

Camões, Portuguese war propaganda, and the dream of a safe colonial empire, 1914-1918

Twentieth-century Portugal's view of itself and its global role was largely determined by the way in which Luís de Camões was celebrated in Portugal in 1880, the third centenary of his death. This much is made clear by Alan Freeland in his article 'The people and the poet: Portuguese national identity and the Camões Tercentenary'.¹ Those celebrations, largely ignored by the Crown, did much to propel Portuguese republicanism into the twentieth century as a nationalist and colonialist doctrine, committed to the restoration of a Portuguese golden era sung in the cantos of Camões epic poem, *The Lusíads*. The responsibilities and opportunities afforded by political power after the creation of the First Republic in 1910 had a significant and destructive impact on the republican movement in Portugal, shattering the once united Portuguese Republican Party into a host of bitterly divided factions vying with each other for control of the country. One party, Afonso Costa's Democrats, quickly established its superiority at the ballot box and on the street. This process revealed that whatever ideological drive existed within Portuguese republicanism paled in importance when compared with the simple capture and division of the spoils of power. In any case, the celebrations of 1880 and the efforts that they generated had a lasting impact on republican politicians who would, once in power, reflect on the days of political propaganda that had followed the Camões Tercentenary as their own golden era, a time of united effort in the attempt to overturn an increasingly compromised monarchy.

¹ Alan Freeland, 'The people and the poet: Portuguese national identity and the Camões tercentenary', in *Nationalism and the Nation in the Iberian Peninsula: Competing and Conflicting Identities* ed. by Clare Mar-Molinero & Angel Smith (Oxford: Berg, 1996), pp. 53-67.

Undoubtedly the most significant event in the history of the First Republic (1910-26) was Portugal's participation in the First World War, which began officially with a German declaration of war in March 1916, but which had been ardently desired by the Democrats and their allies since the very start of the conflict. Portuguese wartime governments, known as the Sacred Union governments, largely abdicated their wartime propaganda role for a number of reasons discussed elsewhere.² Nevertheless, propaganda preparing the Portuguese for the challenges of wartime was produced and, not surprisingly, considering that the overwhelming mass of support for the war came from republican circles, much of the war propaganda produced from 1914 to 1917 was couched in words and images borrowed from earlier campaigns. As a result, the figure and works of Camões were instrumental in the way the war was presented to the Portuguese. Camões' life seemed to provide the moral example that should be followed at a time of crisis, and his works contained a vision of greatness which republicans avidly seized as their own, accepting Camões' stirring verse as an alternative to an adequately funded and modern military force, and an efficient colonial policy, both of which were beyond the country's limited means. The aim of this paper is to examine both how Portugal's propagandists employed Camões and his work to fashion a uniquely republican war effort and the limitations of that same war effort, which was to collapse in December 1917 when the Democrats were swept from power by an armed insurrection.³

² See, for example, Filipe Ribeiro de Meneses, 'Sacred Union or radical Republic? The dilemmas of wartime propaganda, 1916—1917', *Journal of Iberian and Latin American Studies*, Vol. 5, No. 1 (1999), 77-92, on which parts of this paper are based. For a wider discussion of Portugal's intervention in the war, see Filipe Ribeiro de Meneses, *Portugal 1914—1926: From the First World War to Military Dictatorship* (Bristol: Hiplam, 2004).

³ I chose not to provide the original Portuguese text for prose passages in the course of this article, in order to reduce its length. I could not do so for the cited poetry, since I am aware that my translations, especially when it comes to *The Lusíads*, are highly imperfect and far too blunt.

When they came to power in 1910, republicans diffused the symbols of their new regime throughout the country – a new flag, a new anthem, and the bust of a woman wearing a phrygian cap as the embodiment of the Republic. Republicans also went some way towards renovating political elites, causing an increase in middle and lower middle-class participation in politics.⁴ What they failed to do, however, was to turn republicanism into a genuinely popular cause across the country. Recognising their immediate inability to compete with traditional sources of authority in rural areas, notably the Catholic Church, republicans quickly and crucially reversed their initial decision to introduce universal male suffrage. The vote was henceforth linked to literacy (in a country where the illiteracy rate stood at around 70%), and the conditions necessary for the effective political mobilisation of the population failed to materialise. Rural Portugal especially was to be denied the benefits of an active participation in politics through the courting of its vote by rival parties. Moreover, other means to integrate the nation politically into the new regime – notably compulsory education leading to literacy and hence, according to the Republic’s electoral law, the right to vote – were to be held up by the Democratic party’s drive for a balanced budget and, after 1914, by increased military expenditure. The country was not republicanised, which meant that the ideals of liberty, equality, and fraternity were not internalised by the population. At the same time, national consciousness, because of the illiteracy rate, did not match the country’s long history. As for a knowledge of international affairs, in the words of one republican intellectual, the majority in Portugal ‘ignores the world. It lives in the exile of itself’.⁵ In such conditions, it was extremely difficult for any propaganda campaign to score a success,

⁴ See, for example, Nuno G. Monteiro and António Costa Pinto, ‘Cultural Myths and Portuguese National Identity’, in *Modern Portugal*, ed. by António Costa Pinto (Palo Alto: SPOSS, 1998), p. 212.

effectively mobilising the population around ideals advanced by the government and friendly agencies. Eric Hobsbawm, in his essay ‘Mass-producing traditions: Europe 1870-1914’, makes the point that the Third Republic had a ‘store of earlier French republican symbolism to draw upon, which was still capable of producing a response from its intended audience’.⁶ The Portuguese Republic had no such ‘store’. It did, however, have Camões, whose memory republicans had effectively appropriated. *The Lusíads* provided a pantheon of national heroes and a seemingly inexhaustible supply of patriotic sentiment which could be fitted to almost any circumstance with which Portugal might be faced. Camões’ work made possible Portugal’s place in a war described as an epic struggle between Latin civilisation and German barbarism, while also acting as an incentive to protect and develop Portugal’s hitherto neglected African possessions, allegedly inherited from a glorious past but, for the most part, conquered at the end of the 19th Century as part of the general ‘Scramble for Africa’.

That the First World War witnessed a renewed wave of political mobilisation across Europe is nothing new.⁷ In the face of the perils of war, governments and committed organisations and individuals appealed for unity and tenacity, and promised a better future after the expected victory. Their appeal was conveyed through a series of images and themes thought to be capable of capturing the attention, and enthusiasm, of soldiers and civilians alike. Participation in the war could in this way be defended by governments, political parties, churches, trade unions, and a host of other interested groups. Throughout a Europe descending into the depths of total warfare, intellectuals played an important role in aiding

⁵ Augusto Casimiro, *Sidónio Pais: Algumas Notas Sobre a Intervenção de Portugal na Grande Guerra* (Oporto: Livraria Chardron, 1919), p. 15.

⁶ Eric Hobsbawm, ‘Mass Producing Traditions: Europe 1870—1914’, in *The Invention of Tradition*, ed. by Eric Hobsbawm & Terence Ranger (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), p. 67.

⁷ See, for example, *State, Society and Mobilization in Europe during the First World War* ed. by John Horne (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997).

their respective governments to mobilise the population for the shock and sacrifices inherent in the conflict. So great was the commitment to war policies shown by intellectuals that Bertrand Russell in his impassioned ‘Appeal to the Intellectuals of Europe’, published during the war, wrote,

in modern times, philosophers, professors, and intellectuals generally undertake willingly to provide their respective governments with those ingenious distortions and those subtle untruths by which it is made to appear that all good is on one side and all wickedness on the other.⁸

Russell was reacting against the willingness of intellectuals to engage in political mobilisation on the state’s behalf, shaping the ideological content of a war which, as Russell saw it, was exclusively about power and wealth. The war was seen, or at least portrayed, by the majority of European intellectuals as a war for the defence of Latin civilisation against German barbarism, or for the defence of German *Kultur* from the atheistic French, from a nation of soulless shopkeepers, and from hordes of savage Cossacks. There were nationalist, racial, and cultural appeals made in an effort to convince the soldiers, and their families, of the justice of their respective country’s cause. Russell argued that all claims to objectivity, and to love of ‘truth’, had been brushed aside by ‘allegiance to country’, and that a great opportunity to halt warfare through the use of reason had been missed by his colleagues in Britain and other belligerent nations.⁹ Historians were drafted, or offered their services, to authenticate atrocity stories and diplomatic accounts; Oxford University, for example, became an international propaganda machine, its history lecturers writing *Why Great Britain*

⁸ Bertrand Russell, ‘An Appeal to the Intellectuals of Europe’, in Bertrand Russell, *Justice in Wartime* (Nottingham: Spokesmen Books), p. 2.

⁹ ‘Men of learning, who should be accustomed to the pursuit of truth in their daily work, might have attempted, at this time, to make themselves the mouthpiece of truth, to see what was false on their own side, what was valid on the side of their enemies.’ *ibid.*

is Fighting, which was translated in the University into all major European languages before 1914 had ended.¹⁰

Portuguese intellectuals were no exception to this rule. As poet, writer, and educationalist João de Barros¹¹ put it after Portugal's entry into the conflict,

All of us – artists, poets, writers, educators, critics – who are the natural defenders of the highest expression of the spirit of the race, in the supreme flowering of its culture and its ideal, cannot but applaud with inexpressible pride Portugal's international situation.¹²

Many shared the view that this was an epic clash of civilisations, with the heirs of the Roman world on one side and Germanic barbarism on the other. This view, and the mental gymnastics it required in light of the actual alliance systems, was reflected in French writer Paul Adam's *L'effort portugais*, wherein a mythical recreation of Portugal's entry into the conflict was presented:

Lusitania was retaking its place beneath the emblems of the Legions, along with the Italians and the Gallic-Romans, with the Byzantines of Russia, with an England modified by the Normans,

who brought to Oxford and Cambridge the words and habits of our Latin *Pátria*...¹³

Among Portuguese intellectuals, the most important representative of this trend was the poet Teixeira de Pascoais¹⁴, who used the important review *Águia*, which had declared for military

¹⁰ Faculty of Modern History, University of Oxford, *Why Great Britain is Fighting* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1914).

¹¹ João de Barros (1881-1960). Deputy for the Democratic party from 1915—1917, served in a variety of positions in the Ministry of Education. Author, among many works, of the oft-reprinted *The Lusids contados às crianças e lembrados ao povo* (1930), a prose adaptation of Camões epic poem.

¹² João de Barros, 'Os artistas e a guerra', *Águia*, April 1916.

¹³ Paul Adam, *L'effort portugais* (Paris, Barcelona: Comité 'L'effort de la France et de ses alliés', 1916), p. 6.

intervention in 1914, to convey his ideas. In December of that year Teixeira de Pascoais described the conflict as the culmination of rivalries between the ‘Celto-Romans’ and the Germanic world, hostile by nature to all other civilisations. In August 1915, Teixeira de Pascoais returned to this theme, setting out a programme for other intellectuals to follow:

It would be useful to explain what is Portugal and what is France, to define the relations that must unite the two Latin peoples and even all Latin peoples; that is, to make clear the Portuguese ideal and, beyond it, the Latin ideal which, soaring above, and without harming the personality of these sister *Pátrias*, could give them a strong and superior unity. Otherwise, sooner or later, we would have a Prussian world. Europe would perish underneath the crooked claws and the black wings of *Kultur*.¹⁵

Another poet, Xavier de Carvalho¹⁶, speaking at the Sorbonne, ranged Portugal with the other Latin nations in their support (as belligerents or, as was still the case with Portugal, as neutrals) for France, which was not only ‘the great sower of ideas’, but also the greatest example of ‘Latin hegemony’.¹⁷ The time had thus come for Portugal, after years of decadence, to reclaim her place among the powers of the world – not for her own gain, but rather for the benefit of all humanity. Portugal,

¹⁴ Teixeira de Pascoais (1877-1952). Lawyer and poet, leader of the Renascença Portuguesa group, editor of *Águia*, and chief theoretician of Saudosismo, an artistic movement dedicated to capturing the uniqueness of the Portuguese spirit..

¹⁵ Teixeira de Pascoais, ‘Da guerra’, *Águia*, August 1915.

¹⁶ Xavier de Carvalho (1862-1919), author of, among other texts, *Apotheose Camoneana* (Oporto: Emp. Ferreira de Brito, 1885).

¹⁷ Xavier de Carvalho, ‘Le Portugal et la latinité’, *Águia*, January 1916.

since 1910, had assumed a key role in the spreading of republican, and therefore universal, values to all corners of the world. A similar idea was conveyed by Portugal's most important propaganda voice abroad, Sebastião de Magalhães Lima, masonic grand master and, in 1915, Minister of Education. Speaking in Milan, in 1916, Magalhães Lima stated that this was a war being fought by those nationalities which did not want to be ruled by the arbitrary will of others. Portugal had shown by its refusal to accept a German ultimatum of March 1916 that it should be counted among these nations, because

Portugal lives, wants to live, and will live. We Portuguese have a history and the maritime epic of the fifteen and sixteenth centuries; we, like you, are the heirs of Greco-Roman civilisation, and want to give it a dignified continuation.¹⁸

Once Portugal entered the conflict, Camões became an omnipresent figure in Portuguese propaganda, both that generated by leading intellectual figures and its more popular counterpart. As the highest expression of Portuguese letters, Camões was a powerful symbol of Portugal's right and duty to fight in the war. Guerra Junqueiro¹⁹, the closest thing the Republic had to an official poet, called Portugal the 'divine *Pátria* of Camões and Nun'Álvares'²⁰ in a poem – a mystical-nationalist adaptation of the 'Our Father' – which was included in Guerra Junqueiro's contribution to one of the most significant propaganda initiatives of Portugal's participation in the war. This was the *Boletim Patriótico*, published by the Universidade Livre, an adult literacy and education society. The first (and seemingly

¹⁸ Sebastião de Magalhães Lima, *Episódios da minha vida*, Vol. II (Lisbon: Livraria Universal, n.d.), p. 163.

¹⁹ Abílio Guerra Junqueiro (1850-1923).

²⁰ Guerra Junqueiro, 'Aos soldados que partem/Aos Portugueses que ficam', in *Boletim Patriótico da Universidade Livre*, no. 1, July 1917, p. 2.

only) issue was published, according to its organisers, not only to pay homage to the soldiers of the Portuguese Expeditionary Corps to France (CEP), but also to ‘keep before them the heroic concept of patriotic love, which they have so often demonstrated and are still doing in the front; remind them of sublime examples from their history with names and dates that they should memorise; and assuage their nostalgia with images of their fair and fertile land [...]’²¹ Many significant figures participated in this initiative and the didactic nature of the work was paramount: soldiers were being taught (or, as the republicans would have preferred, reminded) of their patriotic values, and Camões was presented by all contributors as the supreme purveyor of those values. There was a clear political aim behind this effort – the twinning of republicanism and patriotism, so that from victory at war would emerge a regime esteemed and respected by all. The very first page of the bulletin reminded soldiers of Camões’ message:

Defendei vossas terras; que a esperança
da liberdade está na vossa lança.²²

[Defend your lands; for the hope/ of freedom hangs on your
lances.]

Guerra Junqueiro, in his already quoted contribution, described the departing soldiers as the synthesis of all that was noteworthy in Portuguese History: ‘Nun’Álvares and D. Henrique, Camões and Bartolomeu Dias, Albuquerque and St. Francis Xavier amalgamate themselves, fuse, and beat in your flesh, in your hearts, in your ideal. You are an epic which has

²¹ ‘Motivo da nossa publicação’, in *Boletim Patriótico da Universidade Livre*, no. 1, July 1917, p. 3.

²² *The Lusíads*, Canto IV, verse XXXVII. These words are spoken in the poem by King John I to his soldiers during the battle of Aljubarrota, which consolidated his claim over the throne and preserved Portugal from Castilian ambitions.

awakened, which rises and continues to march'. A similar sentiment was advanced by poet and newspaper director Alfredo da Cunha²³ in his poem 'Famosa Gente':

Ajuntai mais um trecho heróico à nossa história
Que um canto de epepeia em cada folha encerra;
Entre os vossos avôs há os doze de Inglaterra:
Segui-lhes o alto exemplo! Honrai-lhes a memória²⁴

[Add another heroic passage to our History,/ Which in every page
encloses an epic canto./ Among your forefathers are to be found
the Twelve of England:/ Follow their example! Honour their
memory!]

The already quoted Sebastião de Magalhães Lima contributed to the volume, reminding the soldiers of the importance of the struggle they were about to join and, through the manipulation of pronouns, stressing the importance of the fighting man in Portuguese history: 'Our history was written with your generous blood, courageous pioneers of Justice. And it will be so again. Our race was noted for your incomparable energy, brave crusaders of Law, that incomparable Lusitanian energy, never again to be sublimated, which will ressurge with the new *Lusiads*.' Magalhães Lima was unequivocal about whom the soldiers should turn to for inspiration: 'May the shade of Camões rise and inspire us. We have a history that immortalises us. We are the direct heirs of Greco-Roman civilisation. By thought and deed we are determined to affirm the vitality of our race [...]'²⁵ Teófilo Braga, academic and the first (unelected) President of the Republic, suggested selected readings of *The Lusiads* as a way to assuage the *saudade* that the CEP's soldiers were undoubtedly going to encounter at

²³ Alfredo da Cunha (1863—1942). Poet and director of the Lisbon daily *Diário de Notícias*.

²⁴ Alfredo da Cunha, 'Famosa gente', *Boletim Patriótico da Universidade Livre*, no.1, July 1917, p. 6. The 'Doze de Inglaterra' and their heroic deeds provide the subject matter for much of Canto VI of the *Lusiads*. One of them – Magriço – was later to provide the official nickname for the 1966 World Cup squad – the *Magriços*.

²⁵ Sebastião de Magalhães Lima, 'Soldados de Portugal', *Boletim Patriótico da Universidade Livre*, no. 1, July 1917, pp. 7-8.

the front.²⁶ Finally, Aurélio da Costa Ferreira, Director of the Casa Pia foundation, wrote in his piece – ‘Camões and the war’ – that the Allies were fighting for Latin civilisation and that Camões was one of the most important figures in that same civilisation.²⁷ This is a crucial point; it was Camões’ erudite and internationally-renowned poetry that allowed Portugal to insert itself fully into the general war-related intellectual climate created in the Allied countries. Another figure heavily involved was Augusto Casimiro, poet, military officer, and republican. As Portugal joined the war, Casimiro rejoiced, and the hopes deposited by him in the conflict were demonstrated in the poem ‘To him who is first to fall’, dated ‘Spring of 1916 and of the world’, and of which the following sonnet is a part:

A que eu adoro teve o amor de quantos,
Por seu amor, a história coroou
Heróis, Poetas, semi-deuses, santos,
Filhos de Portugal que a Glória amou

Teve-lhe amor Nun'Álvares. Cantou
Luís de Camões o amor de seus encantos
Por ela a Raça foi ao mar!...E eu sou
Marinheiro e Poeta, como tantos...

Ó bem amada! Eu amo-te na imagem
Da minha terra, a idélica paisagem
Religiosa e doce, que sorri...

E hei-de noivar contigo, – ó Pátria! – quando
Herói por teu Amor, tombar, cantando,
A tua glória – a combater por ti.²⁸

[The one I adore was loved by those/ Whom History, for their
love, crowned/ Heroes, Poets, demigods, saints/ sons of Portugal
whom Glory loved

²⁶ Teófilo Braga recommended two specific verses: Canto III, verse XXI, which begins
Esta é a ditosa Pátria minha amada [This is the fortunate *Pátria*, my beloved]
and Canto IX, verse XVII:

O prazer de chegar à Pátria cara, [The pleasure of returning to the dear *Pátria*].

Teófilo Braga, ‘O poder da palavra’, *Boletim Patriótico da Universidade Livre*, no. 1, July 1917, p. 8.

²⁷ A. Aurélio da Costa Ferreira, ‘Camões e a guerra’, *Boletim Patriótico da Universidade Livre*, no. 1, July 1917, pp. 19-20.

²⁸ Augusto Casimiro, *Ao que tombar primeiro/A hora de Nun'Alvares*, (Oporto: Renascença Portuguesa, 1916).

She was loved by Nun' Álvares/ Luís de Camões sang his love for her charms/ For her the Race went to sea!... and I am/ Sailor and Poet, like so many others...

Oh beloved! I love you in the image/ of my land, the idyllic landscape/ which smiles, religious and tender

And I shall wed you – oh *Pátria* – when/ A hero for your love, I shall fall, singing/ Your glory – fighting for you.]

Casimiro was enthusiastically adhering in this poem to the idea – prevalent in European nationalist circles at the time – of national redemption through a blood sacrifice offered up by a patriotic youth. Powerful themes were thus being stirred up in Portugal's war propaganda which, although generally ignored during the conflict and the years that immediately followed it, would find a positive welcome under the unashamedly nationalist dictatorship which installed itself in 1926.

A final figure involved in the propaganda campaign was Jaime Cortesão, who, like so many of the already mentioned figures, was involved in Afonso Costa's Democratic party. Cortesão spoke at numerous public sessions in the early months of Portugal's belligerency, repeatedly urged the government to do more on the propaganda front and, like Casimiro, used the conflict as a source of poetic inspiration, establishing a link, through Camões and his work, between present-day Portugal and its heyday in the 16th century. This was made clear by the final verse of Cortesão's '*Cântico Lusíada*', whose first line, in printed in gothic typeset, was Camões' stanza '*Esta é a ditosa Pátria minha amada*':

Pátria, junta os cabelos desgrenhados
Enxuga o pranto, abafa as aflições;
Pulsem, batam de novo, desfraldados,
Num vento d'arrancada, os teus guiões!
Torna a soltar as asas sobre o Atlântico,
Resuscita no génio de Camões,

Paira por sobre o Mundo, sê um cantico!²⁹

[*Pátria*, gather up your unkept hair/ Dry your tears, stifle your fears/ May your standard beat, pulsate anew/ Driven by a sudden wind/ Spread once again your wings over the Atlantic/Ressurect through the genius of Camões/ Hover above the world, be a poem!]

Cortesão also published, in 1916, a play entitled *Infante de Sagres*. Henry the Navigator, like other national heroes, had to be remembered in times of national emergency, Cortesão explained in an interview to the Democratic party daily *O Mundo*:

We must be inspired by their noble example. Their life is the most fecund of fictions in clarity of will and spirit of sacrifice. These qualities, indispensable in individuals, are essential to the peoples who want to preserve their independence.³⁰

It was not just intellectual figures who resorted to Camões in order to communicate their view of the war. Similar expressions of devotion to Camões are recognisable in the invitation by the municipal chamber of the city of Coimbra to a solemn session following the German declaration of war:

The country is feeling the effect, in this tremendous crisis which confronts us, of that burning patriotic fever which was present in so many centuries of glory, courage, and heroism ... It seems that Caesar or that Napoleon have returned. The Latin Race will triumph, however, in spite of all, now that once again it has unsheathed its sword, now that once again it has made clear its generous soul in the defence of Liberty, of Reason, and of Justice.

Portugal was never unworthy – as the recent African campaigns testify – of the glorious days of the fifteenth century and of Afonso de Albuquerque. Luis de Camões sang:
‘...o peito ilustre lusitano
A quem Neptuno e Marte obedeceram’.

²⁹ Jaime Cortesão, ‘Cântico Lusíada’, *Águia*, April 1916.

³⁰ *O Mundo* (Lisbon), 10 December 1916.

[...the illustrious Lusitanian spirit/ obeyed by both Neptune and Mars.]

The verses of the divine Poet have always had the most brilliant reality in our national life.

*Portugal sempre grande.*³¹

Another organisation which, during the war, directed its efforts towards propaganda was the Junta Patriótica do Norte, based in Oporto.³² This was one of the few agencies involved in the production of visual propaganda, sponsoring a poster competition and suggesting, in its guidelines, that a literary caption taken from patriotic authors such as Camões, Almeida Garrett or Alexandre Herculano might be included. Not surprising, the themes adopted by it were strongly redolent of Camões' work. One of its posters showed a medieval knight and, under the image, the following passage from *The Lusiads*:

Desta arte o Português em fim castiga
A vil malícia, pérfida, inimiga.³³

[In this manner the Portuguese finally punish/ the enemy's vile,
perfidious malice]

The winning poster's message was also drawn from *The Lusiads*:

Vereis amor de Pátria, não movido
De prémio vil, mas alto e quasi eterno.³⁴

[You shall see love of *Pátria* moved not/ by vile profit, but high,
and almost eternal]

³¹ *Gazeta de Coimbra*, 18 March 1916. The quotation from *The Lusiads* is taken from Canto I, verse III, wherein Camões compares favorably the bellicose efforts of the Portuguese with those of the ancient Romans and Greeks. The verse continues,

Cesse tudo o que a Musa antiga canta,
Que outro valor mais alto se alevanta.

[Let all once sung by the ancient Muse cease/ For another, higher valour is rising]

³² The Junta published translations of its own propaganda material; in these it described itself as the North Portugal Patriotic League.

³³ The quotation is from *The Lusiads*, Canto I, verse XCII, culminating the account of a Portuguese victory in the island of Mozambique.

³⁴ The quotation is taken from Canto I, verse X, and forms a part of the Poet's address to King Sebastian; the love of country the poet mentions is his own, as reflected in the verses of *The Lusiads*.

Among the many initiatives taken by the Junta was an address distributed to soldiers departing from Portugal to France, in September 1917. In it soldiers were assured that, at this crucial moment in the country's history, the following cry, first written by Camões, was present in the breast of each and every Portuguese: 'Honour the *Pátria*, for her eyes are upon you'.³⁵ Even the Portuguese community in Rio de Janeiro, in a telegram of encouragement to General Tamagnini de Abreu, Commander-in-Chief of the Portuguese forces in France, described the Portuguese troops as being motivated by the 'divine energy' of Camões' words – 'Esta é a ditosa Pátria minha amada'.³⁶ Such institutional references to Camões make it clear that appeals to his work were not the preserve of intellectual mobilisation: a considerable part of the population – the republican electorate – was susceptible to its influence. Other examples of the omnipresent nature of Camões in Portugal's war effort can be found in popular literature written at the time of the conflict. *The Lusiads* was a frequently cited text, a simple and immediately recognisable device by which an author could indicate to the audience a character's patriotism. In Carlos D'Alcântara Carreira's *Raça Lusitana*, a one-act play set on the day Germany declared war against Portugal, Manuel, the main character, is a young man who dreams of going to war: and as the play begins he is reading *The Lusiads*. He will later claim that the only examples he needs in life are his father – a veteran officer of campaigns of colonial conquest in Africa now deep in depression – and *The Lusiads*. Another character, Maria, states, in order to

³⁵ Junta Patriótica do Norte, 'Aos soldados portugueses', Arquivo Histórico Militar, Lisbon, 1a Divisão, 35a Secção, caixa 714.

³⁶ Letter sent by the Grande Comissão Portuguesa 'Pró-Pátria' to General Tamagnini de Abreu, 14 June 1917. Arquivo Histórico Militar, Lisbon, 1a Divisão, 35a Secção, caixa 714.

show that she is not afraid of war and its consequences, ‘I know *The Lusíads* by heart! I know what I owe to the *Pátria!*’ In the final apotheotic scene, the old Major is finally roused from his slumber and apathy by the German ‘insult’, proclaiming

[...] we have a race that is ours and ours only, which produced saints and heroes, which gave the world new worlds, which crossed unknown seas, discovered and civilised a part of the universe, found, colonised, and then made independent that enormous pearl, our daughter and sister: Brazil. We have a race that created a great empire in India and still possesses a colonial empire in Africa; we have a race that, to this adorable continental strip which the ocean kisses, joined Madeira and the Azores, jewels of great value. We have our race, the immortal Lusitanian race, whose gospel is here (picks up *The Lusíads*, which he waves in his left hand) and whose flag is this one (picks up the Portuguese flag ... While Manuel, fixing on the ground the French flag that he holds with his left hand, waves the Portuguese flag frantically with his right, the Major unsheathes his sword and covers with it the national flag, pressing *The Lusíads* close to his chest.)³⁷

Another play, M. Velez Tavares’ *Uma heroína portuguesa (apelo à escola)*, written and staged in 1916, used the figure of Camões in a similar fashion. This play was set in a prosperous but illiterate rural dwelling, in which one exceptional character stood out – the educated daughter, Laura. There were some books in the house, including *The Lusíads*, which Laura knew and treasured - and the parents’ lack of knowledge about the great poet, while not negating their kindness, rendered them figures of fun, as is demonstrated by the following exchange:

Tomé (father): ‘Camões?!...Once, while chatting to *compadre* Eusébio, I heard of that chap...who by the way, was blind in one eye.

³⁷ Carlos d’Alcântara Carreira (Cymo Dalcan), *Raça lusitana* (Lisbon, Author’s edition, 1916).

Leonor (mother): 'Blind? Laura, why have you now decided to love blind men? Your father was right when he said that you were losing your marbles'.³⁸

The play ended with Laura fulfilling her patriotic duty by volunteering for a Red Cross nursing course. Another example of this didactic popular literature making an appeal to the figure of Camões can be found in Matias Lima's *Pela Pátria*, a six-part poem written in 1916 whose proceeds reverted to the Portuguese Red Cross. In the final part, after each section of the people had spoken in turn (the old, the young, the mothers, and the brides), the people, as a whole, spoke the following lines:

Bendita sejas, *Pátria* de Camões,
Ó terra ilustre de Pombal e Gama!
Jamais se percam tuas tradições,
Sigam os tempos, a crescer em fama.³⁹

[Blessed be thou, *Pátria* of Camões/ Illustrious land of Pombal and Gama!/ May your traditions never be lost/ May your fame grow as time passes]

The war, interventionists hoped, would forever mark out the Portuguese as a brave and valorous people who had joined a noble cause – the struggle for Civilization, Justice, Liberty and the rights of small nations – without preconditions or ulterior motives. This early, optimistic view of the interventionist sectors of Portuguese life was expressed in António de Oliveira's play, *Paz Bendita*, published in 1915. In the first act, which consists of a dialogue between the nations of Europe, Portugal steps forward and announces that:

O velho Portugal de tradições guerreiras
Também quer ajudar na luta essas bandeiras
Que vão conquistar para a humanidade

³⁸ M. Velez Tavares, *Uma heroína portuguesa (apelo à escola)* (Portalegre, Tipografia Democrática, 1916).

³⁹ Matias Lima, *Pela Pátria* (Oporto: Livraria Chardron, 1916).

Um século de Paz, uma era de igualdade.⁴⁰

[Old Portugal, of warlike traditions/ Wants to aid, in their struggle,
those flags/ Who are conquering for humanity/A century of Peace,
an era of equality]

Similar sentiments were expressed in the propaganda produced by the Cruzada das Mulheres Portuguesas, whose principal ideologue was Ana de Castro Osório, a tireless promoter of Portugal's war effort and of participation by women in that effort. Osório's wartime literary output was indeed impressive, and her appeals to patriotism inventive and untiring. With imagery borrowed, as ever, from *The Lusíads*, Osório wrote of the challenges facing Portugal, and described the attitude of those who feared the war, compared to the 'old man of Restelo' from the end of Canto IV of *The Lusíads*:

There have always been slow spirits, who utter their cry of terror before the beating of the splendid wings of the eagle as it follows its glorious destiny. Camões, sacred symbol of our *Pátria*, knew them well, and clothed them in impotent old age, crying out – useless cry! – on the beach of Restelo, as Vasco da Gama's caravels sail with their resplendent cross towards the new era, which is our own...If there are any Portuguese who doubt the destiny of their *Pátria* and, in an 'apagada e vil tristeza' compare the present, which they deem inferior, to the past, which they see only from a great distance, those Portuguese are not us women. We have an absolute trust in the destiny of Portugal, and without that trust life would not be worth living.⁴¹

Camões was, for republicans of all backgrounds, the ultimate symbol of Portuguese national identity. His poetry provided a living link with a period of Portuguese greatness whose recreation was now within grasp, thanks to the opportunities opened up by the war. This greatness was understood not only in abstract moral terms, but in very precise geopolitical

⁴⁰ António de Oliveira, *Paz bendita: Peça-poema sobre episódios da guerra actual* (Bragança, 2nd edition, 1915).

⁴¹ Ana de Castro Osório, *A Mulher Heróica* (Lisbon: Cruzada das Mulheres Portuguesas, 1916), p. 12.

terms as well, with the hitherto neglected colonial empire as its centre-piece. The use made of Camões in republican propaganda pointed to one of the benefits expected from participation in the war: the resurgence of Portugal as a colonial power. This, as Freeland indicates, was an integral part in the reappraisal of Camões carried out by republicans.⁴² Like interventionists in other European countries which enjoyed the luxury of a debate about whether or not to enter the war – notably Italy – the Portuguese hoped that the shock of war would lead to a national awakening: but for them such an awakening involved the realisation of the possibilities offered by, and the responsibilities inherent in, the Portuguese colonial empire. The Democratic newspaper *O Mundo*, for example, on 11 June 1916, announced the distribution, six days earlier, by the political club Grémio Montanha, of a poem entitled ‘Soldado Português’. Its message of intended colonial greatness was unmistakable:

É preciso que viva o nosso Portugal,
Como sempre viveu, nação colonial!
Cujo estandarte impôs, ao flutuar no sólo,
Respeito pelos seus, d'um pólo ao outro pólo
Cidadão português! Soldado da fileira!
Defende a tua Pátria! Honra a tua bandeira!⁴³

[Our Portugal must continue to be/ What it has always been, a
colonial nation/ Whose standard, fixed to the ground/ earned its

people respect, from one Pole to the other/ Portuguese citizen!
Rank-and-file soldier!/ Defend your *Pátria*! Honour your flag!]

O Mundo, as the main Democratic newspaper in the country, is a source of unique importance for those attempting to establish the nature of Portuguese wartime propaganda. It served as the conduit through which the ideas of republican intellectuals were popularised, and in its

⁴² Freeland, op. cit., pp. 61-63.

⁴³ *O Mundo* (Lisbon), 11 June 1916.

rhetoric Camões, empire and greatness were frequently brought together. José do Valle, a leading contributor, wrote on 3 April 1916 that

Modern Prussia, brutal and savage, does not have the right to offend the historic *Pátria* of the people who carried out one of the most extraordinary deeds of the Renaissance. Those who discovered India and who wrote *The Lusiads* with their soul and blood cannot suffer the insults of anyone else.⁴⁴

Here, then, was the twofold importance of *The Lusiads*: on the one hand it was the fruit of a mystical bond between a poet of sublime talent and of the deeds of a whole people, whose ‘soul and blood’ had provided the material for Camões’ writings and who were now, thanks to the Republic, in charge of their destiny; on the other hand, it provided the Portuguese with a programme to follow now that they found themselves at war with Germany. Through their devotion to the war effort, the people could make permanent Portugal’s prominent position among the nations, thus guaranteeing in perpetuity Portugal’s claim to the vast territories of Angola and Mozambique. Moreover, devotion to the war effort would turn the African empire, for the first time, into a popular cause, an entity recognised by all Portuguese as an asset and not as a financial millstone, as the scene of countless costly and deadly military campaigns, or as a feared final destination for criminals. These concerns were evident in an article published by *O Mundo* in July 1917:

Our future lies in the colonies. It is to keep them that we are fighting in France, on the Rovuma, and in the region of Niassa, and we do not have the right to spare any sacrifice in order to keep intact the remainder – still important – of the discoveries and conquests [...] It is not enough to see our political dominion cemented by the Powers [...] An intense wave of interest in the colonies must be provoked throughout the country; all goodwill

⁴⁴ *O Mundo* (Lisbon), 3 April 1916.

must be channelled, all energy harnessed to begin the task of developing the colonies. New Brazils can be opened up to satisfy the ambitions of the country's youth.⁴⁵

Jaime Cortesão, in his *Pela Pátria - Cartilha do Povo* – an attempt to explain the war to the people in the simplest of terms – reminded his audience that Angola was fourteen times the size of Portugal, and that thousands of Portuguese lived and worked there. ‘This gives our country great importance among the other nations’, Cortesão wrote, adding that Germany, whose colonies were inferior, had already tried to take Angola and Mozambique from Portugal during the early years of the conflict. Ana de Castro Osório, in her 1918 book *De como Portugal foi chamado à guerra: História para crianças*, made this point very clearly: ‘Never must it be taught in Portugal that our Fatherland is small, for that is not the truth. And whenever before a Portuguese such lies are uttered, it will be his duty to defend himself as if from a real insult’.⁴⁶ The importance of turning the Portuguese, through the war, into an ‘imperial’ people (a preoccupation which would manifest itself more strongly under Salazar’s New State) was, all the more important as in the years preceding the war speculation about the division, by Britain and Germany, of Portugal’s colonies had been rife.⁴⁷ According to Prince Lichnowsky, Germany’s pre-war Ambassador to London, the British were willing to appease German ambitions in Africa at the expense of the Portuguese.⁴⁸ For the republican leadership, this was an ever-present threat, and in Britain’s reluctance to allow Portugal to enter the war in 1915 many in government saw a plot to strip Portugal of her colonies as a

⁴⁵ *O Mundo* (Lisbon), 22 July 1917.

⁴⁶ She continued, ‘What would be best for us Portuguese [...] is for Portugal to become what it was in the 16th Century, and what, in truth, it never stopped being, despite its decadence, more apparent than real [...] the beautiful metropolis of a great and global colonial empire, the handsome capital of a nation universally formed by the Portuguese nation, wherever it may be found, linked by the same conscience, strengthened by the same great and noble pride of being Portuguese’.

⁴⁷ Hipólito de la Torre Gomez, *Na encruzilhada da Grande Guerra* (Lisbon: Editorial Estampa, 1980), p. 106.

possible diplomatic solution to the military stalemate on the Western Front. Thus War Minister Norton de Matos, who had considerable African experience, stated, during a Council of Ministers' meeting, that England's position towards Portugal had only two possible explanations: 'It is either a deal with Spain, or Sir Edward Grey covets our colonies.'⁴⁹ French diplomatic sources indicate that the threat to the Portuguese colonial empire was alive and well among Portugal's own allies during the war; France only thwarted Belgian ambitions over the Cabinda enclave because of her own hopes to acquire the territory, and coveted other possessions on the west coast of Africa: Portuguese Guinea and the Ouidah Fort at Dahomey.⁵⁰ In order for France to acquire Cabinda, the French thought, Belgium would have to be compensated with territory in northern Angola, leaving Portugal to content itself with distributed German territory.⁵¹ Another threat to the empire was the proposed creation in Africa of a large, neutral African state, discussed in the 1917 London conference of socialist parties, at which the small Partido Socialista Português was represented, and news of which raised a small storm of protest in Portugal.⁵²

With hindsight, what is remarkable about the republicans' colonial rhetoric, apart from the gulf that separated it from the reality of Portugal's colonial policy, is that it is virtually indistinguishable from that of Salazar's New State. Nuno Monteiro and António Costa Pinto briefly trace the way in which 'republicans linked the "national" and the "colonial"

⁴⁸ Lichnowsky would claim after the war that the territory set to change hands included 'the whole of Angola up to the twentieth degree of longitude ...the valuable islands of San Thome [sic] and Principe ...[and] the Northern part of Mozambique'. Prince Lichnowsky, *Heading for the Abyss* (London: Constable, 1928), p. 59.

⁴⁹ A.H. de Oliveira Marques (ed.), *O segundo governo de Afonso Costa, 1915—1916* (Lisbon: Europa-América, 1974), p. 114.

⁵⁰ MAE, Paris, Guerre 1914-1918, Afrique, Possessions Portugaises I. Dossier Général, 1613 - Aout 1914-Mai 1918. Letter, Minister of the Colonies to MAE, 10 January 1917; Minister to the Belgian Government to MAE, 17 September 1917.

⁵¹ MAE, Paris, Guerre 1914 - 1918, Possessions Portugaises I. Dossier Général, 1613 (Aout 1914—Mai 1918). Report sent by the Minister of the Colonies to the MAE.

questions’, arguing that ‘this modern nationalist linkage shaped Portuguese foreign policy until the transition to democracy in the 1970s’.⁵³ To be patriotic was to be devoted to the preservation and development of the colonial empire. This paper bears out their views, but with the proviso that it was during the Great War, and as a result of the risks incurred by Portugal’s belligerency, that this link was established with such urgency as to remain potent for decades to come. The war failed to consolidate republican rule in Portugal, as was seen by the Sidónio Pais’ experiments with presidentialism and corporativism in 1918, and the 1919 monarchist rising; but it also failed to consolidate the colonial empire in Africa. As a result, the craving for respectability, stability, and security in the colonies would remain in place only to be exploited by Salazar in order to legitimise his rule. The New State’s commitment to the defence and the development of Portugal’s colonial empire was to be the passport that allowed many committed republicans to accept Salazar’s brand of nationalist and authoritarian politics. The defence of the empire was more important to them than the defence of democratic politics.

Despite the fear of the rural masses which had led the Democrats to enshrine a literate, rather than a universal, male vote, the belief that ‘the people’ were essentially patriotic played an important role in republican ideology. This belief in the innate

⁵² See, for example, *O Dia* (Lisbon), 3 October 1917; *O de Aveiro* (Aveiro), 7 October 1917; *O Combate* (Lisbon), 23 September 1917, 30 September 1917. This plan for a large, neutral, African state found its way into the British Labour party’s official war aims.

⁵³ Nuno G. Monteiro and António Costa Pinto, *op. cit.*, p. 212.

patriotism of the Portuguese, which would be allowed to spring forth once the influence of the Crown, the Catholic Church and local notables had been curtailed, was to have serious consequences during the war, as the State's relatively weak pro-war propaganda was more than matched by a fierce anti-war, anti-Democratic, and anti-republican counter-mobilisation. The hoped-for support for the war as a national enterprise did not materialise. The republican interpretation of Portuguese history as being the work not of single figures – kings, princes, and navigators – but rather of a whole nation striving consistently for liberty might have formed an effective basis for the wartime political mobilisation, had it been matched by political generosity on the part of the Sacred Union – but this was not to be. Neither was the war widely interpreted as a sign of the resurgence of the Portuguese 'race' – a concept dear to the republicans – at a time when the future of Europe, and therefore of the colonial world, was being defined. Wartime political mobilisation in Portugal suffered both from the lack of republicans and from the existing republicans' inability to reach out to other groups, including them in a wider national consensus. It was one thing to enthuse the urban middle classes with selected readings from Camões; it was quite another to convince a large and conservative peasantry of central and northern Portugal, the landless labourers of the south, and the emerging industrial working class of the need to defend the Republic. In the end, republicans' reliance on Camões as a vehicle for propaganda in the modern world blinded them to some obvious truths. War propaganda based on Camões could only excite other republicans, already susceptible to a nationalist and populist interpretation made of the poet's work. What it could not do, however, was to convince sceptical minds who understood the very real limits set by the Great Powers to Portugal's ambitions, to educate those who understood little of what the war

was about, and to convert millions to the republican creed. For all the hopes deposited by interventionists in their war policy, it left them only with an unstable regime, a vulnerable colonial empire, and a host of committed domestic enemies, ready to strike at any opportunity.

List of publications to date:

No. 1. *The American Dream in Spanish Poetry: Some Early Twentieth-Century Visions of the United States*, **Dr Terence McMullan**, Queen's University Belfast, February 2000.

No. 2. *Autobiography and Intertextuality in Carajicomedia by Juan Goytisolo*, **Dr Stanley Black**, University of Ulster, November 2000.

No. 3. *Radical Propensities and Juxtapositions: Defamiliarization and Difficulty in Borges and Beckett*, **Dr Ciaran Cosgrove**, Trinity College Dublin, February 2002.

No. 4. *Voices From Lusophone Borderlands: The Angolan Identities Of António Agostinho Neto, Jorge Arrimar And José Eduardo Agualusa*, **Dr David Brookshaw**, University of Bristol, March 2002.

No. 5. *National Identity – a Revisitation of the Portuguese Debate*, **Professor Onésimo Teotónio Almeida**, Brown University, Rhode Island, USA. October 2002.

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No. 13. *Remembering the Spanish Civil War*, **Dr Alison Ribeiro de Menezes**, University College Dublin, April 2005.