

IMAGO, ACTUS ET VERBUM

Desafios e interrogações nos Estudos Medievais:
um diálogo interdisciplinar entre filologia, filosofia,
história, arte e literatura

Filipe Alves Moreira
Francisco José Díaz Marcilla
Joana Matos Gomes
Paulo Catarino Lopes, eds.



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Editing in *absentia*: the Portuguese fragments of Comestor's *Historia Scholastica*

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Abstract

This work assesses the challenges of working with fragmentary texts, or those transmitted in problematic and very late witnesses, to establish an edition that makes it possible, at the same time, to present an accessible and coherent version of the Portuguese translation of Pedro Comestor's *Historia Scholastica* (14th-15th centuries) and, simultaneously, to reveal the plurality of supports and phases of transmission of the text, in which the choice of digital edition has proved to be especially pertinent.

Keywords

Historia Scholastica; biblical translation; digital edition; critical edition; modern transmission of medieval texts

Biographical note

Mariana Leite obtained her PhD in Literature from the University of Porto in 2013, with a thesis on the Portuguese reception of the *General Estoria* of Alfonso X of Castile. She concluded a postdoctoral research project at Instituto de Filosofia (U. Porto), funded by the Portuguese Foundation for Science and Technology (FCT), on the presence of Pedro Comestor's *Historia Scholastica* in Portugal in 2023. She was a Portuguese language and literature teacher at the École Normale Supérieure de Lyon (2014-2016) and at the Universität Zürich (2020-2021); she is currently an

assistant professor in Medieval Literature at the Faculty of Arts of the University of Porto. In recent years, she has dedicated her investigation to the presence of sources for universal chronicles (especially Biblical and Classical) in medieval Portuguese culture.

Editar em *absentia*: os fragmentos portugueses da *Historia Scholastica* de Comestor

Resumo

A partir do trabalho com textos fragmentários, ou transmitidos em testemunhos problemáticos e muito tardios, avaliam-se os desafios de estabelecer uma edição que permita, ao mesmo tempo, apresentar uma versão acessível e coerente da tradução portuguesa da *Historia Scholastica* de Pedro Comestor (séculos XIV-XV) e ao mesmo tempo revelar a pluralidade de suportes e fases de transmissão do texto, no que a opção pelo suporte digital se foi revelando especialmente pertinente.

Palavras-chave

Historia Scholastica; tradução da Bíblia; edição digital; edição crítica; transmissão moderna de textos medievais

Nota biográfica

Mariana Leite doutorou-se em Literatura pela Universidade do Porto em 2013, com uma tese sobre a receção portuguesa da *General Estoria* de Afonso X de Castela. Concluiu um projeto de pós-doutoramento no Instituto de Filosofia (U. Porto), financiado pela Fundação para a Ciência e Tecnologia (FCT), sobre a presença da *Historia Scholastica* de Pedro Comestor em Portugal em 2023. Foi professora de Língua e Literatura Portuguesa na École Normale Supérieure de Lyon (2014-2016) e na Universität Zürich (2020-2021); atualmente, é professora auxiliar de literatura medieval na Faculdade de Letras da Universidade do Porto. Nos últimos anos, tem dedicado a sua investigação à presença de fontes para crónicas universais (sobretudo bíblicas e clássicas) na cultura medieval portuguesa.

The *Historia Scholastica*, a medieval “best-seller”

Few texts had the same success throughout the Middle Ages and beyond as Peter Comestor's *Historia Scholastica* (HS), and perhaps its popularity and accessibility dictated a certain disregard by researchers. It is mainly a compendium of biblical history, accompanied by theological comments and historical incidents, written very simply for it was conceived with an early academic public in mind; it thus transcribes, partially verses from the Bible and then explains either the theological interpretations for said verse – often, using Jewish commentaries –, or it expands the historical context in which the Biblical action occurs. The latter led to the inclusion of several non-Biblical *incidentia*, which also built up the appeal of the HS as a universal chronicle.

The text was the product of Peter Comestor's classes as a Theology teacher at the St. Victor school in Paris. During the last years of his life, from 1168-1175, Comestor – or Manducator, the Eater of books and devourer of history – devised a compilation he dedicated to William of the White Hands, by then Archbishop of Sens, son of the Count of Blois and Champagne – the homeland of Peter, who was likely born in Troyes and spent most of his life in this city.

Although Comestor was a renowned author of his time, the HS's papal approval at the 1215 4th Latran council and rapid inclusion in the Universities' curricula dictated the success of the French author *opus magnum*. By the late 12th century, it was already used in several universities, integrating the courses' core sources¹. From then onward, the popularity of the text exploded during the following centuries: it was intensively copied and printed after the 15th century.

Comestor made the most significant modifications to the HS, with a few other modifications happening quite soon after his death. The early textual fixation is understandable since its canonisation as a work of reference by the Church would leave less room for significant alterations to the text. Thus, we can consider two main manuscript families to which most witnesses belong: the gamma and the beta branches, the latter (β) being the basis for Migne's edition in *Patrologia Latina* 198. Although most of the Iberian witnesses of the HS belong to this branch, it is interesting to remark that in Portugal there were, likely at the same time, witnesses not only from this branch but also one which constitutes its own branch, S, and represents an early compositional state. Indeed, besides the 13th-century copy, preserved in Alcobaça probably since very early, from the beta family, the sole witness to S is a 12th-century manuscript preserved in Santa Cruz de Coimbra².

¹ MOREY, James H. – “Peter Comestor, biblical paraphrase, and the medieval popular Bible”. *Speculum* 68, 1 (1993), 6-7.

² SYLWAN, Agneta – “Petrus Comestor, *Historia Scholastica*: une nouvelle edition”. *Sacris Erudiri*, 39 (2000), 345-382.

The HS's tremendous impact in academic and monastic circuits – as it was said, it was an accessible text, perfect for the education of younger clergy members – very soon reverberated in the secular world. Its thorough explanations of biblical history, associated with the ever-present references to the Pagan world – a tradition initiated with Eusebius and Jerome's Chronicle canons amplified throughout the middle ages – made it an essential source for universal chronicles produced from the 13th century onwards, such as Vicent of Beauvais's *Speculum Historiale*; the German *Christherre-Chronik* or Rudolf von Ems *Keiserchronic*; or, for the Iberian context, the Latin *Cronica Naierensis* or Rodrigo Jimenez de Rada's *Breviarium Historiae Catholicae*, not to mention its role in Alfonso X's of Castille's *General Estoria*. It was also, significantly, one of the sources for Jacobus of Voragine's *Legenda Aurea*.

Simultaneously, it became the best departing point for biblical paraphrases and vernacular *bibles historiales*. Indeed,

“Because of its comprehensive assembly of apocryphal and legendary elements, and because of its frequent translation and paraphrase, the *Historia* was the single most important medium through which a popular Bible took shape, from the thirteenth into the fifteenth century, in France, England, and elsewhere”³.

Thus, the receptions of the HS were mainly two-fold: on the one hand, it was perceived and used as a source for universal chronicles; on the other, it was perceived and used as a source for biblical paraphrases. For the latter, Comestor's text was often depurated from the pagan *incidentia* or even from some of the most complex theological observations in order to produce biblical commentaries focused on the historiographical perspective. Using the HS as such was definitively the most impactful in medieval Europe. There are known translations/ reconversions into commented bibles into Saxon, Dutch, Old French, Catalan, Old Norse, Portuguese, Czech, Old English, and paraphrases deeply dependent on Comestor's work, which suggest previous translations in Middle-High German and Castilian⁴.

The Iberian Comestor

Either as a source or as an inspiration, the *Historia Scholastica* was early received and circulated almost simultaneously in the most prominent Iberian vernacular languages: as just mentioned above, Castilian, Catalan, and Portuguese. The last

³ MOREY, James H. – “Peter Comestor, Biblical Paraphrase...”, 6.

⁴ MOREY, James H. – “Peter Comestor, Biblical Paraphrase...”, 9, n. 11.

two use their Latin source for producing vernacular bibles, whilst in Castilian, the HS survives through its use in a vernacular world chronicle, the *General Estoria*.

This monumental work written by the end of Alfonso X's of Castile's life (from c. 1274 to his death in 1284), comprises the entirety of the Old Testament – including translations of the Psalms or other non-historical biblical books directly from the Bible or from commentators – as well as significant elements from Pagan history, namely the entire lore of the *Romans Antiques* – Thebes, Troy and Alexander – and translations of Classic works, such as Lucan's *Farsalia* or Ovid's *Heroides* and *Metamorphoses*. Just as these sources were almost entirely translated and integrated into Alfonso's encyclopaedic enterprises, so it happened to Comestor's *Historia Scholastica*, so closely and profusely followed that, albeit deeply intertwined with other sources, its inclusion implied a previous translation of the Latin text. This strategy is, likely, seen with other sources and materials compiled and used by the Alfonsine redactors. For instance, digested versions of the matter were firstly produced autonomously, either in Latin or directly in Castilian, to facilitate its inclusion in the larger structure of the *General Estoria*. The Alfonsine *estorias unadas* were recuperated, for example, for creating new, independent books on Troy – as it occurs with later Castilian and Galician Trojan novels⁵ – or paraphrases on biblical history – which was the case of Bernardo de Brihuega's works⁶, produced in Latin for Alfonso X, which survive in this language and in Portuguese⁷.

Just as for the Castilian reception of the *Historia Scholastica*, in the Catalan case, it is also by royal order that Comestor's work is received: the text was commissioned to Jaume de Montjuïc by Alfons III in 1287⁸. For this *Biblia Rimada*, the *Historia Scholastica* was not as much of a direct source as it was the model for this Catalan rhymed adaptation of the Bible. The main difference towards the Castilian version is, obviously, the goals of each project, since in this case – just as for the Portuguese we will see afterwards – Comestor's text became a primary source for vernacular bibles, either as a model which could offer a structure to follow or as a source whose information substantially facilitated the public's understanding of the biblical text.

⁵ PICHEL, Ricardo – “Tradición, (re)traducción e reformulación na General Estoria e na Estoria de Troya afonsinas á luz dun testemuño indirecto do séc. XIV”. e-Spania [online], 13 (2012). Available in <https://doi.org/10.4000/e-spania.21124> [consulted 1st September 2022].

⁶ BAUTISTA, Francisco – “Alfonso X, Bernardo de Brihuega y la *General Estoria*”. *Atalaya* [online], 17 (2017). Available in <https://doi.org/10.4000/atalaya.2954> [consulted 1st September 2022].

⁷ See SOBRAL, Cristina; CARDEIRA, Esperança – “O Livro dos Mártires de Bernardo de Brihuega. Dois séculos de leitura em português”. *Estudos de Lingüística Galega*, 10 (2018), 129-141. Available in <http://dx.doi.org/10.15304/elg.10.4613> [consulted 1st September 2022].

⁸ CASANELLAS, Pere – “Medieval Catalan translations of the Bible”. in Xavier Terrado; Flocel Sabaté (eds.) – *Les Veus del Sagrat*. Lleida: Pagès editors, 2015, 15-34 (here, pp. 19-20); see also PUIG I TÀRRECH, Armand – “Les traduccions catalanes medievals de la Bíblia”. in Armand Puig i Tàrrach (ed.) – *El Text: Lectures i Història (Scripta Biblica, 3)*, Barcelona: Associació Bíblica de Catalunya / Publicacions de l'Abadia de Montserrat, 2001, 107-231 (here, pp. 226-227).

The combination of both – translated source and model for a vernacular Bible – is precisely what occurs in the Portuguese case. The *Estorias de Abreviado Testamento Velho* is a reformulation of the Bible in Portuguese, thus working as a true vernacular bible, but not a close translation of the Vulgate⁹. Moreover, the HS is often shortened and simplified in this case since the goal was not to present complex theological commentaries. The fact that the most ancient version, as we will later see, was preserved in Alcobaça, being a vernacular version of Comestor, suggested its use as a manual for less instructed monks, who lacked knowledge in Latin, and this was often the Portuguese researchers' opinion¹⁰. However, this theory appears flawed when considering all the other instances of the *Historia Scholastica* translations in the Iberian Peninsula and elsewhere.

In almost all instances, the translation is commissioned or produced under the order of a king or another secular ruler. Moreover, the simplification the Latin text suffers tends to erase the more complex theological observations to present a more historical version, compatible with a public interested in sacred history and religious education but not necessarily invested in proper theological and philosophical instruction about the Bible. Likewise, the manuscript preserved in Lamego leads to other considerations. This version was undoubtedly produced for the Jewish public – since it includes the translation of the Pirke Avot¹¹ – by the end of the 15th century, by the precise time the first persecutions of the Jews occurred¹². The Lamego version used both the Alcobaça lost manuscript and, very likely, another translation of the Vulgate in order to complete or simplify the commentaries by Comestor¹³. If the Alcobaça manuscript was made by and for a strictly monastic

⁹ This is precisely the strategy of Guyard des Moulins when producing his *Bible Historiale*, which highlights the importance of comparing both versions in a more in-depth study. About Guyard, see the works of Xavier-Laurent Salvador, namely SALVADOR, Xavier-Laurent – “Guyard des Moulins, traducteur de Pierre Comestor”, in Gilbert Dahan (ed.) – *Pierre le Mangeur ou Pierre de Troyes, maître du XII^e siècle*. Turnhout: Brepols, 2013, 313-327. The same author is also the responsible for the digital edition of the *Bible Historiale*: SALVADOR, Xavier-Laurent (dir.) – *Bible Historiale*. Fr. Villeteuse: Université Sorbonne Paris Cité, 2014. Available in <https://www.biblehistoriale.fr/> [consulted 3rd October 2022]. For a recent and thorough study, see PATTERSON, Jeanette – *Making the Bible French. The Bible Historiale and the Medieval Lay Reader*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2022.

¹⁰ “O Monge de Alcobaça, como se vê logo do primeiro Capitulo do Genesis, tratou de facilitar aos seus irmãos, que não soubessern a lingua Latiria, o uso das Divinas Letras, acompanhadas, como elle diz no titulo, dos dizeres dos Doutores e sabedores” (S. BOAVENTURA, Fortunato – “Introdução” a *Historias d'Abreviado Testamento Velho*. in *Collecção de Inéditos Portuguezes dos Séculos XIV e XV*, vol. II. Coimbra: Real Imprensa da Universidade, 1829, V-XV, p. XIV).

¹¹ CASTRO, Joaquim Mendes de – “Versão medieval inédita do Pirqué Abot”. *Humanística e Teologia*, 10 (1989), 89-100; and VAQUERO, Manuela – “Bíblia de Lamego”, *Inventa MUSEU*, 2 (2015), 11-34.

¹² See LEITE, Mariana – “A Bíblia de Lamego. Leituras de Pedro Comestor no século XVI”. *eHumanista*, 48 (2021), 241-246.

¹³ LEITE, Mariana – “Na senda de S. Jerónimo: as bíblias portuguesas produzidas a partir da *Historia Scholastica* de Pedro Comestor”, in Arnaldo do Espírito Santo et al. – *Optimo magistro sodalium et amicorum munus. Homenagem a Aires A. Nascimento pelo Seu 80.º Aniversário*. Lisboa: Centro de Estudos Clássicos, U. Lisboa, 2022, 535-543.

public, the probability of arriving in the Portuguese Jewish community, especially by the late 15th century, seems unlikely. Considering there were other moralising texts of religious inspiration the Portuguese court commissioned to different monasteries (mainly, but not exclusively, Santa Cruz and Alcobaça), perhaps this was precisely the case of the *Historia Scholastica*. It would not only be coherent with the other translations of the work outside of Portugal, but it would explain the access to a text by a community that was removed from the monastic milieu but had access to royal and other more urban and secular circuits.

In the absence of the text: the digital edition

The Castilian and the Catalan translations of the HS have recent printed or digital editions. The GE was fully published in 2009¹⁴, and there is also an ongoing project for a digital edition of this work¹⁵; meanwhile, the *Biblias Medievales* digital editorial project included transcriptions of GE's Biblical passages¹⁶. As for the Catalan case, the *Corpus Biblicum Catalanicum*¹⁷ made available digital versions of printed editions of Bible translations. Even though it is part of the editorial plan, the *Biblia Rimada* has yet to appear among the published volumes or in progress. Still, hopefully, soon, the public will be able to read this version, inspired by Comestor's work, in an accessible manner.

The Portuguese case is considerably more deprived than its Iberian counterparts. In order to understand this, as well as the issues a digital edition entails, the differences between the witnesses must be taken into account.

As previously mentioned, there are two main witnesses: Alcobaça (BA), from which all other versions seem to derive¹⁸, and Lamego (BL). There are also short fragments: Évora (BE), an 18th-century direct copy of BL, and five fragments kept in the Faculdade de Direito, Lisbon, from the 15th and 16th centuries (BLx). Excluding the Lisbon fragments, Lamego is the oldest surviving manuscript.

¹⁴ ALFONSO X – *General Estoria*. 10 vols. Pedro Sánchez-Prieto Borja (ed.). Madrid: Biblioteca Castro, Fundación José Antonio de Castro, 2009.

¹⁵ GAGO JOVER, Francisco; BEALE-RIVAYA, Yasmine (eds.) – “Philological annotation and textual edition”. In Francisco Peña Fernández (P.I.) – *The Confluence of Religious Cultures in Medieval Historiography*. Kelowna: University of British Columbia, 2016. Available in <https://dege.ok.ubc.ca/> [consulted 19th October 2023].

¹⁶ ENRIQUE-ARIAS, Andrés (dir.) – *Proyecto Biblia Medieval. Recursos para el Estudio de las Traducciones Bíblicas Castellanas en la Edad Media*. Palma de Mallorca: Universitat de les Illes Balears, 2004-. Available in <http://www.bibliamedieval.es/> [consulted 1st September 2023].

¹⁷ PUIG I TÀRRECH, Armand (ed.) – *Corpus Biblicum Catalanicum*. Tarragona: Associació Bíblica de Catalunya, 2004. Available in <http://cbcat.abcat.cat/> [consulted 3rd October 2022].

¹⁸ Leite, “Na senda de S. Jerónimo...”, 543.

Preserved in the Museum of Lamego, it is an exciting volume since BL replaces some elements in the HS by directly translating the Vulgate into some Genesis and Exodus chapters. Besides, it also transmits the Book of Job, lost in the BA edition, and includes a translation of Tobias and Jonas, and the Pirké Avot mentioned above. It has 213 paper folia, likely from c. 1495¹⁹, and entirely written by the same hand, in a simple yet elegant Gothic script²⁰. Joaquim Mendes de Castro published the only edition available in 1998, which is difficult to obtain since it was an author's edition. Luckily, the manuscript is well preserved in Lamego, and thus, it is easy to proceed to its new, digital edition.

The *Biblia de Alcobaça* poses other complicated issues since its manuscript, Alcobaça 349²¹, is missing. The 19th-century editor likely took it to Rome as he fled into exile during the Portuguese civil war. Therefore, all that remains is Fortunato de S. Boaventura's edition, published in 1829, marked by the editor's zeal concerning the theological accuracy of the manuscript. Therefore, we might not even have access to trustworthy text, as Fortunato admits, in the prologue to his edition, that he could not let uncensored some controversial passages. Moreover, the editor indicates BA also had a Book of Job, partially erased afterwards by a zealous scholar who, Fortunato assumes, wanted to present a version closer to the HS, which does not contain any element from Job, one of the most debated texts in Jewish and Christian exegetic tradition. However, the 19th-century editor also considered this first Portuguese translation of Job to require a careful approach, especially concerning its theological implications. Thus, it delayed the edition of this section of the manuscript. He had, however, published the first chapters of Job in a 1827 catalogue²² and promised a complete edition that never came to be.

To make matters worse, the Fortunato did not signal these eventual omissions in the text, so we can only assume what the text could have been comparing it with its Latin source. Nonetheless, the 19th-century scholar did an acceptable transcription, giving us a relatively close depiction of the lost manuscript. If indeed Fortunato censured the text, his intent could have been to copy only the HS matter, eliminating any commentaries or marginalia alien to Comestor's work. Considering this editor's

¹⁹ CASTRO, Joaquim Mendes – *Biblia de Lamego II. Estudo Bíblico-Literário*. s/l, s/n, 1998, 125.

²⁰ See the description in Castro, *Biblia de Lamego II...*, 8-10, 123-131; BITAGAP manid 1563 in ASKINS, Arthur (ed.) – *PhiloBiblon*: BITAGAP - Bibliografia de Textos Antigos Galegos e Portugueses [online]. Berkeley: The Bancroft Library, University of California, 1997-. Available in https://philobiblon.upf.edu/html/bitagap_en.html [consulted 15th December 2022]; and SHARRER, Harvey; PINTO, Pedro – “Os fragmentos da Historia Scholastica de Pedro Comestor da Biblioteca da Faculdade de Direito da Universidade de Coimbra”, in Arnaldo Espírito Santo *et al.* (eds.) – *Optimo magistro sodalium et amicorum munus. Homenagem a Aires A. Nascimento pelo Seu 80.º Aniversário*. Lisboa: Centro de Estudos Clássicos, U. Lisboa, 2022, 515-534, here pp. 519-522.

²¹ BITAGAP manid 1037 in Askins (ed.), *PhiloBiblon...*, and, in more detail, Sharrer; Pinto, “Os fragmentos...”, 517-519.

²² S. BOAVENTURA, Fortunato de – *Commentariorum de Alcobacensi Mstorum Bibliotheca libri tres*. Coimbra: Typographia Academica-Regio, 1827, 577-580.

commentary on the state of the manuscript, how much he regrets the destruction of the Book of Job, allied to his comments on the erasure of matter in Judges, and, more importantly, its proximity to BL, I am inclined to believe Fortunato was somewhat faithful to the manuscript, and thus BA lacked matter even before the edition.

In 1958, Serafim da Silva Neto²³ reviewed Fortunato's edition of BA, changing some linguistic aspects of the previous; the main issue with this particular version is that it departed from Silva Neto's knowledge of the medieval Portuguese language, without any proper confrontation with the manuscript since it disappeared in the previous century. Independently of the value of his linguistic appraisal of Fortunato's edition, Silva Neto's version is even less reliable than the previous one.

Finally, we have the Evora and Lisbon fragments, all still unpublished. The first²⁴ consists of only 30 folios, with Genesis and Exodus matter, copied in a cursive hand in the second half of the 18th century²⁵. The Lisbon fragments pertain to two copy instances (Lisboa A and Lisboa B). The oldest, Lisboa A²⁶, dated from the mid to late 15th century, is comprised of 17 paper folios, written in two columns in a gothic cursive hand, and transmits the first chapters of Genesis in accordance to BA²⁷. As for the Lisboa B set, all four fragments date from the early 16th century – just like the Lamego manuscript. Indeed, they share the graphic presentation (only one column) with this witness, albeit using a more cursive hand. They include matter from Genesis and Exodus (fragment n° 2²⁸, 6 folios); Exodus (fragment n° 3²⁹, 20 folios); and Macchabeus (fragment n° 4³⁰, 2 folios). With only two folios, the last fragment, n° 5³¹, is particularly relevant because it includes matter absent from the BA available edition, namely part of Jonas and another passage of Job, matching the text preserved in BL³². Found in the Faculty of Law of Lisbon in 2009³³, Harvey Sharrer and Pedro Pinto have been studying these fragments³⁴, and they are preparing an edition which I will include in a final digital edition.

The main issue, with editing (and publishing) these witnesses in a digital format is the differences in the material transmission of the texts. The supports are diverse:

²³ *Bíblia Medieval Portuguesa I*. Serafim da Silva Neto (ed.). Rio de Janeiro: Instituto Nacional do Livro, 1958.

²⁴ BITAGAP manid 3423 in Askins (ed.), *PhiloBiblon*...

²⁵ See the considerations about this fragment in Sharrer; Pinto, "Os fragmentos...", 522-523.

²⁶ BITAGAP manid 4368 in Askins (ed.), *PhiloBiblon*...

²⁷ Sharrer; Pinto, "Os fragmentos...", 526-527.

²⁸ BITAGAP manid 4385 in Askins (ed.), *PhiloBiblon*...

²⁹ BITAGAP manid 4369 in Askins (ed.), *PhiloBiblon*... This particular fragment might belong to a different copy: Sharrer; Pinto, "Os fragmentos...", 529.

³⁰ BITAGAP manid 4387 in Askins (ed.), *PhiloBiblon*...

³¹ BITAGAP manid 4386 in Askins (ed.), *PhiloBiblon*...

³² Sharrer; Pinto, "Os fragmentos...", 531.

³³ PINTO, Pedro – "Índice dos manuscritos avulsos da biblioteca da Faculdade de Direito da Universidade de Lisboa", *Revista da Faculdade de Direito da Universidade de Lisboa*, 50 (2009), 477-503; Sharrer; Pinto, "Os fragmentos...", 523-524.

³⁴ I would like to thank Pedro Pinto for sharing with me a draft of the forthcoming edition.

we have three sets of manuscripts and a printed version. The confrontation between versions, especially the main ones – Lamego and Alcobaça – is tainted by the fact that we cannot surely know the text transmitted by the 1829 edition. This issue poses the question of marking eventual irregularities and linguistic divergences between both texts. The most important is establishing standard criteria usable for either printed or manuscript and stressing that one of the witnesses only transmits the previous editor's interpretation. One of the main advantages of a digital edition is precisely the possibility of presenting, side by side, the various witnesses in different degrees of presentation. The reader may confront several versions side by side or compare only one with its corresponding manuscript via photos. The *Estoria de Espanna Digital* project³⁵ offers this option, allowing one to read different witnesses for the same work and open different transcriptions in the same tab. The previously mentioned *Biblias Medievales* project, in turn, allows reading and confronting each line of the translations of the Bible, including the Latin Vulgate and the Tanach.

Although not a significant innovation, the possibilities offered by a digital edition for presenting different versions side-by-side, with corresponding images from the manuscripts or even, for BA, the printed edition, the favours the understanding of the material reality of the edited text. Moreover, the intersection with other online editions can and must be considered. In this case, accessing at least Migne's edition of the *Historia Scholastica* would provide an excellent reading tool for checking the translation process or understanding the processes of transforming a historiographical text with theological commentary in a *Bible Historiale*. Here, as ever, the biggest issue is, without any doubt, time; once more, the difficulties of preparing a digital edition without a team also present many challenges.

There is a terrible lack of access to this Portuguese initiative of transforming Peter Comestor's *Historia Scholastica* into a *Bible Historiale*, especially online. As aforesaid, even the current printed editions are difficult to get: for the lost Alcobaça manuscript, there is also a facsimile of the 1829 edition³⁶, besides the reedition by Silva Neto in 1958; as for the Lamego witness, the sole integral edition is unavailable in most libraries, and became almost impossible to obtain. The other fragments, as said, are still unpublished. It is thus a daunting task and, hence, inevitably will have some shortcomings. Hopefully, I will soon provide some *presentia* to the current *absentia* of the Portuguese versions of Comestor's work from digital platforms and the Internet, thus offering the translations of this 12th-century text to 21st-century readers and bringing them to the same level as other Medieval Iberian Bible translations.

³⁵ WARD, Aengus (ed.) – *Estoria de Espanna Digital*. Birmingham: University of Birmingham, 2013. Available in <https://blog.bham.ac.uk/estoriadigital/> [consulted 20th October 2023].

³⁶ *Collecção de Inéditos Portuguezes dos séculos XIV e XV*. Fortunato de S. Boaventura (ed.); reed. José Marques. Porto, Programa Nacional de Edições Comemorativas dos Descobrimentos Portugueses, 1988.

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