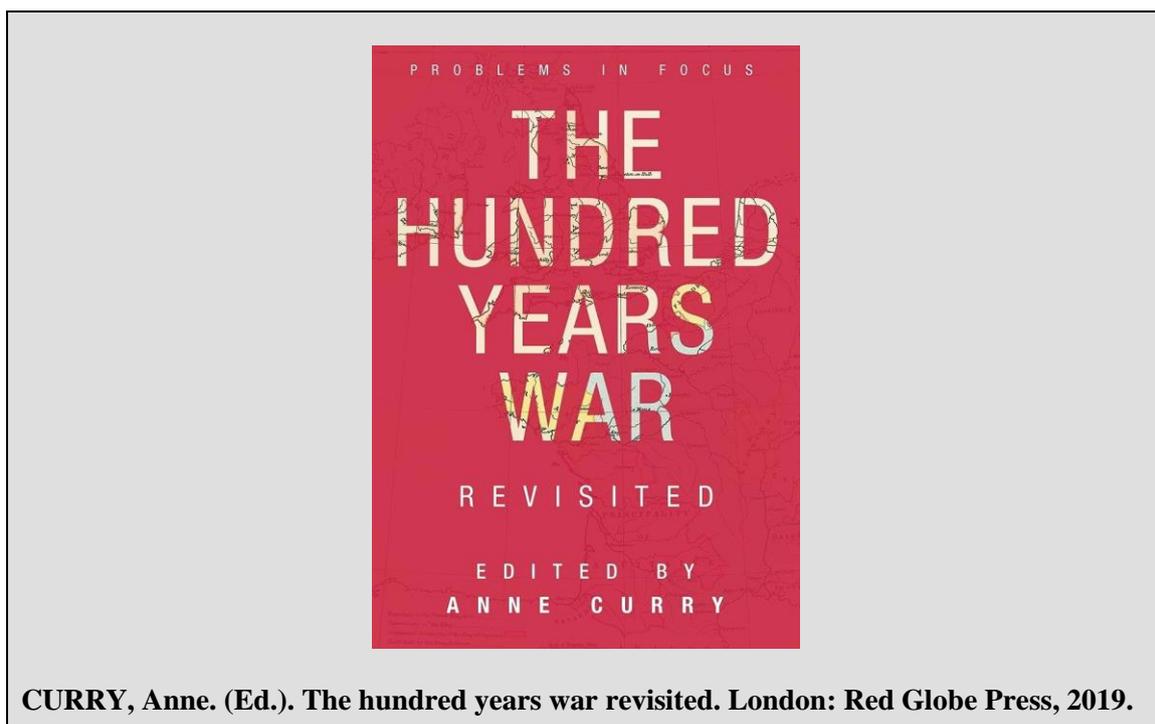


RESENHA DE: “THE HUNDRED YEARS WAR REVISITED ” POR FERNANDO PEREIRA DOS SANTOS

Review of: “The Hundred Years War Revisited ” by Fernando
Pereira dos Santos

Fernando Pereira dos Santos
Universidade Estadual Paulista - UNESP/ *Insulae*
Doutor em História pela Universidade Estadual Paulista
ORCID: [0000-0003-2728-7673](https://orcid.org/0000-0003-2728-7673)
E-mail: fernando.p.santos@unesp.br

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This highly valuable book closely scrutinizes a variety of documents produced by the Hundred Years War main contenders roughly between the early 1300's, a few decades before Edward III declared his intent to prosecute a war against his cousin Jean II for the crown of France, until a little bit after 1453, when Calais became the last remaining possession under Henry VI's control. Pondering on the historical research in the last half century, the world leading expert Professor Anne Curry points out in a richly concise introduction the clear attempt to dialogue with Kenneth Fowler's *The*

Hundred Years War, a substantial volume published back in 1971. All in all, she successfully highlights the advancements achieved on investigating objects thoroughly laboured by employing prime methodologies of research, bringing up such a pleasant reading to experts interested on the several aspects of the longstanding conflicts carried out by both crowns. Structured in nine chapters, in similar fashion to Professor Fowler's list of contents, it covers a broad range of classical topics from financing of war and political tensions between England and France to the composition of armies, navies and the perspectives of cultural approaches regarding understandings of the code of chivalry, the direct insights of first-hand accounts of warfare and the pivotal role played by the Church in regulating violence, administrating war logistics and providing support for either the Plantagenet, Lancaster or Valois king of the time not only with supplies, but also with warriors.

This magnificent work was carried out by thoughtful analysis of eleven different academics, with each chapter built over a strong intertwined cohesion with each other, leading thus to an easier and better understanding of the core topics of the book. Given that a review it is not a place for in-depth analysis, my attempt is to bring up key aspects of such pivotal publication.

Bearing that in mind, a compelling discussion arises in the very opening of the book: what were the main aspects of political relations in both kingdoms? Generally speaking, Gwilym Dodd argues that a successful administration would have heavily been dependent on the ability of kings and their representatives to gather local support and portray the conflict as being of 'national' interest rather than a mere dynastic feud. In England, both Edward III and Henry V presented quite able to maintain an equilibrium between their warrior and administrative roles, a factor that led to the successive succour in men, money and supplies to their campaigns in France, while the failure of their counterparts Richard II and Henry VI might have been partially explained by the lack of such abilities. However, the simple fact a ruler might demonstrate charisma, martial prowess and military leadership was not enough to secure a safe entourage to the enemy's territories, a fact that would have been constantly remembered by the ongoing need to persuade the Parliament in the king's petitions for money.

Therefore, it is emphasized the usefulness of propagandize the legitimacy and justness imbued in the English king's claim to the French throne, a matter constantly brought up to mind by chronicle writers and Church members who took the pulpit in

their preaching to inform and transmit favourable news from the battlefields. In the occasion of defeat, though, especially during Henry VI's reign, the political community virtually abandoned the war efforts due to the lack of confidence on the king's ability to provide adequate responses to the French and Burgundian aggressions, leading to a process of demilitarization and lack of money to support those who still insisted in keeping the flames of the conflict lit.

In France, things were pretty much alike, but with two main differences as pointed out by Graeme Small: while the Three Estates were those to be convinced of the war needs, it was quintessential to consider the changing alliances of Burgundians, Bretons and other local lords. Both aspects required from fifteenth-century English and French monarchs a constant awareness to the observation and enforcement of their respective wills in order to protect sworn loyal areas from the aggressions performed not only by enemy soldiers, but also from their own men. Such issues required an even deeper dependency on developing coercive means through which money could be raised.

Also, differently from England, where the political power had been centralized by the crown in previous centuries, in France the early fifteenth-century Armagnac-Burgundian struggles and the implications of Breton and Gascon policies towards both realms posed a very burdensome challenge on French rulers. It was not uncommon they had to fight not only the Plantagenet and latter Lancaster kings claims, but also to deal with rebellious lords whom, in several occasions, posed even a greater threat to the consolidation of their power over the kingdom.

As stated up to now, the capacity of providing a constant flow of money was a key aspect to be observed by all those with direct involvement in war affairs, from captains to kings. A clearer picture on this matter is offered by Tony Moore and Adrian Bell in a careful estimation of war expenditures based on quantitative analysis of both realms' debts contracted during fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. Shortly, it is argued that most of the time both crowns were unable to rely only on their own sources of money, i.e, taxation and royal prerogatives, a worrying situation that on numerous occasions obliged its rulers to seek investment and loans in a variety of sources: from merchants and local landlords to foreign Italian bankers.

Regarding specifically this subject, it is approached through a three-pronged analysis: the impact of war on national finances; the difficulties to raise enormous

amounts of funds in a short time period to support embarking troops or even those already deployed on sieges and naval activities; the actual means of how exactly it was possible to transfer a huge bulk of money where it was needed and what mechanisms were used to prevent men from performing fraudulent conducts such as receiving their payment and not serving in the ways and places they were expected to.

If merchants and other laymen were theoretically forbidden and not directly involved on bellicose activities, the same applied to the churchmen. However, it was noticed that on several occasions members of those groups not only offered support for the cause, but effectively took arms to engage on the hostilities, such as the fourteenth-century Flemish chronicler Jean le Bel, who took arms in favour of the English in late 1320's and put into writing his bellicose experiences. Thus, in order to offer a fuller understanding of the ideas and practices encompassing the Hundred Years War, it is essential to question the levels of participation of religious individuals and institutions. In discussing this matter, Rory Cox ventilated the practical involvement of Church members both in England and France in numerous fields of activities, ranging from financing and administration to military and diplomacy. Also, as previously mentioned, religious figures played a massive part on shaping public opinion and disseminating royal propaganda as a variety of treatises sanctioning violent actions known from the period testify.

Since the fact that the general outcomes of war were repeatedly acknowledged, bringing up to contemporary minds worries about the destruction of buildings, burnings of crops, physical violence against women, peasants, inhabitants of the countryside, merchants and religious communities, it is far from unexpected that the need of justifying war and its side effects was generally put on the table. However, more than just scratching the surface of narratives provided by hearsays evoked several years after depicted events, another breakthrough of this book is the attempt by Laura Crombie to analyse the impacts of war in towns and civilians living in French countryside and English coastal areas. Among the intriguing conclusions reached by the author is the double role played by women at war: far from being mere passive victims crushed under the potency of warrior's fleshly desires, they might have been active agents on processes of peace making, spying, logistical administration and, surprisingly, on the scenario of war, being Joan of Arc a well-known example from the approached temporality, but not the only one.

An inquisitive mind might have noticed that the first half of the chapters majorly dealt with the dynamics of logistical management, but such a volume would be incomplete if it remained silent on the pondering of war and its prosecution. For such reason, a lot of thought was put in the codes of conduct, the reporting of conflicts and the organization of navies and armies.

As it is expected from any recent study of late medieval warfare, the topic of chivalry strongly appears on contemporary documentation, supporting the evidence that it played a paramount role on the conceptions of how it was expected war should be fought by fourteen and fifteenth-century combatants. In a manner of speaking, the brilliancy of Andy King's analysis lays upon not in providing a general account of its core foundations centuries earlier in France, but in demonstrating that chivalry was a massive driving force to direct the manners and attitudes of men engaged in the conflict throughout its lasting 116 years. All in all, such an ethos was based on a great deal of parameters, some of which were the attempts to balancing one's career on distinguishing prowess and prudence in battle at the same time that it was advisable avoiding rashness and cowardice. Nonetheless, not every aspect was water clear at a first glance, since deception against the enemy was a tool virtually employed by all agents involved in the conflict. Thus, how one could readily distinguish if the killing of enemies, breaching of a truce or the expectancy of material profit would be seen under a virtuous or vicious point of view are arguable topics brought into discussion.

If it is not possible to have a precise image of how such moral matters were understood by contemporary warrior society, likewise it is hard to sustain the reliability of every aspect described in first-hand accounts allegedly produced by testimonies of the gory battlegrounds. Be that as it may, one cannot fully simply ignore them by the assumption they sometimes do not seem to be credible to nowadays eyes. A major reason for that is the fact the shaping of narratives is in itself a form of contemporary understanding of what was taken as truthful and recommended. Following this line of argument, Craig Taylor considered accounts produced by warriors, heralds and religious men, as well as the wide range of topics they cover, in order to provide the reader a rare opportunity to perceive pragmatic problems of the day, from the lack of payments and its developments to the war effort to psychological insights, such as the fear experienced by warriors and the unleashing of fury on their enemies.

Such aspects might be felt both in land and naval warfare. One might contend with the marking similarities and differences between them, but it is far from neglectable the fact both were complementary aspects to be observed by those dealing with war affairs. In such regard, once again English and French documentation is carefully examined in order to provide a very useful insight on the importance of the sea as a strategic area to be constantly watched and worth to be battled for. Aside from geographical and economic issues, methods of recruitment, transportation and composition of both English and French fleets, one of the main contributions from the chapter written by Andrew Ayton and Craig Lambert is the careful consideration of the heavy dependency of ships and sea control as a crucial factor to be observed throughout all the years of conflict, as much as the careful keeping of garrisons as a mean to achieve effective possibility of a successful war operation.

Similarly, Gary Paul Baker highlights several aspects about land warfare from deep scrutiny of documentation. A high number of aspects might have been covered in such analysis, and the author chose to ponder on the structure of armies and how they were gathered and maintained in both kingdoms. He observed that in early 1300's England, feudal levies were raised in a mixed combination with paid troops, the latter becoming the trend from 1360's onwards. In France, however, the usage of feudal prerogatives such as the *arrière-ban* had been adopted until Charles VII developed a functional system of recruitment with the *compagnies d'ordonnance*, leading the French not only to completely overcome the English but also to become one of the most feared armies in Christendom.

Aside from mere highlighting this edition's strong points, a brief remark should be made about a lacuna readily identified in its introduction: the lack of studies dedicated to put in dialogue the economic, political, cultural and military ties of both English and French kingdoms with other realms throughout Christendom deeply affected by the Hundred Years War. However, as Anne Curry readily points out, such 'negligence' is expected to be remedied by a follow-up edition covering such aspects not available in the first volume. Overall, this is an outstanding scholarly effort carried out by some of the foremost world-leading experts and one of the best works about the Hundred Years War published in the last few years, making it both a mandatory and rather quite pleasant reading on the subject.