

# DICIONÁRIO DE HISTORIADORES PORTUGUESES

DA ACADEMIA REAL DAS CIÊNCIAS AO FINAL DO ESTADO NOVO

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**Martins, J.P. de Oliveira** (Lisbon, 1845 – Lisbon, 1894)

A historian, economist, anthropologist, and social and political critic, Oliveira Martins was one of the most influential thinkers in Portuguese historical and political culture from the 1870s onwards. He produced an extensive and multifaceted body of work that left a profound mark on the perception of Portugal, not only among Portuguese elites but also abroad, particularly in Spain and Brazil. His activities and writings provoked controversy and influenced not only the historians, critics, economists, and literary figures of his time and of the 20th century but also contemporary Portuguese political life.

Coming from an urban middle-class family, he was the third of nine children. His father, Francisco Cândido Gonçalves, was a civil servant and small landowner. On his mother's side, he was the grandson of Joaquim Pedro Gomes de Oliveira, a magistrate who was a member of the *Junta Preparatória das Cortes* [Preparatory Board of the Cortes] of 1820, Secretary of State for the Kingdom in 1823–24, and a friend of Mouzinho da Silveira (Guilherme d'Oliveira Martins, *Oliveira Martins, uma biografia* [Oliveira Martins: A Biography], p. 30).

A self-taught and compulsive reader with an insatiable interest in all aspects of human expression, Oliveira Martins began experimenting with various literary and essayistic genres from 1867: historical novels, dramas, essays on historical, political, and doctrinal reflection. However, these early attempts, of uneven quality, did not achieve significant success. In 1879, his intellectual trajectory shifted with the launch of the *Biblioteca das Ciências Sociais* [Library of Social Sciences], an editorial project entirely of his creation. Although it lacked doctrinal intentions and avoided the dominant systems of the time (positivism, evolutionism, spiritualism, etc.), it was partially influenced by some of these trends (Fernando Catroga, "História e ciências sociais em Oliveira Martins" [History and Social Sciences in Oliveira Martins], *História da História...* [History of History...], 1996, pp. 117–159).

Due to its breadth and the diversity of subjects it sought to cover—Peninsular history, national and overseas history, Roman history, anthropology, religious myths, demography, economic and financial themes, etc—the collection represented an unprecedented project within the cultural milieu of Portugal's Regeneration. Its aim was to disseminate a range of knowledge to a broader audience. This editorial endeavour reflected Oliveira Martins's autodidacticism, his boundless scientific curiosity, and his evident interdisciplinary and global perspective, which distanced him from Herculano's analytical rigour and liberal



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argumentation. Indeed, this autodidacticism was inseparable from Martins's own biographical and professional path and his inclination for action.

Due to the death of his father, Martins did not complete secondary school and began working professionally at a young age, employed in two commercial firms (1858–70). He later served as the administrator of a mine in Andalusia (Santa Eufémia, 1870–74) (Fernandez Clemente, “J. P. d'Oliveira Martins nas minas...” [J. P. d'Oliveira Martins in the Mines...], 2008). At that time, he was described as follows: “On his face, drawn with broad, honest strokes, where his brow had the clarity and serenity of morning light, his green eyes sparkled, tear-coloured, vague and mysterious. Never was there a man whose smile was both so sorrowful and so luminous” (*Frederico D. d' Ayalla, Os ideais de Oliveira Martins* [The Ideals of Oliveira Martins], p. 32). Having returned to Portugal, he directed the construction of the Porto–Póvoa–Famalicão railway line and served as the administrator of its railway company. In the meantime, he was also elected president of the *Sociedade de Geografia Comercial do Porto* [Porto Society of Commercial Geography] (1880) and later appointed director of the *Museu Industrial e Comercial do Porto* [Industrial and Commercial Museum of Porto] (1884). Additionally, he served as administrator of the *Régie dos Tabacos* [Tobacco Monopoly] (from 1888) and the *Companhia de Moçambique* [Mozambique Company] (1888–90) and was part of the executive committee of the *Exposição Industrial Portuguesa* [Portuguese Industrial Exhibition] (1888).

An attentive observer of national and international affairs from a young age—evidenced by his contributions to *República* in 1870 and the journal *Ocidental* in 1875—Oliveira Martins deepened his engagement with periodical journalism by founding *A Província* [The Province] (1885–1887) in Porto and, later, *O Repórter* [The Reporter] (1888) in Lisbon. In addition to these diverse professional experiences, Martins, convinced of the need for profound political reform in Portugal, joined the *Partido Progressista* [Progressive Party] in 1885. Within the party, he led the faction known as *Vida Nova* [New Life], supporting Anselmo Braamcamp, whom he greatly admired (see *Política e economia nacional* [Politics and National Economy], 1885). Oliveira Martins became one of the most coherent and profound critics of the politics of Fontes Pereira de Melo. He saw Melo as the personification of a “bureaucratic oligarchy” disconnected from the realities of the country, whose practices of clientelism and *caciquismo* (bossism) had, in his view, encouraged republicanism (*A Província*, III, 428–432). However, upon Melo's death, Martins acknowledged the political leader's character and qualities.

In the political sphere, it is noteworthy how Oliveira Martins's engagement with Portuguese society was judged so differently by his contemporaries. He did, in fact, accept support from the *Regeneradores* [Regenerators] as an independent candidate for MP (1878). Similarly, he would agree to stand as the official candidate of the *Partido dos Operários Socialistas de Portugal* [Portuguese Workers' Socialist Party] in the 1879 elections. His reformist intentions were also evident when he joined the *Partido Progressista* in 1885. He was elected as an MP (serving continuously from 1886 to 1894) and, in 1892, was appointed Minister of Finance in José Dias Ferreira's ministry. However, he held this position for only four months due to

disagreements with the prime minister, who withdrew his support. His trajectory drew heavy criticism at the time, particularly from republicans, however, it must be understood in light of Oliveira Martins's own assessment of the deficiencies of national political life, especially the relationship between the political elite and civil society. His perspective must also be considered within the framework of his independent, suprapartisan reformist project, which downplayed the formal issue of the regime—a stance he shared with Antero de Quental. His adherence to *socialismo catedrático* [academic socialism], his critique of the prevailing system of electoral representation, and his condemnation of the oligarchic nature of parliamentary rule led him, as early as 1879, to propose an organicist model of political representation. This proposal aimed to counter the *statu quo*, which, in his view, fostered *caciquismo* and clientelism (*As eleições* [Elections], 1879; see Fernando Catroga, "O problema político..." ["The Political Problem..."], 1981). His suggestions for an extraordinary dictatorship, the strengthening of state power (evident in the "Explicações" ["Explanations"] to the second edition of *Portugal Contemporâneo* [Contemporary Portugal], 1883), his alignment with the young King D. Carlos, and his inspiration in Caesarism did not yield the desired results as the financial and political crisis intensified in the years 1890–92.

It is clear that Martins's political actions were not always aligned with the critical reading he constructed of Portugal's past. Thus, a superficial reading of *História de Portugal* [History of Portugal] and *Portugal Contemporâneo* [Contemporary Portugal] could provide simplistic arguments for attacking constitutional monarchy, particularly the Bragança dynasty and liberal parliamentarianism. Indeed, both republicans and, later, the *Integralistas Lusitanos* [Lusitanian Integralists] exploited these works for such purposes—the latter rejecting, however, the melancholic, sceptical tone and vague sense of despair about the future that pervades *Portugal Contemporâneo*. Yet the complexity of his works resists such immediate interpretations driven by political agendas.

Disillusioned with Portuguese political life, Martins spent much of 1891 in England. This stay produced a critical perspective on English society in *A Inglaterra Hoje* [England Today] (1891). He also deepened a project he had initiated in 1889 with *Os Filhos de D. João I* [The Children of D. João I], a series of historical biographies of great figures from Portugal's past, focusing on the Avis dynasty. This was another way for Martins to intervene in a present he viewed with profound scepticism while evoking a past when the nation was led by a small, enlightened elite whose actions had universal significance. Oliveira Martins's intellectual trajectory can be summarised in the following phases:

1. 1867–1878: In this period, Martins debuted in multiple genres (historical novels, dramas, chronicles, and literary, artistic, social, and political criticism). This was a syncretic phase of experimentation with ideas and initial forays into intellectual journalism. Across these genres, he invoked history, producing essays on historical themes (1872 and 1878), social and political critiques, doctrinal texts, and reflections on socialism (1872–73). His chronicles addressed diverse contemporary issues (*Ocidental*, 1875). This period saw his intellectual focus expand and centre around three major areas: history, social and political thought, and financial studies. Initially heavily influenced by Proudhon and Hegel, he transitioned from an advocate of a



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social and federalist republic to a sharp critic of republicanism (1873–74) and a theorist of *socialismo catedrático*.

2.1879–1885: This phase saw the publication of *Biblioteca das Ciências Sociais* [Library of Social Sciences], a diverse collection that simultaneously reflected Martins's self-education and presented the results of this autodidacticism to the public. This public dissemination was often years in the making, as in the cases of *História da Civilização Ibérica* [History of Iberian Civilisation] and *Portugal Contemporâneo*. He thus defined a vast cultural and scientific dissemination project aimed at a non-scholarly middle-class audience, particularly the elite educated in secondary schools. Focused on historical perspectives, the *Biblioteca das Ciências Sociais* expanded into geography, economics, politics, anthropology, sociology, and collective psychology, demonstrating profound innovation, as noted by Albert Silbert in 1971. Martins's original view of Portuguese history—counter to the nationalist historicism dominant in 19th-century Portuguese culture—took shape. Not coincidentally, contrary to his initial plans, the publication of this series began with four volumes dedicated to “Peninsular civilisation,” indicating his integrated view of Portuguese history as intrinsically linked to that of Spain. The first volume, *História da Civilização Ibérica* [History of Iberian Civilisation], was published in 1879, followed by *História de Portugal* in the same year, and later *Portugal Contemporâneo* and *O Brasil e as Colónias Portuguesas* [Brazil and the Portuguese Colonies] (1881). These controversial works were promptly reviewed and debated with critics (see “A História de Portugal e os Críticos” [“The History of Portugal and Its Critics”], *História de Portugal*, pp. 215–226).

3. 1885–1894: This period marks Oliveira Martins's return to political chronicles in the periodical press, historical essays (e.g., *Portugal nos Mares* [Portugal on the Seas]), historical biographies, and travel chronicles (regarding England and Spain). It coincides with his departure from the *Biblioteca das Ciências Sociais* [Library of Social Sciences], his most intense phase of political activity (1885–1892), and the conception of a historical biography project (from 1889) centred on the golden period of Portuguese history (late 14th to 16th centuries) and its representative figures (*Os Filhos de D. João I*, *Nuno Álvares Pereira*, and *D. João II*). In Martins's view, this was a pivotal era that encapsulated the best political experiences and lessons for the present.

Whether in the historiographical or politico-ideological sphere, Oliveira Martins occupies a unique position in the cultural and political landscape of Portugal in the latter half of the 19th century, and consistently resists any labels attributed to him. A theorist of socialism inspired by Proudhon, later evolving towards recognising the importance of authority and the *raison d'état*? The mentor of the group *Vencidos da Vida* [Defeated by Life], in the late 1880s? A romantic historian, cultivating a narrative, dramatic, and artistically expressive history? A metaphysical historian, pessimist, and philosopher of history? A disseminator of an anthropology of an evolutionary and Darwinian nature? Undoubtedly. All of this has been said of him (C. Maurício, *A invenção de Oliveira Martins* [The Invention of Oliveira Martins]).

Throughout his body of work, a theoretical reflection on the place of history within knowledge emerges, evolving from his early writings to the later biographies. In *O helenismo e a civilização cristã* [Hellenism and



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Christian Civilisation] (1878), heavily influenced by the work of Hegel, Oliveira Martins distances his perspective from providentialist, metaphysical, and positivist conceptions. While he acknowledged at the time the formulation of historical laws within the framework of a necessitarian conception of the course of history, he nevertheless observed that “the laws specific to each people vary according to the special conditions of their existence,” identifying a fundamental law: “the encounter of various peoples and their civilisations.” (p.11). However, the role of chance in history is not overlooked. A conviction of the superiority of European civilisation is affirmed in this work, a theme Oliveira Martins revisits in *As raças humanas e a civilização primitiva* [The Human Races and Primitive Civilisation] (1881). In the latter work, and in the *Quadro das instituições primitivas* [The Framework of Primitive Institutions] (1883), inspired by the evolutionary anthropology of the time (Spencer, Lubbock, Karl Vogt), he presents a view in which savages are perceived as existing in a stage of childishness and unconsciousness, where emotion and violence dominate rationality. From an ethnocentric perspective, it becomes evident that, while Oliveira Martins supported the abolition of slavery—condemning its inhumanity—he nonetheless perceived it as a necessary and constructive stage in the process of individual and social expansion (Norberto Cunha, *Sobre a natureza humana...* [On Human Nature], pp. 310–325).

For Oliveira Martins, history functions, in the manner of Hegel, as the theatre where the human spirit reveals itself. It represents the expression of human consciousness but also of the unconscious, which drives heroes through instinct, independent of their will (a concept derived from E. Hartmann). At times, Martins appears contradictory, as noted by various interpreters of his work. However, more significant than cataloguing contradictions is, as observed elsewhere, recognising the coexistence of multiple perspectives (or voices) within his writing, alongside the various scales he employed: national, peninsular, European, and global. A notable example is the complementarity between *História da Civilização Ibérica* [History of Iberian Civilisation] and *História de Portugal* [History of Portugal]. Both works integrate a plurality of methods and disciplines (geography, anthropology, economics, political science, psychology, and history). While the former of these works demonstrates a clear scientific and theoretical intentionality aimed at identifying major trends of historical change and collective movements on a peninsular scale, the latter adopts a perspective of national history (Portugal as “a molecule of the Iberian social organism”), employing a narrative method akin to a historical drama that emphasises individual actions and animated collective settings, transitioning from individual behaviour to collective behaviour, and from close-up views to broader perspectives, in the manner of Michelet. In the *História de Portugal* and *Portugal Contemporâneo*, Martins incorporates an ethical dimension tied to the old idea of *historia magistra vitae* while also demonstrating a realist intentionality: “presenting the raw and real truth is the best way to educate” (*História de Portugal*, p. XII). Regarding the narrative strategy in *História de Portugal*, Martins later employed an artistic metaphor that perfectly aligns with the cinematic nature of his historical representation, alternating between individual portraits and ensemble scenes: “a synthetic and dramatic painting of life” (“Advertência” [Preface], *A Vida de Nun’Álvares* [The Life of Nun’Álvares], 1984 [1893], p.7), and he referred to the “tragicomic episodes” illustrating the pathology of 19th-





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century Portuguese society in *Portugal Contemporâneo* (Id., p.9). Nevertheless, in either case, the historian adopted an organicist language in which the analogy between the nation and an individual, organic, and moral being is frequent—one might call it a shared soul or consciousness. Consider the concept of a nation he adopts: "...that association of men which has acquired *organic cohesion*, traditions, habits, and a shared will or consciousness, whether the founders had or did not have ethnic affinity in its constitution, and whether or not they occupied an appropriate place." The concept of *nationality*, on the other hand, refers, in his view, to an "ethnogenic base," forged by a "tradition of common ancestry" (as in the cases of the Jews or the Roma, who, in his perspective, did not constitute nations) (*Política e economia nacional* [Politics and National Economy], pp. 44–45). This distinction, however, does not prevent Oliveira Martins from oscillating in his works between a concept of a political nation—a nation as a consciousness formed through the determination of its elite's will (with the people often depicted in his narratives as generalised figures, settings, or even spectral scenarios)—and suggestions of an ethnic determinism that occasionally emerge as explanatory factors. For instance, this is evident when he proposes the hypothesis of a "greater dose of Celtic blood" to explain the character of the Lusitanians (*História de Portugal I*, p. 6). While he rejects the determinist idea of an ethnic unity at the origins of the nation (as reflected in his critique of Teófilo Braga's concept of a natural and ethnic nation), it is also true that his works frequently suggest racist ideas (*Idem*, I, p. 6), perhaps later overemphasised by António Sérgio. However, the work in which his openness to ethnic determinism is most evident, adhering unequivocally to the racist theories of the time that advocated the superiority of Aryan peoples, is *As raças humanas*. Nevertheless, in this work, Martins acknowledges the idea of irregular, variable, and asynchronous progress across different societies. Furthermore, diverging from the positivists, he emphasises the notion of the indeterminacy of historical development. Does he not leave the narratives of *História de Portugal* and *Portugal Contemporâneo* open-ended with two unanswered questions? And in a text from 1884, is there not a question that unequivocally distances him from teleological systems? "Who can determine laws and discover scientific reasons for so many and such complex events? (...) what vanity it is to claim to determine the motives, to foresee the consequences, when faced with the inextricable complexity of the animal instincts of peoples, their rational instincts, and the passions of men (...)" ("Teoria da história Universal" ["Theory of Universal History"], *Política e história II* [Politics and History II], 1884, p. 7). Martins was well aware of the discontinuities and ruptures (revolutions) in the process of nations' evolution. He thus accepted the idea of non-uniform progress, including phenomena of "paralysis" in development (citing China as an example) or even degeneration (as in the cases of Egypt or Polynesia). While he considered Europe to be the most advanced centre of civilisation, he also acknowledged the emergence within it of regressive phenomena (Malthusianism, infanticide, alcoholism, prostitution, polygamy, etc.), including the rise of "internal barbarians" and manifestations of degeneration—a concept widely discussed in the scientific circles of the time, particularly in psychopathology but also adopted by the social sciences. Like Hegel, Martins viewed the course of history as the ideal teleological realisation of freedom and accepted, in an evolutionary manner, the idea that Western societies were necessarily moving towards democracy, albeit threatened by the social



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movements of the “proletarian plebeians.” However, this was not conceived as a linear trajectory: the near future, in his view, would involve the return of a socialist Caesarism, protective of the underprivileged, as he observed in Germany (“Teoria...” [“Theory”...], *Política e história I*, pp. 29–30). Civilisation (in the singular), according to him, depended, among other factors, on the “psychological capacity of the race.” Yet he did not disregard the influence of environment, religious factors, or the role of chance in social change, which he had learned from Cournot (*As raças...*, vol. I, p. 36). For all these reasons, his rejection of the concept of a systematic universal history, as conceived by the positivist Teófilo Braga, becomes comprehensible. Braga, a childhood friend from whom Martins rapidly distanced himself, stood in contrast to the close bond Martins later developed with Antero de Quental, a profound friendship that also provided significant critical value to Martins’s own works. In Martins’s view, specific civilisations existed independently of each other, with diverse characteristics and development rhythms, rendering the idea of a universal history nothing more than a chimera. Moreover, he considered it impossible to periodise (*As raças...*, II, p. 273).

Nevertheless, he acknowledged the possibility of distinguishing major periods within the history of a particular civilisation, which would imply distinct fields of observation for the historian: a first period of aggregation of elements, in which a community remains a “mechanical being”; a second period of organisation, during which the nation becomes a “biological being”; and a third, in which collective ideas and feelings are expressed as thought (*História da Civilização Ibérica* [History of Iberian Civilisation], pp. 212–213). Inspired by Hegel, heroes are seen as those who most fully express the national spirit. In the case of Portuguese history, Oliveira Martins proposed various periodisations throughout his works. In all instances, he distanced himself from purely dynastic or political criteria. In the introduction to the History of Portugal by Henry Stephens (1893), he distinguishes three major periods: “constitution,” “expansion” (from Aljubarrota to Alcácer Quibir), and “decline” (from then until the 19th century) (S. C. Matos, *Historiografia e memória nacional...* [Historiography and National Memory...], 1998, pp. 219–221).

Another example of the diversity of perspectives he adopts can be seen in *Portugal Contemporâneo* (1880), a vast fresco on the recent past (1826 to c. 1870). Based on a wide range of sources (periodical press, political speeches, travel books, pamphlets, posters, etc.), the work combines diverse forms of writing, from chronicles of events centred on significant historical figures—such as those that open Book I—to essays offering deep reflections on Portuguese society and its history, as well as historical narratives and anthropological insights of considerable interest. Particularly noteworthy in this regard are the observations on the matriarchal structure of Minho society, made in connection with the popular revolt of Maria da Fonte: “the woman governs the house and the husband; she surpasses the man in audacity, cunning, and strength; she ploughs the fields and carries loads of corn, leading the little oxen,” contrasting “the cheerful, almost ironic gaze of the lively, gold-adorned young woman” with “the soft features of the boy, leaning on his staff, contemplative, submissive, as though before an idol” (*Portugal Contemporâneo*, III, p. 52). In this work, as in other historical writings, the multiplicity of perspectives and his remarkable critical capacity for social understanding are evident throughout. Particularly interesting in this seminal work is its partial focus on a



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period the author had either lived through or known directly, or through the memories of those close to him. Thus, it integrates both knowledge and primary memory of events (at least the more recent ones, from the 1860s) with extensive documentary research and broader study. The first edition's valuable statistical tables, unfortunately removed in later editions, are testament to this.

Oliveira Martins's work also reflects an important 19th-century debate: is history a science or an art? In 1879, the historian embraced a concept of history as science, but by 1881, he had rejected this notion, instead characterising history as a field of indeterminacy: "of imagination that sees, intuits, and anticipates with an intuitive power, capable only of reproducing synthetically the reality of living things" ("Da natureza e do lugar das ciências sociais" [On the Nature and Place of the Social Sciences], *Literatura e filosofia* [Literature and Philosophy], pp. 336–337). He classified history as a "narrative, literary art" that "narrates and paints, [while] philosophy defines and explains." Martins rejected determinism, arguing that the course of events does not follow a system of laws (although cause-effect relationships can sometimes be discerned). However, "nothing (...) is permanent or fixed in the succession of causes, and therefore it becomes impossible to follow a systematic deduction." The comparison between the succession of facts and the *course of a river on a geographical map* used by the historian illustrates this view: continuity is disrupted "by the accidents of the riverbed, yet always directed by the general inclination of the basin through which it flows." This does not preclude the historian from uncovering and defining "influences and relationships, causes and effects (...), trends, through a fortunate alliance of reasoning and intuition" (*Idem*, p. 338). He also acknowledged that the observation of humanity's rational creations, particularly in the realm of ideas, enables a "science of the rational and organic development of society," which he termed "nomology" ("Teoria...", p. 6). In any case, by 1884, his position was unequivocal: given the diversity of experiences among different human communities, history cannot be taken as a systematic science; it is, instead, a narrative. Thus, it would be impossible to reduce all these experiences to a "systematic whole." This warning remains highly relevant today, especially when considering the possibilities of global history.

Can it be said, then, that for Oliveira Martins historiography is synonymous with literature? By no means. Perhaps due to an unsatisfactory experience with historical fiction (the now-forgotten *Febo Moniz*, 1867) and being an avid reader of both national and foreign historians such as Guizot, Michelet, W. Humboldt, Ernest Renan, T. Mommsen, Carlyle, Macaulay, and Lafuente, Martins held a negative view of historical fiction, considering it a pastiche genre. He valued authenticity and the pursuit of truth, grounded in "solidly meticulous knowledge" and "precise and erudite understanding of facts and real conditions, lest, instead of writing history, one invents novels" ("Advertência," *Os filhos de D. João I* [The Sons of D. João I], 1891, p. 9). This did not prevent him from being criticised for fantasising about historical facts (Maurício, *A invenção...* [The Invention...], 2005).

It is nonetheless surprising that one of the most perceptive critiques of his works (and there were many) came from a great fiction writer, his friend Eça de Queiroz. In 1894, in gratitude for receiving *A Vida de Nun'Álvares* [The Life of Nun'Álvares], Eça remarked on the resemblance between the historical figures





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depicted in the book and contemporary Portuguese political figures (whom Oliveira Martins knew well): similarities between the Count of Andeiro and the progressive politician Mariano de Carvalho, and between D. Álvaro de Castro and the characteristics of the modern statesman. Eça also objected to particular “plastic details” and asked, using a significant example from *A Vida de Nun’Álvares*: “What document do you have to state that the queen, at some point, covered Andeiro with kisses, or that the Master pensively ran his hand across his face? ... Were you there? Did you see? I think such details do not bring greater intensity of life and create a vague sense of distrust” (Eça de Queiroz, *Carta a OM* [Letter to OM], 26.04.1894, *Correspondência*, II, p. 261). In the absence of sources and information gathered from them, the realist process in Martins’s narratives often relied on an effect of verisimilitude. Martins explicitly addressed this psychological method in response to Eça’s criticism: “...man can only be studied *in vivo*. Nature is not particularly fertile in combinations, and, with the passage of time, types are repeated. The men of any era find their likenesses in the present. Therefore, using the observation of living individuals as a criterion for evaluating those of the past is a method recommended and followed by the masters: Mommsen and Renan. Hence, without his engagement in social and political life or the world of business, it would have been impossible for Oliveira Martins to acquire a “real understanding of men” (*Carta a EQ*, s.d. [8-05-1894], *Correspondência de Oliveira Martins* [Correspondence of Oliveira Martins], p. 266). Moreover, for the historian, a representative personality type seemed to encapsulate the *zeitgeist* itself—hence his belief that “a well-studied character is worth an entire world observed.” (*Os filhos...*, p. 275).

A key element associated with Oliveira Martins’s use of psychological imagination (Moniz Barreto) in constructing his sweeping narratives is verisimilitude, which he considered “the foremost of our intellectual demands.” In his synthetic and comprehensive approach, “probabilities often compensate for the lack of evidence. There is no fantasy or fiction in history thus conceived,” a method he also applied to pre-Neolithic civilisations, which he described as a “synthetic reconstruction of societies” (*Elementos de Antropologia* [Elements of Anthropology], p. 20). Verisimilitude, in this context, was drawn from intuition, supposition, and the historian’s understanding of the people of his own time—based on the belief that human character persists across eras, though he distinguished between the “simple” and the “sophisticated.” This belief also underpinned his (already contested) assertion that “we can explain, define, and intuit what nebulously resided in the souls of the simple from other ages” (*Correspondência...* [Correspondence], p. 267). Martins’s realist narrative method also involved drawing inspiration from the physical locations where the events he sought to describe had occurred. For instance, the scene depicting the landing of D. Pedro IV’s liberal army at Pampelido was written after a visit to that northern Portuguese beach. Similarly, during his 1894 travels through Castile, he visited sites linked to the Battle of Toro with the aim of immersing himself in the environments frequented by Afonso V, gathering material for the writing of *O Príncipe Perfeito* [The Perfect Prince] (*Cartas Peninsulares* [Peninsular Letters], 2018, introduction by César Rina).

However, in the absence of reliable information, Martins employed another narrative strategy: using enunciative markers to suggest suppositions, thereby tempering claims to historical truth. This is evident in



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*Portugal Contemporâneo*, with expressions such as “it seems that...,” “perhaps,” or “if it was true....” He also explored multiple possibilities for particular events, such as whether the death of D. João VI was caused by poisoning, or he posed speculative questions about the future, particularly regarding the political situation of his time in 1826. Another of Martins’s methods was to draw analogies between Portuguese historical figures and those from antiquity (historical, literary, or mythical). For example, Infante D. Henrique, in his vision of empire, is portrayed as the “Portuguese Scipio,” embodying “the mercantile genius of Hanno and the military genius of Hannibal” (*Os filhos...* [The Sons ...], pp. 18 and 198). D. Pedro is likened to the “Portuguese Hamlet” (*Idem*, p. 236), while Herculano is compared to Cato. From a reception standpoint, the historian’s psychological and synthetic reconstruction methods proved highly effective, including in educational contexts, an area of significant concern for him.

The many re-editions of Martins’s works, not only in Portuguese but also in Spanish and occasionally in English, demonstrate the enduring interest in his writings. His interpretation of national history left a profound impact on historians, essayists, novelists, and poets, both his contemporaries and those who followed (Eça de Queiroz, Guerra Junqueiro, Fernando Pessoa, Ruy Belo, António Sérgio, Jaime Cortesão, A. José Saraiva, Óscar Lopes, Eduardo Lourenço, among many others), continuing to the present day—not to mention filmmakers such as Manoel de Oliveira.

However, in an era that embraced a “positive” conception of history as science—rooted in documents and exemplified by the *Revue Historique* since 1876—Martins’s historiography faced scepticism. Yet Eça de Queiroz praised Martins’s skills as an artist, highlighting his realistic grasp of connective movements (a process Eça compared to Zola’s approach). Eça also commended the historical biographies Martins was writing, calling them “the greatest service rendered to Portugal in this century,” as they revived patriotism and redefined Portuguese identity. In these late-life biographies, Martins demonstrated a commitment to rigorous research and the use of sources to underpin his work, alongside undeniable literary and essayistic qualities. However, this aspect of his work was rarely acknowledged, with Vitorino Magalhães Godinho being one of the few exceptions. Throughout the 20th century and even today, interpretations of Martins’s historiographical contributions remain divided. Some, like Magalhães Godinho, appreciate his pivotal role in understanding and reflecting on the Portuguese historical experience. Others, like Oliveira Marques, criticise his lack of grounding in primary sources, objectivity, and balance, even denying him the status of historian. Marques went so far as to claim that Martins lacked “authentic knowledge of the past, direct contact with sources, prudence, objectivity, and balance, in short” (*Antologia da historiografia portuguesa* [Anthology of Portuguese Historiography], vol. I, 1974, p. 40). Such a judgement, however, cannot be applied universally to his entire oeuvre. Admittedly, his portrayal of King D. Duarte is partly unsubstantiated, particularly regarding his supposed political ineffectiveness and indecision (Luís M. Duarte, *D. Duarte*, 2005, p. 21). Similarly, the physical, ethical, and political characterisation of Infante D. Pedro owes much to Antero de Quental, as Sousa Holstein observed in 1923 and Carolina Rufino reaffirmed in *O processo historiográfico de Oliveira Martins...* [The historiographical process of Oliveira Martins], 2017, and even to Martins himself, who identified with him.



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On the other hand, Martins's depiction of D. João VI in *História de Portugal*, which at first appears to be a grotesque caricature, and his compelling narrative of the royal family's flight to Brazil, are largely based on contemporary sources and earlier historians such as Herculano and Luz Soriano. Similarly, contrary to Silva Cordeiro's assumption, the influential *História da República Romana* [History of the Roman Republic] (1885) was not simply a retelling of Mommsen's *History of Rome*. It also drew on various ancient sources, including Valerius Maximus, Suetonius, and Cicero, as well as literary texts, though sometimes with distortions (André Teixeira, *As "fontes inexauríveis..."* [The "inexhaustible sources..."], 2021).

However, one aspect that has received insufficient attention, aside from the exemplary critical edition of *História de Portugal* by Martim de Albuquerque and Isabel Albuquerque, is Martins's meticulous revision of his earlier works and ideas. Consider the successive restructurings he applied to the plan for the *Biblioteca das Ciências Sociais* [Library of Social Sciences] (Vakil, 1999, pp. 64–74); the revisions of *História de Portugal* [History of Portugal] and *Portugal Contemporâneo* [Contemporary Portugal] in response to various critiques (including those from the well-informed Camilo Castelo Branco, Eça de Queiroz, Antero de Quental, and João Lobo de Moura); the reworking of *Os Lusíadas. Ensaio sobre Camões e a sua obra* [The Lusiads: An Essay on Camões and His Work] (original version, 1872) in 1891; and the multiple proposals for periodising the nation's historical trajectory that he successively adopted. There is no doubt, however, that the qualities of a prose writer with exceptional artistic talent and poetic imagination (as noted by Sampaio Bruno and A. José Saraiva) at times outweighed the demands of historical rigour.

However, the multiplicity of perspectives that consistently emerges in such diverse theoretical reflections deepens the understanding of his legacy. Even today, Oliveira Martins's work elicits interpretations and judgments as divergent as those at the close of the 19th century—particularly concerning his historiography and the social and political thought he left behind. What remains indisputable is the enduring presence of his critical spirit among us and the sharp lucidity of his understanding of the Portuguese issues of his time—many of which persisted well into the 20th century.

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Sérgio Campos Matos

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