents a

rather more stylised image of the black king than is found in the other versions. The king is located at the rear of the scene, almost rendered marginal. He is not a party to the central interaction between the infant Jesus, who is reaching out to accept the devotion of Caspar, and the gift of Melchior. Instead, the black Balthazar offers a poorly drawn impression of an African, and closer inspection shows this to be a clumsy likeness, for whilst the facial portrayal has the appropriate flat nose and thick lips, the overall structure of representation is poorly executed. If such a face can be said to show any emotion or character at all, then it is a mixture of sadness and stupidity. The most significant aspect of this unhappy figure is to be found in the golden chain which lies loosely around Balthazar's neck and then hangs down across his chest. Without doubt this chain is a reflection of the chains of slavery and bondage, shackled upon the black Africans by the Portuguese development of the slave trade.

The contrast with the *Adorações* discussed above could not be greater - here is no youthful, active harbinger of succour for the mother Church against the ranks of Islam - here is a clumsily drawn and pathetic figure, marginalised, robbed of humanity, who wears as adornment the chains of slavery; chains whose ironic value is revealed in their golden substance, a calculated and calculative contrast with the iron fetters worn by his fellow Africans.

1 ix) Mestre de Setúbal [no plates; see text]

The polyptych of the main altar of the *Igreja de Jesus*, Setúbal, has been magnificently restored and is now appropriately housed in the setting of the *Museu de Setúbal*, in the cloisters attached to the church. Photography of the paintings is not permitted, and published likenesses have as yet to be located, and it is possible that none such exist.

The authorship of the 14 panels is thought to be a joint achievement, with contributions from Gregorio Lopes and Christovão de Figueireido; Lopes being thought responsible for the *Alegrias da Virgem*, although different panels show different patterns of collaboration. This polyptych is recognised as a major contribution to early sixteenth century Portuguese painting, the main inspiration being thought by Soria to have come from Jorge Afonso. The panels are notable for their sense of depth and movement, and whilst they may lack the luminosity found in other contemporary works, they do have a striking intensity of colour.

The black Balthazar of the Setúbal series is an accurately drawn figure who is raising his headgear in a sign of fealty to the infant Jesus. Although he stands as the furthest of the three Magi Kings, he is not excluded from the focus of the painting as in the Évora *Adoração* (lvii above). He is an esteemed human being, present in surroundings in which luxury and civility have tamed the brutality of nature.

There is a contrast between the controlled piety and mannered attitudes of the Setúbal *Epiphany* and the scene of carnage depicted in another panel in the series *The Martyrdom*.

*of the Saints in Morocco*. This second panel, in which Christian saints are brutally done to death by Moslem executioners, bears a resemblance between its treatment of the black executioner and the depiction of Balthazar in the *Adoração*. In the *Martírio* the dark skin of the executioner contrasts clearly with the pale skin of the martyrs, and his colour is enhanced by the apricot tinted tunic he wears. Both blacks are in a standing position, leaning forward with their right hands raised, and whilst Balthazar doffs his headgear, the executioner wields a heavy, dark scimitar with which to strike an already grievously wounded Christian saint.

The two panels show the ambiguity of the Portuguese attitudes towards Africans - fearing their intolerance whilst at the same time looking to admit black Christians into their world. These divergent views reflect the different expectations and experiences of the Portuguese as they developed ever deeper and more complex relationships with the peoples of Africa; it shows an ability to distinguish a variety of non-white roles, and it also reveals the significance of religion in providing a frame for Portuguese images of black Africans.

1 x) *Madre de Deus Adoração dos Reis Magos*; 1 xi) *Adoração dos Reis Magos*

These paintings are found in reproduction in *Devisse* (vol.II,part II). They are included in *Devisse* both because of their similarity, and because they show good likenesses of young, black, male faces.

2 Other early 16th Century Portuguese paintings including images of black people

2 i) Santa Auta [plate XIX page 474]

Thought to have been painted by Christovão de Figueireido, this retable consists of three panels, the two side panels being painted on both faces. This work is now housed in MNAA Lisboa, but was formerly in the Convent of Madre de Deus. The relics of Sta.Auta were placed there on receipt by Queen Leonor on 12th September 1517. The panels were cut to permit their installation in the building.

The central panel, *Martírio das onze mil Virgens*, shows a scene of violent death in which young Christian women are hacked to death and shot by Huns (who in this version appear to look like Moors). In the background a number of Portuguese naval vessels lie at anchor, whilst others in full sail show fore, aft and broadsides. This is, then, a testament to the Discoveries, showing both the religious motivation and the naval technology which made them possible (see Law 1986). dos Santos sees direct parallels with the work *Manueline Ships* now housed in the Maritime Museum, Greenwich, London.

However, of the panels of the Retable of Sta.Auta, that which depicts *Sta.Ursula e o Principe Conan* has attracted the attention of Saunders (1982) and of Kaplan, who see the six black musicians as a continuation of an older theme, illustrating a document of 1239 "wherein five young blacks are commanded to learn the trumpet so that they may play at Frederick II's Court". Although the musicians are not of

central importance to the painting, they have attained a degree of renown in art commentaries as one of the few depictions of young black males in a secular setting. Their visual similarity to a 20th Century black jazz band may also have not a little importance in this.

2 ii) *O Inferno* [plate I page 352, plate II page 354]

Housed In MNAA, Lisboa. This painting is officially without attribution, but is thought to be by Francisco Henriques.

Kaplan contends that the early European depiction of devils, demons, or Satan, as black, did not present a systematic racism. *O Inferno* - which should perhaps be contrasted with Bosch's *Garden of Earthly Delights* - has the black figure as demon and torturer, with the suffering soul as inescapably pale. It is a matter of judgement as to whether the transsexual devils of this painting are intended seriously to explore the notion of African sinfulness, which seems most unlikely, or whether they represent a variation on the long established theme of the forces of darkness and evil. Taken with the above mentioned paintings dealing with Christian martyrdom, this work suggests a preoccupation with suffering, and interjects into this theme considerations of the relationships between gender groups in Portuguese society.

2 iii) São Tiago [plate XV page 468]

The paintings of São Tiago (St. James) by Christovão de Figueireido show scenes from St. James' missionary activities in Spain and Jerusalem. In *São Tiago Combatendo os Infieis*, St. James is shown attacking an Islamic warrior, whilst in *São Tiago e Hermogenes*, St. James is shown outside Jerusalem as he converts the magician Hermogenes, who has at each shoulder the dark form of a devil. Meanwhile São Tiago stands with his traditional sword. A further painting shows the remains of São Tiago, after his execution, being transported to Spain, where they are believed to have been laid to rest near to Compostella. As a place of pilgrimage from at least the tenth century, Compostella would have been known to the Portuguese. However, the association of São Tiago as the patron saint of Spain would have given these paintings special political significance when they were painted, because of the threat of Spanish domination of the Iberian Peninsula.

It is interesting to note that the scenes from São Tiago's life shown here involve relations between good and evil, depicted as between white-skinned and dark-skinned people. This further reinforces the notion that race consciousness in the early 16th Century Portuguese context can only be understood as an aspect of the religious and political structures of the society, and that 'race' was one way in which inter-cultural contact could be conceptualised. This theme will be studied in the next chapter.



2 iv) Julgamento das Almas [plates X and XI page 420]

This is a more traditionally conceived work, which has a very clear formal structure, hierarchically ordered. Considerations of the implications of the way in which racial differences are treated in this work are to be found in the next chapter.

PLATES XIV - XX

PLATE XIV

*Indiae Orientalis*

Engraving by T. de Bry (C16th)

PLATE XV

São Tiago e Hermogenes

C. de Figueiredo



Indienses do Canas no sítio XVI. Gravura de Theodor de Bry.

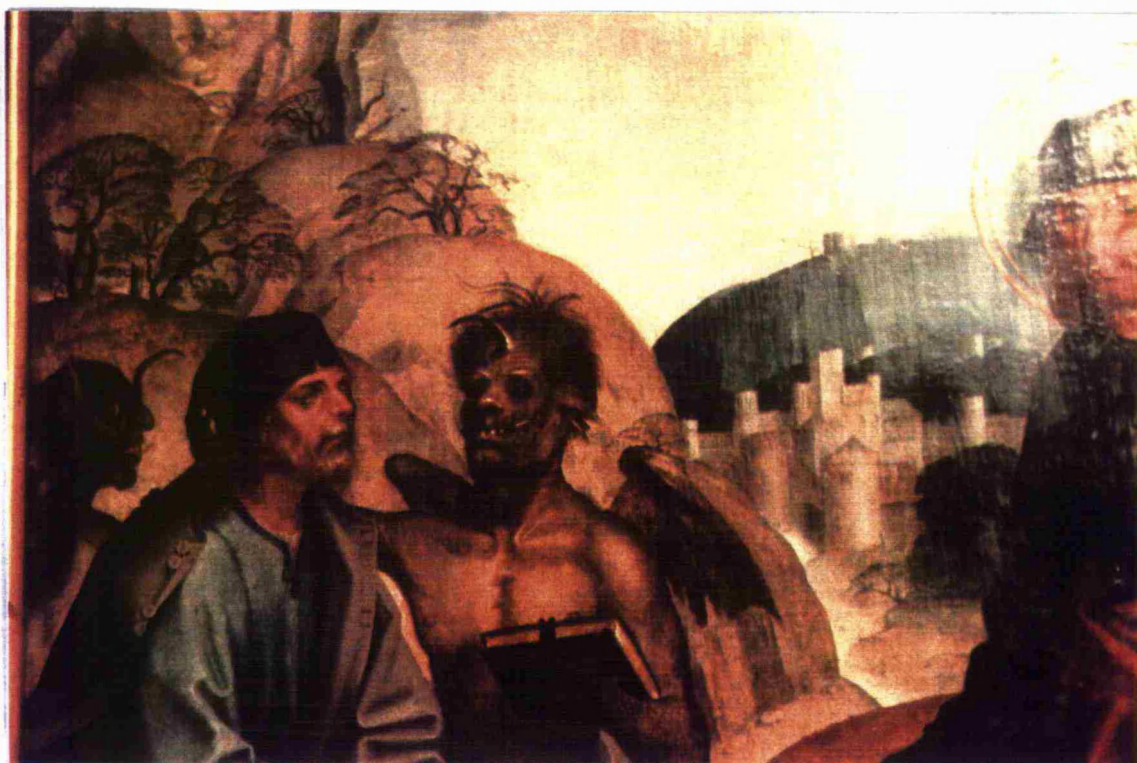


PLATE XVI

*A Deposição de Cristo no Tumúlo*

C. de Figueiredo

PLATE XVII

Detail of Plate XVI





PLATE XVIII

*Adoração dos Reis Magos*

*Retábulo da Sé de Évora*

Life of the Virgin Polyptych, Flemish style







PLATE XIX

Tomb of Fernão Teles de Meneses, Tentúgal.

Sculptor, Diogo Pires (the Younger?) - note monkey head to right



PLATE XX

Detail, *Adoração dos Reis Magos*.

Unknown painter. Evora Museum.





CHAPTER ELEVEN:  
Epiphany and Epiphenomenon II

## EPIPHANY AND EIPHENOMENON II: Formal Structure, Visual Ideology and Cultural Pluralism in the Manueline Style

This chapter examines the significance of the arguments presented earlier for our understanding of Portuguese consciousness of race, both as manifest and implied in the work of the Portuguese Primitives. In so doing it is necessary to evaluate the art products catalogued above; this evaluation initially takes account of the socio-historical factors impinging on Portuguese culture and is structured according to the formal analysis suggested by Wolfflin. The possibility of conceptualising Manueline art as a form of visual ideology is explored, concluding with a more focussed consideration of the kind of Portuguese racial consciousness thereby revealed - a culturally embedded phenomenon.

It should be noted that Manueline art products are characterised by a high level of internal consistency; the observation made earlier in this study that all Portuguese painting of this period was, until relatively recently, attributed to the one painter, Grão Vasco, is indicative of the superficial similarities to be found in much of the work, either at the level of style or of content. It is only in the latter half of the twentieth century that indigenous Portuguese art historians have begun to make attributions to a series of painters. Similarly with the tectonic arts of architecture and decorative sculpture, much progress has recently been made as a result of a developing sense of

historical perspective within Portuguese culture and society. The art historical works of R.Dos Santos and M.C.Mendes Atanazio have collectively redefined the fine and tectonic arts,"stripping away the layers of uninformed and speculative criticism which had sedimented in the arteries of Portuguese cultural critique. This is not to argue, however, that such a redefinition has been solely contemporaneous with the reconstruction of Portuguese society subsequent to the 1974 Revolution, since Dos Santos's contributions were made towards the latter part of the Salazar dictatorship.

We have, then, in the Manueline oeuvre, a series of cultural achievements having as an underlying characteristic a homogeneity which permits a level of generalisation to enter the analysis. Moreover, the paucity, in sheer numerical terms, of this accomplishment is also a factor in structuring our analysis. When compared with the Italian or German or Flemish output of the period, we see that Portuguese artists, probably accounting for at most a few hundred paintings, fewer extant buildings, and much less free standing sculpture and statuary, present the output of a compact and identifiable social grouping.

Our modern tendency to see two schools of painting (based respectively at Lisboa and at Viseu) is even now tempered with the knowledge that communication and creative co-operation took place both within the groups and between them, thus furthering the sense of cohesion and identity which was to emerge in the development of the Portuguese Primitive School. In architecture the dominance of the four

masters discussed previously, and the small number of structures erected, have to be viewed alongside the fact that there took place a good deal of co-operation and collaboration in the design and construction of many of the buildings. So we have to see the architectural development as even more public and processual in its nature than the pictorial, in that architectural achievement was not a once and for all creative act, but was an ongoing process in which the different masters made contributions to specific sites of construction and cultural creativity, either concurrently or, more usually, consecutively.

Consequently, if modern day art history in Portugal still seems unduly obsessed with problems of attribution, or displays an apparent lack of knowledge concerning the art products of this period, this should not give cause for surprise. The cohesion of the Primitives, themselves meeting the demands of the élite groups of Portuguese society, has deprived the contemporary commentator of much of the material required for the establishment and substantiation of better informed perspectives.

We should also note several further points which might account for this relative deficiency. The first of these being the natural catastrophe of the great earthquake which threw much of Lisbon to the ground some two hundred years ago. Important structures such as the Royal Palace were destroyed, along with lesser buildings, churches, houses and complete districts of the city. The toll of architectural structures was colossal, that of fine art is unknown and is



probably lost to history.

The second factor, cultural rather than geological, but no less profound in its significance, relates to the changing hierarchical structures of Portuguese society in the time since the Manueline period; probably the most significant of these changes being the Spanish domination of the late sixteenth century and early seventeenth century, the eighteenth century dictatorship of Pombal, ( a direct result of the earthquake ), and the twentieth century overthrow of the monarchy.

Whilst the Spanish domination probably opened up a siphon of cultural goods out of Portugal, we have no real idea of the extent of such an outflow. It does, however, seem likely that royal holdings would have been the target for appropriation or redistribution, rather than religious goods, and that such a pattern would typify the other periods mentioned above. This would reinforce the power of the Church, simply because of its continued incumbency at a time when the monarchy was in eclipse (the Pombaline Dictatorship), or was put out of power altogether ( Salazar). We might thus expect the effects of history to have acted as a cultural filter, and to have caused the loss of all but the non-moveable buildings of both crown and Church, and the moveable artworks of the Church.

Consideration of the artworks described especially in the preceding chapter leads us to conclude that whilst the hand of the royal power is strongly felt in the architectural inheritance, it is not as clearly identified in its own right

in the fine art products as a whole. However, the particular interests of this study have probably caused us to discriminate in favour of those art works in which the royal interests were represented, because the whole process of the Discoveries was so much entwined with the royal interests. Although such a distinction between Church and crown may not be viable at all levels, it does indicate to us reasons for the particular Manueline inheritance which we have today; it also suggests a structure of interpretation relevant to the notion of visual ideology outlined earlier.

#### Formal Characteristics of Manueline Fine Art Products

Wolfflin's General Representational Forms were seen to offer a key to the appreciation of a number of both general and specific factors. It was suggested that, overall, they can be deployed to indicate the extent to which a particular art work, or genre, subscribes to the 'Classical' and accords with its formal qualities, and they can also be used to suggest to us the 'national identity' which such a style supports and helps sustain. More specifically they can be used to indicate the structural and formal qualities of the artworks themselves. In the present analysis we shall work in the reverse order of these factors, indicating initially the more specific formal qualities before going on to suggest the significance of these in the identification of a Portuguese style. This visual ideology is then interrogated for its

direct and indirect relevance to our understanding of Portuguese race consciousness in the Manueline period.

#### The Linear and the Painterly

A number of commentators e.g. Smith, have suggested that there may be more than a small element of Baroque inspiration in Portuguese art. In the paintings described in chapter eight we find that there is evidence of both linear and painterly styles. *O Inferno* [plate I page 352, plate II page 354] and *Sta. Auta* [plate IX page 418] present us with a predominantly painterly style whilst the *Polyptych of the Mestre do Retabulo do Santos-o-Novo* [plate VIII page 416], and the *Mestre do Sardoal* [plate XII page 422] have an accentuation of line and a feeling of boundedness more typical of the linear. Likewise the *Polyptych of the Mestre de Setúbal* and the works of C. Figueireido [plate XV page 468, plate XVI page 470, plate XVII page 470] seem to emphasise the linear, whilst painterly influences are to be felt in the work of Grão Vasco and in the *Life of the Virgin Polyptych of the Retabulo da Sé de Évora* [plate XVIII page 472].

However, these distinctions must be tempered with the knowledge that in none of the works under consideration do we find the explicit linearity which Wölfflin found to be so typical of the early Renaissance and Classical art; neither do we find the opposite extreme of an abjuration of line in favour only of mass. These paintings, then, do not confront the viewer with a series of certainties, but neither do they invite the viewer to take up an imaginative response. Perhaps

the nearest we come to such an invitation to use our own imaginations is to be found in *O Inferno* [plate I page 352, plate II page 354] (heavily influenced by Van Eyck ), and *Julgamento das Almas* [plate X page 420, plate XI page 420] (Convento de São Bento ) both compositions which invite speculation in the twentieth century mind, but which might have confronted the contemporary spectator in the late fifteenth century with the received certainties of medieval Christianity.

Failure to locate a polar type of painterly or linear style does not invalidate the application of this measure, rather it points to the variation of Portuguese art from the main European artistic development of the period. Regarding the specific inference of a racial consciousness, we shall see presently that the lack of a positive mark of either polar type is significant in that we place the Portuguese style upon a continuum, rather than at an extreme. To discover neither extreme is, in effect, to find that Portuguese art neither closely followed the renaissance forms, nor took an explicitly oppositional position.

#### **Closed and Open Form**

By the time the Portuguese Primitives had begun to paint their own representations of the Adoration of the Magi, it had already become customary to focus upon the actual encounter of the Kings with the newborn Jesus and his earthly family (Kaplan). The procession of the retainers and camp-followers of the pious Kings had become mainly an adjunct.

The real substance of the depiction was to be found in the relationships contrived between the principals, both in their physical disposition vis a vis each other, and in the geometry of their glances. To the extent to which *Adorations* follow such a pattern we may see in them a leaning towards the more formal 'closed' or tectonic style, and by and large this is the case with the Portuguese *Adorações*, not only in the arrangement of the figures but also in the backgrounds which enclose them.

For example, the *São Bento Adoração* by Gregorio Lopez [plate VII page 414], is structured in a series of layers in what seems like a hierarchy proceeding away from the Mother and Child. Joseph skulks in the darkness whilst a row of Magi, and then their somewhat inconspicuous servants, line up along the side in the overt display of piety. Behind these is the row of clerics, accentuated in black, surmounted on the skyline by the lances and banners of the Portuguese nobility. Going beyond those inferences drawn from this painting in the foregoing chapter, we can see here the arrangement of various strata of Portuguese society; royalty and close court attendants, clerics, military, nobility; the qualities of the arrangement being more geological than architectonic. There is a sense also of the monumental in the pair of red marble columns - the twin pillars of Hercules - located on a massive plinth directly behind Mary.

In one aspect, however, "the breath of life which brings flux and movement into rigid form" (Wolfflin 1922) is to be found in the painting. This is in the movement of head and

hand by Balthazar, and the responding proffering of the golden salver by his servant. Here there is the sense of the infusion of animation into an otherwise rigidly arranged tableau. Neither can this sense of animation surrounding the black king be accidental since, as discussed previously, a major part of the meaning of the painting revolves around the pivotal importance of Prester John as the great hope of Western Christians seeking an outpost which would enable them both to succour the Mother Church and to encircle Islam.

Two further paintings which lay stress on the 'open' stylistic approach are Grão Vasco's *Adoração* [frontispiece] and the *Adoração* from the *Life of the Virgin Polyptych* from the Sé de Évora [plate XVIII page 472]. Both have a sense of fluency and naturalism way beyond other *Adorações* produced by the Portuguese Primitives. In the case of the Viseu *Adoração* [frontispiece] we have a celebration of the rustic which so exceeds the classical formulation that all parts of the painting seem to be in flux. There is here a real feeling of action; we are not treated to a static pose but to living human beings caught at some definite point in a succession of activities. It would not be too difficult to imagine Melchior raising his hat higher, Joseph taking the gift right away from Mary, or Balthazar moving further forward to pivot the feathered end of his spear in an arc. The leather thongs of his leggings are still flung out by, and accentuate, the bending of his knee before Mary. This painting has as little architectonic formalism amongst the figures as do the bricks in the wall of the stable. Here there is reality and action;

this is a dynamic world of real people.

On the other hand, whilst it still retains a typically Flemish approach, with less vibrant colour, the Évora *Life of the Virgin Polyptych* [plate XVIII page 472] also has a feeling of movement in process. Admittedly not as pronounced as that of the Viseu painting but enough to make us feel that the kings are moving towards the Madonna and Child. It is the figures of Mary, Jesus, and especially Joseph, which exemplify the staid monumentalism of the tectonic style.

We should perhaps take this opportunity to compare the gazes of the black kings in both paintings; Grão Vasco's black king is looking ahead and slightly upwards, with his lips apart, in an 'everyday' expression of interest. He is not cementing the triangular relationship of the gift giving but looks over Mary's head. In this painting only Joseph is looking at Mary. The three kings, as well as the ox and ass in the stable, are intent upon something out of the picture, we can only see the branch supporting the byre. Is this to be taken as an indication of the Cross, or do the figures gaze out at some point of interest to be assumed beyond the picture - the star perhaps, or the altar of the Cathedral of Viseu?

In contrast to Grão Vasco's cheerful and forward looking black king, the Balthazar of the Évora *Adoração* (Life of the Virgin Polyptych) is indeed miserable and pensive; were it not for his bright green cloak, he would almost appear as a sullen figure, perhaps not so sad as the black king in the Évora painting [plate XX page 476], but certainly not one

meeting his eternal saviour.

Reviewing all the plates available to this study we can see that in the depictions of the Epiphany there is a range of artistic response to the possibility of open or closed interpretations. Were we to generalise on this selection of paintings, then we might cautiously suggest that whilst the overall compositions tend towards a monumentalism and characteristically static figures, the discrete rendering of the black king and his helpers often serves to infiltrate movement and life into the paintings. Given this, the black king is certainly a potent symbol of a dynamic Portuguese anthropology. We have to question whether this is restricted to the paintings of the Epiphany, or whether it extends into other works as well.

#### Multiple unity and unified unity

We find in the works of the Portuguese Primitives examples of both of these forms. At its most clear there is a sense of multiple unity in, for example, Grão Vasco's *Adoração dos Reis Magos* [Frontispiece], whilst *O Inferno* [plate I page 352] or *Julgamento das Almas* [plate X page 420] present us with 'unified' integration of the subject matter by the overarching theme. By and large it might be objected that this part of Wolfflin's analysis is difficult to operationalise. However, it is our thesis that a reconsideration of the depiction of the black characters in the works described, especially in the Epiphanies, shows a peculiar pattern which gives a key to the Portuguese racial conscious-



ness of the time.

This pattern we might recognise as the emboldened treatment of the black king, who often takes a more dynamic role than do Caspar or Melchior. In illustration of this let us take the *São Bento Retable* [plate VII page 414], Grão Vasco's *Adoração* [Frontispiece]. In both these paintings we find the black king has a sense of movement and life which both highlights his physical presence and indicates a wider significance for his appearance. We know in these two paintings that this significance varies from the military and diplomatic hopes pinned upon Prester John to the shock of evangelical expectation aroused by the Portuguese discovery of Brazil. In both paintings the black king attracts the attention of the viewer who is caused to exercise a greater effort of interpretation in that part of the painting.

Across the whole range of Epiphanies which we have gathered together for this study, with the possible exception of the Évora 'slave king' [plate XX page 476], the black kings stand in a pool of enhanced meaning. In reflecting the geo-political and religious aspirations of a culture which had recently discovered in itself the capacity for hitherto undreamt achievement, the black king stood, sometimes knelt, as the symbol and key which would unlock Christianity from its Mediterranean cage. The opulence and vitality of these depictions, their sense of youthful power, suggest that within the Portuguese conception of humanity there existed a positive and valued role for black and brown people. This

role is cast according to the beliefs and requirements of the Portuguese élite and can be seen as part of an ideological interpretation of the world. In this sense the Portuguese Primitives offer elements of a visual ideology which encompasses a discrete form of racial consciousness.

### Beyond the Adoration of the Magi

The Portuguese Primitives chose to portray black people only in a limited number of contexts beyond the Adoration of the Magi, most of them having negative implications for the moral worth of those blacks so depicted. These paintings include *O Inferno* [plate I page 352, plate II page 354], *Julgamento das Almas* [plates X and XI page 420], and Figueireido's depiction of *São Tiago* [plate XV page 468], there is also an ambiguous reference in Figueireido's *A Deposição de Cristo no Túmulo* [plates XVI and XVII page 470]. In addition there is the panel of *Sta. Ursula e o Principe Conan* in the *Sta. Aute* Retable [plate IX page 418]. The sculptures of Pires can also be included in this consideration as they complement the pictorial image, and are very few in number.

*O Inferno* [plate I page 352, plate II page 354]: This painting is most unusually set as a kitchen scene. As was suggested earlier, this painting employs the medieval device of depicting demons as having dark skins. The devil at the back is a Brazilian Indian in medicine man's feathers. Are we to suppose that here is a reference to the conjunction of native cannibalism with the Portuguese consumption of Indian culture?

From amongst the tortured images conjured up by such a nightmarish vision, two specific figures are of great importance for this study; the torturer kneeling in the left

foreground, and the demon with what appears to be a pitchfork, whose image is shown in detail in plate II on page 354.

Both figures are drawn into the general questioning of gender boundaries which features in this work. The figure on the left appears not only as the darkest of the demons and torturers, but arguably as the most evil and depraved. This is because it is the figure closest to some semblance of human normality – the other evil-doers having tails, wings, horns, goats heads etc. For this figure, however, the distinguishing characteristics are dark skin and a primate like face. Here, then, evil comes not only as darkness, but also with simian features. The legacy of modern racism, informed by evolutionist theories, clearly makes us interpret such a figure very differently from the way it would have struck contemporaries of the painter. But with such hindsight we can see formulated here a conjunction of negative and derogatory anthropological images which will be picked up and developed in the most obscene forms in subsequent centuries.

The other figure is interesting in that it not only offers us an accent on transsexuality, but also appears to cross the boundaries between racial grouping based upon skin colour. As we look at the figure from head to foot, we find that the colour of its skin changes from the dark brown of the face to the much lighter skin of the thighs and calves. Now, as with all these figures, it is appreciated that the sense of demonic threat is generated by means of the violent desecration of the commonly held somatic norm images of the culture. How then are we to respond to such a transgression

of the internal boundaries of race consciousness? We are forced to conclude that the painter intended the breakdown of such boundaries to be experienced as a threat in itself. By disturbing the culturally accepted structure of anthropological knowledge the painter suggests a breakdown of the common structures of knowledge and a consequent vision of hell.

We may therefore speculate as to whether Kaplan is correct in his surmise that by the sixteenth century the darkness of the demonic threat is merely an empty and ritualistic artistic device. This painting, whilst possibly not racist in its explicit structure and content, does have very deep concerns for the cultural certainties founded upon a highly structured racial consciousness.

This is a most disturbing and threatening work which reaches into the collective dimension of the culture to gain access to the individual's unconscious fears. In its implications it goes beyond Bosch's *Garden of Earthly Delights*, offering threat where Bosch offers tender love play. Its transgression of the somatic conventions continues to exercise itself upon the modern mind and deepens our appreciation of the impact which the Portuguese discoveries must have had upon the collective sub-conscious of Western European society, and especially upon Portuguese culture. Boundaries were being broken, entries forced, and the holy of holies invaded and defiled; the certainties of centuries and the legacies of classical culture were now repeatedly being called into question, just when they were being called into play in other parts of the Mediterranean as the basis of the

Italian Renaissance (see Conclusion below).

**Julgamento das Almas:** [plates X and XI page 420]

Although on a similar theme, and having superficially similar treatment to *O Inferno* [plate I page 352], this painting presents to the twentieth century viewer neither a sense of threat, nor the deep questioning of major classifications of race and gender. Whilst we have the requisite demons stoking the fires of hell, their challenge to our sense of order is non-existent. This is because they are rendered marginal to the main architectonic structure of the painting which is erected as a superstructure having as the main focus of attention the risen Christ radiating glory. All else in the picture either bears in upon this focus in a radial fashion, or else is rendered marginal by the darkened plinth which draws a complete line across the lower third of the painting. There is about this composition a sense of overall order and intentional construction which contrasts markedly with the confusion and mayhem of *O Inferno*, and, in fact, we also note that it follows in the classical form of Last Judgements, having a traditional form and content.

In looking at this painting we note that the Kingdom of Heaven is the reserve of white people, and that darkness of skin is reserved for the demonic figures. But continued consideration of this work only serves to reinforce the notion that these demons are dark because of an acceptance of the traditional associations of darkness and not because of the disturbing effects of the Portuguese discoveries upon the

European consciousness.

Comparison of the formal qualities of these two paintings reveals the *Julgamento das Almas* as approximating more closely to the linear stylistic cluster of attributes, whilst *O Inferno* has about it the fluency of figure and form, and the subjectivist interpretation of content which we associate with the painterly cluster. It is thus instructive to note which painting has more effect, and which most closely evokes the unsettling effects of the Portuguese imperial adventure.

São Tiago e Hermogenes [plate XV page 468]  
São Tiago Combatendo os Infieis;

A similar conclusion would seem in order concerning the demons in the first of these paintings. However, the juxtaposition of the two does draw to our attention St. James' significance as the patron and emblem of the newly emergent nation of Spain, a country whose history was finding its historical and ideological justifications in terms of the Reconquista. We might thus legitimately claim to find a degree of commonality between the infidel and the demons in that both share in common their having worked against St. James, and consequently against the interests of a wider Iberian nationalism. This must raise the question as to whether Figueireido is drawing for us a conceptualisation of the enemies of Christendom as inspired by darker forces.

Portuguese ambiguity about the thrusting ambitions of its newly united co-religionist are massaged in these works. St. James' murder and the shipment of his body to Iberia underlines the dual threat felt by the Portuguese, from

Catholic Spain and from Islam. Even if Christendom can be triumphant, it is a vessel which can receive various contents. Nationalism and religion thus combine to complicate the conceptualisation of race in these paintings.

Figueireido's ambiguity is further underlined in his painting *A Deposição de Cristo no Tumúlo* [plate XVI, detail plate XVII page 470] (The Entombment of Christ), which was completed some years after the close of Manuel's reign. The feel of this painting suggests greater Flemish influence, especially in the use of colour and naturalistic background, although the device of a rectangular sarcophagus sited in the open air is a stylisation borrowed from the Italian Renaissance painters. However our interests lie with the brown cloaked figure only partially visible behind Mary.

This figure, at least what we can see of it, is possibly a woman, perhaps Mary Magdalene, although definitely a holy person. It is not impossible that this is an angel, although an angel of considerable importance since, if we look closely at the painting - and this is even more apparent with the original - this is very probably an African face. Here are the thick lips, the wide nostrils, and the darkened skin; not so dark as to suggest without possibility of doubt that this is a negress, but sufficiently ambivalent to indicate the presence of a black person sharing the suffering of Christ. Although hidden from view this figure draws our attention because of its resistance to interpretation, and because it has received no attention in other critical appreciations of this painting.



Sta.Auta [plate IX page 418]

The *Sta.Auta* Retable has achieved pre-eminence in the appreciation of the Portuguese Primitives. We may attribute this to the high quality of the work, but also to a sense in which the calm acceptance of the main figures finds an echo in the modern Portuguese acceptance of the division and destruction of the longest lasting modern European empire. If the retable celebrates Portuguese maritime power, it also provides a powerful metaphor for the return of Portuguese self-interest to the homeland after four centuries of overseas exploration and exploitation.

Additionally, the black musicians in the panel *Sta.Ursula e o Principe Conan* have attracted the attention of historians and commentators, who have been drawn by their sense of life, and by the desire to describe their instruments. In truth, however, we can see reflected in the appearance of these young men parallels to the way in which the Portuguese appropriated and re-shaped the alien peoples and cultures which they encountered. From the raised swords and scimitars of the central panel, the peoples of Africa now find in their hands the instruments of sweet entertainment. The uniformed appearance of these players, and the fact of their uniform blackness from amongst five scenes which otherwise pay scant attention to Africans, leaves us little alternative but to see created here an altogether more negative image of black Africans; regimented and powerless, capable of being a spectacle in and of themselves, they are indeed playing the Portuguese tune.

### Three dimensions:

The sculpture of Diogo Pires-o-Novo. *The font, Sé Velha, Coimbra*, attracts our attention both because it is a foremost piece of Manueline sculpture - renowned for its intricacies, and for the naturalistic decorations - but also, and more significantly, because the cherubim which form such a central part in supporting the coat of arms, appear on close inspection to be in the likeness of young Africans. As with some other interpretations, it might be objected that there is some degree of ambiguity and that these are really chubby white children. However, such an interpretation is as much speculation as the conclusion that these are indeed black Africans.

Pires is known for a penchant for the exotic, and it would not have been beyond the bounds of possibility for him to have used blacks for his models. This seems more likely when we see the *Tomb of Fernão Teles de Meneses*, in Tentúgal [plate XIX page 474], although this possibly post-dates the Manueline period. This not only has a facial depiction of a young black man holding a vine which is also clamped between his teeth, but, most extraordinarily - and recalling our discussion of *O Inferno* [plate I page 352] - it has another face and hand entwined in the frieze. This further face is of a monkey, and provides a poignant counterpoint to the central face. Is Pires literally aping the young black, or is such a connection more in the twentieth century interpretation? In the light of the 'positive' interpretation of the cherubs of Coimbra, we could reasonably deny this charge, but the

argument is open and the tomb of *Fernão Teles de Meneses* may be showing us an interpretation of profound racist intent. If this is so it might cause us to re-evaluate the Coimbra font and to see rather than black cherubs, heavenly black servants waiting upon the wishes of their earthly master, and showing due respect to him.

### Affinity or Diversity? The Portuguese Primitives and the Italian Renaissance.

If we take Wolfflin's conceptual pairs as guides to the formal structure of Portuguese art, we find that the Primitives cannot be said either to stand full square in the line of inheritance of the Classical tradition, or to be in opposition to it. There is no marked propensity for the accentuation of line, or for its depreciation. Whilst there is generally, though not always, an open approach to form, there is a predisposition towards multiplicity rather than unity within the paintings. This is yet further evidence of the ambiguity of Portuguese culture upon which we have already laid stress in this study; that it does not accord directly with either the classical or the non-classical. Of course, there is no reason why Wolfflin's analysis has to be paradigmatic, but it is useful in providing a measure against which the classicising tendencies of Portuguese art can be compared. The fact that we do not see a 'fit' with the formal model does suggest that the notion of a Portuguese Renascimento, distinct from the Italian Renaissance, is given added support (see Conclusion below).

### The implications of the formal analysis for an understanding of Portuguese racial consciousness:

In seeking to use formal structure as an indicative tool we have a number of dimensions which can be called upon to suggest the nature of the conceptual approach underlying the

work of the Portuguese Primitives. The linear and painterly pair, which is in fact generic, provides us with evidence of the extent to which the conceptualisation of a subject gives that subject a distinct individual identity or appropriates it to an overarching structure. The essentially linear places a clear focus upon the boundaries of the conceptualisation and is a style which emphasises edges; in so doing it creates centrality and marginality. By contrast the painterly style accentuates content at the expense of margin, substance and essence at the expense of form.

The closed and open pair reveal the extent of the visibility of skeletal structure in the sense of spatial organisation of the content of the painting as a theme in itself. Accentuation of structure is a correlate of, and derivative from, the awareness of the boundedness of objects found in the linear style; lines are drawn between objects and the objects are arranged in relationship to each other. In contra-distinction, the de-emphasis of margins in the painterly style indicates that it is an impression rather than a certainty which is being suggested. Lacking distinct boundaries, it becomes that much more difficult for the subjects to be arranged one against the other.

Finally, the types of unity register the extent to which the conceptual system underlying the painting is articulated on the wood or canvas. The heightened awareness of similarities and differences typical of multiple unification run in harmony with the other characteristics of the linear style, whilst the principle of unification is predicated upon a

notion of an integrated system.

When we take these three dimensions together they give us an awareness of the extent to which a painting is generated from a highly delineated conceptual schema; the more attributes of the linear which such an outlook maintains, the more 'object adequate' does the schema pretend to be. By contrast, painterliness as such does not deny the world of objects but rather bases its organising principles upon the subjective or intuitive response of the artist and viewer. The existence of such a dualism is quite clear in the twentieth century with object adequacy being an inherent feature of photography, whilst the intuitive response has become a major domain of the fine artist ( see for example: *The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction*, Benjamin 1970; *Art and its Objects*, Fyfe 1988 ). In sixteenth century Europe, however, this tension was held within fine art itself, with certain tensions pulling sculpture towards the emulation of realism and architecture towards abstraction, as discussed in detail previously.

In identifying the way in which such formal variations may enable specific forms of racial consciousness to develop, we can see immediately that the linear style is conducive to a perspective which identifies the boundedness of objects and subjects, and retains these discrete phenomena within an overall structure or conceptualisation which is predicated, and hence explicitly structured, upon the need to hold together discrete phenomena. This is not to say that the linear style is either necessarily conducive to, or express-

ive of, racism, nor to suggest that a capacity for such discrimination is exclusive to structures of consciousness associated with the linear, because the painterly style permits the distillation of a form of essentialism which can posit a characterisation at a level lower in specificity than that generated by the linear. For the painterly style, it is enough to hint at an essential characteristic, and with favourable circumstances the reader can supply the necessary background information and contextualisation to allow identifications to be made on a very narrow base of information. Forms of racial consciousness have to be assessed both within a formal and a contextualised frame. With the Portuguese Primitives we find that the frame within which black people are portrayed allows us to draw specific conclusions concerning the socio-historical and formal dimensions of Portuguese race consciousness.

## CONCLUSION



*Os Descobrimentos e o Renascimento português: The impact of the Discoveries upon Portuguese Attitudes to Antiquity.*

When we focus upon the peculiar situation of the Portuguese in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, we find that a case can be made for viewing the Portuguese experience as providing the basis for a re-birth of (European) learning which stands in contrast to the Italian experience and which, because of this contrast, results in varying perspectives being developed amongst the Portuguese themselves at the time. There is an increasing weight of opinion which is willing to take issue with Burckhardt's contention that the Italian Renaissance was the motor for the re-birth of learning in other European countries, especially Portugal. Hooykaas 1979, Carvalho 1980 and Barreto 1983 each see in the effects of the Portuguese Discoveries pressures which resulted in the formation of new attitudes to the world, distinct from those of Italy and the wider European cultural context. These forms of thought encompass mathematics, science and anthropology, each developing both as a result of the insights made possible by the Discoveries, and also in reaction to them.

The voyages were, in fact, both a source of new knowledge and a focus of criticism: they can therefore be seen as providing sites for the ideological struggle within Portuguese society between those concerned to defend the status quo ante, those interested in developing a perspective informed by Italian humanism, and those who had direct experience of, or were at least excited by, the

voyages and the discoveries thereby made possible. It is small wonder then, that the Manueline style, which celebrates this period, should also contain and express the ambiguities of that society; if the voyages were not unanimously welcomed, then the associated artistic style can be expected to express this contest of views, whilst at the same time reflecting the profound impact of the Discoveries upon even the most conservative aspects of Portuguese culture, which were forced into a recognition of their significance. It is this compulsion, even amongst the unwilling, which reflects the profound importance of the new insights which were becoming possible, and which mark out the Portuguese experience as one which could give rise to, and temporarily sustain, its own Renaissance.

An examination of certain themes in the modern interpretation of the relationship between the Discoveries and the Portuguese Renaissance, hereafter called the Renascimento to distinguish it from the wider European experience, will reveal the means by which a particular world-view could be developed, and will show the significance of this for an understanding of Portuguese consciousness of race at the time, along with its potentiality for expression in the art forms of the society.

Carvalho (1980) suggests that an understanding of Portugal is not possible unless we recognise the fundamental linkage between the discoveries and the Renascimento in marking off the Middle Ages, seen as a preparation for the Renscimento, from the modern period, which is, in its own

turn, shaped by it.

*"Os Descobrimentos são o facto essencial do Renascimento... E Portugal não pode ser compreendido no que tem de específico sem os Descobrimentos e em consequência, sem o seu Renascimento. O Renascimento português é a placa giratória da história de Portugal. Portugal de antes, da Idade Média, era já uma preparação para o seu Renascimento, o Renascimento português. O Portugal de depois, da época moderna e contemporânea, é uma consequência dos descobrimentos marítimos, do seu Renascimento ..."*<sup>1</sup> :13

The historical progression which leads directly to the Discoveries is, for Carvalho, the Revolution of 1383, which in turn leads directly on to the conquest of Ceuta. What makes the whole process remarkable to Carvalho is his view of the Revolution of 1383 as being the first national bourgeois revolution in history.

*"...Portugal teve a primeira revolução burguesa da história da Humanidade á escala de uma nação, em 1383..."*<sup>2</sup> :13

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<sup>1</sup> "The Discoveries are the essential factor in the Renascimento...And the essence of Portugal cannot be understood without the Discoveries and, in consequence, without the Renascimento. The Portuguese Renascimento is a pivotal point of Portuguese history. Mediaeval Portugal was a preparation for it, and afterwards modern contemporary Portugal is the result of the Maritime discoveries, of the Renascimento."

<sup>2</sup> "Portugal had the first national bourgeois revolution in human history, in 1383."

The significance of the Revolution of 1383 is that it permits the capture of Ceuta to be interpreted not as an heroic deed of a chivalrous nobility, but as an enterprise, an undertaking, of the commercial bourgeoisie.

*"Ora, e a partir desta Revolução de 1383 que podemos compreender que a tomada, a conquista de Ceuta, em 1415, o primeiro acto da expansão portuguesa, tenha sido, contra todas as aparências, apesar do peso das palavras tomada e conquista, uma empresa da burguesia comercial e não uma façanha da nobreza cavalieresca.*

*A Idade Média portuguesa, a Revolução de 1383, levam-nos á conquista de Ceuta, em 1415, e a conquista de Ceuta leva-nos aos grandes descobrimentos marítimos..."<sup>3</sup> :/4*

There is, then, for Carvalho, a direct historical progression which leads towards the Discoveries, and this progression marks the onward and outward thrust of a characteristically commercially inclined bourgeoisie. The Portuguese Renascimento is thus seen to be linked intimately with a new cultural form, which is given shape by the voyages of Discovery.

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<sup>3</sup> "Now, it is from the Revolution of 1383 that we can understand that the capture of Ceuta in 1415, the first act of Portuguese expansion against all appearances and in spite of the implications of words like 'conquest and capture', was a commercial undertaking of the bourgeoisie and not an heroic deed of the chivalrous nobility. The Middle Ages, the Revolution of 1383, take us to the conquest of Ceuta which itself takes us on to the great maritime discoveries."

*"Consideremos pois o sector da vida portuguesa que nos pode dar os traços específicos do seu Renascimento: isto é, os Descobrimentos marítimos e a cultura portuguesa estreitamente ligada a estes descobrimentos..."<sup>4</sup> :14*

Carvalho suggests that the Renascimento marks an important point which is indicative of the epistemological break, which makes possible a quantitative and experimental approach to understanding the physical world. Such a phenomenon, personified by Galileo and Newton, is foreshadowed by the Portuguese Renascimento in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries.

*"Entretanto, a especificidade do Renascimento português não fica por aqui, pois encontramos na cultura portuguesa dos séculos XV e XVI traços que nos levam - a afirmar que, em meados do século XVI, podemos sepreender em Portugal, ainda que tímida, aquela ruptura epistemologica que foi a de Galileo no século XVII e que vem a permitir logo depois, com Newton, a lei da inércia..."*

*Entremos nesta história profunda, como que subterrânea, inconsistente, do pensamento, nesta verdadeira história social do pensamento, nesta história em que as*

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<sup>4</sup> "Let us consider, then, that part of Portuguese life which can give us specific clues to the Renascimento; namely, the maritime discoveries and the Portuguese culture directly linked to these discoveries."

*personagens são os conceitos, e tomemos como alvo, como ponto de chegada, no nascimento da física matemática, quantitativa e experimental.*

*Ora, relativamente ao nascimento da física clássica, quais serão os conceitos-chave, os conceitos-base sem os quais esta ruptura na história do pensamento não teria sido possível? Trata-se de uma física matemática, quantitativa e experimental. E assim, parece-nos que devemos ater-nos a dois conceitos-chave: a matematização do real e a experiência."*<sup>5</sup>:32

Carvalho's contention is that these breakthroughs in thinking and scientific method were made possible by the maturation of deep concepts, which in turn are indicated by the distinction between reason and observation, between intellect and sensory data, between subject and object as in the Italian attitude towards perspective. In suggesting that the Portuguese Renascimento marks a definite pre-history of the scientific world view, Carvalho cites the evidence of an increasing use of arabic, as opposed to roman, numerals, since quantitative physical science would have proved

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<sup>5</sup> "Meanwhile, the essence of the Renascimento is not here, since in the culture of 15th and 16th century Portugal we encounter elements which lead us to argue that in the middle of the 16th century in Portugal we can detect, however faint, that epistemological break which we associate with Galileo in the 17th century and which permitted Newton to formulate the Law of Gravity.

Intermingled in this deep level of the history of thought, seemingly underground, falteringly, in this real social history of ideas, in which people stand for concepts, and we find like a target, like the point of arrival, the birth of quantitative, empirical, physical science.

Now, relative to the birth of classical physics, which were the key concepts, the basic concepts without which this break in the history of thought would have been impossible? We mean quantitative, empirical natural science. And thus, it seems to us that we must take two key concepts: the quantification of reality, and subjectively based observation."

impossible based solely on the use of roman numerals.

*"Uma física matemática, quantitativa, era impossível sem os algarismos árabes substituissem os números romanos. A mais simples operação aritmética torna-se uma impossibilidade tendo como utensilagem aritmética apenas os números romanos."*<sup>8</sup> :34

With arabic numerals being introduced into Portuguese literature about 1415, along with an identification of the significance of observation, and recognising that these methodological innovations are closely bound to those engaged in navigation and commercial life, it appears from Carvalho's argument that not only does the Portuguese experience usher in a pre-history of scientific method, but that it is a class-bound phenomenon which initially springs from the urban centres and finds its expression in the voyages of Discovery.

This marked a move away from a Platonic notion of Arithmetic towards acceptance of the activity of calculation, with a consequent conflict of interest and identification between those who espoused the aristocratic disdain of trade and those who were prepared to accept commercial activity as a legitimate means of making money.

Just as the social contests and paradoxes are embodied

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<sup>8</sup> "A mathematically based, quantitative physics would have been impossible had not arabic numbers been substituted for roman numerals. The most simple mathematical calculation would have proved an impossibility were it not for the use of arithmetical tools rather than roman numerals."

in the Manueline style, so also are they embodied in the person of Duarte Pacheco Pereira:

*"...um nobre e um servidor de realza, mas tembe, e ao mesmo tempo, um homem cujo gênero de vida, a profissão de navegador e de tecnico da navegação, o ligaram a actividades que foram como que a mola propulsora da burguesia nascente, a nova classe ascendente."*<sup>7</sup> :36

Duarte Pacheco Pereira thus personifies the establishment of a de-mystified view of the world, open to the data of the senses and seeking to appropriate reality through observation.

To understand more fully the impact of this perspective upon the course of the Renascimento, we have to turn to Hooykaas's treatment of sixteenth century Portuguese attitudes to Humanism, and we shall see, with Barreto, that the interaction of these various tendencies leads to the establishment of an anthropological perspective amongst certain Portuguese, which helped form and inform their attitudes to race consciousness. Ultimately, we shall be able to see this anthropology and the Manueline style as different facets of the same ideological interpretation of the world which resulted from the voyages of Discovery.

Hooykaas points directly to polar attitudes towards the

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<sup>7</sup> A member of the nobility and a servant of the monarchy, but at the same time a man whose kind of life, the profession of navigation and navigational technique, bound him to those activities which formed the propulsive force of the emergent bourgeoisie, the new ruling class."



past which were engendered by the contemporaneity of the Discoveries with the Italian Renaissance. The fact of the advent of the Renaissance precisely during a period of imperialism meant that the Portuguese intellectual world was confronted by two interpretations of the past, both in its recent and its antique form; for the Humanists were concerned to re-establish the antique culture and to reject the recent past, whilst those engaged in navigation were making achievements which promoted national pride in the recent past along with a questioning of the wisdom of the ancients in the light of the new discoveries. For Hooykaas, three different ways of re-appraising the science of antiquity were thus possible.

"a) A feeling of triumph about the fact that the Ancients were ignorant of many things and wrong on many points in which they were surpassed by the Moderns...

b) Recognition that the Moderns have greatly extended the 'history' of nature, but that, on the other hand, it was the geometrical and astronomical science inherited from the Ancients, which made those discoveries possible...

c) Over-emphasis on the indispensability of ancient knowledge and the excellence of ancient culture, together with an underestimation and minimizing of the contributions of the Moderns and the brighter side of their own epoch." :108

When attention is shifted from science in particular to

culture in general, Hooykaas suggests that the ready acceptance of the ethical and literary standards of the writers of antiquity resulted in a number of dilemmas when once there was a recognition either of the achievements of contemporary Portuguese navigators, or of the complexity which undelay the simple notion of 'the glory that was Rome'.

"Firstly, there was the conflict between the admiration for Antiquity (and contemporary Italy) and the patriotic feelings of the Portuguese. Secondly, the question arose: which 'Antiquity' should be followed? There were significant differences between Greece and Rome, and within these, between military Sparta and highly civilised Athens, or between the ancient Roman republic and the Rome of the Emperors.

Thirdly, as admiration for ancient Greece and Rome implied the duty of admiring what the Ancients themselves admired, one had to find out what they considered to be the luminous past. And this again was far from unambiguous." :25

The Portuguese were thus left with the problem of finding themselves pressed to choose between their own cultural heritage and that taken as typically Roman, especially in its rustic form, which meant that mediaeval Portuguese rustic culture tended to be downgraded and scorned as unsophisticated. At the same time, the possibility of a direct comparison of the growing Portuguese Empire with the Roman Empire became possible.

"The idea of equalling the Roman Empire was mainly inspired by two important facts: firstly, the Portuguese maritime voyages, which, thanks to the scientific navigation which had been developed in the course of the 15th century, far surpassed the Roman achievements; secondly, the great conquests in Asia and the establishing of political power over vast regions in Africa, Asia and Brazil. In particular the latter situation made it inevitable that, at a certain stage, the Portuguese began to compare their empire to the Roman one and their capital Lisbon to the ancient city of Rome.

From the point of view of imperial power, splintered Italy was a poor heir of the Roman imperium, whereas Portugal, at the height of its glory under King Manuel, could stand a comparison with it." :53

The rewards, particularly of Vasco da Gama's voyage in 1498 which had opened up great tracts of the Far East to the Portuguese, were to fall to the King, Dom Manuel, whose prestige and wealth reached hitherto unknown heights. It is after Dom Manuel, of course, that the Manueline style is called, and in this style and the reactions to it, could be found reflected the internal tensions of Portuguese society.

As Hooykaas puts it:

"The new Empire, like the Roman one, was to have its own style, the Manueline as it is called now: the only

exclusively Portuguese contribution to architecture...Again the inner tension of the Renaissance comes to the fore: the Portuguese Empire might imitate the Roman Empire by having an imperial style, but this was as yet 'portuguese', whereas humanistic purism would require a close imitation of Roman architecture...Consequently, italianising 'innovators' like Francisco de Holanda considered it as no less 'gothic' and 'barbarous' than all other romanesque and gothic architecture.

In the controversy about architecture the ambiguity of the Portuguese civilization of the first half of the 16th century clearly manifested itself." :54,55

However, as we have seen in the case of the innovative nature of the Italian Renaissance in respect of the portrayal of movement, it is inadequate to view the Renaissance simply as a desire to return to Antiquity, since this is to deny the historicity of the Renaissance itself. In portraying Portuguese society as containing conflict and competition between the Humanists and the Navigators, it would be misleading to suppose that the innovatory aspects of Renaissance art were not in some way expressed in the Manueline style, simultaneously with the other, more obvious, maritime themes. As we have already stated, simply to see the Manueline only as a form of the late gothic is to overlook the socially contested realities which gave rise to it. To see it simply as an imperial style, a form of naturalistic realism or an expression of nascent bourgeois triumphalism,

is to miss the fact that the Manueline style is itself historically located at a time when the cultural and social structural factors which gave rise to the Italian and wider European Renaissance were also being felt in Portugal, but focussed upon, and given expression through, the voyages of discovery. The Manueline style should therefore be taken as an expression of a specific Portuguese cultural renaissance, but one which takes place in a society which is compelled by its historical location to enter into a west European cultural dialogue from a somewhat ambiguous, if not to say marginal, position, whilst at the same time directing its attention increasingly outside Europe to Brazil, Africa and the Far East.

#### **The Portuguese *Renascimento* and the Development of a Novel Anthropology**

The renewal of national culture, consequent upon the exploits and achievements of the navigators, compounded by the synchronicity of the wider European Renaissance in arts and letters, brought about a unique cultural configuration in sixteenth century Portugal. This was a society composed of a succession of diverse waves of imperialists, each impelled by a cultural reality which not only gave shape to their understanding of the world, but also motivated their original imperial impulse, yet was, at the same time, moderated by the small numbers of men actually engaged in the activities of conquest and control. Martins, for example, speaks of the

Moorish invaders of Iberia as consisting of only a few hundred men, who managed to conquer virtually the whole peninsula and to cross the Pyrenees; the wonder, then, is not that the Islamic forces were stopped and thenceforward thrust back, but that they made so much progress in the first place.

For Barreto (1983) this process is brought full circle by the advent of the discoveries, which both initiate and condition a re-birth of Portuguese culture. This process has the Portuguese in a situation for which they are historically unprepared, that of conqueror rather than conquered, since the site of imperialistic activity has moved out of Iberia and has called on the Portuguese maritime tradition to supplant the colonial act overseas. Created and compounded almost by fortuitous historical circumstances, the tendency towards social tolerance becomes elevated into the fundamental structural component of the developing world view of the newly ascendant Portuguese colonialists. As such, the Renascimento, for Barreto, consists of the emergence and elaboration of this social tolerance.

*"O discurso sobre o outro civilização produzido pela cultura dos Descobrimentos é um imenso esforço em busca de novos e operacionais horizontes da linguagem e pensamento capazes de melhorar o campo de informações e compreensões sobre uma outra realidade socio cultural."*<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> "The discourse concerning alien civilisation generated by the Discoveries, is a powerful force in arriving at new and viable horizons of language and thought, Capable of advancing knowledge and understanding of alternative socio-cultural reality."

Barreto sees a cultural context of different dimensions to that proposed by Hooykaas, namely between traditional Christian beliefs – looking to Rome not for the origins of Pagan antiquity, but for the focus of the Catholic Church – and the newly developing anthropologically informed view of humanity.

*"Os homens dos séculos XV e XVI balouçam paradoxalmente entre a sua tradicional antropologia filosofica cristã e a novidade de invenção duma antropologia positiva, duma antropologia etnológica."*<sup>9</sup> :61

This paradox is resolved by the process of the Renascimento itself, which, using the Discoveries of the navigators, develops an alternative world view informed by, rather than dismissive of, human differences.

*"Este paradoxo resolve-se no segundo andamento do Renascimento quando uma parte dos sujeitos e unidades discursivas abandona, ainda que apenas parcialmente, a visão etnocentrica e a crença de que os seus padrões de mundo e vida são e devem ser a norma de todo o mundo e vida. Nasce então uma visão horizontal e universal de aceitação da diferença, melhor ainda, começa assim a*

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<sup>9</sup> "The people of the 15th and 16th centuries were balanced problematically between their traditional Christian philosophy of anthropology and the innovation of the invention of a positive anthropology, one ethnologically informed."

*nascer, contraditória e minoritariamente, uma nova antropoligia, aberta, positiva, horizontal."*<sup>10</sup> :61

For Barreto, it is the form and the achievement of the Renascimento to conceptualise and give assent to this new anthropology. Its legitimation is contained within its conceptualisation and elaboration, and we find a self-reinforcing process in which economic wealth is seen to flow directly out of cultural diversity. The economic and cultural stimuli thus work to give expression to the notion that, far from being a cause for disdain, cultural difference is a source of potential riches. As Barreto suggests, this implies that the cultural products of the Renascimento will characteristically focus upon the area of a discourse which takes as its problematic the legitimate existence of socio-cultural alternatives, rather than their legitimacy.

*"O campo de discursos sobre o outro civilizacional, na sua forma maioritária de verbalidade ou minoritaria de literalidade, constitui um dos lugares mais ricos da Cultura Portuguesa Renascentista e um dos frutos mais complexos dos Descobrimentos."*<sup>11</sup> :61

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<sup>10</sup> "This problem was resolved in the second stage of the Renascimento when the ethnocentric perspective was dropped from a part of the social debate with the creation of new standards for the world which are, and must become, the norm for all. Then was born an egalitarian universalist perspective, tolerant of human differences, even celebrating them, and thus began to emerge, against the general trend, a new open, positive, egalitarian anthropology."

<sup>11</sup> The field of discourse concerning the alternative civilisation, in its major verbal form or its minor literary form, constitutes one of the richest sites of Renaissance Portuguese culture, and one of the most complex results of the Discoveries.



Whilst, for Barreto, this discourse is mainly linguistic but admitting of a literary dimension, the burden of the argument advanced in this study is that it would be unreasonable to divorce such a discourse from the overall structure of Portuguese culture. As such, we have to see the development of a positive anthropology as intimately connected to the development of the Manueline style, since both are manifestations of the same process. We are therefore confronted by the central question of this study which is to illustrate the ways in which the Manueline style reflects a novel, culturally tolerant ideology. For Barreto, the key is to be found in Portuguese attitudes to the sea, which has historically contextualised the Portuguese nation, and with the Navigators, becomes transformed into the means by which Portuguese imperialism is given empirical reality. We should therefore not be surprised that the Manueline style takes the 'maritime' as a central motif. What is, perhaps, more interesting, is that it can be shown simultaneously to encapsulate and express the other social contests which were taking place in Portugal in the early 16th century, and which reflect the state of a society in transition, a culture in the process of re-formulation, a people on the point of radically re-appropriating both the natural world and the place of humanity within that world.

### The Manueline Style as a Form of Visual Ideology

The dilemma confronting the Portuguese Primitives was how they could best integrate the imperial and religious aspirations of their sponsors within an acceptable pictorial lexicon. The scene of the Adoration of the Magi Kings proved to be a most suitable vehicle for the exploration of such concerns. Inevitably then, the pictorial realisation of the Portuguese consciousness of racial difference as a socio-historical phenomenon was as an adjunct of the élite imperial, religious and diplomatic concerns of the day. The response is reactive in that it reflects the questions generated by the Discoveries and the sense of imperial adventure. The Primitives chose to fix their attention upon the person of Prester John, who became something of a cipher for black people in general. In the male, youthful, active figure of the black kings we find the hoped for ally in the struggle to encircle Islam; we also find a less explicit, but equally important, accentuation of those most sought after qualities of the human slave: youth and vigour. The ambiguity that Kaplan identifies in the Portuguese attitude to the depiction of black Africans, whereby an unknown King is represented whilst the familiar slaves are largely overlooked, is telling, as is his observation that the artists' models for the black king would probably have been African slaves. Further to this, if we accept that the attributes of the paintings of the black king do indeed reflect the characteristics of the ideal slave, then we can appreciate

not only Kaplan's ironic comments, but also the hidden dimension of the impact of slavery upon racial concepts. Rather than seeing black Africans as sub-human and degenerate, the filter of the slave trade allowed a conceptualisation in which the black is able-bodied, strong and full of potentiality for the wider evangelisation of the human race. The black body is a tool available to the Portuguese to enable them to realise their wishes in the manipulation of the world; where Prester John differed from the African slave was in being unavailable for such ethnocentric designs. In a sense Kaplan is wrong to suggest that the Portuguese painters eschewed representations of black slaves, since what they actually did was to embody the physical qualities of the slave in the person of the king.

This process had the further significant effect of rendering the conceptualisation of racial difference into an aspect of the royal ordinance. The possibility of a debate over slavery was thereby prevented and the power of the monarchy reinforced by virtue of its implicit control over the structure of anthropological conceptualisation. In this way the portrayal of the black as a king can be seen to be constituted as part of a visual ideology incorporated into the cultural structure of society.

Regarding the formal aspects underlying these considerations, we have already said that they reinforce a sense that Portuguese race consciousness was part of an ideosyncratic anthropological and epistemological development. When the black king is taken seriously as an authentic representative

of his people, as in Grão Vasco's work, then the traditional European architectonic structure of the painting goes into a state of flux; this breaking down of the expected internal relationships of the scene is common to most of the paintings considered here in so far as the geometrical interlinking of the lines of sight of the subjects does not create either a triangular structure of recognition, or a sense of concentration upon the infant Jesus. These are people whose concentration has been disturbed and whose attention is focussed upon events taking place beyond the confines of the paintings; they are indicative of the desire to learn more, rather than the need to reiterate pious, but dogmatic, 'truths'.

In its formal structure, the Portuguese interpretation of the *Adoração dos Reis Magos* suggests a tolerance of the speculative and enquiring mode, an unwillingness to render the black person either as a debased adjunct of the white anthropology, or to see black people only as 'white people with dark skins'. There is a recognition of difference, without a will to denigration. Our consideration of the content of the representations suggests that it is at that level that are found attitudes which may appear to the twentieth century observer as ambiguous or ethnocentric. The evidence we have of the formal dimension neither confirms nor denies the view of Portuguese race consciousness as tolerant.

There is a further source of evidence which can be called upon to supply insight in this question, namely Manueline architecture. We have seen that Manueline architecture celebrated in its singular development a specific

attitude towards the natural world and, on a wider cultural plane, towards the development of the classical world view. It is, however, in its exoticism that Manueline architecture exhibits a trait typical of the Discoveries in general, and of the Portuguese attitudes which underlay them. This taste for the exotic can be found not only in Dom Manuel's magnificent cathedral at Jeronimos, and in the royal tombs inside this building (shaped as life-like elephants), but also in the variety of naturalistic decorative effects which pervade Manueline architecture, and which are found in their most concentrated form in the window at Tomar. In addition, the Moorish affectations of the Manueline structure at Sintra, the mudejar stylisations of the Alentejan buildings, together with the so-called 'eastern' feel of the Torre de Belem, all suggest that there was in the Manueline cultural structure a positive evaluation of the exotic; a desire not only to experience novelty, but also to know it and to incorporate it into the overall conceptual schema. Manueline architecture is not simply a celebration of themes nautical, or prosaic, but is a project which aims at the incorporation of the hitherto alien or bizarre.

In the context of a consideration of Portuguese race consciousness, this exoticism might well convince us that artistic recognition of racial difference is a prelude to incorporation rather than exclusion, and that such an incorporation was a first step towards the eventual development of a systematic anti-racism.

**Conclusion. The Manueline Style; Post-modernism avant la lettre?**

The Portuguese Primitives owed their material sponsorship to the Crown and to the Church, whilst their creative inheritance was formed in equally wide geographical sweeps. Kaplan, in his study of the varying types of pictorial portrayal of blacks up to the sixteenth century, has suggested that there were spheres of artistic influence based in Germany, Flanders and Italy which each constrained the development of both style and content within their immediate area of interest. Commercial, military, but especially diplomatic and clerical patterns of influence and domination meant that in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries Portugal lay at the far reaches of the Flemish area of stylistic influence, near to, but not within, the Italian. For reasons of history, which we have already discussed, the intellectual and artistic legacy of the Islamic domination continued to exert a subtle influence especially upon the development of Portuguese architecture in the south of the country; whilst the progressive consolidation and enlargement of Catholic Spain, and the desire of the Portuguese to retain their own independence, created a filter which considerably constrained further westward encroachment of Italian Renaissance influences, which were strong in Spain. In a sense, then, Portuguese culture lay in the lee of the Sierras, able for the most part to repudiate those aspects of southern European artistic development which did not accord with indigenous wishes. Buffered by considerable wealth and naval power, the

Portuguese were well positioned to draw from Flanders sufficient expertise to enable the development of a domestic capacity for artistic creativity and achievement, especially in architecture and fine art. Portuguese artistic development was encouraged by the wealth of the nascent empire, and it is as a reflection of the imperial achievements and returns that Manueline art is usually characterised.

We have found in this study that the Manueline style does not simply take the form of an encrustation of wealth, as Soria has suggested. This is no gaudy materialism or conspicuous consumption. It is a heady mix of amazement and wonder in the face of the exotic, coupled with a gnawing desire to realise amid these alien phenomena the triumph of the Portuguese religious interpretation of the world. In discovering the unknown, the Portuguese also discovered new ideological and political dimensions. The artistic output of the Manueline period can be seen as the self-assured beginnings of the development of a modern world-view which stands as an alternative to that which was ultimately to provide the structure of Western European culture for the subsequent post-Renaissance period.

Portuguese culture, based upon a small population, was not viable as a long term solution to the major problems of the West. Portugal was too ambiguously located within the European culture, and her domestic resources were insufficient to sustain and bring to dominance an alternative modern form. Within a few years of Dom Manuel's death the Manueline style was also defunct; and a few decades later the indepen-

dent Portuguese nation state went the same way. At the time of its flowering, however, the Manueline artistic achievements stand out as a novel and creative response to the recognisably modern European problem of cultural pluralism, the human dilemma of inter-cultural relations and the associated exploration of the variety of the natural world and of the role of human beings within it.



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