

DICIONÁRIO DE HISTORIADORES PORTUGUESES

DA ACADEMIA REAL DAS CIÊNCIAS AO FINAL DO ESTADO NOVO

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PIMPÃO, Álvaro Júlio da Costa (Coimbra, 21-11-1902 – Coimbra, 06-01-1984)

A university professor, historian, and critic of Portuguese literature, Costa Pimpão (CP) studied under renowned and influential figures in the history of Portuguese literature and culture during his degree in Romance Philology, which he completed in 1927. His teachers included Carolina Michaëlis de Vasconcelos, Joaquim Mendes dos Remédios, António de Vasconcelos, Eugénio de Castro, and Joaquim de Carvalho. Later, after obtaining his diploma from the *Escola Normal Superior* in 1930, he joined the secondary school teaching profession, serving as the headmaster of the secondary schools in Funchal, Figueira da Foz, and Viseu. Except for a brief stint in France (at the University of Bordeaux) as a lecturer in Portuguese (1937–1939) and a period as a visiting professor at the Federal University of Bahia and the University of São Paulo (1954–1957), his university career was based at the Faculty of Arts of the University of Coimbra, where he worked from 1939 until his retirement in 1972. He also served as a member of the *Conselho Superior do Instituto de Alta Cultura* [High Council of the Institute of High Culture] (1963–1970) and as a delegate to the *Câmara Corporativa* [Corporative Chamber], representing the literary profession.

His research spanned the three main areas characteristic of a philologist's work: the editing of works, textual hermeneutics, and literary historiography. Following the tradition of his predecessors, CP always upheld the principle that literary history can only be written based on meticulously edited works. It is no surprise, therefore, that he devoted a significant part of his knowledge and time to this task.

Among the various editions he prepared, his work on the writings of Luís de Camões and Gil Vicente is particularly noteworthy. Regarding the former, *Rimas, Autos e Cartas* [Sonnets, Plays, and Letters] were first published in 1944, compiled into a single, deluxe volume. His editorial work on Camões's texts continued until the end of his academic career. In 1953 and 1973, after revisions, *Rimas* [Sonnets] were published separately, first by the *Biblioteca Geral* [General Library] of the University of Coimbra and later under the imprint of the *Livraria Almedina*. In the same year, *Os Lusíadas* [The Lusiads] was published in a carefully annotated edition, preceded by an extensive and comprehensive preface and enriched with a valuable index of proper names.

As noted by two of his critics and direct disciples (Aguiar e Silva and Aníbal de Castro), the discovery of some manuscripts concerning Camões's lyric poetry, previously unknown or undervalued, challenged



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particular authorial attributions established by CP as editor. Similarly, in the case of *Os Lusíadas*, some decisions regarding the text's stabilisation were deemed controversial. Despite these reservations, it can be said that, more than 50 years after their publication, CP's editions of Camões's works remain a reference point for all those who study and teach the texts of Portugal's greatest poet.

The same can be said of the *Obra Completa de Gil Vicente* [Complete Works of Gil Vicente], published in 1956. Like the 1944 edition of Camões's works, this edition also featured vignettes and illuminations by Joaquim Lopes. However, it also included a 75-page introductory study divided into eight subchapters. This study systematised the most important knowledge of the time about the playwright and offered perspectives on controversial aspects, ranging from his biography and intellectual culture to his artistic development, satirical representation of contemporary society, and lyrical expression. The volume also included *Notas* [Notes] at the end and a meticulously prepared *Glossário* [Glossary]. Overall, CP's edition of Gil Vicente marked a significant advancement compared to all previous editions. In terms of critical rigour, it would only be surpassed by the edition published in 2002 under the scientific coordination of José Camões.

In the field of textual criticism, mention must also be made of the work CP carried out in collaboration with Aida Dias on the *Cancioneiro Geral* [General Songbook] by Garcia de Resende. This collaboration culminated in an edition published between 1973 and 1974. Building on this work, Aida Dias would later produce what is today considered the most reliable edition of the *Cancioneiro resendiano* [Resende's Songbook], complete with a study, notes, and a dictionary of themes and authors.

For broader audiences, CP also organised educational editions and oversaw the publication of a series of works by Fialho de Almeida (the subject of his doctoral dissertation), accompanied by extensive critical introductions.

CP authored a volume of *História da Literatura Portuguesa* [History of Portuguese Literature] dedicated to the Middle Ages (1947, revised edition 1959). He also began publishing, in instalments—as was common at the time—the second volume, covering the 15th and 16th centuries. The first book, which reached over 250 pages, was part of an ambitious project intended to encompass Portuguese literature up to the 20th century.

The model chosen was the same one adopted by Francesco De Sanctis for Italian literature in the final decades of the 19th century, followed by Gustave Lanson for French literature, and later implemented by Menéndez Pidal for Spanish literature—closer in time to CP. After the useful but biased historiography of Teófilo Braga, the serious yet oversimplified didacticism of Joaquim Mendes dos Remédios (1911), and the extensive, elaborate *História Ilustrada da Literatura Portuguesa* [Illustrated History of Portuguese Literature], coordinated by Albino Forjaz Sampaio (1929) but aimed at a limited audience, there was a pressing need for a work grounded in principles of rigour.

The notion that each country is called to define its identity based on the cultural and ethnic traits that distinguish it stems from the nationalist vision of a *history of civilisation* as articulated by Hippolyte Taine in *Philosophie de l'Art* (1870). This explains the path that literary historians are required to navigate, moving between the specificity of each culture and broader linguistic-cultural domains. Such a task demanded



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sustained and meticulous research capable of unearthing documents, identifying authorship, clarifying contexts, and establishing a periodological framework. Aware of the challenges inherent in the task he had undertaken, CP admitted in the *Advertência* [Foreword] to the 1959 edition that progress had stalled due to the considerable effort required in “research and criticism,” as well as the “heavy teaching responsibilities” he had to shoulder year after year.

In a country with a limited market, it is reasonable to assume that the emergence of works in the same field posed an additional obstacle to the continuation of a project of such scope and ambition. For instance, in 1955, *História da Literatura Portuguesa* [History of Portuguese Literature] by Óscar Lopes and António José Saraiva was published. Although initially intended for secondary education (competing directly with similar works), over time, its more interpretative nature also won favour among university students, securing a dominant position in the publishing market.

CP's name is usually associated with the editions he prepared and the aforementioned *História da Literatura Portuguesa da época medieval* [History of Portuguese Literature of the Medieval Period], which, in many respects, remains unsurpassed to this day. It would, however, be unfair not to mention a third aspect of his work: his contributions as a literary critic. In this regard, two substantial volumes deserve particular attention: *Gente Grada* [Distinguished People] and *Escritos Diversos* [Miscellaneous Writings], published in 1952 and 1972, respectively. The latter, a collection from the final phase of his career, opens with a Preface that encapsulates CP's stance on literary studies as practised at the time: “Considered in various ways, depending on the audience they were intended for, the people who prompted them, or the circumstances that motivated them, all these writings share a common feature: the love of truth. I have always written to discover how things truly happened—and not how they were imagined by hasty essayists or less scrupulous individuals” (p. V). In proclaiming his positivist convictions, reflected in the desire to “discover how things truly happened,” CP distanced himself not only from the so-called “less scrupulous” but also from the *essayism* that competed with literary history in academic circles, often marked by its neglect of scholarly foundations. In the first section of this collection, titled “Temas de controvérsia” [“Themes of Controversy”], the historian takes a clear stance on contentious issues such as the authorship of two plays attributed to Gil Vicente, the potential discovery of Fernão Lopes's “lost chronicles,” and whether or not Camões had directly read Plato.

The justifications provided by CP in the afore-mentioned *Advertência* [Foreword] to explain the delays and irregularities in the publication of his *História da Literatura Portuguesa* [History of Portuguese Literature] are well-founded. As the sole full professor at his Faculty for many years, he bore the responsibility of overseeing junior professors. In addition to supervising dozens of undergraduate theses, CP also guided doctoral dissertations that would transform the understanding of Portuguese literature. Ofélia Paiva Monteiro, Vítor Aguiar e Silva, Aníbal Pinto de Castro, and Aida Fernanda Dias are among those who benefited from his mentorship during the 1960s and 1970s. Indeed, ranging from the Late Middle Ages (Aida Dias) to Romanticism (Ofélia Monteiro) and including Mannerism and the Baroque (Aguiar e Silva), the dissertations supervised by CP were unified by a clear historiographical reconceptualisation. Beyond studying texts and

historical-cultural contexts, the framework also encompassed the analysis of poetic codes. Within this precise domain lies the doctoral research undertaken by Aníbal Pinto de Castro.

This scientific and pedagogical ambition (referenced in several of his prefatory texts) also led CP to pursue an institutional commitment of a different nature, founding and directing the *Centro de Estudos Românicos* [Centre for Romance Studies] and the *Revista de História Literária de Portugal* [Journal of Literary History of Portugal] (1962). The short lifespan of the journal (only three issues were published at irregular intervals) reflects the difficulty of assembling workgroups within Portuguese universities capable of undertaking large-scale projects. This challenge, among other factors, contributed to the relatively limited number of published works by CP and other university professors of the same era, as well as the interruption of several commendable and ambitious projects.

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