

THE RECEPTION OF VIRIATHUS' FIGURE IN CONTEMPORARY PORTUGAL: BETWEEN THE ARTS AND LETTERS (A FIRST ATTEMPT)

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Abstract

Viriathus, who resisted the expansion of Rome in Hispania in the middle of the 2nd century BCE, appears in several identity and nationalist construction narrative typologies in Spain and Portugal. The use of this historical figure becomes particularly evident from the 19th century onward and, in Portugal, with exceptional clarity during the 'Estado Novo' regime (1926/1933-1974), a circumstance that has been analysed in academia (Guerra; Fabião, 1992).

We will focus, however, on the representation of Viriathus in the visual arts and especially on stage from the end of the 20th to the early 21st centuries without detracting from specific works (especially literary ones), further expanding the first essay carried out in this context (Guerra; Fabião, 1998) to find a hypothetical iconographic and narrative model and scrutinize its origin, objectives, and consequences. Such an analysis would remain truncated if we failed to contemplate this figure in a popular context and public spaces, which we also intend to achieve, even if only in a popular context and public spaces, which we also intend to achieve, even tentatively.

Keywords

Viriathus; Contemporary Portugal; Nationalism; Arts; Literature.

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Resumo

Viriato, que terá enfrentado a expansão de Roma na Hispânia, em meados do séc. II a. C., está presente em diferentes tipologias narrativas de construção identitária e nacionalista, tanto em Espanha, quanto em Portugal. Utilização que se torna particularmente evidente a partir do século XIX e, no caso português, com especial clareza durante o regime do 'Estado Novo' (1926/1933-1974), circunstância que foi já analisada em contexto académico (Guerra; Fabião, 1992).

Centraremos, no entanto, o nosso olhar na representação de Viriato em artes visuais e, sobretudo, de palco, entre finais do séc. XX e inícios do XXI, embora sem desmerecer determinadas obras, nomeadamente literárias, expandindo o primeiro ensaio realizado neste âmbito (Guerra; Fabião, 1998), de modo a encontrar um hipotético modelo iconográfico e narrativo, escrutinando a sua origem, objetivos e consequências. Análise que permaneceria truncada se não contemplássemos a utilização desta figura em contexto popular e espaço público, o que pretendemos de igual modo concretizar, mesmo que de forma ainda sumária.

Palavras-chave

Viriato; Portugal contemporâneo; Nacionalismo; Artes; Literatura.

“O que os deuses ditarem para o seu povo hoje, será a raça que forjamos para o amanhã” (Viriathus, in the film *Viriato*, 2019).

1. Some previous contexts

Viriathus (*Lusitania*), Jugurtha (*Numidia*), Vercingetorix (*Gaul*), Arminius (*Germania*), Decebalus (*Dacia*), Boudica (*Britannia*), among others.

These few names refer to those who, fighting the Roman presence, have remained in history as heroic figures for some and as barbarians for others. Names that have received distinctions by the way they courageously fought against Rome, united by their equally tragic ends (Matyszak, 2013).

Viriathus is one of them.

Associated with the resistance of the people indigenous to Portugal against the Romans, his figure often serves to represent a will toward independence in the face of hegemonic projects that mark some of the pages that will constitute the history of Portugal. The same occurred in other territories under the domain of Imperial Rome—even if the Renaissance and humanism have instituted the prevalence for the appreciation for Romanitas²; a particularity several geographies and cultural realities share and that fascinates the European intelligentsia throughout time. Such rapture was first nurtured during the “Dual Monarchy” (1580-1640), as can be grasped from *Monarchia lusitana* (the Portuguese Monarchy) (1597-1609) by monk, writer, and historian Friar Bernardo de Brito (1569-1617) and in the later epic poem *Viriato Trágico em Poema Heroico* [Tragic Viriathus in Heroic Poem] (Coimbra, 1699) by a military service member, poet, and writer Braz Garcia de Mascarenhas (1596-1656).

More than a century later, a romanticized, lyrical, and epic vision of Viriathus as a shepherd—inspired by the 18th-century *beau sauvage* or by the biblical and Christian “good shepherd”—opposes the moral and political decadence imputed to the absolutist regime equated to imperial Rome (Lens Tuero, 1994; Sánchez Moreno, 2002: 25). A feeling aroused in Europe as it was ravaged by Napoleonic troops, against which united wills rose in the name of shared identities. Thus, figures such as Viriathus unsurprisingly centralize historical narratives in geographies lacking

² In Portugal, the example of Dominican friar and humanist in line with his time, André de Resende (1498-1573), highlights his praise of the Roman presence in Portugal, especially in Évora, the municipality in which he was born and died (Resende, 1996).

although political-administrative legitimacy. However, the Portuguese scenario seems to dispense with this expedient compared to coeval realities despite the devastation from French invasions. This may explain the late integration into Portuguese academia of archaeology, and of other resources within the framework of monumental preservation that existed in different countries. However, nothing entirely prevents Viriathus and Sertório from becoming important tutelary figures during the Peninsular War (1807-1814) and references for the union between royalty and the Court aristocracy (Vlachou, 2008).

However, the position of writer, poet, and historian Almeida Garrett (1799-1954) may cause a slight surprise. In 1845, he dedicated the poems *A caverna de Viriato*³ (Viriathus' cave) and *A sombra de Viriato* (Viriathus' shadow) in his work *Flores sem fruto* (Fruitless flowers)⁴ to the Lusitanian leader. Exalting him as a liberator of rural Lusitania, the poet takes the opportunity to criticize the contemporary 19th-century national politics in the following passage from stanza VII of *A caverna de Viriato*: "That to defend the homeland and freedom // In those times sufficed // Honor and loyalty".

Portugal faces a long and challenging period that is worsened by the independence of Brazil and the liberal struggles that deeply wound the social fabric of the time (which echoes to this day). The result is the victory of a constitutional monarchy led by charismatic and intrepid figures – such as Viriathus – who, among other aspects, seek to return harmony to the Portuguese territory and internal politics by a gradual and late construction – in comparison to other Western contexts – of an empire. In this context, an inspired A. Garrett reproduces (as expected given his training) classical ideals, such as those of freedom and patriotism. However, nothing can prevent the disturbing climate stemming from the need for the often far from evident and peaceful coexistence between the individuality principle Liberalism praises, on the one hand, and Catholic

³ Still in exile in London, A. Garrett wrote and published, in 1825, in the pages of *O Popular, a political, literary, and commercial newspaper* published in London, the poem *Caverna de Viriato*, a song set in a very particular political context in Portugal - the liberal struggles - which was the reason for his exile in the English capital.

⁴ We find similar titles in other publications, the best known of which is *Les Fleurs du mal* (The Flowers of Evil) by French poet Charles Baudelaire (1821-1867), published in 1857, considered a landmark of modern and symbolist poetry (which was produced mainly from the 1840s to the 1850s). Before that, English theologian, academic, writer, poet, and Catholic cardinal John Henry Newman (1801-1890) published *Flowers Without Fruit* in 1833, reflecting the Victorian values of restraint and the greater relevance of actions on emotions.

training and education, on the other; between a liberal political order and political system, on the one hand, and a prominently Catholic religiosity, on the other.

Classically trained, which still superimposes respect for classical antiquities onto that nurtured by national antiquities and reinforced by the neoclassical movement, the choice of *the cave* for the first of his poems dedicated to Viriathus may suggest the allegory of “The Myth of the Cave” from Plato’s “The Republic.”

From this angle of approach, A. Garrett reiterates the role of leaders in building a new reality, explaining, catalysing, organizing, leading, and sacrificing their freedom in the name of a larger project: the community. Moreover, the cave offers a universal symbol of origin and initiation by (re)birth, often used by the Freemasonry in which Almeida Garret was initiated c. 1817, upon which he adopts the name of the Roman Quintus Mucius Scaevola (140–82 BCE), considered one of the most important jurists of his time.

Rereading *A sombra de Viriato* will confirm these putative interpretations.

Referring to the shadows projected inside the Platonic cave, A. Garrett warns of the danger of distorted and prejudiced ideas and the indispensability of proper actual knowledge outside meaning made all the interesting enjoyable by looking at the epigraph the author chose: “Yet came there the morrow, // That shines out, at last [, in] the longest night” by Irish writer, poet, and politician Thomas Moore (1779-1852), who authored successful compositions adopted by fellow nationalists, whom A. Garrett knows well at least since his exile in London in the mid-1920s.

In any case, this hypothetical affiliation of contemporary Portuguese people in Lusitania is contradicted by authors such as historian and politician Joaquim P. de Oliveira Martins (1845-1894)—and retrieved by several others, such as poet and writer Fernando Pessoa (1888-1935) in his poem *Viriato* in his book *Mensagem* (Pessoa, 1934)⁵, the third stanza of which recalls the epigraph Almeida Garrett chose for his poem (*vide supra*). Pessoa’s *premorning* precisely refers to Viriathus reborn from the cave as a hopeful redeemer.

⁵ “If the doing-and-feeling soul knows // Only by remembering what it forgot, // We, as a race, owe our living // To the memory of your instinct. // A nation, since you returned to life, // A people, since it found itself reborn— // Either you or what you augured— // So Portugal was born. // Your beings like cold // Light just before dawn, // The surely up-and-coming day // In premorning, nothingness confused.”

Thus, we better understand the article two Latinists and classical archaeologists, Amílcar Guerra and Carlos Fabião, who are researchers and professors at the Faculty of Arts at Universidade de Lisboa, published in 1992: *Viriato: genealogia de um mito* [Viriato: genealogy of a myth]. This very suggestive and fitting title follows the line of analysis in the Anglo-Saxon historiography of archaeology, which received the influence of the approach to the past of archaeological science defined by the Canadian anthropologist and archaeologist Bruce G. Trigger (1937-2006).

Steering away from traditional studies in the area (which list names, spaces, and projects), Guerra and Fabião seek to understand the interest in Viriathus in their space and time, contextualizing the narratives specific prevailing agendas built about him.

Hence, their symptomatic choice for the epigraph of their article is an excerpt from Luiz Vaz de Camões' epic, whose 500th anniversary we celebrate in 2024: "What glorious laurels Viriatus gained// How oft his sword with Roman gore was stained// And what fair palms their martial ardor crown'd // When led to battle by the chief renowned⁶." (Camões *apud* Guerra; Fabião, 1992: 9). This circumstance is more significant when the moment Portugal and the rest of Europe experienced in the early 1990s seems to demand figures such as Viriathus.

The Berlin Wall still fell amidst a mixture of euphoria, intrepidity, perplexity, hope, and caution. It began a new era that deems itself better, strengthened by developing the territories that adhere to the then-still European Economic Community. Portugal configures one such case, joining it in June 1985. Despite the apparent economic advantages of its entry, many voices oppose it and fear that the new condition of the country will shake, blur, mitigate, or eliminate its identity, the particularities of its people's ways of being and doing. This explains award-winning filmmaker Manoel de Oliveira's (1908-2015) 'Non ou a Vã Glória de Mandar' (No, or the Vain Glory of Command) (1990)⁷, which retraces the memories of devastating wars for the country, from Viriathus' resistance to the African disaster. The following year, the theatre company 'O Bando' (The Gang) stages their play 'Viviriato',⁸ which is based on the work of Braz Garcia de Mascarenhas (*vide supra*) in a scathing criticism of the roots and nature of warmongering (1991) during the invasion of Croatia by federal Yugoslavian forces.

<https://www.gutenberg.org/files/32528/32528-h/32528-h.htm>

⁷ 'Non,' ou A Vã Glória de Mandar (1990) [Trailer] (youtube.com).

⁸ Viviriato (1991) - Teatro O Bando.

This to understand the retrieval of the 'Asterix from Lusitania,' Viriathus; a figure which provides the background that allows us to understand the retrieval of the 'Asterix from Lusitania,' Viriathus, a figure that has been in the Portuguese collective imagination for a long time.

2. Viriathus in Portuguese erudite production: a synopsis

However, certain specific agendas (mainly nationalist ones) retrieve not only Viriathus but also figures such as Arminius, who was elevated to the national hero during the unification of Germany at the end of the 19th century and associated with the construction of the hegemonic National Socialist project⁹.

Ignoring the problem of characterizing Lusitanians, their origin, geographical area of influence, and association with the 'Portuguese' – addressed by authorities in this matter (Guerra; Fabião 1992; 1998), we emphasize that "It is truly when national independence is in danger, and patriotic feelings impose themselves as an imperative of citizenship that the old 'ancestors' are invoked" (Guerra; Fabião, 1992: 17; our translation).

The same goes for Viriathus.

Portuguese the start, the influential figure of Braz Garcia de Mascarenhas, a fervent advocate of the Portuguese monarchical restoration in Viriato Trágico, draws a parallel between the Lusitanians and the Portuguese, and the territories of Lusitania and Portugal.

An affiliation firmly denied in the middle of the 19th century by writer, historian, and journalist Alexandre Herculano (1810-1877) – in a position followed until the beginning of the following century, especially in school textbooks (Guerra; Fabião, 1992: 18) – who immersed himself in literary romanticism under the influence of the medieval revivalism that populates the collective imagination with knights boldly fighting the Moorish presence, that is, the foreign presence in the territory. Moreover, 19th-century Europe experienced historical-cultural contexts that created justifying conditions for a fresh look at classical texts and the rehabilitation of historical figures and episodes that had contributed to constructing presumed nationalities and aggrandizing and perpetuating them.

⁹ On this subject, see the article by Martin Lindner and Nils Steffensen 'Germanic Migrations – Reception and Self-perception in the Federal Republic of Germany' in this dossier.

Despite the apparent exceptions to the still dominant discourse about the association between Lusitanians and Portuguese, José Leite de Vasconcelos (1858-1941) was one of its most notorious defenders when he claimed the affiliation between the Lusitans and the Portuguese in the first volume of his *Religiões da Lusitânia na parte que principalmente se refere a Portugal* (Religions of Lusitania in the part that mainly concerns Portugal) (Lisboa, 1897). However, the context of its publication will explain this position a little better. Portugal in general and Lisbon in particular are on the eve of celebrating the IV Centenary of the Discovery of the Sea Route to India, still in the aftermath of the political, economic, cultural, and mental earthquake due to the 'British Ultimatum' (1890) against Portuguese interests in Africa (Campos, 1990).

However, German archaeologist, historian, and philologist Adolf Schulten (1870-1960) published the Portuguese translation of *Viriato* in 1927, with a preface by a physician, physical anthropologist, prehistory specialist, and university professor A. A. Mendes Correia (1888-1960) at a time when Spain sought to appropriate his figure as a national hero and Portugal reinforced the dictatorial military regime leading to 'Estado Novo' (1926/1933-1974), titling the brigade of Portuguese fighting alongside Franco-favouring troops in the Spanish Civil War (1936-1939) as *Viriatos*, also strengthening the military character of this historical affiliation. A character was retrieved in 1961 with the army "*Operação Viriato*" in Angola during the colonial war (1961-1974).

In this context, Viriathus becomes *the* representation of the warrior forged in the rugged landscape of the Serra da Estrela region, urging unity for the group's survival; imagery that statesman António de Oliveira Salazar (1889-1970) strengthens and appropriates as a central figure in national mythology (Pastor Muñoz, 2006), whose personality had been forged in the escarpment where he was born. In 1940, the commemorations of the Double Centenary of the Foundation and Restoration of the Independence of Portugal (1140 and 1640) also reinvigorated such imagery. The inauguration of Viriathus' statue by Spanish sculptor and medalist Mariano Benlliure (1862-1947) and the speech of ethnographer and writer Jaime Lopes Dias (1890-1977) "*o nosso querido Portugal: livre, independente e imortal*" [Our dear Portugal: free, independent, and immortal] (Dias, 1953: 14) in Viseu in the same year also evince this circumstance.

But how to reconcile the resistance to the Roman conquest and the exaltation of the benefits of classical culture, as A. Guerra and C. Fabião pertinently point out, especially during the Portuguese colonial war (Guerra; Fabião, 1992: 21)? How to harmonize imperialist interests and

desires for independence at a time when historiography tends history to scrutinize all kinds of actors in history increasingly? The gradual decrease in the presence in school textbooks of the constructed figure of Viriathus as the “guerrilla fighter” leading his people in the struggle against the occupier precisely and unsurprising coincides with the colonial war. However, based on of based on this evidence, according to these authors, two other factors refer to the development of research on the history and the evolution of the pedagogical perspectives defined for basic education (which then begin to move away from the discipline) (Guerra; Fabião, 1992: 22).

However, other justifications can be offered.

We forward another additional hypothesis since the gradual distancing from Viriathus’ Lusitanian deeds seems to have occurred mainly at the end of the 1960s, with their references being suppressed since 1968 (Guerra; Fabião, 1992: 22).

It was precisely in 1968 that, following the riots due to May ‘68 in Paris, student demonstrations took place at Universidade de Lisboa, culminating in that which took place in Coimbra the following year. However, this followed a particular temporal coincidence between the constitutional revision of 1951 – which defined the new administrative division of the Portuguese extra-European territories from colonies into overseas provinces, abolishing the concept of the ‘Portuguese Colonial Empire’ in the wake of the international pressures that had been placed on the ‘Estado Novo’ regime – and the publication of *Viriato: capitão da Lusitânia* (Viriathus: captain of Lusitania) (1954) by military and National Assembly deputy Alfredo Pereira da Conceição (1911-1972).

3. Viriathus in the Portuguese iconography at the turn of the 21st century: the construction of a collective image memory

Viriathus’ representation is quite stereotyped as it is coated with Greco-Latin ideological archetypes and transmuted into a national myth modeled around arts and letters. Thus, it will scarcely differ from the type of reproduction for other figures who, also fighting the Roman presence, are also elevated to national myths, such as those at the beginning of this short text (*vide supra*).

In fact, and again resorting to A. Guerra, we learn that, among other situations, “Viriato, as an essential mark of the ‘Portuguese genius,’ is

found in the arch of Rua Augusta.” (Guerra, 2023; our translation), placed there more than a century after its original conception, coexisting with the sculptural representation of Nuno Álvares Pereira (1360-1431), Vasco da Gama (1460/69-1524), and Marquis of Pombal (1699-1782) in an attempt to synthesize pages considered, at the time, fundamental in the history of the territory; a decision that ignored the heated debates around what is understood or intended to be the origin of the Portuguese people and the opposition of opinions emanating from the Lisbon Academy of Sciences (Guerra, 1992; 2023, our translation) as “Viriato constitutes an essential food of the dominant nationalism” (*Ibid*), thus associated with the figure of the leader who groups and guides everyone.

It is certainly neither the first non-literary representation of Viriathus nor will it be the last one.

For example, in April 1799, Portuguese painter Francisco Vieira Portuense (1765-1805), who had lived in London for some years after leaving Italy, is encouraged by Portuguese ambassador D. João de Almeida e Mello e Castro (1756-1814) to show his *Juramento de Viriato* (Viriathus’ Oath), of pre-romantic inspiration with a nationalist bias, at the Exhibition Of Royal Academy of Arts, later offered to Prince Regent Dom João (1767-1826), who placed it at the Ajuda Palace in Lisbon before having it transported to Brazil with the rest of the Portuguese Court in 1807, where it was lost. Even so, there remains the engraving by Francesco Bartolozzi (1727-1815), co-founder of the *Royal Academy of Arts* (London, 1768) and a figure of strong influence in the London artistic circuits (Gomes, 1995: 87), dated the following year, with whom Vieira Portuense became acquainted in the English capital.

Under the number three hundred, this work, included in the catalog of the Exhibition of the Royal Academy of Arts published in the same year, is described with unexpected detail, possibly due to the widespread ignorance of the subject and even of its author:

Viriato, chief of the Lusitanians, exhorts his companions to take vengeance for the perfidy of Galba, who, under cover of a deceitful reconciliation, orders the Lusitanians, with confidence had presented themselves unarmed to negotiate a treaty of peace, to be unmercifully butchered; and at the sight of the dead corps of the men, women, and children slain were slain, Viriato swears, by putting his hand, and those of his companions, in the wounds of the virgins yet palpitating, that they will not lay down their arms until they are revenged on the cruel invaders of their country, and the perfidious enemy of the human race (*Royal Academy of Arts*, 1799: 13).

The same title also appears in other works by contemporary Portuguese authors. This is the case that one signed by painter, collector, and professor of drawing at the Royal Academy of Maritime and Trade Affairs of the City

of Porto (1803-1837) José Teixeira Barreto (1763-1810), made between the end of the 18th century and the beginning of the 19th century, and incorporated into Soares dos Reis National Museum (Porto) collections.

Here, we must see how the theme of the 'Oath' receives a salient expression in this end-of-the-century period—the eve of the French Revolution (1789)—inspiring one of the works that surely, indeed, most influences others in this context. We refer to the painting *Le Serment des Horaces* (1784) by Frenchman Jacques-Louis David (1748-1825), open to the public in the Louvre, which symbolizes the principle of personal sacrifice in the name of the general good, especially the homeland. This theme was reinforced throughout the Napoleonic campaigns, contributing to the visual construction of national myths that started in the artistic production of a historical context and had a neoclassical and romantic aesthetic language.

However, between the initial project and the completion of the aforementioned Rua Augusta Arch (see above), at least one other work incorporates Viriathus' figure.

This plaster bas-relief is entitled—once again—*Viriathus' Oath*, by Francisco de Paula Araújo Cerqueira (1808-1855), executed and presented at the Exhibition of the Academy of Fine Arts in Lisbon in 1843. Designed by painter Tomás José da Anunciação (1818-1879), the piece is supervised by painter, illustrator, and director António Manuel da Fonseca (1796-1890) and engraved by painter António Tomás da Fonseca (1822-1894) (Duarte: 2013: 261; 267). It belongs to the artistic collection of the Faculty of Fine Arts at Universidade de Lisboa and, in 2014, it is part of the temporary exhibition 'Almeida Garrett—a Viagem e o Património,' evocative of the 160th anniversary of the death of this intellectual, which is open to the public at the National Pantheon in Lisbon.

Years pass, and we witness the last great historical novel written on Viriathus. We witness the last great historical novel written about Viriathus's figure: *A voz dos deuses. Memórias de um companheiro de Viriato* (The voice of the gods. Memoirs of a Viriathus' companion) by journalist and writer João Aguiar (1943-2010), published in 1984.

It was an exciting year and title. Portugal had resorted to help and intervention from the International Monetary Fund in the previous year and is to join the then European Economic Community in a year. In this context, Viriathus' feat emerges as a divine mission told by a homodiegetic narrator at a time in which the historical novel becomes particularly present in literary production in Portugal, especially fictional biographies; fiction that, in the words of the author, will be more credible than the data

collected by readers in specialized texts, despite the effort to decentralize archaeological research that benefits the study of autochthonous historical phenomena:

I am sincerely convinced that the Viriathus readers will find these pages closer to the historical and factual Viriathus than the traditional image of the rude shepherd from Hermínios bravely entrenched in his Cave in Viseu; even because Viriathus was not born in Hermínios (that is, Serra da Estrela) and the Cave is a fortification that has nothing to do with the Lusitanian chief (Aguiar, 1985: 7; our translation).

The novel quickly became a success, evinced by its successive sold-out editions, a writing style that hooks readers from the first to the last page, and its recognized historical accuracy as it is based on data collected from ancient documentation and the most recent archaeological studies. Nevertheless, the first significant syntheses took place at the end of the following decade, with temporary exhibitions organized at the National Museum of Archaeology with the respective reference catalogs still up to today: *De Ulisses a Viriato. O primeiro milénio a.C.* [From Ulysses to Viriato. The first millennium B.C.] (1996) and *Por Terras de Viriato. Arqueologia da Região de Viseu* [Across Viriathus' Lands. Archaeology of the Viseu Region] (2000).

The achieved success will justify its adaptation to the stage.

This happened in the summer of 1999 when actor, director, and director of the theatre group *Fatias de Cá* (Tomar; Ribatejo, 1979) Carlos Carvalheiro (1955-) premiered the show *Viriato* as part of *Festa do Rio e das Aldeias, do concelho de Vila Nova da Barquinha, no cenário natural e idílico do Castelo de Almourol*, erected north of a small island in the middle of the Tejo River¹⁰. Repeated in Conimbriga as part of the *Encontros de Teatro de Tema Clássico Conimbriga-Aeminium-Sellium* (Ferreira, 1999), the show has several editions until 2021, with the following two (2022 and 2023) taking place at the Tomar bullring. The action takes place at dusk for greater dramatic charge to the narrative, in which dozens of actors, extras, and the audience participate and are guests of honor at Viriathus' wedding banquet.

Interestingly, in the early autumn of this same year, 1999, Teatro Regional da Serra stages the play *Enclave do Montemuro* at Teatro da Comuna (Lisbon). Produced by Steve Johnstone, the text is the responsibility of British director and playwright Peter Cann (1955-) and actress Thérèse Collins. Inspired by the legends of Viriathus and the Anglo-Saxon Eadric

¹⁰ VILA NOVA DA BARQUINHA – Teatro “Viriato” em Almourol | Rádio Hertz (radiohertz.pt).

the Wild, the play revolves around the region of a country that still resists the foreign power occupying it, like the Gaulish village of Asterix. Let us remember that 1999 is a critical year for the consolidation of the European project, with the start of the third stage of the Economic and Monetary Union, the holding of the European parliamentary elections, and the first sessions of the new Scottish Parliament and the National Assembly of Wales, evincing the identity and nationalist nature of the text.

As with *A to Voz dos Deuses* (vide supra), and *the success obtained justifies a new adaptation for the theatre*.

Now, in 2003, the initiative comes from a lawyer, professor, politician, and president of the United Nations General Assembly, Diogo Freitas do Amaral (1941-2019), with the title *Viriato: peça em três actos* [Viriathus: play in three acts]. Staged at Teatro da Trindade in Lisbon in the same year by director Jorge Fraga, it is “a show in which the universe of politics is, again, on of backstabbing”¹¹ (our translation), opting for a scenography that refers the viewer to the Viriato monument in Viseu¹².

The motto of the play proves to be quite pertinent; three years after entering the single currency, European institutions imposed new fiscal rules on Portugal, limiting its budget deficit to a certain percentage of its gross domestic product. However, the structure of public accounts remains incompatible with the defined target, a context that contributed to the defeat of its Socialist Party in the December 2001 elections and the subsequent resignation of Prime Minister António Guterres (1949-) due to the lack of the minimum political conditions to avoid the collapse of Portuguese public finances. The XV Constitutional Government of Portugal, led by José M. Durão Barroso (1956-), recognized this painful situation. Portugal experienced a deep economic downturn. Freitas do Amaral, who had supported his candidacy, was disappointed with his performance and the support he granted at the beginning of 2003 to the invasion of Iraq by the United States of America.

But J. Aguiar’s book does not only inspire the politician and the director.

Much earlier, its content had motivated conductor, composer, and artistic director Jorge Salgueiro (1969-) to compose *Sinfonia n.º 1 - A Voz dos Deuses*. Composed in 1992, the 40-m long piece again confirms the intimate connection that has permanently been established between literature and music, regardless of the order of the factors. Dedicated, in the words of the

¹¹ ESPERO UM GRANDE ÊXITO - Cultura - Correio da Manhã (cmjornal.pt).

¹² Jorge Fraga – RTP Arquivos.

composer, to Banda da Armada, to which he was admitted as a trumpeter in 1987, the piece premiered in 1993, being played by the very Banda (Neves, 2003: 8). This evinces another link, this time to the Portuguese military legacy, the genealogy many see as intertwined with Viriato's deeds.

Eight years later, inspired by Celtic sounds, musician Carlos Dâmaso (1949-) composed the music that accompanied the show's premiere at the castle of Almourol (*vide supra*).

It is unsurprising that composer and defender of Lusitanian Integralism Luís de Freitas Branco (1890-1955) composes *Viriato. Poema Sinfónico – Funerais de Viriato* [Viriathus. Symphonic Poem – Viriathus' Funeral Rites], glorifying Viriathus' Lusitania¹³, in 1916 (Perez-Borrajó, 2020).

Composed for Orchestra¹⁴ under a strong Wagnerian influence and a nationalist orientation, it is based on a text by writer, journalist, politician, and Lusitanian integralist José Hipólito Raposo (1885-1953), evoking the moment Viriathus' soldiers find him dead, their mourning, and the funeral ceremonies. Premiered in February the following year at Teatro República in Lisbon as part of 'Festival Luso-Espanhol' (Luso-Spanish Festival) by the Lisbon Symphony Orchestra under the direction of Maestro Pedro Blanch (1877-1946), the piece is later performed at Teatro Sá da Bandeira in Porto, this time by Orquestra Sinfónica Portuense under the direction of its founder, pianist, and orchestra director Raymundo de Macedo¹⁵.

It is, without a doubt, the first great experience of osmosis between literary and musical composition, having as a common element the figure of Viriato

In issue 16, of February 15, 1917, of the monthly magazine *Atlântida: mensário artístico, literário e social para Portugal e Brasil* [Atlantis: artistic, literary, and social monthly for Portugal and Brazil] (1915-1920), the short story by H. Raposo appears – *Funerals de Viriato* (Viriathus' Funeral Rites) – dedicated to Alberto Monsaraz and epigraph taken from the work

¹³ A traditionalist and Portuguese monarchical socio-political movement that opposed the Republic, Estado Novo, the Constitutional Monarchy, and Liberalism, defending Municipalism, National Unionism, the Catholic Church, and the Traditional Monarchy and proclaiming the restoration of the Portuguese nation from 1914 to 1932.

¹⁴ The composition is mainly based on woodwinds, percussion, and strings, including harp.

¹⁵ At least two more performances will take place: in 1943, that is, in the middle of World War II (1939-1945), at Coliseu dos Recreios in Lisbon by the Orquestra Sinfónica Nacional under the direction of Maestro Pedro de Freitas Branco (1896-1963) and in 2005, at Teatro Municipal São Luiz, also in Lisbon, under the direction of Maestro Andrea Pestalozza.

of African Latin historian *Lucius Florus* (1-2 century B.C.E.), associated with an excerpt from the symphonic poem by L. de Freitas Branco and illustrated with part of the score¹⁶.

Funerais de Viriato is classified by a particular critic of the time as one of the best, included in the book *Outro Mundo. Lembrança da Terra e dos Homens* (Life After Death. Remembrance of the Earth and Men) by H. Raposo: "It is a strong water, from a Master, painted with art, with love, with descriptive brilliance, in exquisite tones, full of light, projecting itself as a dazzling vision of the Past" (Crispim, 1918: 2, our translation). Others go further, pointing out that,

To remember the past time when children the deeds of its children magnified the Homeland [...] is to work fruitfully to lift a decadent people [...]. It is to feel in your veins the still running blessed blood that made Portuguese History a book of heroisms, a missal of self-denial (Santa Martha, *A Monarquia*, 1918: 2; our translation).

It suffices to retrieve the words H. Raposo printed to understand better this better position:

It is night now. When the fire finished delivering all souls to heaven, the consecration of the last spoils was still missing. Suddenly, through sobs, the alarming cries of the people cross each other: the shadow of the Hero in sight floating on the edge of the flame like the breath of fire, rising to the clouds, where the arms prolong the desire for a departure. // And over the tomb where the ashes are collected, hand to hand, the last soldiers came to kill each other, giving in their glory the testimony of the blood. // This was the great longing Viriathus left in this world (Raposo, 1917: 286, our translation).

The years of the composition and premiere of this symphonic poem will not only coincide in space and time. Portugal entered World War I (1914-1918) on March 9, 1916, because of the seizure of German ships in Portuguese waters, although it had been maintaining battle fronts in Africa to defend the territories of Angola and Mozambique. This situation

¹⁶ A close connection between literature and musical composition had happened before in L. de Freitas Branco's work. Still in 1912, but with a partial premiere only in 1918, at Teatro Politeama (Lisbon), he composed three symphonic fragments entitled *Tentações de S. Frei Gil* (Temptations of St. Friar Gil), based on a work by Portuguese poet, monarchist, and integralist António Correia de Oliveira (1879-1960), published in 1907. In 1915, political essayist, poet, and prominent figure of Integralism, António Sardinha (1887-1925) writes three sonnets: *O motivo da planície*, *Minuete* and *Soneto dos repuxos* (The Motif of the Plain, Minuet, and Sonnet of fountains) for voice and piano. Then came *O Canto do Mar* (The Song of the Sea) (1918) for soprano or tenor and orchestra based on a text by an H. Raposo's collaborator, politician, poet, integralist, and national-syndicalist Alberto de Monsaraz (1889-1959), premiered in the same year at Teatro República (Lisbon).

worsened living conditions in Portugal, making food supply scarce and difficult. This situation worsened living conditions in Portugal, making the supply of food scarce and difficult, leading to several social protests throughout the territory, especially during 1917.

Moreover, the ideas in the works by H. Cabaço and L. de Freitas Branco echo those in integralist periodicals, such as *A Monarquia: Diário Integralista da Tarde* [The Monarchy: The Daily Afternoon Integralist] (1917-1925), to which the composer contributed with musical criticism and texts on 'Latinism,' 'Germanicism,' and his appreciation for French composers. However, it consists of one of the most salient publications of Lusitanian Integralism, *A Questão Ibérica* (The Iberian Question) (1916), bringing together texts from lectures that took place in 1915 at *Liga Naval Portuguesa* (Portuguese Naval League) (Lisbon, 1900), in which we find *Música e Instrumentos* (Music and Instruments) from L. de Freitas Branco, in which he praises the authenticity and patrimonial autonomy of Portuguese popular music (Branco, 1916: 119-1943; Pina, 2016).

These offer only a few examples of how, regarding the figure of Viriathus, historical novels adapted to dramaturgical and musical plays are staged in a clear testimony of the dialogue maintained between forms of creative production of clear communicating vessels.

What about its graphic representation?

Proceeding to a very brief analysis, as this is a first approximation to the theme, it is possible to observe interesting common elements that seem to prevail in the researched material, including that in which the figure of Viriathus stands out, represented as a leader with flowing hair wearing clothing, weapons, and symbols of power considered contemporary, in a warrior and fearless attitude, often appearing on a higher plane than the other extras (when they exist), on a stony outcrop and/or surrounded by rocks, in landscape imagery compatible with what is known as 'Montes Hermínios' - *Mons Herminius* (traditionally associated only with Serra da Estrela).

Although the most followed model, namely on a poster promoting a table tennis tournament, seems to be the statue of Viseu, sculpted by M. Benlliure (*vide supra*), promoting Viriathus as a national hero in a period in which Portugal was yet to exist as a country, Vieira Portuense's painting appears in the same way in some cases. This happens on the cover of editions of *Viriato Trágico* by Braz Garcia Mascarenhas, adapted into prose by writer, pedagogue, and politician João de Barros (1881-1960). Other,

more recent productions will dispense with an *a priori* image, which is another different criterion that is not always evident.

In any case, the representation of Viriathus appears to us in the most diverse types of support and with distinct functions. Among these, we highlight the emblematic, including municipal heraldry—the Vila de Cabanas de Viriato case—and associative and military ones. Although less frequent, we also find it in numismatic, medal-related, philatelic, and bookplate specimens; in addition to bookplate specimens, the municipal heraldry—the case of Vila de Cabanas de Viriato—and associative bookplate specimens and materials directly and indirectly related to tourism, such as postcards¹⁷.

The constructed name and iconography include abundant appropriations—especially by the aforementioned Spanish sculptor M. Benlliure—by the most diverse typologies of different sectors of the national economy, namely cultural, including comics¹⁸. That is why we find it designating the traditional concert hall of the municipality of Viseu that assigns it a day—*Dia de Viriato* [Viriathus' Day]—as part of the annual and very popular *Feira de São Mateus* in August, as well as naming testimonies of hotels and restaurants, along with other companies of the most diverse nature¹⁹, which have, however, as an (almost) common element the fact that they belong to the geography traditionally associated with the life of the Lusitanian warrior; examples showing the importance of the past as an identity mark of a territory and its communities. The use of names and historical achievements that contribute to the construction of what is now Portugal are embodied in the animation *Era uma vez um país. De Viriato à Padeira de Aljubarrota*²⁰ [Once upon a time, there was a country. From Viriato to the Baker of Aljubarrota], published in 2009 by 'Porto Editora Multimédia' in the series *A História de Portugal explicada às crianças* [The History of Portugal explained to children]. This initiative takes us back to the series *Il était une fois... L'Homme* (1978) and to the melting pot of national identity between a time when the Portucalense County was yet

¹⁷ Monumento a Viriato, Viseu (postais-antigos.com).

¹⁸ HOMENAGEM A JOSÉ GARCÊS EM VISEU (wordpress.com) ; BD E HISTÓRIA DE PORTUGAL (5) - VIRIATO (pinterest.com) e “Viriato na Banda Desenhada” | (wordpress.com).

TRIBUTE TO JOSÉ GARCÊS IN VISEU (wordpress.com); BD AND HISTORY OF PORTUGAL (5) - VIRIATO (pinterest.com), “Viriathus in Comics” | (wordpress.com), among other testimonies.

¹⁹ An example of this, the wine production ‘Terras de Viriato’ - 2014 Terras de Viriato Reserva red (garrafeira nacional.com).

²⁰ História de Portugal - Episode “Viriato” (pinterest.com).

to exist and the guarantee of the independence of the Kingdom from Castile in a decisive battle (Aljubarrota, 1385).

More recently, on the eve of the COVID-19 pandemic, Portuguese cinematography theme retrieved theme. This time, filmmaker Luís Albuquerque (1963) directs *Viriato*²¹, which premiered on October 10, 2019, with a screenplay by Ana Carolina Pascoal (1992) and shot in locations in Beira, such as Seia, Viseu, and São Pedro do Sul. According to its synopsis, this film details the biography of the warrior, who dedicates his life to protecting his people, selecting the following phrase for the promotional poster, uttered by Viriato in the film: “What the gods dictate to his people today will be the race we forge for tomorrow.” It is a phrase with clearly messianic weight and defender of the affiliation between Lusitanians and Portuguese, with Viriathus wearing props and body paint reminiscent of other opponents of the Roman Empire, such as the Picts.

It is the only film produced in Portugal that is entirely dedicated to him after, in 2016, the television channel ‘História’ dedicated a documentary composed of two episodes to him²², as had happened in 1990, on the initiative of RTP – Rádio Televisão Portuguesa²³, coinciding with the film ‘No, or the Vain Glory of Command’ (*vide supra*), the play ‘Viviriato’ (*vide supra*) and the publication, two years later, of the first essay on the reception of the figure of Viriato in Portugal, by Guerra and Fabião (*vide supra*).

Brief final reflections and some open questions

As with other historical figures who have become national heroes and myths according to specific historical contexts, Viriathus has been used as an example of personal sacrifice in the name of a greater good, that of the community. A community is associated with a location, a material culture, and a way of being and acting that should correspond to a unison identity, which is permanently constructed and reconstructed to justify genealogical agendas and pretensions.

This is the generalized analysis angle of past reception studies, the narrowest of which involves scrutinizing this reception in the arts and

²¹ VIRIATO Trailer Oficial (youtube.com).

²² Vídeo | Facebook.

²³ Viriato – Episódio 01 – RTP Arquivos.

literature in whose context we produce our first approach to the chosen theme – the figure of Viriathus.

Much remains to be observed and pondered regarding the popularization of this same reception.

In fact, how many examples of the use of the figure and name of Viriathus include a proper understanding of his historical personality? Does appropriating his name and (invented) Viriato mean fully internalizing his deeds and having their meaning in their origin? Moreover, we must remember that legitimizing an identity – in this case, that of Viriathus – implies proceeding, even unconsciously, to an alterity that neither is nor can be the primordial one.

Since the past is composed of emotions, its protagonists, successors, scholars, and users are unevenly lived, memorized, and transmitted. We ask how to proceed with these same emotions when the very act of investigating is one of emotion. Moreover, the reception of the past is always mediated by collective individual or collective emotions. That is why we ask again: how to proceed? Are emotions falsified? Or rather, is it possible to avoid falsifying emotions, especially when they almost always simultaneously seek, provoke, and stem from very concrete agendas? However, a first glance may fail to evince them.

These agendas often require historical-cultural support regardless of their geography, chronology, category, or typology, especially when the emotions thus aroused generate the desired relationships between program makers and the target audience, precisely intermediated by heritage testimonies, therefore also establishing links with the past. Connections are metamorphosed and transfigured according to specific contexts, mainly when motivated by extremist intolerant agendas in which irrationality prevails, enhancing identity passions essential to justify, legitimize, and nourish political programs. Other opposites can also annul and replace them, implying the destruction of heritage specimens. However, absence can be as or more potentiating of emotions, and the referents differ depending on the political angle that uses, reuses, and even forges them.

The figure of Viriathus fails to offer an exception to this picture. Moreover, its appropriation follows what happens in other countries, as we have had the opportunity to verify, albeit briefly, exemplifying resistance to exogenous powers and endogenous forces responsible for economic, financial, and social decay. That is why we find him in various contexts, used in different ways and varying types of support.

Before closing our first approach to the subject, it is essential to mention that much can be produced in this area mentioning that much can be made in this area is essential. First, we will detail the reception of Viriathus' figure over time across the two sides of the Iberian border by conducting an exhaustive survey. To contextualize these receptions from the point of view of trans-contextuality and trans-memory. It is also worth conducting an iconographic and iconological comparative analysis between the types and contexts of reception with other heroic figures who fought against the Roman presence. Furthermore, it will be interesting to try to understand to what extent the appropriation of Viriathus' name and his imagined figure is genuinely internalized. It will also be popular widespread of essential to assess the degree of popular, widespread knowledge about Viriathus and his significance for the construction of regional and national collective memory and the relevance – or not – they give him today, gauging types of emotions and memories he may arouse in them. Only thus will a more generalized and specific picture of this reality in permanent (re)construction, often by revisionist agendas, regardless of the respective ideological and political quadrant.

Only thus will it be possible to communicate, share, identify, analyse, and overcome historical inaccuracies and – possibly importantly, most notably in promoting structure of actual “citizen science” – to discuss, with consequences, the ways of transmitting the past to different audiences without distorting the problematic nature of that past (Martins, 2020; 2022). Audiences that excel in multiculturalism and are more demanding, challenging, and attentive to content propagated quickly and attractively by the digital world and social networks. In short, only thus can a true, accurate, genuine, actual, truly inclusive dialogue be promoted, one of the great tests of identity, not only territorial, individual, and collective, but also scientific.

It is also worth questioning how the production of knowledge and archaeological heritage has contributed, even if involuntarily, to the (re)structuring of Viriathus' and the Lusitanians' figures and the relationship between them and the Portuguese. To what extent have their (re)builders resorted to this same knowledge? What is the nature of the relationship, and what levels of relationships, memories, and emotions have been established between them? These and other questions will deserve the attention and scrutiny of various actors in this whole process of understanding a phenomenon of construction of national myths by imagery (Renard, 2023) that can be discerned in other episodes and actors in the history of any geography and community.

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