

GONÇALVES VIANA AND THE STUDY OF PORTUGUESE PHONETICS

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In my opinion, one of the most fitting ways to commemorate the one hundredth anniversary of the birth of Aniceto dos Reis Gonçalves Viana is to draw up a brief history of the study of Portuguese phonetics. The role of the man whom we are honoring this year will be so outstanding in such a history as to require no further comment.

A history of the study of Portuguese phonetics¹

1. The first study of the sounds of the Portuguese language made since the advent of the science of phonetics was a paper by Prince Bonaparte² entitled *On Portuguese simple sounds*, read before the Philological Society on November 21, 1879. To quote the author: "These sounds are given as I hear them used amongst cultivated society in Lisbon, and as they are generally admitted by João de Deus in his highly approved 'Diccionario Prosodico', Lisboa, 1878." Thus the sole written work to which the Prince refers is this dictionary, a fact for which Sweet later criticized him, as we shall see.

The next article on the subject, the first written by a Portuguese and the first to appear in Portugal, was Gonçalves Viana's review of Schuchardt's *Die "Cantes Flamencos"*, containing many important notes on Portuguese phonetics and many observations on the dialects. This review inaugurated in Portugal the scientific study of phonetics, as Dr. Leite de Vasconcelos has pointed out³.

¹ To be read in conjunction with the "Bibliography of works on the phonetics of standard Portuguese (arranged chronologically)", at the end of this article.

² Prince Bonaparte, who was born in 1813 and died on November 4, 1891, was a nephew of Napoleon I. His title was conferred on him by Napoleon III. He dedicated his life, not to politics, but to science, especially linguistics, and was a famous polyglot. See Gonçalves Viana, *O Príncipe Luís Luciano Bonaparte*, in *RL*, II (1890-2), 351-2, and also the *Correspondance philologique* of the two scholars.

³ *RL*, 111, 372; *Esquisse d'une dialectologie portugaise* (Paris and Lisbon, 1901), p. 68.

Inasmuch as Gonçalves Viana is to play a very prominent role, in the history which we are writing, let us look into his life in order to become better acquainted with him as an individual.

Aniceto dos Reis Gonçalves Viana⁴ was born in Lisbon on January 6, 1840, just one hundred years ago. He was the son of the famous actor Epiphânio Aniceto Gonçalves and of Maria dos Anjos, both natives of the capital. The couple had six children, but only two attained adolescence, Torquato and Aniceto dos Reis. On October 5, 1857, Torquato died of yellow fever; ten days later the father also succumbed to the same malady.

Aniceto dos Reis thus found himself obliged, at the age of seventeen, to support his mother, had to abandon the commercial course he was taking, and on January 9, 1858, entered as an *aspirante* in the *Alfândega de Consumo* in Lisbon. He continued to work there all his life, eventually becoming chief of the *1ª Repartição da Alfândega de Lisboa*. He died on September 13, 1914.

Gonçalves Viana inherited an extraordinary memory from his father, and is said to have known by heart Tasso's *Gerusalemme liberata!* He also had a fine ear; and, without a master, or laboratory, or foreign residence, or established tradition, he became a great phonetician. Only later in life, after having become known, did he travel a little abroad (France, Germany); he was in Paris in 1889. In addition to being a renowned phonetician he was a distinguished polyglot.

Personally, Gonçalves Viana was very nervous and very modest; he did not even trouble to make a will, and most of his books, which he was accustomed to annotate fully, were lost in an official auction after his death. Moreover, Gonçalves Viana was very fastidious about his dress.

The famous customs official is perhaps best known for his work in Portuguese and general phonetics, and for his efforts to simplify Portuguese spelling. The latter bore fruit in 1911, when the government adopted the reformed orthography. He also translated from foreign languages (for example *Die Leiden des jungen Werthers*, published as *Mágoas de Werther* in 1885), wrote school textbooks, and did a large amount of work in Portuguese lexicology and etymology. He was a member of the *Sociedade de Geografia de Lisboa*, of the *Academia das Ciências de Lisboa*⁵, and of other learned societies⁶.

⁴ He earlier spelled his name *Vianna*, and indeed in *Ortografia Nacional* it appears as *Gonçalvez Viana*. Cf. *Vasconcelloz*, old for *Vasconcelos*.

⁵ See *Parecer acêrca da candidatura do sr. Gonçalves Viana a sócio efectivo*, [he had been *sócio correspondente*], in 9, V (1911), 401-2.

2. The following stage in the development of Portuguese phonetics is twofold. Independently of each other and without knowing one another's work, Henry Sweet and Gonçalves Viana were engaged in writing important treatises. The Portuguese scholar was the first to publish, the treatise being his well known *Essai* (1883). Sweet's paper, in which he employs a somewhat unusual system of spelling English, was "alredy set up in type, when Mr. Furnivall called my attention to an article on Portuguese sounds in the *Romania*..." as he tells us in the "Concluding Remarks", page 233. Sweet then goes on to cite points of agreement or disagreement between the two articles, and concludes, p. 236: "If my paper had appeared before M. Vianna's, I might have claimed the merit of having added considerably to our knowledge of the language; as it is, I can only claim that of having, with the help of Visibl Speech, perhaps defined the formation of some of the sounds more closely..." I might add that Sweet's employ of Melville Bell's Visible-Speech⁷ does *not* prevent the reader unfamiliar with that alphabet from fully understanding the article, in spite of Paul Meyer's remark in his notice; it is very easy to learn the symbol for the corresponding Portuguese sound and follow through the article.⁸

Sweet tells us on the first page that his article is based on a careful study with an educated native of Lisbon, aided by Prince Bonaparte's *Simple sounds*, Vieyra's dictionary, and João de Deus's *Diccionario prosodico*, Lisbon, 1878. Thus he was not acquainted with Gonçalves Viana's article in *O Positivismo*. Sweet adds: "But my apreciation of the sounds differs considerably in some respects from that of Deus, whom the Prince generally follows," and says he had heard that João de Deus was from the Algarve, suggesting that there may possibly have been dialectal influence in his work.

Prince Bonaparte was slightly piqued by Sweet's remark that he generally followed João de Deus⁹, and in reply wrote his article *Portuguese vowels, according to Mr. R. G. Vianna* [i.e., in *Essai*, not in *O Positivismo*, with which

⁶ For biographies of Gonçalves Viana, see Cláudio Basto, *A. R. Gonçalves Viana*, in *RL*, XVII (1914), 209-21; J. Leite de Vasconcelos and J. J. Nunes, *Vida e obras de Gonçalves Viana*, in *Boletim da Segunda Classe da Academia das Ciências de Lisboa*, X (1915-6), 607-48 (here we find photographis of the phonetician and of his father); Alvaro Neves, *Aniceto dos Reis Gonçalves Viana*, in *Boletim da Segunda Classe*, X, 972-1010 (here we find a good bibliography of bis writings); and Oscar de Pratt, *Aniceto dos Reis Gonçalves Viana*, in *Trabalhos da Academia de Sciencias de Portugal*, II, 2ª parte, 93-98.

⁷ Alexander Melville Bell (1819-1905) was the father of Alexander Graham Bell (1847-1922).

⁸ As Meyer remarked, Sweet had explained the mechanism of the alphabet in *Sound-Notation*; in *Transactions of the Philological Society*, 1880-1, Part II (1881), 177-235.

⁹ In *Correspondance philologique*, which contains the correspondence between the two scholars from July 13, 1884, to October 24, 1887, the Prince admits (p. 17) that "João de Deus ("Vocabulario Sonico") m'a quelquefois induit en erreur".

the Prince was not acquainted at this time], Mr. H. Sweet, and myself (1885), in which he carefully compared his own previous article, the *Essai*, and Sweet's article, confining himself to the vowels and accompanying the comparison with an elaborate chart. He said that in a future note he would perhaps speak of the consonant sounds, but such a note was never published to my knowledge.¹⁰

3. After Gonçalves Viana's review of Dr. Leite de Vasconcelos's *A Evolução da linguagem*, which contains many useful notes on Portuguese phonetics, we find that the subject of Portuguese Phonetics became known and cultivated elsewhere on the continent of Europe. Jules Cornu, professor of Romance Philology at the University of Prague, who had been in Lisbon on two different occasions, in 1878 and in 1880, and who was to return in 1891¹¹, published his article on the Portuguese language in Gröber's *Grundriss* in 1888, devoting pp. 715-717 to the pronunciation of the modern language.

The following year Gonçalves Viana published his first article in *Le Maître phonétique*; it contains a few notes on Portuguese phonetics, with a transcription of Garrett, *Folhas caídas*. This article appeared in the July-August, 1889, issue (7), and in the November issue (9) we find the Portuguese phonetician listed as a new member of the *Association phonétique des professeurs de langues vivantes*. His review of Wulff's work, in the same organ, contains notes on Portuguese [A], [a], and *nh*. The transcription of the *Lusíadas* is also accompanied by good notes on Portuguese phonetics.¹²

From 1890 on, Gonçalves Viana wrote several articles (cf. *a moyen*), reviews (cf. those of the works, of Edwards and of Jespersen¹³), and notes¹⁴ for

¹⁰ Concerning Bonaparte, *Essai*, and Sweet, see *Kritischer Jahresbericht über die Fortschritte der Romanischen Philologie*, I (1890), p. 1; *Phonetische Studien*, VI (1893) 200-1; and Hermann Breymann, *Die Phonetische Literatur von 1876-1895* Leipzig, 1897), p. 91.

¹¹ See sheet 144 of the *Bibliografia Filológica Portuguesa*. In *Essai*, P. 35, n. 2, Gonçalves Viana says he knew Cornu in Lisbon in 1881.

¹² In *Le Maître phonétique* the author's name is not given, but in the errata in the back of *Exposição* Gonçalves Viana admits the authorship.

¹³ Some statements in the review of Jespersen prompted a polemic between Gonçalves Viana and Julio Saavedra à propos of "b, d, g hispaniques". See *Le Maître phonétique*, 1906, 59-61, 79-80, 1907, 70-2.

¹⁴ See 1890, 105; 1893, 27, 176-8; 1896, 105-7; 1898, 72-3; 1902, 105; 1903, 74; 1904, 26-8, 154; 1905, 67-8; 1906, 112; 1907, 48-9; 1908, 82. Moreover, there is a phonetic transcription of Portuguese by Gonçalves Viana in *Exposé des principes de l'Association Phonétique Internationale*, 1900, p. 13, and another, unsigned, in *Aim and principles of the International Phonetic Association*, 1904, p. 17. Because he did not think the transcription of a Portuguese text in the supplement (p. 24) to the *Le Maître phonétique* of Sept.-Oct., 1912 (*The Principles of the International Phonetic Association*), was quite correct, António F. Botelho, although admitting he had no competence, furnished a transcription for *Le Maître phonétique*, 1928, p. 69. A short transcription of Portuguese, with a few notes ("Final s is rather intermediate between s and z"), is given by A. Machado in *Le Maître phonétique*, 1912, 69.

Le Maître phonétique, many of them shedding some light on the problems of Portuguese phonetics, of which he was most certainly the master during the pre-instrumental days: in the opinion of Rodrigues Lapa¹⁵ and of João da Silva Correia¹⁶, Gonçalves Viana's own hearing was his kymograph.

4. In the meantime Gonçalves Viana published his *Exposição* (1892), destined for a congress of orientologists which was to take place in Lisbon, but which never met¹⁷. Two years later he published his essay on the literary languages of Spain and Portugal, an article which gives a résumé of the chief phonetic features of Spanish, Portuguese, and Catalan.

In this same year (1894) Foulché-Delbosc published his grammar, of which Dr. Sá Nogueira wrote in the *Bibliografia Filológica Portuguesa*: “É particularmente notável o primeiro capítulo, que é consagrado à pronúncia.” I find, to the contrary, that this chapter is quite mediocre, indeed, in some cases definitely erroneous¹⁸. In 1893 the Portuguese scholar went into one of the many problems of Portuguese phonetics in his review of Radermacher's book, where he censures the German for having accepted João de Deus's three *e*'s¹⁹; the reviewer himself furnished several good notes on the value of this letter.

5. The next two works of capital importance are Gonçalves Viana's *Portugais* and his *Ortografia Nacional*. In 1906 we have the following studies: the second edition of Cornu's article, with modern Portuguese phonetics discussed (pp. 917-924) at greater length than in the first edition; Gonçalves Viana's *Quantidade prosódica*, in which that distinction in vowel length which makes possible a pun like “Matei hoje uma galinha, comia ontem” (see p. 26) is discussed; and, the first edition of Passy's *Petite phonétique comparée*, which, in common with the later editions, contains a few notes on Portuguese and a transcription in that language of the text which the author transcribes into several other languages.

The last purely phonetic work which Gonçalves Viana published was his review of Josselyn, containing a few remarks on Portuguese phonetics.

¹⁵ A Língua Portuguesa, II, 286-7.

¹⁶ O problema da norma ortoépica na língua portuguesa (in Biblos, IX, 1933, 1-22), p. 2.

¹⁷ See Revista Lusitana, III, 373.

¹⁸ Cf. p. 8: “*lh* se prononce comme les *ll* mouillés des mots français *fille, paille...*”

¹⁹ For further discussion, see Sweet, *Spoken Portuguese*, and the 2nd ed. of Cornu's article in the *Grundriss*.

6. Next follows a long period of inactivity, broken only by Rolin's article in 1910²⁰, by the introduction into the United States in 1925 of a sound doctrine of Portuguese phonetics based primarily on Gonçalves Viana's *Portugais*²¹, and by Wengler's study in 1926, which is a "Mitteilung eigener Beobachtungen, die ich im Verlauf der Sommermonate 1925 in Coimbra, Vianna do Castelo, Porto und Lissabon gesammelt habe". Wengler had attended the first summer course for foreigners of the University of Coimbra²²; some of his observations are extremely good and very valuable.

As Rodrigues Lapa pointed out, "O labor de Gonçalves Viana não frutificou, como devia; o foneticista não deixou discípulos, nem era fácil deixar, isolado como andou do nosso meio universitário, onde, de resto, se não cura também de preparar sucessores..."²³ It was not until 1936 that Gonçalves Viana's work was really to fructify, with the founding of the excellent *Laboratório de Fonética Experimental* in the University of Coimbra, under the direction of Dr. Armando de Lacerda.

And yet the subject of experimental phonetics was taught in the Faculty of Letters of the University of Lisbon during the school year 1918-19 by Alfredo Apell, and the five lectures of the course were published²⁴. Although Apell was praised in March, 1919, in a session of the Council of the Faculty, on the motion of Dr. Leite de Vasconcelos, "por ter introduzido em Portugal o estudo da fonética experimental"²⁵, no one continued his studies and teaching, the first book published in Portugal on Portuguese phonetics since 1904 being Oliveira Guimarães's work (1927), although on June 24, 1926, at the University of Coimbra, M. le Chanoine J.-M. Meunier gave a lecture on various applications of experimental phonetics, a lecture that was published in the *Bulletin* of the *Institut de Coimbre*²⁶.

²⁰ Rolin presents old and well-known material concerning a few questions of Portuguese pronunciation, chiefly as regards the unstressed vowels. He has largely copied his material from Gonçalves Viana without giving specific citations.

²¹ The section on pronunciation (pp. 1-34) in Hills, Ford, and Coutinho's grammar combines the doctrine of *Portugais* with a number of shrewd and very valuable original observations, especially concerning the so-called "close ê" and concerning the closed *o*.

²² See *Die Nueuren Sprachen*, XXXIV (1926), 57-60.

²³ *A Lingua Portuguesa*, II, 287.

²⁴ Alfredo Apell, *Algumas lições de fonética experimental na Faculdade de Letras da Universidade de Lisboa*; in *Arquivo da Universidade de Lisboa*, VII, Lisbon, 1923, 42 pp. with 13 illustrations.

²⁵ *A Lingua Portuguesa*, II, 289.

²⁶ Le Chanoine J.-M. Meunier, *Applications de la phonétique expérimentale à l'étude des langues étrangères et à la thérapeutique, c'est à dire à la correction des vices du langage et à la rééducation des sourds. Conférence donnée le 24 juin 1926 à l'Université de Coimbre*; in *O Instituto*, LXXIV (1927), 161-85.

7. At the present time in Portugal, two centers for the study of the Portuguese language are functioning. One is the *Centro de Estudos Filológicos in Lisbon*, which was founded by decree N° 21,429 on June 30, 1932, as a dependent organisme of the *Junta de Educação Nacional* (today the *Instituto para a Alta Cultura*). The management of the *Centro* was established by the *Diário do Governo* N°263 (2nd series, November 9, 1932), and Dr. Rodrigo de Sá Nogueira was named secretary in the *Diário do Governo* n°265 (2nd series, November 11, 1932.)²⁷

Dr. Sá Nogueira has dedicated himself not only to Portuguese phonetics but also to Portuguese philology in general. An ample discussion of his recent *Elementos para um tratado de fonética portuguesa* is to be found in the bibliography appended to this brief history.

8. The other center is the *Laboratório de Fonética Experimental* of the Faculty of Letters of the University of Coimbra, which was created by Decreto-Lei N° 26, 994 and founded on September 10, 1936, by the *Instituto para a Alta Cultura*²⁸. Its director has been, since the beginning, Dr. Armando de Lacerda.

Dr. Lacerda studied experimental phonetics for a number of years in Germany, first with Professor Giulio Panconcelli Calzia in Hamburg, and then with Professor Paul Menzerath in Bonn. He has written many articles on general experimental phonetics²⁹, treating of such subjects as coarticulation, orientation (or “steering”), sound delimitation, phonic and sonic structure, tone inflection and sonic structure, tone inflection and criticism of the kymographic method. He is, moreover, the inventor of the chromographic method of registering speech, a method which is fully described in *Sons dependentes*.

Although many of his articles on general experimental phonetics contain notes concerning Portuguese phonetics³⁰, Dr. de Lacerda is now working specifically on Portuguese intonation. His article entitled *Die Flexion des Sprechtones im Portugiesischen* laid the foundation of the study, and *Sons dependentes* represents the application of these new discoveries of experimental

²⁷ I am obliged to Dr. José Pedro Machado for these notes, as well as for many kindnesses shown me. I am also very much obliged to Dr. Sá Nogueira for having permitted me to work in the excellently organized and very well stocked library of the *Centro de Estudos Filológicos*.

²⁸ For a description of the laboratory, see *Laboratório de Fonética Experimental*. Universidade de Coimbra. Publicação comemorativa por ocasião das festas do IV centenário do estabelecimento definitivo, da universidade em Coimbra; Coimbra, 1937, 11 pages.

²⁹ For a complete list of Dr. de Lacerda's publications, see the bibliography of Lacerda and Rogers, *Sons dependentes da fricativa palatal áfona, em português*.

³⁰ See also Paul Menzerath, *Die phonetische Struktur* (in *Acta Psychologica*, I, 1935, 241-62), p. 242, for an important note concerning the nature of Portuguese nasalization.

phonetics to the Portuguese language. *Sons dependentes* provides statistics on Portuguese phonemes and variphones which supplement those given by Zipf and Rogers³¹.

We have now terminated our brief history of the study of Portuguese phonetics, and are in a position to realize what a great debt we all owe the first Portuguese phonetician, the man whose memory we are honoring this year. Non-Portuguese student, of the language of Camoëns in particular are constantly, dependent on the *Essai*, the *Exposição, Portugais*, and *Ortografia Nacional*. Cornu in Prague, Passy in France, Rolin in Prague, and Hills, Ford, and Coutinho in the United States have one and all based themselves on the studies of Aniceto dos Reis Gonçalves Viana.

³¹ It is curious to note that I found the Seminary in Angra do Heroísmo, on the island of Terceira, in the Azores, to be quite a center of interest in experimental phonetics, due chiefly to the priests' acquaintance with Jean Larrasquet, *La phonétique expérimentale et ses applications pratiques*; in *Almanach catholique français pour 1931*, pp. 229-39. See the newspaper *A União*, Angra, July 26, 1939.