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Translating Camões:
a Personal Record

Landeg White

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Índice

Acknowledgements

It was during a visit to the Universidade do Minho in Braga in 1984 that I first met the late Professor Hélio Osvaldo Alves. He was a man of such professional and personal generosity, it was impossible not to warm to him and we swiftly became friends. It was he translated the selection of my poems *Superfícies e interiores,* published by CEMAR in 1995, and when my version of *The Lusíads* appeared two years later, it was duly prefaced by thanks for the encouragement and intellectual stimulus he had provided. When, shortly before his untimely death in January 2003, I sent him the first of my attempts at Camões's lyrics in English (*Aquela Captiva*), he replied he had read it with tears in his eyes. His spirit presided over the years of work that followed.

With this in mind, readers will appreciate what a pleasure it was to acknowledge a complementary debt in my preface to *The Collected Lyric Poems of Luís de Camões*, to Professor Hélio J.S. Alves of the Universidade de Évora. Hélio shares his father's critical rigour and unfailing kindness, and he has brought both to bear on this present volume. As is noted on page 47, the relation between scholar and poet-translator has often been fraught, but I have benefitted in more ways than can be listed here from the erudition and sheer inspiration of his commentaries.

My friend and former colleague at Universidade Aberta, Professor Gerald Bär, is fond of proposing various works to me over bottles of wine. Both the wine and the proposals are appreciated, and this one clicked. I am grateful for the meticulous attention he brings to all manuscripts, including the various versions of this one. What errors remain, of fact or interpretation, are of course my own responsibility.

Introduction

In 1998, Edwin Gentzler and David Connolly, both experienced literary translators, contributed parallel essays to the comprehensive and authoritative *Routledge Encyclopedia of Translation Studies*, edited by Mona Baker.[1] The respective titles, 'Poetics of translation' and 'Poetry translation' indicate a division of labour between theory and practice. While both invoke Roman Jakobson (on the untranslatability of poetry), there is a certain irony about the theorists trying to map out strategies of poetic translation while the practitioners, ignoring all precept, happily declare with William Trask, 'Impossible? Of course, that's why I do it.'

One of the difficulties about theorising literary translation is that linguistics as a discipline came very late to the discussion of metaphor, and linguistic discussion of poetry is so often plodding and wooden. When Gentzler writes 'Some (scholars) argue convincingly that poetic aspects such as intonation, alliteration, metaphor, rhythm, parody and pun inhere in all translation', the poet in me wants to protest at the confusion of categories (these strange things that apparently go on in poetry) while pointing out that he is using several devices himself: there is rhyme (not mentioned) in the phrase 'intonation, alliteration' building to that final 'translation', assonance (also not mentioned) in 'metaphor, rhythm', alliteration in 'parody and pun', while 'inhere' is an unexamined (legal) metaphor, and the whole sentence is built on a pattern of triple rhythms. By his own standards, he is writing bad poetry, bad because he seems unconscious of the fact and is hence not in control.

Connolly comments that 'translators ... rarely keep notes about the process of translation or any record of the choices made in the process,' adding 'it is precisely insights into this process that are missing from most theoretical models.' This short book, which is a personal record of my experience of translating first Camões's epic poem *The Lusíads,* then secondly his *Collected Lyric Poems*, has no pretensions to close this gap between translation theory and translation practice, and it makes few theoretical claims. But it does reflect continually on the linguistic dimensions of the practical problems I faced, in a manner that should interest theorists. To take just one instance, described towards the end of section 3, I experienced the

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[1] Baker 1998, 167-170 and 170-176.

greatest difficulty in translating canto 10, stanzas 10 – 73, where Vasco da Gama is granted a vision of future Portuguese conquests in the Indian Ocean and China Seas. My first thought was I had glimpsed the end of my task too soon, and schooled myself to be patient. My second was that the long passage describes colonial victories, which are not much to my taste. It took me some time to realise that my problem lay in the fact that the English language lacks a future tense, and that the forms for expressing future states in English involve auxiliaries ('will', 'going to') which can also double as lexical verbs. Given that poetry abhors redundant words, the management of these auxiliaries was not easy. 'Will' proved especially difficult, with its connotation of intentionality. When Camões writes 'Pacheco will not only hold the fords / But burn towns, houses and temples', is this simple prophecy or is Pacheco's ferocious 'will' involved?

I should emphasise that my experience is very limited. I have translated Camões and little else, and was already in my mid-fifties when I jumped in at the deep end. Part of my earlier career had been in southern African studies, including history and oral literature along with Portuguese colonial history, and this obviously had a close bearing on *The Lusíads* which spends more time off the coast of Africa than in India. I had also published three volumes of my own poetry which, as I explain, was what drew me to Camões in the first place. To quote Connolly again, 'love for the poet's work together with some degree of inspiration are important factors usually missing from models and theories of poetry translation'. Without a strong sense of affinity, it would be impossible to take on such a long task occupying, for the two volumes, some seven and a half years. But had I spent those same years translating, say, Fernando Pessoa, it's possible my conclusions about translation would be significantly different.

On the issue of 'untranslatability' versus the practice of the impossible, one of my conclusions is that this argument is usually conducted in far too general terms. 'Poetry' is conceived of as a special category of language use, more compact and heightened than the most elaborate prose, bafflingly elusive in its multiple meanings and in its claim that form and content are indivisible. But a great deal of poetry these days is not like that at all. Much free verse is virtually indistinguishable from prose, the line endings determined by nothing more than the end of one thought and the beginning of another, and is easily translated: I have known Portuguese translators of English poetry knock off half a dozen in the course of a single evening, losing (and earning) very little in the process. At the opposite extreme, with the allusive language of poets like Verlaine, or with Rimbaud's ambition 'to

reach the unknown through the derangement of the senses',[2] one meets problems of translation that may indeed be unresolvable.

The Lusíads, is different again. It is a baroque masterpiece with an elaborate architecture, a strict verse form and, in contrast, a challengingly lucid, subtly modern style or variety of styles. Yet even about The *Lusíads*, there is much that is genuinely translatable. First, it is a long narrative poem, and narrative – events succeeding each other, causally linked - can be carried over into English without much loss of force. Camões is so skillful in the disposition and balancing of the episodes that all the translator need do is follow the action and respect his timing. You have to be a great fool to get this wrong. The two English translators who do get it wrong are Mickle (1776) with his concrete slabs of couplets, and Atkinson (1952) with his laboured prose, both imposing their own pace-makers on Camões's heartfelt rhythms.

Similarly, *The Lusíads* contains many speeches, and speeches are composed of arguments, rational or otherwise. Intellectual content is not language specific, and with the debate in heaven in Canto 1, or in Neptune's court in canto 6, or with the Velho do Restelo's denunciation of the whole project, or the diplomatic exchanges between Gama and the Samorin in canto 8, one hears positions taken and rhetoric deployed that it is perfectly possible to carry across into the target language. The same applies to the various prayers, pleadings, intercessions, or accounts of Gama's or Bacchus's or the Samorin's private thoughts that feature from time to time. They are cast in poetic form, but it is their prose content that has dramatic force and may be translated. As for passages of pure lyrical description, with their voluptuous celebration of the resources of the Portuguese language, it is here that the translator may fall short. But the word play in *The Lusíads* tends to take the form of paradox or antithesis ('dry wood on the waves with a sail'), and there (I think) deliberate puns[3]. It remains, of course, much better to read the poem in its original Portuguese, but I am confident my version carries a decent 70% of the original into English.

The main technical problem concerned the differences between English and Portuguese syntax, involving the complete reworking of Camões's sentences. I begin part 2 of my account with an extended comparison of six different English renderings of Camões's opening 16-line sentence, high-

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[2] Lettre à Georges Izambard, 13 Mai, 1871, available at http://abardel.free.fr/petite_anthologie/lettre_du_voyant_panorama.htm#annexe

[3] On "amor" and "amora" in Canto 9:58.

lighting the contrast between a syntax of inflected nouns and verbs, and a syntax where meaning depends on word order. Similar linguistic differences arose over the position of adjectives in Portuguese (normally after the noun) and in English (normally before), in two distinct ways. The first was that Camões had adjectives (along with adverbs and verbs in participle forms) available as his rhyming words, a resource largely absent in English where the rhymes tend to fall on nouns and verbs. This had profound consequences for the choice of poetic form. The second was the sheer abundance of Camões's adjectives, compared to the economy of his nouns and verbs. The solution adopted for *The Lusíads* was the normal solution for translators from the romance languages, that is, to go for the last of a series of adjectives, and make the others earn their keep. With the lyrics, I was forced to revise this practice. So much of the verbal colour of the lyrics proved to be vested in the adjectives that they couldn't be simply trimmed. Instead, I exploited the richness of English vocabulary, with its extraordinary range of alternative words for every situation, transfering something of that verbal colour back to the nouns and verbs.

The poetics of translation, then, in the linguistic sense, proved intimately bound up with the practice of turning poetry in the SL into poetry in the TL. For that was my aim. I was first drawn to Camões's poetry as a young poet, and when twenty-four years later I began translating him, my hope was to give English readers with no knowledge of Portuguese a clear impression of his greatness. A similar ambition is neatly expressed by Edith Grossman, introducing her splendid new translation of *Don Quixote*.

> I believe that my primary obligation as a literary translator is to recreate for the reader in English the experience of the reader in Spanish ... When Cervantes wrote *Don Quixote*, his language was not archaic or quaint. He wrote in a crackling up-to-date Spanish that was an intrinsic part of his time ... a modern language that both reflected and helped to shape the way people experienced the world.[4]

I can't resist adding here a comment of Ezra Pound's, specifically about translating *The Lusíads*:

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[4] Cervantes 2005, xix – xx.

> The beauty of Camoens will never be represented in English until his translators learn to resist translating every Portuguese word by an English word derivative from the same Latin root. The translation of Camoens into words of Saxon origin would demand a care of diction equal to that of the author, and would retain the vigour of the original. A translation filled with Latinisms looks like a cheap imitation of Milton.[5]

Pound's wise advice highlights the boldness of the choices the translator must make. But it also reminds us of something stressed in Gentzler's essay, namely the cultural importance of translation. Pound's adaptations of Chinese poets featured as key texts in the modernist movement. In my remarks on sonnets, I describe the importance of translations by Henry Howard, Earl of Surrey in sixteenth century England, and the stimulus they provided to Shakespeare and his contemporaries.

At an altogether more modest level, I also touch in this short book on Camões's profound influence on my own poetry, both in the volumes before I began translating his work, and in the more ambitious collections I have published since. The experience of living in close contact over several years with such a rare spirit has been enormously enriching, and I hope something of this comes across.

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[5] Pound 1912, 227.

The Biblioteca Nacional

In October 1994, I was standing on the third floor of Lisbon's Biblioteca Nacional before the catalogues of the library's special collection devoted to Portugal's national poet, Luís de Camões. Every fifty seconds, a plane flew overhead, arriving from Africa, the Americas, Europe, or from India and beyond, shaking the building to its foundations before going on to land at Lisbon's Portela airport. In my hands, along with blank sheets of paper and the lead pencil obligatory for use in the special collection, was a publisher's contract with Oxford University Press to produce a verse translation of Camões's *The Lusíads*. The translation was to be delivered for publication in 1997, the quincententary of Vasco da Gama's pioneer voyage to India which was the poem's principal subject.

Nowadays, the national library's catalogue is on-line. You order the item you want to consult before leaving home, and it is there waiting for you when you arrive on the desk you have nominated. In 1994, the catalogues were still card-index affairs, of two types. One head-high cabinet consisted of wooden drawers threaded with long brass rods, their handles burnished with constant use. The labels read A – AC, AD - AG, AH – AN, and so on, all the way through the alphabet down to ZE - ZY at the far bottom right. These contained hand-written authors' names, titles, classifications, and location numbers, in a variety of scripts. The more modern catalogue had metal drawers and type-written references, similarly labeled in little metal slots.

What intimidated was the sheer amount of material, literally tens of thousands of titles. It wasn't as bad as checking under Shakespeare in the British Library catalogue, but it came close. Could I tackle more than a fraction of this before submitting my translation in 1997?

Some of it I knew could be safely ignored. Under Portugal's dictatorship, beginning gradually with Salazar's first accession to power in 1926 and extending to the carnation revolution of 1974, literary and historical scholarship was at a low ebb. At best innocuous, at worst it was thoroughly pernicious. The innocuous productions were editions of sources, including Camões's sources for *The Lusíads*. Lavishly produced, and textually accurate but devoid of interpretation, all scholarship focused on the avoidance of typographical error, these provided useful shortcuts to material otherwise difficult to access in the national library or the national archive in the Torre do Tombo. Less innocuous, and with radical implications as I shall

describe later, were the separate editions of Camões' works, each attempting to establish a definitive canon. The pernicious works were accounts of the Portuguese nation state, beginning in pre-Roman times, surviving intact the six centuries of Arab-Berber rule and the Spanish 'interlude', to re-emerge in 1640, unaffected by Islam, by feudalism, or by any influences from France or the rest of Iberia. These were paralleled by accounts of the 'Portuguese overseas expansion', beginning with the 'discoveries' of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, and continuing as a divinely ordained 'overseas expansion' in sharp contrast to the 'imperialism' of lesser states such as Holland or Britain.

In support of these parallel ideologies, Camões's poetry - and especially *The Lusíads* – had been recruited for the best part of fifty years. To a poet already committed to producing an English version of *The Lusíads* for our times, little of this material was likely to be useful.

All the same, I could not avoid feeling rebuked by the sheer mass of scholarship catalogued before me, especially that in the wooden drawers with their hand-written references. I had no claim to be a scholar of Portugal, but I reverenced scholarship, and had done scholarly work in other areas. Two months earlier, I had moved to live permanently in Portugal, and the Portuguese clearly loved this poet. The record of this love spanned more than four centuries, not just the years of the dictatorship. My publisher's contract notwithstanding, I felt like an intruder.

There was one other type of writing represented in these drawers, a plethora of brief papers by amateur scholars, often privately printed, on such matters as Heraldry in Camões, Camões's cave in Macau, *The Lusiads* retold for children, Camões's family in Tomar, Camões's astrological charts, Camões as a New Christian, medals commemorating Camões, Camões in the Ribatejo, Camões in Évora, Camões in Constância, and so on, each, self-evidently, a labour of love and of local pride. The amateur in me felt drawn to them.

My own take on Camões was very different. It was in Beira, Mozambique's second city, that I first encountered his poetry. The date was July, 1970, and I had recently passed my thirtieth birthday. I had just completed my first year of teaching English Literature at the University of Malawi, having earlier spent four years teaching the same subject at the Trinidad campus of the University of the West Indies. I was writing a book about the Trinidadian-born novelist, V.S. Naipaul. I was also learning to be a poet, wrestling especially with the styles appropriate for writing about non-English peoples and places, using English forms and the English language.

I was in Beira with my girl friend, Alice (pronounced Portuguese-style with the accent on the second syllable). She had been born in colonial Nyasaland, but raised in Mozambique, in the sugar town of Luabo on the lower Zambesi River. We had met in Malawi, and I assumed we were on vacation. But Alice's primary purpose was to introduce me to her family and friends, especially her mother, and get their approval before signing up with me permanently, as she has done for the past forty-two years.

Beira was a small city, with one main square a few hundred yards from the Indian Ocean. In the bookshop one morning, I bought for fifty-two escudos (less than £1) each, volumes IV and V of Luís de Camões's *Obras Completas* in the Sá da Costa edition. Volumes IV and V were devoted to *The Lusíads*. Alice meanwhile bought Jane Austen's *Orgulho e Preconceito*.[6]

The pages of the Camões volumes were uncut, so we sat at a pavement café drinking Moçambican beer while I borrowed a table knife from the Portuguese waiter. It took several seconds to reveal each page and while I was doing so I glanced at the stanzas before me, in effect speed-reading the whole poem in about half an hour. To my astonishment, it began not far from where I was sitting, with Vasco da Gama's fleet already in the Mozambique channel. Sofala, the port and fortress Camões mentions, had been located a few miles south of Beira until washed away in the nineteenth century. Beira was effectively Sofala's replacement. Quelimane, where so many of Vasco da Gama's crew perished from scurvy, commemorated in memorable lines, and the Zambesi River, so vividly described in Canto 10, were our next ports of call.

Here, on the pages unfolding before me, was a poet doing four centuries earlier what I was attempting to do myself – using a European language and an established European form to describe the peoples and landscapes of the east African coast.

Of course, I was already familiar with names like Sofala, Mombasa, Kilwa, Ormuz and Bengal, or further afield Ternate and Tidore, from Milton's *Paradise Lost*. But there they feature as remote, exotic places with resounding, musical names, attuned to the purposes of Milton's grand style. They weren't places where he had lived and worked, or where he was about to meet his prospective mother-in-law. For Camões, in sharp contrast, they were the places where he had spent some seventeen years of his adult life and had written more than half of his poetry. It's necessary to add that in

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[6] Trans. Lúcio Cardoso, Editorial Bruguera, n.d.

those days I wasn't much interested in Camões's role as the Portuguese national poet. Portugal was an enemy, fighting an anachronistic colonial war, and I wasn't impressed by the Portuguese colony I was currently visiting, where even the waiters and shoe-shine boys were Portuguese and the only outlet for African talent was through the minority status of *assimilado*. 'Do they behave themselves?' I was asked by a bemused official, when I explained my job was teaching African students at an independent African university.

Yet in the three volumes of poetry I published between that encounter of 1970 and the day I stood before the catalogues in the national library, Camões became a constant resource. By then, of course, I was more than reconciled to Portugal: I had fallen in love. Sometimes my references were casually incidental – 'I parked outside the hospital in *Luis de Camões*' begins one poem, which makes no further mention of the poet but is concerned with the writing of a poem. 'The coolest place in *Largo de Camões* / is the tile shop' continues another, ostensibly about the poetry of Portuguese tiles (the *largo*, of course, contains Camões's statue). At other times, Camões is addressed more directly, as in the following:

> 'The most difficult art in the world,' said
> the *administrador* between mouthfuls, squid-prodding
>
> fork raised, his right hand casting for the English words
> (I thought of *ottava rima* and Camões)
>
> 'is the art of choosing a good melon.'
> Camões sits in his square under the pigeons:
>
> his poetry is fired hard like tiles:
> his round eye ridicules the end of empire.
>
> To be fair to my friend (retired) the grilled squid
> was succulent in the club where they planned the coup.
>
> Everything that summer was like the wild melons
> exploding at a touch to scatter seeds.[7]

[7] White 1991, 73.

Of this admittedly slight poem, my former colleague Jeffrey Childs has written as follows:

> Camões, along with his *ottava rima*, appears as an immediate, almost knee-jerk, response to the question of the most difficult art in the world, which we are subsequently informed is 'the art of choosing a good melon'. The resolution of this question relegates Camões to the place of unappreciated public hero who now serves as a perch for pigeons. Many elements in this section thus encourage us to read it as an ironic reflection – both humorous and poignant – on the legacy of Camões in particular and, more generally, on the fate of heroes, poets, and poetry both in Portugal and abroad. But there is more going on in this poem. ... Camões's poetry is likened to firehardened tiles, and the locus of historical judgment shifts back to the 'round eye' of the poet. The theme of 'the end of empire' leads on (or back) to where the speaker and his friend now find themselves – namely, the club where the plan for the Portuguese revolution was forged – and thus to the section's concluding lines: 'Everything that summer was like the wild melons / exploding at a touch to scatter seeds'. In these, the punchline of the poem, when read as an ironic deflation of the epic, is transformed into something else: something wild, dangerous, exhilarating; an image of poetry and history and life as wildly and unpredictably fecund.[8]

More generally, Camões who is among the most questioning of poets, testing all received convention against the seventeen years of his travels in Africa and India, became my model in writing what I called in *The View from the Stockade* 'a poetry of fact', the very antithesis of the exotic. These things happened among these people in these places. No need for clever hyperbole when the material itself was so strong.

By 1994, of course, when I was staring at the Camões catalogue in the national library's special collection, much about Portugal had changed. Historians marginalized, exiled or imprisoned in the days of the *Estado Novo*,

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[8] Jeffrey Childs, 'Camões in the Poetry of Landeg White', presented at presented at the 2nd International Conference on Anglo-Portuguese Studies, Lisbon, Fundação Calouste Gulbenkian/CETAPS (April, 2011).

had emerged to dismiss as nonsense the myth of a pre-Roman Portuguese Christian state, surviving all successor states to be re-constituted as Salazar's Portugal.[9] Feudalism in the French manner was firmly on the agenda, drawn as a northern model of political control into increasing competition with the municipal forms of government inherited from Islamic rule in the south. The importance of the monasteries as centres of learning and of agricultural innovation was acknowledged, but interacting constantly with French, Spanish and even Italian orders. The five centuries of Islamic rule began for the first time to be subjected to competent archaeological investigation, and the possibility raised, again for the first time, that songs and poems in vernacular Arabic had influenced the body of troubadour poetry produced at the Castilian and Portuguese courts between 1200 and 1350, especially the famous *cantigas de escarho e da mal dizer* (satiric and insulting songs). With Morocco, Spain and France all competing for influence, the emergence of the Portuguese language and, by inference, of a separate Portuguese identity was being assigned to later and later periods.

All this was invigorating and had profound implications for Camões's poetry: France, Spain and the Islamic world all feature prominently in *The Lusíads*. But Camões studies, based principally at the University of Coimbra, showed little sign of renovation. In response to my requests for a reading list, Portuguese friends recommended a number of essays by such critics as António José Saraiva, Jorge de Sena, and Helder Macedo. These, especially Helder Macedo, proved stimulating. But they remained essays, focusing on a theme or a detail, and not constituting the substantial post-1974 re-assessment I was looking for. The most important advances, building on work done prior to 1974, were textual, producing better editions and substantially revising the Camões canon, particularly in respect of his lyric poems. For a poet whose work had been taken over by the dictatorship, the importance of this can scarcely be over-stated. While Camões was being puffed up as the original and ultimate spokesman for the regime, Camões scholarship was quietly revealing his true dimensions as a poet committed to no politicians cause.

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[9] Several of the historicans exploring the themes described in this paragraph became national best-sellers in a Portugual eager for new perspectives on the past. See, for example, António José Saraiva, *Historia da Cultura em Portugal,* 3 vols., Lisbon: Journal de Fôro, 1950-1962., A.H. de Oliveira Marques, *História de Portugal*, 2 vols, Lisbon: Palas Editores, 1972-1974, and José Mattoso, *Identificação de um País. Ensaio sobre as origens de Portugal* (1096-1325), Lisbon: Editora Estampa, 1985, to cite only the most obvious.

But of the Camões I had encountered in 1970 in Beira, I could discover little. I had met him not, as most Portuguese do, in the classroom already encumbered with heavy baggage as the national poet. I had met him at a pavement café, travelling light, and more or less defined by those travels. Even on such an apparently simple matter as to which of his poems were written during those seventeen years exile in Africa and India, I could find little guidance. There was not even a hypothetical chronology of all Camões's writings. Bizarre as it may seem, in the light of Goethe's comment that 'No man lives among palms unpunished',[10] the standard line was emerging that Camões could have written *The Lusíads* without ever leaving Portugal.

1994 marked two further landmarks, one momentously public, one largely private. It was the year Nelson Mandela was elected President of a South Africa free at long last from the abiding obscenity of the apartheid regime. It was also the year in which the University of York decided to shut down the Centre for Southern African Studies which I had directed for ten years. The two events were linked. For the university, Mandela's election meant the demise of a long period when scholarships provided by the UN, UNESCO, UNICEF, the British Council, and other similar bodies, were available for study at such institutions as the University of York. Under Margaret Thatcher, such externally funded students who could be charged full fees had become a goldmine. With apartheid's demise, such scholarships were rightly diverted to universities in South Africa. My own university could long longer profit, and my position, which had depended on such funds, became untenable.

But I was also retiring from African Studies. I could have remained in York as a member of the Department of English and Related Literature. I chose instead to take the early retirement available on generous terms, and to move to Portugal with the aim of translating *The Lusíads*. I had spent fourteen years in the Centre at York, following on fourteen at the universities of the West Indies, Malawi, Sierra Leone and Zambia. But my years in African Studies had always been too dependent on talented improvisation. I had no formal qualifications in the subject I taught and, though my writings were extensive, my reading was haphazard. My project was to round off that stage of my life by returning to the first contact between Europe and

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[10] The German phrase is 'Es wandelt niemand ungestraft unter Palmen.' The phrase is from Goethe, *Elective Affinities*: a new translation by David Constantine, Oxford: Oxford World's Classics, 1994, p. 169.

Africa, as celebrated by Camões. With the final disappearance of white rule from all the areas first visited by the Portuguese navigators in the fifteenth century, it was possible to take a fresh look. The idea that that first contact had been intellectually stimulating resonated through my first reading of *The Lusíads*, and to recapture that excitement in English became my ambition. I began my translation on the very day Nelson Mandela won the election to become South Africa's president.

I had sold myself to Oxford University Press as a writer on the African dimension of Portuguese colonial history with a working knowledge of written Portuguese, and as author of three well-reviewed collections of my own poetry. As I journeyed home from the Biblioteca Nacional that afternoon in October 1994, it seemed those would have to remain my credentials, supplemented once more by talented improvisation.

The Opening Stanzas

'Poetry is what is left out in translation'
(Robert Frost)[11]
'Poetry is translation'
(Aristotle)[12]

Anyone brash enough to begin translating *The Lusíads* is well advised to consult the work of previous translators. In my own case, I had constant recourse to Sir Richard Fanshawe's lively translation of 1655 and William Atkinson's prose version of 1952. I also had at hand Leonard Bacon's somewhat Spenserian translation of 1950, which proved especially entertaining for its notes, along with Mickle's great slabs of heroic couplets of 1776.[13]

Long afterwards, I discovered Sir Richard Burton, who translated the poem in 1880, had followed it up with a two-volume *Commentary*, including criticism of earlier translations, taking their opening two stanzas by way of example.[14] In practice, his focus is on the accuracy, fluency and sweetness of the translations as a whole, rather than just the epic's opening sentence. But I like the way he introduces his theme, viz., 'I have contented myself with the two opening stanzas than which, perhaps, there are none more unmanageable in the whole poem'.[15] They are, indeed, intractable stanzas, announcing the epic theme in a sixteen-line sentence, introducing the principal subject, modified by subordinate clauses, and two related subjects, each with modifying clauses, until argument and grammar are brought to a head with the main verb in line 15, followed by a final conditional clause. This sort of thing can't be done in modern English, and what follows is an introduction to the difficulties of translating *The Lusíads*, taking the opening stanzas by Sir Richard Fanshawe 1655, William Mickle

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[11] This saying is so well known it may almost be attributed to Oral Tradition. It appears et-al. in Baker 1998, 170.

[12] A provocation: Aristotle said no such thing. But he is often quoted as saying 'Poetry is metaphor'. He seems not to have said that either, but it stands as a fair summary of his views on the language of poetry. Metaphor is turn is usually translated as 'a carrying over', as too is the act of translation. My fiction therefore expresses a truth which I stand by.

[13] The texts used were *Fanshawe* 1963, Mickle 1900, Bacon 1950, and Atkinson 1952.

[14] Burton, *Commentary*, pp. 128-193.

[15] Burton, *Commentary*, p. 127.

1776, Sir Richard Burton 1880, J.J. Aubertin 1884, Leonard Bacon 1950 and William Atkinson 1952, as examples.[16]

Sir Richard Fanshawe 1655

Armes and the Men above the vulgar file,
Who from the Western Lusitanian shore
Past ev'n beyond the *Trapobanian*-Isle,
Through *Seas* which never *Ship* had sayld before;
Who (brave in *action*, patient in long *Toyle*,
Beyond what strength of *humane* nature bore)
'Mongst *Nations*, under *other Stars*, acquir'd
A *modern Scepter* which to *Heaven* aspir'd.

Likewise those *Kings of glorious memory*,
Who sow'd and propagated where they past
The Faith with the *new Empire* (making dry
the *Breasts* of ASIA, and laying waste
Black AFFRICK's vitious Glebe) And *Those* who by
Their deeds at *home* left not their names defac'd,
My *Song* shall spread where ever there are *Men*
If *Wit* and *Art* will so much guide my *Pen*.[17]

Fanshawe was the first to translate *The Lusíads* into English, and most subsequent translators have great affection for 'good old Fanshawe' as Burton calls him.[18] My own tribute was to say 'his version still best captures the intellectual vitality of the original'[19] His version was undertaken while he was under house-arrest at Tankersley in Yorkshire, during the Common-

[16] Other translations include those by Thomas Moore Musgrave (London, 1826), 'Amalia' (Mrs Harris?), (Porto, 1844-45), Edward Quillinan (London, 1853), Thomas Livingstone Mitchell (London, 1854), Robert ffrench Duff (London, 1880), James Edwin Hewitt (Lisbon, 1881 & Rio de Janeiro 1883),) and Hugh Finn (Salisbury, Rhodesia, 1972). Guy Butler published a version of Canto 5 in M. Van Wyk Smith (ed.), *Shades of Adamastor: an Anthology of Poetry* (Rhodes University, 1988). LUSITANICUS (M.C.Tait), included 243 stanzas from *The Lusíads* in his privately printed *The Werewolf and Other Poems and Translations* (1932).

[17] Fanshawe 1963, 59.

[18] Burton 1881, 143

[19] White 1997, xxi

wealth. Under Charles 1 he had served as secretary to the English Ambassador in Madrid, and he was closely identified with the royalist cause. Cromwell, however, seems to have been fond of him, so he was not forced into exile. His qualifications for translating Camões were that he spoke excellent Spanish and that he had available at Tankersley the massive commentary on the poem published by Faria e Sousa in 1639.

Fanshawe never laid down any 'theory' of translation, but his close friend, the poet John Denham, praised his translation of Guarini's *Pastor Fido* in these terms:

> Others preserve the ashes, thou the flame
> True to his sense, but truer to his flame.[20]

A year after *The Lusiads* appeared, Denham commented further, 'I conceive it is a vulgar error in translating poets, to affect being *fidus interpres* ... for poetry is of so subtile a spirit, that in the pouring out of one language into another, it will all evaporate, and if a new spirit be not added in the transformation, there will remain nothing but a *caput mortuum*, there being certain graces and happinesses peculiar to every language, which give life and energy to the words.' The essay continues, 'if Virgil must needs speak English, it were fit he should speak ... as a man of this age'.

Most accounts of poetic translation in English begin with John Dryden's preface to his *Fables Ancient and Modern* (1680).[21] But Denham's comments (1656) precede Dryden's by 24 years. It should be added that Fanshawe was born in 1608 and the poets that mattered when he was a young man were still the Elizabethans and Metaphysicals, lively intellectual poets with widely ranging imagery and rhythms matching those of contemporary speech. Milton and Dryden had not yet become the dominant influences in English poetry, and this shows.

There is an energy and vigour about the two opening stanzas of Fanshawe's version, with little obvious searching after 'poetic' effects. As with Donne, the stresses fall, as they would in spoken English, on the words carrying the meaning. Even the form – *ottava rima* – isn't allowed to impose itself. The lines are not treated as units, but carry over as the sense demands, until the final couplet restores some feeling of order. This is especially true

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[20] Fanshawe 1963, 22.
[21] Dryden 1958, 520-539.

of the second stanza, where lines 2 to 5 threaten to fall apart until line 6 is end-stopped with a strong rhyme and the stanza moves to a concluding couplet.

He has, of course, made two sentences of Camões' long opening period. But he captures the momentum of the original, and his translation reads throughout like a thinking man's version, conveying the intellectual excitement of opening up the world that remains central to the poem's meaning. Modern English readers still have much to gain from Fanshawe, and it is good that his version remains in print.[22]

William Mickle 1776

ARMS and the Heroes, who from Lisbon's shore,
Thro' seas where sail was never spread before,
Beyond where Ceylon lifts her spicy breast,
And waves her woods above the wat'ry waste,
With prowess more than human forc'd their way
To the fair kingdoms of the rising day:
What wars they wag'd, what seas, what dangers pass'd,
What glorious empire crown'd their toils at last,
Vent'rous I sing, on soaring pinions borne,
And all my country's wars the song adorn;
What kings, what heroes of my native land
Thunder'd on Asia's and on Afric's strand:
Illustrious shades, who levell'd in the dust
The idol-temples and the shrines of lust:
And where, erewhile, foul demons were rever'd,
To Holy Faith unnumber'd altars rear'd:
Illustrious names, with deathless laurels crown'd,
While time rolls on in every clime renown'd![23]

Self-evidently, Mickle's chosen form is the heroic couplet, that dominant form in eighteenth century English verse, following on the examples set by Dryden, Pope and Johnson. For the satire of the period, it was the perfect vehicle, synthetic and barbed, and proceeding through antithesis, balancing one phrase, thought or image against its opposite and requiring

[22] £17.99 from EEBO editions or £233 from OUP.
[23] Mickle 1900, 1-2.

the reader to discriminate. For an age that prided itself on being the age of reason, ridiculing all departures from 'sense', the heroic couplet proved the perfect fit of form to content.

For narrative, however, in the hands of anyone less technically skilled than Dryden or especially Pope, it could prove disastrous. The couplets tend to be self-contained, the heavy rhymes ensuring the poem comes to a complete halt every second line, requiring to be jump-started. Mickle's deployment of colons cannot disguise the fact that he has turned Camões's opening into no less than five complete sentences, with further pauses at the completion of each rhyme. All momentum is lost, both in this opening sentence and in the epic as a whole, which proceeds not stanza by stanza but couplet by couplet, the rhythm of Camões's careful divisions supplanted by an entirely different and alien rhythm. The whole architecture of the epic has been altered.

Notice, too, that Mickle takes 18 lines to translate Camões's 16, lines 4 and 14 of his translation having no basis in the original. This, again, is representative. Throughout the translation, Mickle persistently adds material of his own, most notably in Canto 9 where 154 couplets are intruded describing a non-existent sea-battle. He justifies this with reference to eighteenth century taste, claiming the freedom to infuse his version with the 'spirit of an original' work.[24] It's true that much eighteenth poetry proceeds in this fashion. Pope's *Epistles* are modelled on Horace (he calls them 'imitations'), while Johnson's 'London' and 'Vanity of Human Wishes' are contemporary versions of Juvenal. Even the non-conformist hymn writer Isaac Watts describes himself as modernizing the Book of Psalms, bringing them into line with the later revelations of the Gospels, but in a manner completely in accord with the tastes of the age.[25]

It would be more exact to say that Mickle transforms rather than translates the poem. In his hands, it becomes no longer the Portuguese national epic, but a founding text for the British East India Company. *The Lusiad* is, he says, 'the epic poem of the birth of commerce, and, in a particular manner, the epic poem of whatever country has the control and possession of the commerce of India'[26]. As his introduction further summarizes:

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[24] Mickle 1900, xxxii.

[25] See Marini, Stephen A., *Sacred Song in America: Religion, Music, and Public Culture*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2003, p. 76.

[26] Mickle 1900, xxx-xxxi.

> The abolition of the feudal system, a system of absolute slavery, and that equality of mankind which affords the protection of property, are the glorious gifts which the spirit of commerce, awakened by Prince Henry of Portugal, has bestowed upon Europe in general; and, as if directed by the manes of his mother, a daughter of England, upon the British empire in particular.[27]

With this theme in mind, Portugal's role in the epic is consistently minimized.[28] In these opening lines, for example, the 'ocidental praia Lusitana', becomes simply 'Lisbon's shore'. This apparently very minor change draws force from the consistency with which Mickle applies it, references to Portugal or Lusitania being regularly substituted by Lisbon or 'the Tagus'. Having reduced the origin of the voyage to a matter of geography, when Mickle continues in these lines to speak of 'what glorious empire', or 'my country's wars', or 'my native land', the hint is clear it's Britain he's really talking about.

Notice, too, he identifies the legendary Taprobana with Ceylon, and adds a line and a half describing it. Mickle's readers know perfectly well where Ceylon is (it was to be captured by Britain just 20 years later) and, following Cook's voyages, there is no longer any mystery about the limits of the known world.

That said, none of the other 17 English translations of *The Lusíads* has proved as enduring as Mickle's. It remained in print in popular editions until the early twentieth century, and a new scholarly edition was published as recently as April 2010.[29]

J.J. Aubertin 1878

> Arms and the heroes signalised in fame,
> Who from the western Lusitanian shore
> Beyond e'en Taprobana sailing came,

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[27] Mickle 1900, XLVII.

[28] In her essay 'Uma leitura de *The Lusíads* (William Julius Mickle)', Isabel Simões Ferreira quotes a contemporary reviewer of Mickle's translation declaring in *The Edinburgh Magazine* that the poem's 'principal defect' is the account of Portuguese history in cantos 3 and 4 which he has 'no relation to the subject of the poem'. See Machado de Sousa,1992, 80.

[29] *The Lusiad: or the Discovery of India: an epic poem* by William Julius Mickle and John Archer (Bibliobazaar, 2010).

O'er seas that ne're had been traversed before;
Harassed with wars and dangers without name,
Beyond what seemed of human prowess bore,
Raised a new kingdom midst a distant clime,
Which afterwards they rendered so sublime:

Also those kings of glorious memory,
Who, spreading wide the faith and empire's sway,
Went forth where Africa and Asia be,
Sweeping the wicked of those lands away;
And they, who, working many a prodigy
Of valour, death's own laws e'en held at bay,
Shall in my song be o'er the world displayed,
If art and genius so far lend their aid.[30]

I have a great admiration for Aubertin's translation. He was the first translator of *The Lusíads* to speak fluent Portuguese (as an Anglican clergyman, he had spent many years in Brazil) and for sheer accuracy he sets the standard very high. In this spirit, he compares the art of translation with 'the engraving of a picture'[31] – that is, the translator produces an exact copy in a lesser medium. It is hard to dissent from this.

He was also the first to produce a parallel text version (left page Portuguese, right page English), explaining, 'My ambition has been to introduce Camoens to English literature in his own language, and so to interpret him, side by side with himself, in ours, as it seemed to me he would have written his 'Lusiads' had he written them in English'.[32] His version actually functions as an excellent crib. For each stanza, the page on the right in English tells you exactly what's happening on the page on the left in Portuguese. Add that it's skilfully rhymed, you might wonder why translations of *The Lusíads* didn't stop with Aubertin (why, for instance, Sir Richard Burton, his close friend, felt the need to do his own version just 3 years later).

My own reaction to first encountering Aubertin's translation was indeed to wonder why I was bothering with my own (at that stage, two-thirds accomplished). I still have the pencilled sheets on which I copied out sentence after sentence, only to break off repeatedly with the realization this

[30] Aubertin 1878, 3.
[31] Aubertin 1878, xviii.
[32] Aubertin 1878, xvi.

was not really English, but a sort of mid-way language, an uncanny approximation of English to Portuguese. More precisely, the vocabulary was English but the syntax was Portuguese. I'm not complaining about the 'e'ens' and 'ne'ers' employed in these two opening stanzas - standard elisions in nineteenth century poetry - but about the inverted order of the nouns and adjectives, or of the verbs and auxiliaries, the distortions of syntax necessary to secure the rhymes. Lines like 'Beyond e'en Taprobana sailing came' ought strictly to be phrased 'Came sailing e'en beyond Taprobana', while 'Shall in my song be o'er the world displayed' would be better expressed as 'shall be displayed o'er the world in my song'. Ironically, the result is that in order to read Aubertin's translation, it actually helps to know some Portuguese, the parallel text often helping you find your way through the tangled maze of Aubertin's English sentences. Otherwise, his translation is occasionally impenetrable.

Interestingly, though, these comments do not apply to Aubertin's version of the two opening stanzas. Confirming Burton's comments about their intractability, Aubertin has responded by simplifying the challenge they present. The stanzas are separated by a colon, but they are actually two separate sentences, with a new verb phrase 'raised a new kingdom' introduced in line 7. He has also altered the sequence of the clauses, so that the parallel texts do not correspond anything like so closely as elsewhere in his version. Taprobana, for instance, appears in line 3, not line 4, and Africa and Asia in line 11 instead of 12, and he struggles at times with the syntax, 'which afterwards' in line 8 (presumably for 'tanto') being particularly clumsy.

These are very minor points, barely noticeable except by contrast with the skill he demonstrates elsewhere. His version, though unexciting, is both more accurate and more technically accomplished than any other currently in existence.

Sir Richard Burton 1881

The feats of Arms, and famed heroic Host,
from occidental Lusitanian strand,
who o'er the waters ne'er by seaman crost,
fared beyond the Taprobáne-land,
forceful in perils and in battle-post,
with more than promised force of mortal hand:
and in the regions of a distant race
rear'd a new throne so haught in Pride of Place:

> And, eke, the Kings of memory grand and glorious,
> who hied them Holy Faith and Reign to spread,
> converting, conquering, and in lands notorious,
> Africk and Asia, devastation made;
> nor less the Lieges who by deeds memorious
> brake from the doom that binds the vulgar dead;
> my song would sound o'er Earth´s extremest part
> were mine the genius, mine the Poet's art.[33]

Translation theorists distinguish between domesticating and foreignizing strategies, meaning those that employ all the resources and norms of the target language to make the translation seem the work of a native speaker, and those that take pains to remind the reader that the text in question comes from another culture and another age.[34] This defines a graph rather than absolute distinction, for few translations are entirely one or the other. But of those considered here, Burton's is by far the most 'foreignized' – imitating Portuguese syntax (as his friend Aubertin had done) while deploying a vocabulary packed with reminders that this is a sixteenth century poem. 'I have', he says, 'purposely introduced archaisms ... to give a sort of Quinhentista flavour'.[35] He goes to on deny aiming to represent 'the English of the period', but he adds 'a certain air of antiquity is only decent in translating from an author who dated before Spenser'.[36]

No reader can doubt that this was a labour of love. I quote from his Preface:

> None but a poet can translate a poet ... Let me add that none but a traveller can do justice to a traveller. ... I have not only visited almost every place named in the epos of commerce: in many I have spent months and even years. ... During how many hopeless days and sleepless night Camoens was my companion, my consoler, my friend;

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[33] Burton 1880, 5.

[34] The terms were first used by Friedrich Schleiermacher in a lecture 'On the different methods of Translating' (1813). 'Either the translator leaves the author in peace, as much as possible, and moves the reader towards him. Or he leaves the reader in peace, as much as possible, and moves the author towards him.´ Schleiermacher preferred the former. (Baker 1998, 342)

[35] Burton 1881, 188.

[36] Burton 1881, 191.

> - on board raft and canoe; sailer and steamer; on the camel and the mule; under the tent and in the jungle-tree; upon the fire-peak and the snow-peak; on the prairie, the campo, the steppe, the desert ... my ruling passion compelled me to seek a talisman against home-sickness ... I found this talisman in Camoens.[37]

Nor can there be any question that Burton's version is unreadable. Despite his deployment of colons at the ends of lines 6 and 8, of semi-colons in lines 12 and 14, he had in fact closely reproduced Portuguese syntax in what works as a single sentence. But the 'Quinhentista flavour' of his vocabulary means that his language dates from before English poetry found its voice – before Spenser, Sydney, Marlowe, Shakespeare, Donne etc. – rummaging around in the diction of poets like Wyatt and Surrey.

Take, for instance, the word 'haught' in line 8 (meaning ´proud'). According to OED, it's a corrupted version of the French 'hault' (misspelt on the model of words like 'caught' and 'taught'), and last used, in the sense in which Burton uses it, in 1590. Similarly, 'hied' in line 10, meaning ´hastened, was obsolete as early as 1500. As for the compound 'battle-post' (l.5), this doesn't occur in OED at all. Burton was quite unabashed about this. He writes, 'I do not doubt that my 'vocabulary' will lose me many a reader, but these will not be of the class by which I would be read, and the loss will rather be looked on as a gain.[38]

The bravado is typical, but extremely odd. After all, translations exist as a compromise, to make foreign texts accessible to those with insufficient knowledge to read them in the original. In practice, it is easier to learn to read Portuguese than to struggle with Burton's pastiche sixteenth-century English.

Leonard Bacon 1950

> Arms and those matchless chiefs who from the shore
> Of Western Lusitania began
> To track the oceans none had sailed before,
> Yet past Tapróbané´s far limit ran,
> And daring every danger, every war,
> With courage that excelled the powers of Man,
> Amid remotest nations caused to rise

[37] Burton 1880, XIV-XV.
[38] Burton 1881, 192.

Young empire which they carried to the skies;
So, roo, good memory of those kings who went
Afar, religion, and our rule to spread;
And who, through either hateful continent,
Afric or Asia, like destruction sped;
And theirs, whose valiant acts magnificent
Saved them from the dominion of the dead,
My song shall sow through the world's every part,
So help me this my genius and my art.[39]

Leonard Bacon's is the only American version of *The Lusíads*, a fact perhaps better illustrated by the generous space awarded to his entertaining annotations than by any particular features of his style. He taught briefly at the University of California, Berkeley, before retiring at 36 to devote himself full time to poetry. He published for many years under the pseudonym Autholocus in the *Saturday Review of Literature*, before contributing under his own name to a wider succession of journals. His eight volumes of poetry included a mock epic *Ulug Beg* (1923), and the Pulitzer Prize winning *Sunderland Capture* (1940). Among his translations are versions of the *Chanson de Roland* (1914) and of *El Cid* (1919). He died in 1954, four years after publishing his translation of *The Lusíads*, and is now little known.

As with Fanshawe and Aubertin, *ottava rima* is his chosen form, but he doesn't surpass them in ease, or indeed modernity, of expression. Though the two stanzas are divided by a semi-colon, he has, in fact, made them two sentences. The subject of the former ('Arms and those matchless chiefs') is separated by seven lines from the verb ('caused to rise'), and of latter ('good memory') by a further seven lines from the verb' ('my song shall sow'). This makes for congested syntax, the sub-clauses packaged awkwardly, and to achieve rhythm and rhyme he is forced into the same kinds of elisions ('Afric') and inversions ('acts magnificent') that were evident in Aubertin. His notes, which rival Burton's for erudition, mention Fanshawe's and Burton's translations, but not Aubertin's. Was he aware that the task of rendering *The Lusíads* in late-nineteenth century English verse had already been accomplished?

The worst feature of these lines is, in fact, their lack of drive. There is none of the sense of being tumbled headlong into the poem that characterises Camões's original. Each has its too-correct ten syllables, while the

[39] Bacon 1950, 3.

rhymes fall ploddingly, imposing heavy pauses where none should exist – such as that between 'began / To track' (lines 2.3) or that between 'went / Afar' (lines 9-10). But his version has charm and is engagingly enthusiastic. His solutions to translation cruxes proved always worth consulting. In my own version, his at times has a ghostly presence.

William C. Atkinson 1952

> This is the story of heroes who, leaving their native Portugal behind them, opened a way to Ceylon, and further, across seas no man had ever sailed before. They were men of no ordinary stature, equally at home in war and in dangers of every kind: they founded a new kingdom among distant peoples, and made it great. It is the story too of a line of kings who kept ever advancing the boundaries of faith and empire, spreading havoc among the infidels of Africa and Asia and achieving immortality through their illustrious exploits. If my inspiration but prove equal to the task, all men shall know of them.[40]

Atkinson, who also authored a useful *History of Spain and Portugal*,[41] was for many years professor of Hispanic Studies at the University of Glagow. His is, to date, the only prose translation of *The Lusíads* in English, and the first surprise is that he hasn't taken advantage of the freedom of prose to produce the most accurate version available. Those readers requiring a crib to help them follow Camões´s Portuguese are, ironically, much better served by Aubertin. A great deal of the original text is simply omitted. In Canto I, 56, for example, after the fleet's arrival at Mozambique Island, Camões writes as follows:

> Nisto, Febo nas águas encerrou
> Co carro de cristal a claro dia,
> Dando cargo à irmã que a lumiasse
> O largo mundo, enquanto repoussasse.[42]

Atkinson translates this baldly as 'The sun was setting' – the poetry apparently being regarded as superfluous.

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[40] Atkinson 1952, 39.
[41] Pelican Books, 1960.
[42] Cidade 1947, IV: 1, LVI.

His *Introduction* throws curious light on this. He claims he is the first to offer *The Lusiads* to the English reader in a plain text 'unencumbered by a single footnote'.[43] Anything that might need explaining to the general English reader, largely ignorant of Homer, Virgil and Ovid, has been simply expunged. But Atkinson goes further, complaining of 'The abuse of epithet and adverb' in Camões's text, 'the lapse into tag and padding, the sheer prose of many a weary mechanical solution to the ever-recurring problem in a historical-geographical narrative, of versifying the essentially prosaic'.[44] He gives the distinct impression that by turning the epic back into the prose of its original sources, he is restoring the *status quo ante* and doing Camões a good turn.

The long opening sentence of *The Lusíads* becomes four distinct sentences with four main verbs. They are resolutely matter of fact. Virgil disappears, Taprobana becomes Ceylon, and the sublime becomes simply 'all men shall know of them'. In my own translator's note, I described Atkinson's style as 'academic prose laced by Shakespearean echoes'.[45] Actually, this was rather too kind. As with Mickle's heroic couplets, Atkinson's prose obscures the architecture of *The Lusíads*, substituting rhythms wholly alien to the original. As for these opening sentences, they are totally dependent on cliché – 'men of no ordinary stature', 'equally at home in war and dangers of every kind', 'spreading havoc', and 'but prove equal to the task'. This is tired writing, as far from poetry as it gets.

He doesn't appear to have enjoyed the exercise very much. Hilariously, the book is dedicated to his wife 'who kept the translator to it'. This is translation undertaken as a chore, something translation theory doesn't seem to address but which must apply to quite a high proportion of the work of professional translators.

Making a Start

'As armas e os barões assinalados'. What's be done with the word 'barões'? Every Portuguese-English dictionary I consulted (and I worked with six) gave 'barons' as the correct translation. But 'baron' is a word with negative connotations in English. We use it for the 'robber barons' who came over with William the Conqueror and whose heirs served the bad King John, or for 'industrial barons', the Champalimauds of our society.

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[43] Atkinson 1952, 36.
[44] Atkinson 1952, 32.
[45] White 1997, xxi.

It's not the right word for the opening line of *The Lusíads*. I find, consulting the journal I kept of my translation, that I chose the word 'hero' very quickly. It's a word with certain advantages. It establishes very clearly what kind of poem this is – this is heroic poetry – and the plural makes clear that the heroes in this case are 'the Portuguese'. Mickle uses it, Atkinson uses it, and you'll gather that I find it, in retrospect, a little unadventurous. Fanshawe calls them 'men above the vulgar file'. That won't do in modern English, but I like its suggestion of an aristocracy of achievement, which I think is very close to Camões' meaning. Bacon has 'chiefs', which has all the wrong associations and nothing to recommend it.[46]

So we have 'Arms and the famous heroes' as the literal, arguably accurate translation. But will it do? Obviously, not. This is one of literature's great opening lines – it leaves you tingling, like the opening bars of a familiar symphony. In the first place, my version is too short, only half a line, with just three stresses. This was a constant problem throughout the translation. Modern English is very economical in comparison to Portuguese, and time and again I would translate a stanza and find myself with six short lines expressing Camões' meaning instead of the eight five-foot lines of the original. Worse, my version is flabby. By opting for 'heroes' as my translation of 'barões', I've made Camões' epithet redundant, because if they're heroes, of course they're 'famous'. I resolved this by borrowing from stanza 3 Camões' insistence that these heroes were unrivalled by the heroes of classical times, that their exploits surpassed those of Odysseus and Alexander the Great. So my line, echoing Bacon, became 'Arms and the matchless heroes'.

The next word I looked at was 'Arms'. In English, it's a slightly archaic word, surviving in compounds like firearms or the arms trade. For a while, I toyed with more aggressive words like 'war' or 'warfare' or 'conquest' or 'victory', words which would have made very clear that this is (at least, in part) a war poem and that these heroes were fighters. But the point of Camões' opening line is that it deliberately echoes and modifies the first words of Virgil's *Aeneid*, 'Arma virumque cano' (I sing of arms and the man), and this in turn raised the whole question of Camões' classical references.

I belong to the last generation of English students who needed Latin to get into university. Within a few years it was no longer a requirement, even for students in the humanities, and few of the students I had been teaching

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[46] 'Let me add that "barões" is archaic. Barros writes "baroil" (adj.) for today's "varonil", but some people in the late 16th-century already wrote "varões" meaning simply "men".' (Personal communication from Hélio J.S. Alves.)

over recent years in English and Related Literature at the University of York had read Homer or Virgil or Ovid, even in translation. Camões' regular references to these authors would have been noted and enjoyed by his original audience, but they are lost on most modern English and American audiences. The problem is compounded by the fact that Camões´s knowledge of the Latin classics was so profound and extensive that some of his classical references effectively function as riddles. How many of his first readers back in 1580 could have identified 'the bright lover of the adulterous Larissan', mentioned at the beginning of canto 10? The reference is to the sun god Apollo, who had an affair with Cronis of Larissa in the course of which she was unfaithful to him, so that Camões is describing, with appropriate wit, dawn rising over the Isle of Loves. What is the translator to do here? If renaissance readers were pleasurably teased by such erudition, modern English readers are baffled by it. The answer was, of course, to simplify – to retain the references, but to explain them in the text with additional information in the footnotes. But in this context, would it have been right to eliminate Virgil from the opening line of *The Lusíads*? The Roman poet remains, after all, a constant point of reference throughout the text. I decided it wouldn't, and so the line remained 'Arms and the matchless heroes'.

So far, the line consists of a noun and a noun phrase. Where is the verb? In Portugal, this is a very familiar question. Generations of Portuguese children have been tortured with the problem of locating the main verb in the opening sentence of *The Lusíads*. The subject is announced but there can be no pause at the line's end. Both the meaning and the rhythm tumble the reader forward into an extended sub-clause which continues to the end of the stanza, marked by a semi-colon. Then the first words of stanza 2, 'E também', announce a subordinate subject, followed in turn by its own by extended sub-clause, occupying three lines, before 'E aquelles' broaches a third subject with yet another sub-clause - all this before we finally reach the main verb in line 15, 'cantando espalharei'. At no point as we read these lines has it been possible to break off. Suspense builds up, both semantically, as the meaning unfolds, and syntactically as the sentence's grammar is completed. All this is helped rhythmically by the heavy stresses on key words – 'armas', 'barões assinalados', 'perigos', 'guerras enforçados', 'Novo Reino', 'A Fé', 'o Império', 'por toda parte'. The lines demand to be declaimed, not muttered in private.

This is possible because Portuguese is an inflected language, with the parts of speech indicated by the word endings which guide you through the complexities of the sentence, declaring which words belong together as

noun and verb phrases or as modifiers. In Latin, for instance, an even more inflected language, it's possible to say 'the cat ate the fish' or 'the fish ate the cat' (or 'the cat the fish ate'), and as long as 'cat' is in the nominative and 'fish' in the accusative case, the meanings will be identical. In English, little of this survives beyond a basic distinction between singular and plural nouns and a handful of verb tenses. Syntax depends principally on word order, so that to say 'the fish ate the cat' is to say something very different (and a good deal more interesting) than saying 'the cat ate the fish'. One consequence of this is that you can't place the verb too far away from the noun without causing confusion, because it is through their respective positions that you know which noun and verb are being referred to.

I attempted many versions of Camões' opening sentence, keeping the verb where he has it, at the end of the second stanza. If anybody could have pulled this off, it would have been Milton, who begins *Paradise Lost* with a sixteen-line, blank verse sentence of his own.[47] Yet, despite its Latinate construction, even Milton cannot postpone the main verb ('Sing Heavenly Muse') beyond line 6, and the period is divided by a colon in line 10, each side being grammatically complete (in short, there is *de facto* a second main verb). After much experimentation, I decided to put the verb where it belongs in English, that is, close to the main subject. This finally clinched for me what I hadn't hitherto put in so many words, that my translation was to be in late-twentieth-century English, as lucid to modern English readers as Camões's sixteenth-century Portuguese was to his. In the process I also resolved the problem of my opening line being too short. The final version, became 'Arms are my theme, and those matchless heroes'.

I have to confess to you that, eighteen years on, I still like it! It's a dignified line, not at all flabby. Each word carries weight. Most important of all, it has momentum. The pattern of the stresses carries you on irresistibly into the next line, in much the same manner as Camões' postponement of the verb for fifteen lines. But the next question that arises is, which English words rhyme with 'hero'? And the answer is, literally, 'zero'.

The Question of Form

It was not, in fact, only after completing the first line of my version that I began considering the problem of poetic form. I had been tinkering with various possible stanza forms for several months before reaching the com-

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[47] Milton 1998, 121.

promise I adopted. But this is a convenient place to state one of the most important conclusions I drew from translating *The Lusíads*, namely, that fundamental to successful verse translation is the choice of form. This may surprise you, or rather, you may think there is no problem: the original is in *ottava rima*, and so the translation should take the same form. Most previous translators have made the same assumption. I know of fifteen, and of these only Mickle and Atkinson decided against *octavos*. It can be done, and I could have had a go myself. The question is, at what cost?

In Britain, there is considerable confusion about rhyme. A century after the 'Modernist' revolution, there are still people who still think poetry is defined by rhyme. If it doesn't rhyme, it's just chopped up-prose. If you're a poet and show your work to other people, you can sometimes watch them surreptitiously using their index finger to check the line endings as a clue to how they're supposed to respond. These readers also assume that rhyme comes as a by-product of poetic inspiration, and is not something to be worked at. My collaborator and friend, the late Professor H. Leroy Vail of Harvard University, a man of enormous culture and erudition, was shocked to find on my bookshelves a rhyming dictionary. He felt, obscurely, that this was cheating, tantamount to plagiarism. In sharp contrast, you can find creative writing specialists, of whom a surprising number seem to operate in the Cascais area teaching poetry as 'therapy', who begin by telling their patients 'don't try to make it rhyme'. With much more excuse, schoolteachers encouraging children to express themselves creatively, will sometimes issue the same instruction. The assumption seems to be that rhyme, instead of being one among poetry's many resources, is some kind of academic or elitist or bourgeois trick, designed to withhold poetry from the masses.

In practice, attitudes to rhyme have varied enormously in the history of English poetry. Milton called rhyme 'the invention of a barbarous age' and refused to use it in his major poems.[48] It's probably true to say there was more great unrhymed poetry produced in the seventeenth century than there was in the twentieth. The modernists' partial rejection of rhyme was more an aspect of the general revolt against Victorian poetry than a revolution *per se*. Never were the resources of English rhymed forms so exhaustively explored as during the Victorian period. A search for new forms of expression was inevitable. But rhyme is made out to be far more important

[48] Milton 1998, 117.

that it really is when it is treated as poetry's defining feature, or when the revolt against rhyme is taken to be radical.

For what it's worth, the distinction between poetry and prose is very simple. If I hold up a page before you, you can tell at a glance, even at a distance, whether it's a page of poetry or prose. You may not be close enough to read it, and you won't know what language it's written in, or whether as poetry or prose it's any good. But there's no mistaking the difference in form. Poetry is shaped differently from the rectangle of a page of prose, the poet having opted to end the line and start a fresh one before reaching the right hand margin. What the poet's up to, of course, is the deliberate creation of a pattern, a shape appealing to the eye, or a rhythm to the ear, or better still both simultaneously. As always with literature, these rules have exceptions: there is a sub-genre called prose-poetry difficult to distinguish at a distance.

The point about patterns is that they're made by repetition. You recognise a pattern, an image or colour repeated in a carpet, an underlying beat in music, by the way certain elements keep re-appearing. In poetry, the pattern may lie in the rhythm, from the extremes of a regular stanza form with a strong beat to the attenuated phrase patterns of free verse. Or it may lie in the sound, in repeated vowels or assonance, in repeated consonants or alliteration, or in vowels and consonants repeated as rhyme (or any number of variations on these in combination). How much a poem depends on one or on the other, or on both, varies enormously. There are poets like Gerard Manley Hopkins for whom complex word-play seems pre-eminent, others like the Blake of *Songs of Innocence* whose deceptively simple ballad forms appear utterly transparent. There are poems almost dominated by their rhythm, such as the virtuoso performances by Byron or Browning, and others, such as much Imagist poetry, in which the rhythm is so tenuous as to be virtually undetectable, and where the patterning seems merely typographical. But without some sense of pattern, the feeling that there is a shape or *grammar* to these words, over and above the natural sounds and rhythms of prose, it is doubtful whether we would recognise the results as poetry.

Rhyme is just of these means of creating a pattern, neither more nor less important than any of the other resources at a poet's disposal. It's not poetry's defining feature, but nor does campaigning against it make a great deal of sense. Whether rhyme is useful or effective will depend entirely on the kind of poem you're writing. Or indeed, the kind of poem you may be translating. This returns us to the question of whether in translating *The Divine Comedy* it is necessary to reproduce Dante's *terza rima*, whether

Camões's *The Lusíads* should be rendered in *ottava rima*, whether sonnets should remain rhymed sonnets, and so on. But before developing this point, I wish to comment on one particular problem of translating from the romance languages, that is from Italian, French, Spanish and Portuguese, into English.

It's often remarked that there are more rhyming words available in these languages than in English. I've never seen a census, and it would be dull work compiling one. What struck me in translating *The Lusíads* was the number of times Camões was able to employ as his rhyming word one not available to me in English. Take, for example, the celebrated 'Velho de Restelo' passage which concludes canto 4, in which the Old Man of Belém is denouncing Vasco de Gama's enterprise at its outset.[49] In 20 stanzas, 51 of Camões' rhyming words are nouns, 52 adjectives or adverbs, and 57 verbs, many of them in participle form and hence often functioning as adjectives. In short, somewhere between one third and one half of his rhymes are adjectives or their equivalents. Camões can do this without sacrificing the natural word order, it being normal in Portuguese for the adjective to follow the noun it qualifies and the adverb its verb.

In Portuguese, you can have fun with adjectives. You announce the subject (say, a dog) and then you describe it (say, big, woolly, playful, smelly), conjuring it into existence. In English, the proper place for adjectives is normally, though not exclusively, before the noun, and they tend to get in the way of communication. If I say, 'Watch out for the long, black, hairy, dangerous-looking' – I've used four adjectives and you still don't know what I'm talking about. One of several consequences is that in English poetry the natural rhyming words are nouns and verbs. To use an adjective as your rhyme leaves it stranded rhythmically and semantically at the end of the line, still awaiting the noun it qualifies, and leaving the reader with the strong suspicion it has been chosen simply for the rhyme. You can do it occasionally for special effect, but not up to three times a stanza as Camões is able to do. Alternatively, you can invert the order of noun and adjectives, a standard device of much nineteenth century English poetry, and the one resorted to by Aubertin and Bacon. Do that, and you'll sound at once like a Victorian poet.

Adjectives are not the only difference between rhyming words in English and Portuguese. Adverbs are also part of the tale, though in a rather

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[49] Cidade 1947, iv, 4, XCIV-CIV.

different manner. Adverbs are very heterogeneous words with a wide variety of types and uses, and since they frequently occur after the verb in English (as well as before) they should in theory be available as rhyming words. In practice, however, they tend to have more than one syllable – adverbs in English are often formed by adding the suffix '-ly' to the adjective – which raises in turn the difference between masculine and feminine rhymes.

So-called masculine rhymes are those where the rhyme falls on the final and stressed syllable of the rhyming word – for instance, 'bad' and 'mad' or 'romance' and 'advance'. Feminine rhymes have two-or-more syllables with the accent falling on the penultimate syllable – for instance, 'romantic' and 'pedantic'. Masculine rhymes predominate in English poetry while feminine rhymes are the norm in Portuguese and other romance languages. In the 20 stanzas of the 'Velho do Restelo' passage already discussed, 56 of Camões's 60 rhyming words (3 per stanza) are feminine rhymes and just 4 are masculine. The explanation of this difference lies in the different patterns of stress between English in which the accent normally falls on the first or second syllable of a word while in Portuguese it often falls on the penultimate syllable. Curiously, when feminine rhymes are used in English poetry, it is usually for comic effect:

> In the vale of Cassowary
> Near the town of Timbuctoo,
> There I ate a missionary,
> Flesh and bones and hymnbook too.

- lines attributed to Thackeray. Multi-syllabic rhymes are, of course, a key feature of the humour in Byron's epic *Don Juan*. I'm amused to find that for the occasional lighter moment in *The Lusíads*, which is far from being a solemn epic, I have dropped without pre-meditation or conscious reflection into feminine rhyme patterns – the sailors teasing Fernão Veloso about his narrow escape in canto 5.35, or the nymphs awaiting Bacchus's arrival in the palace of Neptune in canto 6.14

> Trying to fathom what in heaven had brought a
> King of wine to the domain of water.[50]

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[50] White 1997, 121.

The couplet extends and 'deepens' Camões's own joke.[51]

Where does all this lead us? My first conclusion is that too much attention is paid to the role of rhyme in poetry, and by extension in the translation of poetry. There are more things going on in a poem than the particular rhyme-scheme the poet may have employed, and some of them will be more important to capture in translation than the precise form of the original. In translating *The Lusíads*, for example, I faced a straight choice between trying to imitate Camões's *octavos* in English, with all the inversions that would entail, and trying to find some English equivalent for the ease and lucidity of his poetic style. I shall describe my particular solution to this problem in a moment. In general, though, I would argue that the pursuit of parallel forms in translation is illusory. You may think you have reproduced Dante's *terza rima* or the Petrarchan sonnet, or indeed Camões's *octavos*, in English, and the results may look very similar on the page. But read them aloud, and you can hear the differences at once. There's nothing surprising in this. It simply means that prosody – the rules of versification – is language specific, and the translator has to understand this.

The choice faced by the English translator of *The Lusíads* is a simple one – whether to imitate Camões' rhyme scheme, with all the syntactical acrobatics that requires, or whether to try to capture in English the naturalness of Camões' style. With the question posed this way, there seems to me only one possible answer, for it is what Aubertin himself calls 'the purity and simplicity' of Camões's style that is the real challenge to the translator (he compares it to the music of George Frederick Handel). In addition, of course, it has to be a verse form flexible enough to translate the variety of styles in *The Lusíads* – the heroic, the pastoral, the lyrical, the sentimental, the prophetic - one that will work for the passages of narrative, battle scenes, speeches and dialogue as well as for prayers and intercessions, pastoral interludes, and moral reflections.

It should be emphasised, too, that the choice of the right form is not just a matter the separate stanzas with their individual music. *The Lusíads* is an epic, not a monstrously extended lyric, and the choice of form affects the pacing and organisation of the whole narrative, the architecture of the poem with its variety of episodes. My eventual solution was an 8-line verse paragraph, unrhymed for six lines but concluding with a couplet. This choice took me some weeks of experiment, tinkering with the opening

[51] See Hélio J.S. Alves, 'Épica na Literatura Portuguesa' in Aguiar e Silva 2011 for some comments on epic humour.

stanzas of canto 1 until I had found the form I felt comfortable with in allowing me to do two things I regard as essential. First, to preserve the natural word-order of modern English verse, respecting the sinews of the language; secondly, to preserve the speed and shape of the original, by proceeding at more or less the same pace with the same formal closes between stanzas.

> Arms are my theme, and those matchless heroes
> Who from Portugal's far western shores
> By oceans where none had ventured
> Voyaged to Taprobana and beyond,
> Enduring hazards and assaults
> Such as drew on more than human prowess
> Among far distant peoples, to proclaim
> A New Age and win undying fame:
>
> Kings likewise of glorious memory
> Who magnified Christ and the Empire,
> Bringing ruin on the degenerate
> Lands of Africa and Asia;
> And others whose immortal deeds
> Have conquered death's oblivion:
> - These words will go wherever there are men
> If art and invention steer my pen.[52]

Other Problems

There were three other aspects of the opening stanzas of *The Lusíads* over which I paused for a long time. The first was Taprobana ('Poor mares nunca dantes navegados / Passaram ainda além da Taprobana')[53]. Where on earth is Taprobana? Bacon's footnote calls it Tapróbané, explaining this is the Greek word, marking the limits of the known world.[54] To the Greeks in the days of sailing ships, the southern tip of India posed the same problems of navigation as the did Cape of Good Hope to Portuguese navigators before Bartolomeu Dias. Of the few people today who know where Taprobana was, I suspect the vast majority do so

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[52] White 1997, 3.
[53] Cidade 1947, VI , 1.
[54] Bacon 1950, 30.

because they've read canto 10, 51 of *The Lusíads* where Camões identifies it explicitly with Ceylon. Is this another of those obscure classical references that have to be simplified to the modern English reader? That's the course Mickle and Atkinson followed. That's what I did in my first draft, and it was only in my final revision that I realised it had to remain Taprobana.

The point here is that all the way through the poem there is a certain tension between Camões' enjoyment of the poetic possibilities of exotic strange-sounding names, and the pleasure he is taking in showing the globe to the reader as the Portuguese have revealed it to be. It's not so much a tension between the poet and the geographer as between two different types of poet, and both have their appeal. It was the poet of exotic place-names that influenced Milton's *Paradise Lost* in which he borrows several of them without worrying about their precise location. In practice, it is usually fairly easy to distinguish between the names Camões is celebrating and the names he is identifying. In canto 10, for example, when Tethys is giving Vasco da Gama a guided tour of the globe, she provides us with the classical and the sixteenth century names for the places touched on. In that part of the poem, my assumption was that the translator should provide the classical and the late twentieth century names. That is what I have done throughout canto 10, with the assistance of the *Times Atlas of the World* (though I stuck conservatively to Ceylon rather than Sri Lanka). Concerning Taprobana, however, I am heartily glad that in my final revision I had a rush of common sense and realised the name had to remain to express the wonder of untold distances.

The second of these problem phrases was 'as terras viciosas/ De África e de Ásia', translated reluctantly as 'the degenerate / Lands of Africa and Asia.' Africans are mentioned only intermittently in *The Lusíads*. Though Africa is the great obstacle, and though the poem spends as much time rounding Africa as it does in India, its inhabitants are rarely mentioned. Jalof and Mandingo feature in canto 5, along with Sierra Leone and the Rivers Gambia and Niger, and, somewhat anachronistically, São Tomé and the Congo are described as Portuguese possessions, already 'brought to faith in Christ'. But there are only two encounters with what Camões calls 'Ethiopians' on the coast of South Africa, one partly violent, the second a delightful pastoral. Once, in Adamastor's account of the treatment of Manuel de Sousa Sepulveda and his wife and children after their shipwreck in 1552, Camões calls them 'Cafres'. Otherwise, from that pastoral encounter onwards, they are consistently 'gente', meaning people, his

term for Vasco da Gama's own retinue, for the inhabitants of the east African coast in the remainder of canto 5, and for the rest of the world as described in Canto 10.

In sharp contrast throughout *The Lusíads* is Camões's hostility towards Islam, which he treats throughout as a single perverse, implacable enemy. In these opening lines, the word 'degenerate' was not to be avoided if I was to render his meaning with anything approaching fidelity. But it gave warning of a severe problem to come.

The third word from these two stanzas to give me lengthy pause for thought was the final word of line 8:

> E entre gente remota edificaram
> Novo Reino, que tanto sublinaram.

'Sublinaram' – 'made themselves sublime'. The sublime is the very essence of the Epic, and the word brought home to me very forcibly that I was attempting to render 'the sublime' in English.

I was conscious, of course, of the enormous gap in talent between my own abilities as a poet and the masterpiece I was translating, and I hope it's not necessary to dwell on this. But there was also the question of the state of the English language in the late twentieth century. Modern English is so empirical, secular and business-like, preferring plainness, directness, and uncluttered syntax. Even my computer rebukes me when I've written a sentence more than four lines long. Is this language capable of expressing 'the sublime'? As early as the 1790s, poets like Blake and Coleridge were complaining about what had happened to the English language in the course of the Enlightenment, the damage done by the new dictionaries and grammars, so that it was becoming more and more difficult to see visions. Certain states seventeenth-century prose was capable of expressing no longer seem possible. Consider, for example, 'The Magnificat', the Virgin Mary's hymn of joy at the Annunciation:[55] in the *Authorised Version* (1611) it's an exultant, unforgettable poem of spiritual exaltation: in the *New English Bible* (1961) it sounds like party political manifesto ('He has scattered those whose pride wells up from the sheer arrogance of their hearts'). This is not altogether the fault of the translators but has something to do with irreversible changes in the language.

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[55] Luke 1, 46-55.

But there is a further question, involving English philosophies of translation. I recall here the words of Denham, quoted earlier: 'if Virgil must needs speak English, it were fit he should speak not only as a man of this nation, but as a man of this age'. Dryden described his translation of the *Aeneid* in almost similar terms, 'I have endeavoured to make Virgil speak such English, as he wou'd himself have spoken, if he had been born in England, and in this present Age'.[56] This passage was quoted by C.H. Sisson, in the preamble to his 1982 translation of Dante's *Divine Comedy*, as 'all that need be said' about the 'claim which, terrifying as it is, must be that of every translator'.[57] What is being defined here, from the seventeenth century to the present, is a tradition of English translation that insists on the role of poets in reinterpreting for their own age the masterpieces of the past. That tradition has not gone unchallenged. When Pope published his translation of the *Iliad*, the great classical scholar Richard Bentley is said to have commented, 'It is a pretty poem, Mr Pope, but you must not call it Homer'.[58] Bentley was contrasting Pope's style with Homer's, but he was also defending the Academy as the proper custodian of classical texts, and his defence ensured him a starring role in Pope's poem *The Dunciad*. This demarcation dispute between the poet and the scholar will never be resolved because there are irrefutable arguments on both sides. In my own case, as I have stated, what I offered my publisher was the translation of a poet.

This means that, in addition to the other difficulties in achieving 'the sublime' was a conscious decision on my part to make Camões speak like an Englishman of the late twentieth century. This involved emphasising those aspects of the poem most accessible to the modern reader, and playing down those most difficult to assimilate. It meant, in practice, opting for the secular rather than the religious, the scientific rather than the mythical, and the geographical rather than the imperial. In short, I didn't believe that Vasco da Gama's voyage, or European colonialism in general, was part of any divine plan. For me, it's importance was historical. I am speaking of matters of emphasis, not of elision or suppression, for *The Lusíads* is a many-sided poem. Nevertheless, my translation of the concluding couplet of the first stanza became as follows:

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[56] Dryden, *Dedication to the Aeneis*, ??

[57] Sisson 1982, 42.

[58] Johnson 1804, 568 (footnote).

Among far distant peoples to proclaim
A new age, and win undying fame.[59]

No 'sublime', you note. But the concept continued to bother me. Was I turning a sublime epic into a highly readable verse novel? I did find a place for the word in the concluding couplet of stanza 5 where Camões concludes his introduction.

Give me a poem worthy of the exploits
Of those heroes so inspired by Mars
To propagate their deeds through space and time
If poetry can rise to the sublime.[60]

You'll see it occurs in the context of a doubt about whether the poetry I'm writing is capable of 'sublimity'. I think that doubt was entirely appropriate, and it continued to nag me. Had I simplified and secularised the text?

After *The Lusíads* appeared in late 1997, and I was still on the rebound, a book came to my rescue. It was by Philip Fisher, and it's called *Wonder, the Rainbow, and the Aesthetics of Rare Experiences*.[61] Fisher is very critical of the idea of the sublime – or rather, critical of the idea that you can have the sublime without religion. The sublime, he claims, secularised religious feelings of the infinite and of the relative insignificance of human powers, allowing the modern intellectual to hold on to covert religious feelings under an aesthetic guise. For post-Romantic art, the sublime has been far more a matter of critical theory than of artistic practice, being peddled by reactionary critics who refuse to give up the transcendental illusions of religion. In its place, Fisher proposes the wonder, as the essential emotion of aesthetic experience. He quotes Socrates that 'Wonder is the beginning of philosophy', and Descartes that wonder is the first of the passions, 'a sudden surprise of the soul'. Most important of all, wonder is not diminished by understanding. Fisher doesn't accept Keats' argument that Newton has destroyed the mythical power of the rainbow.[62] It is the role of art, science and criticism to restore to our minds that wonder that sparks all thought.

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[59] White 1997, 3.
[60] White 1997, 4.
[61] Fisher 1999.
[62] Keats 1953, 137.

As you see, it's very ambitious argument (and, in fact, a dauntingly erudite book). When I read these words I found in them a retrospective validation of what I had less consciously been trying to do. As I have said, I don't believe that Vasco da Gama's voyage was divinely ordained. But in making, Camões speak like a man of the present age, I was opting for wonder rather than sublimity, and the wonder of the *Lusíads* is everywhere.

A translation Journal[63]

It took me some two and a half years to complete my translation of *The Lusíads*, and for the first of those years I kept a journal recording my progress, along with other entries concerning my move to Portugal, my continued involvement with the University of York, and drafts of my own poems. The following are extracts from that journal, including a handful of poems bearing directly on the translation.

1994
6 Aug

an empire and make themselves sublime
and be made sublime

a rhyme
of empire, a case of the sublime.
SUBLIME?

Heroes? Barons? No. Great men? Heroes✓

For Luís Vaz de Camões, then, how was it
quarantined just down there off Cascais
all-but-home after seventeen Christmases
the plague raging, Lisbon a necropolis,

how did he feel, the colonial voyager
with his vision of Portugal, his octavo
epic sundried and nurtured through
mutilation, fevers and shipwreck

in the bag? Was the court corrupter
than he recalled, the clergy more ignorant,
the boy king distinctly odd? Had he
second thoughts about the Moor?

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[63] The Journal is a desk diary for 1994-95, beginning 1 August. But I used it throughout as a notebook. The dates given are page references, roughly though not entirely corresponding to when the entries were written.

And was his stop-press dedication impassioned
or politic? Sebastian, my King, Guarantor
of our Ancient Liberties, born to extend
the Empire of the Faith ... *(a case of poetry*

making something happen? Disaster!)[64]

8 Aug *Problems of Translation*

1. Redundant adjectives – 'Os barões assinalados' – the 'famous heroes'?
2. 'se sublimaram' – Can modern English cope with the 'sublime'?
3. Need to paraphrase for English readers (i.e., include footnotes in the poem) . But directness is such a feature of C's style. Not sure this isn't out of keeping though he sometimes departs from the literal.
4. C regularly repeats nouns and adverbs rather than use synonyms – sounding very bald in English - but he piles on the adjectives as synonyms – very unlike English poetry à la Graves.

11 Sept 1, 56. The beautiful lines – Phoebus/Diana. I can hardly credit Atkinson renders this 'The sun was setting'.

19 Sept Revise: 'The Moor received it all with many a wink
Especially satisfied with his food and drink.'

To: 'The Moor received it all as due his rank
But doubly pleased with what he ate and drank.'

i.e., self-evident C. is mocking him over the alcohol, but my first version makes him a figure of fun - & what about 'astuto' which I want to make 'shrewd'?

20 Sept Met Hélio[65] at Coimbra B station for a day's chat. About his selection / trans. of my poems and my attempt at C. Toured city - very interesting about his student days, marriage in Sé Velha, early married days

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[64] White 1999, 12.

[65] The late Professor Dr Hélio Osvaldo Alves of the Universidade do Minho, an adviser, translator, and friend much missed.

- loves city etc. Regrets over pollution and crumbling stone. Took a long time to broach the real subjects - & then via food to topic of poems he is to print at own expense – cover of 3 Graces (Blake / Stedman) but made to look like azulejos.[66] Asks over lunch, how did I get started? Not what qualifications – that assumed – but HOW? Good, startling question. He likes my 50 stanzas – feels the main effect is preserved (Shakespeare uses rhymed couplet for his exits!) Not missing his *octavos*! We joked about Pierce & C. not needing to travel to write Lusíads (follow Oliveira Martins & look at what he is writing). 'Discoverer' not discoveries.

> *I'm still wondering about Camões, having*
> *myself (to compare great things with small)*
> *been seduced overseas by visions of home*
> *as a place where matters were better organised*
>
> *and returned to the grim reality. Thatcher*
> *was not unlike Sebastian, and the Falklands*
> *turned on a coin. Now we are hoist*
> *with myths of greatness betrayed, and I recall*
>
> *the honourable old man at Belém, cursing as*
> *the caravels waited,* this lust for gold,
> this ambition to be lords of India, Persia,
> Arabia and Ethiopia, this cruel ferocity
>
> with its philosophy of death. *Camões*
> *invented him and gave him eloquence, but*
> *the north wind filled the sails (as it did)*
> *and nothing could undo the vast event*
>
> *(which the poet, as true historian, wondered at.)*[67]

[6664] Landeg White, *Superfícies e Interiores: Poemas. Introdução, Selecção. Tradução e Notas de Hélio Osvaldo Alves*. Figueira da Foz: CEMAR, 1995. ('I remember how my father was proud at the cover of *Superfícies e Interiores*; he just loved it and wanted to show it to me over and over again': personal communication from Hélio J.S. Alves).

[67] White 1999, 12.

24 Sept Reached 1, 64 – Gama's testimony of faith. I can reel this off *ad nauseum*, the advantage of a background in Protestant hymns.

25 Sept 1, 66 (& earlier): curious English has no synonym for 'enemy' other than foe. Makes rhyming difficult.

26 Sept 1, 71: How serious is this stanza? It's perfectly obvious why 'the Moor' is suspicious of Gama. There's no unfathomable mystery about God's will – unless C. is more of a bigot than I thought. Or is this just a pious addition for the inquisition? I don't know how serious C's style is, whether his ironic air is appropriate or whether it *is* a mystery to him.

28 Sept 1, 76. Immense trouble with the final couplet. Obviously, I need something semi-proverbial that slips off the tongue as an aphorism. Something like 'strike while the iron is hot' etc. (I'm amused to consult Fanshawe and see this is exactly his solution. Atkinson, per contra, omits it altogether as beneath consideration.)

So I come up with 'In enterprises of whatever type, the time for action's when the time is ripe.'

For 10 hours or so I was happy with that. It has the right ring of meaningless sententiousness and, after all, Bacchus is 'insane with rage' and trying to re-write Destiny. All the same, it's not close enough to C's meaning which *is* meaningful if proverbial. Also the rhyme here is rather laboured. So come up with

> 'In any enterprise the best command
> 'Seizes on the tools that are at hand.'

Next morning, still baffled. How easy Atkinson makes it for himself, writing prose and omitting anything he didn't want to take on.

1 Oct The problem is the long inheritance of Colonialism, the assumption that there is nothing to be learned from these territories in Africa and India, that these are known, inferior, savage places which we have to sort out – hence the inability of scholars and translators to take on board the challenge posed to European thought by the 'discoveries' which is the very essence of C's concerns. Much amused

again by Frank Pierce's claim C never needed to have travelled, followed by his thanks to the OUP *History of India* for its explanation of what C is on about. Battle scenes fantastic. C knew what he was talking about.

2 Oct Discovery! The word's on everyone's lips, especially with 1998 looming. But who's ready for discovery? What is supposed to have been discovered is known, catalogued, defined, a body of received doctrine. I am an Englishman translating Camões's poem of discovery. If my poem is different, how will the professors of the *descrobimentos* react? With horror and sarcasm, with complaints of how little I have understood their national poet? What howlers I have perpetrated? What misunderstandings of crucial passages? Or will they say this Englishman has discovered something? Camões´s poem is not just about discovering Africa and India. It is about discovering, perhaps in the Mekong Delta, something of what it was to be Portuguese. Just as I, in the Zambesi valley, found something of what it was to be English, and have enacted that in my commitments and my poetry ever since. Part of the excitement of translating *The Lusíads* is the excitement of rediscovering that discovery. A version of Camões has to be an exploration or it's nothing.

3 Oct It's no use embarking on a task like this in a spirit of abject humility or stark apology. Speaking with Portuguese friends I want to apologise for my presumption. But I have to assume, in day to day work, that I'm up to it, and C is certainly cooperative – a companionable poet, not like Milton. The bull ring metaphor (stanza 88) – very revealing. Whose side is C on? Is he 'of the devil's party' without knowing it'?

4 Oct 1, 92: has C no sense of shock at what the Portuguese have just done? Just completed the first battle and there's no doubt I found it very uneasy to translate – the triumphalism, the contempt for the Moors, the savage adjectives are not to my mind. There's no doubt C valued what he was seeing and knew the challenge it posed to medieval thinking, the Inquisition etc. Discovery was part of the Renaissance and the alliance of the classics with Christianity is a proud and rich inheritance. But at the same time, the notion of the Europeans coming in conquest with the Bible and the gun is clearly present in these lines. How *could* he be so triumphal over such simple, pastoral people? Was it an achievement to blast them into the sea? What right has he to climb the moral high ground on this? Start

with the bullfight metaphor and the line about old men and women with babies cursing. And modify their curse on 'him who sent it.' Make them pacifists, not judges?

5 Oct Afonso Henriques – Ourique or whatever! Maybe it's the Battle of Hastings! Or Agincourt? Do I read *Henry V* and sympathise with the French? Isn't this how the Portuguese felt about their conquests? I will have to resolve this or the poem will have no soul. I have done several stanzas of very bad translation – little better than doggerel – while my mind is on mortgages and insurers and the bureaucracy of residence permits.

6 Oct 1, 96-98: strange how innocent C makes the Portuguese sound, to the point of naivety (c.f. however, the precautions taken before the attack). C credits the Moors with politics, cunning and deceit – the signs of intelligence, while the Portuguese are simply honourable and have the military virtues. Reminds me of Henry James' characters – innocent in Europe, with the same overtones of a young, fresh culture confronting an older civilisation & a little out of its depth even as it is asserting itself, flexing its muscles.

8 Oct

An autumn beach, the tide is low,
rock pools are an hour's science.
Did Camões not find it so
after canto 10 and the license

to publish? What was his rage
against the Moors? They're politic
and cunning? It's the homage
Vigour pays to Intellect,

or Innocence to Culture
- as with the Jews in Babylon,
or Alexander in Asia (or
Mr. Henry James in London).

Young Portugal, conscious of destiny,
flexing its muscles, and such a poet!
This was his theme. Yet already
such days were gone and he knew it.

Like Elgar's pomp and circumstance,
like Kipling's grand design
but grander, absence
haunts his lines.

He wanted the epic fought again
but it found a different end
with the barren King Sebastian
and lines drawn in the sand.

I like the myth his servant
begging somewhere by Cais do Sodré
where the blackest women I know vend
buckets of roses today.

Scholar, courtier, soldier
and poet of attack,
he greets me as translator
and connoisseur of tide wrack,

if on far from equal
footing, etcetera etcetera,
there is a certain leveling
about the end of empire.

Wrecked and bereaved in their Mekong Delta,
his manuscript in his hand,
he was closer to the quiddity
than armed to the teeth on Lisbon's strand.

His poem made the people
it's my choice to live among.
A poem made this nation,
not an empire but a song.[68]

12 Oct Revising 1, 53-69: it's plain I was wrong in my first draft to present the Moor as African. The contempt in the Moor's (Islander's) speech needs emphasis & the pride – his wish not to be taken as one of *them*

[68] Published under the title 'Estuaries', and dedicated to Hélio Osvaldo Alves, White 1999, 43-44.

(i.e., the real natives). I find (in English: perhaps it's not so in Portuguese) a difficulty about confusing the first Moor ('one of the islanders') with the 2nd Moor (the Governor). His style is different - & the politics of the encounter *must* shine through. It probably helps if I use 'the Governor' for 'the Moor' in some lines. It happens again with the pilot subsequently who also becomes 'the Moor'. This is a real problem – is he, for C, as it were a single character? Or am I justified in seeing each as an individual? So far, I'm inclined to the latter, and I'm suspicious of what seems in C like an obsession. (PS. There's another Moor, Bacchus in disguise. No wonder I wrote my translation was doggerel.)

13 Oct 1, 80: problem of contradiction between 'bad conscience making you wary' (*tenção danada nasce a medo*) and (*a gente descuidada*) 'not suspecting' etc. Contradiction ignored by Atkinson, and even heightened by Bacon (viz, 'fear' & 'without a care').

19 Oct Completing my revision of canto 1. Is it possible to make these stanzas work as 20C poetry? All these Moors, all this intrigue, all these simply deceived Portuguese. *Of course* they plotted against Vasco da Gama. *Of course* they were not sympathetic to Portuguese aims. *Of course* their brains were used in defense of their interests. C seems to resent all this. The naive and the brave (are the Moors not brave?) are the heroes.

20 Oct C in Mekong Delta, discovers his identity as Portuguese, creates a language & a history, returns to Portugal and finds himself out of step – appeals to the king to make it real – fails/dies – taken up after 1640.

21 Oct Still revising canto 1. The last 10 stanzas or so seem intractable without some paraphrase. The previous two 'Moors' I think I've coped with, but the speed of the narrative across the '8's and the simplicity of C's adjectives (especially for 'the Moor') don't read well in modern English. I've played up Mombasa, & played up the 'Prester John' angle - & modified the pilot making him subtle rather than treacherous. The effect is to make Gama seem excessively trusting, but that can't be helped. The captain seems to have no psychology anyway.

23 Oct Started canto 2 with some complicated arithmetic – 1102 stanzas in all (106, 113, 143, 104, 100, 99, 87, 97, 95, 152), meaning

canto 1 is less than 10% (but 1 – 3 will be approximately 1/3rd). A long way to go but for the first time I'm getting a better sense of the architecture (Arnold's indispensable word). C very good at sunsets – always gives them a purple passage (cf. Conrad) & another sure sign of his being in the tropics. Part of the complex psychology of Gama's dealings with the Moors is not just innocence/strength dealing with sophistication/culture etc. (see above) but the way C records the Moors as reading the Christians accurately – mirroring their prejudices about 'Orientalism', picking up their Prester John superstitions, playing on their greed for gold and spices. They cast themselves in their enemy's image, and play their hand accordingly. No wonder the Portuguese can only respond (like Caliban) with threats and insults.

25 Oct Does C have any sense of irony? There are implicit contradictions that cry out for comment – e.g., 'a bad conscience breeds wariness' canto 2, stanza 9, and several others in this section. It seems like innocent self-assertion, blind to the possibility the 'other' might have a case, but C also comes so close to undermining his moral certainties – with irony and self-doubting (the weapons stanza) & the sheer obviousness, never acknowledged, of why the Moors object to the Portuguese. So, does C's Christianity admit of irony? Or is it my innocence that is the problem here? Is C undermining the Inquisition? Does he secretly love the Moor – of the Devil's party, etc.?

26 Oct Well into canto 2, but stopping occasionally to re-read and revise canto 1 before sending it to Hélio. At this stage, despite all the revisions, I am as usual treating it only a first draft – i.e., behind my 'first' draft lie many crumpled pages, but in the search for perfection there are no resting points. What I've done seems fluent, skillful, varied, with touches of comedy and good characterisation, marking off the episodes clearly and respecting C's different styles - best of all in the pastoral, but quite good in the delineation of the battle etc. – BUT somehow terribly *mundane*. I dodged the word sublime in stanza 1, and the absence of sublimity haunts me. But C's language is so simple & direct! I translate it so, then try to decorate. At least, my version's interesting. But who will recite my lines the way Hélio in Coimbra reeled off line after line of Camões? My version has vigour and interest. But eloquence? Beauty?

31 Oct Back half-drunk from *Petisqueira*.[69] It's cheap, generous and tasty, but not a patch on *Vitor's* for atmosphere and wine. I reflect on my motto – that cheap is tasty, expensive is poorer quality. For the most, this works in Portugal, but what of Camões? He would have preferred *Vitor's*, I think. Bacchanalia & credit cards. I imagine his signature. Luís Vaz de Camões. What could you not purchase with that?

7 Nov 2, 7-13 etc. Again, does C have sense of irony? The 'degredados' sent ashore are criminals – but they quickly metamorphose into true Xtians when confronted with the guile and deception of the Moors. Who's kidding whom – V da Gama the Moors, or the Moors him, or C the reader? I can point the irony myself by labeling the Christians converts. For the time being let it stand. This continues to trouble me. Irony is an attitude to history as futility – C's history was a sense of loss, compounded by a sense of the futility of human endeavour. But did his hatred of the Moors blind him to contradiction?

14 Nov Contrast the similes – Frogs (clearly comic), Ants (admiring but curious & *very* literary – part of the classical stuff) & bull fighting (for the Moors, the Portuguese being the bull). I've made a good job of each – also of the King of Mombasa's message & the struggle on the bar. Note the historical record – I presume Mombasa's bar being as dangerous as, say, Luabo or Quelimane, that the difficulty was the nature of the Portuguese ships. Cf. the reference to Mozambique being the safest habour – no bar? No river? Gama's prayer remains dead & uninspired. I haven't so far found any way of bringing him alive – what human touches does he have? Very pious, conventional, easily taken in (not like Odysseus)! – good sailor. I've given him rather archaic phrases: is that right? Very single-minded and obsessed with 'Christianity'. Not a hint of commercial intent?

16 Nov Read today Helder Macedo's piece on Pastoral & Epic in *The Lusíadas*.[70] Very impressed. He argues opening stanza ('by seas yet uncanvassed') echoes Ovid *Metamorphoses* (check ref: the passage where he says the Golden Age ended when men took trees to the coast and built ships), & that for Camões the pastoral and the epic are opposites – the pastoral by celebrating a lost age, the epic the activities which ushered in the new. He ties this in

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[69] Like Vitor's, a restaurant in Alcabideche.

[70] Macedo, 1990, 32-37.

with C's appeal to the nymphs of the Tagus, and his own move from pastoral to a new style, grand and 'contemporary'. He also says the Old Man at Belém is the voice of pastoral, condemning the epic enterprise and the poets who commemorate it, C. incorporating the opposite in his grand design.

Then comes the difficult bit – the Garden of Love & the recreation of the Golden Age as the *consequence* of Portuguese activity, the epic and the pastoral being reconciled. Helder says this is difficult for modern readers, then implies it may have been difficult for C himself, returning to Portugal and finding how most of what he had written was already in the past, superseded by corruption etc. – *The Lusiads* being an epic about a lost age in Portuguese history. The only way out of this dilemma is the appeal to Sebastian to do it all again. ending 'ironically' (Helder's word) at Alcacer Kebir. (Is ironically the right word here?).

But I'm deeply impressed by this. The 'Pastoral' informs so much of what I've written in recent years (*Magomero, The View from the Stockade* a 'vision of pastoral lost', & of course *Bounty*.) It has been my interpretation of Europe's dealings with Africa & the source of my feelings of destruction. I flirted with the Zambesi Bridge only to dismiss it as a colonial 'folly'.[71] Now, I'm struggling with C's vision of achievement & the confidence that drove it. The pastoral and the epic *are* at war in my mind. I'm suspicious of epic even as I translate it. I have to take this to heart, or stop reading Homer, Virgil, Milton etc. & cultivate my garden. For me it's not the idea of the Portuguese creating a new Golden Age that's the rub. I wouldn't buy it from the British either. *The Lusíads*, however, takes me further outside myself than I've been before.

19 Nov 2, 30-32: working all day on the 'pious prayer', very difficult to strike the right note. I know the theology & simply have to suppress all irony – above all, it must seem genuine and not self-righteous, which would be the case if I, as translator, seemed *too knowing*. Vasco da Gama is (as Alice says of Herman José) 'a heavy man'. He remains resolutely wooden in my version so far.

20 Nov Will it annoy the Portuguese to be told that Vasco da Gama (in C's account) is very similar to David Livingstone? Convinced Africa & India will be better off Christian, utterly unable to comprehend that anyone should disagree or that those who do disagree could be moti-

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[71] See bibliography, works by Landeg White.

vated by anything other than malice of various kinds (the Moors to Gama, the Portuguese to Livingstone). Both self-pitying in their piety, self-absorbed in their dealings with God whom they assume to be on their side, & unable to comprehend why they should suffer. Both win through by sheer determination, plodding on against all odds in a demonstration of self-sufficiency. Both rather wooden. (NB, Livingstone ended by preferring the Arabs (Moors) to the Portuguese.)

21 Nov 2, 34-38: C & eroticism, arising from the description of Venus. My note (Bacon) refers me to *The Aeneid* book 1, but Virgil doesn't describe Venus, only the complaint & Jupiter's reply - which throws C's eroticism into focus. (Also the critics: I laughed at Hernâni Cidade's 'Que *roxos lírios* são estes'?) Of course, these catalogues are familiar in renaissance literature, & the comic aspects are not to be ignored: this is a woman getting her own way. I like, too, the acknowledgement of the erotic as a male determinant, but, but, but – what was C's attitude to women? (return to this theme after Inês de Castro & Adamastor & the Isle of Loves. But remember it as a problem, not least in the context of my re-reading of Eça de Queiroz, whose 'women' are simply shapes and sizes.)

Now I've completed some 150 stanzas, worth reflecting on my substitute for the *ottava rima* – i.e., my 'eight-line verse paragraph ending with a couplet'. How does it work? The dangers are 1) a contradiction between the free verse of the 6 unrhymed lines and the final couplet – it can become rhythmically illiterate. 2) the last 2 lines are far too epigrammatic -. Instead of flowing naturally as part of the stanza they become semi-proverbial conclusions, altogether too *heavy* for the sequence of speech or narrative or incident. 3) I am straining for 'poetry' in the unrhymed lines, straining for 'naturalness' in the rhymed couplet. 4) Rhythmically, too many stanzas work the same. I need more variation & better manipulation of the couplet. That said, I remember Hélio's comment that 'he did not feel deprived of the octavos'. At least, it means the poem is proceeding at C's pace & not (as in Mickle & Atkinson) to an altogether different rhythm or paragraphing. On the whole, I seem to be making a better job of the interludes, speeches, the classical bits & the dedications than the actual narrative which is full of this and then that – without C's rhyme, it seems in places very bald indeed.

25 Nov 2, 50: Jupiter's speech etc.: is the claim sustainable that the influence of the Portuguese is greater than that of Greece or Rome? The claim was implicit earlier as a rejection of Odysseus and Aeneas compared

to V da Gama, and as an insistence on the equal or greater heroes of Portuguese battles – in Portugal or India. But now we confront C's view of the epic, of the Portuguese mission PAZ PORTUGUESA & the 'new dispensation' & an historical influence beyond Greece & Rome. Deserves reflection – it may be Eurocentric to deny it wholeheartedly: after all, it is in India, China, Africa and Latin-America that the inheritance (Catholic, the Portuguese language) is most expressed. Has Portugal contributed more than any other imperial power to the making of the 3rd world? (NB Remember walking with Alice in Port Loko, Sierra Leone, & being called 'Aportos' by the children who followed us, laughing).

26 Nov I've changed my method, vastly for the better. Instead of one stanza at a time, getting it right before proceeding (as I've always written my poetry), I rough out the whole of the next episode – Venus before Jupiter, Jupiter's speech, Mercury's descent to Malindi & Mombasa – one section at a time, & then work on it *as a section*. It alerts me far more quickly and sensitively to C's shifts of style. It's also faster & for some unknown reason the couplets come easier.

1 Dec A great shock to my whole enterprise, this *Dia dos Restauradors* has been my discovery (belatedly) of Fernão Mendes Pinto´s *Peregrinação*. Of course, I'd read of it before many times, in Boxer et.al. and had vowed to read it following the TLS review of Rebecca Catz's version (which I must order ASAP). My present encounter is with the Carcanet abridgement, trans Michael Lowery & splendidly introduced by Luís (Sousa Rebelo). A superb, subversive text. I'm fascinated that he lived at Almada, writing it while Camões was putting the finishing touches to *The Lusíads*. But Pinto is so dismissive of the whole imperial enterprise, so frank in seeing the Portuguese as no better than anyone else, so sure that the other nations will not benefit from Portuguese expansion, & so uncompromising (there is no humbug human nature cannot promote with when aided by obvious power – cf. C's complaint at the end of canto 1 & Vasco da Gama's prayer canto 2) - all this wins my assent in a way C's narrative does not (as yet). This picaresque, honest, vivid, unbigoted narrative unravels the whole epic enterprise. Did they know each other, separated only by the river? Surely two men of such shared experience must have talked? (Is Pinto the Old Man at Belém?)

4 Dec 2, 67: 'Luck alone' – psychologically correct, but inconsistent with the 'divine providence' argument earlier - or is this just Gama, while the crew are altogether more skeptical? Can this be represented in the translation?

23 Dec Mine is a Romantic, & perhaps anachronistic version of *The Lusíads* – i.e., concerned with C's experience, discovery of identity, etc. Shouldn't I pause to take account of 'artifice', Jorge de Sena's mannerism, the argument that C need never have travelled, loved, fought, and so on? The trouble with this cold, neo-classical, (for me) *modernist* stuff is that I can't see the point of writing in such circumstances. Futility, despair, confusion of identity, multiple identity, I can accept all that – even if I'm not there myself. The trouble with deconstruction is that once you've said yes, it's all a fiction, is you still have to get up next morning and resume the business of living, creating, or not, as the case may be: it all comes back to experience.

P.S. Obviously, any poem worth its salt has a significant measure of artifice. If mannerism means a playful style, full of hyperbole, bordering on the baroque, that's fine by me. It's obvious the gods and goddesses are not drawn from life. The game of language is more fun than football (which is in turn more fun than basketball, or the American hide-the-ball variety they also call football). One of the pleasures of C is that the artifice bits (gods & goddesses) and the experience bits are distinguishable, part of the artifice of the poem.

1995

4 Jan Finished the shortened version of Fernão Mendes Pinto (the Carcanet edition) with the same sense of intellectual crisis. His account of piracy, monstrous atrocities & theft by various Portuguese in the east, and his eloquence in the person of, e.g., the Chinese boy, or the Priest of the Tombs, or the defeated king (defeated by the Burmese), castigating the Portuguese for hypocrisy and cruelty – all this is eloquent preparation for the parable of the hands, & for Pinto's (apparent) renunciation of his Jesuit project for converting Japan. Obviously, his reaction to China & Japan is that Portugal has more to learn than to offer. I am in so much in sympathy with this that I have to work hard mentally to remind myself that this, too, is a literary construct, mixing satire (the speeches put into anti-Portuguese mouths) with utopia (the picture of China, full of contradiction between praise & reported fact). In essence, it's a Portuguese *Gulliver's*

Travels, even though it all happened, and not just a critique of Camões from a realist perspective. Did Pinto & C meet, the one in Almada, the other in Cais do Sodré? What's fascinating is the typology of their contrasting assumptions about Portugal in the east. After these 2 contrasting books, what more was there to be said?

9 Jan

Heroes! The word has me fumbling
for the delete. Heroes are the invisible ones,
putting their lives on the line
to stop the slaughter while madmen

rave, or enduring years in the concrete
jail for a friend's secret or a metaphor,
or just being there, a secure rock
through unemployment or marital

earthquakes, but always the dispenser,
not Achilles, nor pious Aeneas,
nor Odysseus, nor 'os barões
assinalados', nor Vasco da Gama.

Hero! A four-letter word
if you like. 'Pity' (said Brecht)
the country that needs one'.
'Pity', say I, 'the clown that is one.'[72]

18 Jan V da Gama sailing to meet the king of Malindi dressed 'in the iberian style / though the underwear he wore was French.' Pity I can't retain this but the footnote warns me severely that 'roupa' meant 'cloak' to Camões.[73]

30 Jan Tried to print out my draft of the rest of canto 2 only to find my cartridge run out on the first page. So furious I grabbed canto 3 and did 12 stanzas straight off in an hour and a quarter, driven by sheer adrenalin. Read Frank Pierce's article on allegory in *The Lusíads*. Continued to be baf-

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[72] Previously published.

[73] It's the Michaelis *Português-Inglés dictionary* invites the 'underwear' translation.

fled by his scorn of the biographical - his attack on Bowra for assuming C took the classics with him and consoled himself with them in India & Africa. Also read Torrance's account of the Garden of Love, very persuasive & in line with my own feelings about the pleasurable artifice of the gods etc. Was struck by the similarity to the sylphs in Pope's 'Rape of the Lock', irrelevant in narrative terms but poetically a stroke of genius, a delight.

5 Feb Reached stanza 72 of canto 3 in draft. Very solid week's work – the product of boredom.

8 Feb

'Sancho', cast there, it must be said
in his various tons of chain-mail verdigris
by the Dictator to whom the national epic
was a constant source of inspiration,

'Sancho the First', Camões recounts it
'just a few years into his reign
laid siege to the city of Silves
where the barbarians tilled the fields.'

They are still there, those barbarian farms
and watercourses, and orchards blossoming
alternately with almonds and oranges.
But Camões has it wrong. It was English

not German (a pardonable confusion)
the fleet that came to Sancho's support
when 'all who resisted were put to the sword'
(the orange blossom is as sweet as it was).[74]

4 Mar During this long visit[75], all I've done has been entirely mechanical. I find the place (York) unpoetical in the Matthew Arnold sense. So I've raced ahead with the roughest, most literal of first drafts, taking my

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[74] White 2002, 40.

[75] I spent the spring terms 1995-1997 teaching in the Department of English & Related Literature at the University of York.

up to the end of canto 3, and ready for the pleasures of slow revision of cantos 2 & 3 as my next task, immediately on return.

9 Mar 3, 129: their sad mother's consolation. Searching for the final couplet, I am reminded of the hymn:

> Vainly we offer each ample oblation
> Vainly with gifts would His favour secure
> Richer by far is the heart's adoration
> Dearer to God are the prayers of the poor.[76]

How we are made by poetry! It's decades since I ceased to be Christian and years since I forgot such lines. Yet they remain as a blueprint, crystalising what, purged of its transcendence, I believe. Wonderful.

4 Apr Very striking in revising 3, 6 – 17, to have flown from Lisbon to Uppsala & return[77], viz, to have crossed C's Europe. He does it from East to West (viz. from the Don to Portugal) but incorporating Scandinavia & the Black Sea/Greece & the Balkans en route – but tending to a centre of gravity in Spain. Why the Don to the East? Why no Britain? Why indeed no Britain? What does C really tell the king of Malindi about Europe? Geography? Greece/Rome/Venice? What else?

13 April Revising canto 3, especially Afonso's battle, it strikes me how strangely Camões straddles the medieval & renaissance worlds – that strange tale of chivalry, Crusades, younger sons on the make, sanctioned by the church (cf Runciman) to combine Christianity with conquest & carve out southern estates, even kingdoms for themselves, but all with reference to patronage, chivalry, & the faith of the crusades – then carries over, the same chivalric standards into Africa & India, where C's poem invents 'Portugal', an altogether different concept, the nation state, with frontiers, national identities, holy places sanctioned by first battle and national myths, all operative, as it seems to me, only after 1640.

17 Apr What would have been the effect if C got no further than canto 5, with its climb from the middle ages into the modern world of 'the Discoveries' & its very effective sense of an ending? It would be a tantalis-

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[76] 'Brightest and best of the sons of the morning', Reginald Heber, 1811.

[77] I visited the University of Uppsala as examiner.

ing epic fragment – all the more eloquent for looking forward to what we know to be historically true but perhaps need not be spelt out – in a re-reconstructed Portuguese history to the Catual, & the rehearsal of the conquest of India etc. Obviously a very Romantic notion 'the suggestive fragment, the partial vision', losing all the symmetry and completeness of what we have instead. But is the material which follows less gripping? We shall see. End of canto 5. C seems to distance himself from Gama, pointing out he doesn't like poetry.

25 May 3, 132 I don't know how I can translate this – will English take the interwoven syntax? Atkinson separates it out into sentences – very dull. Bacon takes the 'flores' to be breasts (& adds a crib) making his task simpler (no 3rd subject matter) but unconvincingly, I think (unless there is Song of Solomon here). Fanshawe mixes the grammar perhaps he is right – making it surrealist in effect. But his is not a success.

So now against Inês the brutal (savage/brutish) killers
In that neck of alabaster which held (on which was raised)
Those features which had slain with love (struck/so smitten)
The prince who afterwards made her queen
Plunging their sword, and the white flowers
She had watered with her own tears,

Weltered in blood, distracted in their delirium /rage from
From (to) any thoughts of the punishments to come

So far, no good.

1 June

Fernão Mendes Pinto, Viva!
memorialised in the famed Thesaurus
as conjurer, deceiver, liar,
trickster, humbug, a massed chorus

of Pharisee, Rosicrucian, Jesuit,
actor, jobber, dissembler, charlatan,
all because you refused to credit
the Portuguese could civilise Japan!

In your book, the pious Catholic
pirate, ruthless as any infidel,
bound by his imperial ethic
rapes, despoils, betrays, kills.

You mock yourself as God's missionary
lampooned for eating with your hands.
How could you not go down in history
but as by-word for the soi-disant?

Medicaster, saltimbanco,
I hope in Dante's whichever hell
jockey, perjurer, Cagliostro
Roget's doing time for libel.

My question's this: as you ploughed
old memories into your jeremiad
blockbuster Perigrinação,
did you know of C. and his Lusíads?

While the picaresque and satiric
danced from your goose quill in Almada,
the sublime and truly epic
went begging in Alcântara,

the briefest of river trips apart,
within hailing distance as it were.
Did you never share a heart-to-heart
with that other Eastern warrior?

Your buccaneers were his barões.
He saw God's designs turning
on the deeds of mariners you disowned
and reckoned fit for burning.

Two masterpieces, alternate visions,
divided by an estuary
which drifts into the setting sun,
that uncompromising referee.

You won your case, you lost your cause,
for history's unkind to truth,
bestowing all her best applause
on those capable of myth.

It's no unflattering epitaph
to be yoked with the most deceiving,
Luís de Camões's apogryph,
and an author to believe in.[78]

9 June Some multiple reflections of the last few weeks (cantos 3, 4 & 5 in various states of completion)

1. How far does Vasco da Gama speak for himself and how far for Camões – i.e., he is a *character* in an epic: how far do his views (on epic poetry, e.g., 5, 90-92) match Camões's (1, 4-5)?
2. The move from the early battles to the insistence (off Namibia) on being a Renaissance man, observing nature, taking measurements. The early battles are thoroughly medieval, emphasising God versus his enemies (mainly Islam) & honour & loyalty to king. How does this fit with the 'scenes' of 'discovery'? (i.e., is V da Gama's voice an issue here?) And how is Aljubarrota a turning point – i.e., a civil war, insisting on primacy of patria over feudal loyalties determined by inheritance (though the inheritance is also questioned via the former queen's chastity)?
3. How does V da Gama know about the bay of Sofala?
4. Note Atkinson's racist versions of a) the Namibian encounter b) the Natal encounter, c) the Quelimane encounter with its talk of 'gibberish'. Nothing in Camões justifies this – even his 'people more civilised' is really 'people like ourselves' (at Quelimane).
5. Note the poetry of factual description – waterspout, scurvy etc. Not 'giving the familiar a new twist' but something new in nature.
6. Following on from this, the reductive (naïve?) nature of C's (V da Gama's?) insistence on 'truth' over myth (canto 5, 91-92). Yet he's just done the Adamastor episode. What sense does this make? Is Adamastor just a creaking fiction to work in some 'prophetic' history?

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[78] Published under the title 'The Most Deceiving', White 1999, 55-56.

16 June

Ourique on its eminence, that hot November
Sunday, seemed abandoned. We looked outwards.
On the parched plain to the horizon, each
cork oak loitered in its pool of shadow.

Back in the square, an old man rose, drank
from the fountain, and sat without turning.
Empty alleyways, their cobbles polished
to pewter, zigzagged steeply to the church

past the town hall where Camões's chiseled
octavos told of the battle that possibly
was fought here with a list of the heroes
that possibly won. My whisper, translating

this, rattled like grapeshot. An orange
dropped audibly, rolling in its gold foil
all the way down to the new by-pass,
though only we were around to record it.[79]

24 June Figueira da Foz for *Superficies e Interiores*. Met Hélio's daughter / son-in-law[80] – he a historian, at odds with the Discoveries Panel - & expert on maps of the period & another of study dethroning Henry the Navigator & elevating Pedro in his place. Resentment stimulating. Computer-mad, but to good effect on the cover and lay-out of my book. Gave Hélio my Stedman.[81] He bowled over. The book *marvelous*.

5 July Have spent the last 3 days 'punctuating' (no less) cantos 1 – 4 (following Cidade & Pierce: I have no idea what's their authority), but

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[79] White 2002, 41.

[80] Diana Alves and Dr Alfredo Pinheiro Marques.

[81] *Narrative of a five year's expedition, against the revolted Negroes of Surinam, in Guiana, on the Wild Coast of South America, from the year 1772 to 1777. Elucidating the history of that country, and describing its productions, viz., quadrupedes, birds, fishes, reptiles, trees, shrubs, fruits, & roots; with an account of the Indians of Guiana, & Negroes of Guinea. By Captain .J .G. Stedman, illustrated with 80 elegant Engravings, from drawings made by the author.* Printed for the Imprint Society, Barre, Massachusetts. 2 vols., 4to, 1971.

am amazed at how much minor re-shaping this has led to, drawing attention to C's multitudinous uses of the *ottava rima*, The rhythm is never the same from one stanza to the next – of course, I knew that – but the manipulation of the pauses is so clearly marked by the punctuation that the simple fact of copying the commas, semi-colons, (especially) and full stops forces a fuller study and revisions to respect C's versatility. In the process, some of my own extravagances have had to be detached – there has proved nothing to rebel against by way of introducing variations.

20 July Fatima's husband (Zé, Sintra Poets[82]) said he hated Camões at school – it was proclaimed by the regime & he hated the regime. Also, of course, taught at ages too young for the poetry. But the Salazar contamination needs emphasis. It parallels the British colonial inability to accept the challenge of new ideas, new peoples, new places.

27 July *GOING BACKWARDS*[83] Problems with revising canto 3, especially with all those medieval battles. I was heartily glad when Afonso died:

> His bored translator cries out in vain,
> Afonso, stay dead. Don't rise again.

Query: Is Vasco da Gama's voice the same as Camões's. He doesn't deploy the classical mythology, though there are plenty of references to ancient history for parallels. But Venus never interferes in Portuguese history (though Maria is compared to Venus when she appeals for help to Afonso VI). This may be because Portugal is X-tian & the 'unknown' world is colonised by Greek myth. Could it be it's V da Gama is very literal-minded? c.f. Camões's remarks on poetry, & on the da Gama family not appreciating poetry.

25 July *Topic*: What is the relationship between God's will & fortune (more problematic than the simple tension between Christian & pagan gods)? Why is it destiny (or divine wrath) when things go wrong & Providence when they go right? What mind-cast is this? 'Character is fate'

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[82] A poetry group that used to meet in Sintra, coordinated by Rosemary Palmeira.

[83] The desk diary ended 31 July. These concluding entries were made upside down with the book reversed.

(Novalis) is simply an extension of Protestant notions of responsibility. But if fate is Fate, or Fate is Christian, where does God come in? Simply with grace?

31 July (October 1995) It has taken me far too long to cotton on to the fact that I am not writing a poem. I began, stanza by stanza, not proceeding until what I'd done was right, exactly as I normally do, each poem being a slow process of discovery, so that to proceed without a sure beginning would only lead it in the wrong direction. Hardly ever have I done a whole poem in rough and then gone back to tidy it up. 'Ministering' was one example, but I can think off hand of no other – and that came in a rush with only a word or two altered afterwards. This is one reason why I have enjoyed working with my muted half-rhyme *terza rima*, because you *have* to get the links in the chain right before you can proceed - hence the poem can resolve itself slowly as the pearl grows in the oyster, to use AE Housman's image.

Translating *The Lusíads* is not like that. Camões has written the poem & it's finished. My job is to listen, even to the point of taking dictation (as I have sometimes dreamed at night). I have found it best to plough ahead, in the crudest of rough versions, and have 3 cantos going at once, letting it improve slowly as different passages are polished at different times. It matures like wine, not secretes like the oyster. This means the poem is less & less mine, more & more Camões's in English. But it's the better for that.

9 July Canto 5 (revising). This, to me, is a big canto, the heart of the poem & of everything the one I must bring alive. It's African (nothing of Islam here, except in prospect: NB Is this really a poem about Africa, not India? – calculate the stanzas devoted to each!) Bacchus & Venus are absent, or superseded by the new African myth of Adamastor. Add that it is about discovery, observation & science – the waterspout, St Elmo's fire, the astrolabe etc. Need to emphasize the significance of 'new skies, new constellations' – the Bear constellation's contradictory orders – i.e., a new astrology, new fates, the end of pre-determined fates.

7 July Canto 5 (contd.) A puzzle throughout is the tension between V da G's repeated insistence that are sailing unknown waters & the knowledgeable way he identifies landmarks. Two levels of contradiction, between the classical names he gives to places he says were previously un-

known, and between his knowledge of the geography & his insistence no one has been here before. But what of stanza 73 where he talks of standing off from Sofala? How does he know? Here, plainly, later knowledge is being brought to bear on a manoeuver that must have had some other explanation.

3 July How many years is it since I first went to Quelimane – was it 1970? Or Easter 1972, when we watched the Good Friday procession through the town with burning crosses at the junctions? Now at last, 25 years on, I am translating the profound, awful lines about scurvy on board – canto 5, 80 etc. The town existed in the greatest poetry 400 years before I went there, & I went in such ignorance. How little of the world's accumulated culture I know. I keep writing of places as though they were pristine, yet they are all full of graves, haunted with spirits, crawling with legends. Where are those sailors, buried by the Kwakwa? On what prazo? In what Aid Agency's encampment?

1 July (Dec 1995) Canto 8 (first draft) – Note Gama's (C's) description of himself as just an explorer. Throughout poem, reference back to King Manuel as author of everything (plus previous kings). Is Manuel the real hero? Of course not, but he is the *authority* (like Odysseus & Aeneas). Is this the first epic of a working man? Or at least of a 'subaltern'? What is the status of a sea captain as, e.g., compared to a knight? (NB how C links the discoveries with the knightly re-conquest – taking to the sea when there was no more land).

29 June Canto 8 (polishing) - refer to V da Gama's 'merely explorer' speech and to my queries about status of captains. Implications? Is he the first working hero? The model is *The Aeneid*, but Aeneas had Venus for a mother. What difference does this exactly make? Aeneas also springs from the Royal house of Troy (cousin of Hector) - i.e., he's not defined by his trade as V da Gama is. Remember Gama's criticism of Aeneas's incompetence as a sailor. What are the implications of this for 'the sublime'? And who are these companions named – not just Paulo etc but Veloso? What is the role of humour – Veloso episode certainly, probably Leonard. How does this square with Longinus?

26 June (18 Dec, 1996) Read J.J. Aubertin's *Camões.* He claims he's written it as Camões would have done in English (first ed. claim) *had he*

written in ottava rima (added 1884 ed.). Rhymes pretty good - not always true, but in the main very close to the Portuguese – has a real Portuguese feel, both in word order & sound. This *is* what C would have written in English had he still been a Portuguese first-language speaker. Yet time & again, transcribing passages because they are so good, I paused pen in hand & thought 'This isn't English'. It's English bent into a simulacra of Portuguese, the language straining to be close to the original. (NB he contrasts Strangfords' 'Perish the thought, Veloso said' with his own. 'The verb used is not just', adding, 'if that's translation I'm not a translator'. Errs on side of literal – loses vigour & naturalness. That said, why did Bacon bother? Aubertin as good as possible to go in that direction. (NB Aubertin recommends prose as the next translation in the interests of greater accuracy → Atkinson). Fabulous reviews printed at back of volume. 1884, of course, didn't mind archaisms, inversions etc. His version in tune with poetic style of day.

(End of Journal)

My Journal ends at this point with me still wrestling with canto 8. I seem to have made no further entries. However, I did subsequently write an unpublished essay on some of the difficulties I had with canto 10, and it is appended here for its interest.

Where there's a will[84]

> 'And behold, thrones were kingless, and men walked
> One with the other even as spirits do,
> None fawned, none trampled; hate, disdain, or fear,
> Self-love or self-contempt no more inscribed
> On human brows ....[85]

Why is Shelley's Utopia, the climax to *Prometheus Unbound,* described not in future tenses but in the simple past?

The question came my way when I was struggling with translating canto 10 of Camões' *The Lusíads*. The nymph Tethys has taken the hero Vasco da Gama to the summit of a mountain, and describes the conquests the Portuguese will make in the Indian Ocean, following his own pioneering voy-

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[84] Written for *Poetry Wales*, but never published.

[85] Shelley 1971, 252, lines 130-134.

age. I could make no headway with this canto. At first, I thought I was sighting too early the finishing line of a two and a half year project, and I steeled myself to be patient. When that didn't work, I told myself this was a description of colonial conquests for which I had little relish, and that my job was to make the best of a bad job. Only after some six weeks wrestling did the real cause of the stalemate occur to me – that the whole passage, sixty-eight *octavos* of it, is in future tenses:

> Nor will you evade him, for all your
> Vast treasures and your location
> There in Dawn's very emporium.
> Renowned, opulent Malacca!
> For all your arrows tipped with poison,
> The curved daggers you bear as arms,
> Amorous Malays and valiant Javanese
> All will be subject to the Portuguese.[86]

I never use the future, except in letters to my bank manager or advice to my sons, both deeply implausible. My own volumes of published verse are cast entirely in past tenses with occasional forays into the simple present and the odd imperative (plus a couple of future passives). So I began to look for models.

How do you prophesy in English poetry?

I began with Shelley, the most obviously utopian of the revolutionary romantics, and was surprised that what I remembered as profoundly visionary was all done in past tenses as reported speech. Of course, there are sound dramatic reasons for this. The messenger reporting the 'catastrophe' was a stock device of the Athenian stage, and to adapt it for good news – utopia as a *fait accompli*, no less – carries much more dramatic weight than expressing it as mere aspiration. Only in the concluding lines, where Shelley reflects that even after the revolution mankind is 'not free .../ From chance, and death and mutability' is there a shift to the simple present.

That sent me skimming through the standard anthologies, to make one of those discoveries that confirmed something I already knew but that had never before occurred to me - that the commonest form of closure in English poetry down the centuries is a change of tense in the last line. Often,

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[86] White 1997, 205.

the shift's from past ('Little lamb, who made thee?') to present ('Little lamb, God bless thee'), but often, too, from past or present to future:

> Youth's a stuff will not endure
> But when we come where comfort is she never will say no.
> I'll think of the leech-gatherer on the lonely moor
> And be like him and he will then love me
> Freedom shall awhile repair / To dwell a weeping hermit there
> I shall but love thee better after death
> What will survive of us is love
> And death shall be no more. Death, thou shalt die!

Sustained writing in future tenses, however, is hard to come across.

Why so? Even our politicians look as far ahead as the next election. What makes poets so shy about where we're heading?

Is it something to do with the enlightenment, that eighteenth century rationalising of English through grammars and dictionaries, that left the supernatural a matter of the 'willing suspension of disbelief', and confined symbolic meaning to the penumbra of language? If poetry had its origins in witchcraft, we have lost our faith, still present in African poetry, in the power of words to determine events, the danger of them flying around with no fixed target, the horrors of a curse that can't be recalled. Or is it something about the Protestant inheritance that our poetry is confessional? My puritan forbears used to preach something called 'the priesthood of all believers', every man his own confessor. But 'testimony' was followed by being 'born again', touched by the Holy Spirit with the 'gift of tongues'. It's the bit that followed that has vanished.

Obviously, I'm being literal-minded about this (reading Camões can make you so). We don't want our poets to be soothsayers, fortune-tellers, mountebanks or prestidigitators. When we call poets prophetic, we mean they possess some special insight that resonates long after their death. As Blake wrote, 'Vision or imagination is a representation of what eternally exists, really and unchangeably'. Yet it is surely curious that even Blake's prophetic books contain virtually no future verbs (the few that occur refer exclusively to the Day of Judgment). In the books of the *Old Testament* that are his most obvious model, the authentic note of divine inspiration is 'And it shall come to pass'.

The first volume of Roy Foster's magnificent biography of W.B. Yeats concludes with the poet's own reflections, as he approaches 50, on his

youth and childhood. 'All life', he writes, 'weighed in the scales of my own life seems to me a preparation for something that never happens'.[87] Yeats's gift of prophecy was, in reality, an uncanny ability to keep re-interpreting the past from the perspective of the present. The satisfactions of this, of making sense of who and where we are, are not to be under-estimated. Yet the fact remains that this most eloquent and forward-looking of twentieth century poets had no idea where he was going – until one day, despite the monkey glands, he found himself an old man ('Who could have foretold / That the heart grows old?'), and that became his final theme.

Or is our problem with futures something inherent in the language itself? Unlike the romance languages, English has no future tense formed by inflexion. English depends on 'will', and 'going to', and this raises difficulties. First, that constructions like 'I'm going to come to Cardiff next year', while fine in conversation, are intolerably clumsy in poetry (is this man coming or going?). Second, that 'will' and 'go' are also lexical verbs, with meanings in their own right, and in poetry *all* words are lexical. Those old metrical polyfillers 'do', 'does' and 'doth' ('The north wind doth blow') have long been outlawed from competent verse. Using the future involves poets in finding double meanings, making the auxiliaries earn their keep. But there is a limit to the possible puns available and, though they may be entertaining over a quatrain or so, they quickly become the same jokes repeated.

Shakespeare is the arch quibbler in English verse. His sonnet 135 is an exuberant cadenza on the difficulties of 'will':

> Whoever hath her wish, thou has thy will,
> And will to boot, and will in overplus;
> More than enough am I that vex thee still,
> To thy sweet will making addition thus.
> Wilt thou, whose will is large and spacious,
> Not once vouchsafe to hide my will in thine?
> Shall will in others seem right gracious,
> And in my will no fair acceptance shine?

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[87] Foster 1998, 531.

The sea, all water, yet receives rain still
And in abundance addeth to his store;
So thou being rich in will add to thy will
One will of mine to make thy large will more,
Let 'no' unkind no fair beseechers kill;
Think all but one, and me in that one will.[88]

'Will' is used here in five different senses – intention ('thou hast thy will'), lust ('will in overplus'), vagina ('thou, whose will is large and spacious'), penis ('hide my will'), and William ('that one Will'). Sonnet 136 caps all these with the bizarre construction 'Will will fulfil the treasure of thy love': the first here has at least four different meanings, the second is the auxiliary, meaning 'shall'.

There's a distinct air of drunkenness about these sonnets, as though they were devised in the course of one hell of a night out. But the joke's over, complete in its first devising, and it's hard to see how any poet since could rival Shakespeare's exuberant punning. As for translating Camões's 68 stanzas of straight prophecy, with every auxiliary is doing its lexical bit – well, you see the difficulty.

There's one remaining puzzle, *viz*, why has 'shall' passed out of use? The old grammarians' insistence on 1st person 'shall' / 3rd person 'will', was perhaps unworkably abstruse – certainly too abstruse for American usage. But our forefathers seem to have managed it without effort, and it supplies the key auxiliary in two passages of prophecy in famous English poems. The first is the long history lesson given Adam by the Archangel Michael in Books XI and XII of Milton's *Paradise Lost* ('So shall the world go on / To good malignant, to bad men benign')[89]. If that seems hindsight, the second is heartfelt prediction - Coleridge's prayer for his son at the conclusion of 'Frost at Midnight':

Therefore all seasons shall be sweet to thee,
Whether the summer clothe the general earth
With greenness, or the redbreast sit and sing
Betwixt the tufts of snow on the bare branch
Of mossy apple tree, while the night thatch
Smokes in the sun-thaw; whether the eave-drops fall

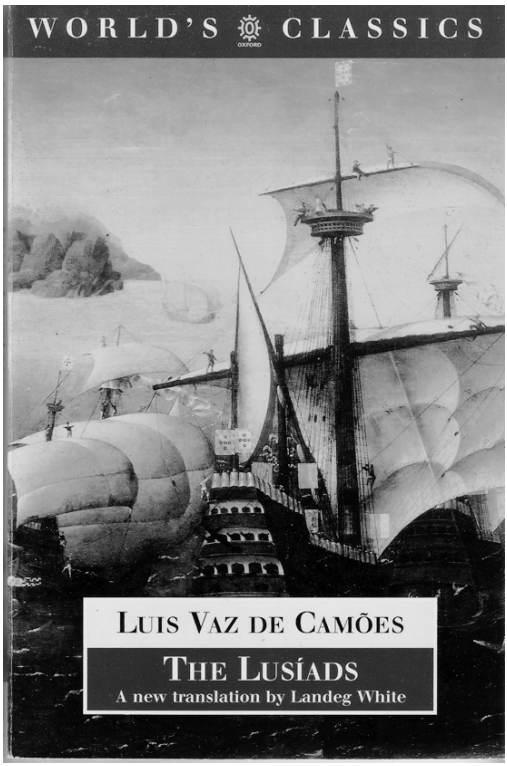
[88] Shakespeare 1995, 144.
[89] Milton 1998, 374 – 403. The quotation is from Book XII, lines 537-538

Heard only in the trances of the blast.
Or if the secret ministry of frost
Shall hang them up in silent icicles.
Quietly shining to the quiet moon.[90]

It seems, for once, a good idea for a poetry competition. A technical challenge, doubling as conceptual. Will our futures for the usual prizes, sponsored by the national lottery!

[90] Coleridge 1969, 242.

Publishing The Lusíads[91]



Gods and Humans

Not all the questions raised in my Translation Journal were ever resolved. How far Vasco da Gama's is Camões's spokesman, and how far he is an independent character expressing opinions of his own, is a matter my version never established. Towards the end of canto 5 (st. 94), after three whole cantos narrated by Gama, Camões seems to repudiate him, saying he 'laboured to prove' his own exploits were greater than 'those odysseys the world acclaims'. Eight stanzas earlier, da Gama had indeed challenged the Sultan of Malindi:

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[91] Cover illustration: detail from Portuguese Carracks off a Rocky Shore, style of Joachim Patinir, 16C, National Maritime Museum, Greenwich.

> Did you think O King, the world contained
> Men who would tackle such a journey?
> Do you imagine that Aeneas and subtle
> Odysseus ever ventured so far?
> Did either of them dare to embark on
> Actual oceans? For all the poetry
> Written about them, did they see a fraction
> Of what I know through strategy and action?[92]

Yet these lines only echo what Camões himself had declared in canto 1, 3: 'Boast no more of the subtle Greek / Or the long odyssey of Trojan Aeneas', going on to claim that Portuguese achievements had left the 'ancient Muse' far behind.

Canto 5 continues by warning Gama his reputation is entirely in Camões's hands. Without Homer, Achilles would be forgotten. Alexander, he says, was well aware of this, using his Homer as his head-rest. Without Virgil, the Rome of Emperor Augustus would be deprived of its glory. Portugal had already known the equivalents of Caesar, Scipio and Octavius, but they lacked the poetry that would have made them remembered. Finally, as if the argument were not sufficiently pointed, Camões concludes:

> Let da Gama be grateful to the Muses
> That they love his country as they do,
> Being constrained to honour in poetry
> His title, fame and exploits in war;
> For in truth neither he nor his lineage
> condescend to be Calliope's friend ... [93]

Yet by canto 5, some of the greatest poetry of *The Lusíads* has already been placed in Gama's mouth, including the set pieces of the battles of Ourique and Aljubarrota and the high lyric poetry of the Inês de Castro episode. There are moments, particularly during the fleet's voyage around Africa, when the two voices merge indistinguishably. Stanzas 10 – 23 of canto 5 contain several details that are plainly anachronistic. The ancient Congo kingdom of northern Angola, described as 'brought by us to faith

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[92] White 1997, 115.
[93] White 1997, 117.

in Christ', was not actually converted to Christianity until the reign of the remarkable Nzinga Nvemba (1506-1543), confirming that Camões is blending Gama's voyage with his own voyage fifty-six years later.

Does this matter in the least? Do readers balk at it? Probably not. As Samuel Johnson remarked of Shakespeare's mixture of tragedy with comedy, 'there is always an appeal open from criticism to nature'.[94] What the poet gets away with is not for the critic to carp at. But the question connects with another raised in my journal and never fully resolved, namely, Gama's status as the epic's hero.

I flirted with the notion of his being a 'working class' hero. This was patently off target, but the notion that he is the first epic hero to be a self-made man, earning his status by professional competence, is not ridiculous. He describes himself as no more than an explorer, drawing his authority from Dom Manuel. Unlike Aeneas, he is not half-divine, born of Venus and Anchises, and unlike Odysseus, he does not have affairs with immortals like Calypso. His captain's scorn for Odysseus for forgetting his crew-mates on the island of the Lotus-Eaters, and for Aeneas for losing even his helmsman on a calm night, is reinforced by the contrast he draws between their shore-hugging Mediterranean voyages and the vast, uncharted oceans on which the Portuguese have ventured. Moreover, he insisted, his story is true: theirs is mere myth: 'My own tale in its naked purity / Outdoes all boasting and hyperbole'.[95]

What do we see him doing? For much of the poem, he remains on board ship, navigating with undeniable competence, taking his position with the use of the correct instruments, notably the astrolabe, and facing down both the Cape of Storms and an Indian Ocean typhoon – though it was a mistake to try to cross the bar at Mombasa and he needed a pilot, another 'Moor' no less, for the last stage of the voyage from Malindi to Calicut. He leaves his ship twice, to give the Sultan of Malindi his three-canto lesson in Portuguese history, and for two unproductive, and diplomatically inept meetings with the Samorin at Calicut. But his principal achievement, as both he and Camões emphasise many times, is the voyage itself, sponsored by Dom Manuel's vision and accomplished by Gama's seamanship and sense of duty. Is such a wooden, largely inactive figure, constantly riding his luck, really up to being called 'sublime?' Or is he more

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[94] Samuel Johnson, *Preface to Shakespeare*, http://ebooks.adelaide.edu.au/j/johnson/samuel/preface/preface.html

[95] White 1997, 115.

akin to Captain MacWhirr in Conrad's *Typhoon*, who resolutely pulls off an extraordinary feat through sheer lack of imagination? (Or, indeed, is MacWhirr more than a little sublime?)

Gama is, of course, not the only hero. The epic's opening line speaks of 'os barões assinalados', those 'matchless heroes', in pointed contrast to Virgil's emphasis on the single figure of Aeneas in 'Arma virumque cano' ('I sing of warfare and a man at war').[96] These figures include Gama's brother Paulo, in command of the sister ship *São Rafael*, Nicolau Coelho in command of the caravel *Bérrio*, and Gonçalo Nunes responsible for the supply ship. Also on board were Pero de Alenquer, who had been Bartolomeu Dias's pilot in 1487-8, Fernão Martins who spoke Arabic, Martim Afonso, who had lived in the Congo, and a certain Álvaro Velho, who kept a diary of the whole voyage as far as Guinea on the return journey, along with four masters, three ships' clerks and an unknown number of priests, mariners, caulkers, soldiers and condemned prisoners (see canto 2, 7), in total somewhere between 150 and 200 men. Also mentioned in *The Lusíads* are Fernão Veloso (cantos 5, 30-36; 4, 41.69; and 9, 69), Leonard Ribero (cantos 6, 40; and 9, 75.82), Álvaro Vaz de Almada (cantos 4, 25 and 6, 69), together with brief mentions of Álvaro de Braga, the clerk and Diogo Dias, the overseer. None of these figures especially stand out, and the two most prominent feature in mildly comic episodes – Fernão Veloso when having to flee from the encounter in Namibia ('Veloso, my friend, that hill's obviously / Better to come down than go up').[97] and Leonard, desperate for romance, until finally 'consoled' by the nymph Ephyre on the Isle of Loves.

English critics have been preoccupied with the propriety of mixing the classical gods with the Christian in *The Lusíads*, though no one has gone so far as Voltaire in declaring 'So incongruous a machinery casts a blemish on the whole poem'.[98] For my part, I can't see what the fuss is about. In canto 9, 90-91, Camões is quite explicit in dismissing the pagan gods as simply poetic creations ('Jupiter, Mercury, Phoebus ... they / Were all composed of feeble human clay'). There is no need to accept the suggestion that these

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[96] Virgil 1992, 3.

[97] White 1997, 105.

[98] Voltaire, 'Il semble que ce grand défaut eut dû faire tomber ce poème', Essai sur la poésie épique, Chapitre VI. Le Camoëns. http://www.voltaire-integral.com/Html/08/21_Epique.html#CHAPITRE VI. LE CAMOËNS. See the article 'Maravilhoso' by Hélio J.S. Alves in *Dicionário*, 2011.

lines were added to satisfy the Inquisition and should be censored from modern editions. What they declare is amply confirmed by canto 10, 82, in words that must be authoritative:

> I, Saturn and Janus,
> Jupiter and Juno, are mere fables
> Dreamed by mankind in his blindness.
> We serve only to fashion delightful
> Verses.

It is important to note that the gods and goddesses never accomplish anything. They are twice warned by Jupiter in canto one that fate has decreed the Portuguese will prevail 'in the seas / Where the sun makes his purple appearance'.[99] Yet they go about their business, Bacchus in particular, apparently unaware that all their efforts amount to nothing. There is no need for the reader to believe that it was really Venus who prevented the fleet entering the harbour at Mombasa, or Bacchus who called up the hurricane. Gama has no difficulty in explaining all that befalls his fleet in terms of a quite different set of beliefs, thanking God for their deliverance on both occasions. Nor has the modern reader any problem in attributing Portuguese setbacks to a mixture of commercial jealousy and natural disasters.

Reflecting on this, I seriously wondered whether *The Lusíads* could be considered an example of the mock-heroic, drawing a parallel (see entry for 30 Jan, 1994) between the role of the gods and goddesses to that of the sylphs in Alexander Pope's *The Rape of the Lock*, completely ineffective creatures but poetically a delight, a stroke of genius. The account of Bacchus's descent to Neptune's court, and especially the description of Triton covered with crustaceans and with a lobster shell on his head, are certainly comic,[100] and there are comic aspects to the presentation of Venus and Mars.[101] Rendering them in mock-heroic terms would have been excessive, though not entirely ridiculous. In the end I conceived them as examples of the baroque, following Bernini's principle never to use a straight line where a curve will work.[102] There can be no doubt

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[99] Canto 1, 24 and 28.

[100] Canto 6, 7-37

[101] See again Hélio J.S. Alves, 'Épica na Literatura Portuguesa' in Aguiar e Silva, 2011

[102] The art critic Luigi Barzini ie., quoted by Randall Anderson in a review of Franco Mormando, *Bernini: his life and his Rome*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2011, in

Camões took the requirements of the epic form wholly seriously, choosing an undeniably momentous action, rooted in history but open to fine invention including an enormous variety of episodes very skillfully disposed, in a style 'both grand and contemporary', and paying close attention throughout to ancient models. But he was also careful not to challenge the credulity of renaissance readers. There is, for example, no descent into hell in *The Lusíads*. The wonders are either natural wonders or, like the Isle of Loves, transparently artificial.

Equally significant is that the gods and goddesses are confined in their operations to the Indian Ocean. There is no mention of Jupiter, Venus and Bacchus as actors in the long account of Portuguese history occupying cantos 3 and 4, nor in the voyage down the West African coast in canto 5, nor indeed in Paulo da Gama's further discourse on Portuguese history in canto 8. Parallels are drawn with heroic figures from ancient times and these occasionally border on myth. But paganism doesn't not intrude until Vasco da Gama has rounded the Cape of Storms that marked the boundary between the known, partially-Christianised Africa of the west coast, and the Africa beyond, known only to legend. Adamastor charges the Portuguese with breaching 'what is forbidden', desecrating 'Nature's secrets', a charge rich in meaning to the renaissance reader. As the fleet enters, the Indian Ocean, the gods assemble on Mount Olympus. Their debate re-emphasises the unprecedented nature of Portuguese actions, and everything Venus and Bacchus do subsequently, or imagine they are doing, is confined to Africa and India. The distinction adds a further dimension to Camões's recourse to the pagan deities.

Camões was the first major European poet to cross the equator and visit the tropics and the orient. He was thus the first to face the challenge of finding a language and form to give expression to such new experiences. One can witness him in his lyric poetry very quickly discarding the Petrarchan conventions of courtly love, along with the whole notion of a courtly audience, as the facts of his bitter exile hit home. In *The Lusíads*, Gama's voyage of exploration becomes an extended metaphor for Camões own explorations in the craft of poetry. By raiding the Latin classics for references associating Bacchus with India (and briefly Portugal), and by expanding on Venus's legendary love for islands, Camões was able to invent for himself the rudiments of a 'tradition' which Portuguese exploits could be represented as supplanting. Once embarked on this course, it was surprising how many classical tales could be adapted to his purpose – Phaethon's

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the *Times Literary Supplement*, 23 March, 2012, p. 10.

chariot, the Argonauts and Daedalus, Memnon and Ethiopia, Venus and Cupid hiding as dolphins from the heat of the tropics, and a host of other borrowings from Virgil, Ovid, Horace and Catullus. His style, or rather his variety of styles, reflects this, mixing Latin or Latinisms with Castilian Spanish and vernacular, sometimes vulgar Portuguese, in a combination demonstrably his own. The classical authors gave him a framework and a language to stand off from, even as modern authors like Soyinka, Brathwaite, and Rushdie have given shape to their work by 'writing back' against British myths about the West Indies, Africa and India.

But the pagan deities gave Camões something more. As the navigators approach Mozambique Island (canto 1, 45), they pass a cape which Camões confidently identifies as 'Prasso', namely, Ptolemy's *Promentorium Prasum*, the furthest point south known to the Greeks. No one knows for sure which cape was meant, but by identifying it with Cape Corrientes Camões is making an ideological point, that these sea routes and city states, currently in the possession of Islam and about to become a battlefield, were 'colonised' by the European imagination long before the 'Moors' got there.

Islamophobia

The most troublesome aspect of *The Lusíads* to the modern reader must surely be Camões's treatment of Islam. The ending of the cold war has reopened a much older wound in human history, that fault line between Christian and Islamic societies that extends from northern Asia through eastern Europe and the middle east to the west coast of Africa. The attack on New York's twin towers occurred after my translation appeared, but even in 1997 Islamic fundamentalism was being touted as NATO's newest enemy. In the sixteen-century, the Turkish empire was Europe's rival superpower. The folly of the Crusades had been compounded by the catastrophic fall of Constantinople in 1453. Though the loss of Christendom's eastern capital was partly offset by the capture of Grenada in 1492, the Turks were secure in their occupation of Athens and were advancing in the Balkans and north Africa. The destruction of the Turkish fleet at the battle of Lepanto occurred while Camões was putting the finishing touches to *The Lusíads*.

Even in this context, Camões's hostility is disturbing.[103] Translating canto 1, 88.92 with its account of the destruction of the Swahili town on Mozambique Island, I commented in the journal (4 Oct), 'the trium-

[103] See Hélio J.S. Alves, 'Corte Real"' in Aguiar e Silva 2011, which compares the very different attitude in Camões's contemporary, Corte Real.

phalism, the contempt for the Moors, the savage adjectives are not to my mind. How *could* he be so triumphal over such simple, pastoral people? Was it an achievement to blast them into the sea?' Such doubts re-surfaced sporadically, most notably in the long account of obscure naval victories in canto 10, 10 – 73, as the Portuguese seize control of the Indian Ocean. The problem has two aspects that must be confronted. The first is the poem's broad nationalistic element, grossly overplayed in the days of the *Estado Novo*, but undeniably present in the work. The second is the general portrayal of the Moslem world.

Obviously, it's anachronistic to describe a poem published in 1572 as 'nationalist', and it's probably anachronistic to call *The Lusíads* 'imperialist', though that term is more open to debate. But Portugal was the first European country to achieve its modern borders, and *The Lusíads* is the first modern poem to commemorate loyalty to the idea of a country rather than to a royal line. It describes Portugal's origins, in feudal wars against the Berber city states, and subsequently against Spain (for Spain, too, is a target of nationalist fervour in the poem), and it celebrates Portuguese achievements, most notably the achievement of Portuguese navigators in opening up our knowledge of the planet we inhabit.

I suggest some such question was in Ezra Pound's mind when he wrote in the following, in *The Spirit of Romance*:

> Camoens writes resplendent bombast, and at times it is poetry. The unmusical speech of Portugal is subjugated, its many discords beaten into harmony. As florid rhetoric, the Lusiads are, I suppose, hardly to be surpassed ... Although Camoens is indubitably a poet, one reads him today with a prose interest. *Os Lusiadas* is better than a historical novel; it gives us the tone of the time's thought.[104]

It's not just foreign readers who are put off by this. One of the things that surprised me when my version appeared in late 1997 was the number of Portuguese friends, colleagues and acquaintances, and sometimes strangers, who told me how much they have always disliked *The Lusíads*. I'm not sure it's legitimate for Portuguese to dislike *The Lusíads*, and I suspect that sometimes they were telling me what they would hesitate to say to each other. The reasons for this are many and complex, but they have something

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[104] Pound 1912, 228.

to do with how they were introduced to Camões at school, and the way the poem was used to underpin the national and imperial ambitions of Salazar's regime. Only canto 9, which was usually censored in school editions, provided some respite from the use of the poem as propaganda. Students could read of the Isle of Loves by torchlight under their bedclothes.

Fifteen years on, I find to my surprise that I have played down the national and imperial aspects of the poem. I didn't do this deliberately. Although I am temperamentally opposed to imperialism (and have been ever since the Suez Crisis of 1956), I was also brought up to revere accuracy. What happened was not deliberate, but an unintended consequence of a problem that arises in translating from Portuguese into English.

Once again, it concerns adjectives, and English translators' practice. Faced in Portuguese with a noun followed by multiple adjectives, they focus on the final adjective as the clinching one, and make the others earn their keep.[105] When you apply this rule of thumb to *The Lusíads*, something unexpected happens. It turns out that quite a lot of the nationalist and imperialist colour of the epic is born by the adjectives. When the translator curtails them somewhat, shifting the emphasis to the nouns and verbs, a different poem begins to surface.[106] I don't want to exaggerate this – after

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[105] For spilling the beans on this, see Reynolds, 2006, 25.

[106] To take two instances out of many, canto 2, stanza 50, lines 5.8 and stanza 51 read as follows:

Envejoso vereis a gráo Mavorte
De peito lusitano, fero e horrendo;
Do Mouro ali verão que a voz extrema
Do falso Mahamede ao Céu blasfema.
Goa vereis aos Mouros ser tomada,
A qual virá despois a ser senhora
De todo a Oriente, e sublimada
Cos triunfos da gente vencedora.
Ali, soberba, altiva e exalçada,
Ao Gentio que os ídolos adora
Duro freio porá, e a toda a terra
Que cuidar de fazer aos vossos guerra. (Camões 1947: 76)

My version runs:
Great Mars will swell with envy
At the ferocity of the Portuguese,
While the defeated Sultan, facing death,
Will curse Mohammed with his final breath.

all, the substantives are there in the original, and the beating up of the Swahili town in canto 1 is done with nouns and verbs, not just adjectives. Nevertheless, this translation process arising from syntactical differences between the two languages, cutting back on what Pound was referring to when he spoke of 'bombast', does allow different features of the epic to emerge more clearly.

Meanwhile, what of Camões particular hostility to Islam? Muslims are consistently presented as *astuto, falso, enganoso, malicioso, pérfido, sábio, sagaz, torpe,* and *gentes infernais.* The only *fiel* Muslim is Monsayeed from Morocco, who turns Christian after helping Gama escape from Calicut. Yet these adjectives, together with the fact that Camões consistently labels all Muslims as 'Moors', suggest a great deal.

Camões was reasonably well-informed about Islam and was perfectly aware of its scope and its divisions: the first suspicion of the governor of Mozambique when he comes to inspect the Portuguese fleet is that they must be Turks, whom he regards as hostile. The label 'Moors' insists on two things. It declares that Islam is a single and united enemy; and it identifies the Swahili traders of East Africa and the Muslim rulers of the Persian Gulf, Turkey and parts of India, with the Muslim Berbers driven out of Portugal during the twelfth to fourteenth centuries. This is the principal theme of canto 3, as Gama tells the Sultan of Malindi about events from the Battle of Ourique (1139) to the Battle of the River Salado (1340), including sieges such as the capture of Lisbon (1147) and of Silves (1189), with the assistance of English and German knights *en route* to the second and third Crusades.

Yet not long before, in the tenth and eleventh centuries, students had been flocking to Muslim Andalusia – to read Aristotle in Arabic with com-

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Goa, you will see, seized from the Muslims
And come in the fullness of time to be
Queen of the Oriente, raised up
By the triumph of her conquerors.
From that proud, noble eminence
They will govern with an iron fist
Idol-worshipping Hindus, and everyone
Throughout that land with thoughts of rebellion. (Camões 1997: 13)

Grim stuff, but Camóes's eleven prominent epithets have inadvertently become seven easily-overlooked modifiers in translation.

mentaries by Averroes, to study Galen, to learn the use of the astrolabe, and to benefit from the new mathematics (since the reign of Henry I, our chief tax collector has been known as chancellor of the exchequer: the reference is to the abacus or chequered cloth which made it possible to calculate in tens and units). Andalusia was a centre of learning in all its branches, the civilised heart of medieval Europe, a place of culture and architectural splendour, and of greater religious tolerance than any society that followed.

It is this that makes Camões's adjectives interesting. Earlier translators had little difficulty in rendering them as 'wily, cunning, dissembling, treacherous, deceitful', and so on, and these are legitimate synonyms. But they also suggest intellect, subtlety, learning, and diplomacy – all the provocations of *culture* and *sophistication* to a young., emerging nation, conscious of destiny and flexing its muscles. Self-assertion is less offensive in the relatively powerless than in the powerful, and Camões's hostility to Islam is (to use an anachronistic term) 'post-colonial' in its determination to cast off an alien yoke. *The Lusiads*, then, belongs with the *Song of Roland*, the epic of *El Cid*, and more directly, Dante's *The Divine Comedy*, in claiming the spiritual, cultural and intellectual initiative for Europe after a long period during which Islam has been in the ascendancy. As with Dante, Virgil becomes Camões's guide to the origins of the new Christian humanism, in terms of which Portuguese revelations and about the size and wealth of our planet may be comprehended.

Those days are gone, of course. But perhaps there are lessons for our own time in Camões's reluctant recognition that, so far from involving a few fundamentalist ayatolahs, Islam has a historical, intellectual and spiritual inheritance, commanding among its followers a loyalty equal to that exerted by the different branches of Christianity and its secular inheritance.

Why read *The Lusíads*?

> And may no solemn chronicler,
> Nor sweet harpist, nor eloquent poet
> Commend your deeds or celebrate your fame,
> But let your folly vanish with your name.[107]

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[107] White 1997, 97

The words are those of the Old Man at Belém. Is there another epic that so thoroughly questions its own existence?

In December 1968, the Apollo 8 spacecraft showed us on television the first blurred pictures of earth taken from space, and early in January, after the spacecraft's return, *The Times* newspaper devoted its whole front page to one of those pictures. At the time, I was teaching temporarily at Padgate College in Warrington in the north-west of England. It was a year in which the government had experimented with abolishing British Summer Time, so it was still pitch black at 8.30 when I walked through snow under a starlight sky to breakfast in the college canteen. There I opened my newspaper and saw that famous photograph of the fragile blue marble, rising above the moon's horizon, suspended in the depths of space.

Camões completed *The Lusíads* and died without apparently knowing of the Polish astronomer Copernicus and his theories about a sun-centred universe. In canto 10, it is the Ptolemaic system of concentric spheres with earth at the centre which Tethys explains to Gama. But the new geographical discoveries of the previous century, and the unprecedented encounters between peoples they entailed lie at the very heart of his epic. In cantos 3 to 5, Gama explains to the Sultan of Malindi exactly where Europe is, country by country, and why his voyage is significant. The explanation involves more than geography. From Christ's manifestation at the Battle of Ourique to Gama's men sitting on the beach at St Helen's bay, north of Cape Town, using the astrolabe to determine their position, we are swept as in no other renaissance poem from the world of medieval religion to the world of science.

But then it is the Sultan of Malindi who gives Gama a pilot to navigate the last stretch across the Indian Ocean to Calicut. It is Monsayeed, a Muslim from Morocco, who tells Gama about the history, religion, and social and political systems of India, before proceeding in canto 7 to tell the Hindu Samorin of Malabar everything he knows about the Portuguese, information supplemented in canto 8 as Paulo da Gama gives a lesson in Portuguese history to one of the Samorin's officials. There are other mini-encounters, some friendly, some violent – which other epic contains informed conversations between so many different nationalities? The poem concludes in canto 10 with a guided tour of Europe, Africa, the Middle East, Indian, Chinas, Japan, various Pacific and Indian Ocean islands, and finally the Americas and Antarctica (with a backward glance at Magellan's circumnavigation of the globe), as Tethys explains to the Portuguese the momentous consequences of their voyages in demonstrating to mankind

the dimensions and wealth of the globe we inhabit. It is a moment that bears comparison with that Apollo 8 photograph of the earth seen from space.

Over three centuries of colonial rule by the European empires blunted our responses to that pristine vision. As European power in India and Africa hardened into paternalism and a degree of contempt for their peoples and cultures, European languages took on a carapace which obscured the intellectual excitement of those original encounters. In Portugal to this day, talk of the *descrobimentos*, usually under the rubric of 'the Portuguese overseas expansion', does not envisage that there is much to be 'discovered' by Portugal, only by other nations learning of her past greatness. In the case of English, one sees this clearly in William Atkinson's translation, published in 1952 when the British Empire was still a force in the world. Words like 'gibberish' for language, 'trinkets' for merchandise, and 'natives' for people, reveal an inability to respond to the imaginative challenge of *The Lusíads*, and Atkinson's rendering of the African and Indian dimensions of the poem is little more than a tissue of colonial-settler platitudes. Yet India had gained her independence five years before his translation was published, and by the time my own version appeared just forty-five years later, the world's largest democracy was rapidly over-taking Britain as an economic power.

Camões was, for the phrase bears repeating, the first great European poet to cross the equator, and *The Lusíads* is the first truly global poem. It is surely no accident that his vision of Portugal's significance as the crown on the head of Europe should have come to him in India. No one can speak with assurance of what was passing through his mind during his long sojourn in the Orient. Our only source is his poetry, and any conclusions will follow from how that poetry, including his lyric poetry, is interpreted. The intuition that guided my own translation, beginning with that moment of my first encounter with the poem in Mozambique's Beira in 1970, is as follows, that during his years in Ceuta, Goa, Macau and Mozambique, Camões 'discovered' two things.

First, he learned what it was to be Portuguese, to come from a landscape whose towns and rivers he loved, whose plains and castles were haunted by the ghosts of warriors who had fought for this territory, whose provinces were part of Christendom and the Holy Roman Empire but were emerging as a 'state', and whose people were learning loyalty to a concept of nation which transcended loyalty to kings. Secondly, he learned to celebrate what the Portuguese had given to the world with the pioneer voyages of the fif-

teenth century, culminating in then voyage to India, in revealing the planet's true dimensions, its wealth, and its multitudes of peoples. It was the former of these ideas which was prophetic, taking wing after the restoration of Portugal's independence from Spain in 1640. The latter, Camões's celebration of the newness of the world, was a theme that required, and requires, constant rediscovery.

Needless to add, it is not necessary to accept either of these propositions to enjoy this magnificent poem. Camões calls his heroes 'sublime'. The sublime, for reasons I have given is not easily rendered in modern English, but I hope I have done enough to give an inkling of the great sweep of Camões's narrative, with its endless variety of incident and description, its openness to the wonders of the natural world, its relish of the differences between human societies, its eroticism, its humour, its balancing of the claims of epic against those of pastoral, its nostalgia for that golden age before men first fitted sails to wood and took to the seas, matched in turn by profound scepticism and a note of elegy for achievements already fading, already requiring the artifice of poetry's surprise.

The Biblioteca Nacional (2)

In February 2003, just over five years after the publication of my version of *The Lusíads*, I was back in the Biblioteca Nacional consulting the special collection on Camões. I had decided, in the same spirit of talented improvisation, to attempt the translation of Camões's large body of lyric poetry. To this end, I had invested in volumes 1 – 3 of the *Obras Completas* in the Sá da Costa edition, edited by Hernâni Cidade, volumes 4 and 5 of which contained *The Lusíads* I had long ago purchased in Beira. But I had become aware of a problem, which had drawn me back the library where those immense catalogues, the wooden and the metal, still hugged the wall of the ante-room, but where computers had begun to intrude.

Volumes 1 and 2 of the *Obras Completas* contained 694 pages devoted to Camões's lyric poetry, namely 119 *redondilhas*, 204 sonnets, 8 eclogues, 13 odes, 5 *oitavas* (written in *ottava rima*), 10 elegies, 11 canções, and 1 sestina, or 371 poems in total.[108] But I had also purchased the three volumes of the *Lírica Completa*, edited by Maria de Lourdes Saraiva and published by the Imprensa Nacional, in close association with the Bibiloteca Nacional where the volumes were on sale. The numbers of poems were not significantly different – 217 sonnets instead of Cidade's 204. But Maria de Lourdes' edition included substantial appendices of poems regarded of doubtful authorship – a further 152 sonnets, 35 songs, 10 more hymns, 4 more sestinas, more elegies, more eclogues, more eights and an additional ode. A few of these 'extras' had been taken by Cidade as authentic, making the apparent agreement over numbers somewhat misleading: those 119 songs were not the same poems in both editions.

Meanwhile, I had already seen in Lisbon bookshops but had not yet purchased, a compact edition of the *Rimas*, edited by Álvaro da Costa Pimpão which, as early as 1944, had admitted only 166 sonnets as canonical, with lesser trimmings of the other types of lyric.

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[108] 'Redondilhas' means literally 'rounds'. I have called them 'songs', the nearest English equivalent. The 'oitavas' are, of course, poems written in *ottava rima*. I have called them 'eights'. 'Canções' is the Portuguese translation of the Italian 'canzone'. Rather than call such elaborately-constructed poems 'songs', I have chosen the term 'hymn'. A sestina consist of six six-line stanzas, the same line-endings featuring in each stanza but in rotating order.

What was going on? In translating *The Lusíads*, I hadn't doubted that Hernâni Cidade's edition was authoritative (and was glad to be told afterwards that this was acceptable). But in tackling Camões's lyrics, I had no ambition to translate poems he hadn't written. That morning at the Biblioteca Nacional, where the planes overhead thundered louder and seemingly closer than ever, I asked to see Sir Richard Burton's 1884 translation of *Camoens: the Lyricks*, and confusion thickened.

Burton was a hugely intelligent, massively learned, endlessly enquiring and boundlessly energetic figure, blazing like a meteor across the last decades of the nineteenth century with his Arabian and African explorations and unexpurgated translations of Arab and Indian classics. No talented improviser can presume to patronize him. But his translations of Camões's lyrics maintain the program declared in his version of *The Lusíads*, namely to 'purposely introduced archaisms ... to give a sort of Quinhentista flavour, giving a certain air of antiquity ... only decent in translating from an author who dated before Spenser'. This, for example, is Burton's version of one of Camões's most subtle sonnets, 'Transforma-se o amador na cousa amada':

> Becomes the Lover to the Loved transmèwed,
> By thoughts and reveries the Fancies fire:
> Then have I nothing left to desire,
> For the Desir'd is in me embùed.
> If my transmèwed soul in her be viewed,
> What can my formal body look for higher?
> Only in self for rest can it desire,
> Since that same spirit has my form imbrùed.[109]

Could such fustian be further from the grace and economy of the original? Apart from the obsolete language ('transmew' is an antique form of 'transmute'), the ugly chime of line five (where 'viewed' has to be accorded two syllables to preserve the rhyme) is sufficiently damning.

I had been prepared for this by reading Burton's version of *The Lusíads*. What astonished me was to find Burton's *Lyricks* contained no less than 380 sonnets by Camões. Though he skipped the odes and elegies and did only a tiny fraction of the songs, Burton also translated 21 hymns, 11 *octa-*

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[109] Burton 1884, 31.

vos, 15 eclogues and 5 sestinas, all apparently by Camões. What the devil was going on?

I next consulted Burton's principal Portuguese source, namely, the three volumes of Teófilo Braga's *Parnaso de Luíz de Camões: ediçao dos poemas líricas consagrada do centenário de Camões*[110]. Like Burton's translation of *The Lusíads*, this mammoth edition of Camões complete lyrics had been published to commemorate the tercentenary of Camões death in 1580, and it turned out to enshrine the results of three centuries of poor scholarship. One day in the Biblioteca Nacional was not sufficient to unravel from the highly critical Portuguese sources exactly what had gone wrong, but the picture gradually became clearer, and with it came a mounting sense of excitement.

Apart from *The Lusíads*, Camões published only three poems in his lifetime, in support of publications by friends.[111] For the rest, his lyrics circulated only in manuscript. The first edition of the *Rimas* appeared in 1595, fifteen years after the poet's death. It contained 58 sonnets, 75 songs, 8 eclogues, 4 elegies, 4 odes, 10 hymns and 3 poems in *ottava rima*. Expanded collections followed, in 1598 and 1616, the latter including for the first time poems retrieved from India. But even this early, poems were being published under Camões´s name that are no longer believed to be his. Two editors, living two centuries apart, were crucial to this process: namely, Manuel de Faria e Sousa, the Spanish-based Renaissance humanist, and the Visconde de Jurumenha. In their respective editions of 1685 and 1860-1869, they attributed to Camões, from sheer enthusiasm, pretty well any poem they admired from the period. The fat tomes that resulted not only obscured his own genius, but made his relationship with contemporary poets virtually invisible. Diogo Bernardes, for example, published his own lyrics in 1595, only to find his better poems attributed to the master. Imagine the equivalent situation, that the best poems by Spenser, Sidney, Marlowe, Jonson and Donne were all attributed to a mega-poet called Shakespeare, and you get a sense of how Camões's distinctive voice was swamped by over-attribution.

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[110] Braga 1880.

[111] 'Aquele único exemplo' appeared as preface to Garcia de Orta's *Colóquio dos Simples e Drogas da India* (1563), a pioneering study of medicinal plants, and 'Depois que Magalhães tevb e tecida' and 'Vós, Ninfas da Gangéticas espessura' were included in Pêro de Magalhães Gândava's *História da Provincia de Santa Cruz* (1576)

Much scholarship was expended during the early twentieth century in cutting these attributions by roughly half, not least by recognizing the achievements of Camões's fellow poets. These included such figures as Sá de Miranda and his pupil António Ferreira, Jorge de Montemor, Andrade Caminha, Jerónimo Corte-Real and Manuel de Portugal to whom Camões addressed the fine ode 'A quem darão de Pindo as moradoras' (To whom will the dwellers on Mount Pindus). It bears repeating that the process of paring down the Camões canon was accomplished at a time when other Portuguese heroes were being puffed beyond recognition as founding fathers of Salazar's *Estado Novo*. While Camões was being celebrated as the original and ultimate spokesman of the regime, Camões scholarship was revealing his true dimension as a poet committed to no politician's cause.[112]

Given, as I have contended, it was *The Lusíads* that first created the concept of Portugal as a nation greater than its actual kings, a concept that took wing after the palace coup of 1640, any dispute about the Camões canon becomes implicitly a dispute about the national inheritance. Did Camões really write those poems about his youth besides the Mondego River, with their strong hint, nowhere confirmed, that he studied at the University of Coimbra? Or should they be attributed to Diogo Bernardes? Did he really write those ultra-orthodox Catholic sonnets, or were they foisted on him by Faria e Sousa? There are people to whom these questions matter passionately. Even today, In Portugal's liberal democracy, there is no firm agreement on what Camões wrote or did not write, and among the bewildering variety of editions of the *Rimas* for sale in Lisbon bookshops, there are none whose contents are identical.

Following this tangled story, I began to sense an opportunity. Camões was unquestionably one of the greatest poets of the Renaissance. Some half dozen versions of his masterpiece *The Lusíads* were readily available in English. Yet the only substantial attempt over the past four hundred years to bring his lyric poetry to English readers, Burton's *Camoens: the Lyricks*, was vitiated not just by its style but by the plain fact that well over half its contents were not by Camões.[113] I had the chance, as the unwit-

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[112] The editors of Camões's lyric poetry pay tribute to the pioneering work of D. Carolina Michaëlis de Vasconcelos, as carried through in their various editions: (see bibliography).

[113] The nearest rival, J.J. Aubertin's *Seventy Sonnets of Camoens* (London: C Kegan Paul & Co, 1881) suffers equally in that more than half the total are not by Camões. Viscount

ting heir to a century of Portuguese scholarship, to present 'the other half' of Camões in English for the very first time. As I travelled home after a week's work in the Bibioteca Nacional, I could hardly credit such luck.

Strangford published a much-criticised selection *Poems from the Portuguese* (London: J. Carpenter, 1803), that went through a bewildering variety of editions (the BN has 10 different imprints). Elizabeth Barret Browning's famous 'Sonnets from the Portuguese' have no basis in Camões, though she is likely to have read Strangford.

Translating Camões's Lyrics

The problem of form revisited

Before tackling the first poems, I had once again to think seriously about the question of form. I commented in my approach to translating *The Lusíads* that the most basic problem of poetic translation turns on this question. Get the form, or forms right, and more than half your problems are resolved. But my approach this time had to be different. There was a sense in which *The Lusíads* posed one big problem, a problem with many variations, given Camões's very different styles, but single in the sense that what I termed my 'ersatz octavos' had to apply throughout the epic, coping with narrative, debate, intercession, pastoral description, and so on, preserving Camões's overall architecture and maintaining his own pace.

The lyrics, on the other hand, posed a multiplicity of problems. They came in eight different forms – sonnets, songs, odes, ecloques, elegies, hymns, eights, and a sestina – and the forms themselves contained huge variations. The songs consisted of ballads of several types, short narratives, skits, satires, and long meditative poems such as 'Sóbolos Rios'. The eclogues contained separate sections, each cast in a different form. Between the four-line joke of 'Cinco galinhas e meia' (Five and a half chickens) and the elaborate structure of 'Vinde cá, meu tão certo secretário' (Come, my trusty writing desk), Camões had tested every possibility of his age, and his late deployment of a 'piscatorial' eclogue in the manner of Jacopo Sannazzaro showed his alertness to new forms. There could be no single translation response to this enormous variety.

I remarked earlier that rhyme is only one means in creating in the patterns integral to poetic form. In confronting the various forms taken by Camões's lyric poetry, the choice was whether to imitate his rhyme schemes, with all the syntactical acrobatics that required, or whether to try to capture in English the ease and lucidity of his style. Aubertin, it will be recalled, compared it to the music of Handel, and one has just that sense of delicate but robust perfection, reinforced by a steely wit. With the question posed this way, there seems only one appropriate answer. On the other hand, most of these forms were strict. The sonnets were Petrarchan, the ballads were closely rhymed, the elegies and some sections of the eclogues were in *terza rima*, the eights were, of course, in the *ottava rima* of *The Lusíads*. Most elaborate of all were the irregularly rhymed but strictly modulated hymns, while the single, unrhymed sestina posed in some ways the strictest problem of all.

Donald Davie's approach to these problems was that 'rhyme is the first thing to be dispensed with.'[114] Dave was a poet and critic I admired and felt close to, not least because his background was similar to mine: his father, like my own, was a minister in the Baptist church, and he had written with great insight about nonconformist hymnology.[115] But I rejected his advice out of hand, along with his untypical assumption that rhyme was for poets of the second rank. One important aspect of the sonnet as a poetic form is the feeling it conveys of tightness or constriction. 'Nuns fret not at their convent's narrow room; / And hermits are contented with their cells', wrote Wordsworth, continuing that for him ''twas pastime to be bound / Within the Sonnet's scanty plot of ground'.[116] 'Scorn not the sonnet', he wrote on another occasion, adding 'With it Camöens soothed an exile's grief'.[117] Wordsworth carried great weight with me, and this was not an issue to be fudged. Unrhymed sonnets obviously exist, preserving no more of the form than the balance between octave and sestet. But where the original is rhymed most readers will a feel a good translation should respect the form's virtuosity of compression by providing some equivalent sense of restriction. An unrhymed sonnet feels like a contradiction, the tightness of the form being integral to how the poem works.

The history of the sonnet's adaptation into English is interesting and illustrates what I have been arguing. There are Petrarchan sonnets in English – Sidney's *Astrophel and Stella* has over a hundred marvelous examples. But in general, the sheer dullness of most Elizabethan sonnet sequences is attributable, at least in part, to the wordiness arising from the attempt to fit the English language to an Italian form. The hero of this particular confrontation is the almost forgotten Tudor poet, Henry Howard, Earl of Surrey. Howard was beheaded, for no evident reason, at the age of 30 in one of the last executions of Henry VIII's bloody reign. But he left two enduring legacies. First, he invented English blank verse, employing it in his 1540 translation of Virgil's *Aeneid*. Over the next three hundred years, blank verse in the hands of poets from Marlowe to Shakespeare to Milton to Wordsworth came to seem the most natural of English measures, the one closest to the native rhythms of the language. Only with Eliot and

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[114] Quoted in *The Oxford Guide to Literature in English*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000, 207.

[115] Davie, 1994.

[116] Wordsworth 1969, 199.

[117] Wordsworth 1969, 208. He had presumably read Strangford, first published 1803.

Pound, reacting against the mechanical rhythms of Tennyson's *Idylls of the King,* did blank verse seem something to avoid.

Secondly, Howard adapted the sonnet form to English rhyme.[118] Instead of the strict Petrarch octave with only two rhymes and the sestet with a further two, Howard invented the three independently rhymed quatrains followed by a concluding couplet that became the basic form of Shakespeare's sonnets.[119] It was a way of capturing in English the form of the Italian original while leaving the English poet free to respect the resources of his own language. In practice, of course, though it looks familiar on the page, and though it bears the same name, the English 'sonnet' is a somewhat different form. In the Petrarchan sonnet, the turn of the argument comes between the octet and the sestet with the introduction of a new set of rhymes. In what we now call the Shakespearean sonnet (though it deserves to bear Howard's name), the 'turn' comes with the concluding couplet. But most poets would be proud of such a twin legacy, and Howard deserves a more prominent place in English cultural history than he is normally accorded.

Nothing could underline more strongly my earlier contention that the key to successful translation is finding a poetic form which imitates the original but suits the idiom of the target language. Get it wrong, and your version will never take off. However, experimenting not just with the sonnets but the *terza rima* of the elegies, I realised something further, something that had not occurred to me when I devised the 'ersatz octavos' which worked well with *The Lusíads*. Rhyme is so easy in Portuguese. This is not just because of the availability of adjectives and adverbs as rhyming words, as I argued earlier. Inflected word endings themselves form rhymes, so that a list of irregular verbs reads like a rhyming dictionary, while a stanza in which all the verb forms are in the same tense rhymes more or less automatically. The corollary of this is that the rhymes don't draw attention to themselves, but are merged in the general musicality of the language. The contrast with English where the rhymes fall on the nouns and verbs, reinforcing what are already the key words of the sentence, is striking. In translation then, a relatively relaxed rhyme scheme, preserving the form but mixing full and half rhymes with sometimes the merest echo of a vowel or

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[118] There are others who credit his close friend Sir Thomas Wyatt with the invention.

[119] Petrarch's sonnets are divided into a quotrain, rhyming abbaabba, and sestet rhyming cdecde, but with variations. The 'Shakespearian' sonnet normally rhymes ababcdcd efefgg.

consonant, allows for versions that read like modern English, while actually being closer to the way rhymes sound in Portuguese because they are so unobtrusive.

One further technical problem became quickly apparent. I wrote earlier of the rule of thumb followed by most English translators, not just from Portuguese but from the Romance languages generally. Faced with a noun followed by multiple adjectives, as Romance grammars allow, translators focus on the final adjective as the clinching one, and make the others earn their keep. It was soon plain to me that this was no going to work with Camões's lyrics. Once again I was faced with an extreme economy of language in respect of nouns and verbs, balanced by a profusion of adjectives. One of the earliest poems I tackled was the Hymn 'Under a dry, wild and barren mountain'.[120] This begins with three adjectives preceeding the noun ('monte'), and continues 'inútil e despido, calvo, informe' (useless and dying, bare and shapeless) 'da natureza em tudo aborrecido' (abhored by nature in all ways) – four more adjectives constituting the second line, and an adjectival phrase the third. But so much of the poem's verbal colour is invested in these epithets that economising could be no solution. My version runs

> Under a parched and barren mountain,
> Treeless, unfarmed, utterly bare,
> The most tedious place in all nature ...

This sheds one adjective from the first line one, converts another to an adverb in the second, and changes line three to a noun phrase – conveying, I hope a similar sense of utter desolation but shifting the force of the description in the direction of the nouns. This type of syntactical transformation I found myself employing repeatedly. The force of the adjectives had to be respected, but with recourse to the endless versatility of the English language in furnishing synonyms.

Translation Notebooks

Once again I maintained a notebook, in practice four desk diaries for the years 2003-2006, while doing the translations. Instead of a running commentary, however, they are filled with working drafts. These drafts

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[120] 'Junto um seco, fero e estéril monte', White 2008, 192-196.

have a certain academic interest, showing false starts, misunderstandings, and various types of clumsiness en route to more polished versions. Normally, they begin with a prose paraphrase of the poem or section of the poem concerned, and then move towards making the lines work as verse. Initial comprehension is followed by the application of poetic technique, though the processes are by no means so distinct, A good line, or a suggested pattern of rhymes, will occur in the middle of the prose, and the initial poetic draft was often scrapped in the search for a better summary of the poem's meaning. Once again, the process is very different from writing original poetry, waiting for the poem to emerge and take shape without previous knowledge of where it is going. These sonnets, songs, elegies and the rest, were Camões's poems, and my job was once again to listen.

The chief interest of the notebooks is the order in which the poems were tackled, beginning in January 2003 with fragments testing the thoughts about form I have just summarised. Jumping in the deep end, I began with the opening lines of 'Come, my trusty writing desk',[121] with its immense verse paragraphs. But I quickly realised such an ambitious, tightly woven poem, summarizing a whole career in writing, would have to be approached circumspectly. I needed to know far more about what I was doing. There follows on 24 January a late draft of 'Sete anos de pastor Jacob servia' (Seven years Jacob served as a shepherd), which I must have worked on separately, its rhyme scheme already intact – two quatrains, rhymed abba, cddc, and a sestet efefef, the form I would employ for the vast bulk of the sonnets to follow.[122] At this point, I contemplated with some horror the scale of the task I was taking on. In the two volumes of Hernâni Cidade's *Obras Completas* devoted to the lyrics, the songs and sonnets occupy 305 pages and the eclogues, odes, eights, elegies, hymns and sestina a further 304, considerably more than the space taken up by *The Lusíads* in volumes 4 and 5. At issue here was not simply the enormous amount of material. Equally daunting was the prospect of finding a publisher ready to take on over 600 pages of lyric poetry.

I went out immediately and bought Álvaro da Costa Pimpão's *Rimas*, which became the text I used from then on. Its advantages were its slimmed down canon (just 381 pages (excluding appendices) and its authority, having been reissued with the backing of the University of Coimbra in 1994. I

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[121] 'Vinde cá, meu tão certo secretário', White 2008, 297-304.

[122] In this draft the 3rd line reads 'labouring not for the father but for her'. In the published version, the last two words were cut.

worked with this edition for the next four and a half years and, for what my opinion is worth, came to trust its editorial judgements.

My notebooks next reveal a five page tussle with 'The swan when he senses fast approaching',[123] broken off with the octave partially established, and the beginnings of my engagement with the elegy 'Echo who died of her helpless passion'.[124] With this powerful poem of exile, I found for the first time solid ground in this fresh endeavour. It was like being back in Beira in 1970 when I was cutting the pages of *The Lusíads* at a pavement café, to discover this epic poem began just a few hundred metres from where I was sitting.

The Camões who had excited me in Beira, and continued to excite me throughout my translation of *The Lusíads*, was the travelling poet, the one who knew these remote, exotic place first-hand and wrote about them with a matter-of fact directness:

> Look there, how the seas of the orient
> Are scattered with islands beyond number;
> See Tidore, then Ternate with its burning
> Summit, leaping with volcanic flames.[125]

You can check Ternate on the internet today and witness those volcanic flames still leaping. Compare this with Milton's use of the islands as metaphor (clearly derived from Camões) as Satan sets out from hell on his journey to earth to seduce Adam and Eve:

> As when far off at sea a fleet descried
> Hangs in the clouds, by equinoctial winds
> Close sailing from Bengala, or the isle
> Of Ternate and Tidore, whence merchants bring
> Their spicy drugs ... so seemed
> Far off the flying fiend.[126]

For Milton, the islands have already become literature. For Camões, they were the background to his workaday existence.

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[123] 'O cisne, quando sente ser chegada', White 2008, 96.
[124] 'Aquele que de amor descomedido', White 2008, 86-90.
[125] White 1997, 223.
[126] Milton 1998, 158-159.

Now, with the elegy, I found myself at the very beginning of this poetic process. The poem's immediacy was overwhelming. It begins:

> Echo who died of her helpless passion
> for the toy boy Narcissus, who himself
> pined away in self-contemplation,
>
> was afterwards changed by Juno to a cave,
> so that of her truly human figure
> only the cadence of her voice survived.
>
> In the same fashion, of my personal hurt,
> already history, nothing remains
> but this poem I scribble urgently...

The poem is addressed to D. António de Noronha, apparently a young courtier, and the problem is identified from the start. Camões early poems had tried to catch the attention of the court. Suddenly, with exile in north Africa, his voice is reduced to a mere echo. What does the court poet write about when removed from the centre of things?

> Nor is it I who write of my customary fate;
> But within my heart, overwhelmed and broken,
> The heartbreak writes, and I translate.

The elegy made it plain that Camões had not travelled for travel's sake. He had been exiled for an unknown offence, to spend some two years with the garrison at Ceuta in Morocco as a common soldier, losing an eye in action. As with his later, prolonged exile in India and the far East, he presents his years abroad as a sustained banishment, imposed on him by an implacable destiny. He experienced the exile's idealisation of home, the nostalgia for past pleasures, the sense of time passing to little purpose, the longing for and the fear of death.

Yet as early as this north African poem, written in his late '20s, there are new elements.

> I meditate at times on the newness
> and oddity of things, such as change,
> if only I could direct its course,

and my mind struck by this foreign
land, these new ways of being human,
a different people with customs I find strange,

I climb the mountain Heracles the Theban
divided from Gibraltar's Rock,
giving entrance to the Mediterranean

and I try to image where he picked
the apple of the Hesperides ...

How marvelous that he should have been so literal-minded, or played the game of being literal-minded, as to search for the exact spot where Heracles killed the serpent guarding the apple of the Hesperides, or fought with the giant Antaeus, holding him aloft to prevent him drawing strength from his mother Earth. Until now, these Ovidian stories had been the pleasing decoration of his courtly eclogues. Now he is using them as a means of getting his poetic bearings among strange people in a foreign land. It is the method he was to bring to fruition in the opening cantos of *The Lusíads* when, after the fleet has rounded the Cape of Storms, venturing for the first time on an ocean unknown to European mariners, he raids Ovid, Virgil and Horace for stories - Venus and Cupid hiding as dolphins from the heat of the Mozambique Channel, Phaeton's chariot scorching the peoples of east Africa – that will give him a means of describing the hitherto undescribed in a new poetic language.

But these stories from Ovid's *Metamorphoses* are not the only ones to be transfigured here. Ovid, too, wrote poems of banishment, and in his *Tristia* and *Black Sea Letters* he offered a paradigm of the life of the reluctant exile in which certain stock themes and images predominate – the inhospitable climate, the monotonous scenery, the lack of civilised conversation, the alien people. Camões had recourse to these poems, which he echoes repeatedly. But his own work feels different. He mentions the injustice of his banishment, but he does not bore his readers (as Ovid himself acknowledges) by spending poem after poem dwelling on it. He doesn't complain he is losing the language, or that his poetic skills are atrophying. He doesn't reiterate that his companions are barbarians, unable to appreciate a man of culture such as himself. Interestingly, given everything Camões says afterwards about the 'Moors', he shows no animus against the people who have cost him the sight of an eye.

Most important of all, Ovid doesn't look back on his earlier writings with any sense that his exile has called them into question. Despite the fact that, as Ovid's editor Peter Green points out, having mocked the moral and imperial aspirations of the Emperor Augustus's regime, he 'was being made to suffer a punishment that in the most appallingly literal way fitted the crime',[127] he simply boasts with justice that his work stands and that it has already made him immortal. For Camões, by contrast, his exile means a massive shift of perspective, and all his major work lies ahead.

In this spirit, he concludes with a wonderful vow, that 'echo' or otherwise, he will never abandon his art:

> For if implacable fortune commands
> so long an absence from all good that my spirit
> soars from the prison where it's chained,
>
> to the roaring of the black waters
> of Cocytus, on the verge of the gloomy groves,
> I will sing what is written in my heart,
>
> and deep within the dreadful cliffs
> where Nature withholds all daylight,
> amid fears and bitter suffering,
>
> in a tremulous voice I will celebrate,
> though tired and cold, the shining face
> of Fancy, of whom I never lost sight.

Is it significant that Camões has employed here not Ovid's elegaic couplets but the altogether stricter form of Dante's *terza rima*? The couplets feel satirically dismissive. The interlocking rhymes of the tercets point backwards and onwards.

Sonnets

After spending an agreeable week with the elegy, I made first drafts of the sonnet 'As often as Daliana at the spjnning wheel'[128] and of the song

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[127] *Ovid* 2005, xxv

[128] 'Quantas vezes do fuso s'esquecia', White 2008, 167.

'On her head she bears her waterpot',[129] before plunging into that most intractable of poems 'By the rivers that flow'.[130] I was drawn to it by its length (in a task like this, the longer poems cannot be put off) and by a notion I cannot account for that it was one of the great poems of exile. I find that in a week I got no further than line 200.

The poem is an extended gloss on Psalm 137[131], itself one of the more intractable of the psalms. After beginning memorably with the exiles weeping by the rivers of Babylon and hanging their harps on the willows, it concludes with the appalling curse, 'Happy shall he be that taketh and dasheth thy little ones against the stones'. Camões, of course, allegorises this (what else could he do?), but the train of thought feels awkward. It is also written in one of the most restrictive possible of verse forms – stanzas composed of five (or ten, depending on the edition) three-stress lines rhyming abbab. For so long and so philosophical a poem (is it intentionally 365 lines in length?), this seems impossibly demanding. It requires of the translator the utmost tact and delicacy in the handling of assonance and half-rhymes to maintain the musical flow and avoid the English version descending into clod-hopping doggerel.

Finally, what is one to make precisely of a poem that renounces poetry, using poetry to celebrate the laying aside of his flute? I decided that 'By the rivers that flow' belonged with 'Come, my trusty writing desk' as a late poem to be tackled when I was I was ready for it, when the bulk of the translations had been done. As a result, I gave my attention for the next six and a half months entirely to Camões's sonnets.

One of these, 'Love is a fire that burns invisibly',[132] I had already translated in 1998 for a Cascais advertising agency. I received the invitation after the appearance of *The Lusíads*, and quoted a fee so outrageous I expected a refusal, so felt rather foolish when it was accepted without demur. But it's an entirely straightforward piece in the Petrarchan manner, posing no serious challenge to thought or technique:

> Love is a fire that burns invisibly,
> a wound that festers though inert,
> a happiness more like a hurt,
> a pain that rages painlessly.

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[129] 'Leva nas cabeça o pote', White 2008, 187.
[130] 'Sóbolos rios que vão', White 2008, 317-327.
[131] Psalm 136 in the Portuguese Bible
[132] 'Amor é um fogo que arde sem se ver', White 2008, 26.

What Petrarch knew as his *Rerum Vulgarium Fragmenta* (Fragments in the Vernacular) was published after his death as the *Canzoniere*, or Song Book. The majority were sonnets, and though the collection also included hymns (canzone), sestinas, ballads and madrigals, it was the sonnets that swept Europe in a literary craze that took two centuries to exhaust itself, moving through Italy, Spain, Portugal and France and eventually washing up on the shores of Elizabethan England in Sidney's *Astrophel and Stella*, Spenser's *Amoretti* and Shakespeare's Sonnets.

I had been fortunate to pick up second-hand the long out-of-print *Sonetos* of Camões, also edited by Maria de Lourdes Saraiva.[133] This credited Camões with 214 sonnets (as compared to the 217 of her Imprensa Nacional edition), but it also divided the sonnets into four distinct periods, the first attempt I had seen at establishing a chronology, however provisional, for any of Camões's lyrics. Among those assigned to the *Primeiro Período (1540-1547)* are several deriving from Petrarchan originals. 'So much of my life is equivocal'[134] is patently a re-writing of Petrarch's 'Pace non trovo'. Similarly, 'Prettily woven head-dress arrayed',[135] about ribbons that have fallen into the lover's hands, is based on Petrarch's 'O bello man', where the adored object is a glove, while Camões, too, has a sonnet 'Divine worship was being consecrated'[136] that describes falling in love during divine worship when his thoughts should have been elsewhere. These apprentice sonnets contain much that is more generally reminiscent of the *Canzoniere*: snow that burns, happiness that hurts, eyes that kill and restore to life, together with the constant play of antithesis as Love wars against Reason, and both are in conflict with Destiny. Love is the principal actor, personified in a variety of roles, ranging from the grinning Cupid of 'To a garden luxuriously verdant' to the capricious tyrant of 'I'm well aware, Love, what I fear is true', or 'When, Lady, Love gave orders I should dote'.[137] As in Petrarch, the language of love is a central theme, for while both poets insist on the absolute primacy of experience, both poets recognise their dependence on verse idioms both to understand love and to reproduce the same feelings in their readers. In two early sonnets, Camões promises,

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[133] Saraiva n.d. (1975).

[134] 'Tanto de meu estado', White 2008, 26.

[135] 'Lindo e sutil trançado', White 2008, 32.

[136] 'O culto divino se celebrava', White 2008, 34.

[137] 'Num jardim adornado', 'Bem sei, Amor, que é certo o que receio', and 'Quando, Senhora, quis amor que amasse', White 2008, 31, 99 and 103.

> Once you experience love, I'm persuaded
> you'll know what I'm on about in my verses.[138]

While the contrary of this delicate balancing act declares,

> I'll sing of love in a manner so svelte
> with theme and style perfectly matched
> two thousand amorous parts of speech
> will make hearts feel what they never felt.[139]

What is striking about the more mature sonnets is the way the derived features of Camões's style are transformed to serve utterly contrasting ends.

Consider, for example, 'The swan when he senses fast approaching', to my earlier drafts of what I now returned:

> The swan when he senses fast approaching
> the hour that brings his dying moments,
> pours forth song with a rising cadence
> loud above his deserted beach.
>
> He longs to have his life extended,
> lamenting what is about to be lost,
> and heartsick about the cost
> bewails his calendar's sad end.[140]

The wonderful plangeancy of this sonnet is almost impossible to capture in translation, and it took me many versions to get as far as I did – using all the resources of alliteration, varied stress patterns, and internal and feminine rhymes to imitate the original's sad music. It's true the poem closes with a quotation from another Petrarchan sonneteer, the Spanish Juan Boscán,[141] but the style, which the translator must reflect, is distinctly Camões's own.

Over the next fourteen months to May 2004, I translated 80 sonnets, observing no particular order, deliberately sampling their immense variety

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[138] White 2008, 25.
[139] White 2008, 25.
[140] White 2008, 96.
[141] 'La vuestra falso fé, y el amor mio' (Your false faith and my own love).

along with the separate problems each one posed. I began with 'A fermosura desta fresca serra' (The beauty of this fresh hillside) before discovering (in a rush of empathy for Burton and Aubertin) that it's no longer securely attributed to Camões.

Editors and commentators have different ways of sub-dividing the sonnets – by the order of the first appearance in the different manuscripts, by their dominant themes, by their possible chronology, and by genre – love sonnets, mythological sonnets, narrative sonnets, sonnets of exile, and heroic sonnets.[142] Let me admit candidly I made little headway with the heroic sonnets. I translated them all, but eventually published only three. Extravagant praise of colonial conquerors whom modern editors cannot always identify is difficult to render with any conviction. I tried a mock-heroic version of 'Great strength, matching his thoughts',[143] sensing that even Camões's heart wasn't in the poem, but discarded the effort as unworthy.

There were a handful of others it was hard to take entirely seriously. After Camões's return from Ceuta, he was exiled again, this time to Portuguese India. He had been arrested in 1552 for brawling at Lisbon's Corpus Christi festival with the keeper of the King's harness, and sentenced to three years further service as a common soldier. Despite being what would later be termed a *degredado*, he commemorates his colonial military service as follows:

> Whoever wants to witness Love at his best,
> his refinements burnished to perfection,
> observe where I was dispatched by Fortune,
> putting fidelity to the ultimate test.
>
> Where memories are killed by long absence
> on the fearful ocean or in dire war,
> there my longing is most secure,
> the dangers strengthening my endurance.

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[142] See the works cited by Hernâni Cidade (1985), Maria de Lourdes Saravia (1975 and 1994), Costa Pimpão (1994), and Helen Vendler (2002).

[143] 'Esforço grande, igual ao pensamento', Cidade (1947), Vol 1, 240-241.

Wherever I'm placed by relentless fate
in sorrow, death, injury or perdition,
or in sublime and prosperous anchorage;
in short, whether in high or low estate,
until implacable death tracks me down,
on my tongue your name, in my heart your image.[144]

This vow that wherever destiny takes him he will not abandon the Petrarchan values of courtly lover is paralleled in another sonnet "My Lady, if it is fortune's will'[145] apparently written about the same time.

In that heart, where Fortune's impotent,
I'll bear you ardently, where not cold nor famine
nor frivolous dangers can drive you out.

In the front line, in an echoing, strident
voice, boasting your name alone,
I'll put hurricanes and the enemy to flight.

This is touching, but surely it's more than a little absurd? The first action Camões saw after reaching India was as part of Afonso de Noronha's expedition against the Sultan of Chembe who had been dubbed 'the pepper king'. The aim of the action was to corner the market in peppers, and there was nothing remotely courtly about it. Camões sounds here a bit like Dom Quixote, following his books of chivalry in a world to which they don't apply. This is Tommy Atkins (or GI Joe) pretending to be a Knight of the Round Table, and it's hard not to feel that the gap between Camões's poetic language and his actual circumstances is being stretched to breaking point.

In sensing this, I hadn't yet read 'Talking with captain Themistocles',[146] Camões's second great elegy of exile which would put his stance into context. Meanwhile, I continued with the sonnets, and encountered this:

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[144] 'Quen quiser ver d'Amor ua exelência', White 2008, 159.
[145] Senhora minha, se a Fortuna imiga', White 2008, 160.
[146] 'O Poeta Simónides, Falando', 148-154.

Invent fresh arts and cunning, Love,
to destroy me, and new frustrations;
but you can't remove my expectations
by taking away what I don't have.

Look where my hopes are grounded!
Observe what perilous guarantees
that I don't fear even on the wildest seas
contrast or change, the ship having foundered.

But insofar as I'm not unhappy
when hope fails, Love maintains within
an evil that destroys, and in secret:

some days there pitches camp in me
I know not what, nor where it is born,
nor when it comes, nor why it hurts.[147]

No, this isn't the work of a different poet. There is the same management of cadences, the same mastery of the sonnet form, the same trademark movement throughout the poem towards greater simplicity and poignancy of expression. But this is a poet who accepts that he has become 'an echo' (to quote the earlier elegy) or, to modify the image, that his first audience is himself. Love is still the theme, but it's hardly courtly love. The word is still capitalised, but this is not Cupid with his wild arrows, rather a mysterious ailment of the heart. There is no high-born lady with her customary disdain, no courtly presence at all, not even courtiers pretending to be shepherds and shepherdesses. In short, Camões has moved away from the sophisticated, aristocratic wit of the Petrarchan code to write a completely original kind of love poem, one that is direct, intense and personal, and for the translator, dismaying simple.

That simplicity was throughout my biggest problem in translating the sonnets. The purity of Camões's diction was unlike that of *The Lusíads*. There, though Camões was economical with nouns and verbs, he was lavish with his adjectives, much of the 'grand but contemporary' style being vested in the epithets. As I have altready remarked, cutting back on the

[147] 'Busque Amor novas artes, novo engenho', White 2008, 215.

adjectives didn't work with the lyric poetry, especially with sonnets. Time and time again, examining my first prose draft, I would be in despair at the sheer economy with which Camões achieved his effects. The English language, which has absorbed so many other languages, is rich in synonyms, which English poetry loves to explore. But even taking the plainest, most lucid poets as my models – Andrew Marvell, say, or W.H. Auden with his ease of utterance – the temptation was always to elaborate on my prose draft to make it look like poetry.

Many of the sonnets turn on paradox, and once the paradox has been grasped (as not all readers, or translators, manage), it can be rendered in uncomplicated English. These are not the conventional paradoxes of Petrarchan convention ('the white fire of that snow burns / singeing hearts and the imagination'[148]) but more akin to contradiction, confronted with stoic endurance, bereavement or heroic death. In a manner that owes less to Petrarch than to contemporary song, he takes as his heroes and heroines peasants caught in the tangle of love, fate and separation. Daliana, betrayed by the shepherd she loved, and taking revenge by marrying cowman Gil, only to wither away in her lifelong misery. Or a second Daliana, married to Laurénio but desiring Sílvio, a case of 'nature's discord' that neither pity for her husband, nor his genuine compassion for her, can resolve. Or Nise and Montano, divided by circumstance, she 'tired of herself, of fate and the years', lamenting his departure freshly each dawn while he, pacing the beaches of the Indian Ocean, mourns her 'who preferred to leave me'.[149]

Such tales of contradiction are paralleled in sonnets on biblical or classical themes. Jacob, cheated on his wedding day after working seven years to earn Rachel, embarks on seven more years' labour, adding 'I would work on, were it not / for so long a loving so short a life.' Cephalus, wishing to test his wife's chastity, courts her in disguise and seduces her by offering a bribe ('observe how blindly a lover will rush / to ensure he will always be discontent'). Cephalus again, under 'the power of misplaced passion', asking pardon from his wife who had consented to be raped, 'though he was the one who was cheated'. Telephus, wounded by Achilles and told by the oracle the only cure was to be wounded a second time – this being a metaphor for the lover's state:

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[148] White 2008, 27.

[149] The sonnets mentioned here are 'Tomava Daliana por vingança', 'Quantas vezes do fuso s'esquecia', and 'Apartava-se Nise de Montano', White 2008, 167, 167, and 166.

> Such is your beauty, my prognosis
> is that of a patient swollen with dropsy:
> the more I drink in, the greater my thirst.[150]

Sonnets turning on such narrative ironies are relatively easy to render, needing only an uncluttered style and a close attention to Camões's pace and meaning.

Nor should Camões's wit be underestimated, and that wit must be captured – outrageous at times, as when Cupid is asked which flowers are his favourites only to answer 'I much prefer / viola-tion to mere rose and lily'; at others, effective repartee as when Diana retorts to Venus 'Better to take the nimble deer in my snare / than be caught in one by your husband'; but at all time pointed, as when he defends his sexual desire:

> But this pure passion in me is condemned,
> as a stone is driven by the art of its gravity
> to desire nature's very kernel,
>
> so imagination (through the demands
> I derive from my fallen humanity)
> forces me, Lady to ask this fundamental.[151]

There is always an active intelligence, almost metaphysical, driving these poems.

But it's subtle states of feeling, of grief, anguish, and despair, that are hardest to translate, because it is precisely at such moments that Camões's language is simplest. Consider the following endings:

> 'Why reject me, whose whole life's
> yours, for one who loves you not?' he sighed,
> and Echo responded, 'loves you not.'

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[150] The sonnets mentioned here are 'Por sua ninfa, Céfalo deixava', 'Sentindo-se tomada, a bela esposa', and 'Ferido sem ter cura perecia', White 2008, 164, 164 and 165.

[151] The sonnets mentioned here are 'Num jardim adornado de verdura', 'Enquanto Febo os montes acendia', and ''Pede o desejo, Dama, que vos veja', White 2008, 31, 169 and 27.

Or

> But what if this theory is a figment?
> O indolent and blind conceit!
> Am I still dreaming I could be happy?

Or

> No one answered. The sea beat far off.
> The casuarinas stirred gently.
> The wind returned his voice in the same breath.

Or

> But great experience is a great danger,
> for what to God seems just and evident
> seems to mere humans profoundly wrong.[152]

Each of these endings is intellectually satisfying, adding something to the earlier argument. Each is technically accomplished, providing a perfectly paced sense of closure. Each is profoundly moving – I challenge anyone not to pause and re-read the sonnets to which they are the conclusions. Yet the language of each could not be plainer, as even metaphor is abandoned in the search for absolute simplicity and directness.

Or consider the following complete sonnet:

> When prolonged reflection on my grief
> dulls my eyes in sleep, I discern
> in vivid dreams that dear person
> who was for so long the dream of my life.
>
> There in the empty landscape, straining
> my pupils at the shimmering vistas,
> I pursue her. And she then appears
> remoter than ever, and more driven.

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[152] The sonnets mentioned here are 'Na metade do Céu subido ardia', 'Com grandes esperanças já cantei', 'O céu, a terra, o vento sossegado', and 'Vós outros, que buscais repouso certo', White 2008, 169, 227, 173, and 287.

'Don't avoid me, gentle shade,' I cry out.
She (her eyes brimming with tender shame
like one who speaks what cannot be)

turns to flee me. 'Dina' I shout,
and before I have added '-mene,' I fathom
even that brief illusion's denied me.[153]

My version is relatively simple, the word order straightforward, the vocabulary plain, with actually a higher proportion of mono-syllabic words than in the Portuguese. The rhythm is a close imitation, the two run-on lines ('I pursue her' and 'turns to flee me') matching the original exactly, while the feminine half-rhymes echo the plangeancy of Camões's own music.

Yet Camões has outdone me. 'Vivid' dreams, and 'was for so long' are elaborations. 'Straining my pupils at the shimmering vistas' doubly translates 'vista', and where Camões concludes 'I wake and see / not even a brief illusion I can have', my version intrudes the metaphor 'fathom', along with an unknown agent of denial.

Songs

After a year spent with the sonnets, completing rather more than half, I moved on in May 2004 to the songs. There was strategy in this. I was anxious to find a publisher but, unlike *The Lusíads* about which the right kind of publishers were already well informed, Camões's lyric poetry was not known in English and I needed to offer a substantial selection of the various genres to create an interest.

Apart from his profound knowledge of the Latin classics, especially of Virgil and Ovid, and beyond the marked influence of Petrarch and other Renaissance poets, there was a third important ingredient to the fashioning of Camões's mature style, namely, his deep love of Portuguese folksong. This knowledge is freely on display in the epigraphs to many of his songs, such as 'To this old song', or 'On this common song' or 'On this theme', followed by three or four lines of quotation before his own poem begins. It is a striking feature of Portuguese literary history that Camões did not have to scour the countryside collecting this material. He would have encountered the taste for folksong at court. Some of the oldest po-

[153] 'Quando de minhas mágoas a comprida', White 2008, 172.

etry produced at the Castilian and Portuguese courts between 1200 and 1350 was in imitation of Provençal troubadours. Some 1,680 *cantigas* have come down to the present day, written not in Castilian, the normal language of the court, but in Galician-Portuguese, the dialect of north-western Iberia. There are *cantigas d'amigo*, or songs about a friend, usually a lover, and *cantigas d'escarnho*, or songs of scorn, directed at landowners, hypocritical priests, exorbitant prostitutes, cowardly soldiers, and rival poets.[154] The *cantigas* include some five hundred examples where the singer is assumed to be a woman.[155] Among the poets of the *cantigas* are Kings Sancho I and Dinis of Portugal, both hero figures in *The Lusíads*. This courtly appreciation of vernacular folksong was continued in such influential Portuguese anthologies as Garcia de Resende's *Cancioneiro Geral* (1516), which alongside poems inspired by Dante and Petrarch, printed vilancetes and madrigals much in the manner of the older *cantigas*, though Castillian centred and no longer strictly following the principles of the *Arte de Trovar.*

Camões's songs may be seen as responding to this tradition. No less than three-quarters are in the older forms, with lines of five to seven syllables in stanzas of seven or eight lines, rhyming abbaacc, with variations, forms that would have been instantly recognisable to the troubadours. Camões did not need to turn to his Petrarch to appreciate what could be done in vernacular styles. He had models much closer at hand. Between May 2004 and February 2005, I completed 48 of the songs, along with two of the eclogues 'The sweet ballads, sung by the half-goats'[156] and 'What changes the headlong hours'.[157]

The songs proved delightful. Some, like 'If you've no wish to tolerate', a mock invitation to friends in Goa, are extremely funny, while satires like 'To me, Caterina's lovelier', or 'Over something so trite', a girl's complaint about 'dumb John' in love with 'a turban', would have been instantly recognisable to the composers of the *cantigas d'escarnho*.[158] As those examples indicate, one of the pleasures of the songs is to encounter poems unmistakably located in India, something that happens only occasionally in the son-

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[154] For an accessible introduction in English, see Zenith, 1993.

[155] See especially Cohen, 2003.

[156] 'As doces cantilenas que cantavam', White 2008, 64-80.

[157] 'Que grande variedade vão fazendo', White 2008, 199-212.

[158] The songs mentioned here are 'Se não queres padecer', 'Caterina é mais formoso' and 'Por cousa tão pouco', White 2008, 260, 128 and 190.

nets. In 'Wishing to write out one day',[159] he casts himself as a tropical Ovid, mixing classical and Indian metaphors for love. Of the Hindus of northern India, for example, he writes:

> According to some authors,
> close by the clear source
> of the Ganges, mountain dwellers
> there among the glaciers
> subsist on the scent of flowers.
> If emotions yield calories
> sufficient, and in residue,
> it should cause no surprise
> that if they subsist on odours
> I'm sustained by seeing you.

The poem continues taking examples from a tropical tree, Mithridates, jaundice, the puff adder (a north African example intruded), Pygmalion, the palm tree, swallows, a petrifying river in Java, and the electric eel, in a tour de force of ingenuity.

Few of the songs match the personal intensity of the sonnets, and some are very slight, little more than squibs addressed to friends, or jokes teasing a young girl with green eyes, or appeals for patronage for himself or for friends. As with the sonnets, each has a clear line of argument, usually witty, full of social reference or sexual innuendo. A poem addressed to a lady whose daughter was given a piece of yellow satin, making her suspicious, begins:

> If you derive correctly
> this word *sitim* (meaning satin),
> you'll discover literally
> after the *si* (yes) comes the *tin-*
> kle that's heard across the city.
> I can see you understand me,
> I'm not casting words to the wind;
> I know throughout this land
> in as much as you concede the 'si'
> the tinkle´s close behind.[160]

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[159] 'Querendo escrever um dia', White 2008, 239-245.
[160] 'Se derivais de verdade', White 2008, 112-114.

A poem accompanying a gift of little pins is Donne-like in its sexual envy of the parts of her underwear they, unlike the poet, will have access to:

> There they go and will continue
> where alongside and underneath
> perpetually they hold you,
> and eventually impale you,
> while here I pick my teeth.[161]

Others again pose interesting technical challenges, taking a four or five line stanza by Francisco de Morais or Juan Boscán, or from a well-known song, and glossing it in four or five stanzas, each ending with a line from the theme poem. The best of all - poems like 'Patridge, whose winged fancy', or 'If you wish to go on board', or 'In her challenging eyes' about a shepherdness in the Serra de Estrela - have the timeless quality of folksong:

> In her challenging
> eyes, such beauty glows
> as to scorch in the snows
> whoever risks such a vision.
> Don't, brilliant Dawn,
> unfasten your hair:
> I am lost over her.[162]

One of these, 'That slave I own',[163] I had already tackled before embarking on the *Rimas*, sending it to my friend and translator Professor Hélio Osvaldo Alves, some weeks before his death in January 2003. He replied that he had read it with tears in his eyes which, with his passing, further hallowed the poem. Known to generations of Portuguese readers as 'Stanzas to the Slave Barbara', it is a poem apparently in the Petrarchan manner, the poet praising his mistress for being lovelier than the rose, brighter than meadow flowers or the stars in the heavens, a heartless, unattainable beauty whom the enslaved lover can worship only from afar. Yet this Barbara is dark-skinned, with black hair and non-European fea-

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[161] 'Esses alfinetes vão'. White 2008, 118-119.

[162] The songs mentioned are 'Perdigão, que o pensamento', 'Se vos quereis embarcar' and 'Nos seus olhos belos' White 2008, 251-252, 127 and 41-42.

[163] 'Aquela cativa', White 2008, 253-254.

tures. She is his 'captive', a female prisoner whom the soldier poet has made his apparently reluctant concubine. It is this situation of gross sexual exploitation, reflecting the cruel realities of colonial conquest, to which the hackneyed Petrarchan conventions are applied, providing Camões with the astonishing open lines 'That slave I own / who holds me captive', and the equally astonishing conclusion ''This is the vassal / who makes me her slave'. Having turned both poetic and social conventions upside down, he continues by subverting other modes: the assumptions that white skin, an alabaster neck, a bosom like snow, and hair like gold are the marks of the desirable mistress. So Barbara becomes 'distinct in feature / eyes dark and at rest', while her 'hair is raven / and the fashion responds / forgetting its given / preference for blonde', and finally 'Love being negro / at so sweet a figure / the blanketing snow / vows to change colour.'

Perhaps the poem's most disturbing line is the fourth 'who scorns I should live,' This sounds like the cruel mistress of Petrarchan courtly love, despising her adorer. Or is it instead the smouldering resentment of a slave, hating her exploiter? A generation later, Shakespeare and Donne would take pleasure in upsetting the poetic conventions ('My mistress' eyes are nothing like the sun'),[164] but it is hard to feel that anyone travelled so far as Camões in taking Petrarch apart.

It is not an easy poem to translate. The doctrine of 'types', the convention that different styles were necessary for representing different social levels, has been obsolete for over two centuries. Those opening images of rose and starlight seem mere clichés, and we no longer feel, as Camões's first readers would have done, that it is precisely their application to a slave girl that is startling. The effect could so easily have been mock-heroic, diminishing Barbara by the extravagance of the diction applied to her. Instead, we have a poem of such tender authority that, although there is no evidence that Barbara ever existed, most readers are instantly persuaded that this is not mere word play ('Barbarous? Never!') but that she was a real person, much as described and open to erotic fantasy, and that Camões was in love with her.

A second Elegy of Exile

After ten months with the songs, and the two eclogues which, I confess, I laboured over, finding the pastoral form a barren academic exercise (I shall return to this question), I tackled with enthusiasm the second of the

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[164] Shakespeare 1995, 141.

great elegies of exile 'Talking with captain Themistocles'[165]. I was glad to be back with *terza rima*, back to imagined biography, and back to the heart of Camões's poetry of travel. He begins with a grim joke. The Greek poet Simónides had invented a method for perfecting memory, offering it to his friend Themistocles as a means 'to file / systematically all his experiences'. Themistocles replies 'If only you could show me the knack / of recalling nothing from my past, / you'd be doing me the better work.'

With this, Camões embarks for India. As he proceeds down the Tagus, the nymphs Galateia, Panopeia, Ligeia, Melanto and Dinamene accompany him, surfing in their scallop shells. They had been the heroines of his early eclogues, including 'The sweet ballads, sung by the half-goats'[166] which I had just completed. There they featured as thinly disguised versions of ladies at court, and he chats with them companionably. But they cannot face the Atlantic. He has to sail on without them and, within three tercets he is entirely new poetic territory, under constellations he doesn't recognize as the 'waves became vertiginous':

> Fierce Boreas and Notus conjured
> howling gales, tearing
> the concave sails from the masthead;
>
> the rigging whistled in the uproar;
> the blaspheming of the shocked
> mariners curdled the atmosphere.
>
> Austere, terrible Jupiter shook
> the bolts forged by Vulcan's hammers,
> leaving earth's poles thunderstruck.

Ovid's poems of his Black Sea exile (especially *Tristia*, 1.10)[167] are once again in Camões' mind here, with the poet ambushed by storms *en route* to his harsh exile. But there's no reason to doubt Camões really did encounter bad weather off the aptly named Cape of Storms. Most vessels did (though not, ironically, Gama's in 1497), even after it was rechristened the Cape of Good Hope. Later, of course, this storm was to be re-worked as the Ada-

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[165] 'O poeta Simonides, falando', White 2008, 148-154.
[166] 'As doces cantilenas que canatavam', White 2008, 64-80.
[167] Ovid 2005, 21-22.

mastor episode of canto 5 of *The Lusíads*. But until this moment, he had never written anything remotely similar.

Then at the storm's height, he makes a most curious vow. Turning, as it were, back from Ovid to Petrarch, he promises that wherever his fate takes him he will stay true to the values of chivalry 'for love is never truly courtly / while in the presence of its cure'. I have already described my encounter with the sonnets in which, having arrived in India, he fulfills this vow, proclaiming his lady's name as he goes into battle, wearing her favour on his shield. But even as the Elegy continues, a gap yawns between such high-flown poetic ideals and his actual circumstances. That first campaign against the Sultan of Chembe, a distinctly un-chivalrous affair with the aim of cornering the market in pepper, is now described as 'with very little effort we won / against a people skilled only with bows, / punishing them with death and arson.' Courtly values already seemed as irrelevant to colonial India as Quixote's chivalry to early seventeenth century Spain.

Camões continues the Elegy by reflecting on what might have been were he not 'harnessed for life / to others ambitious to be gentlemen. / O happy those who work the land, if /only they knew their own good.' Thirteen tercets follow, invoking the benefits of rural existence, including its aesthetic and intellectual pleasures, in contrast both to the court and to his present existence 'having to pursue dreadful Mars, / my eyes always on my jeopardy.' The sentiment rings true. As I had just seen from the songs, Camões was a great admirer of folksong, and life as a rural poet might have suited him. But how could any shepherd or cowherd understand his present situation?

> How could he grasp what I have to say
> about having to pursue dreadful Mars,
> my eyes always on my jeopardy?
>
> Yet it must be, my Lord, by whatever muse,
> that even if fate has such authority
> to divide me so far from all I prize,
>
> it can't divide me from the prime duty
> of my muscular verse, while death postpones
> my passage to Rhadamanthus's court,
> if sad people can enjoy such fortune!

It is like the vow concluding the earlier elegy 'Aquela que de amor descomedido', and I had already encountered some of the 'muscular verse' that resulted.

Approaching some conclusions

It would be tedious to continue through the remaining two notebooks, charting in chronological order my encounters with the remaining poems. Still very conscious of the immensity of the task, I proceeded by genre, tackling 47 sonnets in a single batch, 4 more of the elegies, 55 of the songs, then 6 of the odes, 3 hymns and 2 more eclogues, as though working a production line, and ticking off my progress on a graph. But I also found myself becoming selective. Given the absence of any firm agreement about what Camões did or didn't write, there seemed scope for choice. I have already described myself skipping several of the heroic sonnets. I began to suspect, in fact, that the only edition that would satisfy Portuguese readers would be (as Richard Zenith remarked of Pessoa's *The Book of Disquietude),*[168] a loose-leaf edition from which readers could select or discard poems as they wished, following their vision of the poet as spokesman for their vision of the nation, and placing the poems in any order that suited them. Though my translation was obviously not intended for Portuguese readers, I (and Oxford University Press) had been surprised by how many copies of *The Lusíads* had circulated in Portugal. In any case, I live in Portugal, and local reactions would matter.

In this spirit, I ignored the acrostics, or the 'ABC done as themes', as altogether too slight for interest, along with a handful of others such as 'This world is a path' as basically untranslatable given the evident corruption of the text, and the ode 'The snow departs' as no more than a translation from Horace's original Latin.[169] However, I was scrupulous in including 'Worthy spirit, whose condition',[170] Camões's plea for clemency in the case of a certain D. Caterina, a girl of noble birth, imprisoned for adultery while her husband was absent in India, which Faria e Sousa, Camões's first commentator, had banned from the canon on grounds of Catholic orthodoxy.

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[168] Pessoa 1991, XIV.

[169] 'ABC em motes', 'Este mundo es el camiono', and 'Fogem as neves frias', Cidade (1947), Vol 1, 166-175, 95-101, and Vol 2, 147-150.

[170] 'Espirito valeroso, cujo estado', White 2008, 293-297.

However, there remained to be translated poems of immense brilliance and imaginative power. Late in March 2006, immediately after my encounter with those 55 songs, I attempted the ode 'An immense yearning has the power'.[171] This is a poem of such transcendent beauty that my normal strategy of trying to match Camões's directness and simplicity would not suffice. Everything would depend on vocabulary and the control of cadence, and given that 30% of Camões's rhymes were adjectives, the syntax of each of his sentences would have to be recast.

I find to my shame that I assumed the opening line was a question, and I was well into the poem before that basic error was corrected. A 'Platonic' poem in every sense of the word, it celebrates the purifying and ennobling beauty of the loved woman, praising not just her eyes or her 'posture and movement' but the discourse of her 'discreet and gentle words', the 'ebb and flow' of her presence. Such a vision transcends language, including the Petrarchan clichés, and even Dante's vision of Beatrice, as he vows to raise for her 'songs unprecedented':

> Flowers have ceased to enamel
> the meadow, thistles in their ugliness
> swarm, and they surely fail
> as metaphors for your eyes.
> But let vile doggerel say what it likes:
> the sun that is your very essence
> will always be my unsullied light in darkness.

Next, I returned to 'Come my trusty writing desk',[172] after my earlier, abortive encounter. It proved to be a dense, elaborately-constructed, intricately-argued, unremittingly bleak poem, not always easy to follow and difficult to render lucidly in English. I'm still not sure I understand the fourth stanza (beginning 'My wet nurse was a wild beast') with its complaint about the 'toxic' beast that suckled him 'at the breast of hope ... as if proudly anticipating the evil / in prospect'. Yet there's no denying the poem's majestic style as it looks back on a lifetime to rehearse all his old themes – the reasons for writing, his audience of the 'desperate', the devotion to love imbibed at birth, the mistress worshipped for her flawless eyes, his bitter exile, the 'lawless fury of Mars', the irrepressible memories along with his endless

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[171] 'Pode um desejo imenso', White 2008, 138-141.
[172] 'Vinde cá, meu tão certo secretário', White 2008, 297-304.

ill-fortune. Yet there is also, very briefly a new note of regret, about his response to exile:

> My humanity failed me; in my first
> danger, I saw the friendly people
> as hostile; and in my second,
> the land I had set foot in seemed lethal
> as to breath the very air was refused,
> while time and the world were what in the end
> I missed.

Are these 'first' and 'second' dangers his two exiles, in Ceuta and Goa? The poem breaks off with the cry that brought *The Lusíads* to an end, 'No more, song, no more!' and it ends with a personal epitaph:

> Nor do I sing for courtesy's sake
> with a taste for praising, but to make
> pure truths known about my former times.
> Would to God they were mere dreams.

This led me in turn to the equally unfinished 'By the rivers that flow',[173] the other late poem I had earlier found intractable. I came back to it with the aid of a stimulating essay by Miguel Tamen[174], who points out that the first part of the poem, consisting of lines 1-200 and corresponding to what I'd already done, exists on its own in a manuscript dated 1578, shortly before Camões's death. The complete poem, with its slightly longer second part, was first published in 1595. The tone of the two parts could scarcely be more different, reflecting a sharp shift in Psalm 137, on which the poem is an extended gloss, between verses 1 – 6, in which the exiled Israelites are recalling Zion, and verses 7 – 9, in which they anticipate with bloodthirsty relish Babylon's imminent destruction. They read almost like the work of different poets, but that the two parts belong together is evidenced not only by their single source (Psalm 137), but by the elaborate manner in which every aspect of the first part is thrown into contrast with every aspect of the second. To use Camões own word, the second is his 'palinode' to the first.

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[173] 'Sóbolos rios que vão',White 2008, 317-327.
[174] Tamen 2002, 39-48.

I commented earlier on the technical difficulty of rendering complex arguments in jingle-like stanzas, so compressed and so closely-rhymed. Babylon seems to stand for Goa, as in Camões's earlier sonnets of exile, with Portugal as its antithesis. But it also stands for the opposition between two kinds of music, as played on the flute and the harp, and hence between two kinds of poetry and more generally between earth and heaven. If Orphic and Biblical references dominate the first part, Plato and St Augustine take over in the second, with an emphasis on aseticism, and even self-flagelation. The argument is moblised so schematically that there is little room for the creative disagreements great poetry normally stimulates, which explains, in Tamen words, 'not why so many exegeses have been produued thereon but why they all resemble each other so much.'[175] However, there are times (such as canto 10, 10-73 of *The Lusíads*) when the translator simply has to knuckle down and get on with things. I believe my version reflects accurately the tenour of the argument of 'Sóbolos rios' while avoiding the pitfalls of flabbiness or doggerel.

But these post-India poems also include 'That time-honoured rural contest',[176] an eclogue so ingenius I was forced to question my dismissal of the earlier eclogues as mere courtly exercises.[177] It acknowledges a debt to 'the fisherman Sannazzaro', that is to Jacopo Sannazzaro (1458-1530), who devised the so-called piscatorial eclogue[178], presenting fishermen as pastoral protagonist, fishing as pastoral activity, and the sea as a pastoral domain. Camões offers us two pastoral poets, the herdsman Agrario and the fisherman Alieuto, competing in their lovesongs before an mixed audience of shepherds and fishermen, the successive stanzas rivalling each other in inventiveness. When Agrario speaks of the fledglings and myrtle berries, the flowers and strawberries he has gathered for his Dinamene, Alieuto outdoes him:

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[175] Tamen 2002, 40.

[176] 'A rustica contenda', White 2008, 307-317.

[177] Camões's editors seem to agree that the dedication to the second Duque de Aveiro, a close adviser of King Sebastião who was to be killed with him at Alcácer Quibir in 1578, along with the blatant appeal for patronage (lines 19 - 57), places this poem late in Camões career.

[178] Jacopo Sannazzaro, *Eclogae Piscatoriae*, Naples, 1526.

> For whom do I bring hook-shaped prawns,
> fresh and wriggling in water pots;
> for whom do I dig the exposed dunes,
> red clams and white whelks my harvest;
> for whom, diving in remote oceans,
> do I tear branched coral with my fists,
> if not for the beautiful Lemnoria,
> one smile from whom is my ultimate cure.

Camões is most delightful when not imitating Ovid but outdoing him.

Meanwhile

Inspiration works strangely. After my first encounter with *The Lusíads* at that pavement café in Beira, I wrote several poems, not all of them published, about Camões, or referring to Camões by way of anchorage. I was deported from Malawi, for no declared reason, and as I continued my career in the universities of Sierra Leone and Zambia, and latterly Kent and York, I continued to use Camões as a touchstone for the poetry I continued writing, not always addressing him directly or mentioning his name, but aware of his example. When I began translating *The Lusíads* in 1994, my work was periodically interrupted by poems arising from the encounter, and included in the notebook I transcribed earlier. Some, but not all of those poems were subsequently published in my collections *South* and *Traveller's Palm*.

Introducing *Traveller's Palm*, I recorded another aspect of Camões's influence:

> This book carries an experiment with a particular kind of poetry to its limits and perhaps beyond. All my adult life – my life as a poet in Trinidad, Malawi, Mozambique, Sierra Leone and Zambia, and now Portugal – I have been oppressed with a sense of rich experience, a wealth of poetic material, unused and unusable. For an audience in Britain, anticipating reports on 'the other', there was always so much to explain before the poem could begin. Yet for me, poetry began when I lost my sense of the exotic when - as poem 47 puts it, describing my family surrounded by Kalashnikovs – 'at the time, all this seemed normal'. Added to this, dated as it may now appear, was a Puritan sense of a need to correct colonial mis-representations by a scrupulous regard for the truth of what I had lived and witnessed. No need for clever hyperbole, when the material itself was so strong.

> So, taking Luís de Camões - that most literal-minded of poets - as model, I have attempted what I called in *The View from the Stockade* 'a poetry of fact'. The 'pure', the 'plain, the 'limpid', bordering the 'prosaic: it is the tightrope Wordsworth trod. At whatever different level, I am writing in an honourable tradition, driven by something both Camões and Wordsworth implicitly recognised, that there is no such person as 'the other'.[179]

Traveller's Palm appeared in 2002, the year I began translating Camões's lyric poems. But in sharp contrast to my experience of working on *The Lusíads*, I wrote very little that reflected directly the pleasure I was taking in the work. Over the next four years, I wrote and published the poems that appeared in *Arab Work*, and wrote most of *Singing Bass* which was published the year after the *Collected Lyrics*. Both volumes reflect the wider vision, not to say adventurousness, that I had learned from Camões, in their variety of style, form and content. *Arab Work*, for example, contains attempts at odes, eclogues, elegies, sonnets and songs, in direct reflection of the poems I was translating. Yet in neither volume is Camões mentioned. It seems the experience of translating his lyrics was sufficient end in itself, without my feeling the need to address lyrics to him.

But there were two exceptions. In March 2005, my notebook records I wrote the following, long-forgotten sonnet:

> *Banishment was his theme. It had happened*
> *to his master Ovid. As his caravel*
> *tacked to the Atlantic, nymphs accompanied*
> *him, wind-surfing in their scallop shells.*
>
> *and he addressed them by name: Melanto,*
> *Panopeia, and Dinamene. When they blenched,*
> *lacking the craft for such a voyage, he sent*
> *to the Tagus shepherds his final message,*
>
> *and was on his own. Rounding the Cape,*
> *under new constellations, gales howled*
> *through the rigging, the mariners blasphemed.*

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[179] White 2002, 7.

How to write of such things? His tropes
deserted him as Adamastor scowled:
a limpid style, fresh wit, an epic theme.

Obviously, this was a gloss on 'O poeta Simononides', but added nothing to what my translation already contained, and I never made the revisions it calls for and never published it. The other exception was also a sonnet, this time looking back to *The Lusíads*:

Fado

When Vasco da Gama captained Benfica,
those were the glory days. Vasco led
from the back, with Nick Coelho as keeper,
and his brother Paulo as inside-forward,

and Leonard Ribeiro, an old-fashioned winger,
(except when eyeing the girls in the crowd),
and the sprinter Fernão Veloso as striker,
with Diogo and Álvaro, all proud to wear red.

Those were the days of adventure and clout,
with Dom Manoel our manager-trainer,
and Peru de Covilhã our roving scout.

Today, we're trophy-less, bankrupt and disdained,
longing for Sebastian, cresting some tidal wave
on his surf-board, to alight in the Algarve.[180]

This, of course, is not today's Benfica, rather Graeme Souness's, Vale e Azevedo's Benfica. But my long encounter with Camões has always had its lighter moments.

[180] White 2006, 49.

Publishing the Lyrics

The striking picture of Camões jailed in Goa, used by Princeton as the cover of my translations, was discovered as recently as 1972.[181] It shows him raggedly dressed, sitting at a wooden table, and holding out a dinner plate with perhaps a coin, perhaps a stone in his left hand. To his right is a manuscript, headed canto 10, along with two quill pens. Covering the bed or chair to his left is a map of Goa, with two Portuguese warships under full sail. Behind him is a bookshelf, with a copy of João de Barros's *Décadas da Ásia (1552)*, a key source of *The Lusíads*. Two birds are perched on the prison bars, and in the distance are the masts of two ships. In the top left corner is an image of the prison as seen from outside, with a palm tree and

[181] Soares de Azevedo 1972, 96-103.

three Indian guards. The colors and the style suggest the portrait may have been painted by a cartographer, two of whom, Fernão Vaz Dourado and Lázaro Luís, are known to have been living in Goa at the time. Visible top left under infra-red photography, is the date 1556. This date is a puzzle. Camões was imprisoned in Goa twice, after his return from Macau in 1558. There is no other evidence that he had reached canto 10 of *The Lusíads* so early. Whether or not this is an authentic, contemporary image of the poet, all the more precious for its intimacy and warmth, it was the perfect cover picture for my take on Camões's poetry.

Between submitting my versions of Camões's lyric poems to Princeton University Press and their actual publication, two things happened. Any publication involves negotiation, and Camões wrote a large number of lyric poems. In the Lockhart Library of Poetry in Translation, which my book aspired to join, many of the volumes are parallel texts, with the original and translation on facing pages. This may or may not be the ideal. My own feeling is that the more translations aspire to being poetry in their own right, the greater right they have to stand alone. The matter is endlessly debatable. However, in the case of Camões's lyrics, parallel text versions would have required two very substantial volumes. A single volume of English texts seemed preferable in market terms, and even that would be a substantial 500-odd pages.

The solution Princeton proposed was an edition of Camões *Collected Lyrics*. In publisher's jargon, 'Collected' meant something rather less than 'Complete'. It implied the poet himself had 'collected' the lyrics he wished preserved for posterity. Of course, Camões seems to have made no such choice. But the strategy allowed me to 'collect' his poems on his behalf, to produce a publishable volume of some 367 pages including apparatus. In practice, that meant omitting 4 of the eclogues (the early ones), along with 4 of the hymns, 7 of the odes, 2 of the elegies, 3 of the oitavas and a handful of the sonnets and the songs. In all, the *Collected Lyrics* contain 286 of Camões's lyric poems, with the sonnets and songs predominating, but all other types substantially represented in a single, affordable paperback.

I commented earlier on the excitement I felt about the circumstances than allowed me to become the first English translator of the lyrics that Camões most probably wrote, and that excitement remains with me. But there was a second, last-minute cause of excitement. The first manuscript I submitted to Princeton contained the lyric poems arranged by genre, as in all the editions of the complete poems I consulted – sonnets, songs, elegies, odes, eclogues, hymns, eights, and the sestina. It was the last week of 2006 that I had the sudden idea of attempting to present them chronologically.

The day before I had come across in a Chinese supermarket in Lisbon's Martim Moniz a box of uncooked prawn crackers. I had enjoyed these many time in Chinese restaurants, but didn't know how they were done. Opening the box, I found myself handling some round silicon-looking slips like old-fashioned escudo coins, which the instructions said were to be tossed into hot oil. I tried this and, after a couple of seconds, with a sudden whoosh! they were authentic prawn crackers. It happened so quickly that I burned the first lot before I could remove them from the oil. The second batch were fine.

I enjoy cooking, and this was a new find. When next morning I had the notion of putting the poems in chronological order, the one discovery became a metaphor for the other. With a whoosh! (that actually took some twenty-four hours), my book sprang suddenly to life. The order in which the poems were finally presented, loosely grouped in four sections, rested on two assumptions. First, that poems referring to specific events were written more or less contemporaneously. I was surprised how many poems could be placed by their content – the elegy 'Echo who died of her helpless passion', in north Africa, the elegy 'Talking with captain Themistocles' In India (given it contains a description of his voyage there), or the further elegy 'What fresh griefs, what further harm',[182] which describes the 'monsoon beaches of Goa / Seething with an agitated crowd'. Several of the sonnets are quite specific in their description of a parting, a voyage, a blow of fate:

> Resolute and strong, buoyed by these breakers
> I went wherever my luck ordained,
> since, buoyed by the tears that rained
> for me from those bright eyes I could embark.[183]

Several of the songs are equally specific in their reference to Indian themes.

My second assumption was that Camões's poetic style matured detectably as he grew older, that sonnets written in direct imitation of Petrarch were youthful exercises compared with the stoic dignity of 'You others who search for peace of mind'.[184] Self-evidently, both these assumptions may be challenged. For a poet whose work circulated in manuscript for over thirty

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[182] 'Que novas tristes são, que novo dano', White 2008, 269-276.
[183] 'Por cima destas aguas, forte e firme'. White 2008, 159.
[184] 'Vos outros, que buscais repouso certo', White 2008, 287.

years, there is no knowing how stable these texts were.[185] The hymn 'Under a parched and barren mountain' may possible have more of the 1570s about it than 1555 when Camões was actually based in the Red Sea. But even if that poem were written late as Camões looked back on his travels, or was substantially revised in the 1570s, it would still reflect his thoughts about that period and may be placed in that context. The hardest poems to date are the songs, it being their virtue to float free of any discernible background.

Returning once more to the Biblioteca Nacional, I confirmed my earlier impression that Portuguese scholars have been reluctant to speculate on where and when the majority of Camões's lyrics may have been written. The excesses of attribution, culminating in Teófilio Braga's edition of 1880, were matched by excesses of biographical speculation, with the poems (only half of them by Camões) raided for information about his life, the results being then applied to elucidate the poems. In sharp reaction, as I have described, twentieth century Portuguese scholars worked tirelessly to establish what Camões actually wrote, eschewing biography for the more rigorous critical practices of formalism, mannerism and (more recently) discourse analysis. It is intensely wary of 'whoosh' moments (especially when the 'cook' is *um Inglês*, not noted for culinary skills).

I remarked earlier that in her 1975 edition of the *Sonetos,* Maria de Lourdes Saravia had assigned them to four periods, 1549-1547, 1547-1554, 1555-1572, and 1572-1580, and I found these dates persuasive. Seven years later, in a paper presented to the Lisbon Academy of Science, her husband, the historian José Hermano Saraiva, plausibly assigned forty-three of the major poems to four distinct periods.[186] I rejected only one of his suggestions, namely that the eclogue 'What changes the headlong hours / bring about'[187] was written in 1570 after Camões's return to Portugal. Both the dedication and a letter written home by Camões from Goa make it clear it belongs to the period immediately after his arrival in India.[188] Saraiva, however, did not discuss the sonnets or the songs. His

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[185] The hymn 'Manda-me Amor que cante docemente' (Love commanded me to sing) exists in three versions, and there are differences between the versions of the ode 'Aquele único exemplo' (That matchless example) published in 1563, and in *Rimas*, 1595. Otherwise, we are largely in the dark.

[186] Saraiva 1982, 257-284.

[187] 'Que grande variedade vão fazendo', White, 199-212.

[188] Willis 1995, 59.

novelistic (and much ridiculed) *Vida Ignorada de Camões*,[189] seemed only to confirm the need for a strict attendance to the actual texts, and no one has built on his chronology.

In the last resort, a translation is like any other critical intervention in that it offers a reading of the author concerned. My reading is a close one, it being in the nature of translation to pay strict attention to every word. But it makes no claims to being definitive. With poets as great as Camões, definitive readings do not exist. Similarly, the chronology I have proposed is a hypothetical one. I do not pretend that the poems were written in the precise order in which I have presented them. The four sections are loose bags, nothing more. In the current state of Camões scholarship, I cannot prove I am correct. But nor can anyone prove me comprehensively wrong. The advantage of doing as I have done is that it opens the possibility of exploring what difference it made to Camões's poetry that he was exiled from the court for most of his creative life and had to completely re-think his art, both in terms of the poetic conventions in which he had been raised, and in terms of his personal reasons for writing. Without a chronology, however tentative, such matters cannot be explored.

What's ultimately involved here is a proper recognition of the scale of Camões's achievement. As the odes and several of the sonnets make clear, Camões did not travel for travel's sake. He experienced Africa, India and the far East as a long and bitter exile. By modern standards, he didn't make the most of his opportunities (as he seems to concede in 'Come, my trusty writing desk'). He didn't follow his friend Garcia de Orta in writing a pioneer study of Indian medicinal plants.[190] He didn't match the British judge Sir William Jones in founding the Asiatic Society of Bengal and revolutionising language studies by proposing Sanskrit as a source for both Greek and Latin.[191] He didn't attach himself to a guru, or learn to play the sitar, or follow the hippy trail and smoke pot in Katmandu, or any of the things the modern European visitor is supposed to do in India. Yet no one doubts Camões spent up to two-thirds of his adult life in Africa and the East, and it beggars credence that such a genius could spend seventeen years there without the experience leaving a mark on his outlook and poetic practice.

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[189] Saraiva 1980.

[190] Garcia de Orta, *Colóquio dos Simples e Drogas da India*, Goa, 1563, prefaced by Camões 'Aquele único exemplo', his first published poem

[191] In his third presidential address to the society delivered 2 February, 1786.

The fact that many of Camões's lyrics may be terms 'poems of exile' has long been established. But Camões went further. He responded to the challenge of exile by re-thinking the very basis of his art, and he transcended Ovid's *Tristia* and *Black Sea Letters* in two fundamental ways. The first of these was his creation of an entirely new kind of sonnet, one that is intense and personal, the very antithesis of the worn-out courtly mode.

While my book was in the press, an article by Barbara Everett described something very similar happening in Shakespeare's sonnets:

> 'European Petrarchism was a code which by the 16th century had, through its political functions, become as ferociously limited, as purely social, as its first inventor had been gifted and influential. The sonnet of this period is a courtly form, first appearing in English in Chaucer's translation of a Petrarchan sonnet in Troilus and Cressida. That great act of translation, that desire to heighten English feeling by teaching the culture courtly love, was resumed in the 16th century by Wyatt and Surrey. The second of these ...was an earl, the first a courtier. The best and most seminal of the sonnets are by Sidney, the flower of Elizabeth's court, and his arrogant and sophisticated wit established the form as a social medium .... Sidney's sonnets became known by being pirated, because aristocrats did not publish such intimate work, let alone write for the theatres. The first of Shakespeare's sonnets to be known were the 'sugred sonnets among his private friends' .... A number of them seem to carry an awareness of Sidney, and comparison proves interesting. For example, the courtly poet had written triumphantly and with a knightly flourish 'Having this day my horse, my hand, my lance'; the 'different hand' of Shakespeare's Sonnet 50, 'How heavy do I journey on the way', has the speaker trudging away from his beloved on a cheap horse, his own misery voiced by the groans of the pathetic beast ... they are just a pair of hacks.... Sidney portrays with charm and assurance the world of power and ambition ... Shakespeare has no such world .. the Sonnets are never precisely at home anywhere, and their writer .... worked all his life in the London theatre. ... The life that floods into Shakespeare's sonnets is the effect of a natural, characteristic and enormous energy of mind, an ability to connect everything with everything ... Departing from the more rigid Petrarchan form ... the new sonnets are beginning to be intense love poems: by

> 'love' they mean the tired horse trudging on and groaning at the goad, actors forgetting their lines, death-bells ringing in the churches of the city, stone lions and sea waves, poisons and medicines, ruined chapels and winter trees, music being played by a loved and hated woman, obsession and fidelity and tenderness and time always passing.[192]

The parallels between this and what I'm documenting in Camões are very close, and his images for 'love' are equally drawn from his circumstances - dangerous coasts, to which he is fated to keep returning, voyages 'into parts / from which there is no return', lighthouses, ships foundering, vile prisons, the clanging of chains, the galley oar, sacrificing more than lambs or heifers, pacing the Indian Ocean beaches, questioning the stars, or the cards, or the turn of the wheel, 'a loved and hated woman, obsession and fidelity and tenderness and time always passing'. The difference is that Camões was writing half a century earlier.

The second and larger achievement, though, was the creation of one of the greatest epics of the Renaissance. Since publishing my translation, I have been bemused to find Frank Pierce's bizarre claim that Camões never needed to travel to write his epic has found a certain critical acceptance in Portugal.[193] The argument has two strands, first, that poetic convention in the sixteenth century placed no value on originality, rather on the rhetorical practice of emulating, adapting, and enriching texts by earlier authors. The practice was linked with the widespread observation that 'everything has been said already', or, as Scaliger, Camões's early contemporary expressed it, 'We have a method of expressing the nature of things, for we imitate what our predecessors have said in exactly the same way as they imitated nature.'[194] The English poet, Alexander Pope, put it more snappily. About Virgil, he wrote ''Nature and Homer were, he found, the same'.[195] The authors imitated were, of course, predominantly Greek and Latin, but Petrarch's *Canzoniere* had extended the concept to vernacular texts, in a manner that provided Camões with three sources for rhetorical imitation – the Latin Classics, the Italian Renaisaance poets and their Spanish (and Portuguese) imitators, and Portuguese folksong.

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[192] Everett 2008, 12-15.
[193] Pierce 1973, x.
[194] Scaliger, *Poetices, libri septem*, Lyons, 1561, v.x.
[195] Pope 1963, 148.

The second strand to the argument is that is that there is little in *The Lusíads* that does not derive directly from Camões's sources – the chroniclers Fernão Lopes, Rui de Pina and Duarte Galvão, in respect of the history of Portugal recounted in cantos 3 to 5, and the *Décadas* (1552) of João de Barros and the *História do Descrobimento e Conquista da India* (1551-4) of Fernão Lopes de Castanheda, for the remaining materials. Claims that the waterspout (canto 5, 18-22) had been described before Camões, or that the storm later in that same canto derives from Ovid and, by implication, never occurred, or that all the trees named in the Ilha dos Amores in canto 9 may be found in Portugal, or that many of his metaphors may be traced to earlier writers, especially sixteenth century Spanish poets, among other examples, are used to support the hypothesis that seventeen years spent in the great library at the University of Coimbra would have sufficed to furnish him with his materials.

Camões left no critical writings, but there can be no doubting his broad compliance with the poetic conventions of his age. Of his 117 songs, no less than 72 are *cantigas*, reworking old folksongs or stock themes, while a further 17 are *glosas*, taking the four or five lines of an existing stanza as the concluding lines of a four or five stanza ballad. His adaptations of Petrarch in the sonnets, or of Ovid almost everywhere, testify to the same creative constraints. One should add the evident pleasure he takes in echoing familiar passages, demonstrating the continuing relevance of ancient writers by giving them a contemporary twist. At times, these reference are so erudite as to become tantamount to riddling.

Yet his recognition of the conventions also extends to his repeated claims to have surpassed them through the combination of imagination with what he terms 'living experience',[196] or as he further adds,

> Erudite men give lofty reasons:
> much better is to have travelled around,
> for experiences are the truer test.[197]

His description of the waterspout concludes with the couplet 'Witness then, experts in nomenclature / What wonders exist in unlettered Nature!'. This is the context in which Gama can claim, to the Sultan of Ma-

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[196] In the sonnet, 'Conversação domêstica afeição', White 2008, 226.
[197] In the sonnet, 'Verdade, Amor, Razão, Merecimento', White 2008, 288.

lindi, to have out-voyaged Ulysses and Aeneas, a claim backed up in Camões's own voice with 'Boast no more about the subtle Greek / Or the long odyssey of Trojan Aeneas':

> Abandon all the ancient Muse revered,
> A loftier code of honour has appeared.

For all the Virgilian echoes in *The Lusíads*, the epic moves on into its own territory (something translators must respect, and not turn Camões back into Virgil as Mickle and Aubertin have done).

The claim that there is nothing in *The Lusíads* that may not be traced to earlier writers won't stand. Curiously, it is Frank Pierce, in whose edition I first encountered the claim that Camões need not have travelled, who makes the point most effectively:

> Camões's use of his sources constitues a striking example of his poetic freedom .. What pinpoints the poet's independence, in using the chronicles of empire, are, for example, the daring intervention of the Old Man of Belém, the unabashed in corporation of recorded fact into the miraculous rescue at Mombasa (where the chronicler simplky refers to God's decision to save the Portuguese), and the complete ignoring of the record by the insertion of the storm in the Indian Ocean. Otherwise, Camões had no trouble in selecting details and in making narrative poetry out of the unadorned facts of the voyage.[198]

Pierce could have added the survey of Europe, given to the Sultan of Malindi in canto 3, 6 – 21, starting with Russia and moving through the peoples and sites of central Europe, through Scandinavia, Greece, Italy, Germany and France (but omitting England), to Iberia, and finally to Portugal, self-evidently an ex-patriate's vision, reflecting a Europe looked back on from outside. The terrifying encounter with Adamastor, the last of the Titans exiled to the tip of Africa, is Camões's creation, though, of course, Adamastor's prophecies of the disasters to befall subsequent navigators draw their authority from history as subsequently recorded. There are a host of lesser of details, from the description of the Hindu temple in India,

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[198] Pierce 1973, xxviii.

or (yes!) the waterspout,[199] or the shipwreck in the Mekong Delta, to the comment that it was hard to tell whether songs that entertained the mariners on that beach in South Africa were rhymed or in prose.[200]

No one (so far) has denied that Camões spent 17 years exiled in Africa, India and parts further east, and it challenges credence that such experiences should not have stamped their influence. To paraphrase Dr Johnson, there is always an appeal open from criticism to common sense, and most readers would assume Camões own voyage to India and his poem about Gama's voyage to India are linked at some level. It's puzzling what combination of residual nationalism and 1990s post-modernism should have lead scholars to devote great erudition to denying such a connection. Obviously, *The Lusíads*

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[199] I've been looking into this waterspout business. The claim that Camões simply followed a source, which taught him what to see, derives from João de Castro's *Roteiro do Lisboa a Goa* (Lisboa: Academica Real das Sciencias, 1882), an account of a voyage to Goa in 1538, during which he made detailed observations that revolutionized the study of the earth's magnetic field. On page 284, Castro describes a waterspout, a column of water, its head in the clouds, and extending downwards to the sea, its lower part round and bloated, raising itself with great energy, and taking up water which it conveyed to the higher part of the column. The spectacle lasted quarter of an hour, during which his ship stood off half a league, and it concluded in a shower of rain with thunder. Castro calls the waterspout 'tromba' and 'manga', describes it as 'roliça e redonda', and emphasizes 'hua grande fumaça e fervencia'. Camões, whose description is twice as long, calls the waterspout 'um cano' (a spout, or tube), 'a vapour and subtle smoke /rotating a little from the wind's drag', later growing to 'the thickness of a mast head', drawing up water as its foot 'undulated with the waves' while 'a black cloud condensed' at its top. He adds the stanza-long metaphor of a leech sucking at the lips of some beast, and tells us that the rain which fell as the waterspout dispersed contained no 'traces of salt.' All these details are fresh. The single word which perhaps derives from Castro occurs in the line 'Os golpes grandes de água em si chupava', which may reflect 'parecia chupar água'. The passages have no other words in common, beyond 'mar' and 'água'. Had Camões borrowed anything from Castro, it would certainly have been the terms 'tromba' and 'manga'. It must be emphasized that he insists repeatedly 'I saw with my own eyes', 'I saw beyond question', 'I saw it distinctly (and do not presume / My eyes deceived me)', adding in conclusion 'If philosophers of old, who visited / So many lands to study their secrets / had witnessed the marvels I witnessed, / Spreading my sails to such different winds, / What great writings they would have left us'...'. Scholars should be much surer of their grounds before they cast doubt on this.

[200] The comment occurs in canto 5, 63 . I have spent many years working with southern African oral literature, and one of the difficulties you face when transcribing from the tape recorder is where to to put in the line endings. Camões as a poet, interested in other peoples performances, has noticed this, and when he does so you are right there on the beach beside him.

has at its heart a historical event, and Camões has studied the available sources with some care. But he reads them with the eye of a man who has been there himself, and knows precisely which details suit his purpose, adopting some, rejecting others, and adding his own where necessary.

I suspect at times that it is only readers like Burton, or the poets Roy Campbell or F.T. Prince,[201] who have made similar journeys, who fully respond to the freshness of Camões's vision. There is a direct link between the colonial platitudes, of which I complained earlier, and the post-modernist reductionism that ignores, or attributes solely to his sources, the intellectual excitement of the encounters Camões is celebrating.

I published *The Lusíads* twelve years before *The Collected Lyric Poems*. Searching for an epigraph for the latter volume, I used a quotrain from the sonnet 'Everyone considers me a lost cause',[202] which struck me as a mordant summary of his position as a poet:

> But I who have criss-crossed the globe
> being, as it were, doubly cognizant,
> remain at bottom a deluded peasant
> whom my sufferings have not enobled.

The *Lyrics*, of which my knowledge was very imperfect at the time, seem to me now to throw a great deal of light on the making of *The Lusíads*. It was there he charted the disaster of his successive banishments from the Portuguese court, the pain of finding his poetic voice reduced

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[201] Prince praised Camões in his war poems. Campbell's famous tribute as as follows:

> Camões, alone, of all the lyric race,
> Born in the black aurora of disaster,
> Can look a common soldier in the face:
> I find a comrade where I sought a master:
> For daily, while the stinking crocodiles
> Glide from the mangroves on the swampy shore,
> He shares my awning on the dhow, he smiles,
> And tells me that he lived it all before.
> Through fire and shipwreck, pestilence and loss,
> Led by the ignis fatuus of duty
> To a dog's death – yet of his sorrows king –
> He shouldered high his voluntary Cross,
> Wrestled his hardships into forms of beauty,
> And taught his gorgon destinies to sing.

[202] 'Julga-me a gente toda por perdido', White 2008, 229.

to a mere 'echo', his belated acceptance that he could never be a courtier', the irrelevance of his earlier pastoral models when confronting the terrors of the Atlantic, the larger irrelevance of the Petrarchan conventions of courtly love in battles for the pepper trade or in dealings with a loved concubine. It was there that he vowed to continue his devotion to fancy, wherever his destiny took him, even to the very jaws of hell, and there he repeated that

> even if fate has such authority
> to divide me so far from all I prize
>
> it can't divide me from the prime duty
> of my muscular verse.

It was there he constructed, from the fragments of classical literature that mentioned, sometimes only in passing, Hercules in the Atlas mountains or Phaeton's scorching of the inhabitants of Africa or Bacchus's origins in India, a new language to deal with experiences never before confronted by any European poet. It was there that abandoned the aristocratic wit of the Petrarchan sonnet to write a new type of love poem, direct, intense and personal. It was in response to all these movements, from the far perspective of India, that he conceived his epic *The Lusíads*.

I concluded my account of publishing *The Lusíads* by emphasising the intuition that had guided my translation. First, Camões learned, as ex-patriates often do, to cherish the country that was his home, its varied landscapes, its history and its peoples. Secondly, he learned to celebrate what the Portuguese had given to the world with her pioneer voyages, in revealing the globe's true dimensions, its wealth, and its peoples. I went on to comment it was not necessary to accept these propositions to enjoy this magnificent poem, and that comment obviously holds good. But translating the *Collected Lyrics* has reinforced the feeling I then expressed, and with the scale of Camões's achievement in question, I am convinced that I was right.

The picture of Camões imprisoned in Goa, whether authentic or not, captures much that is relevant. It depicts him at a desperate moment in his career, his clothing torn, holding out a dinner plate, possibly begging. On the the bed or perhaps chair to his left is a map of Goa, showing two Portuguiese wearships in full sail, and behind him is a shelf with four volumes of João de Barros's *As Décadas da Ásia*. On the bars of the window are

perched two birds, very possibly related to the bird celebrated in the sonnet 'Whoever had by way of companion':[203]

> Whoever had by way of companion
> in lush green meadows that tiny bird
> which, lacking the blessing it once enjoyed,
> knows not how to be happy again;
>
> and whoever was shut away from people,
> she, as a comrade and a neighbour,
> should help me sigh away this nightmare,
> I with her in the sorrow both feel.

To the right of the rough wooden table at which he is sitting is an inkwell with two quill pens, and a manuscript, headed canto 10.

This was the perfect cover picture for my reading of Camões's achievement – companionable, lucid, the antithesis of everything Parnassian. This was the Camões who had shared my pavement café in Mozambique's Beira, a Camões responding to the personal disaster of exile and imprisonment with the original, muscular verse of the *Collected Lyric Poetry* and of *The Lusíads*.

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[203] 'Quem fosse acompanhando juntamente', White 2008, 228.

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In the comprehensive and authoritative *Routledge Encyclopedia of Translation Studies,* edited by Mona Baker, David Connolly, comments 'translators … rarely keep notes about the process of translation or any record of the choices made in the process,' adding 'it is precisely insights into this process that are missing from most theoretical models.'

In 1997, Landeg White published his verse translation of Camões's *The Lusíads*, and in 2008 followed it up with verse translations of Camões's *Collected Lyric Poems*. This short book, a contribution to the CECC series on 'Translating Europe through the ages', is a personal record of that experience. It records, over some seven and a half years, the almost daily choices made in respect of poetic form (choice of line-length, stanza, type of rhyme), grammar (phrase and sentence structure, navigating the differences between Portuguese and English syntax), and vocabulary (the diction appropriate for Camões's huge variety of styles). The account makes few theoretical claims. But it reflects continually on the linguistic dimensions of the problems faced, in a manner that should engage theorists in the effort to bring together translation theory and translation practice.

It records, too, what was in essence a labour of love. Connolly continues, 'love for the poet's work together with some degree of inspiration are important factors usually missing from models and theories of poetry translation'. They are found here in abundance.

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