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**Maxwell, Kenneth. *Pombal, Paradox of the Enlightenment*.  
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Discussing what has or has not been said in the historiography written in English about themes from Portuguese history runs the risk of being transformed into a string of constantly repeated lamentations. As a general rule, there is almost always a tendency to fall back on a comment made by Laura de Mello e Souza in the first published review (1995) of Maxwell's book about Pombal: "peripheral, both in the past and in the present, Portugal has ended up being miniaturized by European historians, who have placed it well below its real dimensions or have simply ignored it."<sup>2</sup> Nonetheless, the eighteenth century has a number of quite distinctive marks, which are best not forgotten.

Repeatedly seen as a key period in the gestation of so-called Western modernity, such a status is normally associated not only with economic change, but above all with the intellectual movement known as the Enlightenment. And, although it is less and less evident what is understood by this title, there are two aspects that seem to be fairly indisputable. On the one hand, the eighteenth century did not only result in the economic and political predominance<sup>3</sup> of certain regions of Europe over others, such as the Classical nucleus that the intellectual thought of that time is reputed to have built up in part through its fierce criticism of the religious, social, and political models of certain European territories that thereafter began to be regarded as "decadent" and "backward."<sup>4</sup> Fundamentally, the critical thought of the territories that are now considered to belong to the center assumed as their absolute opposite the Catholic Iberian Peninsula and its colonial dominions, returning to and expanding upon the legacy of the so-called "Black Legend" generated in the previous centuries, among others by the Protestants and Jews, about the territories that had built the hegemonic political center in the early sixteenth

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<sup>2</sup> Sousa, "Pombal, déspota ilustrado."

<sup>3</sup> "It is best observed in northwestern Europe: England, the Low Countries, and parts of France and Germany. The North American colonies share in these characteristics," De Vries, *The industrious revolution: consumer behavior and the household economy, 1650 to the present*, x.

<sup>4</sup> Poulot, *Les Lumières*, 67.