

DICIONÁRIO DE HISTORIADORES PORTUGUESES

DA ACADEMIA REAL DAS CIÊNCIAS AO FINAL DO ESTADO NOVO

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Biography and History I

As a multifaceted genre, averse to disciplinary demarcations, and the confluence of different methodologies and models of varying scopes, historical biography is difficult to pin down as a unit in its own right with an autonomy that would warrant a more detailed reflection on its specific place in the history of Portuguese historiography. However, given the exponential multiplication of its products in recent decades and, above all, its election as a banner of the traditionalist turnaround that has recently marked historiography (also) in Portugal, such reflection appears to be necessary.

In this climate of renewal or revision of historiography, much has been said about the recovery of the biographical genre, supposedly "forgotten" and even "disdained" for decades by the academic doxa of grand interpretative and analytical schemes. Therefore, the intention of an ideal model of biography, explicitly defended by some of its most distinguished practitioners, is clearly recognisable in this discourse. Here, one encounters a pronounced preference for characters with relevant public careers (political, diplomatic, or military, and therefore predominantly male) and the use of individualistic methodologies that acknowledge personal will and reason as the driving force of historical action. However, practice is averse to singular models. In fact, despite the apparent traditionalist matrix of the biographical exercise, a broader look at biographical writing throughout the period covered by this Dictionary presents us with a far more complex picture than the barely shaded landscape of that ideal model.

It is a fact that great figures – from the military and royal heroes to the democratised version of the great man, more typical of the second half of the nineteenth century – have always dominated biographical writing in Portugal. These more or less illustrious characters, from the fields of arms and governance to those of science and culture, have never been anything other than those worthy of "consecration" and "remembrance," as later on in the century Oliveira Marques would say of "the great (and small) personalities" of the twentieth century, the profiles of whom it was necessary to outline. But this openness to the realm of creation and intellect, correlated with the progressive entry into history of social groups less accustomed to portrait honours, expanded the universe of biographical subjects and with it, the forms of intervention in historical processes beyond the narrow limits of more conventional historiography (O. Marques, Afonso Costa, 1972: 17-18).



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On the other hand, variations on the voluntarist theory and the contrasting assumption of the prevalence of the environment over the individual multiplied at the pace of biographical production. It should be noted that this circumstance is first and foremost empirical. Until a few years ago, and with very localised exceptions, Portuguese historiography did not promote a true substantial reflection on the representativeness of the biographical object or on the limits or freedom of human action. Only the final decades of the nineteenth century (and later, by ideological extension, the period of the Estado Novo), under the influence of sometimes positivist theories and sometimes those, not necessarily contradictory, advocated by authors such as Thomas Carlyle and Ralph Waldo Emerson, saw more consistent attempts to develop an explanatory theory of individual intervention in history. Even then, despite the texts – some of which have become references – by Alexandre Herculano, Pinheiro Chagas, José Silvestre Ribeiro, Silva Graça, Oliveira Martins, and above all, Teófilo Braga, it is difficult to make out any theoretical clarity or argumentative depth in the vast majority of the biographical exercises of the time to sustain them in a presumed debate on human agency. This means that in practice, and throughout the period under analysis, eclecticism was a constant feature of the genre, with the portrayed figure appearing more or less conditioned by surrounding circumstances and more or less capable of intervening in the "social milieu."

In schematic terms, if it were possible to impose a secure order on a genre characterised by diverse historical conceptions, essentially syncretic approaches, and an overly heterogeneous set of objects, one might say that biographical writing in Portugal developed all possible combinations of elements, in the distance between the following (ideal) poles, giving rise to as many models or modes of biographical writing: (1) the tendentially exclusivist consideration of the role of the (great) individual as the driver of historical action with the former emphasising the weight of the context in their conditioning; (2) the use of biography as a source of exempla for present and future generations – in the tradition of *Historia Magistra Vitae* – diametrically opposed to the more erudite, ideally neutral, portrait of life, typically produced in an academic environment, and whose purpose and end are tied to research; (3) the purely academic product, for self-consumption, as opposed to works published with the intention of popularisation, generally closer to the literary register; and finally, (4) specifically academic and amateurish authorship, often driven by curiosity about historical themes.

These considerations, broadening the range of the biographical works considered herein, obviously bear weight in their final reckoning and in the conclusions deriving thereof. However, this weight, although significant in quantitative terms, is more indicative of the variety of the genre. With various extents and scopes – not including literary memoir and fictional writings due to their specific nature, from extensive portraits to compilations, such as dictionaries and catalogues, purely academic biographical notes, intellectual biographies, and even the panegyric literature of praises, they are sufficiently expressive in number to at least confirm historical biography in Portugal as a common resource for historians and curious minds.



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As a difficult object to frame, with vastly blurred lines, and due to the proverbial aversion of the Portuguese historiographical environment to self-reflective exercises, historical biography rarely received the attention its practical relevance would justify. These contributions, although sporadic, are nonetheless significant, especially regarding the change in status that the genre underwent during the nineteenth century. This change is immediately evident in the debate – albeit localised – sparked by biographical writing at the end of the century, largely due to the work of Oliveira Martins and those who adopted and discussed positivist theories. These years witnessed a significant portion of the very scarce theoretical reflection on biographical writing in the country, an exercise that was always more practical than reflective. But the awareness of the singularity of the genre and its implications had been set in motion.

It is true that the initial appraisals of the volume of biographical production tended to be negative, reflecting more concerns and anxieties in particular fields than a more in-depth observation. For example, Pinheiro Chagas regretted above all the lack of "universal biographies" that would preserve and honour the memory of the "illustrious men" of the nation, as he would later complain of the scarcity of literary memoirs that served as the basis for the historian's work – but not without noting that never before had so many biographical notes and news been published, which he referred to as a "delirium of minutiae." Here, Chagas, as a practitioner of the genre, compared the work of a conscientious and critical nature, more typical of the academic circuit in which he also circulated, to texts designed specifically to satisfy the more prosaic appetites of the 'general' public. Nevertheless, the increasing activity of his contemporaries in the art of biography was attested to – and did not wane in the times that followed. However, it was always dominated by the "great figures" of national history, as were the more traditionalist biographies. Therefore, the gaps that were occasionally pointed out by authors dedicated to the genre displayed both confirmation of their evident vigour and condemnation for what had remained undone in particular areas and among less conspicuous characters: as noted by Carolina Michaëlis de Vasconcelos in the case of second-tier female figures, or by the Count of Campo Belo, when he spoke of the need to create a "national biographical archive" listing all those who had distinguished themselves locally, and even Oliveira Marques, towards the last quarter of the century who, against the existing volume of biographies on the prominent names of national political history, advocated for a "developed and organised biographical studies programme on the Portuguese of the twentieth century" (P. Chagas, *Portuguezes illustres*, 1869, p.xiii, *Migalhas de história portuguesa*, 1893, p.135, "Historia de Julio Cezar...", 1864; Campo Belo, *O arquivo biográfico nacional*, 1944, p.5; C. Michaëlis de Vasconcelos, *A Infanta D. Maria de Portugal...*, 1902, p.2; O. Marques, *op. cit.*, pp.17-19).

And yet, despite the scarce novelty brought by the biographical exercises, production in this area was abundant, especially that which targeted a broader audience. M. Lopes de Almeida referred to this much larger set when pointing to the "abundant biography" included in this genre (not only historical) and spoke of the need to offer it a separate place in the history of Portuguese literature. The fact that biographical writing has been practiced not only generally but has also been an object of curiosity since early times is not second-hand news.



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Notes on the success and ease with which some works of this nature sold out, the frequency of their re-editions (of which the case of Oliveira Martins is the most notable), the multiplication of editorial collections especially dedicated to the genre, and the profusion of periodical publications in which biographical news occupied a central position, all contribute to paint a far less gloomy picture than some more pessimistic comments would suggest, even within the academic circuit (Lopes de Almeida, *Introdução a Lourenço Mexia Galvão*, 1946, pp.23-24).

In the early twentieth century, this interest in biography as a genre in its own right is reflected in a series of scattered texts where the biographer or biographical production becomes the object of study: such as in Baptista de Lima, on Garrett's biographer, Gomes de Amorim (1928); in Alfredo Duarte Rodrigues, in the extensive work dedicated to the numerous biographies on the figure of the Marquis of Pombal (1947); in Cruz Malpique, on Teixeira de Pascoais, a biographer (1960); in Alberto Iria, on the Portuguese biographers of Garcia de Orta (1963); and in Saavedra Machado, on José Leite de Vasconcelos, a prolific writer of biographical notes (1970). However, at least one author attempted more comprehensively to follow its trail, or rather to reconstruct over time what he termed as "affinity" with the biographical genre: from António Feliciano de Castilho, Latino Coelho, Rebelo da Silva, and Oliveira Martins to Gomes de Amorim, Rodrigues Cordeiro, Visconde de Sanches de Baena, and Alberto Pimentel. A tireless practitioner of the biographical genre himself, although primarily a disseminator and therefore detached from the academic circuit, Mário Gonçalves Viana perhaps best understood its potential in the field of (historical) biography and reflected on its path. In addition to his intense collaboration with the Estado Novo regime, this writer, teacher and journalist dedicated an extensive text, a combination of study and pamphlet, to the biographical genre, addressing the notion of the great man, serving as a significant introduction to one of the translated volumes of Plutarch's *Lives*. Convinced of the success of biography among readers of both the past and present, M.G. Viana even called for its status of "science" in his apologia for his ideal model – as indeed Conde de Campo Belo had done some time before, to which he added: "Whoever wished to follow each step in the evolution of this literary genre would be truly surprised by its importance and scope" (M.G. Viana, "Ensaio preambular", max. pp.34, 46; Campo Belo, op. cit., p.7).

1. "Illustrious Men." This ideal model of biography, or the more traditionalist way of writing it, was obviously not an ex nihilo creation or even the result of a series of essays seeking to refine a unique way of recounting a singular history. In the Portuguese case, as in others, this model or the biographical genre in general, unabashedly rooted itself methodically in panegyric literature, from hagiography to chronicles, and even to the life portraits inserted in sermons and other commemorative texts, such as funeral eulogies. The fact that this eulogistic dimension (or sometimes its opposite) has managed to persist until today, especially in works aimed at popularisation, is merely indicative of the ease with which biographical records may be adapted to the



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exercise of value judgment, typical of the history-courtroom, relatively constrained by rules of good historiographical practice and more or less subject to political circumstances or propagandistic intentions.

This aligns with the biographical historiography of the Ancien Regime, in its laudatory tone and in the choice of exemplary, or so-called exemplary figures as objects of study and the preferred means of representing national history. At the time when the Royal Academy of Sciences (here, ACL) was founded, history was still predominantly that of the dynasties, kings (and occasionally queens), and the great figures, as well noted by Herculano, just as it had been institutionalised decades earlier with the hallmark of the short-lived Royal Academy of Portuguese History (ARHP); and the dominant type of author was the "ecclesiastical historian," both a servant of the reigning House and a member of the Clergy, thus justifying the inclusion of notable figures, especially those with a religious background or, maxime, saint heroes. A genre that focused on individual backgrounds and made praise the mainstay of discourse was fitting for the pursuit of favours. Indeed, one of the most cited biographical works of the period, *Elogios do Reis de Portugal* [Praise of the Kings of Portugal] (1785), expressively dedicated to the firstborn of the royal family, belongs to one of these men, namely António Pereira de Figueiredo, a canonist, theologian and member of the Real Mesa Censória [Royal Censorship Board]. Characterised by a panegyric tone, moralising content and limited circulation, his model (as announced) was the classical one of Cicero, of a master of life history, but also – as was the case much earlier in the *Elogios* of Fr. Bernardo de Brito –mirrors for princes; and his audience were the elites in power, who would use the examples as a guide for their own conduct (A. Herculano, "Cartas...", 1842; Reis Torgal, "Antes de Herculano...", 1996, p.22; A.P. Figueiredo, *Elogios...*, 1785, "Dedicatória").

However, while the end of the 1700s was still the time of chronicle literature, from Fr. Cláudio da Conceição's *Gabinete Histórico* [Historical Cabinet] (1818-1831) to more individual exercises, as well as revised versions of the lives of saints and other Church figures, two circumstances altered both its weight in the overall historiographical production and the conception of history on which it was based.

Firstly, in conjunction with the founding of the ACL, the establishment of rules for good methodological practice fundamentally shaped historiographical work. Indeed, the need to conduct a survey of data on the country's past, a principle largely embodied in the model of the Academy's *Memoirs*, served to promote a more distinctly erudite register, moving away from the prevailing encomiastic tendency. In this regard, a form of presenting results was developed which, in a more direct and concise news tone, fundamentally subverted the traditional(ist) reference of biographical writing: from compendiums and/or catalogues, mere collections of chronological notes in their most basic version, to dictionaries and comprehensive biographies in their more finished form. This is evident in the work of Francisco Nunes Franklin, who resumed part of the work initiated by Fr. Manuel de Figueiredo on the chief chroniclers of the kingdom, such as António Ribeiro dos Santos and Francisco Manuel Trigoso; and beyond the narrow scope of the ACL and under the developed format of dictionaries, the reference works by José Mazza on musicians in Portugal, by Cirilo Volkmar Machado on its painters and, above all, by Inocêncio da Silva, the most direct heir in the field of bibliography to the tradition



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remotely inaugurated by Barbosa Machado. Far from being a marginal manifestation, even in the more specific field of life histories, these news collections became a successful (sub-)genre in the centuries that followed, primarily within the methodical tradition whose foundations were being laid.

However, the laudatory tone of historiographical discourse did not disappear completely, even within the context of the ACL, as is abundantly shown by the formal and systematic praise of academics and Crown figures. It was, in fact, inherent in the functions of some of these men who, like Francisco Franklin – author of a chronicle on the first Duke of Braganza – held positions such as Chronicler of the House of Braganza. Nor did the figure of the ecclesiastical historian cease to dominate, as exemplified by another royal chronicler, D. Tomás Caetano de Bem, even though mainly framed by the now-defunct ARHP. By virtue of his functions, this author of biographical works of a religious nature, like many of his peers, also conducted a genealogical work on the kings of Portugal and a 'dictionary' of their illustrious families. However, the direction in which his work, and that of others, was heading, also as he was an excellent organiser of archives, already differed from the essentially panegyric literature.

Having expanded the horizons of historiographical work beyond the ideas of service, debt, and devotion, the range of characters worthy of portrayal (literati and men of science) also expanded, even in more extended monographic works. These individuals are and will continue to be remarkable figures, but no longer exclusively or primarily those exalted by the literature of great conquests: within the ACL context, for example, A. Ribeiro dos Santos focused on the figures and works of Pedro Nunes and Francisco de Melo (1806), both mathematicians, and Francisco Alexandre Lobo on those of Camões and Padre António Vieira (1820 and 1823). The entry, particularly through the channel of intellectual biography, was definitively open to many of those who had been excluded by the more exclusive literature on kings and military figures.

However, the landscape of historical writing in general, and biographical writing in particular, underwent profound changes due to a second circumstance, not only external to the narrower circle of academia but also, in many ways, responsible for opening historiography – especially in the accessible form of life histories – to a broader audience beyond the Court and Clergy. António Pereira de Figueiredo had written his *Elogios...* in Portuguese and Latin, with the ambition that the work would circulate beyond the country's borders. However, it is not possible to discern in this ambition the intention to disseminate which today, beyond the academic environment, is intrinsic to the biographical genre itself. The first signs of political and social upheaval in the 19th century gradually changed the scenario. It is a fact that a part of the debate on royal legitimacy and the regime – understood as that which relied on historical arguments – continued within learned circles, especially in the form of praise. However, increasingly, and through confrontation, biographical literature not only became a political tool but also targeted a readership beyond the elites in power (A.P. Figueiredo, *op. cit.*, p.1).

The *Retratos, e elogios dos varões, e donas, que ilustraram a nação portuguesa* [Portraits, and praises of the illustrious men and women who distinguished the Portuguese nation] (1817), almost exclusively authored by the royal instructor Pedro José Figueiredo, are symptomatic in this regard: published as pamphlets between



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the first and second decades of the century, illustrated and assumedly written in a clear style to facilitate comprehension, they not only broadly targeted the "Portuguese" (understood as "citizens" in the classical sense), but also significantly expanded the range of portrayable characters. These were no longer just praises only of monarchs, but praises translated into exempla of the nation's illustrious "men" and "women", although the predominance of members of the High Clergy and Royalty configured a profoundly conservative discourse of moralisation, explicitly modelled on Plutarch's Lives. Yet this was not a unique case in its time. Around the same time, under a similar format (but with far shorter texts and epitomes), the *Retratos dos grandes homens da nação portuguesa* [Portraits of the great men of the Portuguese nation] were also published by the Spaniard Antonio Patrício Pinto Rodrigues. However, Figueiredo's collection not only featured traditional figures of Royalty, arms, and religion but also others from the realms of sciences and arts and paid unusual, although not unprecedented attention to the female gender, in works of the same type. (H.M. Samyn, "Retratos de donas", 2013).

The momentum that the biographical genre experienced shortly after the turn of the 19th century stemmed from both the rapid change in criteria for selecting biographical subjects and a reworking of the panegyric register that had always prevailed. This register did not exactly disappear, but rather thrived, to a large extent on a new awareness of public space usage and the potential contained in a particular discourse about the past (not always distant), where the selection of its most worthy representatives would determine its direction. The role in this of the authorised representatives of the legitimacy and memory of the regime and the reigning House, both in the ACL and the university, would not be surprising. There was still a long way to go before the grounds of erudition and dissemination, or propaganda, would be clearly distinguished. During the Peninsular War, Fr. Fortunato de S. Boaventura, future archbishop and professor at the University of Coimbra, published a series of brief portraits dedicated to recording the names and deeds of illustrious individuals for posterity. This was a projective discourse aimed at including present and future actions in history, which were not yet history, making the model of praise the closest reference to a politically committed and intensely practiced way of writing biographies over the many decades to come. Volumes of a few dozen pages, the "biographical news" of Wellington, Beresford, Trant and General Silveira, on the conservative side of the barricade, announced the new impetus the genre would gain well into the century at the hands of academics and curious minds from elsewhere.

2. "Great ordinary men". In the 19th century, biography experienced its first real moment of expansion in terms of the number of practitioners and the exponential increase in demand. This phenomenon, or "age of hypermnesia," to use the words of Castelo Branco Chaves, was obviously not unrelated to the relative democratisation of access to books or the pronounced change in the profile of the portrait-worthy figure, especially in terms of opening the genre to contemporaneity and political confrontation. The climate was ironically conducive to perpetuation of the panegyric tone that had so well suited the biographical genre and the more traditionalist conceptions of historical writing, albeit with new players. While the predominance of the



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more or less mitigated chronicle record, and the preferential choice of exemplary figures from the realms of arms and governance became less clear in the liberal period, they did not disappear. Not only did they continue to mark the work of conservative authors, but also on the flip side, those who saw the publicising of national accomplishments and unique backgrounds as a privileged avenue for advocating the new regime and new social order, embodied by its major (but also minor, at times) exponents. In more than one sense, as will be seen, the great man of the democratising visions of Liberalism mainly consisted of a redefinition of the traditional hero from the past. (C.B. Chaves, *Memorialistas portugueses*, 1978, p.15; F. Catroga, *A historiografia de Oliveira Martins*, 1999, pp.448-449)

Despite the distinctly nationalistic if not propagandistic civic and political commitment characterising this new phase of biographical writing, its evident vigour was not alien to the more restricted and specialised circles of historiographical activity. In the new *Curso Superior de Letras* or later, in the faculties of arts, as well as in the ACL, the University of Coimbra, and the *Sociedade de Geografia de Lisboa* [Lisbon Geographical Society] (SGL), historical biography was both a scholarly product – and, following some loose strands of Positivism, a means of reflecting on determination and indetermination in history – and a privileged vehicle for historians' intervention in the society of their time. Indeed, the erudite tradition inherited from the previous century was not lost amid the political and social instability of those years; rather, it was solidified and ensured a long life as the ultimate instance of the autonomy and specificity of historiographical work. Here some of the most fervent biographers of the time may be found, authors of short-range news pieces often published in periodicals but also of texts with a broader scope. These life portraits, essentially for study purposes, sought to rescue lesser-known figures from obscurity – as seen in catalogues and dictionaries, gathering lost or scattered elements into comprehensive corpora – but also to review earlier versions in light of new documents. This is evident in the work of the bibliophiles, from Inocêncio da Silva's monumental work, later continued by Brito Aranha and Joaquim de Vasconcelos, to the Viscount of Sanches de Baena and Rodrigues de Gusmão, who, as physicians and self-taught historians, made the collection of biographical news, some in extensive volumes, one of their main occupations.

While the work of some of these men, frequently framed by institutions and by the ACL, displays a thematic openness essentially anchored on the quasi-filigree recovery of less conspicuous trajectories than those of the prominent figures in national history (thus potentially distancing themselves from the prevailing laudatory model of those biographies), the driving force behind the biographical boom of the 19th century is primarily found on the margins of historiography or historical criticism, as it was becoming institutionalised: the disseminators – both within and outside academia – were the ones to dominate the landscape of biographical writing over these years and who definitively expanded the universe of portrait-worthy characters beyond the narrow confines of conventional biographical writing. These "improvised great ordinary men," as Garrett called them, or those who had achieved greatness by merit, were no longer just the notable figures who continued to fill the pages of biographical texts or the numerous collections of illustrious lives being published, but also the names



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of those distinguished in more recent times: parliamentarians of modest renown, journalists, musicians, and actors. (A. Garrett, “Memoria historica de ... Mousinho da Silveira”, [1849], p.350)

In this movement of openness, opposing formations and interests converged, among which notably those representing the specialisation movement in history. The fact that, in the middle of the century, the writing of the biography of actress Emília das Neves, who was still active at the time, was disputed by Almeida Garrett, Rebelo da Silva, Júlio Machado, Latino Coelho and António Feliciano de Castilho, is suggestive of this climate of exchange and sharing of interests and references that only the field of dissemination could provide. But also, and above all, the naturalisation of a conception of historical time of signalled by the life portrait, before other genres: a conception that could be called presentist, both in the temporal thickness already discovered in the trajectories of contemporary figures and those from the very recent past - thus elevating them to monuments - and in the updating of the work and deeds of great figures from the more remote past, active participants, through biography, in modern political debate. This kind of communion between past and present, which can be detected in the common way by which the same author outlines the profiles of characters from yesteryear and his own time, was dictated by two notions that dominated the Portuguese intellectual scene for most of the 19th century and beyond: that of the nation, a metahistorical entity towards which past and present actions converged, and that of the great man - of interest here - a concept which, although less restricted than that of the hero, broadened the criteria that determined who was worthy of portrait honours. (L. Câmara Leme, *Emilia das Neves*, 1875, p.5; A.F. Castilho, “Emilia das Neves e Sousa”, 1860, pp.197-99).

Due to the adherence to these common denominators, as well as the essentially similar way historical and contemporary figures were approached and judged, it is not possible to untangle the steps taken by historical biography in particular from those taken by the biographical genre in general (namely literature dedicated to portraying illustrious men). Moreover, it was the growing attention to recent history, if not strictly contemporary, that primarily promoted the encounter between academia and the general public and thus, to a large extent, determined the trajectory and success of nineteenth-century biographical historiography. This attraction to contemporaneity was not always predominant. In a significant number of cases, even among those with a parallel political activity, the more remote past remained the main focus of interest, as seen in Luciano Cordeiro, Conde de Sabugosa, and José Silvestre Ribeiro. However, it found many adherents among legitimate historians and even brought together efforts from academics and other writers, especially through collaboration in more or less specialised periodicals. For instance, in 1870, Luís Rebelo da Silva published the *Varões ilustres das três épocas constitucionais* [Illustrious men of the three contemporary eras] compiling articles previously published in periodicals. A substantial portion of these news items, accompanied by portraits, had appeared in the *Revista contemporânea de Portugal e Brasil* [Contemporary Journal of Portugal and Brazil] (RCPB), where authors from diverse backgrounds such as Latino Coelho, Pinheiro Chagas, António Feliciano de Castilho, Inocêncio da Silva, Mendes Leal, Júlio César Machado, and Teixeira de Vasconcelos had participated, all engaged in writing biographical works and most of them with studies on



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figures from the more distant past. Latino Coelho published the lives of Garrett e Castilho [Garrett and Castilho] (1917), based on articles in the journals *Panorama* and *Portugal artístico* [Artistic Portugal] and in the aforementioned RCPB, although his biographical activity had been primarily shaped by works on Pombal and the celebrated *Galeria de varões ilustres de Portugal* [Gallery of the illustrious men of Portugal] by the Corazzi publisher, on Camões and Vasco da Gama. In addition to other more extensive biographies, Pinheiro Chagas successfully adopted the anthology model for the general public and for schools with his *Portugueses ilustres* [Illustrious Portuguese figures] (1869), a small volume focusing on great Portuguese figures dating back to the nation's beginnings. António Feliciano de Castilho, like his brother José Feliciano to a lesser extent, was concurrently engaged in extensive biographical studies of writers from the modern era alongside his journalistic activities. Even the *Glorias portuguesas* [Portuguese Glories] by Teixeira de Vasconcelos (whose material was provided by the *Gazeta de Portugal*) adhered – as would befit a member of the ACL and SGL – to the critical scrutiny of the "historian," who rejected the portraits of personalities who were still alive (T. Vasconcelos, *Glorias portuguesas*, 1869, p.viii).

Like the RCPB, other publications from the same period made the life story, particularly of contemporary figures, and often their respective portraits (considered aids in the biographical reconstruction process), the anchor of the publication. Depending on the target audience, these more or less popular publications were seen throughout the second half of the century, albeit with varying longevity: the *Álbum: publicação foto-biográfica* [Album: a photo-biographical publication], the *Arquivo biográfico* [Biographical Archive] (of which some numbers sold out) and the *Retratos de homens ilustres do século XIX* [Portraits of Illustrious Men of the 19th Century], mainly based on image reproduction, but also, to some extent and only as an example, the *Arquivo Pitoresco* [Picturesque Archive] (where Inocêncio published abundantly), the *Ilustração*, the *Gazeta de Portugal* – the latter two linked to Teixeira de Vasconcelos – and, above all, the *Plutarco português* [Portuguese Plutarch] (1881), a title accompanied by the suggestive subtitle *Colecção de retratos e biografias dos principais vultos históricos da civilização portuguesa* [Collection of portraits and biographies of the main historical figures of Portuguese civilization]. Counting on the collaboration of renowned authors in the very few fascicles released to the public, within or on the fringes of the academic circuit (with Teófilo Braga at the forefront, in addition to Oliveira Martins, Joaquim de Vasconcelos, Carolina Michaëlis de Vasconcelos, and Júlio de Matos), in this area the *Plutarco português* was perhaps, one of the most evident and finished examples, even if not the most popular, of the attempt of the learned community to intervene in the public sphere. This "history with names," as referred to by Teófilo in the opening text on the "theory of great men," was indeed the chosen vehicle, from the most conservative to the avant-garde sectors, to promote contact with a wider audience. However, the *Plutarco*... opted for an overly erudite style to compete, within the Portuguese landscape, with the deliberately simple and accessible language used by the more popular – and allegedly democratising – press (T. Braga, "Theoria dos grandes homens", 1881, p.vi)



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In the periodical press and in small-format editions, as well as in monographs dedicated to great figures or in the "universal biographies" mentioned by Pinheiro Chagas, the initial outline of a national biographical corpus was taking shape, or, in a broader format than the original, that which Garrett called a "Plutarch of youth," whose principles and content he presented in the extensive essay on education dedicated to Queen Maria II. In education, moreover, this pedagogy of example, varying only in the relative prominence of the ancient hero or the more recent great man, was largely consensual, as was the case in literature specifically aimed at children and young people, resorting to the portrayal of great figures: from Pinheiro Chagas and Alfredo Gallis to Vilhena Barbosa, whose compendium of *Exemplos de virtudes cívicas e domésticas: colhidos na história de Portugal* [Examples of Civic and Domestic Virtues: Retrieved from the History of Portugal] was adopted in schools and successively re-edited over two decades. (J. Ribeiro Ferreira, "Débito de Almeida Garrett a Plutarco", 2008; S. Campos Matos, *Historiografia e memória nacional*, 1998, pp.396-97).

The awareness that historical themes and the personalisation of the past strongly appealed to general curiosity was indeed shared by all those who were devoted to biographical writing, although the underlying motivations and objectives were not coincident. This awareness alone, and regardless of epistemological considerations, largely justified its practice by a significant number of authors, also full-fledged historians. But the distance between Teixeira de Vasconcelos' democratic indoctrination volumes in the "Livros para o povo" ["Books for the People"] series or the small fortnightly pamphlets in the "Propaganda democrática: o que o povo deve saber" ["Democratic Propaganda: What the People Should Know"] collection (1886-88), in which Consiglieri Pedroso published biographies of contemporary political figures, and the biographical series being inaugurated by some publishers to accommodate the publication of more extensive and impactful works, almost always on characters from the distant past, was evident. This includes the aforementioned "Galeria de varões ilustres de Portugal" by Corazzi, Luciano Cordeiro's "Serões manuelinos" ["Manueline Evenings"], launched shortly after by Ferin, or, at the turn of the century, the "Mulheres ilustres" ["Illustrious Women"], a fleeting collection designed and executed by Olga de Moraes Sarmiento within the scope of her feminist activism. Despite the short lifespan of most of these series, they were not merely episodic phenomena. Instead, they were part of a widely shared editorial strategy, where the performance of the *Imprensa Nacional* [National Press] was exemplary in this regard. Without relinquishing an accessible style that guaranteed some expressive adherence, the former Royal Press sponsored serialised editions of the same type, such as *Biografias, apreciações e narrativas* ["Biographies, Appraisals, and Narratives"], but above all "Portugueses fora de Portugal" ["The Portuguese Abroad"] and, in the midst of the overseas crisis, "Descobertas e descobridores" ["Discoveries and Discoverers"] in which Luciano Cordeiro, not coincidentally one of the founders of the SGL, published part of his research. It is noteworthy that some of these volumes would even see new editions under the aegis of the General Overseas Agency or the current National Press.

Thus, a popularisation, and even civic intervention model, more in tune with the specialisation movement in historiographical work, was taking shape. This model was less directly propagandistic and preferably geared



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towards a more distant past, less coloured by the internal struggles that spanned the century until the First Republic, even though the political reality, like the colonial issue, marked its rhythm. Like those who, in a climate of profound political change, found themselves receiving monumental honours, notably through the dissemination of their life history, the heroes of the past became the heroes of the present. The committed recovery of heroic narratives, especially in times of commemoration, which included Vasco da Gama, Afonso de Albuquerque, Luís de Camões, Nuno Álvares Pereira, and Infante D. Henrique among others as protagonists, was, after all, the most pronounced historical aspect of a discourse, or discourses, on the present and future state of the country. The profoundly controversial case of the Marquis of Pombal – “o português mais historiado de Portugal” [“the most storied Portuguese man of Portugal”] – at times a “genius” or “great man,” then a “villain” or simply a “notable figure,” was mainly symptomatic of a generalised modus of personalising ideological disputes, due to the unprecedented volume of biographical publications dedicated to him. (Alfredo Duarte Rodrigues, *O Marquês de Pombal e os seus biógrafos*, 1947).

A product of its time, the dominant profile of authors of biographical works, even those in which originality (whether in research or approach) overshadowed the disseminating purpose, bore the mark of a political climate especially conducive to the intersection between erudite work and public intervention. This was where the crux of reflection on the role of the individual in historical processes lay, more than in the restricted environment of academia. This circumstance was signalled by the journalist and politician Luís de Magalhães when referring to the articles that his former comrade-in-arms and mentor, Oliveira Martins, had published in *A Província* [The Province], the newspaper that served as the body of the *Vida Nova* movement: more than “political writings,” “battles of principles and governmental ideas” – which they also were – he said that they were “small works of history – history of the past or history of the present – studied [in the] psychology of the men who propel and guide it with their ideas, feelings, and actions.” In the collection of these articles that was later published after the death of its author, under the suggestive title *Perfis* [Profiles], national and foreign figures coexisted, as Garrett had wanted in his educational plan for a “Plutarch of youth.” The articles on military heroes, statesmen, and intellectuals in which Oliveira Martins acknowledged the exception – Pombal, Saldanha, Garrett, Antero, Napoleon, Luís da Baviera, Gladstone, Renan,... – were nothing but a prelude to his major biographical works and those which, even today, credit him with a large part of the laurels. But in these articles, even more expressively, since they were closer to the biographical style of their time, one could already find a conception – eclectic, nonetheless – of history and, in particular, of human agency, which largely echoed the debates around the notion of the great man and hero that tinted the most relevant biographical production of the second half of the 19th century, within and beyond the academic circles. (L. Magalhães, “Oliveira Martins: o historiador e o político”, 1930, p.ii)

In Oliveira Martins, as in others, the syncretic way in which the highly fashionable variations on the voluntarist theory was composed is especially symptomatic. The debate on the concept of the great man, which at the end of the century took the forefront in historiographical theorisation around agency, never offered



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well-defined views. Somewhat akin to Herculano's approach when, despite contradicting the history of kings and dynasties built around singular figures, in practice, he emphasised the role of individual will and motivations as explanatory factors, the great character could never divorce himself from the collective that served as his reference or even from the conditions imposed by the social environment on his actions. On the one hand, the almost indiscriminate use of the ideas of hero and great man, referring primarily to men of arms for the former and the increasingly dominant benefactors of humanity (among statesmen and men of letters, arts, and sciences) for the latter, pointed to the consensual prevalence of the criterion of exceptionality, or superiority, in the selection of historical protagonists, far beyond considerations about the limits that could or could not be recognised in their actions; on the other hand, and as a logical consequence, there was a *de facto* agreement, in general terms, regarding their conception (simultaneous or even interchangeable) as a synthesis, symbol, representative, or interpreter of the national whole in its historical evolution. By drawing indiscriminately on romantic idealism, especially via the French route, little indeed separated the voluntarist in this domain from the sociological and even providentialist theories, despite the greater influence attributed at times to individual paths (as in O. Martins' great portraits) and others to the "social milieu" (as insisted by Teófilo) on historical progress. Although with corrected excesses – which explain the criticisms of Consiglieri Pedroso and Emídio Garcia of the theory of divine choice, or of some positivists and republicans of the hyper-subjectivation of certain narratives –, the prominent role given to great personalities, the recognition of their relevance in historical processes, was practically unanimous among the many who, in the historiographical milieu, devoted themselves to biography (or resorted to it to compose synthesis works). In this sense, it is all the more significant that, even among those touched by deterministic theories, the awareness of the effectiveness of life portraits among a predominantly illiterate audience often prevailed over depersonalised accounts: as in the case of the positivist Zeferino Cândido, where the great figures provide the titles to the chapters of Portugal (S. Campos Matos, "História, positivismo e função dos grandes homens", 1992, e *Historiografia e memória nacional*, 1998, pp.395-401, 409-28; F. Catroga, "O magistério da história e a exemplaridade do 'grande homem'", 2004; A.M. Hespanha, "A história na cultura portuguesa contemporânea", 2009, pp.585-86).

This awareness, which also encompassed imagination and sentiment as the main avenues of attraction for the anonymous masses, was expressed in different ways by authors dedicated to biographical writing. Not many were like O. Martins, who became famous in the field of biography as a literary exercise or art of resurrection, either because they rejected it on principle or because erudition played a role in their interests and activity. But in the clear preference for the genre, especially reflected in the more substantial volumes, there was an almost equal manifestation of a pedagogical and moralising conception based on the idea of biography as the chosen terrain of history and of the latter, in the style of Carlyle and Emerson, as a collection of biographies. As already seen, many were successful in the genre of biographical writing before the undeniable influence of O. Martins' works: Pinheiro Chagas, Teófilo Braga, Rebelo da Silva, Latino Coelho



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and Luciano Cordeiro. All of them, in their own way, disciples of Plutarch and Cicero, used life stories as a means of politically active moralisation, but probably all of them, or the majority, were also knowledgeable about the individualistic theories then in vogue. (O. Martins, *Os filhos de D. João I*, [1891], p.8; P. Chagas, "Historia de Julio Cezar...", 1864; T. Braga, *Os centenários como synthese affectiva...*, 1884, p.181).

At this time, T. Carlyle (1841) and R.W. Emerson (1850) had already published their major works on the role of great men ("heroes" in the former, "representative men" in the latter), while the Portuguese editions were only planned in the next century, significantly as part of the civic education programme of the Portuguese Renaissance. They had said that the history of humanity came down to the history of its great men, as indeed Luís de Magalhães himself would say in the preface to O. Martins' *Perfis* and several decades later, Mário Gonçalves Viana, one of the spokesmen for the Salazar regime. The logical outcome of the path followed by the voluntarist theories during the troubled period that preceded and followed the establishment of the Republic was that the Estado Novo ideology would transform the assertion into doctrine. Not without its own dose of philosophical eclecticism (Nietzsche's work on the *Übermensch* came out in the same year), in 1913, R.W. Emerson's *Representative Men* was translated under the suggestive title of *Os Super-homens* [The Supermen]. The path was thus paved for the new biographical wave that would occupy historians and enthusiasts for a substantial part of the 20th century. (Álvaro Ribeiro, "Apresentação", [1956], pp.10-11; L. Magalhães, *op. cit.*, p.ii; M.G. Viana, "Ensaio preambular", 1944, p.17)

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