

Eutropiana Books

Between Objects and Reading Practices
of a Black Intellectual in Post-Abolition Brazil

Os livros da *Eutropiana*

Entre objetos e práticas de leitura
de um intelectual negro no pós-abolição

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ABSTRACT This article examines the private library of José Eutrópio (1886-1929), which contains 410 volumes, including books, magazines, dictionaries, catalogues, sheet music, records, and film reels. a black man with a law degree, he dedicated himself to teaching and journalism. The analysis of this collection provides valuable insights into black intellectual thought during the post-abolition period, highlighting traits of the owner's personality, interests, and preferences, as well as reading patterns and choices of works and authors. This research aids in understanding the production, circulation, and consumption of literate cultures in the early twentieth century. From a methodological standpoint, the article is based on José Eutrópio's inventory and his intellectual output – chronicles, opinion pieces, and critical articles published in the press. Ultimately, studying this private library presents a historiographical opportunity to explore the reading practices of a generation of black

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intellectuals who were educated and politically active between the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries in post-abolition Brazil.

KEYWORDS private book ownership, reading practices, post-abolition

RESUMO O artigo investiga a biblioteca de José Eutrópio (1886-1929), composta por 410 volumes entre livros, revistas, dicionários, catálogos, partituras, discos e fitas de cinema. Homem negro, formado em Direito, dedicou-se ao magistério, jornalismo e teatro de revista em Juiz de Fora, Minas Gerais. Inspirado na *Limana*, expressão cunhada por Lima Barreto, denomina-se *Eutropiana* a biblioteca, o consumo de livros e as práticas de leitura elaboradas por José Eutrópio. A análise desse acervo oferece perspectivas de estudo para a história do pensamento intelectual negro no pós-abolição, pois revela traços da personalidade do proprietário, seus interesses e preferências, além de padrões de leitura e consumo de obras e autores. A pesquisa contribui para compreender os mecanismos de produção, circulação e consumo das culturas letradas no início do século XX. Metodologicamente, o artigo baseia-se no inventário *post-mortem* de José Eutrópio e em sua produção intelectual – crônicas, artigos de opinião e crítica publicados na imprensa. Por fim, o estudo da *Eutropiana* representa uma oportunidade historiográfica para investigar práticas de leitura de uma geração de intelectuais negros que se formou e atuou politicamente entre o final do século XIX e as primeiras décadas do século XX, no contexto do pós-abolição no Brasil.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE posse privada de livros, práticas de leitura, pós-abolição

INTRODUCTION

José Eutrópio (1886-1929) died on 21 June 1929. He was a Black man with a law degree who worked as a teacher, school inspector, journalist, and playwright in Juiz de Fora, Minas Gerais. His post-mortem inventory revealed that he owned a private library of 410 volumes, including books, magazines, sheet music, and catalogues—an important collection

for a Black intellectual active in the post-abolition period. The analysis of his library, here referred to as *Eutropiana*, offers a unique opportunity to understand reading habits, literary socialising, and cultural mediation by Black intellectuals in the early 20th century. The name *Eutropiana* was inspired by Lima Barreto, who named his own library *Limana*. Unlike the famous author from Rio de Janeiro, José Eutrópio did not give his collection a name. I deliberately adopt this term as a heuristic device: it is an interpretative category created to illuminate the political and cultural dimensions of José Eutrópio's library, without attempting to entirely replicate the conditions of its formation or the subjective meaning of the '*Limana*'. Consequently, rather than a direct comparison, the concept acts as an analytical key that helps us explore book ownership, reading practices, and the experiences of Black intellectuals in the post-abolition era.

The article posits that José Eutrópio's library should not be viewed solely as a physical collection of books but rather as a space for constructing an intellectual framework shaped by the movement of ideas and a specific form of political involvement. Consequently, I intend to pursue three interconnected aims: analysing the library's material makeup based on its post-mortem inventory, considering its possibilities and limitations as a resource; examining the reading practices and cultural appropriation associated with this collection, alongside José Eutrópio's intellectual output; and recognising the *Eutropiana* as a symbolic representation of black thought networks, thereby emphasising how the inclusion of works by black authors was connected to initiatives opposing racial hierarchies in the post-abolition period.

From a methodological perspective, this study combines *post-mortem* inventory analysis – a document prepared within the legal framework of asset distribution – with an exploration of texts produced by José Eutrópio himself. This analysis enables us not only describe the collection but also to examine its social, political, and cultural significance. Throughout this article, I argue that *Eutropiana* should be understood as a space for cultural mediation, reflecting both the restrictions and possibilities imposed by a racialised society and the political

projects of an engaged black intellectual. In this way, I aim to reflect on the patterns and practices of reading, as well as the mechanisms of production, circulation, and consumption within the literate cultures of a black intellectual in the early 20th century.

**THE POST-MORTEM INVENTORY BELONGED
TO A BLACK MAN WHO WAS “CULTURED, FORTUNATE,
AND A LOVER OF GOOD CULTURE”**

A few months after José Eutrópio's death in April 1930, the board of directors of the Minas Gerais Press Association, of which he had been one of the founders at the start of the previous decade, announced in the Juiz de Fora press a plan to create a sculpture in his honour. At that time, journalist Gilberto de Alencar (1886-1961), one of his closest friends, described him as a 'cultured, fortunate man and lover of good culture' and, for this reason, one who deserved a "*tribute to his memory*".¹ However, the project never came to fruition. This statement was added to other comments that made up the list of justifications for the tribute project to José Eutrópio. They recognised him as one of their own intellectual peers, a schooled man who worked in prestigious professions such as teaching and journalism. In addition, he was financially well-off and an exponent of a certain type of elite culture, at least in symbolic terms.²

The analysis of post-mortem inventories of individuals such as José Eutrópio can offer insights into the material living conditions of individuals and families from the Black community who developed

1 TRIBUTE, Jornal do Comércio newspaper, Juiz de Fora, 10 April; 1930, p. 2.

2 Maraliz de Castro Vieira Christo (1994) developed a compelling argument about the political behaviour of José Eutrópio's contemporary intellectuals from Juiz de Fora. According to her, these were impoverished individuals from the urban middle classes who, to enter and participate in the cultural production labour market, resorted to their status as educated, literate men with intellectual capital as a strategy for social mobility. Nevertheless, her study was limited to analysing the trajectories of white men. Thus, racial markers did not appear in her analysis as elements that could influence the development of social and political hierarchies and inequalities experienced among the intellectual establishment in Juiz de Fora in the early 20th century.

different strategies for social advancement. Simultaneously, they were both participants in and consumers of various models of capital consumption, which were expanding in Brazil at the beginning of the 20th century. Furthermore, regarding the type, format, and purpose of the post-mortem inventory as a legal document, it is challenging to establish parameters for concepts such as ‘elite,’ ‘middle class,’ or even precise definitions of wealth and poverty in the early 20th century. This requires a comprehensive historiographical analysis based on the comparison and joint study of various inventories and/or wills (Silveira, 2023). Aware of these limitations, it was not my intention to conduct a serial approach to the social and class status of individuals or groups of Black people in the post-abolition period, based on the study of *post-mortem* inventories. Rather, I sought to highlight the possibilities that the description of a black man’s estate, contained in this type of judicial document, can offer as a guide to understanding the broader universe of black experiences in the early 20th century. From this perspective, it is possible to examine both the opportunities and obstacles to social advancement in a society marked by racial hierarchies and inequalities, in which the overwhelming majority of Black people lived on the tenuous border between precarious material survival and poverty.

Several studies have highlighted the relevance of *post-mortem* inventories as a useful source for the study of material culture. This type of document provides insight not only into economic heritage but also into the lifestyles of different strata within the population. In José Eutrópio’s case, it was no different. Like so many others drawn up in the registry offices, his inventory “referred not only to the list of assets contained in a partition process, but also to the legal process as a whole, which recorded in writing the acts necessary to divide the assets among the heirs” (Furtado, 2009, p. 103). Accordingly, the document consists of the “opening statement, valuation of assets, supporting documents (appendices) with valuation of active and passive debts, and division of assets” (Teixeira, 2012, p. 65).

José Eutrópio’s post-mortem inventory helps us understand the connection between urbanisation processes and shifts in consumption

habits – seen here as a social process – among Black populations in the early 20th century. José Eutrópio was private about his personal life and rarely mentioned his family in his writings. Therefore, he created and circulated narratives throughout his life that attributed his social “position” and “status” solely to his own merit and talents, which mostly came from his work as a teacher, journalist, and revue theatre writer. However, he did not come from a poor or underprivileged family. His education, including time at elite schools and higher studies at traditional law faculties, indicates that he enjoyed a prosperous financial standing (Ribeiro, 2024).

Whether combined or not, these elements may have contributed to José Eutrópio’s accumulation of wealth throughout his life. At the time of his death, he enjoyed considerable material wealth. His residence was situated on *Marechal Deodoro* Street, one of the main thoroughfares in Juiz de Fora. Daniel Moratori (2017) noted that this street was traditionally dedicated to commerce, but also housed numerous private residences, including townhouses and mansions, especially in its upper part, near Halfeld Park. José Eutrópio had lived at number 482 since at least the early 1920s. It was not his own property, but a property rented for the significant sum of 250\$000 (two hundred and fifty thousand réis) per month.³ It was a spacious single-storey house, comprising a living room, an alcove, a study (library), a hallway, two bedrooms, a bathroom, a latrine, a kitchen with running water, and a walled garden. Despite these comforts, he may have suffered from the frequent flooding of the *Paraibuna* River, which affected the region in the early 20th century, as did other residents and merchants who lived on the ground floor of *Marechal Deodoro* Street. (Moratori, 2017).

Amid such adversities – or despite them – José Eutrópio’s post-mortem inventory reveals a refined domestic style, shown by the

3 This and the other descriptions that follow of the items in José Eutrópio’s estate are in the ARQUIVO HISTÓRICO DE JUIZ DE FORA [HISTORICAL ARCHIVE OF JUIZ DE FORA-AHJF], Juiz de Fora. José Eutrópio’s inventory, 29 June 1929. Box 1, folder 6, 51 pages, unnumbered (n. p.).

ownership of a set of furniture considered, according to the consumption patterns of the time, as sophisticated and luxurious (Barbuy, 2006; Deaecto, 2002; Needel, 1993). The rooms of his residence were furnished with *macauba* wood cabinets, upholstered furniture for the living room, a piano, a record player, a gramophone, a mirror, a desk, bookshelves, a *peroba* wood table and chairs, a clock, an oak sideboard and dish rack, porcelain tableware, an iron stove, and a washbasin. However, it is worth noting that these records represent José Eutrópio's material assets at a specific moment in time: his death in mid-1929. Therefore, considering the particularities inherent to this type of document, the inventoried estate may not have corresponded to the entirety of his assets. Furthermore, it is reasonable to assume that José Eutrópio accumulated – and also disposed of – other assets throughout his life. Consequently, these assets were not included in his post-mortem inventory.

Regardless, the material wealth accumulated by José Eutrópio, at least as recorded at the time of his death, presents, despite numerous limitations, empirical opportunities and perspectives for analysing class relations, race, social mobility, and the processes of wealth accumulation and distribution among Black individuals and families in the post-abolition period. The aim of this article is not to study the so-called black “elite” or the multiple meanings this political concept might have held in the lives of men and women who amassed significant material wealth in the early decades of the 20th century. Instead, it seeks to encourage research into the diverse experiences that shaped the different lives of Black people who achieved better material living conditions in a political context where racial markers (colour, ethnic-racial status) were fundamental to defining class standards and notions of material consumption in Brazilian society, wherein the social progress of Black individuals was intertwined with a form of political commitment to the ideology of whiteness.⁴

4 Studies on Black individuals and families with financial wealth in the post-abolition period remain scarce in Brazilian historiography, especially those analysing the processes of wealth accumulation and distribution, as well as the meanings attributed to this type of material

Although José Eutrópio's financial situation was "exceptional" – mainly when compared to the experiences of the poor black population in Juiz de Fora in the early 20th century, for instance (Batista, 2006; Guimarães, 2006) – the study of his life offers insights into "exceptional-normal" black histories (Grendi, 2009). The biographies reflect experiences of wealth, occupation, mobility and recognition of social status. Accordingly, when analysing the trajectories of black individuals and families who accumulated significant material and symbolic wealth in Porto Alegre (RS) after abolition, Melina Perussatto (2018, p. 30) proposed using the analytical category of the "educated class of the race". Notably, she highlighted the heuristic potential of this framework to examine "the specificities of social mobility processes and internal differentiation among strata of Black populations, using race as a point of reference." Furthermore, according to the author:

Black individuals and families were not 'left to fend for themselves' in the post-abolition era, nor did those who achieved social mobility do so by imitating so-called white standards. Despite the adversities faced in a society structured along colour and race lines, Black individuals and families managed their lives in freedom, however limited their options might have been or seemed to be, and shared their perspectives on the turbulent historical process between the mid-19th century and the early decades of the 20th century (Perussatto, 2018, p. 178).

wealth within a society structured by class and racial inequalities. However, there are some exceptions in studies dedicated to wealthy Black figures in the 19th century, such as Grinberg (2002), Parés (2024), and Reis (2016). For the specific post-abolition period, the works of Gonçalves (2023), Moreira (2014), Perussatto (2018), and Woodard (2014), among others, are noteworthy. Additionally, the collection of letters and diaries of engineer and abolitionist André Rebouças (1838-1898), recently organised by Mattos (2022, 2024, 2025), offers useful insights into the experience of a wealthy Black man (and his family) throughout much of the 19th century. In the field of race relations sociology, it is also worth mentioning the classic study by Azevedo (1955) on the social rise of Black families in Bahia during the first half of the 20th century, as well as more recent works by Figueiredo (2002) and Rios (2014).\\

Amid the various social mobility and advancement projects undertaken by segments of the Black population in the post-abolition era – particularly those who accumulated significant material wealth – formal education emerged as a form of cultural capital that was eagerly sought after. This pursuit provided not only status but also financial and symbolic benefits. From this perspective, owning books extended beyond the aesthetic aspect associated with a specific culture of consumption common in the early 20th century. It also served as a kind of ‘certificate’ of social progress and standing (Almeida, 2018).

These markers enable us to understand how displays of racial prejudice – such as racism – influenced the lives of these individuals. Their ways of perceiving the world and reconstructing it from relatively privileged economic positions were largely shaped by these markers. These experiences help reveal the configurations assumed by racism as a political practice and as a pattern of social behaviour. They also demonstrate how these dimensions affected, in various but interconnected ways, the broad and diverse segments of the Black population. This approach to historiography has the potential to expand the debate on the historicity of the social construction of racism in post-abolition Brazilian society.

The cultural similarities shared by affluent black individuals and families may have become markers of class identity. These markers can help us understand how forms of racial discrimination, such as racism, affected these individuals, largely shaping their ways of perceiving the world and reimagining it from relatively privileged economic positions.

To contribute to discussions in this area, but understanding that José Eutrópio’s experience provides only general and thus limited conjectures. I believe that analysing his post-mortem inventory, particularly his library, can yield insights to advance the debate on black individuals who accrued some form of wealth. These trajectories illustrate how such individuals navigated dimensions of class and race, which serve as markers around the development of processes that produce differences, as well as inclusion and exclusion mechanisms in post-abolition Brazilian society.

EUTROPIANA'S BOOKS

To reflect on reading patterns and practices, as well as the production, circulation, and consumption mechanisms of literate cultures experienced by José Eutrópio in the early 20th century, I use the category of Black intellectual as a theoretical, conceptual, and epistemic resource to examine his biography and some features of his private library. As stated by Matheus Gato:

For an analysis focused on understanding the development of Black intellectuals, the methodological requirement is to identify, on a case-by-case basis, the constraints and privileges involved in exercising the “intellectual function” and, among these, the importance or unimportance of race [...]. In racialised societies historically shaped by slavery and colonialism, where the circulation of economic and symbolic capital establishes the existence and hierarchy among colour groups, the practices described as intellectual and the forms of social distinction they create are also evaluated in relation to the racial hierarchy (Gato, 2023, pp. 187-188).

My goal was to understand how José Eutrópio read and appropriated texts, to grasp the intellectual concepts that shaped his library and, consequently, his models of political behaviour in public debate. This is a challenging and bold aim, given the difficulty of fully understanding the diverse subjectivities involved in acquiring, collecting, organising, reading, and experiencing a private library and its objects. In reality, José Eutrópio's *post-mortem* inventory provided information about his library, but not about the meanings this collection of books held for him, especially regarding the emotional and symbolic aspects of this relationship. Therefore, the potential for research on private book ownership is vast. Nonetheless, since studying private libraries can facilitate historical analyses of specific personality traits of their owners, I concluded that

the *Eutropiana* could offer valuable insights for reflecting on aspects of José Eutrópio's life, particularly his intellectual development.

Private libraries are a valuable area of study, as they can provide insights into the intellectual profile of their owners and the mindset of a specific era (Ferreira, 1999; Silva, 2002; Silva, 2014). From this perspective, I believe the *Eutropiana* collection enables us to trace the reading practices of a prominent figure among the generation of black intellectuals who emerged between the last decade of the 19th century and the early 20th century. This generation was part of the post-abolition period, marked by intense racialisation of social relations and the proliferation of various forms of prohibition that hindered Black people from experiencing the fullness of their humanity (Santos; Nascimento, 2023).

The historiography of libraries, especially private ones, and reading practices has opened up valuable avenues for exploring the social, political, economic, and cultural dynamics of various periods (see, among others, Darnton, 1987; Chartier, 1994). Private libraries offer countless clues about the lives of those who assembled them. Although not all of the books collected were necessarily read, they enable us to create reader profiles and better understand reading habits. According to Robert Darnton:

A private library catalogue may reflect a reader's profile, even if we do not read all the books we own, and read many books we will never purchase. To peruse a private library catalogue is to scrutinise the contents of its owner's mind and connect the "what" with the "who" of reading (Darnton, 1990, p. 151).

In line with these thoughts, I conducted a historiographical analysis aimed at understanding the connection between José Eutrópio's books and his intellectual work, both as a reader and as a producer of symbolic goods and cultural mediator (Gomes; Hansen, 2016), considering how the "orthodoxy of texts" relates to the "diversity of readings," as Roger Chartier (1990) put it. In this framework, José Eutrópio's

library is a great place to start. Its *post-mortem* inventory offers a rare opportunity to access the material contours of this universe of readings and to understand how cultural consumption practices and intellectual production were articulated.

‘It has a library comprising 410 items, including 390 bound books and brochures, for studies in law, education, art, and literature.’ This is how José Eutrópio’s library was described in the post-mortem inventory by Ormino Maia, clerk of the 3rd Notary Office, based on the assessment of Sebastião Augusto Gomes, then judicial assessor of the First Court of the District of Juiz de Fora. In this notarised document, the books were not fully inventoried. Whether through carelessness or unexplained criteria, those responsible for assessing the assets paid little attention to the bibliographic collection, which was ultimately recorded in an inaccurate and imprecise manner. Information on authorship, title, location, publisher, and date of publication appears incomplete, fragmented, or vague. Often, only the author’s name is recorded; in other cases, only the title, frequently noted incompletely. Gaps in the post-mortem inventory suggest that part of the library may have circulated outside the formal record of the document, whether through loans, donations, or informal sharing. Although described in a fragmentary manner, reference to more than 300 books indicates a sizeable collection. Ownership of such a collection could signal social distinction in a context where access to this type of cultural asset was restricted, especially among poor populations in the early 20th century.

Evidence indicates that Joseph Eutropius did not keep a catalogue of his library, which would have simplified the tasks of the judicial assessor and clerk. In fulfilling their bureaucratic duties, court officials compiled a disorderly list in which the books were not classified according to any organisational criteria, such as genre, subject or authorship. Moreover, only the total value of the library was recorded in relation to the other estate assets, without specific details of individual item prices. *Eutropiana*’s books were valued at 600,000\$ (six hundred thousand *réis*),

a substantial amount compared to the values allocated to other items in the *post-mortem* inventory.⁵

Some of the most highly valued items in José Eutrópio's estate were arranged in a room of the house described in the post-mortem inventory as a "cabinet" where the *Eutropiana* was located. It is possible that the books, in addition to "magazines, statistics, bookshop catalogues and piano score catalogues," were organised on the "eight bookshelves" or stored on the "desk with bookshelf." The "Victor brand orthophonic record player" probably harmonised the environment, designed not only for professional duties but also for moments of leisure. Completing the composition of the space were a 'Victor gramophone' and 'nine film reels,' possibly arranged on the various shelves in the cabinet.⁶ The existence of a space set aside for reading, revealingly named a cabinet, with bookshelves, a desk, and other objects typical of a library, indicates not only intellectual habits but also the incorporation of standards of comfort and distinction characteristic of the consumer culture of the middle and upper classes of the time (Deaecto, 2002).

Given the limitations of José Eutrópio's posthumous inventory, which made it difficult to categorise his books accurately, I chose to create a thematic division that is admittedly arbitrary and somewhat contrived. My aim was not to produce a bibliographic classification but to develop a 'catalogue of reading intentions,' as defined by Almeida

5 To get an idea of what this amount represented in 1929, in terms of the local economic reality, in December 1928, *Correio de Minas* reported, in the section titled "Acquired Properties" that "Mr. José Gomes da Silva purchased for 600\$000 from Mr. Sebastião Hermógenes de Carvalho a plot of land measuring 10 metres wide by 40 metres deep, on Maria Perpétua Street" in the Botanágua neighbourhood, then a peripheral region of Juiz de Fora. PROPERTY ACQUISITIONS, *Correio de Minas*, Juiz de Fora, 10 Dec. 1928, p. 1. The *Jornal do Comércio*, in turn, noted that in January 1929, a "clerk from the 4th Military Region [headquartered in Juiz de Fora] received a monthly salary of 600\$000." ATOS OFICIAIS [OFFICIAL ACTS], *Jornal do Comércio*, Juiz de Fora, 25 jan., 1929, p. 1.

6 In addition to money in a checking account at *Banco de Crédito Real de Minas Gerais*, precious objects such as "a gold-rimmed class ring" and a Schiedmayer & Soehne piano, the other most valuable items in the estate were a Victor record player and a Victor gramophone. So far, everything in: AHJF. Inventory of José Eutrópio, 1929, n. p.

(2018, p. 70). Analysis of the inventory, alongside other records of José Eutrópio's intellectual output, suggests that the accumulation of books did not necessarily equate to active reading practices. It is reasonable to assume that not everything in the *Eutropiana* was actually read. Similarly, it can be said that his education as a reader also occurred through access to works not listed in his library, either because they were not recorded in the post-mortem inventory or because they circulated in other spaces.

Manuel Raymundo Querino's works (1851–1923) exemplify this. He was a black intellectual and one of the founders of modern Afro-Bahian anthropology, gaining prominence in studies on folklore and popular culture in the early 20th century. José Eutrópio published a political chronicle in *Correio de Minas* in 1925, discussing efforts to develop a scholarly understanding of a specific conception of African history, closely engaging with the ideas presented in “O colono preto como fator da civilização brasileira” [The Black Settler as a Factor in Brazilian Civilisation], originally published in *Anais do 6º Congresso Brasileiro de Geografia* [Annals of the 6th Brazilian Geography Congress] in 1918.⁷ However, neither this text nor any other works by Manuel Querino appeared in José Eutrópio's *post-mortem* inventory. In attempting to classify *Eutropiana*'s works, I examined the subtle boundaries between the acquisition and consumption of books, such as the distinction between copies possibly obtained to meet professional requirements and those connected to José Eutrópio's personal interests. In the following chart, the topic “Social Studies”, which contains the largest number of books, informally includes a variety of authors and works on Sociology, Politics, Geography, the History of Literature, the History of Theatre, and, particularly, Political Economy. Of the 111 books assigned to this theme, 11 belong to the field of Political Economy and were possibly related to one of José Eutrópio's professional activities.

7 EUTRÓPIO, José. Uma lição de História Pátria [A Lesson in National History], *Correio de Minas*, Juiz de Fora, March 15, 1925, p. 2; March 17, 1925, p. 2.

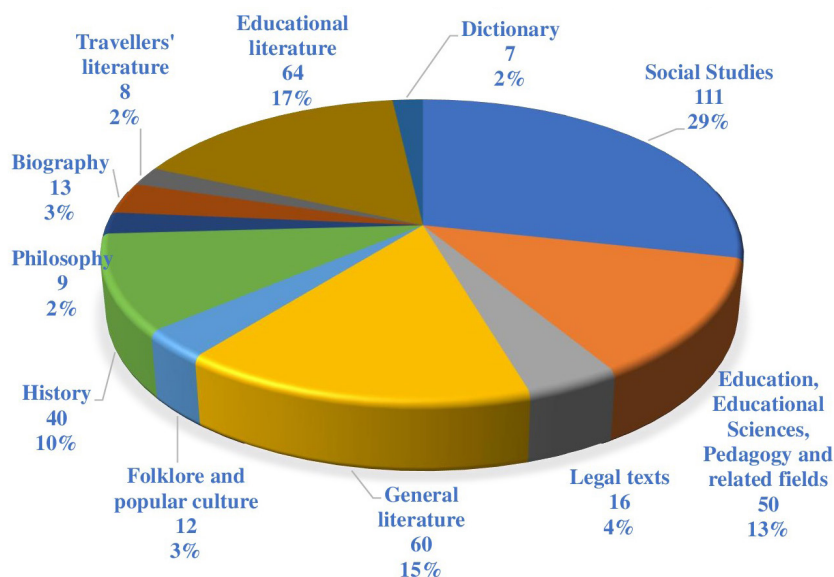
He taught Political Economy at the Juiz de Fora School of Engineering between 1918 and the mid-1920s.⁸ There are no specific records of his work in this teaching field but his classes were likely prepared and taught based on original readings and interpretations of classics of political economy, such as *Economia política, finanças e contabilidade* [Political Economy, Finance and Accounting] (1918) and *Direito Administrativo Brasileiro* [Brazilian Administrative Law] (1923), both by Aarão Leal de Carvalho Reis; *Curso Didático de Economia Política ou Ciência do Valor* [Didactic Course in Political Economy or the Science of Value] (1913), by Joaquim José Vieira de Carvalho; and *Elements of Political Economy* (1821), by James Mill.⁹ Although this bibliography is considered classic in the subject's teaching (Cosentino, 2019), it is reasonable to assume that José Eutrópio left his intellectual mark on the course, especially considering his reflections on racial issues in early 20th-century Brazil, as will be discussed below.

Still on the subject of *Eutropiana's* thematic “classification”, the topics with the largest volume of books – “General literature”, “Educational literature (textbooks, compendiums, primers)”, ‘Education, Educational Sciences, Pedagogy and related fields’ and ‘History’ – present relevant elements for composing the reader profile, as well as the consumption and reading practices of José Eutrópio. Concerning ‘General Literature,’ which includes novels, short stories, poetry and poems, there is a notable presence of black authors, such as Luiz Gama, Machado de Assis, Cruz e Souza, Lima Barreto and Mário de Andrade. The

8 Founded in 1914, the *Escola de Engenharia* [School of Engineering] in Juiz de Fora was part of the educational complex of the *Academia de Comércio* [Academy of Commerce] (1884), which in turn was maintained by the *Congregação do Verbo Divino*. In addition to higher education courses in engineering and commercial sciences, the academy offered a commercial (vocational) course in bookkeeping. For more information on the history of these educational establishments, see: Wilson de Lima Bastos (1982), José Vicente César (1991), Maraliz de Castro Vieira Christo (1994, pp. 69-100) and Dalva Yazbeck (1999, pp. 42-54 and 67-73).

9 AHJF. Inventory of José Eutrópio, 1929, n. p. As mentioned earlier, references to books in the *post-mortem* inventory are fragmented and incomplete. For these works, there is no information on publication dates, which is why I have indicated the year of the first edition. For James Mill's book, only the title is given, with no other specifications.

Chart 1: Thematic composition of Eutropiana books (390 items)



Source: AHJF. Inventory of José Eutrópio, 1929, n.p.

significant presence of these authors in Eutropiana can be interpreted as an indication of the intellectual and affective strategies mobilised by José Eutrópio in building a career as a black intellectual, whose references dialogued with a literary and political tradition marked by criticism of the organisation of Brazilian society, based on racial hierarchies. This characteristic will be analysed in more detail in the next section. Nevertheless, I would like to highlight José Eutrópio's fondness for and curiosity towards a wide and diverse range of literature, as well as the role of his library as a place of leisure, beyond a space dedicated exclusively to books related to teacher training or legal studies.

The last three topics with the highest volume of books reflect José Eutrópio's work in teacher training, both at the teacher training college and in secondary education. At the Escola Normal Santa Cruz in Juiz de Fora, he taught from 1915 onwards for almost a decade, lecturing on Practical Pedagogy and School Organisation. At the secondary level, he regularly taught Brazilian History, Universal History and General

History at the Academia de Comércio between 1915 and the end of the 1920s. In these fields, José Eutróprio developed educational thinking on didactics and other teaching methodologies, as well as on school History. This intellectual work was certainly influenced by authors and works grouped under the term ‘Educational Sciences,’ among which Carneiro Leão, Manoel Bomfim, Camilo Passalacqua, and Jean Baptiste Daligault stand out, names most cited by José Eutróprio in his texts published in the press.

In addition to owning school History books as part of his duties as a teacher of that subject, José Eutróprio received many other copies as gifts after he became rapporteur for the *Conselho Superior de Instrução Pública* [Superior Council of Public Instruction], a centralised administrative body of the Government of Minas Gerais, linked to the Secretariat of the Interior. Appointed in October 1919, he joined this section of the *Inspeção Geral de Instrução* [General Inspectorate of Education] due to his role as regional education inspector. Among the duties of the members of the Superior Council were to “issue opinions on compendiums and teaching aids” and “organise the list of compendiums approved for public education, as well as the books to be adopted in each of the four years of primary school”.¹⁰

In this activity, José Eutróprio served as rapporteur for the Commission on Compendiums of National History between 1919 and 1922. Even after leaving this position, he continued to receive educational works from some authors in this publishing universe as gifts. He even published brief comments in the press about some of them. He received from Carlos Góes, his friend and colleague on the *Conselho Superior de Instrução* [Superior Council of Education], the first edition of *Pontos de Instrução Moral e Cívica* [Points of Moral and Civic Instruction], intended for teaching history in primary schools. In an affectionate tone, “with much friendship and admiration,” José Eutróprio “thanked

10 MINAS GERAIS. *Coleção das Leis e Decretos do Estado de Minas Gerais* [Collection of Laws and Decrees of the State of Minas Gerais] in 1911. Belo Horizonte: *Imprensa Oficial do Estado de Minas Gerais* [Official Press of the State of Minas Gerais], 1911, pp. 175-176.

him for the courtesy with which he was honoured with the exquisite book.¹¹ As early as 1925, he used the press to record the receipt of the second edition of Rocha Pombo's school textbook *Nossa Pátria* (1917), stating that he was "grateful for the book, with testimony of recognition and affectionate feelings."¹²

I followed the lessons of Vivian Nani Ayres (2018) to prioritise understanding the ways books were possibly appropriated and mobilised for certain purposes, rather than defining how they were read and assimilated. This does not mean, however, that José Eutrópio's reading habits were not influenced by the cultural context of the time, but also by his purchasing power. According to Marisa Midori Deaecto (2019, p. 348), "private libraries are the result of subjective choices, as they are the fruit of the consumption possibilities of an era, both financial, considering that books were not accessible to anyone interested, and in terms of access, in view of the development of the book trade".

José Eutrópio was an intellectual deeply involved in what was then called the 'world of letters' in the early 20th century. In this context, it is certain that he also participated, at least as a consumer and reader, in the book trade network of Juiz de Fora during that period. Between 1915 and 1930, the book trade in Juiz de Fora had six bookshops, some of which specialised in specific segments, like Livraria Bulcão, on Halfeld Street, which, in an advertisement from 1922, claimed to have "a large assortment of books for primary, secondary and higher education, which it sells at very low prices."¹³

Livraria Sampaio, also located on Halfeld Street, was in the business of "buying and selling new and used books," as it advertised in the press. Its ads stated that the establishment "bought libraries and individual books" and provided a "complete assortment of school books, Literature, Science, and Law books."¹⁴ There were also other 'book circuits'

11 *PUBLICAÇÕES*, Minas Geraes, Belo Horizonte, 18 December 1922, p. 4.

12 *IMPRESSOS*, *Correio de Minas*, Juiz de Fora, 25 November, 1925, p. 1.

13 *LIVRARIA BULCÃO*, *O Pharol*, Juiz de Fora, 23 December, 1922, p. 2.

14 *LIVRARIA SAMPAIO*, *O Pharol*, Juiz de Fora, 9 January 1924, p. 2. *Livraria Sampaio* served

(Deaecto, 2019, p. 28) present in Juiz de Fora in the early 20th century, such as the sale of books in non-specialised commercial establishments or printing shops. The *Sociedade Propagadora de Letras e Artes* [Society for the Promotion of Letters and Arts], also based on Halfeld Street, was dedicated to the trade of “stationery shop, printing shop, small bazaar and bookshop.”¹⁵ The *O Pharol* printing workshop, also located on the same street, was also part of this book trade. Throughout 1926, its advertisements informed that copies of the *Enciclopédia Tesouro da Juventude* (Youth Treasure Encyclopaedia) could be purchased at its headquarters.¹⁶

Although there is not enough space here to adequately address the economic and cultural relations between book circuits and the diverse population of Juiz de Fora, it is important to note that, at the beginning of the 20th century, and certainly in earlier periods as well, there were various forms of book circulation in the city, which implied a variety of reading practices experienced by different social groups. The book circuits in Juiz de Fora consisted of distinguished spaces of sociability linked to reading practices. Alongside bookshops, this universe included the *Sociedade Maçônica Fidelidade Mineira* [Masonic Society Loyalty of Minas Gerais], the *Confeitaria Rio de Janeiro* [Rio de Janeiro Confectionery] and the *Charutaria Campos* [Campos Cigar Shop], all located on Halfeld Street. Maraliz de Castro Vieira Christo (1994) and Ana Lúcia Fiorot de Souza (2005) identified these spaces as cultural meeting points for the intellectuals of Juiz de Fora. Halfeld Street itself, where most of the bookshops and other similar establishments were

as a second-hand bookshop for a long time. For example, the press reported in 1916 that its owners had acquired Professor Belmiro Braga's library, consisting of “over a thousand volumes by the best authors of Portuguese, French, English and Brazilian literature,” and that they were “selling them at exceptional prices.” *LIVRARIA SAMPAIO, O Pharol*, Juiz de Fora, 14 April 1916, p. 1. Márcia Delgado (1999) conducted a useful study on the history of second-hand bookshops in Belo Horizonte throughout the 20th century.

15 *SOCIEDADE PROPAGADORA DE LETRAS E ARTES, O Pharol*, Juiz de Fora, 15 January 1924, p. 2.

16 *ENCICLOPÉDIA TESOIRO DA JUVENTUDE, Pharol*, Juiz de Fora, 8 February 1926, p. 2.

concentrated, can be interpreted as a space for expression and production within this book circuit.

However, this world of books and reading practices was not restricted to a certain intellectual elite, nor to the world of literate people or those who, at least, had mastered the basic rules of reading and writing. There were certainly countless opportunities to experience and interact with the book circles in Juiz de Fora.¹⁷ In this scenario, booksellers and street vendors, in addition to traditional bookstores, competed for customers by advertising books of various types and formats at low prices, particularly during the city's religious festivals.¹⁸ During the celebration of *Santo Antônio* [Saint Anthony] in July 1924, the press reported that the "festival had both religious and recreational elements, with travelling booksellers, a fair, stalls and a large tombola."¹⁹ The same occurred at the *Festa de Nossa Senhora das Graças* [Feast of Our Lady of Grace] in 1925, whose organisers announced in the press that booksellers would be among the attractions at the festival.²⁰

CONCLUSIONS: THE LAST BOOK FOR *EUTROPIANA*

Revisiting the analytical framework outlined throughout this article, the final reflections focus on the notion of the black intellectual as a concept that allows us to understand the broader meaning of José Eutrópio's library and his role as a reader and agent of cultural mediation. Among the debts left by him and settled by his executors and heirs was the purchase of a book, possibly the last one he acquired for the *Eutropiana*

17 The *Biblioteca Pública Municipal de Juiz de Fora* (Juiz de Fora Municipal Public Library), founded in 1897 and established in the 1920s in Halfeld Park, can be understood as part of a diverse circuit of book circulation and reading practices in the city.

18 For more information on street booksellers in Rio de Janeiro in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, see the study by Alessandra El Far (2005).

19 *FESTA DE SANTO ANTÔNIO* (Feast of Saint Anthony), *Correio de Minas*, Juiz de Fora, 13 June 1924, p. 2.

20 *FESTA DE N. S. DAS GRAÇAS* (Feast of Our Lady of Grace), *O Pharol*, Juiz de Fora, 7 June 1925, p. 2.

collection. A payment receipt, issued in August 1929 by Casa Crashley & Co., a bookshop specialising in the import of foreign books, printed matter, newspapers and magazines, based in Rio de Janeiro (Machado, 2012), stated that the copy ordered from Livraria Aillaud Bertrand, in Lisbon, Portugal, would arrive in a few weeks.²¹ The book *O preto do Charleston* (1929), written by Mário José Domingues (1899-1977), a journalist and historian from São Tomé living in Portugal, was acquired for the impressive sum of 95\$000 (ninety-five thousand *contos de réis*).

Studies on the life and work of Mário Domingues suggest that the writing of this fictional prose narrative was influenced by the political tendencies of Pan-Africanist modernism in the transnational circuit of Black modernity in the 1920s, of which the author was one of the leading figures (Beleza, 2024; Domingues, 2022; Garcia, 2022; Pereira, 2023). *O Preto do Charleston* tells the story of a young Angolan emigrant who, in the 1890s, after living in the United States, takes up residence in Lisbon (Portugal), where he begins to work as a dancer and promoter of Afro-diasporic musical culture, such as the Charleston and other similar genres. José Eutrópio became deeply involved in this transnational universe of black modernism. I believe that his interest in this specific work by Mário Domingues was related to his work in revue theatre.

I previously studied José Eutrópio's intellectual output in this branch of the cultural industry, where he wrote plays whose repertoires directly addressed themes related to racism, which in turn formed the core of the plots (Ribeiro; Gonçalves, 2024). Through the staging and performance of these plays, whose protagonists were black characters played by black actors and actresses, he challenged the hegemonic form of aesthetic production in revue culture, marked by narratives dominated by racist images, stereotypes and representations, commonly associated with black populations and culture.

In fact, records concerning José Eutrópio's life, such as his post-mortem inventory, reveal an individual deeply committed to engaging in various forms of dialogue with the works of black intellectuals across

21 AHJF. Inventory of José Eutrópio, 1929, n. p.

different periods. Throughout his diverse intellectual contributions, he interpreted specific currents and various expressions of racial theories circulating in post-abolition scientific and intellectual debates, employing them as political tools to promote projects challenging the racial hierarchies and inequalities within Brazilian society. In this context, his library provides elements for reflecting on the development of his own language and unique worldview, whilst also enabling observation of diverse practices of reading, translation, and interpretation of ideas circulating in the early decades of the 20th century. More than a mere catalogue of works, *Eutropiana* can be seen as part of a project of distinction and social mobility, in which books functioned as instruments of work, cultural consumption, and political recognition.

Throughout this article, I have argued that the concept of the black intellectual is a useful interpretive key to understanding José Eutrópio's career. His reading habits, the works collected in his library, and his activities in the press, teaching, and revue theatre reveal a project of cultural mediation and intellectual grammar that is part of modern black thought. In this sense, *Eutropiana* represented not only a collection but also a political stance in a context characterised by intense debates about the meanings of people, society, nation, rights, citizenship, colour, and race, disputed by different segments and groups of the black population in the post-abolition period.

What meanings were instilled in the political habit of establishing intellectual dialogues with different forms of black thought? Focusing on the complexity of this political behaviour provides elements for questioning José Eutrópio's intellectual trajectory, as well as the multiple meanings that can be attributed to the composition of his library and his reading practices. It may also provide clues for reflecting on his possible connections with the ironic realism and social criticism present in works such as *Memórias Póstumas de Brás Cubas* [The Posthumous Memoirs of Brás Cubas], *Quincas Borba* [Quincas Borba²²: A Novel] and *Esau e Jacó* [Esau

22 Translator's note: *Quincas Borba* by Machado de Assis has been translated into English several times, the first edition being published in 1954 under the title 'Philosopher or Dog?'

and Jacob], by Machado de Assis; in abolitionist and combative literature, such as *Primeiras Trovas Burlescas* [First Burlesque Ballads], by Luiz Gama; or in *Missal*, by Cruz e Souza. This aspect also allows us to reflect on how the sharp criticism of racism and racial inequalities that structured post-abolition Brazilian society, found in *Recordações do Escrivão Isaías Caminha* [Memories of the Clerk Isaías Caminha], by Lima Barreto, dialogued with the meanings attributed to José Eutrópio's reading practices.

I recognise the difference between owning and reading a book, just as it is possible for a reader not to read all the books they own, and to read many books that are not in their private possession (Darnton, 1990). However, although José Eutrópio did not read all the books by black authors in his library, their presence in his collection is indicative of the political profile and intellectual project he sought to build throughout much of his life. Between what was planned, acquired, stored, read, annotated, and kept for future reading, the Eutropiana book catalogue presents intriguing historiographical possibilities for investigations into the diversity of black experiences in post-abolition Brazilian society.

By exploring these possibilities, the analysis of José Eutrópio's library allowed us to question the material and symbolic constitution of a unique collection, articulating practices of reading, cultural consumption, and trajectories of social mobility. More than a simple catalogue of goods, the *Eutropiana* reveals how a black intellectual in the post-abolition era shaped political behaviour and social habits. From this perspective, the study of experiences similar to that of José Eutrópio can contribute to shedding light on a still little-explored dimension of the history of black experiences in emancipation and post-abolition in Brazil, by showing that the owning and use of books were also a means of defining or expressing ideas of social participation and rights forged by black people, producing expectations shaped by distinctions of race,

by translator Clotilde Wilson. and is now available in several modern editions by different translators, such as Margaret Jull Costa (famous for her translations of Brazilian author) and Robin Patterson, now called Quincas Borba: A Novel (2024).

class, and gender. Future research exploring other post and the ownership of private libraries could expand this reflection, allowing us to understand, in a comparative manner, how different black subjects built significant material assets and how they experienced experiences shaped vertically in terms of wealth, power, and social and political influence, but also the forms of inequality and social tensions generated around these other possibilities of experience.

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DATA AVAILABILITY STATEMENT

The entire dataset supporting the results of this study has been published in the article itself.

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