

# DICIONÁRIO DE HISTORIADORES PORTUGUESES

DA ACADEMIA REAL DAS CIÊNCIAS AO FINAL DO ESTADO NOVO

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## Biography and History II

1. **"Leaders of the Nation"**. Given their inherently plastic genre and malleability by diverse historiographical conceptions, as well as their underlying ideologies, biographies reflected well the hesitations and ambiguities that marked early-century historical writing, from the authoritarian attempts of the initial phase to the consolidation of the Estado Novo regime. The previous landscape had remained much the same. In a climate of instability, albeit with different facades, the life portrait was still the ideal vehicle for the dissemination of both new and old ideologies. Generally in a shorter format, biographies continued to multiply at the pace of political upheaval. Some years prior to the establishment of the new regime, José de Agostinho, an outstanding disseminator of Republicanism, published his "Galeria republicana" in the Biblioteca Democrática. In the year zero of the Republic, it was the turn of Rodrigo Veloso, a journalist and bibliophile and fellow student of Antero, to initiate several series (his own edition) determined by the categories in which he placed the eminent figures of his time: jurists, benefactors, bibliophiles, parliamentarians and journalists. It was only a few years later, within the context of a national regeneration and in keeping with the democratic tradition of uplifting the masses, that other collections dedicated to the men of letters and the thinking of the nation were published, such as "Os nossos escritores" ["Our Writers"] again by J. Agostinho, and "Patrícia" by the Diário de Notícias, where the journalist and bibliophile, Forjaz de Sampaio, published numerous short biographies of mainly contemporary figures. However, and contrary to the relative indefiniteness that had been observed until then, the dominant profile of the authors of these works became more distinctly that of the publicist and amateur and less that of the scholar. The former will have to be deciphered among those who found their selected material in the more distant past, as it was thus determined by the progressive delimitation of historiographical work and the status of the historian.

The precursor of this divorce – since this is what it was, to some extent, during a considerable part of the Estado Novo regime – was initially the predominantly exclusive interest that academics and other scholars dedicated to figures of the past, claiming, as historians, to be the only ones qualified to validate their versions of national history (and consequently, to judge its protagonists). The fact that academic historians had borne a considerable part of the contribution to the effort of national cohesion throughout these years, through the



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remembrance and rehabilitation of past themes and names, would only be the logical course of this definition of their status as authorised interpreters. This was understood, for example, by the experienced publisher Ferin, when entrusting the collection "Grandes vultos portugueses"[ Great Portuguese Figures] to António Baião, one of the future founders of the conservative Portuguese Academy of History (APH). He was accompanied (also as author of a biography on Afonso de Albuquerque) by Brito Rebelo, Manuel Sousa Pinto, Laranjo Coelho, Francisco da Costa Cabral, and Damião Peres, another founder of the APH, later awarded a public decoration during the period of the Estado Novo, and whose published biography on King John I marked the beginning of his career. Targeting a broad audience and therefore duly simplified, the series still claimed respect for the critical spirit of the (erudite) tradition in which the works and their authors were situated. This declaration of intentions – although not always respected in practice – was, however, fundamental. It laid the foundation for an awareness of the fine line that divided fiction from reality and mere curiosity from research in the biographical genre. But above all, it echoed the most specific feature encapsulated by the historical discipline – its method – as a distinctive and validating element of the presented readings. However, the frequently expressed fear of literary artifices, such as those used by O. Martins in his major works, contained as much of methodical fastidiousness as of criticism of interpretations of national history less aligned with the celebratory and regenerative spirit of past glories (Álvaro Dória, *A rainha D. Maria Francisca de Sabóia*, 1944, pref. [p.14]; Carlos Maurício, *A invenção de Oliveira Martins*, 2005, pp.64-77).

This fear was not new: in the authors' repeated reminders of the non-fictional nature of their works. Indeed, they had been translated into a rhetorical device for decades to support the credibility of the politically implicated versions, or into a sign of an evident concern with applying the strictest rules of historical criticism, even when conditioned by burning issues of national politics. It was on this 'non-literary', or even 'anti-literary' stance that the intended neutrality rested, highlighted by João Lúcio de Azevedo, among others, in his presumed demystification of the various discourses surrounding the controversial figure of Pombal. He was backed by a critical tradition, largely fuelled by biographical research, which included both heavily erudite texts from specialised journals (such as the *Arquivo Histórico Português*, *Revista de História*, and *O Instituto*) and their prolific authors (including Pedro de Azevedo, Anselmo Braamcamp Freire, Sousa Viterbo, and Brito Rebelo), as well as more expansive works, found in abundance in literary and art histories or in historians such as Carolina Michaëlis de Vasconcelos, António de Vasconcelos, and the aforementioned João Lúcio de Azevedo (L. de Azevedo, *O Marquez de Pombal e a sua época*, 1909, pp.7-8).

The possibilities inherent to this revision work, even though the historiographical community was progressively closing in on itself, were too obvious not to be used to ignite the political debate. It was not by chance that Lúcio de Azevedo's work on the Marquis of Pombal was re-edited by Seara Nova/Renascença Portuguesa in 1922, a decade after its initial appearance. In *Integralismo Lusitano* as well as in *Renascença Portuguesa*, and their subsidiary currents, the ideal of regenerating the national body largely relied on considering the exemplary value of past heroes, the "leaders" of the nation's destiny, on whom, as Jaime



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Cortesão rightly noted in an initial phase, "the epic and hypertrophic concept" of Carlyle easily rested. In particular in the monarchist current, the discourse of the rehabilitation of the country's "supreme governors" fuelled a substantial part of its historiographical production, although its most significant biographical works, comfortably aligned with the prevailing ideology, emerged well into the 1930s. However, contrary to the republican tradition of general enlightenment, the revision of history mounted on the monarchist position relied less on the principle of dissemination and elevation of its audience than on the historical foundation of claims for the restoration of the old regime. This, in more immediate terms, involved the legitimising portrayal of the last champions of Absolutism (above all, D. Miguel) and, structurally or methodically, the critique of the (so-called) decadent end-of-century theories and the history-art on which they were based, especially in the portrayal of great figures. Due to the political ends that this reinterpretation of national history and its rulers also encompassed, as seen in the case of João Ameal, the most prolific among these authors, its underlying methodical position did not always result in an outright rejection of literary devices especially aimed at the general public's consumption, which had been used in biography. The works produced in this context would find their preferred interlocutor in another, more cultured type of reader, and their chosen characters were the Royal Family or the highest leaders of the nation. In 1934, Caetano Beirão published the biography (which he referred to as a "historical revision") of Queen Mary I, which received the Alexandre Herculano Award by the SPN (National Propaganda Secretariat); two years later, Alfredo Pimenta released "King John III," the first and only volume of a series suggestively titled "Biblioteca de revisão histórica" ["Library of Historical Revision"], published by the Livraria Tavares Martins, seeking to "rehabilitate the figures of the supreme rulers [of the Nation]". In the 1940s, they were followed by Eduardo Brazão with a study on the figure and reign of King John V, part of the "Historical" collection coordinated by Damião Peres; the musicologist and historian of music, Mário de Sampaio Ribeiro, with a work on Queen Leonor; Hipólito Raposo with the biography of Queen Luisa de Gusmão; and João Ameal, who, among others, this time in the collection "Rainhas e Princesas de Portugal" ["Queens and Princesses of Portugal"], directed and re-edited by Tavares Martins, published Dona Leonor: "Princesa Perfeitíssima". [Dona Leonor: "Most Perfect Princess"] Although less concerned with reaching a very broad audience, in line with an anti-mass market ideology, the publication of these works experienced relative and varied success – Caetano Beirão's biography, for example, unlike the aborted "Historical Revision" collection, saw four editions within ten years (J. Cortesão, "A história e o historiador", [1959(?)], p.5; João Ameal, Dona Leonor, 1943, pp.v-xv; Alfredo Pimenta, D. João III, 1936, "Pródromo" [s.p.]

However, it was not on this overly erudite model for the average Portuguese reader that the vast majority of biographical production sustained itself, even in the early years of the Estado Novo regime. By the second quarter of the century, it was mainly the popularisers and so-called publicists, amateurs by rule, who took the lead in rescuing the past. Among them, the state apparatus itself, in its most authoritarian version, found some of the most effective propagators of its message above all in biographical form. In children's literature, which was assumedly formative and not negligible in conveying the Estado Novo ideology, this sponsorship proved



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particularly significant. A prime example of widespread success was the series of booklets released between the late 1930s and the late 1940s in the "Pátria" ["Fatherland"] and "Grandes portugueses" ["Great Portuguese Men"] collections (followed by "Grandes portuguesas" ["Great Portuguese Women"] to a lesser extent), both under the auspices of the SPN/SNI. They were inaugurated by Virgínia de Castro e Almeida, also an official collaborator of the Portuguese government. Besides this literature targeting a more specific audience, the longevity of other series sponsored by state bodies should be noted, mostly dominated by the theme of overseas expansion and the recent exploration of the African continent. A reconfigured legacy of the end-of-century crisis that had hit the Portuguese colonial domain – when historiographical production on the Expansion period multiplied, especially biographical works– was indeed the foundation of a significant part of the biographical production in the mid-century and, by the same token, a substantial part of the state's investment in popularising historical content in the imagery of the Empire. A striking case in the expressly promotional literature of the "Pelo Império" ["By the Empire"] collection (published by the General Agency of the Colonies, from 1935 to the early 1960s), later continued to some degree (with some re-edited volumes) until 1974 in "Figuras e feitos de além-mar" ["Overseas Figures and Achievements"] then under the transmuted General Overseas Agency. The more qualified participation of academics is rarely found there or in its rival "Cadernos coloniais" [Colonial notebooks] by Cosmos. Instead, there is a clearly predominant proportion of authors directly or indirectly linked to the armed forces or overseas administration, but names like Eduardo de Noronha, Gastão de Sousa Dias, and Marcelo Caetano, for example, contributed to lending an aura of quality to these collections in their genre, and enjoyed widespread popularity (Arlindo M. Caldeira, op. cit., pp.130-31; L. Reis Torgal, "Livros de história e de histórias no Estado Novo", 1992).

It may be said that the model and principle of Plutarch's Lives had been assimilated, materialised in the portraits of those who, in their various fields, had led the destiny of the nation. Faithful to the secular model of the exempla, whether under the direct sponsorship of the state or simply in its shadow, authors and publishers appeared to invest in these collections of individual trajectories which, to some extent and with a didactic purpose, presented a global interpretation of the country's history. Although the format and level of historical accuracy varied in these editions, the conception of history – and its underlying ideology– was essentially the same. Costa Brochado (this full member of the reconstituted APH and a member of the National Assembly) exemplified and synthesised the programme well in most of these works – including his own– by stating that what interested him was not "the life of a man, but that of the Portuguese nationality itself [...]". As the author of works dedicated to national expansionism and missions, which he wished to see constituted as an organic set of reconstructions of this "great feat", C. Brochado's biography of Infante D. Henrique received the Alexandre Herculano Award from the SPN in 1942, and the following year, that of Afonso de Albuquerque with the History Award in the Colonial Literature competition. Whether gathering authors or entrusting the writing to one person in the more extensive form of a collection or in single volumes, these syntheses of Fatherland history, embodied by its great names – the "supreme rulers" or the "leaders" in a broader sense – multiplied



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exponentially throughout the duration of the dictatorial regime (Costa Brochado, Afonso de Albuquerque, 1943, prefácio).

Obviously, their preferred authors drank from the same ideology. Following the liberal and republican dissemination path of literature, collections composed of small, easily accessible volumes were published, such as the very extensive one created by the journalist and member of Lisbon's Academy of Sciences, Rocha Martins, in the early 1930s, still in the phase when he actively supported authoritarian government solutions. Under the generic title "History", it featured short biographies grouped into series dedicated to "Legends", "Great loves" and "Heroes, saints and martyrs of the Fatherland". A few years later, the even more celebrated collection on "National figures" was released, exclusively authored by Mário Gonçalves Viana, another close collaborator with the government apparatus. As a practical realisation of the ideal, conventional model of biography, associated with a certain type of society and regime symbolised in its "leaders," its editions sold out and a separate volume was published containing a collection of enthusiastic reviews (Vítor de Sá, "Releitura de O Arquivo Nacional", 1989, pp.107-8; M.G. Viana, "Ensaio preambular", 1944, pp.14-20; *As Figuras Nacionais...*, 1938).

In the context of popularisation, this clear predominance of biographies with traditional outlines, heavy moralizing content, and unequivocal political conservatism, appeared to configure a kind of symbiotic relationship between the agents of this type of literature and those representing the political regime in force. Interpretation in Portugal of works such as those of Emerson and Carlyle (the former translated during the First Republic, while the latter, due to publishing issues, was only translated in the mid-century) largely reflected the easy adaptation of the theories on the great men to an autocratic model based on the function and charisma of the leader, a domain in which national history - from the earliest times to the present - would be filled with examples. To encompass all the areas where the Portuguese genius was manifested, M. Gonçalves Viana referred to them as the "visible or invisible leaders" of the nation (M.G. Viana, op. cit., p.16, e Nuno Álvares Pereira: arquétipo perene, 1966).

However, the idea of the great man adapted well to discourses that were situated far beyond, or even in diametrically opposite positions from the official ideology mirrored in the majority of biographical production. In an atmosphere of regeneration, an ideal that was present across the various political programmes and throughout the first half of the twentieth century, biography became an instrument of active pedagogy and in its plural use a site of dissent during those years of imposed unanimity. This dissent was related to the strictly conventional model of life recording that dominated throughout the Estado Novo period. For example, between the late 1930s and the following decade, Agostinho da Silva inaugurated a long series in the "Cadernos da Seara Nova" ["Seara Nova Booklets"(and continued, on his own initiative, in the "Cadernos de iniciação cultural" [Cultural initiation booklets]),consisting of biographies of eminent figures of world history. With an explicitly pedagogical purpose, these biographies broke the narrow limits of Portuguese-centric views, as well as those of military feats and governance, similar to what had been proposed decades earlier as criteria for





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reforming the school curricula. Through non-fictional educational biographies, these heroes of new times, heirs of the democratisation set in motion in the previous century, provided material for a long-awaited "cultural and political revolution" (H. Brios e Mota, "...ou como, através do relato de vida de grandes homens...", 2003, pp. 7-14).

Yet even in the more conventional realm of eminent figures of conquest and governance, this atmosphere of regeneration, translated into the "revision" of history that some works sought to achieve, was felt in the products that were less aligned with the dominant discourse. In one of the few reflective texts dedicated to the biographical genre during this period, even though in the form of an introduction to a work, the journalist, writer, and anarchist Mário Domingues went so far as to refer to the biographical writing around great personalities as "the highest aspiration of today's reader," capable of elevating their consciousness as agents of history and, consequently, their condition. With an egalitarian discourse resonating republican ideals, and nuanced by an evident admiration for O. Martins and the systematic reference to great figures of the national past, the text of M. Domingues revealed both historiographical common sense (as would befit a work sponsored by FNAT) and the conscious and plural use of the genre as a tool for social intervention. As a prolific author himself of historical biographies for dissemination—especially in the popular "Série Lusíada," published by Romano Torres between the early 1950s and the early 1970s—Domingues used the portrayed figures, mostly royalty, not so much to emphasise their power of action, but rather to subject it to non-contingent conditions, to make their exemplarity an incentive for the reader's active participation in social progress. His exclusive work and the sheer volume of biographies published by Romano Torres in that collection earned him an official decoration during the Estado Novo regime— not without irony and despite the more or less subliminal messages—, as was also received by Elaine Sanceau, another successful biographer in the field of expansion, with an unequivocally conservative orientation. The fact that competing positions were reflected in biographical works is all the more significant. Here, more than elsewhere, against the backdrop of exemplary literature, the role and place of the individual (and the collective) in history were debated in practice (M. Domingues, *Grandes momentos da história de Portugal*, 1958: 9-19)

The potential of historical biography as a far-reaching intervention tool fuelled the increasing publication of such works in the mid-century. It is suggestive that despite the express and gradual replacement of the protagonists of this type of literature, with a decrease in the prominence of royal and military figures to favour those linked to the arts and culture in general—with the obvious exception of the popularisation sponsored by the state—no clear slowdown in the pace of publication was observed, apart from that experienced in the volume of publications in general around the years close to '74. Specifically biographical collections, typically delving into the lives of intellectuals, were published by Seara Nova ("Biografias" ["Biographies"]), Cosmos ("Biografias" ["Biographies"]), Sá da Costa ("Os portugueses no mundo" ["The Portuguese in the World"]), Bertrand ("Vidas portuguesas e brasileiras" ["Portuguese and Brazilian Lives"]), Presença ("Biografia de



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bolso") ["Pocket Biography"], Excelsior ("Grandes vultos da história da humanidade" ["Great Figures of History and Humanity"]), in addition to many others that were frequently included in works of the same type (such as "História de Portugal" ["History of Portugal"] by the Empresa Nacional de Publicidade or "Biblioteca breve" ["Brief Library"] in the 1970s by the ICLP). As the second half of the century approached, publishers gauged the pulse of the biography-consuming public, especially regarding biographies with a historical focus, and judging by the introductory texts of some of these collections, they recognised a growing interest in the genre. However, their content, increasingly dominated by cultural figures, was less explicitly marked by the dominant ideology, although it remained almost always celebratory. This suited popular taste and the nationalist sentiment which historiography, particularly the biographical genre, had helped to consolidate with such success.

**2. "The Great and Humble".** Recognising the potentially formative and even propagandistic dimension of the discourse on the past – with the biographical genre at the forefront – the community of historians was confronted with two situations that influenced both the public projection and the autonomy of the discipline in various ways: on the one hand, the dense presence of authors from other socio-professional areas in their specific field of work, or merely amateurs; and on the other hand, a publishing industry (also reflected in the school curricula) dominated by interpretations of "Fatherland" history with heavily ideological content. It is not that this clear predominance of history enthusiasts or self-taught individuals in publishing went unanswered, especially those with global readings of Portuguese history. However, the gradual return of historians to the public arena after decades of relative isolation was not, and perhaps could not have been, free from ideological aspirations.

In that regard, it was not strange that this blend of erudition and dissemination should share a taste for the exemplary nature of particular figures. In the 1940s, for example, Lopes de Oliveira surrounded himself with a team of experienced biographers, who were not only writers but also legitimate historians, although not academic - such as Augusto Casimiro, Tomás da Fonseca, and Visconde de Lagoa - to publish an extensive work dedicated to "As Grandes Figuras da Humanidade" ["The Great Figures of Humanity"] where, according to the prevailing tastes and ideology, national figures stood out. Other works in the same spirit would follow. In the "História de Portugal" collection by the Empresa Nacional de Publicidade, for instance, which by the mid-century included university scholars, writers and erudite individuals of various backgrounds - such as Vieira de Almeida, Carlos Selvagem, Luís Chaves, and Mário Domingues - the programme aimed to reconstruct Portugal's most splendid eras through portraits of emblematic figures. Around the same time, but in this case in a clearly academic environment, Hernâni Cidade - himself a prolific author of literary biographies - would oversee a kind of national history in two substantial volumes, under the unequivocal title "Os grandes portugueses" ["Great Portuguese Men"]. Here, erudition was expressly placed at the service of popularisation, even among a relatively educated public with access to more rigorous volumes. In terms of publication, the distinct authorship justified the format since a significant portion of the Portuguese academic universe or its



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fringes could be found among the work's contributors: from Jaime Cortesão to António José Saraiva, Lindley Cintra, Borges de Macedo, Óscar Lopes, and José Mattoso, including, for the focus here, experienced biographers such as Torquato da Sousa Soares, Fidelino de Figueiredo, Francisco da Gama Caeiro, Ester de Lemos, and Mário Martins.

In other more specific areas beyond the broad historical frameworks, the entry of some of these academics into the realm of dissemination essentially involved sharing their own interests and research efforts for the benefit of popular education. The preferred model, given the predominance of thinkers and artists as subjects, was that of life and work. In the fields of literature and the arts in general (particularly plastic arts), this intervention strategy proved fruitful, sometimes at the expense of the old format of publishing in fascicles, aimed at widening access to editions that would otherwise be unaffordable for many. José-Augusto França is perhaps one of the most perfect and persistent examples of this type, having published short biographies in various art collections targeting a non-university audience. In the area of literary history and thought however, although in larger volumes, sometimes containing excerpts of works and targeting necessarily cultivated readers, the involvement of academics in a publishing market beyond the strict academic circle had become quite noticeable since the mid-century. For example, in *Arcádia* (in "A obra e o homem" ["The Work and the Man"] collection) where, until the late 1970s, works by Hernâni Cidade, Óscar Lopes, and Oliveira Marques were published (and re-edited), as well as by Álvaro Dória and António Quadros, and in *Inquérito*, which published several volumes of Plutarch's Lives between the 1930s and 1940s, and with which Joel Serrão and J.-A. França, among others, also collaborated.

Essentially, the response to the invasion of the historian's own field of research and action involved a reinforcement of scholarly tradition, less permeable to the contamination of ideas and primarily intended for internal consumption. Thus, the disciplinary boundaries of history were delineated. Among academics, biographical production often tended to be, above all, a work tool and a framework for research, whether among historians themselves (such as committed biographers Banha de Andrade, Pina Martins, M. Lopes de Almeida, and Teixeira da Mota), or those who made biography the essential cornerstone of the history of their discipline, from economics (such as Moses Amzalak) to medicine (following in the footsteps of Maximiano Lemos, A. da Rocha Brito, Jaime Walter, and Luís de Pina). Here the most direct heirs of Sousa Viterbo and Braamcamp Freire can be found, but also those who, adopting a methodology geared towards the reconstruction of individual trajectories, turned biography into both an exercise in dissecting singular lives and a gateway to broader historical epochs, entities, and processes. Even here, however, in the more specific field of academic production, there was no absolute immunity to the prevailing ideology, whether due to individual choice or institutional conditioning. The selection of themes and protagonists often reflected this dominant conception of a history grounded in its golden ages and the men who had shaped them. When Visconde de Lagoa, who shared with others of his time a similar desire to build a national biographical archive, outlined his plan to rescue the "great and humble" figures of Portuguese expansion, he did so not so much in the name of





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these men but of the work they would have accomplished. By the same token, it was with the aim of enriching the documentation of the country's "inalienable rights", as reflected in its statutes, that research within the reconstituted Portuguese Academy of History, much of it biographical in nature, was launched. It was, in fact, a fertile repository of that material from which the most erudite version of the discourse of power on the past was made, as it had materialised in the various figures of national history: from the genealogical elitism of the Marquis of São Paio and the monarchist conservatism of the Count of Tovar or Montalvão Machado to the ecclesiasticism of António Brásio and D. José de Castro.

As in the field of dissemination, in the more restricted circuit of historiographical activity, in which academies and institutes are rightly included, a closer examination of the object does not reveal a decrease in the production of biographies reflecting a change in any academic doxa, at least quantitatively. Not even in the years surrounding the April Revolution, let alone its prolegomena, diminished the relevance that biographical writing had always had in the overall work of these authors. Firstly, the unwavering constancy shown by the Portuguese Academy of History (APH) in producing portraits or biographical notes (the *Anais*, in particular, continued to provide abundant biographical material well beyond '74) is noteworthy, and even that of those who, by vocation, dedicated themselves to religious history, such as Avelino de Jesus da Costa, António Domingues de Sousa Costa, Leite de Faria, António Brásio, and those, such as Serafim Leite and Domingos Maurício, who had been active since the first half of the century. In the university setting, more specifically, the genre even experienced some degree of popularity, as is evident in the choice of dissertation themes; while some of these works largely focused on the study of a body of work, others were closer to the traditional concept of biography. Examples include the doctoral theses of António Gonçalves Rodrigues on Cavaleiro de Oliveira (1950), Veríssimo Serrão on Infanta D<sup>a</sup> Maria (1953), Borges Nunes on D. Frei Gomes (1963), Luís de Oliveira Ramos on Cardinal Saraiva (1972), and Sales Loureiro on Miguel de Moura (1974). There were also undergraduate dissertations, such as that of Maria do Rosário Themudo Barata on the diplomat Rui Fernandes de Almada (1971) and of Fortunato Queirós on the pedagogical ideals of Pedro V (1970), which formed the basis for the extensive work he dedicated to the king and began publishing in the very year of the Revolution.

While obviously not impervious to the major analytical wave, the fate of biography does not appear to have been quite as French in Portugal. It is a fact that some echo of the debate around biographical writing reached the academic milieu, as part of a broader discussion on methodological and epistemological issues raised primarily by the French *Annales* movement. However, it is difficult to recognise in this discussion in Portugal – apart from the exclusive adoption by some of the anti-individualistic theoretical models – a radicalisation of terms that would foreshadow the almost total marginalisation of the genre that is talked about so much more today than back then. In his work dedicated to the economic situation during the time of the Marquis of Pombal, for example, J. Borges de Macedo postulated as a principle that no personal trajectory could serve as a matrix for, or replace, a "global explanation." However, rather than renouncing the genre altogether (he would even



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take part in *Os grandes portugueses*, by H. Cidade, a few years later), the author pointed to a specific model of biography, an ideal model, as Herculano had also defended many decades earlier – that of the great man, in which the entire history of a period or a "people" is synthesised. In fact, Macedo's assertion echoed a concern that had affected some authors in the mid-19th century who had dedicated themselves to historical portraiture or, more specifically, thought about the relationship between the individual and context. While not new and having faced decades-long dominance, especially practical, of the most extreme voluntarist theories – those that in an authoritarian environment pitted individual will against the irrationality of the masses – this issue gained new vigour in the mid-century. Within the academic sphere, but no longer limited by the girdle of purely methodical practice, scholars began to rethink the place of biography in historical interpretation (J.B. Macedo, 1951, pp.27-31; A. Herculano, "Cartas sobre a História de Portugal. Carta IV", [1842]).

The fact that academics with a Marxist background may be identified among some practitioners of the genre is not a unique phenomenon. On the one hand, the biographical exercise paved the way for a discussion on the relative positions of the individual and the collective which served the underlying ideological debate, consistent with positivist theories. By adopting what he referred to as the "sociologist method," Vítor de Sá, for example, could "counterpose" the "Antero-Antero," studied on the basis of himself, to the "Antero-product-of-a-context," a contingent point of intersection of major social processes. The clear preference of these authors for thinkers and writers adapted well to the precedence given to external conditions over individual action, the model of the study of life and work, ironically typical of the radically elitist conception of literary history and art, serving as their gateway to observing social conditions or major historical processes. These individual paths were nevertheless recognised as relevant—such as in António José Saraiva (particularly in the various texts he wrote on Fernão Lopes), Óscar Lopes (who, besides major works, also took part in the aforementioned edition of *Os grandes portugueses*), and Fernando Lopes Graça, all of whom dedicated part of their research to the lives and works of eminent figures in Portuguese culture (V. Sá, *Antero de Quental*, 1963,p.22).

On the other hand, this selection of subject matter reflected the adaptation of the life narrative to both Marxist ideologies and methodologies. Some of these left-wing authors were not unfamiliar with an avant-garde conception of history, in which specific figures, due to their particular qualities, were seen as "leaders" or "interpreters" (in politics as well as in literature) of the so-called fundamental movements—but also, as in the more conventional version of biography, as "lessons" or "practical" examples for future generations. This civic engagement in the act of biography, despite being primarily aimed at peers and the university audience in general, largely sustained the significant biographical production of authors such as Vítor de Sá: from the undergraduate dissertation dedicated to Amorim Viana, to comprehensive works on Antero de Quental, and to post-revolutionary works around figures of nineteenth-century Liberalism. This universally shared predilection for major figures did not negate the holistic approach that characterised these works, as was the case with António Borges Coelho, especially in his characterisation over the years of the expansionist process. His first foray into the biographical genre, in the mid-60s, still in the early stages of his career, was with the



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portrait of Alexandre Herculano, published in the "Biografia de bolso" collection by Presença; only in the 1990s did he extensively delve into a personality of his choice, namely João de Barros or, after the turn of the century, D. João de Castro (suggestively, in the "Biografias" series by the unsuspecting Caminho). However, there was no novelty in this apparent interval or in this apparent openness to conventional characters. A closer look at the author's work sheds light upon an interest in both major and minor figures, from those who were left to rot in the dungeons of the Inquisition to those who led the Expansion movement—all, as he always said, were "people of flesh-and-blood" whose names, profiles, and actions populate his work (v. José Neves, "Marxismo", in this Dictionary; V. Sá, *A mocidade de Antero*, 1942, pp. 11-12, e *Antero de Quental*, 1963: 9-24)

Contrary to other historiographies, such as the Italian or French, attention and prominence have not been given to the 'anonymous' figures in Portugal to date, as the new trends of the mid-century appeared to announce. In the Marxist tradition, although at times this anonymous mass took shape, what opposed the dominant model within the field of biography was, above all, a revision of previous versions in light of a conception of history focused on major processes rather than a fundamental subversion of the criteria determining the prominence of major figures. This exercise, however, was sketched out around the same time, albeit limited in scope from the perspective of a reflection on the hierarchisation of historical agents. It can be identified, especially among those who were most affected by and adopted the new themes and methodologies developed within the framework of the New History. Here, the closest examples of "modal" type biography (G. Levi) may be found, in which so-called "average" characters serve as a gateway to reconstructing processes, periods, or social categories. However, as historiography rarely stripped protagonists of their exceptionalism or power of intervention in the course of history, these examples represented the most complete manifestations of the generalising capacity of the life portrait. This exercise was not new: specific periods and phenomena in Portuguese history, not only in methodical tradition, were often accessed through 'minor' and great names, such as Mário Brandão in works on the Inquisition Court or the Viscount of Lagoa in the project to reconstruct the history of national expansion towards the East through an exhaustive collection of lives among the "great and humble" figures. They were not, nor would they yet be the truly marginalised figures of history nor, strictly speaking, the "average" characters that dissolved into the context, but rather those representatives who had been relegated by historiography to secondary roles in favour of more prominent figures: such as the forgotten parliamentarians of Oliveira Marques, the Tristão da Cunha seen by Banha de Andrade as a means to reconstruct politics and administration in the 16th century, or the merchants and bankers who, in Virgínia Rau's work, coexisted with the more conventional profile of D. Catarina de Bragança (Giovanni Levi, "Les usages de la biographie", 1989, p.1329; B. Andrade, *História de um fidalgo quincentista português*, 1974, p.14).

A significant and relevant part of biographical production from the third quarter of the century converged in this model – or in the variations composed upon it. However, diverse biographical forms, even within the restricted academic environment, continued and continue to coexist. Generally more practical than reflective, the life portrait has never been confined to a defined territory, nor tied to a particular way of writing history. It



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may have been a preferred genre among those with a more traditionalist view of the past, which included the collaborators of the re-established APH and the heirs of the distant historian-clergyman. But among its most illustrious representatives, such as Queirós Veloso, Banha de Andrade, Armando Cortesão, Teixeira da Mota, Virgínia Rau, Avelino de Jesus da Costa, Veríssimo Serrão, and Oliveira Marques, the place they occupied was markedly disparate, be it in theoretical, institutional, or ideological terms. What unites them, from a distance, is their undeniable interest in recording singular trajectories, reflected in a considerable volume of biographical texts. Yet, it must be said that biographical writing did not establish itself as a significant trend in Portuguese academic circles. It always depended more on personal research interests than on any theoretical or other principle that would determine its inclusion in a cohesive historiographical body. Perhaps this, above all, has earned it the epithet attributed by the more recent historiography of "marginalised," if not "forgotten". However, the prominence it enjoys today, anchored in a fast-growing production of works, does not necessarily have to be celebratory. The elegy has long been declared a distant relative of history. In order for the discourse on historical biography not to follow the same fate and finally become both practice and reflection, a detailed portrayal still needs to be traced.

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