

Extract from
PORTUGUESE STUDIES
VOLUME 14 1998

Printed and Published for the
MODERN HUMANITIES RESEARCH ASSOCIATION
by W. S. MANEY & SON LTD

Revisiting Alcacer Quibir: History, Myth and War in Manuel Alegre's *Jornada de África*

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In the opera *Orlando* by Georg Handel, based on Ariosto's play and performed for the first time in London in 1733, the magician Zoroastro is carried to the top of a mountain from where he solemnly sings:

Lascia Amore e siegui Marte!
Va, combatti per la gloria.
Sol oblio quel ti comparte,
Questo sol bella memoria.¹

Throughout history war has been the inspirational theme of the great chroniclers, epic poets and playwrights; a theme challenged only by love, with which it often features in splendid combination. Greek, Roman and Hebrew writers have been inspired by war and by ideals connected to war, to write what have become some of the great works of reference of Judeo-Christian civilization. Similarly, in the large body of early European literature which consists of medieval sagas and epics, war was central, sometimes being the only theme. It is associated with the ideals of national identity, ethical behaviour and religious imagery, which are related to the ideal of the Crusades of conquering the world for Christ. With the Renaissance and the new European perception of the world, inspired by the Discoveries, the movement to conquer new lands only heightened the political and religious ideals that had already broadly taken shape in the Middle Ages. Camões, the great love poet but also 'the great worshipper of battles',² recounts in *Os Lusíadas* both Portugal's expansion and the military action of Portuguese seafarers, explorers and soldiers in their crusading efforts to further and uphold Christianity, using a narrative model which emphasizes the heroic. His belief in the divine nature of this idealized epic fate of the Portuguese is such that, his lamentations on the 'apagada e vil tristeza' of the homeland notwithstanding, he asserts the possibility of Portugal recovering her historic grandeur by military action of the 'excelentes vassalos' he believed the kingdom still possessed. He thus dedicates the *Lusíadas* to the young king D. Sebastião, lover of 'God and Arms', who was soon to launch his country into what was then an anachronistic attempt to redeem and glorify his kingdom: the Battle of the

Three Kings at Alcacer Quibir where Portugal lost its king, its army, its nobility, and shortly thereafter its independence,³ in a disastrous climax to what Fernand Braudel called the 'dernière croisade de la Chrétiennité méditerranéenne'.⁴ Here we witness the failure of the harmony of the Camonian conquest in which Mars becomes the lover of Venus so as to regenerate the warrior through love or, in the context of the maritime voyage, to free the sailor from the dangers of the sea. In Canto VI of *Os Lusíadas* one recalls the episode of the gales braved by the sailors until Venus sent her nymphs to seduce and calm the winds through the power of love; one also recalls the famous episode of 'Ilha dos Amores', conceived as the warriors' reward for enduring the perils of the voyage and as the symbol of their redemption from the violence of war and conquest through love.⁵

In contrast to Zoroastro's praise of love and war in *Orlando*, the Battle of Alcacer Quibir did not bring happy memories, although the battle and the mysterious disappearance of the king did inspire stories and tales of martyred heroes and there were many possible or imagined reports of his return. History thus became myth, which is to say a fictional image, and Alcacer Quibir was to be imprinted on the memory of the nation as a timeless symbol of disaster and collective death, but one which is, paradoxically, constantly revived as the soul of the nation. In fact, the cycle from the Castle of Guimarães where the nation is founded, to Alcacer Quibir where D. Sebastião disappears, is not a complete cycle, but rather created an open space to be revisited through the Sebastianic expectation of a return to the glory of the past.⁶ But this open space also helped to preserve the self-representation of Portugal as the master of a colonial empire imbued with an African, Asian and Brazilian multiplicity, creator

³ On the perception and consequences of Alcacer Quibir's battle from the Moroccan viewpoint see Lucette Valensi, 'Au Maroc: l'événement réinventé', *Fables de la Mémoire — la glorieuse bataille des trois rois* (Paris: Seuil, 1992). I am grateful to Professor Luís de Sousa Rebelo for the reference to this work.

⁴ Fernand Braudel, *La Méditerranée et le Monde Méditerranéen à l'Époque de Philippe II*, 2 vols (Paris: Colin, 1966), II, 462.

⁵ Helder Macedo, 'Love as Knowledge: The Lyric Poetry of Camões', *Portuguese Studies*, 14 (1998), 51–64. See Luís de Camões, *Os Lusíadas* (Lisbon: Ministério da Educação, Instituto Camões, 1992) p. 171, VI, 88, 89 and 91:

Não creias, fero Bóreas, que te creio
Que me tiveste nunca amor constante,
Que brandura é de amor mais certo arreio
E não convém furor a firme amante.
Se já não pões a tanta insânia freio,
não esperes de mim, daqui em diante,
Que possa mais amar-te, mas temer-te;
Que amor, contigo, em medo se converte.

⁶ See Robert Vecchi in 'La guerra coloniale tra genere e tema: Jornada de África, di Manuel Alegre', in *Dalle Armi ai Garofani — studi sulla letteratura della guerra coloniale*, ed. by Manuel G. Simões and Robert Vecchi (Rome: Bulzoni Editore, 1995), p. 53.

¹ Rui Bebiano, quoted in 'O Espelho de Marte, on a Guerra como Imagem', *Revista de História das Ideias*, 15 (1993), p. 75.

² Compare Belisário Pimenta, 'Camões e as "artes bélicas"', *Revista da Universidade de Coimbra*, 15 (1945), 274–346.

of a national consciousness of universal scope, to which generations paid allegiance and promised to return. Writers over the centuries, including Manuel Alegre in modern times, have revisited Alcacer Quibir as both a symbol of irredeemable perdition of the motherland and the archetypal place of the rebirth of the nation through the return of its absent king.

Camões, whose poetry celebrates a period of glory and conquest while foreshadowing the decline of the kingdom, has been read and interpreted by generations as a celebration and founding discourse not only of the imperial motherland, but also of its necessary regeneration. Thus he became the inspiring voice in texts glorifying the nation as well as the inspiring voice for the discourse of national regeneration from the seventeenth-century prophesies of António Vieira and, via nineteenth-century writers, to the present day.

This nostalgic Camonian line prevails in Manuel Alegre's *Praça da Canção*, *O Canto e as Armas* and *Jornada de África* as the expression of a literary family to which he belongs. However, as a modern writer he adds to that tradition aspects that were already becoming obvious in the nineteenth century: the valorization of the 'self' and its poetic or narrative perspective. As Catherine Brosman points out this question has changed the whole literary expression of war: 'What distinguishes literary expression of war from these, at least in the modern period, is first of all the emphasis upon the experiential dimension. Fiction, drama, and poetry concerning war tend toward recording not simply the causes and conduct of armed or individual battles but the manner in which they are lived, felt, used, and transformed by participants'.⁷

This does not mean that texts which questioned the cruel reality of war are a twentieth-century phenomenon: they have existed since the Middle Ages. However, particularly after the harrowing experience of the Great War it became evident that the narrative focus had shifted from the emblematic (be it the collectivity or an exemplary hero) to an individual self in spatial and temporal rupture. This led to the shift from a discourse on national celebration to a semantic field where individual responsibilities, moral values, individual feelings and identities are questioned. One need only think of the English corpus analysed by Paul Fussell in *The Great War and the Modern Memory* or of texts of the French Barbusse, Dorgelès or Granvilliers, or those of Hemingway, to know that the memory of war experience, and consequently its literary expression, had already recorded this momentous change.

⁷ Catherine Savage Brosman, 'The Functions of War Literature', *Journal of the South Central Modern Language Association*, 9 (1992), 85-86. See also Hayden White in *The Content of the Form* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1987).

Therefore the literary testimonies of this conflict not only record the dissolution of the self confronted by the experience of war, as it applies to a new imaginary in need of myths, fantasy or heroism but which is full of psychosis and images of an absurd time. After the First World War literature could no longer continue to celebrate its heroes in a heroic manner. Or in Hemingway's words:

Abstract words such as glory, honour, courage, or hallow were obscene beside the concrete names of villages, the numbers of roads, the names of rivers, the numbers of regiments and the dates.⁸

From then on a new morality had been imposed, pointing to a new commitment of individuals to their time. Perhaps no other writer has captured the spirit of the time so well as Aragon who led the movement towards a change in the literary treatment of war and would introduce a new attitude towards ethical, moral and social values to which the modern poet should adapt his poetry.

'Je chante les armes et l'homme . . .', ainsi commence *L'Eneide*, ainsi devrait commencer toute poésie. [. . .] 'Je chante l'homme et ses armes . . .' et en ce sens oui, je chante, et je suis prêt à reprendre pour notre temps et mon pays ce programme par quoi débute l'épopée romaine, et je n'ai forgé mon langage pour rien d'autre, de longue date, pour rien d'autre préparé cet instrument chantant . . .⁹

In this post First World War text, which rewrites the best known and most inspiring celebration of arms and men (*The Aeneid*), Aragon reverses the order and consequently the meaning, recording the change in the nature of the relationship between the self, space and time, which modern time and particularly the experience of war had wrought.

Canto as armas e os homens
as pedras os metais
e as mãos que transformando
se transformam. Eu canto
o remo e a foice. Os símbolos.
Meu sangue é uma guitarra
tangida pelo Tempo.
[. . .]
Canto as armas e o Tempo.
As minhas armas o
meu tempo. E desarmado
pergunto à flor pergunto
ao vento: vistes lá
o meu país? E o meu
país está nas palavras.¹⁰

⁸ Ernest Hemingway, *A Farewell to Arms* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1970), p. 162.

⁹ Louis Aragon, 'Arma Virumque Cano . . .', quoted by Manuel Alegre in *O Canto e as Armas* (Lisbon: Dom Quixote, 1989), p. 135.

¹⁰ Alegre, *O Canto e as Armas*, pp. 137-39.

Manuel Alegre opened with these lines in *O Canto e as Armas* (1967), restoring, via Camões, the epic tone of *The Aeneid*, 'Canto as armas e os homens', and adapting it to the modern period like Aragon: 'Canto as armas e o Tempo/ As minhas armas/ o meu tempo'. At that time Portugal was under one of the last Western European dictatorships and had been thrown into an anachronistic colonial war which involved the country in absurd sacrifices while trying to stem the 'winds of change' of which MacMillan had spoken. Manuel Alegre was not the only poet of his generation who resented the incongruity of this war which had suddenly, though not unexpectedly, transformed a 'pátria oficialmente exemplar e feliz num barco louco correndo de olhos abertos para a sua própria perda', to quote Eduardo Lourenço.¹¹ But he was certainly one of the poets whose work best filled the silence of a tragic time of lives condemned to an empty epic endeavour, becoming the prophet-poet of a perdition foretold. His poetry plots the geographic and historical co-ordinates of the African journey between the opulence of history and myth and the mean realities of life in the African bush, as is shown in 'Nambuanguongo meu amor' from *Praça da Canção*, and 'Continuação de Alcácer Quibir' from *O Canto e as Armas*, prefiguring the dramatic and mythical space of his *Jornada de África*. Manuel Alegre juxtaposes the space and time of Alcacer Quibir with that of the colonial war, and thus in his poetry Alcacer Quibir becomes a chosen metaphor to urge the necessary struggle against that past within the present, that is to say against this new Alcacer Quibir. In these poems the discursive, symbolic and metaphorical progression of the thematic core of the novel *Jornada de África* is also apparent: the colonial war, the end of empire, the end of a cycle riddled by imperial obsession, the physical and spiritual death in Nambuanguongo/ Alcacer Quibir.¹²

Quantos desastres dentro de um desastre.
Alcácer Quibir foi sempre
o passado por dentro do presente
ó meu país que nunca te encontraste.
[...]
Alcácer Quibir é ir morrer
além do mar por coisa nenhuma.
[...]
Alcácer Quibir és tu Lisboa.
E há uma rosa de sangue no branco areal.

¹¹ Eduardo Lourenço, 'Poesia e mito em Manuel Alegre', *Jornal de Letras*, 17 January 1996, p. 37.

¹² See Urbano Tavares Rodrigues, 'Entre Quipedro e Alcácer Quibir — o espaço dramático e mítico de Manuel Alegre', in *Os Tempos e os Lugares na Obra Lírica, Épica e Narrativa de Manuel Alegre* (Lisbon: Universitárias Lusófonas, 1996), p. 11.

Há um tempo parado no tempo que voa.
Porque um fantasma é rei de Portugal.¹³

In 'A Crónica de D. Sebastião' from *Atlântico* (1981), the poet portrays the ground that suddenly becomes red in that dual space between Nambuanguongo/ Alcacer Quibir clearly pointing to the horrific world of cripples, paraplegics and the corpses depicted in his *Jornada de África*.

O resto ficou nas picadas, Angola é nossa, venham ver, há bocados de carne por aí, são pedaços de Portugal florindo algures no mato, sangue e merda, duarte de almeida é o nosso nome, Para Angola e em força, braços, pernas, mãos.¹⁴

In this same poem the return to Alcacer Quibir is achieved not only with recourse to a mythological and historic memory, but also to a textual memory which points to the conceptual and textual structure of *Jornada de África*. 'A Crónica d'El-Rei D. Sebastião', where the poet narrates 'o dia da infelicíssima batalha', weaves together texts from various chronicles on the expedition to Alcacer Quibir, as well as fragments of other texts with war as their *leit-motiv*.

O dia pois da infelicíssima batalha
quando se ouviu aquela voz: *ter ter*
e o teu jeep explodiu contra um rochedo
aquele dia de não mais esquecer
quando os tiros soaram em Quipedro
e ficámos cercados de metralha
aquele dia de morrer morrer
em que vi o teu corpo sem mortalha
no plaino abandonado trespassado
por malhas do Império lado a lado.¹⁵

Along the poetic route of *Praça da Canção*, *O Canto e as Armas* and *Atlântico* the narrative web of *Jornada de África* is woven, engendering what could be characterized as a 'modern epic'. In this 'modern epic' the chronicle of the past and the chronicle of the present are mingled as various times of a single time, composing the background of a dialectic tension between the individual experience and the collective experiences which shape history. This strategy of making the 'crónica do seu tempo', tying up the loose ends of history, literature and life provides not only a quest for an understanding of personal identity in the face of experienced realities, but

¹³ Manuel Alegre, 'Explicação de Alcácer Quibir', in *O Canto e as Armas*, 30 Anos de Poesia (Lisbon: Dom Quixote, 1995), pp. 163–64.

¹⁴ Manuel Alegre, *Jornada de África* (Lisbon: Dom Quixote, 1989), p. 169.

¹⁵ Manuel Alegre, 'Crónica de El-Rei D. Sebastião', in *Atlântico*, 30 Anos de Poesia, p. 421.

also a more searching enquiry into national identity as in *Jornada de África*.¹⁶

* * *

The *Jornada de África* recounts the story of the life and death of second-lieutenant Sebastião in the colonial war in Angola at the beginning of the 1960s. The similarity with the title *Jornada de África* by Jerónimo de Mendonça, which is about the African expedition of King D. Sebastião to Morocco, immediately brings to mind the historical and literary memory of the tragedy attached to the Alcacer Quibir disaster. Nevertheless, the obliquely Sebastianic sub-title of *Love and Death of the Second-Lieutenant Sebastião* has Rilkeian echos, and directs us to a more modern kind of narration in which the focus of the action is developed around a protagonist who undergoes and lives through an experience of love and death, as in the *The Lay of Love and Death of Cornet Christopher Rilke*.

The narrator further commits himself when he states: 'Contarei como quem estava presente e não omitirei uma só palavra da verdade'.¹⁷ Four hundred years before Jerónimo de Mendonça, one of the returnees from Alcacer Quibir, had promised to chronicle what he 'had seen' and 'heard' in order to re-establish the truth about King D. Sebastião.

Jornada de África opens with warnings by Lázaro Asdrubal, head of the PIDE (Portuguese Secret Police) in Angola to the head of government, Salazar, about the rebellion which, according to his information, was being prepared in the colony, thus recalling the earthly and celestial warnings that, four centuries before, King Sebastião had also received and stubbornly ignored. According to the *História Sebastica*, by Manuel dos Santos,¹⁸ just before the battle there were supernatural signs and portents foretelling of an apocalyptic outcome: fires, comets and visions seem to have filled man's imagination in that time before the battle. These were signs of a divine will to which some earthly advice was added by clergymen. But D. Sebastião was not listening, he seemed to be already possessed by the idea of a martyred destiny where he would find glory.

In *Jornada de África* Manuel Alegre writes:

¹⁶ The significant interconnections between the Nambuangongo/Alcacer-Quibir link made in *Jornada de África* are paralleled in Manuel Alegre's poetry. He links, for instance, the fifteenth-century conquest of Ceuta and the departure of Portuguese troops for the war in Angola in the 1960s; and the national uprising of 1383-85 recorded by Fernão Lopes with contemporary accounts of the 1974 revolution. See also Manuel Alegre, 'Manuel Alegre: Atlântico ou as sete partidas duma geração', *Jornal de Letras*, 28 April-11 May 1981, p. 18.

¹⁷ Alegre, *Jornada de África*, p. 46.

¹⁸ Manuel dos Santos was the friar and historian of the king and kingdom. Manoel dos Santos, *Historia Sebastica, contem a vida do augusto príncipe o senhor D. Sebastião, rey de Portugal* (Lisbon: 1735).

Conseguiu finalmente falar com o Chefe, teve de esperar quase quinze dias, apesar da urgência. Veio de propósito de Luanda para o informar do levantamento que se prepara no Norte da Província. Agora tem de guardar a resposta só para si: 'Deixe andar, é um sacrifício necessário, só assim poderemos contar com o apoio do país e do Ocidente.' [...] dentro de meses, quem sabe se dentro de dias, vai haver um levantamento em Angola e ele, Director da Polícia Internacional e de Defesa do Estado, nada poderá fazer. O Chefe quer assim, talvez tenha razão, por cá ninguém se preocupa com o futuro da Província, talvez o sangue acorde o país, talvez depois seja mais fácil mandar a tropa.¹⁹

Parallel to the expiatory sacrifice by D. Sebastião, in the hope of redeeming his country by doing battle in the name of Christ, Salazar appealed for a 'necessary sacrifice', as if it were a divine ordeal, so that Portugal would rise from the shadows and take on the role of guardian of the West against the new infidel creed, communism, which was spreading into Africa. This adaptation and use of national memory as a call to arms fused comfortably with the symbolic system in power at the time of the colonial war, in that it recovered the ideological matrix that was to cast military action actually taking place as though it were a memorialist exercise of self representation of the nation's imperial identity. The African wars were thus transformed by the regime into an internal triumph of faith and patriotism. Everything in this period, as in the time of D. Sebastião, inevitably led to the conclusion that the renaissance was condemned to failure, since it was intended to inspire the rebirth of an ideal which no longer corresponded to the new historical context, and could only be enforced by an implacable and dictatorial will.

Desta maneira se tratou o negócio, e pôsto que houve muitos fidalgos de contrário parecer no caminho que se seguiu, todavia permaneceu a opinião de el-Rei, como tão própria a seus desejos; e mandou que o campo marchasse por terra a buscar o vau do rio Lucus de Larache, para vir sitiar a fortaleza que da outra banda estava.²⁰

From a distance of four centuries, D. Sebastião's outlook can be seen as, if not a metaphor for the present, at least as equally anachronistic and thus comparable to the posture of Portugal at the beginning of the 1960s. The impossibility of finding a stable political solution to the tensions in the colonies, the economic crisis, the social disintegration provoked by emigration and the increasing isolation of Portugal were some of the problems faced by the providential man who 'protected' Portugal, immobilized in his dream of an orderly society, safe from subversion, who did not realize that it was not going to be possible to transform the war into a new crusade. Want it or not, Portugal would not remain immobilized in Canto VII of *Os Lusíadas*, in which Portugal alone confronted the infidel

¹⁹ Alegre, *Jornada de África*, pp. 11-12.

²⁰ Jerónimo de Mendonça, *Jornada de África*, ed. by António Sérgio (Paris/Lisbon: Aillaud & Bertrand, 1924).

as the guardian of the West. At a time when so many were evading the draft and leaving the country, dreaming of a new salvation in the factories of industrial Europe, the country's youth was being forced into a last crusade of Christendom, but that crusade did not really exist, for in the parallel rhetoric of the state it was merely a peace-keeping mission. Despite the aberrant scenario and unlike the attitude prevalent in the nineteenth-century, during this period there seemed to be no collective awareness of a crisis. However, 'algures, alguns lunáticos, mas poucos' broke the silence and risked saying no, dreaming of a free homeland.

From the second chapter the narrative development of *Jornada de África* takes three dynamic paths. Lieutenant Sebastião moves on the mythological and historical paths of national history through the evocation of Alcacer Quibir; the winding and ambiguous tracks of personal experience of the colonial war in Angola with bush war and failed conspiracy, of which Sebastião and his companions were protagonists; and finally, in the shadow of these paths, is the perspective of the Other. These Others are sometimes revealed through the words of Agostinho Neto, Amílcar Cabral and other Africans who are included in the text; at other times they are revealed through the character of the Angolan nationalist Domingos da Luta, in the opposing camp; and finally they are revealed by Bárbara, Sebastião's Angolan lover and an MPLA militant.

This modern literary strategy of threading times and places into the narrative tissue of the novel becomes obviously subversive. By reintegrating the hallowed national memory and mythology into the time of a colonial war which legitimized the official patriotic position, Manuel Alegre appropriates and subverts them in order to legitimize his own standing against Alcacer Quibir and the painful associated myths, reflected in the experience of the new Sebastião in the last Portuguese crusade in Africa. The timelessness of this war is made evident as Manuel Alegre emphasized:

Aquela era já à partida uma guerra fora do tempo . . . A lógica do tempo era uma lógica de insubmissão e emancipação, não esta lógica de sujeição e servilismo perante o mais forte, o mais rico, o mais poderoso.²¹

Thus Manuel Alegre aimed at repeating in *Jornada de África* what had already been written by Jerónimo de Mendonça, chronicler of the Battle of Alcacer Quibir, but in a different way for a different time.

In this *Jornada de África*, Sebastião is not depicted as the sovereign destined to create the myth, but rather as a rebellious officer who went to Angola to relive an old myth in a new way; similarly the author Jerónimo de Sousa (a character in the novel with the same name as the author of the other *Jornada de África*), is an anti-colonialist resident in Luanda who is

destined to write another *Jornada de África*; and finally Sebastião's companions, reincarnated in the present as the protagonists of the fatal battle are meant to be heroes from another epic. As the contemporary author tells Sebastião: '—Sonho muitas vezes que estou num palco e esqueci o papel [. . .] estamos no meio de uma peça em que os actores são outros'.²²

The story of the present-day Sebastião on the colonial battlefields is made up from contemporary elements and fragments of collective history. These are signs which Sebastião will attempt to decipher until they form a complete puzzle which identifies present time with the time of the disaster of Alcacer Quibir. Since his departure for Africa when, from the airplane, Sebastião catches sight of an old man crying near the Torre de Belém, Sebastião has been aware of elements of the past which reappear in the present as if they belonged there:

Quem sou, pergunta-se. Já não sabe quem é, o nome saiu dele, é de um outro que ficou não se sabe onde, há muito tempo. Talvez seja só o sono, aí vai pela picada fora, os cavalos cavalgam e a coluna avança. [. . .] Há uma vertigem, ele não sabia ainda que também a guerra tem um ritmo, este rufar dentro dele, ó música, ó fanfarras, bandeiras, bandeiras. É as belas, velhas, loucas cargas de cavalaria. O seu corcel o leva, ou é um jipe, já não sabe o seu nome, é um guerreiro, um simples centurião, um cavaleiro doutras eras desembarcado nesta guerra. Se perguntassem por ele poderia responder apontando um retrato algures numa sala antiga: Ninguém.²³

The projection of a fatal past into the experience of a cruel present marked by a war full of violence and death, with Garretian undertones, provokes a crisis in Sebastião, which leads to an eroding of his previous self image and makes him for a moment accept the inevitability of the myth which he seemed predestined to embody.

Já não sei ao certo quem sou, há aqui um estranho mistério de nomes que preciso de decifrar. Vou receber alguém que tem o nome do autor da crónica do OUTRO, quem sabe se não está destinado a escrever a minha.²⁴

The idea that he could be a modern equivalent of the other Sebastião leads him to self-questioning. The death of Maldonado in the Sete Curvas is decisive because it symbolizes the synchronized time and place where the past is merged into the present. The colonial war is now regarded as a new Alcacer Quibir leading the new Sebastião to the day of the 'ill-fated battle' in which he became the Other. In this symbolic place Sebastião accepts the return of the myth and turns himself into the living metaphor of a collective loss, epitomizing the wider identity of a generation that no longer recognizes itself in the dominant ideological discourse. It manipulated the memory and the national myth for the defence of its anachronistic crusade,

²² Alegre, *Jornada de África*, p. 162.

²³ Alegre, *Jornada de África*, pp. 48–49.

²⁴ Alegre, *Jornada de África*, p. 75.

²¹ Manuel Alegre, 'Um Outra Memória', in *Jornal de Letras*, 19 February 1991, p. 13.

as did the expert in counter-insurgency in his lesson on the civilizing mission of Portugal in Africa:

estamos aqui para defender cinco séculos de História e assegurar a permanência de Portugal numa perspectiva de renovação e de futuro. Estamos aqui para ser o braço armado da lei, do progresso, da justiça, numa palavra: da Portugalidade.²⁵

As pointed out by Robert Vecchi in 'La guerra coloniale tra genere e tema: *Jornada de África*, di Manuel Alegre' the artificial character of this monologic vision of history is being set against the essential nature of the Other.²⁶ In the shadow of the paths of Sebastião's predestined paths in his *Jornada de África*, a central role is held by the enemy of the Portuguese, or by the other side of history which chroniclers normally ignore, but where Sebastião believes to reside the only possible regeneration for this time of war. As Camões pointed out in the idyllic 'Ilha dos Amores' from the *Lusíadas*, the regeneration of man in time of conquest could only be achieved through love. However, for Manuel Alegre this was no longer a time of conquest, this was a time beyond time, and the 'Ilha dos Amores' in this *Jornada de África* is a place of conspiracy and of foreshadowing an end.

– Olha para eles – diz o Alferes apontando os banhistas, ainda não sabem mas é o fim, talvez demore uns anos mas é já uma festa de despedida, eles são os últimos e ainda não sabem.²⁷

Like Camões, Sebastião falls in love with the Other, a woman also called Bárbara, like Camões's dark mistress who 'bem parece estranha, mas bárbara não'.²⁸ The Bárbara from *Jornada de África*, was a 'daughter of empire', child of a Goanese father and a Cape Verdean mother, but herself Angolan and a MPLA militant.

At this time of colonial war she represented the Other. But in terms of his own time (the time of the Sebastião who had been an anti-fascist militant), the love of Bárbara was the hope of possible regeneration. However, the times were against them and their love, forcing the two lovers in different directions: Bárbara into exile, Sebastião to Nambuangongo/ Alcacer Quibir. Perhaps only the child that Bárbara wanted with Sebastião could have provided a dialectical synthesis, the basis for the renewal they searched and yearned for, which would transcend nation and identity. Bárbara's wish was thwarted by the overpowering dynamics of war, the devastation, political persecution and exile which, to paraphrase Bárbara's last letter to Sebastião, at that time they were

²⁵ Alegre, *Jornada de África*, p. 64.

²⁶ See Vecchi in 'La guerra coloniale [...]', p. 57.

²⁷ Alegre, *Jornada de África*, p. 149.

²⁸ Macedo, pp. 51–64.

condemned to live. The last hope for the 'salvation' of Sebastião was thus denied and with it that of the nation itself.

From then on Sebastião will not try to evade his fate as the narrator metadiscursively wonders 'o Alferes não vai escapar-se, seguir o seu próprio impulso, autodeterminar-se, afirmar o primado da vida (ou da morte) sobre a escrita'.²⁹

The 'condemnation' of Sebastião transcends the limits of his personal history in a time of war. His fate harks back to Alcacer Quibir, the symbolic end to the unfulfilled epic which began with the departure of the war ships for Ceuta. The disappearance of the new Sebastião at the end of the novel, after insisting on an attack which could not succeed, represents the acceptance of the other Sebastião's destiny.

In *Jornada de África* by Jerónimo de Mendonça, the narrator reports the final moment thus:

Nesta forma, chegando Luís de Brito onde el-rei estava com poucos de cavalo, perguntou el-rei: Trazeis o estandarte? Respondeu ele que o trazia e o mostrou envolto em si. El-Rei que não punha as esperanças mais que na memória de sua morte, lhe disse: Abraçai-vos com ele e morramos com ele.³⁰

And in *Jornada de África*, Manuel Alegre writes:

Quem levantará agora a bandeira, abracemo-nos, camaradas, os nossos nomes estão marcados, quantos Silvas e Costas e Andrades e Pereiras de Alcácer estarão aqui, quantos Maneis e Antónios, as crónicas falam dos fidalgos, dos outros quem falará, Josés de Alcácer e Nambuangongo, nomes de muitos nomes feitos, abracemos-nos, camaradas.³¹

On the other side we have the others: Domingos da Luta and Bárbara, who just as her lover disappears gains a country and a new history. In his last aerogram to Bárbara, Sebastião had written, 'não há aqui epopeia para dizer'.³² But perhaps a new era was emerging, as he affirms in his Pessoa-inspired final message to his friend Poeta, his *alter ego*:

Talvez o Quinto Império seja afinal o fim de todos os impérios. O Grande Império do Avesso, o Anti-Império. E talvez seja esse o único sentido possível desta guerra: fechar o ciclo. Talvez tenhamos de nos perder aqui para chegar finalmente ao porto por achar: dentro de nós. Talvez tenhamos de não ser para podermos voltar a ser.

Há outro Portugal, não este. E sinto que tinha de passar por aqui para o encontrar. Não sei se passado, não sei se futuro. Não sei se fim ou se princípio. Sei que sou desse país: um país que já foi, um país que ainda não é.

É por ele que me apetece dar de novo Santiago.³³

²⁹ Alegre, *Jornada de África*, p. 236.

³⁰ Alegre, *Jornada de África*, p. 241.

³¹ Alegre, *Jornada de África*, p. 241.

³² Alegre, *Jornada de África*, p. 186.

³³ Alegre, *Jornada de África*, p. 231.

This final declaration reveals the dialectics that underlie this *Jornada de África*: the all-or-nothing of being able to be Portuguese in a Alcacer/Nambuanguo over which an eternal cycle had reopened. Sebastião's fate then revitalizes the double meaning encoded in the myth surrounding his royal namesake: to disappear like Sebastião the King and in so doing give rise to another 'Encoberto' of a nation waiting for freedom, a new country, a new subversive 'D. Sebastião'.

Haverá sempre em nós um rei perdido
 Por seu excesso de saudade e ânsia
 Um ser de ainda não ser ou já ter sido
 Outro tempo no tempo outra distância
 A nossa pátria é sempre outro lugar
 E quando alguém voltar Ninguém Ninguém
 Haverá sempre um não chegar
 E D. Sebastião é quem³⁴

The articulation of the mythical historical and narrative material in the novel *Jornada de África* provides a double writing of history which simultaneously reads and rewrites the past and frames it within the modern memory of the experience of war. It offers a full and multifaceted experience of war that problematizes history and collective identity through the one overwhelming myth of Portuguese history, in which Portugal was condemned to lose itself in order to find itself again. Hence its conscious and critical use of the Sebastianic myth enables Manuel Alegre to transform the catastrophe into hope, his own experiences of a war which could not be won into a new beginning.

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³⁴ Manuel Alegre, 'D. Sebastião', in *Atlântico*, 30 Anos de Poesia, p. 572.