

Sebastianist traces in Northern Europe: the case of *Der Spanische Quintana* (1686-1687) by Werner Happel

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Abstract

Eberhard Werner Happel wrote one of his European historical novels, which aimed to transport the reader to southern latitudes, in late 17th-Century Hamburg. The first character to be introduced in *Der spanische Quintana* (1686-1687), however, is not a Spaniard, but a Portuguese, Rotalino. After being enslaved, he has a conversation with his mistress, a Turkish widow, about the fate of D. Sebastião I, his reappearance in Venice and the integration of Portugal into the Spanish Monarchy. The following paper analyses the sebastianist elements present in the novel and reconstructs the sources on which it is based. By doing so, it illustrates the international circulation of ideas and information during the Early Modern Age.

Keywords: Sebastianism; Happel; Spanish Monarchy; Portugal; historiography.

Resumo

Eberhard Werner Happel escreveu no Hamburgo de finais do século XVII um dos seus romances históricos europeus: *Der spanische Quintana* (1686-1687). A primeira personagem a ser apresentada, no entanto, não é um espanhol, mas um português, Rotalino. Depois de ter sido escravizado, conversa com a sua dona, uma viúva turca, sobre o destino de D. Sebastião I, o seu reaparecimento em Veneza e a integração de Portugal na monarquia espanhola. O artigo que se segue analisa os elementos sebastianistas presentes no romance e reconstrói as fontes em que este se baseia. Ao fazê-lo, ilustra a circulação internacional de ideias e informações durante a Idade Moderna.

Palavras-chave: sebastianismo; Happel; Monarquia Espanhola; Portugal; historiografia.

After his strange disappearance in the Battle of Alcácer-Quibir (1578), king Sebastian I inspired a secular prophetic movement. Sebastianism flourished in Portuguese society, shaping a mental framework behind which people's political and economic uncertainties could shelter. The proliferation of impostors helped for this set of beliefs to crystallise, not only on a popular level, but also as ideological and literary phenomena. The development of the press in a Europe eager for news, also contributed for sebastianist mythology to adopt an international dimension. This article reconstructs the reception of 16th- and 17th-century Portuguese prophetism in the work of Eberhard Werner Happel, a prominent German writer established in a city with a large community of Jews of Portuguese origin: Hamburg. It was there that he conceived *Der spanische Quintana* (1686-1687), a novel in which the hostilities between Spain and Portugal appear recurrently. This study analyses the sebastianist images echoed by the German novelist, and deciphers the dynamics of otherness reflected therein, alongside the mechanisms of historical reflexion within which they are contained.

1. Roots and development of Sebastianism: a historiical approach

In the Late Middle Ages, Iberian society witnessed a growing sentiment in favour of the restitution of unity of the Iberian Peninsula associated with the Visigothic Kingdom of Toledo. Indeed, numerous Spanish sources of the 14th and 15th centuries used the concept “restauración de España” as an imperative goal after it was “lost” following the Muslim irruption on Iberian soil. The Catholic Monarchs took advantage of this ambition, conceptualized by such authors as the Catalan Cardinal Margarit (1421-1484), the Extremadura-born Andrés Bernáldez (1450-1513), or the Castilian Hernando del Pulgar (1436?-1492), among others. Much of the Ferdinand II of Aragón (1452-1516) and Elizabeth I of Castile's (1451-1504) domestic policies are argued to have aimed to the reunification of Romans and Visigothic Hispania under the Catholic religion, as illustrated by the conquest of the Kingdom of Granada (1492), the annexation of Navarre (1512), and the strategic marriage policies with Portugal.

Blood ties between the Spanish and Portuguese royal families were strengthened by the marriage of Charles V (1500-1558) to Elizabeth of Portugal (1503-1539), and of her brother John III (1502-1557) to the youngest daughter of Joanna of Castile, Catherine of Habsburg (1507-1578). Another sister of the emperor, Joanna of Austria, reinforced these family bonds further when she married *infante* D. João Manuel (1537-1554). The strategy, however, did not

bear the desired fruit, at least until the occasion arose with the disappearance of Sebastian I (1554-1578).

The young Portuguese king, formed under the strictest Jesuit principles and still a representative of a typically medieval mindset, embarked on an ambitious martial undertaking of a Messianic nature to bring the *Reconquista* over the sea to North Africa. The expedition, which included soldiers, musicians, pages, poets, and the cream of Portugal's aristocracy, resulted in a catastrophic defeat, not only in quantitative, but also in qualitative terms: the king himself disappeared in the Battle of Alcácer-Quibir (1578). This seriously disrupted the Portuguese politics, forcing an interim in which the crown fell to the elderly Cardinal D. Henrique, uncle of D. Sebastian. The successor tried to rule a country torn by instability, where the absence of a firm heir to the throne only contributed to the proliferation of presages in an Ancien Régime-society.¹

This prophetic environment intensified with the events that followed the passing of the Cardinal. Among the most relevant candidates for the succession were António, Prior of Crato (1531-1595), grandson of Manuel I; Catarina de Bragança (1540-1614), also a granddaughter of Manuel I; and the Spanish sovereign Philip of Habsburg (1527-1598), who had a solid Portuguese ancestry. Even if much of the nobility seemed to welcome a union with Spain under the person of Philip, which was regarded to be a possible solution to the kingdom's serious financial position, those who objected to this were also vocal. After exhausting diplomatic channels, the Prudent King, Philip II, decided to resort to arms by deploying an amphibious army to neutralize the movements of the Prior do Crato. The operation was successful: the Duke of Alba won the battle of Alcântara (25th August 1580), forcing an injured D. António to flee from Spanish persecution. Afterwards, he embarked in a tour through Europe that led him to cooperate with England and France. Later, he moved to the Açores before returning to Portugal and, finally, becoming the rallying-point of anti-Philippine resistance in his final residence, Paris.²

On the other hand, the brief military intervention of 1580 cleared the way for the Habsburg candidate to the throne. The ambitious project of reuniting Iberia under a single crown, already formulated during the reign of the Catholic Monarchs, became a reality with the coronation of Filipe I by the Parliament (*Cortes*) of Tomar (25 March 1581). This solemn ceremony opened a new

¹ Eliane de Alcântara Teixeira, "D. Sebastião: um Rei e um Mito", *Razón y Palabra*, 94 (2016), p. 876-883.

² Hermann, Jacqueline, "Um rei indesejado: notas sobre a trajetória política de D. Antônio, prior do Crato", *Revista Brasileira de História*, 30 (2010) <https://www.scielo.br/j/rbh/a/phrh3CBspqNd4ZnJBqHBwhr/> (consulted 25th May 2024).

chapter in the annals of Portugal, but it did not imply a loss of political autonomy for the kingdom. Following the aggregation dynamics typical of early modern dynastic conglomerates (*æque principaliter*),³ Portuguese privileges, parliament, and institutions were respected, and the structure of the Spanish *polisinodia* even incorporated a specific council to address Portuguese affairs.

Portugal's new position within the Hispanic Monarchy, which respected the country's culture and politics, contributed to the new king being widely accepted. What is more, it was not until the reigns of Philip III (Filipe II o Pio) and especially Philip IV (Filipe III o Grande) that support for the Iberian Union and the Habsburg project began to dwindle. Increasing taxes to support the 17th-century wars and the infringement of Portugal's constitutional freedom because of Madrid's centralist tendencies, stimulated a feeling of "Castilian domination", absent for most of the rule of Philip II.⁴ For instance, Lisbon, a first-rate trade hub and meeting point between continents, drew the attention of the Castilian authorities after its incorporation to the Monarchy was a reality. This interest crystallized in a pharaonic, albeit unrealized project to connect both Iberian capitals through channels linking the rivers Tagus and Manzanares. The dream of physically integrating Portugal to the rest of the Peninsula using hydraulic engineering led also to consider a Porto-Burgos fluvial axis.⁵

However, while the work of adapting Portugal to the Spanish Monarchy was ongoing, mythical narratives about the true fate of King Sebastian and his eventual return began emerging in the popular imagination. The aura of mystery surrounding his burial only added fuel to the rumours: by order of the new sovereign, who received the lifeless body of the *desired* king,⁶ Sebastian was deposited in the Monastery of the Jerónimos. Nonetheless, nobody had the opportunity to see the corpse before the funeral, which sowed doubts among the population. Thus, over the next two decades, reported sightings of the martyr of Alcácer-Quibir proliferated. Only three years after the coronation, Alcobaça

³ On the mechanisms of integration in composite monarchies, see Xavier Gil Pujol, "Integrar un mundo. Dinámicas de agregación y de cohesión en la Monarquía de España" in O. Mazín and J. J. Ruiz Ibáñez (eds), *Las Indias Occidentales: procesos de incorporación territorial a las Monarquías Ibéricas (siglos XVI-XVIII)*, Mexico City, Colegio de México, 2012, p. 69-108.

⁴ Mafalda Soares da Cunha, "Legitimações dinásticas em confronto: 1580 e 1640" in L. A. Da Fonseca (ed.), *Entre Portugal e a Galia (Sécs. XI a XVII). Um Olhar Peninsular sobre uma Região Histórica*, Porto, Cepese-Fronteira do Caos, 2014, p. 335-342.

⁵ Diego Suárez Quevedo, "Navegación fluvial e ingeniería militar en España, siglos XVI-XVII. De Pérez de Oliva y Antonelli, a Leonardo Torriani y Luis Carduchi", *Anales de Historia del Arte*, 17 (2007), p. 117-153.

⁶ Due to the popular appeal of the martyr king, Sebastian was called in Portugal "o rei desejado".

witnessed the arrival of the King of Penamacor, and soon after another impostor, the cleric Mateus Álvares, was to come to light in Ericeira (1585). These sightings were not limited to Portugal. Even in the Castilian city of Madrigal de las Altas Torres, a baker called Gabriel de Espinosa claimed to be D. Sebastian a decade later. The list closes with the young Calabrese Marco Tulio Castizione, whose advent took place in Venice in the epilogue of Philip II's reign, in 1598.⁷

The specific nature of these recurring appearance has led to the coining of the notion of "Sebastianism". The concept describes a messianic movement based on prophecies that made the young king the saviour of a people mired in uncertainty and financial crisis. In fact, the credibility of these providentialist accounts cannot be understood without considering the deep roots of prophetism in European and particularly Portuguese society. The auguries of Joaquim of Fiore (12th century) and Joan of Arc (14th century); the Castilian *coplas* of Mingo Revulgo (15th century); the incarnation of Ferdinand II the Catholic in Antonio Navarro; the so-called *Encobert* during the *Germanias* of Valencia (1525)... countless examples emphasise the extent of a phenomenon characteristic of highly-religious societies. In Portugal, this goes back to the miracle of Ourique. This ancient legend combined miracles and prophecies to explain the victory of King Afonso Henriques in the battle of Ourique (1139), a legend that was timely revived in the second half of the 16th century. Aware as he was of the importance of the theology of power, symbolic codes, and messianic metaphors in *Ancien Régime* societies, Philip II himself adopted Davidic attributes at his coronation as Filipe I. The Spanish chronicler Luis Cabrera de Córdoba gives the following account:

vestido [Philip II of Spain] con sotina y granalla de brocado carmesí con larga falda, que llevaba el conde de Matusinos, empuñando el cetro y con la corona parecía el rey David, rojo, hermoso a la vista y venerable en la majestad que representaba⁸.

Apart from precedents and analogies, the structural roots of Sebastianism have been identified by António Sergio in the adoption by the Portuguese people of Jewish messianism. Oliveira Martins, however, points to a more archaic substratum that combines Galician, Turdetanian, and Celtic beliefs,

⁷ Eliane de Alcântara Teixeira, "D. Sebastião...", cit., p. 879-880.

⁸ Translation from the Spanish: "dressed in *sotina* [names in Italics refer to Spanish garments] and crimson brocade *granalla* with long skirt, taken by the Count of Matusinos, wielding the sceptre and with the crown he looked like King David, red, beautiful to the eye and venerable in the majesty he embodied." Fernando Bouza Álvarez, *Portugal no tempo dos Filipes. Política, Cultura e Representações (1580-1668)*, Lisboa, Edições Cosmos, 2009, p. 69.

a conclusion shared by Van Besselaar when he establishes an evocative link between D. Sebastião and King Arthur⁹.

Regardless of the way it is interpreted, the sebastianist myth is underpinned by more secular factors and, in this regard, the sources of the myth's narrative model – the *trovas* of Bandarra (1510-1540) – must be emphasised. They are a series of predictions by the shoemaker Gonçalo Annes, which can be summarised as the coming of a redeemer king to put an end to the misfortunes of his people by establishing the Fifth Empire, i.e. a power of planetary dimensions. The numerous prodigies and revelations reported in Portugal at this time, reinforced by the apparitions mentioned above, show the wide influence of the famous *trovas* on the popular imagination in conjunction with the growing discontent with the Spanish authorities. One of the most notable episodes was the miracle of Santarém, which occurred on 13 June 1598: a boy born just two years earlier in unique circumstances rose up and, in a providential voice, proclaimed “Mãe, mãe, há de vir o Bastião!”¹⁰ The natural reaction was to correct him, because the monarch the people expected was King António (Prior of Crato), but the child persisted in his vision. It was not the only episode of this nature: another boy, when his father was reading *Dialogos de varia historia* by Pedro de Mariz, asked him about the genealogy of the Portuguese monarchs. After his father explained it to him, the child began to weep in front of the image of Dom Sebastian, crying out the same words: “Há de vir o Bastião!” Interestingly, the prophecies came true in September with the return of the false king from Venice. As noted by Gonçalves Serafim, the major events rocking Iberian policies in 1598 make it unlikely that this “real” embodiment of Sebastianism was fortuitous: the death of Philip II triggered the first succession to the Portuguese throne by Spanish Habsburgs. In addition, the signing of the Peace of Vervins by Spain and France (1598) undermined Dom António's international support, already at a low after the death of the Prior of Crato three years before. As such, the hopes of his followers were solely placed on the messianic king who would come to redeem the people.

2. Sebastianist discourse in the dialogue between Rotalino and the turkish widow

Im Jahr 1598. kam erst die obgemelte Erklärung an Tag, als der besagte Emanuel Antonez, indem er hörte, daß man anfieng zu sagen, daß Don

⁹ Eliane de Alcântara Teixeira, “D. Sebastião..., cit., p. 881-882.

¹⁰ Translation from Portuguese: “Mother, mother, Sebastian is coming!”.

Sebastian wiederum vor den Tag kommen war, bestunde auszusagen, was er gesehen hatte.¹¹

The news reported From Venice had continental repercussions, reaching as far as northern Germany, and almost a century later, literature still carried echoes of the sebastianist ideology in a novel written in the cosmopolitan late 17th-century Hamburg: *Der spanische Quintana* (1686-1687).

The work, a huge undertaking in four volumes with an aggregate of over 1,600 pages, is part of the series of novels that the erudite and renowned Baroque writer Eberhard Werner Happel (1647-1690) conceived to portray Europe's present and recent past. The author categorised his ambitious project as "Europäische Geschichts-Roman". The titles aptly represent a content characterised by the contrast of referential archetypes, a typical feature of Baroque literature, which in this instance are defined by national psychological traits: *Der italienische Spinelli* (1685-1686), *Der spanische Quintana* (1686-1687), *Der französische Cormantin* (1687-1688), *Der ungarische Kriegsroman* (1685-1697), *Der ottomanische Bajazet* (1688-1689), *Der teutsche Carl* (1690).

All the novels in the series share some features. First of all, they bring the reader closer to other worlds by reproducing the characteristics that the prevailing determinism of the cultural elites of the time assigned to each people. As a result, *Quintana* epitomises the bravery and nobility of the Spanish *hidalgo*, even though his compatriots behave angrily and arrogantly in other passages of the novel.

Of particular significance is the fact that the plot, which revolves around the main character's adventures and misadventures, is used as an excuse to display the author's erudition. Happel, in fact, can be regarded as a polymath, whose knowledge spanned a wide array of subjects, including history, geography, botany, ethnography, etc.¹² This blurs the boundaries between literary fiction and history, thus shaping a particular genre that, at first sight, might more aptly be regarded as a sort of *chiaroscuro*. For Happel, however, the function of the novel is to inform the reader and, in this regard, by presenting the true facts of history, to help humanity to overcome blindness: "Die Historie ist ein

¹¹ Eberhard Werner Happel, *Der spanische Quintana*, Ulm, Mateus Wagner, 1686, p. 39. Translation from the German: "In 1598, the declaration mentioned above only came to light when the aforementioned Emanuel Antunes, hearing that people were beginning to say that King Sebastião had appeared again, agreed to testify to what he had seen".

¹² Marília dos Santos Lopes, "Writing New Words: Eberhard Werner Happel and the Invention of a Genre" in *Turning Points: Concepts and Narratives of Change in Literature and Other Media*, 33, 2012, p. 351-360.

solch nützlich Werk / dass wir ohne dieselbe / wie blinde Leute / gleichsam im Finstern tappen würden”.¹³

This informative and even didactic purpose, through the fictional recreation of events contemporary to the writing, also introduces aspects of journalistic literature. In addition, it is a strategy to quench the public’s widespread thirst for news at the time when newsbooks and the first periodicals were emerging, particularly in one of the most powerful information hubs of the 17th century, Hamburg. The fact that Happel produced his last works, including the “European historical novels” in the mediatic, northern metropolis, earned him undisputed renown and allowed him to live off his writing.

However, the author’s life was far from easy. He was born in Kirchhain (Hessen) to a humble family headed by a Protestant clergyman. Despite their little means, the young Happel was sent to study in Marburg, beginning a career that was only interrupted by the death of his father, which left him without funding. From then on, his life became a pilgrimage worthy of a Byzantine or even a picaresque novel: he travelled through different German principalities and even considered the possibility of embarking for Sweden or the East Indies. He finally settled in Hamburg, where he entered the local society through marriage. In his last years he worked as a private tutor, offering his services to the elite of Lower Saxony. His patrons included the Duke of Schleswig and the Hamburg syndic Julius Surland. This social capital gave him privileged access to rich libraries, the knowledge of which was moulded into the pages of his prolific output, as he admits in *Der ungarnische Kriegsroman*.¹⁴ But before tracing the sources that led him to mention the sebastianist myth in the first volume of *Der spanische Quintana*, the way in which the doubts, prophecies, and apparitions surrounding the legendary king took shape in Happel’s *informative imagination* must be reconstructed.

Following the archetypal patterns of the Baroque novel, which involve long concatenations of scenes and characters, the author opens the story with the arrival in Flanders of a Portuguese man, Rotalino (originally called Matusientos). There, he is received by the Spanish governor, who shows interest in his difficult journey through hostile lands and wild seas: two shipwrecks, an unknown island, and even the yoke of slavery adds an epic component to Rotalino’s story. Happel uses all sorts of argumentative devices to overload the plot and thus confuse the reader by intertwining history and fiction. In his

¹³ Eberhard Werner Happel, *Der spanische...*, cit., s.p.

¹⁴ Orsolya Lénárt, “17th century Hungary in the work of Eberhard Werner Happel” in M. Wakonnig (ed.), *From Cultural Memories to Intercultural Exchanges*, Viena, Lit, 2012, p. 79-89.

speech to the governor and the other guests at the table (Neubrisseuris and Kircherus), Rotalino recalls his enslavement at the hands of the Ottomans: first he served a goldsmith and, after he died, he was sold to a good-hearted widow, a woman who had other Portuguese people in her service. Driven by curiosity at the other slaves' deference to the new arrival, the Turkish woman discovered that Rotalino was a count, which sparked a degree of solidarity between mistress and captive: they were united by the illustrious blood of the Portuguese nobility, as she claimed to be a descendant of the unfortunate King Sebastian, who not only did not perish in Africa, but also secured the continuity of his lineage by having a son.

With this reference to the mythical sovereign, the dialogue between the widow and her slave transposes historical facts and interpretations into the literary narrative. The woman's voice allows Happel to introduce an unofficial version of the end of King Sebastião: his death was not fortuitous, but the product of betrayal by his uncle, the King of Spain. The original text reads:

Er [D. Sebastian] hatte zwar deßfalls auch eine starcke Alliance mit dem damaligen König von Spanien, Philippo II. gemacht, wie er aber gelten solte, da zohe derselbe die Hand ab, gab keinen Succurs oder Auxiliar-Trouppen her, und verbotte über das bey Lebens-Straff in seinem ganßen Land, daß sich niemand unterstehen solte, dem König Sebastian in diesem Zug zu dienen. [...] Woraus viel schliessen wolten, Philippus II. habe dernach verlanget, daß sein Vetter, der Portugallische König, zusamt seiner schwachen Armee, unkommen möchten, so könnte er als dann Portugall mit Spanien unter eine Kron vereinigen, welches auch geschehen ist.¹⁵

The woman's bold conclusion is confirmed by the compromising letter found in the sack of Muley Maluco, one of the two Berber kings who fought the Portuguese. In it, Philip II notified the enemy of his decision, sacrificing "der beste Kern von der Jugend und Macht desselben Königreichs".¹⁶

To round off the story, the widow's interest in the story that followed the loss of the young king is seen to increase. Naturally, Rotalino compounds this by presenting a hostile view of Philip of Spain's manoeuvres to take over

¹⁵ Eberhard Werner Happel, *Der spanische...*, cit., p. 32. Translation from the German: "He had struck a strong alliance with the king of Spain, Philip II, but when the time came to act, the latter withdrew his hand, denied him support or auxiliary troops and forbade anyone in his domains to serve King Sebastian on pain of death. [...] And many conclude from this that Philip II had wanted his cousin [sic], the Portuguese king, together with his weak army, to die, in order to unite Portugal and Spain under one crown, as finally happened".

¹⁶ Ibidem, p. 33. Translation: "the best of the kingdom's youth and fortitude".

Portugal. The enslaved nobleman's monologue describes how, after the brief reign of Cardinal Henrique, the emperor's son rejected his will and resorted to the weapons of Spain's most feared general:

[Felipe II] Den Duc de Alba auß Niederland berieffe, und mit einer grossen Macht in Portugall schickte, dasselbe Königreich einzunehmen, da erwählten die Portugiesen, auß haß wider der Spanier, obgedachten Antonium Nothum alsobald zu ihrem König [...] Den Duc de Alba nahm eine Stadt nach der andern, und folglich das ganße Königreich ein.¹⁷

According to Rotalino's speech, this "hatred of the Spanish" led the Portuguese to choose an undeserving candidate over the Castilian sovereign. The change of demonym is neither a mistake nor a metonymy: in fact, Rotalino introduces a highly-significant nuance by pointing out the "grossem Haß wider die Castilianer".¹⁸ This feeling is rooted in the cruelty of the neighbours illustrated by the rape of a peasant's wife by the soldiers of the Duke of Alba and the husband's reaction, taking revenge for their affront. This marks the emergence of the Spanish national heterostereotype, one of the most recurrent argumentative pillars of the so-called "black legend".¹⁹

As for the fate of King Sebastian, Happel invests Rotalino with the sceptical look of the Portuguese resistance, making a reference to the enigmatic burial of the fallen king: although it was said that his body was recognised and handed over to Philip II after the payment of 100,000 crowns, "die Portugesen aber sagen, daß sie nicht glauben, daß ihr *König* daselbesten todt geschlagen,

¹⁷ Eberhard Werner Happel, *Der spanische...*, cit., p. 34. Translation: "[Philip II] summoned the Duke of Alba from the Low Countries and sent him with a great army to Portugal to conquer that kingdom, so the Portuguese, out of hatred against the Spaniards, immediately elected the aforementioned Antony Nothum as their king [...] The Duke of Alba took one city after another, and consequently the whole kingdom".

¹⁸ Ibidem, p. 34-35. Translation: "great hatred for the Castilians".

¹⁹ This controversial concept ("Leyenda negra") was coined in the early 20th Century by Spanish scholars to describe the alleged structural anti-Spanish propaganda, which, according to Julián Juderías (1914), appeared for the first time during the Dutch Rebellion (16th Century); decades later, Sverker Arnoldsson (1960) noted that a hostile view on Spain already existed in the regions of the Italian Peninsula under the rule of the Crown of Aragón during the 15th Century. By the 1600s, the proliferation of negative *topoi* about the Spanish had a continental dimension and seemed to build a rigid discourse that combined references to Spain's political ambitions (excessive power of the Inquisition, desire to rule the world) and the character of its peoples. Tyranny, cruelty, arrogance, anger, indolence, and pride were the traits most commonly attributed to the Spaniards. Holger Kürbis, *Hispania descripta. Von der Reise zum Bericht*, Frankfurt am Main, Peter Lang, 2004, p. 245-246.

noch sein Leichnam gefunden worden”.²⁰ After expressing these doubts, the nobleman reduced to slavery becomes the spokesman for a sebastianist discourse impregnated with epic images and vertebrated by the binary confrontation that characterises the great heroic stories: the righteous king, betrayed martyr, suffers the persecution of those who snatched his kingdom and is doomed to wander the world until he proves his royal identity. His prodigious escape from the battlefield in the middle of the night; the return to the Algarve to be sheltered in a Jerome monastery; the continuation of his particular ostracism through Europe, Africa, Ethiopia and Asia (naturally, always fighting the “Moor”); his life of spiritual perfection as an anchorite in the mountains; his arrival in Sicily and another betrayal by the servant who stole his clothes; his departure for Venice and the trial to prove the truth of his story; the constant threats from Spanish agents to kill him. It could indeed be the plot of a story from the Classical period, but the difference is that this narrative is but a succession of accounts given credit by the public opinion of his time, as will be noted later.

Before that, the sudden emergence of an alleged Sebastian I in 1598 deserves a more detailed analysis. This news had great repercussions in Europe, as illustrated by its mention in *Der spanische Quintana*.²¹ This should be framed in the context of the widespread resistance to the messianic ambitions of the Catholic king of Spain. In line with the view conveyed by João de Castro, the most prolific sebastianist author, Werner Happel fictionalises a real story in which the man from Sicily was recognised by the Portuguese community in Venice. Faced with the growing intimidation of the *Serenissima* by Philip II’s diplomacy, the followers of the revenant helped him flee to Padua. It was the right decision: the Venetians had already started legal proceedings to determine the veracity of such a transcendent claim. Even after entrusting the defence to Dr Sampaio, the pretender’s strategy proved insufficient to counter the Spanish ambassador’s movements, so the self-declared Dom Sebastião was taken to a monastery, dressed in a monastic habit, and transported by gondola to later return to Padua and finally find refuge in Florence.

Philip II’s pressure, far from abating, turned to the Duke of Tuscany, who, after some enquiries, decided to send the false king to Orbetello, which facilitated his capture by agents of the Catholic monarch. From that moment on, the life of the man who claimed to be King Sebastian was in the hands of the Spaniards. He was first put in the dungeon of the Neapolitan Castel d’Uovo, in

²⁰ Translation: “the Portuguese don’t believe that their king fell dead, nor that his corpse has been found”. Ibidem, p. 39.

²¹ The novel omits other prodigious episodes, e.g. the miracle of Santarém.

the custody of the Viceroy Count of Lemos. Although he was imprisoned and tortured, no amount of coercion could break the captive's determination and he even managed to arouse the compassion of his captors with his eloquence. Water, food, money, and even a reception in the palace show the relaxation of his imprisonment, which was only reversed when the viceroy was succeeded by his son. Sebastian's fate was then linked to the oar of a galley, which took him first to Barcelona and then to Sanlúcar de Barrameda. It was there that the defendant's story was once again given credit, in this instance by the highest local authorities, the Dukes of Medina-Sidonia. The piece of evidence that tilted the scales in his favour was that he remembered the gifts he gave them when he was still king: a sword and a jewel. The tears of the ducal couple were not enough to free Sebastian from the chains in which he died, but they contribute to give some nuance to the Spanish cruelty that pervades Rotalino's speech.

Apart from the succession of events reconstructed in a literally way by Werner Happel, the German polymath demonstrates his knowledge on the importance of prophecies for the Portuguese people when he closes the episode using the following words:

Zur selbigen Zeit wurden auch durch die Portugiesen viel alte Prophezeyungen wegen König Sebastians und seines Staats außgegeben, die in unterschiedlichen Historien angemerckt worden, sie lebten in der Hoffnung, das früh oder spät ihr gefangener König ihnen wiederum werde zugestellt werden.²²

3. Information bridges between Sebastianist literature and Werner Happel

One of the objectives set out in the introduction of this article was to reconstruct the sources that allowed the German author to have such an intimate knowledge of the story of King Sebastian. In order to shed light on this question, it is worth considering the powerful voice that the sebastianist cause found in authors such as the aforementioned João de Castro or Manuel Bocarro Francês. The latter, an interesting polyhedral figure who ended up offering his services to the Spanish Crown, resurrected messianic prophecies in his *Anacephalose da Monarchia Luzitana* (1624), while Castro, the most

²² Eberhard Werner Happel, *Der spanische...*, op. cit., p. 52. Translation: "At the same time, the Portuguese also issued many old prophecies about King Sebastian and his state, which were mentioned in various histories; they lived in the hope that sooner or later their captured king would be delivered to them".

prolific author of the resistance to the Spanish Habsburgs, dedicated his life to a titanic anthropological and scholarly effort towards political legitimization. Ten years after the battle of Alcácer-Quibir, he addressed a *Discurso* to King Sebastian (1588) to inform him of the state of the kingdom. This was followed by *Tratado da Quinta Monarquia* (1597), *Aurora*, *Tratado Apologético e os Advertimentos ao sempre bem vindo e apparecido Rey D. Sebastião* (all published in 1604), *Novas Flores* (1607), *Comentário ao Apocalipse* (1612), *Declarações ao Profeta Daniel* (1613), *Segunda Parte da Paraphrase e o Tratado das Ordens* (1614), *O Anticristo* (1615), *Avisos para os conquistadores* (1617), *Renovaçam do Tratado Apologético* (1620), *Genealogia dos reis de Portugal* (1621), *Tratado dos Portugueses de Veneza* (1622-1623) and *Segundo apparecimento del Rey D. Sebastião*.²³

This vast bibliography might have been complemented by the hectic activity of the press in the city where Happel shaped *Der spanische Quintana*. Early modern Hamburg was, in fact, a northern metropolis, cosmopolitan and polychromatic, in which news and images of other worlds circulated as goods did. The economic vitality of the most flourishing Hanseatic city at the time was fuelled by the presence of vibrant and confessionally differentiated foreign minorities, mainly Catholic merchants belonging to the Italian nation and powerful Sephardic lineages of Portuguese origin. Although the latter claimed to be new Christians (they had actually fled the Iberian Peninsula as converts), their singularity as an endogamous group, capable of gaining political and diplomatic leverage thanks to their financial power, quickly became apparent.²⁴

This influence is exemplified by their collaboration with the Portuguese rebels during the Restoration War (1640-1668). Practising a curious form of proto-nationalism, which was superficially at odds with their condition as exiles, many Sephardim mobilised resources and capital to facilitate the shipment of arms to Portugal and legitimise secessionist aspirations. One of the most prominent sebastianist authors, the aforementioned Manuel Bocarro Francês, settled in Hamburg. Other names that illustrate Portugal's importance in the northern metropolis are King Christina of Sweden's friends Manuel and Abraham Teixeira

²³ João Carlos Gonçalves Serafim, "D. Joao de Castro, «O Sebastianista»: Meandros de vida e razões de obra", Porto, Universidade do Porto (PhD dissertation), 2004, p. 1-2.

²⁴ On the relevance of the Sephardic community in early modern Hamburg, see Jorun Poettering, *Handel, Nation und Religion: Kaufleute zwischen Hamburg und Portugal im 17. Jahrhundert*, Göttingen, Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 2013; and Hugo Martins, *Os judeus portugueses de Hamburgo. A História de uma comunidade mercantil no século XVII*, Florence, Firenze University Press, 2021.

and Daniel de Prado.²⁵ Some even had extensive credit networks across northern Germany as far as the court in Copenhagen: The Sephardim Gabriel Gómez, the third largest creditor to the Danish Crown, obtained a seat in Frederick III's government after the absolutist coup d'état of 1660.²⁶

All of this illustrates the marked Portuguese accent of Happel's Hamburg. The Portuguese influence reached the city's powerful press, including one of the oldest and most widely read German-language newspapers: *Nordischer Mercurius*. Founded in 1664, it published extensive reports from a variety of sources, with monthly issues of up to fifty pages. This turned this gazette into an essential source for the precarious press system in the Scandinavian kingdoms. In fact, the Danish *Den Danske Mercurius* (est. 1666) and the Swedish *Post och Inrikes Tidningar* (est. 1645) had postal branches in the Hanseatic city and sent weekly operators to collect printed editions and begin the work of selecting, censoring and translating news.²⁷ In consequence, the tone and perspective adopted by the Hamburg media (whether newspapers, *Flugblätter*, or newsbooks, depending on the period) placed a decisive role in shaping public opinion in northern Europe. Concerning the Spanish-Portuguese tensions, the *Nordischer Mercurius* quickly echoed the Spanish disasters against the armies led by the Duke of Bragança. For example, in the first issue we read "Spanien das alte Reich / Demgar wenig Reiche gleich / hat nun auch was mehr zu klagen / als von guter Zeit zu sagen. / Dann es ist aus Portugal / (Welches Reichs Trompetten Schall / zimlich siegend sich lässt märken".²⁸ The image of a declining Catholic Monarchy is also echoed by the *Ordinarii Post Tijdender* (initial name of the *Post och Inrikes Tidningar*): the issue of 23 July 1645 reports Madrid's desperation, illustrated by its promises to ennoble anyone who helped fight the Portuguese rebels during the Restoration War.²⁹

²⁵ Bertil Maler, "Drottning Kristina, Abraham Teixeira, Daniel de Prado och greve Bernardino de Rebolledo", *Nordisk Judaistik/Scandinavia Jewish Studies*, 2 (1977), p. 22-26; Arno Herzig, "Die Hamburger Sephardim als Wirtschaftselite im 17. Jahrhundert", *West Bohemian Historical Review*, 1 (2011), p. 15-30.

²⁶ Johan Jørgensen, "Denmark's relations with Lübeck and Hamburg in the seventeenth century", *Scandinavian Economic History Review*, 11 (1963), p. 73-109.

²⁷ Paul Ries, "The politics of information in seventeenth-century Scandinavia" in B. Dooley; S. A. Baron (ed.), *The politics of information in Early Modern Europe*, London; New York, Routledge, 2005, p. 237-272.

²⁸ *Nordischer Mercurius*, January 1664, p. 6. Digital version available in <https://brema.suub.uni-bremen.de/zeitungen17/periodical/pageview/1076542>. Translation: "Spain, the old empire, / Like few empires / Has now more to complain about / Than to speak of good times. / Then it is from Portugal / (Which empire's trumpet sound / can be heard triumphantly [...])".

²⁹ Kungliga Biblioteket (SKB). *Ordinarii Post Tijdender*, year 1645, n. 30, 23rd July.

Equally revealing is the fact that news of the conflict came only from Lisbon or Hamburg, thus omitting the Spanish version.

However, Rotalino's account in *Der spanische Quintana* does not follow the sebastianist line conveyed by the books in the Hamburg libraries. A textual and critical comparison with other authors of the period reveals the author's true source: the Dutchman Pieter Bor (1559-1635). Together with Van Meteren, he was part of a generation of Dutch historians committed to independence from the Philippine yoke and concerned with bequeathing the drama of the rebellion and subsequent repression to posterity. However, these authors refrained from adopting the polemical tone of pamphlets, attempting to precisely reconstruct the events and even to analyse the psychology of the characters. In this way, Bor is no stranger to the copious praise heaped on Philip II by other historians (not just Spanish ones). Like them, the Dutchman recognises the enormous political intelligence of a man who used religion as a power strategy.³⁰ The same conclusion was reached by another Dutch writer, Everard van Reyd (1550-1602): "[...] hy [Philip II] beschuldight werdt, sich te bekleeden met den schoonen schijn van de Roomsche Religie, als die bequaemste oprichtinghe zijner Monarchy, ende andersins die selve weynich achtende, waneer hy beter voordeel sach".³¹ This judgement evokes another episode in the long narrative axis of Eberhard Werner Happel's novel. The passage recreates a Berber gaol populated by Christian prisoners of different origins. The prison did not deny them of access to the chapels opened and tolerated by the Muslim authority, so the Portuguese inmates decided to honour their homeland by placing the Bragança coat of arms over the entrance. This act unleashed the wrath of the Spaniards, who destroyed the coat of arms and stormed the sacred space, causing riots in the city. In the turmoil, the local population attacked Christian symbols, reducing churches, images, and altars to ashes.³² Between the lines, these fictional events recall Bor and Van Reyd's conclusion: Spain confuses its national interests with those of Catholicism, and in doing so only harms the Roman faith.

Returning to the disappearance of King Sebastião and its consequences, Bor writes:

³⁰ Leonardo H. M. Wessels, "Tirano o soberano. La imagen cambiante de Felipe II en la historiografía holandesa desde Bor hasta Fruin (siglo XVI-XIX)", *Cuadernos de Historia Moderna*, 22 (1999), p. 157-181.

³¹ Translation from the Dutch: "He [Philip II] was accused of cladding himself with the fair lustre of the Roman Religion, as the most appropriate foundation of his monarchy, and otherwise esteeming it little, when he saw better advantage". Everard Van Reyd, *Oorspronck ende voortganck van de nederlandstche oorloghen*, Amsterdam, Everhard Cloppenburg, 1644, p. 518.

³² Eberhard Werner Happel, *Der spanische...*, cit., p. 360-362.

En dat de Conink van Spangien met de vlote die hy bereid hadde en die men hadde laten luiden dat op Barbarien soude varen, op Portugael wilde, om 't selve metten wapenen in te nemen en te conqueren, also den roep ging dat die van Portugael Don Antonio wilden tot Conink maken door den haet die sy de Spangiaerts toe drogen.³³

This paragraph alone, from the fourteenth volume of his *Oorsprongk, begin, en vervolg der nederlandsche oorlogen* (1680), contains two ideas present in *Der spanische Quintana*. First, the fact that Philip of Spain had ships ready for Barbary implies the betrayal referred to by the Turkish widow. Second, the choice of Don Antonio as king just to avoid subjugation to Spain, which Happel expresses in the following words: “Obgleich die Portugiesen wol wußten, daß Antonio die Kron mit Recht nicht gebührete, so erwählten sie ihm dennoch bloß, auß grossem Haß wider die Castilianer”.³⁴

The most transparent illustration of the connection between Happel and Bor is the passage that reconstructs the imprisonment of the revenant in the castle of Naples. The novel includes an epic speech by a man who fears nothing, being the bearer of truth. These were the words that, in Rotalino's account, he pronounced before the general:

Ich bin der König Sebastian von Portugall, der im Jahr fünffzehnhundert acht und siebzig wider die Mohren in Africa überschiffte, der sag ich, der der Christenheit zum Besten, sich selber und sein Leben in Gefahr geseßt hat; der Unglückliche, der wegen seiner Sünden eine Schlacht verlor, welche viel Unheil in der Christenheit verursacht hat. Dieses [...] ist die Warheit, und anders weiß ich nichts zu sagen.³⁵

This is a literal translation from a passage in Bor's work:

³³ Translation: “And that the King of Spain, with the navy which he had prepared and which he had announced that it was to be sent into Barbary, wanted it to sail to Portugal instead, and this to immediately take [the country] by force of arms and to conquer it. There was also word that the Portuguese wanted to make Dom Antonio the king because of the hatred that they harboured for the Spaniards”. Pieter Bor, *Oorsprongk, begin, en vervolg der nederlandsche oorlogen*, vol. II, Amsterdam, Joannes van Sommeren, 1680, p. 178.

³⁴ Translation: “Although the Portuguese were well aware that Antonio was by right not entitled to the crown, they merely mentioned it to him out of their great hatred for the Castilians”. Eberhard Werner Happel, *Der spanische...*, cit., p. 34-35.

³⁵ Translation: “I am King Sebastian of Portugal, who in the year 1578 sailed against the Moors in Africa, the one who, for the good of Christendom, put himself and his life in danger; the unfortunate man who, because of his sins, lost a battle that caused much harm to Christendom. This [...] is the truth, and I have nothing else to say”. Ibidem, p. 47.

Ik ben die Don Sebastiaen Conink van Portugael, die Anno 1578. in Africa tegen d'ongelovige overscheepte, de gene die om 't getal en macht der Christenen te vermeerderen, sijn leven in hazard stelde, dien ongeluckigen, die om zijnder sonden wille eenen slag verloor, waer van 't verlies so veel ongeluks en veranderinge in de Christenheyt veroorsaect heeft: dit is de waerheyt, en wete anders niet te seggen.³⁶

No knowledge of German and Dutch is necessary to appreciate the obvious convergences between the two texts. Although this could seem like a coincidence resulting from the use of a common source, Happel's account evidences several connections with volumes written by Dutch historians almost a century earlier. The reuse of ideas and words was by no means perceived as plagiarism in Early Modern Europe. As Roe has recently stressed, "the value of a work derived from its conformity to the great works of the past" and, consequently, the (literal) reproduction of previous texts was regarded as a mechanism to make truth accessible to a wider public.³⁷

The corollary of Bor and Happel's intertextuality is the mediating role of Dutch historiography in the transmission of the sebastianist message, subordinated to the aim of legitimising the rebellion in the Netherlands and generating a hostile image of the Catholic monarch. As such, the outbreaks of Portuguese resistance to the Iberian Union attracted the attention of authors like Bor and Reyd. Their works, written in a language that was easier to understand for northern scholars, helped to spread the myth of a returned King Sebastian in the north of the continent. What is more, Rotalino's discourse also echoes that of the German Protestants, who stressed the contrast between German freedom ("Teutsche Libertet") and Spanish serfdom ("Hispanische Servitut").³⁸ Naturally, João de Castro's exile in the French capital and highly mediatic events such as the appearance of the Venetian Sebastian came to reinforce a cause whose interests were in line with those of part of the European public opinion: the fight against Spanish hegemony.

³⁶ Pieter Bor, *Oorsprongk, begin, en vervolgh der nederlandsche oorlogen*, vol. IV, Amsterdam, Joannes van Sommeren, 1684, p. 622. The translation is almost identical to that of the text in the previous note.

³⁷ Glenn Roe, "Text reuse as cultural practice: intertextuality in the 18th-century digital archive", *Digital Enlightenment Studies*, 2 (2024), p. 1-30

³⁸ Thomas Weller, "Andere Länder, andere Riten? Die Wahrnehmung Spaniens und des spanischen Hofzeremoniells in früneuzeitlichen Selbstzeugnissen aus dem deutschsprachigen Raum" in A. Bähr, P. Buschel, G. Jancke (ed.), *Räume des Selbst. Selbstzeugnisforschung transkulturell*, Cologne; Weimar; Vienna, Böhlau, 2007, p. 41-55.

Conclusions

The equivocal fall in battle of King Sebastian I put an end to his reign, but did not bury his figure. He continued to cast a long shadow over a country torn by uncertainty, where some saw Philip II as an opportunity for regeneration while others clung to the memory of a king invested with a prophetic halo. However, it cannot be denied that the political practices of these two Iberian sovereigns, united not only by blood ties but also by messianic aspirations, were not so different. This did not impede the emergence of a form of proto-nationalist particularism, reinforced by dynastic claims and, in this regard, loyalty to the Avis created another focus of resistance in a Europe mistrustful of the designs of Philip II of Spain. As a result, Sebastianism transcended its most popular expressions and was elevated to the political and historiographical literature of the 16th and 17th centuries.

In *Der spanische Quintana*, Happel did not miss the opportunity to revisit the unfortunate story of King Sebastian I in an attempt to create a novel about the Hispanic Monarchy. With the end of Sebastian's reign, and after the death of Cardinal Henrique, Portugal was incorporated into the global project of the Spanish Monarchy, which could not prevent the appearance of sceptic circles. This confrontation between neighbours under the umbrella of the Catholic King creates an argumentative niche in which the otherness that separates the Portuguese and the Castilians is notorious. The cruelty of the Duke of Alba's troops; the voracity of a Castile interested in extending over the whole Iberian Peninsula; the mistrust inspired by impostors; the anger and pride of the prisoners in Barbary... This imagery, mediated by Happel's writing, brings together the most negative *topoi* about the Spanish as seen through Portuguese eyes. Nevertheless, there are also expressions of sympathy from the Dukes of Medina-Sidonia, who were born in the sweet lands of Andalusia, not the harsh Castilian Meseta.³⁹ Their compassion, complemented by the nobility and quixotic heroism of the novel's main character, the Spanish Quintana, reinforces the contradictory image aroused by the *homo hispanicus* in the Early Modern Age.

³⁹ The hostility towards Castile within the natural borders of the Iberian Peninsula was not limited to Portugal. Alongside other provinces such as Catalonia, Aragón or Valencia, Andalusia also took part in the social unrest the Spanish Monarchy had to face in the decades of 1640-1650. As for the so-called "Alteraciones andaluzas", discontentment with the Castilian government led to some kind of approach to Portugal, as illustrate the following verses contained in a pamphlet: "*Que se da a Sevilla, ser más de Portugal que de Castilla*" (Translation: That it is given to Seville to be more part of Portugal than of Castile).

The purpose of this article was also to analyse and explain how the disappearance of the desired king came to be reflected in a German novel from the late 16th century. The first hypothesis pointed to the spatial context in which the work was conceived: Hamburg. As noted, it was the Venetian revenant who, two decades after the battle of Alcácer-Quibir, brought back the sebastianist cause to the international arena, once the news was amplified by a historiography conceived to serve political interests. In this regard, although Paris was the main seat of the sebastianist exile, Dutch historians were the ones who projected their principles onto a continent-wide stage. The Netherlands, traditional mediators between northern Europe and the Iberian Peninsula, continued playing this role despite the war and, in line with this, Bor was Happel's inspiration for the exchanges between Rotalino and the Turkish widow.

The results of this study help to outline the cultural integration of a Europe where dynastic confrontations, cultural differences, and confessional rivalries did not prevent the dissemination and reshaping of ideas. Eberhard Werner Happel illustrates the figure of the European erudite capable of turning words into bridges. Thus, with his "Europäische Geschichts-Romane", and particularly with *Der spanische Quintana*, the German author drew a point in which Portugal, Spain, Italy, the Netherlands, and the Empire converged.

