

Images, Perceptions and Productions in and of Antiquity

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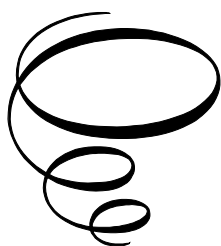


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CHAPTER IV

THE RECEPTION OF ANTIQUITY

SECTION 2.

CLASSICAL RECEPTION STUDIES

CICERONIAN PORTRAITS IN OLIVEIRA MARTINS AND ANTÓNIO ROMA TORRES

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Abstract

Marcus Tullius Cicero (106–43 BC) was seen through the centuries as an *exemplum* for the western world. As a symbol of the twilight of the Roman Republic, the reception of this politician and most eminent orator was transformed through diverse historical paradigms.

Though admired by dignitaries of such distinction as St. Augustine (354–430), Francesco Petrararch (1304–1374), and Almeida Garrett (1799–1854; one of the greatest Portuguese writers), Cicero's image was, however, tarnished by Theodor Mommsen's (1817–1903) *Römische Geschichte* (1854–56), which described the Roman orator as a lawyer-politician.

This representation was also echoed in Oliveira Martins' *História da República Romana* (1885). Nevertheless, Cicero's image in this work does not correspond to a mere pastiche of Mommsen. Oliveira Martins points out a series of typologies which have been connected with contemporary Portugal. However, António Roma Torres, doctor-psychiatrist and dramatist, restores Cicero's excellent reputation in *César e Cícero* (2016). These plays, divided into three parts and consisting of dialogues between Julius Caesar and Cicero and a final monologue by Cicero, consider the classic dichotomy of liberty versus tyranny present in Ciceronian portraits. This paper intends to discuss and compare the portraits of Cicero portrayed in the works of António Roma Torres and Oliveira Martins. From these works, we can dissect the Ciceronian reception in Portugal in the nineteenth and twenty-first centuries to perceive the typologies of reception about Cicero and the end of the Roman Republic. The methodology employed will be a

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comparative analysis of the two authors.

Keywords: Marcus Tullius Cicero; Oliveira Martins; António Roma Torres; Roman Republic; Ciceronian reception in Portugal

1. Cicero through the lens of Theodor Mommsen and Oliveira Martins

Though admired by dignitaries of such distinction as St. Augustine,² Petrarch (1304–1374),³ and Almeida Garrett (1799–1854)⁴—who was one of the greatest Portuguese writers—Cicero’s image was, however, tarnished by Theodor Mommsen’s (1817–1903) *Römische Geschichte*, which described the Roman orator as a lawyer-politician.

Mommsen, who had a significant influence on the composition of Oliveira Martins’ *História da República Romana*, was one of the leading figures responsible for an attempt at *damnatio memoriae* on Cicero. As Rawson points out, “Furthermore, Cicero’s political character was almost irreparably damaged by the attacks made on it by some of the finest Roman historians of the period, especially the great Mommsen [...]” (Rawson 1975, 305–06). Mommsen’s judgment about Cicero is as follows:

This was Marcus Cicero, notoriously a political trimmer, accustomed to flirt at times with the democrat, at times with Pompeius, at times from a somewhat greater distance with the aristocracy, and to lend his services as an advocate to every influential man [...] In the character of an author he stands as low as in that of a statesman. [...] By nature a journalist in the worst sense of that term [...].⁵

Mommsen’s influence on Oliveira Martins⁶ is evident from the dedication in the *História da República Romana*, “To Theodor Mommsen my guide

² See, for example, Saint Augustine, *The City of God*, 3.30. Cf. also MacCormack, “Cicero in late antiquity,” 273–82; Manuwald, *Cicero*, 140.

³ See, for example, Petrarch, *Familiars*, 24.3.2–5. See also Marsh, “Cicero in the Renaissance,” 306–307; McLaughlin, “Petrarch and Cicero,” 19–38.

⁴ See, for example, Garrett, *Portugal na Balança da Europa*, 15. See, too, Cação, “Ecos de Demóstenes em Almeida Garrett,”; Nobre, “Proteger a Liberdade, defender a Revolução: a poesia de intervenção de Almeida Garrett”.

⁵ Mommsen, *History of Rome*, IV: 169, 609. Trans. Dickson. For a reappraisal about the critical judgment of the figure of Cicero by Mommsen, see Merolle, *Mommsen and Cicero*.

⁶ For Mommsen’s influence on Martins’ works, see also Kreuzter, “A República romana,” 91–110.

and master in this work”, and a eulogy in the introduction “[...] Mommsen, the first historian of the century [...]” (Martins 1965, I: 28; my trans.).

1.1 Oliveira Martins

Joaquim Pedro de Oliveira Martins (1845–1894), whose father’s death forced him to give up on his studies, was welcomed into the Grupo de Cenáculo (1870), consisting of renowned personages like Antero de Quental, Batalha Reis, and Eça de Queiroz.⁷ He ran for deputy of the Partido dos Operários Socialistas de Portugal (1878) and became deputy for the Partido Progressista between 1886 and 1894. He also held, among other public offices, the post of the Minister of Finance in 1892. As an eminent member of the so-called “Geração de 70”, he stood out at an intellectual level in the political-pedagogical project of the “Biblioteca das Ciências Sociais”, which he had begun in 1879 and which ended in 1885.⁸ The *História da República Romana*, the last volume of the Biblioteca, was, according to the author, “the heart of the system of works that make up our Library” and representative of a “type,” which is, according to the Viquian criterion of history, that Roman society would be a “model” and “paradigm” for all societies (Martins 1965, I: 7; 1981, 95).

1.2 Oliveira Martins and Cicero

Cicero’s portrait fits into the period that Oliveira Martins calls “decomposition”, which, according to the historian, is characterised by the political rise of “orderly conservative” characters who imagined solving internal problems through “compromises”, “concessions”, or arrangements that, instead of softening, only precipitated the fall of the Roman Republic (Martins 1965, I: 26). This presentation of Cicero, which was made in the introduction, tends to be repeated throughout the work. For example, in the second chapter of the sixth book, on the occasion of the famous trial against Gaius Verres, Cicero is portrayed as a “lawyer-literate-politician”—which is almost a *pastiche* of Mommsen—who grows in the “ferment of decaying democracies” (Martins 1965, II: 175). In the next chapter, Oliveira Martins harps on about Mommsen’s imagery while, at the same time, playing a “mirror game” with the Portuguese reality of the nineteenth century. It is worth quoting in full:

⁷ Maurício, “Uma cronologia de J. P. Oliveira Martins,” 37–38.

⁸ Valério, “A cultura material,” 253.

Cicero, the lawyer-literate *par excellence*, with all the flaws and weaknesses, with all the childish illusion of that sort, is the body of Rome's upper-class society; is the orderly instrument of the weighty people, as in our times was Chateaubriand in France and between us Garrett, not to mention the alive literates that would be ridiculous to compare to Cicero.⁹

It is also in this chapter that Oliveira Martins chooses to present the longest part of Cicero's characterisation. As typical of this historian when presenting the greatest figures of the Roman Republic, he chose a pivotal moment: in Cicero's case, the candidacy for the consulship in 64 BC. There are some *topoi* previously invoked as "the literate" and "the orderly" (referring to the nineteenth-century liberal Portuguese politicians called "orderly"): "In Rome, he is seen as a fickle political person: such was the reputation of Garrett among us, orderly too, sometimes Setembrist, others Cabralist, in the deep down sceptical and weak" (Martins 1965, II: 234). This characterisation is repeated in the remaining chapters of the work: after the conference of Luca in 56 BC, which extended the informal agreement between Julius Caesar, Pompeius, and Crassus as "Cicero commanded in the Senate [...] finding for all eloquent reasons with his lawyer's idle talk" (Martins 1965, II: 264); about Julius Caesar's successes in Gaul as "Cicero, convinced and converted, was ahead of the enthusiasts, hasty, chanting hyperbolic praises, daily complaining to the Senate new honours to the man who, an already famous orator and politician, revealed himself such a great general, such a gifted writer" (Martins 1965, II: 283); and on Cicero's hesitation when choosing a party at the beginning of the civil war between Caesar and Pompeius in 49 BC as "He changed his mind every day" (Martins 1965, II: 307). In 46–45 BC, he says in a eulogy to Cato the Younger, "Our Cicero, always literate, with the semi-intelligence of our literates, with his absolute lack of character, devoid of vanity, bitten by the abjection to which he knew he had descended, sharpened the quill and threw his perfidious *Cato* against the one at whose feet he had grovelled, sharpening his sayings, confessing that his cheeks were burning with the shame of being a slave" (Martins 1965, II: 375). Finally, in the year 43 BC after the battle of Mutina in which Mark Antony was defeated and the consuls were killed, he says "Rome had no consuls—but had Cicero, who thought of himself as a king and the true winner of Antony. His rhetoric overflowed, and his vanity blinded him [...]" (Martins 1965, II: 399). Now that I have considered Oliveira Martins' image of Cicero, it is time to explore how Roma Torres pictures the Roman orator.

⁹ Martins, *História da República Romana*, II: 194. All translations are my own.

2. Roma Torres and Cicero

Diametrically opposed to this is Antonio Roma Torres' approach (1947). This doctor-psychiatrist and film reviewer at the *Público* newspaper is also the author of several books including the drama, *César e Cícero*. This 2016 work is presented as three independent plays. At the end of each play, the author refers to the sources and bibliography handled when writing the book.

This drama reflects a restoration of Cicero's image in the late twentieth century, which was mainly carried out in an Anglo-Saxon environment. In the bibliography furnished by Roma Torres, we can see some of the apologetic narratives on Cicero, such as the biography by the scholar Elizabeth Rawson, which is a laudatory portrait from an intellectual point of view, or one of Cicero's rare biographies translated into Portuguese by Anthony Everitt, former Secretary-General of the Arts Council of Great Britain, in which the author intends, in his own words, to do "an exercise in rehabilitation", stating that "Many writers from ancient times to the present day have seriously undervalued Cicero's consistency and effectiveness as a politician" (Everitt 2003, X). The first part of *César e Cícero* takes place at the end of 60 BC before the opening of Julius Caesar's consulship in 59 BC when Caesar tries to persuade Cicero to join the so-called "first triumvirate". In this dialogue between Caesar and Cicero, the Cicero's core values are emphasised, such as support for "democracy", political moderation, and a compliment to the prevailing condition of the Roman state—"adult and already firm and robust" (Torres 2016, 9–23). Roma Torres even proceeds, based on book II of *De Re Publica*, to an aetiology of Rome, from Romulus to the decemvirate (Torres 2016, 23–36). Roma Torres' choice to finish this aetiology at the second college of Decemvirs is not innocent. By accentuating the discord that broke out in the Roman Republic as a consequence of the second secession of the plebs which later gave rise to the legend of Virginia and the decemvir Appius Claudius' motif of tyranny, Cicero warns Caesar against the dangers of the future triumvirate: "So, I do not trust in triumvirs, quadrumvirs or decemvirs", he asserts (Torres 2016, 36). The playwright also seeks to emphasise the two proposals for the governance of Rome by the interveners; for Cicero, what "defends the Republic are not men but the structures" (Torres 2016, 61), while for Caesar, "Rarely happens a republic to be well-ordered at its foundation or restored in a different mode from its former order, if it is not ordered or reformed by one single man" (Torres 2016, 68). Later in the First Act, Cicero spells out the theory of the three styles of discourse or *genera dicendi*, presented in the rhetorical treatise *Orator*, to defend moderation in politics, asserting that

the “middle” style is the right one for the Republic (Torres 2016, 70–75). The second part takes place in Brundisium, in September 47 BC, where Caesar, the victor at Pharsalus, who murdered Pompeius by order of Ptolemy XIII, is increasingly close to absolute power in Rome. The dialogue begins with a pessimistic Caesar who is exhausted by the consequences of the civil war—“Was it worth it? With a small soul I see myself again. So many more years, and nothing more. Rome dies” (Torres 2016, 85)—and recalls their previous meeting in the first part of the drama—“A dozen years have passed over our conversation [...], and all of this now seems inevitable. Where had our mistake begun?” (Torres 2016, 86). Cicero, however, welcomes Caesar’s victory with hope and challenges him to restore the Republic: “For your country you have undoubtedly lived little. Stop, I beg, with this wisdom of learned men in despising death. Do not want to be wise to our detriment. It is up to you to restore” (Torres 2016, 94). Shortly thereafter, he points out a series of measures that Caesar should take: “restore the courts, recover financial credit, restrain vices, foster the population”. Finally, the dialogue between the two actors focuses on the questions of divination and rationality—Caesar, a fatalist, has the premonition of the Ides of March and seems to accept this fate, while Cicero defends rationality and recalls that *otium* must be cultivated like Numa Pompilius, the second king of Rome, taught (Torres 2016, 121–23). The third and last part of the work takes place in December 43 BC by the time of Cicero’s death. After the Pyrrhic victory at Mutina and the formation of the triumvirate in November 43 BC, which marked the beginning of the proscriptions, in which Cicero’s head, at the behest of Mark Antony, was at a premium, Cicero, while wandering through Italy, finally arrives in his *villa* at Formiae, where he reflects on his political career and the death of Caesar: “The sword that triumphs, once again, over word and thought” (Torres 2016, 130). Throughout this monologue, Cicero exculpates the actions of Julius Caesar—“Tyranny was in this military step. You did not stop or stop them. For the rest you were just” (Torres 2016, 131)—and finds the symbol of tyranny in the figure of Mark Antony. Roma Torres even attempts in his attribution of blame which is centred almost exclusively on Mark Antony to soften his judgment of Dolabella, Cicero’s former son-in-law and *consul suffectus*, in the year 44—“But Dolabella is a very young man much of him not malevolent” (Torres 2016, 142)—and that of Octavian, Julius Caesar’s adopted son and heir and the future Augustus—“Octavian has shown a divine wisdom and sense of common good” (Torres 2016, 142). Imagining speaking to Caesar, Cicero reflects on the historical reception of his actions—“But in their history I am the loser. The one that hesitated, the one that put the rashes of conscience above practical reason” (Torres 2016,

142)—thereby foreseeing some *loci communes* that were already verified in Oliveira Martins. If the symbol of tyranny is almost completely placed on Mark Antony, then the Stoic idealism of Cato is also the target of severe criticism. Notice how Roma Torres takes on the burden for some of Cicero's less edifying episodes while emphasising his ominous absence in some of the most decisive periods of the late Roman Republic. At the Catiline conspiracy, in the year of the Cicero's consulship, he says "It was Cato who proposed to vote in the Senate on the summary execution of the Catilinarian conspirators. And it was Cato who avoided any postponement" (Torres 2016, 154). It was also Cato who proposed his appointment as governor of Cilicia between 51 and 50 ("And it was Cato again who wanted me out of Rome, Quaestor [sic] in Cilicia") and he continues to blame Cato for the beginning of the civil war between Caesar and Pompeius ("And it was he who avoided Pompeius' retreat and proposed the Senate vote for your dismissal in Gaul [...]") stressing that his council could have deterred Pompeius ("If I had been in Rome, perhaps Pompeius would hear me") (Torres 2016, 154-55). At the end of this act, Cicero compares Antony and Cato as individuals who "balance in the extremes" (Torres 2016, 160). In the end, Caesar and Cicero are *alteri nos* (Torres 2016, 160).

After considering the works of these two authors, let us establish some differences between them with regard to the treatment of Cicero's image.

3. Contrasts between Oliveira Martins and Roma Torres

Oliveira Martins' image of Cicero, taken from Mommsen but equally paralleled with characters from nineteenth-century Portugal, is markedly critical. Notice the proliferation of negative adjectives used while drawing Cicero's portrait: "literate" used in the negative sense as presented by Mommsen (e.g., Martins 1965, II: 194, 232, 234, 238, 397); "vain" (e.g., Martins 1965, II: 234, 240, 243, 375, 399), or "smart Alec" (e.g., Martins 1965, II: 233, 240). In contrast, there is the portrait of Roma Torres in which Caesar praises Cicero's Senate speeches (Torres 2016, 15) and where Cicero's words, unlike the image of the Martinian "lawyer-literate", are able to found "a new State" (Torres 2016, 37) which desires Caesar to emulate Cicero's consulship from 63 BC (Torres 2016, 43). Caesar's admiration for Cicero is portrayed throughout the entire play: "Whom do I admire more than you, Cicero, minded spirit, orator, sage?" (Torres 2016, 63). Even in the second part when the dictator points to the appointments he wants to make in the offices, he makes a wish and, at the same time, confesses an

error: “They will listen to you more than I did. It was perhaps my biggest mistake”. Let us move on to some preliminary conclusions.

4. Conclusions

The two portraits are diametrically opposed portraits marked by different contexts and purposes: Oliveira Martins, who understood Roman history as a “type”, conceives of Cicero as an archetypal character. This character image is repeated in the nineteenth century in Chateaubriand or Thiers and especially in Almeida Garrett and Rodrigo da Fonseca—the orderly, political denomination that the nineteenth-century Portuguese reader knew about and to whom Martins even devotes a sub-chapter in the work *Portugal Contemporâneo* (1881).¹⁰ The purpose is clear: Oliveira Martins invites the reader to think of contemporary Portugal in the light of the Roman *exemplum*. António Roma Torres, in turn, excels in his plays for a near absence of coeval elements, to which an exception is made in the introduction of Part I and the epilogue of Part III. The author proposes a modern setting in the presentation of the first play: “[...] in a modern apartment in the near future. [...] Caesar wears a military uniform and Cicero a suit and a tie” (Torres 2016, 11). In the epilogue, Cicero is murdered not by a Roman *gladius* but instead by “a burst of machine gun fire” (Torres 2016, 160). These small, general features are, in my view, a warning about the constant danger of the militarisation of society without any reference to Portugal or any particular world event. Roma Torres’ continuous reference to the *persona* Cicero and respect for the law, the *otium*, *concordia*, and especially peace intends to capture the dichotomy of *libertas uersus dominatio* for the reader.

5. Epilogue

These are different authors with different purposes and different ambitions. Oliveira Martins, it should be remembered, aimed for political ascent. In the same year that he published the *História da República Romana*, he joined the Partido Progressista. At the same time, between January and April 1885, he had also made a pre-publication of excerpts from that work—it was only published in July—in the *Novidades*, a Portuguese newspaper run by Emídio Navarro, an illustrious member of the Partido Progressista.¹¹ It is also important to remember the “Biblioteca das Ciências Sociais” project.

¹⁰ See Martins, *Portugal Contemporâneo*, II: 119–26.

¹¹ Cf. Valério, “A cultura material,” 262.

Roma Torres, like Oliveira Martins, is an autodidact. Yet, Torres emphasises the laudatory *exempla* of Cicero's political career. He even depicted Caesar and Cicero with similar personalities as both are presented as antagonistic. Still, not everything is different. Both receptions of Cicero seek, via this "paradoxical Cicero", to examine Cicero as the "lawyer-literate" portrayed by Martins and the hero of freedom and martyr of the Roman Republic portrayed by Roma Torres—the hero and the antihero which are used as figures of instruction to the contemporary world.

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